Articles by Edwin Fesche

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A Biographical Sketch—William Kelly

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William Kelly

Edwin Fesche

Some years ago I was invited to take away what books I chose from a deceased brother's library. I selected a complete set of "The Bible Treasury" from 1856 to early in this century. A collector's item indeed. Later I handed the volumes to a friend who happened to be a Kelly buff. He in turn showed them to a nephew visiting him from Holland who further appreciated their value. The nephew took them back with him to Europe where they were photographically reduced and printed on thin paper so that four years of publication could be condensed into one volume. The resulting small print became hopeless for this reader's eyes. For over fifty years this magazine was edited by William Kelly. The bound volumes are now again procurable. In its day the "Bible Treasury" was appreciated by such reputable scholars as Dean Alford. An archdeacon referred to Mr. Kelly's magazine as the only religious magazine worth reading. Most of Kelly's expositions of the books of the Bible (it is claimed that he wrote on every book in the inspired canon) first appeared in serial form in the "Bible Treasury." Fortunately, all of these noted expositions were published in books. Since most have long been out of print they also are being reproduced, especially by the letters of the "Serious Christian," a committee that republishes what it considers the cream of Brethren writings.

The first introduction to Kelly's works to come this writer's way was his large volume on the Revelation. Contemporary with Kelly the four volumes of Horae Apocalypticae were published by Prebendary Eliot, an Anglican who was perhaps the most able exponent of the historical school of interpretation. Both authors were acquainted with each other's expositions of the Revelation. It has been interesting to read the criticisms that each of these learned men has for the other's position. Eliot could not appreciate Kelly's application of Revelation chapter 2 and 3 to deal with nineteen hundred years of history and chapters 4 to 19 to take up only seven years — Daniel's 70th week.

Mr. Kelly was perhaps the most erudite of all the chief men among the brethren. His library of 15,000 volumes was bequeathed to the city of Middlesboro, England. It still remains in the library there. Kelly lived when German higher criticism of the Scriptures had peaked. To such Kelly proved to be a timely and formidable foe. However, he was just as severe with his own assembly connections. One writes that "His sarcasm was the searching rapier of applied truth."

In scanning the lives of the early leaders of the brethren movement we are struck with the longevity most were granted. We are thus reminded of a spiritual principle that cannot be ignored, "But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). William Kelly was no exception to this rule; he was "put to sleep by Jesus" March 27th, 1906, in his 85th year. He was the last of the early brethren to leave this scene.

This gift to the church in these last days was born in Northern Ireland and was educated at Dublin University. He was saved soon after graduation and secured employment as tutor to the family of an Anglican clergyman in the Channel Islands. There a lady called his attention to 1 John 5:9-10 from which he gained assurance. In 1840 he embraced brethren principles and for the rest of his life became a keen expositor and polemist of such. William Kelly was fully aware of the objections to the Brethren's position, especially regarding church truth. Among his most widely read books has been his exposition of Matthew. His remarks on the 18th chapter are particularly illuminating. He is dealing with the subject of church discipline; this is tied in with the oft repeated 20th verse, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Such a gathering, so small, can act as a sovereign church and its prayers and decisions will be ratified in heaven. The mention of such a small number could be a comfort for some assemblies as the church age draws to a close. To Kelly such gatherings are always possible no matter to what extent Christendom may be in ruins. Here is a quote from the expositor's remarks, "Now a person may ask, are any upon that Ground? I can only say that the Christians who fall back on Scripture, owning the faithful presence of the Spirit in the assembly on earth, are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if they are not. They are foolish in acting as they do unless they are sure that it is according to the mind of God."

The great Baptist preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, a contemporary, wrote in his "Guide to the Commentaries" that Kelly had a mind for the universe but had been

narrowed by Darbyism. Indeed Kelly collected all of Darby's writings and systematically arranged them. This amounted to 34 volumes. No wonder that he used to advise young men to "Read Darby." Dr. Wereford, who wrote a mini biography, mentions a characteristic incident in the life of W. K. (the early brethren were in the habit of identifying themselves by the use of their initials). We quote from the biography: "A young relative whom he had prepared. for Trinity College, Dublin, so distinguished himself that Mr. Kelly was urged by one of the professors to settle there, as by so doing he might make a fortune; But it was characteristic of the man that his reply should be summed up in the question: "For which world?" Fortunately it can be said of W. K. and his illustrious contemporaries that although dead, they yet speak through their writings. This writer would chime in at this point and advise, "Read Kelly."

The writings of Kelly are certainly far more readable than those of Darby. What Darby would write in one paragraph Kelly would take three paragraphs. In fact, we might say that Kelly is Darby made plain. Someone observed that through the editing of Darby's volumious writings Kelly "has done much by his own expositions to give currency to the views enshrined in them." We do not intend to give the impression that Kelly's works are a rehash of Darby. Indeed Kelly's writings are the result of his own matured thinking, and when he contends for the faith, as he often does, his polemics are of a forbidding calibre. He was certainly widely read by the leading churchmen of the Victorian era.

In 1884 William Kelly severed himself from hard-core exclusivism. He now had the approbrium, or honor, of a group of assemblies named after him. Victims

themselves of, and protesters against, authoritarianism, they have pursued a more healthy respect for evangelism and the autonomy of the local meeting. We understand through their missionary endeavours they are well represented in Egypt. Mr. Coad remarks about the present day Kelly groups, “It is little wonder that the basis of their ‘church principles’ has become so rarified that few can understand it.” At this late date new problems have arisen that cannot be solved by harking back to the past. We need each other. In this connection we quote Melanchton’s oft repeated maxim, “In essentials, unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

A Trail Blazer

A Trail Blazer

Edwin Fesche

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Anthony Norris Groves' missionary service, first In Iraq, then in India. W. B. Neatby described Groves as "one of the Church's great saints," and G. H. Lang wrote a biography of him, its subtitle being: A STUDY OF A MAN OF GOD.

It is fitting that we honor the memory of one of the Lord's choice servants of a past era, even as we are indebted to Mr. Edwin Fesche for his interesting and informative article on this missionary trail blazer.

In the great historic saga of modern Christian missionary activity the illustrious name of William Carey heads the list. He has been rightly called "The father of modern missions." Following his generation is another name that is deserving of marked esteem. We refer to Anthony Norris Groves who, because of his principles, was destined to be among the paradoxical, "As unknown, and yet well known" (2 Cor. 6:9). Over what we are sure would be his protests, we feel fully justified in calling him "The father of faith missions."

Groves, from his earliest memories, felt that the ideal Christian was the one who was privileged to evangelize the heathen. At first Groves thought that in order to be a bona fide missionary, he must work within the framework of the church; particularly his church which happened to be the Church of England. Consequently, he was advised to take a theological degree followed by

“holy orders” or ordination. At the time, he was living in Exeter, England, and was engaged in a lucrative dental practice while enjoying a charming wife and three interesting youngsters. Through a special arrangement he was able to engage a tutor and then make periodic visits to Dublin, Ireland, for his term examinations. It was during these visits to Dublin that he contacted Christians who, like himself, were having difficulties with the prevailing practices of Christendom. They were also studying the Scriptures privately and collectively and were prepared to act upon what light was given to them. It was their conclusion that all churches had made critical departures from the original pattern. This did not apply to real Christians who were to be found in various folds.

Finally, there came a break from all precedents and this group met around the Lord’s table as Christians, brothers among their brethren, each open to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Groves was aware of this irregularity with his church affiliations. By now he had advanced to see that the clergy as a distinct entity had no place in the Body of Christ. He enquired as to the possibility of going to the mission field in a lay capacity. He was informed that he would be unable to celebrate Communion unless an ordained priest was present. Groves was now about ready to make his final trip to Dublin and take “holy orders,” but before doing so his house was burgalized and his fare money stolen. By now the Scriptures, his personal experiences, and his present circumstances all added up that God was leading him in other directions. The main thrust of the Reformation was the question of personal salvation. The “Brethren

Movement," so called, was mainly concerned with the teaching of the Scriptures as they related to the church.

Journey To Baghdad

In 1829 Groves and his wife with their two boys, nine and ten, and Kitto the boys' tutor (later to become a great expounder in his books of Bible customs), and others set out for Baghdad via St. Petersburg, Russia. In the long overland journey they used covered wagons. Here and there they met sympathetic Christians that helped them on their way, particularly the Mennonites. At Shusha they were received and succored by Swiss missionaries laboring in the area. One of them, Pfander, a linguist, accompanied them the rest of the way and remained in Baghdad for a while rendering valuable help. In all the journey took over six months, the sea part of the trip having been made in a small sailing vessel providentially placed at their disposal. Early upon his arrival in Baghdad, Groves characteristically wrote in his diary, "I feel I am happy in having no system to support in moving among either professing Christians or Mohammedans; to the one, a person so situated can truly say, I do not desire to bring you over to any church, but to the simple truth of God's Word, and to the others, we wish you to read the New Testament that you may learn to judge of God's truth, not by what you see in the churches around you, but by the Word of God itself."

A Baptism Of Testing

By the second year of their stay there was much to encourage. The Armenians, who were professing Christians, were accessible, and some Jews showed interest, but the Mohammedans were hostile, though

some contacts were made with them. A school was opened as a means of making contact and being of mutual benefit to teacher and scholar. In an enthusiastic account of this phase of Groves' work, F. W. Newman mentions that the school greatly aided Groves to learn Arabic, attach young scholars to him, give him opportunity of "trying his wings" (as he calls it) against Christian errors, and exciting the attention of Moslems.

Groves also put his medical knowledge to good use treating diseases of the eye and removing cataracts. Then in March 1831 there was an outbreak of the plague. The enemy seemed to sweep in like a flood. The plague was responsible for 2,000 deaths daily. Adding to this desolation was the flooding of the Tigris River. With food and water shortages the city was further subjected to gangs of robbers. The little missionary enclave, although robbed, was left unharmed. Groves himself was holding on to the promise in Psalm 91, especially verse 10. His faith was severely jolted when his wife sickened and died of the plague, and soon after a baby daughter was taken. He himself was next to be laid low and despaired of his life, and especially at the prospect of his two young sons being left as orphans. But God willed things otherwise and he recovered. At the same time, a local war was being waged and the army that had been besieging the city finally entered, restored order, and showed unexpected moderation. As a result of this baptism of testing Groves wrote, "It requires great confidence in God's love, and much experience of it, for the soul to remain in peace, stayed on Him, in a land of such changes, without even one of our own nation near us, without means of escape in any direction; surrounded with the most desolating plague and

destructive flood, with scenes of misery forced upon the attention which harrow up feelings, and to which you can administer no relief. Even in this scene, however, the Lord has kept us of His infinite mercy in personal quiet and peace, trusting under the shadow of His almighty wing."

A relief party left Dublin in September 1830 to join the Baghdad work. On account of illness and one death, plus the disturbed conditions in the wake of the 1828-29 war between Russia and Turkey, the expedition took 21 months via Malta and Aleppo to reach Baghdad. Then another death struck the relief party soon after their arrival in Baghdad.

In reading these annals we are led to appreciate the amenities of science such as the luxury of modern travel and the effectiveness of modern medicine — when our arm becomes a pincushion. The "good old days" had their setbacks, too.

While in Baghdad, Groves was visited by a British army engineer, Colonel Cotton, who was on his way back to India. The colonel had accomplished some fine engineering in flood control and irrigation in the Godaveri Delta resulting in much blessing to the local people. Cotton had read Groves' pamphlet on "Christian Devotedness" and was convinced that the author was the man for India. As a result, Groves went with the colonel to India. He explained his purpose for doing so: "To become united more truly in heart with all the missionary band there, and to show that, notwithstanding all differences, we are one in Christ; sympathizing in their sorrows, and rejoicing in their prosperity."

To accomplish this end Groves travelled extensively, even to visiting Ceylon. His ambition was to discourage all denominational attachments and gather all to the unity of the Church of God. In this, he was grossly misunderstood by many. He also keenly felt that the Europeans were conscious of a superiority over the natives. He wrote, “The farther I go, the more I am convinced that the missionary labour of India, as carried on by Europeans, is altogether above the natives; nor do I see how any abiding impression can possibly be made, till they mix with them in a way that is not now attempted. When I think of this subject of caste, in connection with the humiliation of the Son of God, I see in it something most unseemly, most peculiarly unlike Christ. It is truly hateful that one worm should refuse to eat or touch another worm, lest he become polluted. How strikingly the Lord’s revelation to Peter reproves it all, ‘What God hath cleansed that call thou not common.’”

Groves was hopeful that a true Christian unity could be planted outside of Christendom; he seemed to have no illusions that such was possible within Christendom. He wrote, “I do not yet despair of seeing in India a church arise that shall be a little sanctuary in the cloudy and dark day that is coming upon Christendom.” Groves taught and exemplified missionary “identification” — to live on a level with those he was attempting to reach for Christ. He saw the need of an indigenous church and was able to teach Indians to pioneer on “faith lines” — particularly one named Arooloppen. This brother, we understand, planted many assemblies in Southern India which remain to this day. Groves anticipated what seemed so unlikely in his day of the “British Raj” —

namely, its demise. He saw the instilling of Scriptural principles as the only answer to that eventuality, when he wrote, “But, it must be obvious to all, if the native churches be not strengthened by leaning on the Lord instead of man, the political changes of an hour may sweep away the present form of things, so far as it depends on Europeans, and leave not a trace behind.”

Ahead Of His Times

Anthony Norris Groves was essentially a man well in advance of his generation. True, his procedures must have brought some severe criticisms and, no doubt, from many well meaning fellow missionaries. But if he could not get followers he would walk alone into some of the untrodden paths that he believed were Scriptural, if not in accord with the status quo. He not only spoke his convictions, which made such demands on pride and personal advantage, but he put them into action. Only present missionary history brings him up to date. The “white supremacy” that he deplored, and so odious to nationals, still lingered in the Orient in the late 1920’s when the writer was there. The lightning Japanese victories early in World War II and the rise of Communism, along with Ghandi’s social reforms, has at least brought the white man down to size in that vast area. The Viet Nam war has been a further humiliation. All of this has tended to bring to an end or seriously limit organized Christian missionaries that so much concerned Groves. The native churches that have been taught their pilgrim character and autonomy can adjust to changes and go underground, if need be, to survive.

In 1853, while visiting England, Anthony Norris Groves died in the home of his brother-in-law, George Muller of Bristol and orphanage fame. He was only 58!

Amos

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Amos

Edwin Fesche

The unpredictable way in which God raises up and uses His servants has led to the remark, “The lion’s share of God’s work has been performed by the laity.” So often the formally trained and office-holding church dignitaries are by-passed and the Word of God comes to those who are void of the requirements that are so highly prized by men. The prophet Amos tells us that he was a farmer and that he spoke his message only because of the irresistible urge resulting from being given God’s Word.

His Call

In other words he was a man that had received a call. This, along with his message, was his only credential. From all accounts he maintained his original means of livelihood while prophesying. His position and message touched the mainspring of all that the priest of Bethel, Amaziah, represented (Ch. 5:10-13). Amos was keenly conscious of sin. In the first two chapters of his book he takes Israel’s neighboring nations to task. From the 4th verse of chapter 2 and through the remainder of this written ministry he is concerned with Judah and the Northern Kingdom, designated as Israel. The surrounding nations had less light and therefore a corresponding responsibility. With Israel much had been given, consequently much more was expected. Amos

found Israel in great default. His divine call was doubtless coupled with his observations of sin and hyprocrisy. He says, “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (3:8). Our prophet was unlike many of our moderns who find excuses for sin, or call it by some other name, it was his reason for prophesying. His intellect and emotions were happily blended as he says, “I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins” (5:12). Only as we are personally victorious over sin and in touch with God’s Word about it will we begin to know its true character. Actually redemption is only appreciated to the extent that we have discovered the meaning of sin. Amos, who reveals a very practical acquaintance with the outdoors observes that lions do not roar without occasion (3:4). Are we in such a state that it is “woe is me if I preach not the gospel?”

His Communion

It is not hard to surmise that Amos had spent long seasons alone as a herdsman in the open spaces near his home in Tekoa, which was surrounded by large unpopulated pasture lands just south of Bethlehem. He had observed the stars at night (5:8) singing and saying, “The hand that made us is divine.” He was in touch with the Creator of the stars as he admonishes, “Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion.” For him the visible things revealed the invisible God (Romans 1:19-20). This herdsman’s simple rustic meditations did but collaborate with his inherited Jewish faith. His God was not only transcendent, but a God to be known personally. Lamenting that Israel had not walked with God following the exodus, Amos then raises the

question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3). The nation had long since broken off the communion, but this did not prevent Amos from walking on good terms with his God. It seems quite natural for him to add, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” We will never know distance from God unless there have been times in our experience when we enjoyed closeness. If it has been lost naught else can replace it; nor is there rest until the lost communion is regained. It is the source and spring of all Christian action. Such enriching experience is for all of God’s people, but only known and enjoyed by the diligent.

Courage

Amos soon found himself in conflict with the prevailing religion of his day. Bethel had very adroitly been settled upon as a place for one of Jeroboam’s golden calves (1 Kings 12:26-33). It had patristic associations (Genesis 13:3; 28:19); furthermore, a feast substituting and aping the passover had been aligned to its ritual. This was a sufficient show of orthodoxy to make Bethel a substitute for Jerusalem. This cunning mixture had gone on for nearly two hundred years when Amos pronounced his satire and thundered the Lord’s judgments on Bethel and all that it represented. “Come to Bethel and transgress” (4:4) is the Prophet’s ironic remark. The outcome of a visit to the sacred site was but to increase the danger of incurring more sin. Into this center where sin and religion were on the best of terms Amos provoked a vigorous hostility. The high priest of Bethel, Amaziah, hurried off to the king with his official report, “Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the

house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words" (7:10). Then Amaziah proceeded to give a misquote of some of these words calculated to further insure the king's disfavor of Amos. The king and priest enjoyed a common interest and Amaziah appears to return to Amos with the king's commission, "Flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court" (7:12-13). In spite of this official attempt at silencing and commanding him to go back to his native Judah, Amos lives on and prophesies. He was immortal until his work was done. Not so Amaziah with all of his present plush privileges; said Amos to him, "Thou shalt die in a polluted land."

Consummation

In the last chapter Amos sees the judgment of the Lord catching up with every deserving sinner. "Though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them." To sin in spite of light is serious business. Yet, this judgment would eventually prove to be remedial as far as the nation is concerned, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in the sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Then follows the prophecy concerning the "tabernacle of David that is fallen." When Amos gave these words the decendents of David were occupying the throne. Later it fell under the strokes of Nebuchadnezzar, and is still seen unrestored after the first advent of Christ (Acts 15:16-17). From James' application of the prophecy it is only natural to gather that the restoration of the Davidic kingdom will be just as literal as its fall. Contingent

upon this is the millennial picture that follows when, “the ploughman shall overtake the reaper” and Israel will be planted, “no more to be pulled out of their land.” Israel as a nation has forfeited all grounds for God’s favor. The future rests in the disposition of their Messiah toward them. He will yet be gracious unto His ancient people. So, today, “The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, He’ll never, no never, forsake to His foes.”

An Ancient Shipwreck

An Ancient Shipwreck

Edwin Fesche

Mr. Edwin Fesche of Westminster, Maryland, was commended to the work of the Lord 54 years ago. Now an octogenarian, he continues to preach and write, being the valued and appreciated author of “The Current Scene” column which appears in each issue of “Food for the Flock.”

In the first century of our era, Rome was the mistress and capital of the ancient world. Her population far exceeded the surrounding agriculture’s ability to supply sufficient food. Consequently, Egypt was the source of much corn (actually wheat). This in turn required considerable shipping to carry on this brisk commerce. These ships (so small compared to our modern ships) were also able to crowd in some 200 to 300 passengers. The voyage which forms our story was narrated firsthand by one of the passengers. Back in 1850 two Englishmen interested in revamping the account of the ancient narrative showed their source to a naval captain stationed in the area. He concluded that a landlubber could not give such an accurate account of the seamanship apart from being an eyewitness.

The historian of this ill-fated sea voyage was none other than “the beloved physician,” Dr. Luke. In his two writings, Luke names four emperors of the first century. The current emperor must have been the infamous Nero and this helps us to date the voyage around 62 A.D. Luke mentions many other contemporary personages.

He relates in his literary works many incidents, such as names, offices and cultural behaviour belonging exclusively to the first century. A writer who so relates his story to the wider context of world history gives his readers some good occasions to check his accuracy. From this he is well accounted as an author belonging to that far distant century.

Luke was travelling with his friend and companion, the Apostle Paul. The apostle had been apprehended by the Jews in Jerusalem for what they considered heresy, punishable by death. Saved from this religious fanaticism by the Roman authorities, Paul, having seen the hopelessness of a fair trial, had appealed to be tried at Caesar's judgment seat. This was a right granted to Roman citizens. Sir William Ramsay, another who traced the journeys recorded in the Book of Acts, says such a procedure called for the defendant to pay all the expenses. This amounted to no small sum if the armed body guard would be included.

The ancient voyage we are following actually commenced in Caesarea, a seaport on Israel's west coast. Upon reaching Myra in Turkey, a transfer was made to a ship of Alexandria sailing to Crete, which put into Fair Havens for replenishments, occasioning further delay including the approaching season of tempestuous winds known as a Euroclydon (today called a Levanter). This called for a discussion between the captain and owner of the ship and the centurion in charge of the prisoners. Then the prisoner, the Apostle Paul, who by this time must have gained the respect of the officers, gave a prophetic utterance saying, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading of the ship, but also of our lives." The

centurion, who appears to have had the final say, took the master's advice and they set sail. At first the south wind blew softly and supposing they had gained their end, we can imagine how discredited the Apostle Paul must have looked concerning his prediction. So often the counsel that comes from a worldly source contradicts God's commandments and our conscience. Then comes temporary prosperity. While all was going well, suddenly the Euroclydon struck. The boat trailing astern was taken in with great difficulty and they feared that they would be cast upon the small island of Clauda since they were being driven by a northeast wind towards Surtis, a danger spot between the headlands of Tunis and Barca. With a shift of the wind to the east they were delivered from a threatening lee shore and lowering the mainsail hove to (a small spread of sail in the after part of the ship to keep her heading into the storm), and so were driven westward. The strain on the ship's timbers had caused them to spring which called for frapping the vessel (passing strong ropes under the keel to brace them). Worse yet, the cargo of wheat had become wet and swelling caused the sides of the ship to further widen. To reduce this, cargo was cast overboard.

All had now been done to save the ship that was humanly possible. For many days the tempest continued to rage and neither sun nor stars appeared to give aid to navigation until, writes the participant, "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away." God often arranges the affairs of men to where they are allowed to exhaust their own resources and in their desperation turn to the listening ear of the God of Scripture.

Anyway, Paul the Apostle who had been long at his devotions now lifts his voice above the howling wind and

the roar of heavy seas and proclaims his divine assurances. A prisoner ordinarily would be of little or no consequence under any circumstances. Matters were now different, and he, who was a man of God indeed, now had the entitlement to be heard. From now on in this otherwise doomed vessel, Paul took the ascendancy. He informed his fellow travellers that an angelic visitant had assured him that his wish to visit Rome was certain and also that the ship would be wrecked but all lives would be saved.

After fourteen days of peril, the shipmen sensed that they were near to some shore and taking depth sounds discovered they were getting into shallow waters. Fearing the possibility of falling upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for daybreak. With the arrival of morning, Paul encouraged all to take a meal which aided in boosting their morale. With this, the anchors were weighed, the mainsail set, and they were able to make for an inlet where the ship was beached and remained firm while the hinder part was broken up with the waves. The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners lest they should escape, but the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose. Those who are the salt of the earth often account for the preservation of others. The next order was for the swimmers to first make it to land and the rest on boards and broken pieces of the ship likewise escaped all safe to land.

This voyage has been likened to the church which has survived through the stormy seas of the centuries, but by schism has been rent asunder and further fragmented. Yet her Lord's dictum remains: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The true members

may consciously identify themselves with one of its many parts. All brought safe to land. And when the roll is call up yonder, all will be there.

An Appreciation of Dante

An Appreciation of Dante

Edwin Fesche

Few Christians today know anything about Dante and his writings. Thus we are indebted to Mr. Edwin Fesche of Westminster, Maryland (the author of “The Current Scene” column), for his insights regarding this unusual man as expressed in his work, The Divine Comedy.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), an Italian poet, is best remembered for The Divine Comedy. This book consists of three parts: The Inferno, The Purgatory and The Paradise. It is a Christian allegory about the soul’s vision of sin, its cleansing from guilt, and its rising in newness of life.

The best Protestant version of from sinnerhood to glory is, of course, Pilgrim’s Progress. Its universal popularity is based on its practicality and simplicity. Dante Alighieri, on the other hand, presents his spiritual pilgrimage with illustrations from history — current scenes in and around his native Florence. Then he draws heavily on pagan mythology and a remarkable acquaintance with the poets, philosophers and church fathers that had preceded him. This makes for heavy reading and calls for constant reference to a glossary. Beneath all of this profusion of classical imagery and references there is a steady development of truths that could only originate from the Holy Scriptures. Not, as to be expected, without a Roman Catholic flavour.

Dante’s famed poem The Divine Comedy, opens with these words, “Midway in our life’s journey I went astray

from the straight road and woke to find myself in a dark wood." Here Dante is describing what he had discovered the world to be, "a dark wood." At "midway," half of man's alloted span of seventy years, he is awakened from wrath to flee. For the first 35 years of his life he had enjoyed affluence, education, active military duty and success in politics—all "a dark wood." Three animals bar him from making a short journey to heaven, one of them, a she wolf, (incontinence) drove him to despair as she had so many others. In a swoon, and with a sense of lostness, he is awakened by Virgil who has been sent to him by Beatrice to escort him to the bliss he seeks.

Dante's work is in three parts: The Inferno, The Purgatorio, and The Paradiso. Virgil, who represents the best of human reasoning, escorts Dante through hell and purgatory. Virgil, because he lived before Christ, cannot go on to Paradise. Here Dante is assigned to Beatrice who symbolizes pure love and who leads him up to the Empyrean—heaven.

Dante, then, is to learn depths and consequences of sin from his escort (as sort of guided tour) through The Inferno. Next, he is to learn the necessity of personal holiness as he ascends the "mountain of Purgatorio." In other words, personal sanctification. To the Protestant here and now is the only place that this struggle for acquired purity can be achieved. Paul informed his converts "that we must through tribulation enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The bliss of The Paradise is the only satisfactory answer to the "whys" of the imponderables of the present. Again, this is in line with Paul, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present

time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

The Inferno

This is seen as an inverted cone placed in the lower parts of the earth. Along with his guide Virgil, Dante descends to the bottom where Satan is. On the way down he passes different spheres where the sufferers are tormented according to the nature of their sin. Dante on occasion swoons as he beholds the gruesome nature of the sufferers along with such noxious vapours. Some he does not fail to name, even including his contemporaries, also the pope of his day — Boniface VIII whom he particularly loathed (and rightly so).

The Purgatory

The poets coming out of hell are challenged by Cato (symbol of freedom) and Virgil intercedes for Dante, "As I told you, I was sent to show the way his soul must take for salvation. I have shown him the guilty people, now I mean to lead him through the spirits in your keeping, to show him those whose suffering makes them clean."

The two ascend and on seven ledges encounter those, with himself, who are combating the seven deadly sins. They start with pride and end with incontinence. Dante is left to wander through a wood until confronted by two rivers. The first is Lethe, which in pagan mythology is river of oblivion. Dante, with the aid of Matilda, crosses Lethe and finds he has lost the memory of the evil he has done. The next river, Eunoe, brings back to his memory all his virtuous acts. These are two things we need on the heavenly path: "I will remember thy sin no more," and "Thou shalt remember all the way that the

Lord Thy God led thee." Commenting on this part of The Purgatory, the late Harold St. John remarked: "And if a man gets a good drink of these two rivers he will never sink into the depths: but you can only find these streams by the mingling of a sinner's tears and a Saviour's blood."

The Paradise

Here, Dante is taken into the custody of Beatrice. This maiden must have been the girl of his dreams. He made her acquaintance as a child and later in adulthood (although he never married her). He now climbs to the stars. There are nine of them and beyond is the Empyrean — heaven. The moon is the first to be reached. Dante's universe believed the earth to be the center of all things; Copernicus, the founder of modern astronomy, was not even born. The moon represents those who had once lost their purity, David-like, but lived it down. When Mars is reached, the fourth sphere, Mars was the god of war. Dante makes this the sphere of the warriors of God, Joshua and Gideon, for instance. When Saturn is reached we are introduced to those who have passed their life in holy contemplation—Saint Bernard is the example selected. When the outskirts of the universe is reached—the Pruim Mobile—then comes the arrival into Empyrean where all dimensions cease and Dante received a vision of God. It is Bernard that now escorts him to the ultimate — heaven. This includes a huge white rose. Its center is occupied by the Virgin and her Son; she is declared the Queen of Heaven. The circles around the center are peopled by those who have reached the eternal bliss. Their distance from the center proclaims the extent of their piety. This reminds us of

the famous rose window in Notre Dame, Paris. The poet finally gets a vision of the Trinity. This vision is to suggest the highest human aspiration reached—a soul returned to its Maker.

The reading of these three headings reveals that Dante has been struggling with the imponderables that suggest themselves to the spiritual thinker, such as election, the consequences of Adam's transgression, total depravity, the limitations of human reasoning, and the mystery of Christ's two natures. Dante amply reveals he has read the Bible from cover to cover and believed it. He laments the corruption of the church of his day. From the very first canto it would suggest he had had a real born again experience.

But Thou Oh Man of God

After 2,000 years of Church history, the backward look is disturbing and the present perplexing. The brethren movement has no quarrel with the great cardinal truths of Scripture. It does, however, beg to differ in its view on Church Truth. Mong with this it finds sufficient Scriptural grounds for rejecting an officiating minister. This practice makes us a people rejected by some of the best elements of Christendom. Consistent with this there comes the call to separate from the world and worldly Christianity, which adds to brethren's unpopularity. One good point out of all this is that it tends to take pride from man because of being out of step with some cherished opinions. As Saint Athanasins held to the truth of Christ's absolute deity in his day when such was attacked by Arius; as Luther recovered the gospel smothered by a gaudy ritual and corruption; so the brethren are convinced that they have reintroduced the principles of the New Testament Church. Only those who are fully persuaded that this claim has the support of Scripture will be sufficiently attracted to the brethren and endure to the end. Shallow convictions will not do here. One finds himself a square peg in a round hole in his associations with most other Christians. Resentment is provoked when commended workers prove that service can be performed apart from a distinctive name, organization and distasteful methods of raising money. Such Scriptural literalness and renouncement of expediences are not proving appealing to the young. There are a couple of generations that have been born into the movement. They know nothing of the exercise that led their forefathers to such spiritual discretion.

There is the temptation to join para church movements that are in many respects more successful. Those that could have stayed where their roots are have oped for greener pastures, or have they?

If brethren principles can be upheld by

Scripture, and I believe they can, then it behooves the searching soul to give this inquiry a top priority. Just as the sinner can find excuses aplenty for refusing Christ because of the behavior of some professing Christians he knows; so not a few have excused themselves from identifying with the assemblies and tragic failures because of the poor showing of some. The only answer to this is, “what saith the Scripture?” Human shortcomings in this area should in no wise be allowed to annul a revealed truth. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” Matt. 7:7. Then, after an honest waiting on God, “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” Romans 14:5. The local church should be a microcosm of the church universal. It could be just two or three are gathered to the Name of Christ and capable of developing into an autonomous body coming behind in no gift. It is described as God’s workmanship, or as the margin renders the word, masterpiece. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God” Eph. 3:10.

Without being sectarian there are sound reasons for being preferential. The local assembly, or assemblies, warrant our undivided support. This is not an interdenominational movement. It is a modest attempt to approximate the will of God concerning His Church. If

this is so, and it is to some of us, then what was said of Christ when He cleansed the temple should characterize us, “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” John 2:17.

Consistent with this go the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, no promiscuous financial appeals in the Church. Those who minister the Word are brothers among their brethren and recognized by their possession of a Spirit imparted gift.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” II Corinthians 3:17. The open meeting as outlined in I Cor. 14 is the forte of the brethren. Appreciated and extolled by those who have discovered its sweetness, it revolves around the breaking of bread. We say to all pure in doctrine and morally upright, “come thou with us, and we will do thee good” Num. 10:29.

The words of another supplement our thoughts. “But a person may ask, are any upon that ground? I can only say that the Christians who fall back on Scripture, owning the faithful presence of the Spirit in the assembly on earth, are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if they are not. They are very foolish in acting as they do unless they are sure that it is according to the mind of God. Ought you to have more doubt how Christians should meet together for worship or mutual edification than about other directions in the word of God?”

E. Fesche

Current Scene

Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Although the U.S. election is now history, the Editor felt that it was appropriate to include Mr. Edwin Fesche's comments on "The Election." His words merit our thoughtful contemplation (regarding Mr. Fesche's column on "The Current Scene," please see the details appearing in "From the Editor's Notebook").

The Election

At the time of writing the verbal battle between the two Presidential contenders rages on. Fortunately, in a democracy it is a conflict of words only. Other systems can be conducive to bloodletting. We wonder what China will have to go through before a successor to Mao arises. History recounts the foul ends to which men will go to fulfill their ambition to rule their fellows.

Some seem to think if a candidate is a Christian that this is a strong reason why he would make a good President. This is wishful thinking. Many feel that this is the best guarantee when they are putting a top priority on character. After Watergate we can sympathize with their desire. In reality we wonder if such a candidate, in the first place, could ever get the limelight and airing necessary to push him to the top of his party. Then again, would a spiritual man with the Biblical viewpoint of this present evil world ever generate sufficient ambition to soar so high where his Lord was only given a cross? When William Kelly was informed that with his

endowments he was well-fitted to make a name for himself in the world, the rejoinder was, “Which world?”

In the Old Testament we discover detailed instructions for the kings that were to rule over Israel. In the New Testament there is complete silence. Although the Church is spiritual and heavenly in its calling, there are, nevertheless, ample down-to-earth commands in which Christians are to function in whatever niche happens to be theirs in society. For instance slaves, masters, husbands, wives and children are told what is expected of them now that they are members of the household of faith. Church elders and deacons are answerable to even greater responsibilities, but there is no counsel for a king, or his modern counterpart — the politician. Believers will find their numbers scarce among the top echelons of humanity — “not many noble are called.” Since it is the meek that are to inherit the earth the New Testament does not contemplate a disciple becoming a king. Perhaps the most Biblically instructed and spiritual man ever to find himself at the head of his country was Oliver Cromwell. He imposed the sabbath and a stern morality everywhere. His disciplines were possible because the iron of the army was ever his support. England became what Geneva had been under Calvin. All the while the country was longing for its Barabbas and rejoiced to choose the desolute Charles II. The unregenerate feel more comfortable with one of their own kind lording it over them — “as with the people, so with the priest.”

Christians have more going for them in a democracy than in any other form of government. It is the free countries that are sending out missionaries, printing Bibles and producing a wealth of religious literature. It

promotes industry and frugality, and Christians are generally in that category. We do not see why we should not do all that is Christian and legal within the system to keep it that way. The alternatives only create concern. Even if we vote, and our man loses, it will communicate to the winner the size of his opposition. This would at least help for balance.

The pressures created by one man one vote are being felt in our society. The fabulous efficiency of free enterprise is being hamstrung. Compassion for the underdog is the promise of the successful politician. But where is the abundance coming from if we tamper with the human drives which produces it. Students of history and those who know the truth of the Bible's definition of man, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), know that power in the hands of the majority can be just as terrifying as when secured by the despot. In fact, "Mobocracy" soon terminates in, and gives a pretext for, the rise of a strong man. Without going into details at this time we do observe in Revelation 13 a "beast" rising up out of the sea. The sea symbolizes restless humanity and the "beast" the last man of destiny to head up Gentile supremacy. The future will not be a world safe for democracy, but just the opposite. The present trends abroad in the world are anticipating conditions prior to our Lord's return to the earth. Looking out on the national scene the Christian has every reason to concur with Scripture, which says, "this is man's day" (1 Corinthians 4:3, JND trans.). "The day of Christ" is another matter and is the real hope of the Christian.

A Man

History reveals that the rank and file of humanity have always been willing and excited about following a leader. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the undisputed masters are rare. The Mohammeds, Napoleons and Hitlers inflict more misery than blessing. In spite of this, men sense today that only some great chieftain, national or international, can solve the nagging problems such as inflation, unemployment, and need for security. Such leadership, however, finds itself hamstrung with the checks and balances of democracy. So right away our cherished freedoms would be in jeopardy. Hitler filled the political vacuum that had been unwittingly created by the Weimar Republic that preceded him. His leadership was not established apart from the most revolting violence and purges. There is nothing so corrupting as power, and there is nothing so terrifying as complete power in the hands of the wrong individual.

This yearning for a leader and unifier is innate in humanity. It harps back to the Bible truth that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Sin has brought into the race suspicion and disunity. To overcome a fragmented society the warrior has sought to enforce unity on his terms. Their empires have all fallen apart. Then the approach of federation has been tried. The European Common Market is the latest experiment. It is the brainchild of some noble minded souls. The Common Market significantly covers a large section of what was once the Roman Empire. A forte of the “Brethren Movement” has been an original study of prophecy. Consequently, 150 years ago some startling conclusions were reached. Among them was the restoration of Israel

as a nation and the resurrection of the old Roman Empire. Though considered fanciful at the time, such conclusions are not unrealistic today. Present trends tend to confirm that God was revealing to His servants of that day things which must shortly come to pass. Nor must we leave out Peter's counsel: "Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8). There are some convincing things about the Common Market to suggest that it is laying the foundation for the eventual restoration of the old Roman Empire. The constant threats from Russia and her own economic straits could create the need and cry for a man of destiny. The "Brethren," in the main, concluded that most of the book of Revelation dealt with world affairs after the removal of the Church. John, the inspired writer of Revelation, often writes quite obviously of the Emperor and empire under which he lived. Some of the things of which he spoke were fulfilled soon thereafter, such as the Christian persecutions. This preteristic interpretation, while possessing some merits, is unsatisfactory unless treated as rehearsals of still greater events. John, with his Empire still in mind, prophecies of a time when its ten representatives will surrender their power to the "beast" (Revelation 13:4). This Satan-filled man will be readily worshiped as God. Like Napoleon and Hitler, his immediate successes will be phenomenal but he is marked out for what he is by the coming of the Lord Jesus and is to be cast alive into "the lake of fire."

Certainly mankind is not going to be cheated in its aspirations. The desire for a sinless and fruitful earth is a vestige, along with conscience, of the divine that still persists in fallen humanity. The dispensational

explanation of Scripture allow's for Christ's kingdom to include a literal existence. In Revelation 20:4 we learn of Christ reigning a thousand years. He is to reign where He was rejected. His royal glory is yet to be witnessed on earth, as was His moral glory during His first advent. The present role of Jesus Christ now seated on His Father's throne is not to be confused with what He terms "my throne" (Revelation 3:21). Now He is saving the whosoevers that come to Him for redemption; when on His own throne He will "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:5). This will answer the oft repeated prayer, "Thy kingdom come." This will be earth's grand finale— "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (Ephesians 1:10).

Geopolitics

Geopolitics

Edwin Fesche

Former U.S. President, Richard Nixon, has written a book that gives us the fruits of his 35 years in public life. His experience with affairs at home and worldwide are impressive. This timely volume has been given an apt title, “The Real War.” To Nixon the world is already engaged in World War III; at least we are in the preliminaries. He writes, “There is no mystery about Soviet intentions. The Kremlin leaders do not want war, but they do want the world. And they are rapidly moving into a position to get what they want. Their basic behaviour is ‘Probe with baynets, if you encounter steel, withdraw. If you encounter mush, continue.’” Commenting on the intellectuals that see only the ideals of Communism, Nixon has this to say, “Nothing can defend a society from itself if its upper 100,000 men and women, both the decision makers and those who help to mold the thinking of the decision makers, are resolved to capitulate.” That sounds like there are some around that are thinking that it is better to be red than dead.

The writer tells of his interview with Dr. Edward Telfer (the father of the hydrogen bomb). The famed physicist was asked what he thought the U.S. would be like in the year 2000. His reply was that there would only be a 50 percent chance of survival. When asked whether he meant physical or a system of government he said, “Either or both.” Indeed many of the world leaders are just catching up with one phase of Bible prophecy. At least they are pessimistic, in their way, regarding the

future and without any heaven to compensate. The great tribulation is yet to visit our planet that will exceed all former sorrows. The sovereignty of God will order its progress and limits, as the inspired Psalmist writes, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” The believer knows that behind the dim unknown there is a watchful and over-ruling God. He is not going to allow the world to self-destruct itself — the thing the modern scientist fears. Only God will then be purging the world by his judgments in order to usher in a glorious millennium.

To counter the Russians, so Nixon advises, is to keep up with them at their own game. This calls for frightful rearmaments. The reasoning is, “The less that a nation has regard for moral obligations the more it tends to respect physical strength.” Elsewhere the author says, “In order to be able to sit down with the Russians you must first be able to stand up to them.” The ex-President is not adverse to the use of covert actions. (His Watergate downfall). His argument for this is, “World leadership also requires something that is in many ways alien to the American cast of mind. It requires placing limits on idealism. At times matching duplicity with duplicity, and even with brutality. After a century and a half of holding the world at arms length, of declining to be contaminated by contact with its intrigues and its tyrannies, it requires marching into the field and playing the game of power diplomacy. It requires doing so even when the rules imposed on the game are rules that we would not have chosen.” Furthermore, we read, “Moralizing is always easier from behind the lines than it is at the battle front.” This is certainly not from the Bible but rather a little bit from Machiavelli’s, The

Prince, an ancient tome of political doctrines which placed expediency above morality. Craft and deceit are countenanced in order to assert a ruler's authority. The human heart has not changed; the Bible says it "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Surrounded by such a can of worms at home, and far worse abroad, it is hard to see where a really Christian conscience would prevail. The New Testament instructs how church officers are to behave, the ethics for husbands and wives, masters and servants in their Christian orbit, but no admonitions for a Christian ruler. The silence may suggest that such is not contemplated in a world that has cast out Christ. King David must have been referring to his experience whenever he attempted to clean up the political messes of his day. He likens the corrupters of government as "sons of Belial" and as thorns too sharp to be taken with hands. An illustration suggesting that the reformer may get hurt more than the workers of iniquity. They know how to stay beyond the reach of honesty (2 Samuel 23:6-7). World rulers may give scant attention to the account of man's fall in the garden of Eden, yet they soon discover that human behavior is akin to that piece of human history that Paul endorsed in his day, "For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

This book does not fail to observe the significance of the Middle East. Its abrupt rise is occasioned by its vast oil reserves — the West's jugular vein, as Nixon describes it. Those who interpret Bible prophecy literally see that the world's interests are to again polarize around Jerusalem and the old Bible lands. Nixon rightly sees that the nation which gains a stranglehold on this area can, because of oil dependence, dictate its terms to the

rest of the world. He writes, “Events in the Persian Gulf show dramatically how places that until recently seemed remote and exotic can suddenly present us with a crisis of surpassing urgency: how we can awake to find that a region once celebrated largely in romantic fantasy now holds the fate of the world in its hands — Or, more precisely in its sands.” God may be using oil to remove the world’s gravity centres to the locations where the greatest drama is yet to occur — the culmination of the times of the Gentiles. “The kings of the earth and of the whole world” are yet to be gathered for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” — namely Armageddon (Rev. 16:14-16). The tardy and unrealistic undertaking of the government’s approach to the energy crisis alarms Nixon. He adds, “Nothing is more natural than a depletion of one energy resource, its gradual rise in price, and its replacement by a new source. In our day, however, that transition has turned into a crisis.” The failure to find a substitute for oil will only tend to heighten the importance of the ancient Bible lands.

Reading the book can get one depressed. True, according to Nixon there is still time to turn the tide. The remedies necessary are massive armaments, a sound dollar and increased productivity. Knowing the decadence that has already beset the U.S. and the love of the good life in the democracies generally, one can hardly envision the sacrifices being undertaken, and that voluntarily. There is not much mention of God in this volume. The last chapter does quote from Napoleon’s words, “There are two powers in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.” In this the author sees that the U.S. has an advantage over an atheistic adversary.

However, Nixon does not get much comfort from the spirit. He laments that conquest from this source takes generations, even a millennium. Therefore, we read, “In that short run in which we all live, the sword is the essential shield of the spirit.” So, to quote from another world leader, was it Oliver Cromwell? “Trust in God but keep your powder dry.” We conclude by feeling that we have been reading, from a secular angle, the Bible’s prophetic picture of the end times. What Nixon is saying, based on his experience and foresight, the Scripture has been saying for two thousand years, “This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1).

God and His World

God and His World

Edwin Fesche

Mr. Edwin Fesche resides in Westminster. Maryland. He has been in the Lord’s work for over 50 years and is a valued and regular contributor to “Food for the Flock” magazine (see his column, “The Current Scene”).

We consider that God in dealing with His world does so on three levels. To each God has imposed His principles, or laws, suitable to the nature wherein they operate. They are Creation, Conscience and a Divine Revelation. These three spheres have a voice to all that are attentive and wise. In fact, the lessons learned far exceed the sophistries so current in present society. “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation” (Psa. 119:99).

The Bible definitely states that God created the heavens and the earth. We discover ourselves to be dwellers on this terrestrial globe and are invited to “lift up our eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things?” (Isa. 40:26). As one appreciative observer has said, “The stars forever singing as they shine: the hand that made us is divine.” The precise movements of the heavens and the fixity of the laws of the earth teach us that the Creator is the architect of order. Think of gravity, the seasons, and the work ethic for survival. Woe to the farmer that plants his corn in the fall instead of the spring. Worse yet is to deny a Creator. Since the days, particularly of Darwin, creationism has come under attack. Of such God has said, “The fool hath said

in his heart, there is no God" (Psa. 14:1). To others God is defined as a creative process within nature, or "the ongoing of things" — pantheism. Certainly He is not viewed as a personal God to whom man will give account. Because of this trend, our schools and colleges take a favorable view of evolution. In Scripture our world is seen as a forecaster of heavenly things. Our Lord often appealed to nature to point to higher truths. The parable of the sower revealed how the kingdom of heaven was to be propagated. As a cure for anxiety, He advised his listeners to "consider the lilies" or God's care of the sparrows. Saint Paul showed a wholesome respect for the laws of nature when he advised the centurion and the ship's captain to remain harbour-bound until the tempest season was over. The refusal imperiled the whole ship's company on the journey to Rome. When imprisoned in Rome, the apostle asked Timothy to bring him his cloak as winter was coming on. On another occasion Paul rebuked the men of Lystra for worshipping Barnabas as Jupiter and himself as Mercurius. The witness of God sending in rain and fruitful seasons should at least show to them the folly of their poltheism and superstitution. So then creation leads us on to a higher plane.

Conscience

God has written His moral law in the heart of every man that comes into the world. Furthermore, for those who are within reach of a Bible there are the Ten Commandments. The great missionary to Africa, Dan Crawford, said "the heathen sin against light." So, just as there are laws in the material world and men soon learn to adjust to them; equally so, there are moral laws.

Obedience and compliance to these brings its reward: on the other hand, there is punishment to the disobedient. The laws of morality are not as demonstrative as those of nature. So often we see sinful men seemingly getting away with it. In this connection this verse naturally comes to mind, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before in judgment: and some men they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24). A holy God must execute justice according to His impeccable nature. As another has said, “The man or the nation of men who thinks it possible to cheat a moral God in a moral universe is a moral imbecile.” The most overt area that portrays a society’s moral calibre is its respect, or otherwise, of the relationship between male and female. The modern mentality encouraged by permissiveness and contraceptive devices has thought to bypass shame and punishment. As a result, social diseases now terrorize or torment offenders. The “do your own thing” society is not the way to the happiness that it seeks.

The January ‘83 Reader’s Digest, while fully neglecting any thought that the present scourge (20 million Americans) is a divine visitation, nevertheless, recognizes that punishment can be a necessary deterrent. This secular writer observes, “The herpes counter-revolution may be ushering a grudging chastity back into fashion.” The writer also adds, “This highly contageous disease has irrevocably altered the lives of millions and might help bring to a close an era of mindless promiscuity.” The excessive reliance upon alcohol, drugs, tobacco and gambling each have their retributive backlash.

All of this reminds us of God’s revelation to Abraham when he promised Canaan to Abraham’s descendants

after the “iniquity of the Ammonites” (the then inhabitants) had come to the full. Modern archeology has confirmed the moral degradation of the Canaanites that were to be put to the sword by the invading Israelites. Also the antediluvians had become a moral cancer and the only remedy was their destruction in Noah’s flood. Those lessons from divine history, so ignored or refused by present liberalism, have been defined as “God’s moral surgery.” The secret of Joseph’s chastity (Gen. 39:9) was found in his own words, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Where there is no fear that God is a consuming fire, an attitude so prevalent today, He has called other monitors to the front. Compliance with the dictates of conscience pays priceless dividends. The rich young ruler, although he balked at wholly following Christ, possessed an admirable character, insomuch that Jesus loved him. He was a noble product of the culture of his day. Peter, having learned of the piety of Cornelius, said to him, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34-35). Still he needed to hear “words” whereby he could be saved, but he was actually a likely candidate. A scribe in our Lord’s day, although not saved, won our Lord’s approbation, for it is written, “When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:34). So there is such a quality as plumb, plain decency and morality. Where such does not cater to self-righteousness there has been a development that conditions one to be amenable to the gospel invitation.

Divine Revelation

There have been those in the past that have observed how closely the laws of creation and morality are related to the spiritual realm. Bishop Butler's analogy 250 years ago showed how the physical foreshadowed the spiritual. He argued that man is more than his body but also a spirit and, therefore, eternal. Butler saw that a man could lose all his limbs, but his spirit or mind need not be diminished. Losing all physically by death still leaves the spirit intact. The latter is just what the Bible teaches. The Bishopsaw the vanishing lines of the physical projecting into the unseen. A hundred years ago Professor Drummond wrote a sensational book entitled, Natural Law in the Spiritual World. The substance of his book is seen in one of his sentences, "The true greatness of Law lies in its vision of the Unseen." If the only way a man can enter the world is by birth, so a spiritual birth is essential to enter "the kingdom of God." F. W. Grant, while appreciating Drummond's work, reversed the title of his book, Spiritual Law in the Natural World. Drummond looked from the bottom up to the Source: Grant saw God imposing His laws on everything created. Butler and Drummond would have nature interpret Scripture; Grant's reversing, then, is the better approach. Both of these later writers reveal an immense knowledge of the sciences up to their day. Modern discoveries in no way negate their reasoning but rather further add to the views already advanced.

The voice of everything around, whether they be animate or inanimate, witnesses to their Creator. Paul confirms this, "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and

Godhead; so that they (mankind) are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

When the Apostle Paul defined a man as "spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:15), he was distinguishing him from the "natural man." The natural man is a man of the world nevertheless. He might rise to the top of one of the professions, or by laziness or immoderate living wind up as a bum. Much depends on how they have responded to "the work of law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). On the other hand, the spiritual man (a born again, normal Christian) is he that has obeyed the laws of the divine revelation. The grand words "whosoever will" have been heeded and one is immediately introduced into the realm of the spirit. He has inherited a new nature that elevates him for higher things than mere morality. Again, we notice that the laws of the Spirit are an enlargement of the natural laws. For instance, natural birth and born of the Spirit. There is no natural life without seed, so Saint Peter writes, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Then also spiritual growth is developed by cultivation; either by self-discipline — "abiding by the vine" — or by the ministrations of the local church: "I (Paul) have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). We reap what we have sown, which can be either to the flesh or to the spirit. Paul speaks of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). These laws reveal a single Creator and show how essential it is for man to conform to these principles for a normal existence here and God's approbation in the hereafter.

Job's Lesson

Most of the books contained in the Bible can be summarized as containing a major theme. The burden of the book of Job is plainly God and His involvement in human suffering. The answer will for the present time satisfy the man of faith, but still leaves some questions that will always be present this side of eternity. There is a righteous and omnipotent God to be trusted who does not always give an account of His ways. The problem is further compounded because Job was a righteous man. In fact, it is that which made him Satan's target. The historical and moral application from Job's experiences are later acknowledged in the New Testament (James 5:11).

Job is introduced as a man in possession of boundless wealth. His character is described as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God." In fact, God is proud of him, saying to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job that there is none like him in all the earth?" Actually Satan had already spotted Job and accused God for putting a hedge about him making him unfair prey for Satan's temptation. Thus God was compelled to place His champion Job on a level ground with Satan to match the ensuing conflict. Satan was soundly defeated by Job's fidelity.

Some obvious conclusions can be gathered from Satan's supreme attempt to conquer Job and get him to curse God. We see Satan commanding the elements to perform his foul purpose, especially in the deaths of all his children. He has the power over death. Not so with Job. Along with all the faithful he was immortal until his

work was done. Again we notice that the devil goes after big game. His design was to bring about the fall of the standard bearers. In our day there have been some lamentable cases that have darkened the testimony of some assemblies. Job's body is covered with putrefying sores that are oozing puss. His wife filled with disgust becomes Satan's mouthpiece, saying "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). With all of Satan's malignity hurled against Job, his reply is superb. "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10)

In all of this did not Job sin with his lips! There is no mention that Job was aware of what was going on in Heaven! We will only attempt to summarize the great discourses that follow. Job opens with a lament that he did not die at birth. He sees no occasion for the calamities that have suddenly fallen upon him. Not so his three friends that have come on the scene seemingly to debate and give their reasons for Job's predicament. Although much varies in detail each concludes that somewhere along the line Job is being punished for sin. Elihu, while excusing his youth, reasons Job's problem with more understanding than the three. His concept of God was superior. Elihu accused Job of being self-righteous and his afflictions could be God's method of teaching Job some lessons he needed to learn. To the three companions their God was exclusively righteous and Job's sufferings could only be accounted for that Job was harboring maybe a secret sin. Otherwise God was not wise to allow such undeserved suffering. The dialogues of all four reveal remarkable insight into the human existence and interspersed with much that could be classified as truth and not random remarks pertinent

to Job's predicament. This was especially so with the speeches of Job. In one place he questions what happens beyond the grave (14:10-14). Then he bursts into exaltation, saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (19:25) and intimates His resurrection. Here we have an example of the light man can reach without a written revelation (the Bible), insomuch that Paul can conclude that the heathen world is "without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

Turning now to the protagonist of this paper, Job, it is natural to expect a solution to his major problem, namely pain, especially when the righteous are singled out. Another example is Paul with his "thorn in the flesh." (2 Cor. 12:7) In Job's case God addresses him out of the whirlwind. No detailed explanations for the calamities that had befallen Job. God assumes the role of the Potter and Job but clay in His hands. Job's attention is drawn to God's creative powers. Such omnipresence can be trusted whatever betide. God vindicates Job before his three friends and denounces accusations against Job as not right; he was not a hypocrite. Yet Job's sufferings were far from being in vain. He learned one paramount lesson – his own depravity as expressed in his own words, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (42:6) This confession is from the one God acknowledges as "none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man" (1:8). Not only did Job learn his depravity, but in contrast he saw an infinite God, and that was enough!

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John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby

Edwin Fesche

A Biographical Sketch

On Thanksgiving Day, 1928, the late Harold St. John addressed the Chicago Brethren's Conference. While evaluating J. N. Darby's New Translation of the Bible, he added this to his remarks, "J. N. Darby was perhaps the greatest constructrive theologian who has arisen since the Apostle Paul." This speaks a volume for a servant of Christ. However, Mr. Howley, late editor of the "Witness" informed me that St. John, when late in life, modified his opinion of Darby. Another notable described Darby: "He was one of the most unworldly men who ever lived." Few who have acquainted themselves with his biography and read some of the weighty products of his untiring pen have failed to appreciate outstanding greatness in piety and scholarship. Certainly it was he who synthesized the spiritual emphasis that characterized assemblies in general. A chosen vessel indeed; one of Christ's special gifts to the Church. Hy. Pickering called him, "the Tertullian of these last days."

John Nelson Darby was born in London in 1800 but raised in Ireland. He was often referred to as the "Irish Clergyman." This was fitting for he was ordained an Anglican priest and was appointed to a poor Wicklow parish. The middle name "Nelson" was in respect of Lord Nelson the famed British Admiral. His uncle was in command of the "Bellerophon" at Nelson's first major victory over the French fleet that had landed Napoleon

in Egypt. Indeed Darby belonged to the upper echelons of the society of his day. He himself had graduated with the highest honours of Dublin University and was destined for a career in law. A sensitive conscience prevented him from entering its practice, much to the chagrin of his amibitious father. Instead, Darby settled for a poor church among the Irish peasants.

The interference of the state in the affairs of the Anglican Church, coupled with the ever present agitation of Irish politics and his sensitive conscience, now enlightened by Scripture, led him to write a pamphlet of protest. Here we see the early formation of his separatist convictions already formed sufficiently in the direction of his subsequent spiritual pilgrimage.

The so-called “Plymouth Brethren” had their earliest origins in Catholic Dublin in 1828. Darby here crossed his spiritual Rubicon when he “broke bread” with four or so brethren who were all developing similar views concerning the established church, either Anglican or dissenters. All of them had been well schooled in the universities.

Next we find Darby moving with ease among the clergy and ordinands of Oxford. Here the atmosphere was charged with high churchism (introducing all of the rites of the Catholic Church apart from acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope.) At the same time there was a strong evangelical witness going on at the university. On some of this group Darby’s views bore fruit. A contemporary wrote, “His insight into character, and tenderness pervading his austerity, so opened men’s hearts, that day after day there was no end of secret closetings with him. I began to see the prospect of so

considerable a movement of mind as might lead many in the same direction as myself."

Darby, spiritually speaking, possessed the nose of a hunting dog for heresy. It appeared to be almost an obsession with him. To say the least, he was a formidable apologist. He was the protagonist in the "Brethren's" first and most destructive division. Some of us feel with hindsight that he overreacted. The result was the formation of exclusive assemblies and congregational assemblies (each assembly a sovereign unit). Certainly those who have followed his leadership into exclusivism have inherited problems that are inherent with those principles.

Darby was a born leader. His personality, ministry and the obvious mastery he exerted over himself had an impact upon his hearers. Being an accomplished linguist he was instrumental in planting assemblies in France, Switzerland and Germany. Lewis Sperry Chafer credits Darby with recovering the principles of the primitive New Testament church just as Luther had reached back to the beginning for the doctrine of Justification. William Kelly credits Darby as the first to teach the "secret rapture." Certainly what had been disorganized in the way of dispensationalism, he synthesized. The writings of Darby covered all of the salient doctrines of Christianity. His astute criticism of the Roman mass is biting and convincing to any open mind. We could hardly call him a moderate when he expressed his views on the sovereignty of God. Certainly his sympathies were far from the different schools of Arminianism. He expounded every book of the Bible, as well as translating the Bible into French, German and English. These works are still being reprinted, which speaks for

itself. Some of his expositions are delightfully simple but for the most part extremely condensed and require considerable self-discipline to read.

Darby was a shining example of what our Lord must have meant when He said, “and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Matt. 19:22).

This spiritual giant, “unknown, and yet well known,” passed on to his reward in 1882 in Bournemouth, England. Some years ago we went to the cemetery where Darby’s body awaits the first resurrection and inquired for his grave. We were immediately directed without consultation to any records. Remarking to the attendant about this he replied, “We have more visitors to this grave than any other in the whole cemetery.”

Studies in Colossians --Part 1

Studies in Colossians

Part 1

E. Fesche

These studies form the first articles by our brother Fesche to appear in Food for the Flock. They are the result of his own personal research; moreover, they have provided the basis of some of his ministry to the people of God. We appreciate this concise exposition of a very important Epistle.—Ed,

Introduction:

This Epistle was written along with the letters to the Ephesians and Philippians; also Philemon. They were dispatched during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, during which time he enjoyed considerable liberty although still a prisoner (Acts 28:30). There are several resemblances between Ephesians and Colossians; yet, on closer examination, there is no mere repetition. Each Epistle has its dominant theme. In Ephesians the emphasis is on the Church, while Colossians deals principally with the Church's Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. When reading the Song of Solomon, it is often hard to decide whether the groom or bride is being described. In this there may be a purpose as the bride becomes the necessary part of the groom — "bone of his bone." When this viewpoint is taken, both are alike. So in Ephesians the Church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In Colossians, the Head, Christ is "the fulness of the Godhead."

There is reason to believe that Paul had not been in Colosse; he speaks of the Church as having not seen his face (Colossians 2:1). The Church was the outcome of the labours of Epaphras (1:7) who was now a prisoner with the Apostle (Philemon 23). It is not hard to conjecture that Epaphras had recounted to Paul a faithful history of the work in Colosse (1:4; 8). During the course of the narrative, Epaphras must have revealed certain tendencies at work which were dimming the otherwise brilliant faith and love of the Colossian Christians. To expose these errors and present the glorious remedy was the immediate occasion of the Epistle. It has been said that “The bird that cannot be shot can be snared.” If we are not the kind that Satan can entice into the sins of the flesh, he will seek to snare us with his subtleties. In Corinth we see Satan using “the gun”, here in Colosse it is “the snare.” Leprosy can manifest itself either in the head or the body (Leviticus 13:42). Immorality or doctrinal error can alike cripple our communion and usefulness; worse still, damage the Lord’s work. The doctrinal errors that threatened the Colossians were “philosophy” or rationalism (2:8), legality (2:14-17), and indirect approach to God through angels (2:18), and ritualism (2:20-23). Because these are ever-present perils, the Church needs to be constantly on its guard against them. In Christendom, there are great segments of the professing Church that are completely leavened by one or more of the dangers that threatened the Colossian Church. These errors assume different garbs to suit the age, but in essence, they are still the same.

I. Paul Greets The Colossians - 1:1-8

The Epistle opens with an appropriate apostolic salutation which continues to verse 8. The Apostle is alert to recognize all that is praiseworthy about these believers. Their faith was in “the word of the truth of the gospel” (v.6). As Tertullian said, “Truth is proved by what it produces.” The Lord said, “Men do not gather figs of thistles.” A gospel that makes men truthful and holy must be truth. How important it is to explain our gospel by our lives! We are also told that this gospel had gone into “all the world” (v.16). In a matter of thirty years, it had spread through the ancient world, just as it has gone generally to the ends of the earth today. A Chinese once asked an American why he had the effrontery to bring his religion to China. The apt reply was, “The right to give to others something that is too good to keep.”

II. The Apostolic Prayer - 1:19-14

Here is a splendid example of prayer for other believers. It was short, to the point, and intensely spiritual. The Apostle desired that they might “be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.” In other words, that they might have an understanding of God’s purpose in this age of amazing grace and the formation of the Church. Then with spiritual appraisal of themselves, work out their lives within the framework of God’s world-wide plan. In this way, they would be walking “worthy of the Lord,” be pleasing to God, and fruitful. At the same time, such a path would be educational in “the knowledge of God.”

The manifold experiences and oft discouragements that are common to a perseverance in assembly life are the

necessary textbooks to a wisdom that excells all schools. For such a path, one must be “strengthened with all might” (vs. 11). In connection with this prayer, Paul has not overlooked the fact that “it is a good thing to give thanks.” Yes, he gives thanks for those things that many in their ignorance of God’s free gift never cease to ask of God in this life. Notice the present possessions of believers.

In verses 12-14 which reach us through faith, not asking. We have already been made fit for our future inheritance; we are delivered from Satan’s power and have a redemption which spells out the forgiveness of all our sins. Only as we are personally assured of these blessings will there be the kind of praise and thanks that becomes our God.

III. The Twofold Headship Of Christ - 1:15-19

In verses 15-17, we see our Lord’s relationship to creation. “He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Furthermore, all things were created by Him and for Him. All emanated from Him and are to eventually accomplish His express purposes. This blessed One has been seen in His creation. To faith He is observed as the “image of the invisible God.” What God essentially is, His character, has been told out “in the body of His flesh” (vs. 22). God, in the Person of His Son, came into His own creation in perfect Manhood (Hebrews 10:5), and as such He was “the Firstborn.” This is a title of dignity, see Deuteronomy 21:16; Psalm 89:27. Christ is greater than creation, not part of it, as Arius taught, and now revived by Jehovah’s Witnesses and Unitarians. As Athanasius reasoned against Arius, “If Christ was a created being, what is to stop more

Christs from being created?" "No," says Paul, "Christ is all."

In creation, He is alone "the corn of wheat …abideth alone" (John 12:24), as sinless, doing the works of the Father, The Light of the world! The Head and Centre of creation! Again, "He is the Head of the body, the Church." As such, there has been another Genesis, so to speak. "The Beginning" of a new creation comprised of those who are indeed to be raised from the dead. Among such Christ is seen to be "the Firstborn." He is now the seed wheat "that bringeth forth much fruit," a spiritual creation headed up in Him, that last Adam. No more probation, never another fall!

"The body" refers to the Church. It is one of the several figures used of the Church suggesting it as the vehicle and servant of the Head; the present channel of expression of the Head in heaven. Hence, we read of "holding The Head" — receiving His mind and sustenance through the local ministers. "All fulness" dwells in Him; which in turn reaches down to the body (Ephesians 1:23). In both creations, Jesus Christ enjoys the preeminence. The Church is seen as "the bride" in Ephesians 5:23. As such, the Church is the necessary completion of the Head and the object of affection.

* * *

The day when Jesus stood alone, And felt the hearts of men like stone, And knew He came but to atone; That day, "He held His peace."

* * *

The shuttles of His purpose move

To carry out His own design;

Seek not too soon to disapprove
His work, nor yet assign
Dark motives, when, with fear and dread
You view some sombre fold;
For lo, within each darker thread
There twines a thread of gold.

Studies in Colossians --Part 2

Studies in Colossians

Part Two

E. Fesche

NOTE: The first article in this series appeared in the September issue.

IV. The Reconciliation - 1:20-23

It is revealed that Christ is “to reconcile all things unto Himself.’“ From Philippians 2:10, we learn that there are three spheres to creation: “things” in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. Here it is a question of homage, and so, “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Included in this are “things under the earth,” a reference to the infernal realm. In Colossians where reconciliation is the theme, hell is not included. That will be God’s eternal “Bunker Hill Monument” of His righteous indignation against sin.

The work of reconciliation has already commenced. There are those who have embraced the gospel in truth. Of such we read — “Now hath He reconciled.” Through His death, believers are immediately made “holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight.” The rest of creation will not be brought back unto harmony with God until the return of our Lord to establish His Kingdom (Romans 8:22; Ephesians 1:10).

This is one of the particular hopes of the gospel. A gospel into which by faith they were to be “grounded” — a good foundation — “settled,” established, no settling cracks; “not moved” because of an experimental and

mental grasp of the truth. The “if” in verse 23 expresses Paul’s apprehension of some in Colosse who had not really, after all, exercised saving faith; otherwise, they would be more stable.

V. Paul’s Stewardship

Paul tells us he had been made a minister of the gospel as well as a minister of “the mystery.” By that he means he had been given a special “stewardship” (dispensation). As the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was the repository of new revelations (Ephesians 3; Galatians 1:1; Corinthians 11:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:15). In this way, he was “a minister,” and hardly in the sense we have become accustomed to using the word.

It would appear that Paul’s Church ministry was particularly provocative of suffering. He speaks of suffering “the afflictions of Christ.” No doubt this is a reference to his “great conflict” for them (2:1) and his present imprisonment (4:3). The devil will persecute a gospel witness, but appears to show added vehemence against all that is involved in practising Church truth. For further proof of this, outside of one’s own experience, Broadbent’s “Pilgrim Church” should be read. The witness to the all sufficiency of Christ given by a local church so wilts every added scheme of man that the opposition to it generally arises from churches whose defections are being exposed. However, this ministry was to “fulfill the Word of God.” To complete, finish or round it out. To limit one’s self to labour in the gospel and ignore “the mystery” would be leaving a convert, like Ephraim, “a cake not turned.” To the chagrin of the first century Jew, “the mystery” put the

Gentile on an equal privilege entirely apart from the law and ordinances. Paul teaches and warns that only as every man follows the full implications of “the mystery” will he become a “perfect” man “in Christ Jesus;” that is, fully matured, a spiritual adult. We can look around and see those who have faithfully stuck to the local assembly. Their trials, problems, and upsets have been great, but all this has tremendously added to their spiritual calibre. So we are to strive, and strive on behalf of others for “the full assurance and understanding” of these things. Christ is the reservoir of all the necessary wisdom and strength for this understanding.

VI. Warnings (2:4-23)

Satan knows how to sap away the vitality of the truth of the mystery. The four things here warned against are often found highly esteemed among men, especially religious men. Only the inspired wisdom and spiritual understanding of Paul could detect them as subversive to the truth.

1. The Warning Against Philosophy (vs. 8).

This was being dished up with “enticing words.” Paul refers to it as ‘‘after the rudiments of the world.” It was the working of the human mind in the realm of things that could only be learned through a divine revelation. Before that revelation came to the Gentiles, it was fitting that they should make an attempt to unravel the mysteries of our existence, origin, and destiny, “if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him” (Acts 14:16; 17:16). The ancient philosophers tried and failed. Now all the treasures of wisdom are to be found in Christ. It was like putting a candle against the sundial to get a

useless shadow. The sun was shining! Before Christ, philosophy was a necessary phase in Gentile development (elementary or rudimentary). Now that experiment is all over, and men are to listen to the truth of the gospel. To engage in philosophy as a source of truth was to virtually say Christ, too, was limited and still the last word had not been said. Therefore, Paul describes it as “vain deceit.” Modernism is the present-day version of this error. It is still the human mind and not Christ that is made paramount. Paul says it will “beguile” (delude R.S.V.) and “spoil” (“make a prey of,” R.S.V.) you from being “rooted and built up” in Christ. How many have been exposed to the rationalism, or the evolution theory, and consequently been “robbed” of their” faith!

2. The Law Blotted Out (2:14-17).

Appreciating the fact that the Law could not save the Gentiles, there was, however, a wide-spread movement in the infant Church by law-minded Jews to make the Law a rule of life after conversion. This, too, struck at the sufficiency of Christ. The Law had been given a fair chance to prove itself. In fact, two experiments with the human race were in operation in the Old Testament. Could a man by searching find out God? Philosophy, as we have seen, was the noblest attempt. The second trial was — could man obey God’s will after it had been revealed to him? This was the Jews’ responsibility. Both Gentile and Jew failed alike in their respective tests. Hence, in every way, the Old Testament was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Now that these two principles have been eclipsed by Christ, they are not to be reintroduced into the Christian economy. Believers

are complete in Christ! (2:10). Hence, Christianity is not a showy religion taken up with “meats” and “holy days.” It is significant that when true spirituality wanes, externals again come into prominence. We are not disciplined by a church calendar, but by a living union with the Church’s Head. The Jewish rituals were but “shadows” of Christ; now, He has come and given substance to “the shadows.”

Studies in Colossians --Part 3

Studies in Colossians

Part Three

E. Fesche

This is a continuation of the article which appeared in the October issue of Food for the Flock. The first of these studies, by Bro. Fesche, was printed In the September issue.

The continuation of these studies demands that we finish an examination of the section with which the author was dealing at the close of the last insertion.

3. The worship of an invented spirit (V. 18):

This verse is easier read in the Revised Standard Version. We do know that Gnosticism was at work in Colosse. This sect, willing enough to embrace Christianity as contributing so much toward Gnosticism's supposed superior knowledge and sanctity, did not accept Christ as Pre-eminent. They interceded through intermediary angels. This was more self-abasing than going immediately into the presence of God through Christ. There is also the suggestion of invoking the spirit world by intruding "into those things which he hath not seen." It was a denial that "Christ was All" in regards to knowledge. The practice of seeking the aid of canonized saints for particular needs, in principle, is condemned in this verse: also, attempts to consult spirit mediums. In Christ, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4. Asceticism warned against (Vv. 20-23):

Here again we have that which is extra-Biblical — Christ plus something else, a human attempt to check “the indulgence of the flesh” by submitting to self-imposed rigours. It would seem that Paul is looking into the future when the monastic life would assume such a craze. Regimented denials and disciplines cannot get at the root of sin. “The circumcision of Christ” (V. 11) is the answer to what God has done for “sin in the flesh.” A realization by faith of our indentification with Christ buried and risen will make saintly Christians anywhere.

Some observations: These errors threatening the Colossian church are seen in their innocent buds. Only revelation could show how they stab at the very vitals of true Christianity. We, who can look back on 2,000 years of Church history, see whole segments of Christendom completely “leavened” by these plausible additions to Christ. They soon become the centre and Christ merely appended to them. Look how Christendom has reincorporated the Law in one way or another into its system. Do what you can with the Ten Commandments and then look to Christ to make up any shortcomings! With so much depending on human effort, assurance is looked upon as a dangerous doctrine. Other persuasions see only slight modifications between the Temple of the Old Testament and a Church filled with ritual in this dispensation. The inspiration to worship is gathered from the architecture, incense, and colourful priesthood. Such shadows do not reach the conscience. They are not after Christ. Religion instead of Christ has been developed, something in which an unconverted man can participate and enjoy. A far cry from what Paul means when he says, “For we are the circumcision which

worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). All true revivals have essentially been returns to Christian simplicity. Also, every reformation in its first generation of existence displayed its finest vigour. Generally, the places of meeting and the preacher's externals were inconsequential. All were "holding the Head," and the "joints and bands" were Christ ordained gifts ministering nourishment to the body.

"Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,

The gift unpriced — God's living bread,

With staff in hand and feet well shod,

Nothing but Christ — the Christ of God."

VII. The Secret of Christian Fruitfulness (3:1-6).

The first two chapters have been principally engaged in doctrine, and in pointing out those errors which will hamper the growth of a healthy Christianity. In the portion now before us, we see what good doctrine produces, or should produce. Truth stirs to activity. Divine knowledge leaves no man stationary. Objective truth leads to subjective living. True Christianity filters down to the most ordinary things of life. It does not take us away from them as does monasticism. "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called" (1 Cor. 7:20), says the Inspired Word.

"If ye then be risen with Christ." The "if" here is not a suggestion of doubt; perhaps the use of the word "since" would better convey the meaning. Every believer is risen with Christ. Consequently, we are to "seek" the things

above. The opposite to this would be engaging in the philosophical and religious energies of the natural man. Only the “born again” man can be truly occupied with Christ risen. The “affection” (“mind” R.S.V.) is to be developed for “things above.” When professed believers “mind” earthly things, Paul is led to weeping. Such are the enemies of the cross “whose end is destruction” (Phil. 3:17-10). The Christian’s life is Christ: it is hid with Him. In underwater operations there are the conventional divers. The diver is enabled to live in an element unnatural to him because of his contact with the surface. The Christian lives because he is in vital touch with Christ in Heaven. Redeemed by His death, which took place on earth, the Christian is now sustained, kept, saved by Christ’s risen life (Rom. 5:10). Christians are exhibiting “the divine nature” down here in this adverse element — the world. The secret and explanation of all this is the hidden Christ Who now “sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Soon that which is only known to faith will be displayed to the world. Christ will appear with His own glory. Since here we learn that we are to return “with” Him, it is natural to conclude He must first come “for” us (1 Thess. 4:16-17). So “the coming” in Colossians is the return to the earth. “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

* * *

Oh, give Thy servant patience to be still,

And bear Thy will;

The faith to venture wholly on the arm

That will not harm;

The wisdom that will never let me stray

Out of Thy way.

The love, that now afflicteth, knoweth best

When I should rest.

* * *

When obstacles and trials seem

Like prison walls to be;

I do the little I can do,

And leave the rest to Thee.

Studies in Colossians --Part 4

Studies in Colossians

Part Four

Edwin Fesche

This is the concluding section of these helpful studies in Colossians. We appreciate the time and effort expendid by our brother in their preparation.

Practical Expressions of the Hidden Life (3:5-4:6)

Mortify your members (3:5-7): We are to "mortify" (consider dead) our members. There is no uncrucified flesh in the Christian (Romans 6), but it takes a lively faith to count it crucified. To the extent that we do this, we shall know the power of His resurrection to deliver from the power of sin. There can be attendant upon life, the most appalling weakness. We must meet the conditions if we spiritually would be strong. The especially unclean sins mentioned here, one would think unnecessary for Christian warning. God knows better! The world "walks" and "lives" in them as did some of the Colossians before their conversion. If one is really saved, he may commit one of these sins, but he could never live in them.

Put off and put on (3:8-17): A series of lesser, or more common sins among Christians is mentioned. If we were not capable and in danger of committing them, we would not be warned so vigorously against them. The Christian still has the "old man" in him. So, he is to "put off" these sins as he would an old garment in exchange

for new apparel. This “new man” or “new nature” (R. S. V.) that we are to “put on” is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator (R. S. V.). The new nature has been created within us; now it must be cultivated by gaining in understanding, and by the constant renewing from its Creator. Eventually, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). This fact for believers eliminates racial, national, and social distinctions; they are “all one in Christ.” Since all believers owe everything to Christ and Christ is in every individual, there can be expressed in a tangible way that “ye are called in one Body.” Along with this fellowship in equality, there still abides until we reach Heaven, social distinctions. While at the same time Christ is in all, it will be observed that wives are to submit, and children are to obey. Masters and slaves are still to maintain the social and economical relations in which the gospel found them. Christianity is not revolutionary; yet, its moral force is felt in every legitimate relationship of life. Hospitals, schools, missions, and the proper status of women have followed in the wake of Christianity. However, we must be careful to note that these are only the by-products of Christianity. The natural outgrowth of being in right relationship with the Head of the Church.

Christians are to be especially considerate in their behaviour toward other members of the Body of Christ. Lowliness, meekness, and forbearance should pervade our persons. Those entertained in the home of the saintly Robert Chapman were never allowed to speak in a derogatory way of other believers. At the first indication of heated discussion, he would say, “Better lose your purse than your temper.” Since we have been forgiven so much, we can afford to forgive our brethren.

In this connection, let us ever keep Matthew 18:21-35, before us. It is the parable of the servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents and in turn refused to forgive a fellowservant of a debt to him of one hundred pence. This forgiven, unforgiving servant was cast by his lord to the tormentors. Then says the Lord Jesus, “So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” We are to forgive one another in the same spirit that Christ has forgiven us. When we love, then every other grace will be in operation. The rendering of verse 14 in the Revised Standard Version is illuminating, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” The peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts. Darby translates the word “rule” by the word “preside.” Young’s Concordance informs us that this is the only place this particular word occurs, and gives as its meaning, “to act as judge or president.” Others have suggested the word “arbitrate.” Christians are to persue the things that make for peace. It is to be a ruling factor in our decisions. Abram sacrificed his rights in the interest of peace when he gave Lot first choice (Gen. 13: 8).

“The word of Christ” is to dwell within us. All that the Scriptures have to say about the Lard is to become part and parcel of us. The word “dwell” means “to be in a house,” and suggests a delightful familiarity with all that relates to Him. What we have learned, we are to communicate to others by teaching and admonishing; all coupled with singing and grace reigning in our hearts. “Whatsoever ye do” is to bear the fragrance of the Name of the Lord Jesus; nor must the ingredient of thanksgiving be left out. The almost parallel passage in

Ephesians 5:18 -20, makes the fulness of the Spirit produce the same results as does the “word of Christ” in this Colossian passage. We cannot have the one without the other.

Home and work (3:18-4:1): Obviously, Christianity is not intended to make hermits, but rather homes that are adorning the gospel with a happy combination of love and order. The great head-on collision of capital and labour in our day is foreign to what is enjoined here. The unhealthy antagonisms that have been aroused have created suspicions that make cordial relations most difficult. However, both master and servant are to have their eyes upon the Lord.

Continue in prayer (4:2-4; 12-13): The Christian should not only pray in his closet but cultivate the habit of “praying without ceasing.” It is as vital to our spiritual life as is our breath to our present existence. The key-word is “watch.” Yes, watchful lest we become negligent in the matter, watchful against the intrusion of foreign thoughts; and patiently watchful awaiting the answer. Epaphras is a splendid example in prayer service. Pray for God’s servants that they may be given open doors and power of utterance. Paul desired this especially in connection with “the mystery.” It is this truth that particularly stirs up antagonism from the unconverted religious world. Paul accounted it responsible for his bonds. The Christian life is like living in a goldfish bowl. The world is eyeing us from every direction and is double-quick to note our failings. Our speech is to be gracious and salty. Says Solomon, “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd” (Ecc. 12:11). Furthermore, we should be able to give an

intelligent answer to all who inquire as to the grounds of our hope (1 Pet. 3:15).

Love One Another (4:7-18)

Reading over these few verses, we readily gather the mutual interest believers had in each other. A readiness to help supply known needs is evident. There is no parade of ecclesiastical dignity. A common fellowship seems to abound. The terms, “my fellowprisoner,” and “who is one of you,” suggest this. The ignoble past of the slave Onesimus carries no stigma; he is a faithful and beloved brother. Grace can take from the dunghill and seat its objects among princes (1 Sam. 2:8). Marcus (John Mark) is now back in the confidence of the Apostle (Acts 15:37). A rash act of Mark on the first missionary journey was probably occasioned by a preference for ease, to the hardships of the missionary. Anyway, the repercussions were a falling out between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:39) and Paul’s justified want of confidence in Mark. “None of us liveth to himself” (Rom. 14:7). Time and subsequent behaviour have now fully healed the breach. Paul’s reference to Barnabas in 1 Cor. 9:6 indicates that they are restored to each other’s fellowship. Regarding Mark, Paul later says, “He is profitable” (2 Tim. 4:11). Those in the wrong should so amend their ways that such become as obvious as was their error. The wronged should be eager to exercise forgiveness or reconciliation. Nothing but commendation is given of Luke and his profession as a physician. Faithhealers and those Who refuse aid from medicine when necessary take note. Demas is mentioned only by name. Perhaps his love was already in the process of a division which was soon to

completely yield to the enchantments of the world (2 Tim. 4:10). The saints could meet in church capacity in a house as well as anywhere else. The Epistles were to be passed on (V. 16). Archippus had received a ministry from the Lord; he was perhaps showing signs of fatigue or discouragement. Let him take heed to fulfil his God-given task. Paul gives his personal salutation to the brethren, and adds an exquisite human touch, "Remember my bonds." "He was a man subject to like passions with us," but he prayed, suffered, and served. His cry still reaches us across the centuries, "Be ye followers of me."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Creationism

It is now 57 years since the much publicized “monkey trial” took place. Since then the teaching of Darwin’s evolution has snowballed in our public schools and colleges. The Genesis account of creation has, for the most part, been discredited. In some 25 states the law required a “balanced treatment” of the two positions. On January 5 Judge Overton struck down the law requiring creationism as an alternative to evolution to be taught in the State of Arkansas. Now the American Civil Liberties Union, the plaintiff, is about to test the law in Louisiana. The Fundamentalists, headed by San Diego’s “Creation Science Research Centre,” are strenuously championing creationism. God always raises up those who are equally able to contend for the truth (Jude 3). The controversy, as all verbal and written conflicts, has one good effect, it has stimulated new investigation. Truth has nothing to fear and welcomes the keenest investigation. Stanley Weinberg, a member of the Iowa Academy of Science, regards creationism as “too outlandish to be worthy of scientific debate.” His mind appears to be closed to the great array of evidence for creation. The British Scientist, Sir J. W. Dawson, who lived when the discussion was lively, for he was a contemporary of the Huxleys, stated: “I know nothing of the origin of man, except what I am told in the scriptures — that God

created him. I do not know anything more than that, and I do not know of anyone who does."

The popularity and general acceptance of evolution as the answer to the mystery of existence is amusing. In magazines such as the National Geographic it is treated as a proven fact. At best it is only a reasoned guess. Anything that can discredit the Bible looks good to those who consider it liberation to get out from under its disciplines. It is the modern Adam hiding himself from a seeking, loving God. Actually, evolution does not account for origins; it just puts the beginning millions of years back but has no explanation where the primordial slime came from. "Nothing comes from nothing"; so there must be One who is responsible and above everything. Those who deny this, the Bible says, are fools. Admit what reason and the Bible reveal—a personal omnipotent God. We all accept that existence is a mystery, but also a fact. Faced with this reality the vast majority of mankind accepts some form of the supernatural. Those who are content with the explanations of the wonders of nature as just accidents profess a credulity that invokes more problems than simple faith: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). We justify our faith in the reasoned words of another, "Some have supposed that that which is too wonderful for the mind to grasp, came into being without a mind and thought. That that which is unique and cannot be copied with the human hand came into being without a hand. This illogical reasoning is called 'Science.' 'Come now,' says the God who has revealed

Himself in creation and the Bible ‘and let us reason together’ (Isa. 1:18).”

The Test Of Time

Thirty years ago Communism was to some the inevitable goal of the future. It caught fire, if not in name, certainly in principle among intellectuals and ministers. Just 25 years ago Khrushchev was so confident that he said to the West, “We (Communism) will bury you.” The simplistic formula of Marxism has fascinated the “have nots” wherever they are to be found, especially in the so-called “Third World.” Here is the slogan, “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.” From Plato on it has been tried on a small scale —monasteries and the Jamestown colonists, but found unworkable. Today, maybe a third of the world’s population is under the heel of dictatorial Communism. This has been accomplished often by sending military hardware to left-leaning adventurers always to be found, who, in turn exploit the ever present pockets of poverty and malcontents. They can break the eggs (disrupt the status quo) but not make the omelet (bring in the promised workers’ paradise). What the Soviet system lacks in economics it makes up with brute force.

The glaring proof of all this is Poland. This ample country has concluded, after a fair trial, that Communism has not met, is not meeting, nor ever will meet the natural aspirations of an energetic people. True, the West is not without its severe problems; inflation, unemployment and urban decay, but as a system it enjoys far less reliance on rumbling tanks and Berlin walls. Communism is the religion of atheism. One’s view of God (or no God at all) will largely

determine his concept of man. To the atheist man is an accident, at best a human animal. The individual is expendable if he does not fit into the common mold. The Biblical creationist believes that man has been created in God's image and respects man's natural needs, and even more the yearnings of his soul and spirit. This has been a by-product of Christian influence.

In May '81 and two months before "Solidarity" in Poland, the President said in a speech at Notre Dame, "The West won't contain Communism; it will transcend Communism. It won't bother to denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written." If left in a fair economic race there would be no doubt as to the winner. Ironically, the appeal of Communism has been its formula to cure the world's economic ills. Instead of being its forte it threatens to become its Achilles' heel.

The scholar-author Ben Wattenbery makes this observation, "Poland is one of those great events that happen once in a generation to unmask the truth." Unfortunately, truth does not travel with the speed of lies and is often not palatable even when it does become obvious. Man is even more antagonistic to the truths of Scripture. Yet how gullible has the populace so often been to political and religious quackery.

Russia, from all accounts, has one superiority over the rest of the world. That is her terrifying buildup of military might. Outdone by Western economic achievements, Russia might be tempted to act as a cornered beast. That is, to use her armored might in some power play more daring than her invasion of Afghanistan.

In the setting of the stage leading up to “the great tribulation” and Armageddon is the resurrection of the Roman Empire as an undisputed world ruler (Rev. 13:4). At present an air of pacifism dominates the area, as witness the thousands of protestors in Bonn, Amsterdam and London. This is the weak link in our interpretation of prophecy. We have Israel back in her land (Jeremiah 30:3); Russia, “king of the north” (Dan. 11:40; Ezek. 38), militarily capable of invading Palestine and much in line with her national ambitions. Then there are stockpiles of atomic weaponry capable of matching apocalyptic prophecies. All this, but not the military potential of a confederation of Mediterranean nations. A move by Russia that could threaten Europe’s supply of oil could make Europe and not America the guardian of the Middle East. Certainly America is not in the prophetic theatre. Maybe she will accept the rebuff of the peace marchers and “Go Home.” Prophecies so long ignored by the church at large are now being studied with new fervor. The trend of world events shows a remarkable correspondence with what the Bible predicted centuries ago.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Religion and Politics

The President and his conservative position on economics has discovered a powerful and sympathetic ally in the fast growing ranks of fundamental Christianity. In spite of its being a risky business to mix politics and religion the President said at a Dallas prayer breakfast, “Religion and politics are necessarily related.” This brought a scathing rejoinder from Walter Mondale. He accused Reagan of embracing zealots on the “extreme fringe” who want to impose their beliefs on the nation. The President later said such could never happen with a Constitution guaranteeing the openness to people’s beliefs. Dr. Charles Stanley of Atlanta accounts for the trend of conservative Christians to throw their weight behind old fashioned morality, because “of the growth of pornography, the disappearance of Biblereadings in the schools and abortion on demand.” In our pluralistic society, when someone sounds the religious theme, there are never lacking persons and groups with their counterarguments.

Up to the present the “Brethren movement” has shied clear of making their congregations fronts for political campaigns. They are well known for this by the governments of the world. This has often stood them in good stead when nations have fallen into the hands of dictators. In turn they have not been harassed and their

property confiscated. Generally, their world property has not been sufficient to raise the cupudity of enemies. The New Testament church is so constituted that it can adjust and survive wherever it may find itself. All the furniture it needs is a cup of wine and a loaf of bread along with a nearby body of water for baptism. Such are pilgrims in the world but not of it. Whether such vote, it is a personal and private exercise.

Bogus Diplomas

All of the safeguards that society imposes upon itself for protection against fraud can be upset by clever counterfeiters. We are referring to the alarming circulation of bogus diplomas and fake passports. Although there are fake lawyers and psychiatrists, it appears that the well-paying medical world is especially infiltrated by falsifiers. Applicants who lie about their credentials probably are very articulate and fortified with prestigious but fake ivy league degrees. They are practicing life and death procedures on hospital patients. Their present distribution and numbers have created an alarm.

This surge in dishonesty has called for a new industry, and that is, credential checking. Here experts investigate the genuineness, or otherwise, of an applicant's qualifications.

If the secular world is plagued with fakes, the religious scene is even worse. Here there is no permissible voice of authority to inform the public what is true or false. This is an area where all are free to proclaim their nostrums. The tragedy is that many are deceived by their pernicious ways. In fact, mankind is more prone to embrace a religious phoney than it is to believe the

truth. The only safeguard is to be sure one is born again by the Holy Spirit. This is described as an imparted "unction" whereby we "know all things" (1 John 2:20). Such are likely to be appreciating the Holy Scriptures, or possess enough discernment to seek the counsel of one who is knowledgeable in the Word of God. Like Nehemiah who was confronted with the palaver of an enemy who was seeking to entrap him, he was able to conclude that, "And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me" (Neh. 6:12). Satan's emissaries often come as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:15), and no wonder since Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light.

Before examining others with competence we should, as Scripture enjoins, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). Then we shall be in the tradition of the elect lady and her children of John's second epistle: "… they that have known the truth: for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever... Whosoever, transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (vv. 2, 3, 9-10). This discernment was found in a godly sister.

"What think ye of Christ?" is the test.

You cannot be right in the rest

Unless you think rightly of Him.

Examination

The Church of God is bidden to “remember them which have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7). The word translated “rule” is better understood as leader, or guide. The local church is not dominated by authoritarianism, but by elders who are an example to the flock. It is not a gift, but something to be desired. The qualification is godliness that has been recognized by the outside world, the home and the church. Those lacking morality and spirituality would not be desirous of being a New Testament guide, elder or overseer. In Christendom it is a different matter. Even “gays” are pressing for ordination in the main line churches. An assembly seeks to maintain New Testament standards especially among the elders. They in turn are to be examples to the flock. The Bible which is the source of the highest demands of righteousness must be equal to its demands. It can be known by its fruits. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit” (Matt. 7:17). The Bible is as good as its claim to be the inerrant Word of God. Man could not write such a book if he wanted to, nor would he write such if he could.

Whence, but from heaven could, men unskilled in arts

In several ages born, in many parts,

Weave such agreeing truths?

Or how or why should all conspire

To cheat us with a lie?

Unasked their pains, unheeded their advice,

Starvation their gain, and martyrdom their price.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Salt Talks

The President of the United States, when on the campaign trail and seeking the office, gave the impression that he knew how to deal with the Russians. No more powder puff diplomacy; let's get tough. Well, at the time of writing, the new Secretary of State, Mr. Cyrus Vance, has just returned from Moscow with negative results. We can hope that the arms control negotiations to be conducted in Geneva in May will resort to reason and flexibility. Otherwise President Carter threatens to engage in a big U.S. arms buildup.

A lesson from history is that whenever a nation stockpiles weapons eventually someone gets trigger happy and the war hounds are loosed. Certainly there is no guarantee of peace. Treaties are conveniences until aggressors are ready to strike. The Bible time and time again describes a war of heretofore unprecedented proportions. Often it is referred to as "the great tribulation." Even our Lord spoke of it in His Olivet discourse. That it was to immediately precede His Second Advent means that nothing in history, so far, answers to this time of sorrow, for our Lord has not yet come. The Third World War could well answer to this prophecy, for we can conceive of nothing left that would allow another buildup to rival it. Already, we are told, there are sufficient atomic weapons to make a cinder out of this world, and that would happen if it were up to

the madness of man. There is One who rules, and overrules, and as the Umpire of the scene He will decree, “Except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:21).

In all of this inhumanity of man against his fellows God will only allow the wrath of man to praise Him, “and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psalm 76:10). In the light of the Scripture wars will continue to threaten and increase with their horrors. The root cause is man’s sinful nature and only Christianity can remedy that. So in the name of common sense our statesmen must keep the nation armed to the teeth. True, the money involved could be put to much better use, but this is the kind of world in which we live. After all, there is Satan, who is “the prince of the power of the air,” and much of his venom is in evidence everywhere. In the light of Scripture we see little prospect for the laudable aims of President Carter — namely, arms limitations.

Capitalism

It can be fairly said that the development of a capitalist society was one of the outcomes of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation. The nations that yielded to Protestantism in turn encouraged personal liberties and were soon in the forefront of material prosperity. England, Holland and Switzerland were perhaps among the notable examples. This mighty thrust that entered into history came to its crest in North America. Nothing equaled it in South America, although the natural resources of either continent were not that different. The possibility to accumulate wealth excited the ambitious to do their utmost and also brought amenities

to the rank and file unknown in previous history. Its weakness has been to boom and burst.

The poor, whose standards have been raised, are the first to suffer. Communism has exploited this weakness and stands ever ready to feed upon it. The bigger the crisis the brighter their chances of success. Witness the throes that Italy and Portugal are passing through. From recent elections France does not appear to be far behind. Communism will only work where some of men's most cherished freedoms are denied. If men prefer these freedoms, then capitalism and democracy, so far, is the only answer. No other system of human government yet devised can afford to give its citizens so much liberty. However, security seems to be uppermost in men's minds today. As a result, capitalism is finding the soil harder to cultivate. This is literally true where Communism prevails; it cannot get the desired results from collectivized farms. Even where freedom reigns it is only a secondary blessing unless it is coupled with freedom from sin. Only the Lord Jesus can handle that problem of problems. He himself said, "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Men laud their liberators such as Washington, Bolivar and Garibaldi, but Christians praise their Saviour. In this connection we appreciate the words from the pen of J.N. Darby:

Free from myself, Lord Jesus.

Free from the ways of men;

Chains of thought which once bound me;

Never shall bind me again.

None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,

Conquered this wayward will.

But for Thy love constraining,

I had been wayward still.

The thing that makes capitalism tick is material wealth and the possibility of constant growth. Like a man riding a bicycle, he must keep going or he falls. Capitalism is ever pulling down to build bigger and better. With sound money it is able to corner the world's markets. Raw materials, the sources of such growth, are either diminishing or more costly to secure. This is particularly true of civilization's life blood — namely, oil. As Robert Heilbroner writes in Between Capitalism and Socialism, "Economists have begun to concern themselves with a heretofore ignored aspect of growth —its encroachment on the carrying capacity of the globe.

A recent report given to the United Nations reveals the tremendous strain on social and technological problems to maintain world growth during the next 25 years. All of this bodes social unrest. The seething masses of humanity, intoxicated by demagogery, could readily take to the streets. With no appreciation of economics, they can only see themselves as being robbed by the rich. Scarcities eventually call for rationing. It is not hard to envision such on a worldwide scale. The poorer nations will be insisting on their share also. A world under the strictest controls is not a strange vision for those who have been interpreting the book of Revelation as largely pertaining to the future. In that last book of the Bible we read of a regimentation on a scale hitherto unknown. "That no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast." As always, this sort of monopoly ferrets out those who are faithful to God and they

become the objects of persecution. In close connection with this economic boycott are religious demands. The despot behind all of this is the Antichrist and we find him decreeing that “as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

When Mr. Heilbroner comes to moralizing on capitalistic growth, he inquires whether we are twice as happy as our parents since we have double what they had, four times as much as our grandparents and incalculably more than our colonial forbears. He says, “Such questions answer themselves. We are not. Something about the notion of growth is fraudulent, something about the riches it purports to bring is illusory.” This secular writer who is so skeptical about material prosperity seems to be equally alarmed when it becomes no longer possible. Of course, what our author appears to have discovered is what the Bible has been saying for centuries and with much less sophistication. The wise Solomon said, “Give me neither poverty nor riches” (Proverbs 30:8). Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes can be found the best solution to human happiness. Nor must we overlook the fact of life stated by our Lord — namely, that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

Perhaps our generation has seen the peak of the so-called “good life.” Never before have so many had so much. Unfortunately, the steady hand to hold the full cup has been wanting. With prosperity comes the increase in divorce, crime, liquor and want of discipline. God is ever saying to this world, “Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with sore destruction” (Micah 2:10)

This world is to prepare us for better things, “Take then the world, but give me Jesus.”

As Christians we might well go along with John Wesley’s advice: “Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Free Enterprise

We live in a world where the free market is undergoing severe tests. Can it survive the pressure brought about by its bleeding heart critics. The Prime Minister of England, Mrs. Thatcher, confesses she cannot be overly sympathetic when she is trying to bring her nation out of the economic doldrums to which an overindulgent socialism must bear some of the blame. President Reagan has vetoed two bills, excellent in themselves which would clean up the polluting wastes and repair deterioring highways. The President's interest was what would be best for the nation in the light of the frightening national debt. The Congress had in mind the states they represent. Now that the President's veto has been overridden, it remains to be seen whether the nation will get its money's worth knowing how notoriously such government enterprises are so often filched. Look for interest rates and inflation to be back with us. Economics are brutal; spending ourselves rich is a myth. The benefits of the two bills will hamper free enterprise as it is further robbed of a sound dollar and investment capital. Isaiah the prophet illustrates what happens when a person, or a nation, lives beyond its means: "For the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower that he can wrap himself in it" (28:20). If he covers his feet his

shoulders get cold; he adjusts to warm his shoulders and his feet suffer.

Good management and capitalism go together. As Churchill remarked, “Democracy was the best of the worst forms of government.” It does tolerate economic, political and religious freedom. In the light of Scripture there is ample justice for private ownership. An ideal situation is described in: “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4).

Attempts to regulate the economy send prices up and services down. Now the minimum wage is being considered to be raised only to increase unemployment among those with limited skills. Elevator operators are no more; milk delivery and auto windshields are no longer cleaned. In our area two large orchards have closed. The excuse is that red tape has made it too costly for the hiring of migrant workers. More mechanical pickers are on the way in agriculture. The local man with 1,200 beehives that he farms out to the orchards is also bewildered. Mexico continues to profit from America’s agriculture problems. Communism and trade barriers have their appeal to those who are displaced. Then the black market flourishes. Remove the profit motive and man in his fallen condition is not likely to do his best. If someone will work harder and better the consumer decides who will eventually win.

Well has Solomon observed, “That which is crooked cannot be numbered” (Eccles. 1:15). A perfect world is nowhere in sight; in fact, the prophetic Word says matters “shall wax worse and worse.” The worldling describes the present as a dog eat dog society. The Christian accepts it as God’s school fitting one for

eternity. He in no wise is exempt from the shocks and scorns our flesh is heir to and discovers that Jesus Christ is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Also he rejoices to know that eventually a king (Christ) shall reign.

Two New Words

At least these watchwords are foreign to us since they hail from Russia. They are “glasnost” (openness) and “perestroika” (restructuring). These have become the buzzwords of Mikhail Gorbachev, something like our slogans, New Deal, Square Deal and so forth. Primarily the catch words are for Russian consumption. The Russian leader is giving attention to the private sector which we are told is riddled with alcoholism, absenteeism and lack of civic spirit. Mortimer Zuckerman asks, “Is it possible that the aim of their government may shift from striving to be the greatest military power and exporter of Communism into one where the principle aim is to improve the quality of life for its citizenry?”

The director of defense studies, John Erickson of Edinburgh University, advises caution that the liberal moves do not mean “perestroika” which means breathing “spaces.” This was Lenin’s policy when it was unwise to push his goals at that moment. The West has a wily foe that will resort to all kinds of strategies but will in no wise change its ultimate goal — a socialized world. Avowedly the Communist insists that the human race can only achieve its desire for peace and plenty by a universal surrender to a single system of economics. All pockets of freedom must be brought into the Communist orbit.

This craze to unify the world has been the dream of the philosophers on the one hand and the Caesars on the other. Nebuchadnezzar was the most successful, as he was able to address “unto all them that dwell in all the earth” (Dan. 4:1). Yet, in all attempts to the present, ultimate success has been wanting. The Antichrist, yet to come, Satanically motivated, will be the final loser and summarily cast alive into the lake of fire at the second coming of Christ, for He alone is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Bible and secular history affirm the following three facts that come from the pen of the late C. F. Hogg:

1. Sin is a disintegrating force, a dividing and scattering power in the shepherd in which it works.

2. Man is engaged in an age-long struggle against sin, striving to defeat this disruptive power.

3. Man’s struggle against sin is carried on in vain.

It is natural to ask what it is all about, living in a no-win world? When we bring God into the quandry we have only enlarged the problem. The non-Christian says, “If your God loves the world, why all this misery and inequality?” If his lot is in the third world, he finds it easier to settle for the gospel that Communism offers. Eventually, and to his chagrin, he will discover Communism to be as helpless as any other “ism” to battle the dilemmas of life. Instead of wringing our hands in the air we are driven to turn to the Bible for the answer. There we learn that this life is introductory to an eternal existence. Then the believer will know he has been in God’s school and will not be sorry as to how much he had grunted and sweated under this weary life.

Yes Hamlet, it is “to be,” for, as Paul says, “to depart, to and be with Christ, is far better.”

Winds of Change

Militarily great changes are in the offing. With Russia taking the initiative there is an offer for a joint reduction of nuclear weapons positioned all over Europe. The start is for each side to completely remove their short range missiles — zero —zero. These arms talks taking place favorably impress the average man of the street; though not their governments. If these trends succeed it would still leave Russia formidably superior in conventional forces. Writes one reporter, “The last six months have shaken America’s NATO partners as no other period in the alliance’s 38 year history has done.” Europe cannot count on America keeping 300,000 troops on the wrong side of the Atlantic forever. This has been a stable editorial in European newsprint for a considerable while. Actually, Free Europe has both a larger population and larger economy than either of the present super powers, but if left to fend for themselves some unpopular economic changes would be felt because “its present wealth and manpower do not translate into equivalent military force.” The British and Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, warned that Europe needed to become self-reliant. In his speech he said, “We do need to be alert to trends in American thinking which might diminish our security —perhaps not today or tomorrow, but possibly in the longer view.”

The colossal buildup of conventional arms on the Soviet side is frightening. For instance, the Soviets are fielding in the zone 19,500 tanks to NATO’s 9,000 in artillery; the disparity is 10,000 to 4,000. The well documented

lead article in “U.S. News” rightly observes, “the net effect is that America’s allies are on guard, unable to take long term comfort from what they are hearing.”

Such a buildup of military prowess presents a big temptation to the adventurer. A comparable deterrent is the only choice for those who would most likely be the victims. If we are reading the prophetic Word aright, it is Europe that is to be the dominant world power during the great tribulation. Headed up under the beast we look for some semblance of the old Roman Empire to be revived. The potential is there and the ominous threat from the East may make sense to the pacific mentality that abounds in Europe. The only real peace to be found in this life is: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Early Warning

The failure that occurred on Three Mile Island, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, when its nuclear power plant released undue amounts of radiation has sounded a general warning. We are paying a high price in risk for our electricity. The affair, we gather, was very near being a catastrophy, so an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Now all atomic power plants in the United States are undergoing a severe inspection. All of this can be a blessing in disguise. As a result of future precautions real tragedies could be averted. Nor must we overlook the warnings that come to all of us at times reminding us of the brevity of life, and the heaven to win and the hell to shun. God speaks through circumstances, as well as sermons, to flee from the wrath to come. The Lord Jesus stands ready to save to the uttermost all those who come to God by Him and His finished atonement.

Another early warning that’s shaping up is the gasoline shortage. This has given credence with some that it is a manufactured shortage — a ruse to escalate prices. The President of the United States, and he should know, assures the nation that there is a genuine oil crisis. And unless more new oil is discovered, the situation is bound to get worse. The problem has developed at a snail’s pace. This allows time to seek other substitutes. All are hoping that the old adage will again prove true that

“Man’s necessity is the mother of invention.” At present coal is the most promising replacement for oil. The processing is costly and cheap energy from this source cannot be expected. With practiclly everything mechanized in one way or another, we learn how vulnerable are our amenities. That we have been unduly extravagant with this irreplacable resource must be confessed. High prices and scarcity will remedy this with most of us. It will force a change of life styles and that perhaps for the better — more home life and time for books. A little more reflection on the issues of life would prove beneficial to most, if not all. May it lead for many to the discovery of eternal things. And may it lead not only to more walking, but to more walking in the Spirit. Both of these spheres of exercise require our attention.

Salt II

This peace pact of a kind was formally signed at a summit meeting of President Carter and Soviet President Brezhnev in Vienna. The treaty basically calls for a numerical equality of strategic weapons. Presumably there is an equal division of the 2,250 nuclear missiles already in existence. To prevent the Russians from cheating, the United States must rely mainly on photography sent by satellites constantly flying over Russia. The more efficient listening post in Iran has been denied us since the revolution. We are informed that: “Salt II does not signal an end to the arms race. It does not mean an end to competition between the Soviets and the U.S. It is not a substitute for a strong defense. But it is decidedly better than having no treaty at all.” Since competition has not been

ruled out, it is not hard to imagine that in the deep recess of secrecy, scientists are seeking to discover the ultimate weapon. The search for a death ray is held out as a possibility. Such a discovery could make overnight the present arsenals obsolete.

It would appear from Ezekiel 39:10 that the weapons which will be used in Armageddon have considerable wood in the makeup. Horses are also included. A death ray that would home in on metal would make such obsolete and could occasion the revival of ancient weaponry. The invention of gunpowder made knights in armour and castles a thing of the past. The ironclad monitor made the wooden navies vulnerable. In turn, the airplane has brought about the demise of the mighty battleship. Certainly some of the apocalyptic judgments that are yet to come upon the earth are brought about by man's ability to self-destruct himself. Treaties, which often are nothing more than scraps of paper, are considered just breathing spells for Communists. By no means are they intended to deter them from their avowed goal — namely, to communize the world. In the light of Scripture, this will never be. That role is ultimately for Jesus Christ. America should not put its Central Intelligence into a straightjacket. Since we are in a fallen world, no nation is Christian; we must match gun with gun. The late John Foster Dulles wrote that since history began there had averaged out a major war every 25 years. If we can classify Korea and Viet Nam as "brush wars" we have been fortunate. These wars on the perimeter have acted as exhaust valves. A major war is so awesome to contemplate that the winner would only be in possession of a Pyrrhic victory. The present build-up of weaponry could be for "the great tribulation."

Logic asks what could be greater than the next war and what would be left to build up something even greater to answer for the tribulation? The tribulation, whatever school of prophecy we adopt, immediately precedes our Lord's second coming (Matt. 24:21).

Humanism Versus Christianity

There have been, to be sure, short periods when Christians have been in the driver's seat. They have been able to enforce a Biblically based morality on a nation, or sphere of influence — particularly so in Geneva, Switzerland, as long as John Calvin lived, and Holland and England under Oliver Cromwell. The Pilgrim Fathers brought it to Massachusettes. The ever-present opposition which has never been lax has magnified the faults of these noble souls. For instance, John Calvin's consent to the burning of Servetus for his heresy, Cromwell's Sabbatarianism and summary punishment for drunkenness and swearing, and the Pilgrims and their witch hunting. An in-depth study of these Christians will reveal a zeal for virtue and justice far in excess of their faults. However, hindsight has always revealed that Biblically inspired disciples to the unconverted and to the carnal Christians have been unacceptable.

The Christians we have mentioned accepted the Biblical doctrine that all men are sinners by nature. All have been fouled by original sin and are not the product of the evolutionary process. This gave them a realistic approach to man and his problems. They would have never worked from the starting point of the humanist — namely, the basic goodness of humanity.

Let us suppose that the influence of the Pilgrim Fathers was still in vogue. What would characterize our government? We would certainly expect a sound fiscal policy. Money would not be thrown at every problem. Depressions and the like would be considered as divine visitations, to be heeded for the lesson they are intended to teach. Individuals cast on their own resources would discover some means to keep the wolf from the door. The alternative — the welfare state — feeds on itself and creates an ever-increasing indigent population.

Our forefathers would have had no scruples about exercising the death penalty. No sophisticated arguments would be entertained that contradicted a plain categorical command from Scripture: “whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6). Failure has resulted, and hundreds of prisoners rot in overcrowded prisons where further murder and mayhem could instantly develop the moment prison security is caught off guard. Those who have put forward the social clock have created a new set of problems that defy solution: inflation, disrespect for authority, and a breakdown of morals, to name a few. The tragedy is that when Christian standards are compromised, the slide always tends to accelerate. Soon the point of no return is reached. Now Christian philosophers, such as Francis Schaeffer, conclude that we have resorted back to a pagan society — it is certainly non-Christian. The fact that a Biblical morality is unenforceable in the world at large is a strong proof that sin amounts to rebellion against the Creator. Biblical disciplines appear as putting everyone into a straightjacket. If such were enforced the cry would soon

be, “Away with such restrictions, we will not have them to reign over us.”

Just as Christian ethics are a priceless boon in the long run to the practicing Christian, so it is possible for a nation to invoke God’s blessing.

The inspired proverb says, “righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). In turn, individuals and nations can provoke God’s displeasure. The Christian realizes that the present time is “man’s day.” Also, the words of our Lord when He was arrested in Gethsemane are still applicable; “… this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). That hour continues and will do so until He comes “whose right it is” (Ezek. 21:27).

As Christians we are in this world but not of it. Yea, we are delivered from this present evil world.

The Death Penalty

Florida’s execution of a convicted murderer on May 25th is putting the clock back to where it belongs. This is the first execution in twelve years and it breaks a logjam. “Judges and governors will be able to deny stays of execution without bearing the onus of breaking the death penalty moratorium.” Actually, the polls show that two out of every three Americans favor the death penalty. The death penalty is right because it is Biblical: “Whoso shedded man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6). This is further born out in the New Testament. Here we learn that world rulers are “ministers of God,” and it is added, “he beareth not the sword in vain” and is “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4). The present pressure

to execute murderers is a confession of the failure to rehabilitate hardened criminals. Also, a sentimental attitude toward violent crime is probably a contributor to the accelerated growth of the deplorable conditions that surround us today. The majority in the nation that are fed up with life sentences for murderers are unwittingly going back to what God's Word has been saying all along.

The argument that capital punishment does not deter crime may be proven by statistics. But that is not the point. The point is, what does God say? Then, too, incarcerated murderers full of frustration are ready to murder their fellow prisoners or guards given the least opportunity. One of the reasons for the judgment upon Israel in Ezekiel's day was: "the land is full of blood." In other words, the land was full of unrequitted murders. There was no death penalty for Cain and later Lamech appears to boast of committing two murders and faring no worse than Cain. No doubt such laxity brought on the conditions that invoked the flood. This has been called God's moral surgery. Our Lord foretold that one of the signs of His second coming would be a repeat of the days before the flood. None of God's commandments can be broken with impunity.

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Politics

Two stark realities have surfaced. One is that Communism is an economic failure, and in America the government cannot underwrite all of the social needs of its people. We are also witnessing both systems receiving the attention of their respective leadership. They are desperately trying to mend the fences.

Communism has little choice but to use repression. Incidentally, where a modicum of free enterprises has been allowed, or a look the other way, as in Hungary, agriculture certainly has improved. In spite of the general economic failure of Communism there are strong tides surging in Latin America for a try at Communism. The rhetoric of their revolutionaries, as always, blossoms out with beatitudes of hope and plenty. History, so far, reveals that the Achilles' heel of Communism is the nonco-operation of the farmer. One boast of Communism is that it is "the historical perspective of mankind." From the viewpoint of Scripture, Communism is doomed to fertilize more seeds that spell its destruction than its rival and foe — Western freedoms. The Bible will allow no ideology to master the world; that is reserved to Jesus Christ who is the only "King of kings and Lord of lords." Communism's coffin nails are its atheism. The patience of the God of the Bible will have its limits to this blasphemy. Then also, man is lowered to being nothing more than a

breathing mass of clay. Without a God and a hereafter life is an enigma and holds no explanation for its trials. Man's freedom is denied. Indeed it is a denial of man's most cherished aspirations — after all he is created in God's image.

Our welfarism occasions some pressing questions. We suffer from recurring recessions. Since the great depression of the 30's governments have sought to show, more than ever before, a human face. The "unseen hand" of the free market has been pushed aside and F. D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" evolved into the "Great Society" of Lyndon Johnson. It is still, "the poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8). Consequently, the disciples of thrift, the work ethic and respect for authority have been badly eroded. The average citizen of a Judeo-Christian culture is not uncharitable toward the unfortunate. Not, however, to the extent of an attempt to redistribute the nation's wealth. Is equality a legitimate goal? As to a political system, the Bible is silent. However, the tilt appears to favour the sacredness of property, "Thou shalt not steal"! By the time this gets into print the congressional elections will make or break the present attempt to initiate a conservative reform. The competitive struggle for votes gives an edge to the politician that can promise the most. Unfortunately, the U.S. needs the medicine that only the realistic will implement; such as defense, an ailing Social Security solvency, and even those recommendations of the "Moral Majority." The present sees both emphases polarizing, an incipient military moral majority, and an equally aggressive American Civil Liberties Union. May not this be the iron that will not mix with miry clay? This mixture marks the unstable feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image

(Daniel 2). If so, it is an impressive sign of the nearness of the pulverizing stone “cut out without hands” that ends “the times of the Gentiles.” The “Stone” is an oft repeated symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we observe God in the Old Testament often using a wicked nation to chastise His ancient people Israel. If it were a moral measurement, Israel could be a shade better than the nation oppressing them. Israel possessed more light and was judged according to the height from which she had fallen. As Peter informs us down here, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God” (4:17). Later judgment catches up with the wicked.

Before Russia’s prophesied downfall she is to be, if our understanding of Ezekiel 38 is correct, used as God’s whip, especially upon Israel.

In this connection the little minor prophet, Habakkuk, writes of his perplexity. He deplores the uncorrected violence, iniquity and spoiling that he witnessed among God’s people. The apparent inactivity of God in the matter concerns the prophet. Then there is a reply from God who was about to raise up the heathen Chaldeans to be the instrument of chastisement. This further alarmed Habakkuk; why, they were more wicked than Israel! Yes, but they were about to fulfill God’s purpose and then afterward be judged for their ways. This principle still operates among the nations. It accounts for the Napoleons, Hitlers and Soviets. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

History

The second volume of Dr. Henry Kissinger's memoirs is particularly interesting to the student of Bible prophecy. He aptly titles it, Years of Upheaval. Its main concern is the Yom Kipper War in the fall of '73. Only a few days before that war broke out, Dr. Kissinger was installed as the Secretary of State. Referring to this event that took place in the East Room of the White House he writes, "My parents were as in a dream, they could hardly believe that 35 years after being driven out of their native country, their son should have reached our nation's highest appointive 'executive office.'" Indeed, this was not the first time a Jew had been appointed to preside over national affairs with success and distinction. We can add such worthies as Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai and, of more recent times, the British Prime Minister Disraeli.

The war was a cleverly conceived plan by the Egyptians and Syrians and, humanly speaking, with a good chance of success. Kissinger had not taken Sadat seriously. The many feints to start a war were but gestures of a conscious strategy; and then deciding on the time for the real attack, the Jewish air losses were alarming from the Soviet surface to air missiles on both fronts. Not until the Egyptians were beyond their range could the Israeli planes target the advancing tanks. The real shocker, writes the secretary, was the loss of 500 Israeli tanks. The alarming situation was kept a top secret lest the rest of the Arab world join in for a knockout blow. Consequently, a cry came to Washington for help which resulted in a spectacular airlift. The Soviets were already engaged in an airlift to their allies. On October 15th some 2,000 were joined in a battle in the Sinai —

one of the biggest armor battles in history. The next day Israeli tanks were across the Suez and pounding away at the SAM missiles and a clear opening was developing on to Cairo. Along with this, a 35,000 man force was trapped on the East Bank of Suez. Sadat was frantic and called for the Russians and Americans to enter the war and assure a cease fire. To Brezknev this was fine — Americans stopping the Jews. Kissinger was urgently called to Moscow and given complete power to negotiate with Brezknev. This he acknowledges, was to his disadvantage, as he could not if cornered bide time by conferring with the President. To create delays was to Kissinger's advantage when it was plain that Brezknev would act unilaterally. Their air-borne forces were alerted and there were 85 of their ships in the Mediterranean; two amphibious vessels were heading for Alexandria. The President was distraught with the clouds of Watergate gathering around him. The Soviets would save the Arabs on their two battle fronts; the Arabs would subsequently sing their praises and Russia would have an indisputable hold in the Middle East. With a "functioning" President we see Kissinger rising to the occasion. He remarked, "We are at the point of maximum weakness, but if we knuckle under now we are in trouble." The U.S. could not tolerate Soviet intervention. The U.S. military was put on the alert; two aircraft carriers were rapidly moving to the area of conflict. The Russians withheld their forces and Kissinger flew to Cairo. His task was to enforce a cease fire and a genuine disengagement of forces. At this juncture Kissinger writes, "The strategy of the October war was to thwart a victory of Soviet arms and hence a defeat of Israel; to prevent humiliation of moderate Arabs, especially on the Egyptian front; to convene a

peace conference in which sub groups would negotiate away from the rhetoric of plenary sessions; to seek results step by step rather than in one comprehensive negotiation, and to restore ties first with Egypt and then with other Arab nations ready for peace." To implement all of this the so-called "shuttle diplomacy" was brought about between Jerusalem and Aswan. Few realize that a major confrontation was avoided between the two world major powers. Humanly speaking, a big appreciation goes to the Secretary of State.

The need for a settlement to the recurring Middle East upsets is apparent. Nations dependent on oil from this area demand a solution to the problem. Who can stop Israelis and Arabs from continually bringing the world to the brink of the feared holocaust? The closeness of Russia to this theatre, Arab population and the oil blackmail create a formidable advantage at any peace table. Israel is kept impoverished by huge military expenditures. Is there any relief from this and who can assure her security? As Dr. John F. Walvoord observes, "The international political leader who can give Israel these guarantees and force dissident Arab factions to accept a final peace will gain world recognition overnight. This role is not America's, we will have problems enough closer at home. The crisis calls for a super man — the antichrist. How easily Daniel 9:27 could fit in here — a seven year covenant made with Israel by 'the prince that shall come.'"

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Pacifism

Whenever the subject of national rearmament or war comes to the front, as it has today, the pacifists become annoyingly demonstrative. History reveals that there has always been an aggressor nation ready to exploit another nation's weakness. In the Bible we read of land-hungry members of the tribe of Dan. Their reconnoiters discovered what they were looking for, "a good land carelessly defended which became their easy prey" (see Judg. 18). Later we read that Nebuchadnezzar had taken counsel against a similar situation, "Arise, get you unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which has neither gates nor bars" (Jer. 49:31). The world is still as dirty. A weak America would only excite the cupidity of aggressors elsewhere.

Arming to the teeth is no assurance of peace in our day. However, it is the best solution to those who are compelled to work out their own destiny.

In Scripture it is the Lord who holds Himself responsible for stirring up war, famine and plagues. Numerous proof texts are not wanting, "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). Again, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Obviously the best defense is a righteous nation, but where is such today? He, and He alone,

“Maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth” (Psa. 46:9).

Famine

The signs that are to announce the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ appear to be accumulating and increasing in intensity. Certainly they have always been around, but their proportions are on the increase. The news media and revolting pictures have awakened the world to the plight prevailing in most of Africa. Fortunately the granaries in countries where farming has become efficient are bursting with surpluses, and their compassion for the starving is shipping to African ports tons of relief. Getting food inland to the starving is the problem. Commenting on the situation the former World Bank President, Robert McNamara, said, “It is fortunate that a few tens or hundreds of thousands are dying today — because millions are going to be dying in 10 or 15 years unless the world does act today.” This informed observer of world affairs is but catching up with the prophetic meaning of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. The third, a black horseman, predicts a famine of unprecedented proportions. The foreign policies of the Soviets tend to aggravate the situation by being more interested in shaping the governments of impoverished countries rather than helping their economies.

Poverty

The Roman Catholic bishops have issued a pastoral letter on the economy which contains an overdose of liberalism. In essence it is to soak the rich in order to benefit the poor. A redistribution of the nation’s wealth

could temporarily uplift the downtrodden only to be followed by deeper headaches. It is the creation of new wealth that can promise anything permanent. President Johnson's "Great Society" resulted in a huge increase in illegitimate births. Back in 1960 the now Senator-Moynihan asserted that illegitimacy is a cause of poverty; and we might add crime. It is no blessing to remove the necessity to work.

As soon as man fell God cursed the ground for man's sake. From henceforth he was to earn his living by the sweat of his face. Technology, robots, high wages and being choosy about jobs contribute toward the curse of modern society —unemployment and generation after generation schooled only to live off welfare.

The poor in our Lord's day had the gospel preached to them and this would infer that they were responsive to it. Today we are not aware that those below the poverty level are particularly responsive to the good news of salvation. Their leaders and spokesmen are all for getting them more relief. They need reformers, who are also evangelical, who would encourage the advantages of school, some neighbourhood pride, and be willing to start off with the jobs that illegal immigrants seem so eager to claim. Honest work of any kind will put moral fibre into a person; idleness, enforced or otherwise, is demoralizing. The disciples were called while mending their nets. Our nation by a landslide election has chosen this approach to self-government and, like it or not, it is our duty, particularly as Christians, to honor and obey. Outside of this the New Testament gives Christians very little to do about their government. They are to adjust, as far as a Scripturally enlightened conscience will allow, regardless of the powers that be under which

providence has placed them. The church is “in the world but not of it” — a called out company. It certainly is to do good on its own behalf.

Lest one would think that our viewpoint is too strongly tinctured with the Puritanic ethic let him read Charles Murray’s new book, Loosing Ground. He says, “We tried to provide more for the poor and produced more poor instead.” A system that makes it more profitable to live off welfare than to work needs overhauling. Better for labor to compete with foreign imports than have idleness which eases Satan’s inroads to our personality.

Another Damper

The 60’s witnessed the sex explosion. Old fashioned fears were removed by the “pill.” Since then severe retribution has come in the prevalence of two, so far incurable, social diseases. The divine decree was not just a joke, “The way of the transgressor is hard” (Prov. 13:15, RV — “treacherous”); or “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). As another of like mind has written, “This is God’s world, not man’s, and whilst men are, up to a point, able to choose their actions, they are not able to choose the results of those actions. The man or the nation who thinks it possible to cheat a moral God in a moral universe is a moral imbecile.”

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Health Care

Americans, we are told, have more doctors per capita, more hospital beds and the most advanced medical technology in the world. Certainly astronomical sums of money are diverted to health care. Here is a case where throwing money at something is not the best way necessarily to solve the problem. In spite of our splendid medical facilities the health record of the United States is not a good one. Why is this so? It is because a large percentage of human illness is self-inflicted. Our unparalleled prosperity has brought with it means of self-indulgence. As a nation we consume too much liquor, smoke excesssively and eat too sumptuously. There is a dictum that applies to the saved and unsaved alike, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Unless prosperity is attended with self-control it is a debatable blessing.

Moses foresaw the dangers when his nation would emerge from the wilderness and eventually become prosperous. He was so certain of his look into the future that he used the present and past tense in his prophecy: “But Jesurun grew fat, and kicked. Thou art become fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation” (Deuteronomy 32:15).

Fortunately, the born-again Christian possesses the indwelling Holy Spirit and one of His nine operations in our lives is “temperance” or self-control. Where this is exercised the health record is considerably improved.

So, Christianity can enable us to get the most out of this life, for the main ingredient to wholesome pleasure is normal health. The Christian also has the assurance of eternal bliss, so it can be that we are making the best of both worlds after all. Certainly we are free from the debilitating effects of fleshly lusts that plague all too many men of this world. If Christianity were limited to keeping a man from wine, women and tobacco, and there was no hereafter, he would still be a winner. His only argument and consolation is that we die like dogs anyway. This superficial logic is trifling compared with the well-reasoned hope of the Christian’s resurrection. In spite of the other-worldly nature of Christianity we are told that “godliness” includes profit for the life that now is and that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8). The salutation of 3 John 2 wishes a double prosperity to “be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

Now that our nation is paying for a considerable percentage of its citizens’ medical bills, and the trend is toward complete social medicine, the costs are becoming a national concern. The task, of course, would not be so bewildering if we all lived normal lives, for then the need would be to treat only those ills that are our natural heirship. So, here again, man’s bent on sinning magnifies the problem and makes public health so prohibitively expensive. The President, when addressing the American Public Health Association in Miami last October, had this to say, “It is not the role of government to dictate life styles, but it is the proper role

of government to educate our citizens and to aggressively stress the promotion of good health." He called for corrections in our eating, drinking, smoking and need of exercise. He went on to say, "We would be healthier, be happier, live longer and save ourselves billions of dollars in the process."

Better a fence along the edge of the cliff than a hospital at the bottom. Peter tells us that the Christian is not to "suffer as an evil doer." Can we include self-indulgence in this admonition? On the other hand, "If any man suffer as a Christian," says Peter, "let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16). Certainly there are the normal shocks and pains that our flesh is heir to; a godly walk will prevent us adding thereto.

Nor must we leave out divine discipline in the way we observe the Lord's Supper. Because of failure to judge ourselves, says the Apostle Paul, "many are weak and sickly among you" (1 Corinthians 11:30). Christians should, and generally do, have a brighter prospect for health, happiness and longevity. Then too, we are bidden to be anxious for nothing but to bring our anxieties to God in prayer, and this results in experiencing the peace of God which passeth all understanding. To know more of this could ease considerably mental and emotional distress.

Yes, Christianity carries priceless dividends both here and hereafter.

Gold

This metal is scarce but indestructible. The gold that disappeared from the pyramids centuries ago has

perhaps been melted and remelted and is somewhere still an emblem of value, perhaps in your tooth filling. From Bible times it has been a standard of wealth until the present. The nation that has no gold reserves possesses a monetary system held suspect by the rest of the world. In spite of this there are among the economists “chrysophobes” — gold haters. Such have become popular among politicians. On the other hand, the “chrysophilites” —gold lovers but derisively labeled “gold-bugs” — are those who advocate sound money. The dismissal of gold as a money standard has generated the present inflation that eventually promises more problems than it seeks to remedy. Swamped with paper money our gold became meaningless, so Nixon severed the dollar from Roosevelt’s $35 an ounce gold in 1971. Now we have floating currencies and the worth of our money is discovered on a day to day basis.

In his book The Realms of Gold, author Ray Vicker has this to say: “It is about time international money-men took another look at gold and the place it might play in bringing about monetary stability, instead of ridiculing it and its adherents. It is far easier to belittle anyone who doesn’t agree with the philosophy of easy credit for solving the world’s problems than it is to make those cheap-money policies work.”

The monetary fiasco to which cities, nations and the world appear to be heading will be a reaping of what has been sown. The standard, in this case gold, has been bypassed. Cheap money has been an easy answer to the current problems. Now pay day is coming around; the world of reality is pressing home. Man has equated his liberty with freedom from the taboos of yesterday. Money and morals particularly have been severed from

their anchors. Actually the stubborn standards of life are found in the Ten Commandments. To break these immutable standards is to have them eventually break us.

Doctrine of Demons

The amazing success of the movie, The Exorcist, has established a momentary precedent in the industry. It gave a new direction to an ailing form of entertainment since the popularity of TV. Quoting from a reviewer we learn that “devil movies play equally well in Japan, Ecuador and Wisconsin. That isn’t true of love stories and Westerns anymore.” From this same source we read, “Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation plans three sequels to its big hit The Omen. Warner Communications, Inc. is putting the finishing terrors in its sequel to The Exorcist. M.C.A., Inc. is readying three demonic films. American International Pictures, has two devil films in release and two more in its Satanic mill. And other movie companies are preparing not directly about Lucifer, but about the supernatural.”

The producer of The Omen attributes the film’s success to the theory that a growing number of people believe in evil forces like the devil and also disasters like famines, floods and wars which he says may lend credence to the movies’ thesis that the antichrist is at hand. This coincides with Scripture where we are told that men’s hearts will be failing them “for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.” Strange and unaccountable, apart from the biblical doctrine of sin, is the morbid satisfaction many get from the lies and distortions that originate from the pit.

Another disturbing flare, at least in nominally Christian lands, is the rise of astrology. Dyrness, writing in Christianity Today says, “Every day over 50 million Americans consult readings in 1200 newspapers. For by that day they can find a prediction that is determined solely by the arrangement of planets on the day of their birth. There are now supposed to be 10,000 full-time astrologers in America and 175,000 working part time.” At this point of writing there appeared in Time magazine’s religious column an account of a shadowy appearance of the head of Christ on the napkin on an altar. So far thousands have made a pilgrimage to this little Episcopal Church in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, where this phenomenon has supposedly appeared. We wonder how many of them would sit and listen to a sermon on Christ’s deity, death and resurrection and call to discipleship?

What does the evangelical believer gather from all this? It does indicate that the Bible no longer holds a paramount place in people’s thinking. Also, it shows their disgust with the materialism with which they have been fed these many years. Man is more than an animal or a mere accident in the course of things. Consequently, he yearns for the supernatural. Unfortunately, if the Scriptures are discredited or neglected then Satan exploits the situation. In the world beyond dwells the living and true God; but there is also Satan and his demons. We are told that he can work through human instruments with “all power and signs and wonders,” and this, with the intent to deceive. Here then we also have a concrete sign that we are approaching the end of the Christian era. Satan is filling the vacuum created by the “falling away” (Lit., “the apostasy,” margin). Turning

from 2 Thessalonians 2 to 1 Timothy 4:1 we read this corollary, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” The prophet Isaiah gives us in his sturdy language the antidote to all this devilry: “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto those who are mediums, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? Should they seek on behalf of the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:19-20).

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Edwin Fesche

Israel

The year 1987 is the 20th anniversary of the Six-Day War. At this commencement, the Jews were purely on the defensive, but the battles changed to phenomenal Jewish victories that resulted in land expansion, particularly the capture of the Jordanian occupation of Jerusalem and Syria's Golan Heights. Since then much pressure has come for Israel to restore the captured territory as the price for peace in the area. As to the likelihood of this an observer wrote, "The world is far too dangerous and hostile to expect Jews to give up power in return for promises."

From the sack of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. to World War II, the Jew had an uneasy residence in many nations. The past 50 years have brought them to the attention of the world. Three monumental events are responsible for this. The Holocaust impressed them of their vulnerability. Next came the establishment of the State of Israel, followed by the Six-Day War, which declared the restoration of Jewish power to the stage of world history. Their superb air power has carried Israeli might to Uganda, Tunisia and Iraq. The Iraq raid destroyed that country's possible atomic arsenal with pin-point accuracy. To the chagrin of her neighbours there is reason to believe she now has her own atomic potential.

Lately Israel has not been making the headlines. Politically they have almost a hung government. Their invasion into Lebanon was a necessity because of the P.L.O. buildup but was a marginal success. At present the nation is little more than an armed camp on account of the designs of her many enemies.

When the Bible is taken literally in its dealings with the Jews, who happen to be God's chosen people, we conclude that God is yet going to make good His covenants and promises to Israel. This necessitates Israel's national recovery and eventually their spiritual regeneration. At present we see the blossoming of the fig tree (Luke 21:29), meaning Israel at last back in their homeland. Among the several signs our Lord has told us will announce His near return, the current history of Israel is probably the most assuring. Some consider it a signal that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. At His first coming only a few were aware. The Lord raised the question when He returns, will He find faith on the earth (Luke 18:18)? In spite of "the midnight cry," comparatively few answer to this exhortation, "and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Neb. 9:28).

The Persian Gulf

The situation in that part of the world continues to be a witch's brew. If the Soviets were not in the caldron, matters would not be so fearsome. An artful bit of Oriental cunning leaves little choice for the United States but to insure the safety of the Arabian tankers. Along with this the Saudi's had also requested similar aid from the Soviets. American interests are to keep the Russians out of that strategic area. If the U.S. does not

maintain the sovereignty in the Gulf, the Soviets will eagerly fill the vacuum.

Another problem is the effectiveness of a proven missile to destroy or seriously damage a surface vessel. The disaster that took place on the USS Stark, killing 35 crewmen, gives grounds for a serious inquiry. A British warship was completely destroyed by a French-made Exocet missile in the Falkland Islands' war. It is yet to be proven how safe surface ships are against the new technology devised for their destruction.

Here the stakes are extremely high because of the tremendous oil reserves which, for the most part, are essential for the survival of the free world. If endangered there is little doubt that the U.S. would use its formidable force, now in the area, hopefully as a deterrent, to keep the sea lanes open. The use of force could destroy the oil bases and bring upon us the wrath of the allies deprived of their oil. Another no win situation — bless you if you do, bless you if you don't. The critics see plenty of danger in the present policies of the White House. One wonders if they had the responsibility how they would act. Remember, Iran heads a large assortment of Arabs who view the U.S. as their great Satan. There are fanatics who are deaf to dialogue, and any treaties made with them are worthless. Also, Russia is waiting with practiced eye to capitalize on any weakness.

There are two rather distinct theatres of Bible prophecy. The New Testament has much to say about the future of the revived Roman Empire. While a lot of the Old Testament sees Israel as having to do with Assyria, Babylon and Persia, their military invasions of Israel are

used by the prophets as foreshadowings of the future hostilities against Israel (Ezek. 37-38). The West is seen as Israel's protector and her danger will again rise from these areas with the added backing of Russia. Present trends appear to be adjusting toward the prophetic lineup. Just how the U.S. will fare in that treasure land of oil will be breathtaking to observe. Knowing the cupidity of man and nations, there is plenty to incite adventurers to fight for and sufficient reason to defend.

No Way Out

Recently 230 Americans and 200 Soviet citizens did a walk for peace from Leningrad to Moscow. Among them was William Mandel, a 70-year old scholar of Soviet affairs living in Berkeley, California. In his reflections he said, "In all previous times in human history, no matter how bad things were, you could always hope for a better day. (Now) for the first time, there's a possibility of no day."

Situations tend to reach a climax and get beyond human control. In Luke 21:25 we read, "and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." Regarding this word "perplexity," Vine's dictionary has this comment: "literally, at a loss for a way, finding no solution to their (the nations) embarrassments; papyri illustrations are in the sense of being at one's wits end, at a loss, how to proceed without resources." In Luke 21 our Lord is speaking of the signs that will announce His second coming.

Several nagging developments certainly fit into this word, "perplexity." There is the new plague that has broken out practically worldwide, especially in Africa and the United States. We refer to the disease commonly

known as AIDS. Despite billions being spent on research for a cure or vaccine to protect, nothing is in sight. The cost of caring for these patients is $1,000 a month for medication alone, which only prolongs life and adds to hospitalization, which is expected to amount to a $1,000 a day. With patients on the increase no medical program could long remain solvent. Says Dr. Paul Volberdinga, researcher and clinician of San Francisco: “The AIDS fight can be disheartening.”

This plague is the positive outcome of a most degrading sin. It reminds us of the iniquity of the Ammorites; when full it was to assure their doom. Our Lord prophesied that before His second coming “iniquity shall abound” (Matt. 24:12).

Another “perplexity” is that many of the world’s nations are in hock, with the United States being the biggest offender. The belt tightening that is essential for any approach to budget control is not in the interests of elected politicians. So things will go merrily along until a crash. Some cracks are already showing up such as bankruptcies.

An exploding world population is still another “perplexity.” This is paradoxical; the white races are hardly holding their own while minorities and third world nations are proliferating at an enormous rate, and the more impoverished the bigger the families. Landless masses, millions unemployed or unemployable are creating situations that will be a constant challenge to law and order. Rioters who cry for democracy only create sterner measures to suppress them. If successful, it will be found that they have only changed hats. The beast, the world’s last dictator (Revelation 13), rises out

of the sea, the sea being a symbol for restless multitudes. Crime and prison overcrowding are outpacing the restraints of law and order.

Our Lord, in answer to His disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" includes wars, famines, false messiahs and pestilences. True, such things have always plagued humanity. But toward the end they will accelerate. The faithful are not to be alarmed because the world does not improve. Theirs is to patiently await the consummation of our salvation which takes place at His promised coming.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Economics

The age old principle of supply and demand is receiving fresh attention. There was a time, not too far back, when America was a land of surpluses. Now the changes that will affect the life style of most of us are in the offing. An observer has written: “For one thing, our present system works when there are plenty of resources to go around, so that even the losers get something. We can’t depend on that happening any more.” It must be to the chagrin of the Communist bloc nations that the world’s bread basket is found in the land where free enterprise is still respected. The Bible makes a point here, when it says, “In all labor there is profit.” When labor ceases to receive an appropriate reward, then its productivity wanes. The socialism so prevalent in our world today describes capitalism as a system of greed. On the other hand, capitalists consider themselves as examples of motivation, daring and hard work. Lamenting that the present government refuses to remove its muzzle on free enterprise, the above writer already quoted says with some irony, “The old ways don’t work any more and the new ones may not be any better.”

A noticeable recoil is taking shape and it is against this equal shares are fair shares philosophy. A recent book, The Aftermath of Slavery, has this to say: “Slavery was most destructive not because of its inexcusable brutalities but because it imposed a system of

dependency. The lesson of American history is that the most successful groups — Jews, Japanese and black West Indians, for example — are not those which are heavily aided by government but those who achieve their own successes, even against heavy resistance, as American poor blacks were doing until the programs of the Great Society reduced them to wards of the state."

Great Britain recently gave a surprising vote to the party that promises to end at least some of the abuses of the socialist's mentality. America is now hearing some voices crying in the wilderness that are by contrast to the present ultra conservative. Unfortunately, we personally can see nothing but a polarizing of either left or right. The present economic scene has left the Biblical work ethic far behind. The atmosphere appears to be ripening for party strife. Let the world work out its problem and let the Christian by example and word give out the Gospel of Christ.

Scapegoat

Whenever a crisis occurs it is natural for us to look around for someone on whom to lay the blame. The gasoline crunch has interfered with the American's love affair with his automobile. The rider on the third horse of the apocalypse was ordered to "touch not the oil and the wine" (Rev. 6:6), these undoubtedly being the symbols of luxury and pleasure. The OPEC nations have had the audacity to do just that. At least that is about it if we listen to the President of the United States. In his memorable Sunday night speech President Carter blamed the Arab oil barons when he said, "This is the direct cause of the long lines that have made millions of you spend aggravating hours waiting for gasoline. It's a

cause of the increased inflation and unemployment that we now face." This, at best, is only a half truth. For one thing, the oil consortium was adjusting its prices to our inflated dollar. They threatened to keep this up and with the steady slippage of the dollar men will look back a few years from now and refer to a dollar a gallon gasoline as the good old days.

We would wish to compliment the President for his bit of sermonizing as he rebuked the nation for its downward moral trend. There was one listener who did not like the President's moralizing and in an open letter wrote to him as follows: "Some people like the party, and some people like to teach Sunday School. What nobody likes is setting the thermostat at 78 degrees." This letter writer cannot blame morals for shortages when he says, "You may tie it all in with the decline of the family and self-indulgence; rather it's a problem to be solved, the stuff of moral life rather than a symptom of spiritual crisis."

The long letter revealed the mentality of the materialist. The President's thought in this connection was obviously molded by the Bible.

Here, we learn that shortages are a reflection of a nation's moral fiber, or the lack of it. The Old Testament abounds with remarks of this nature: "The Lord hath called for a famine." Sin was always the cause of God showing His displeasure. On the other hand, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

Of the many reasons that have been given to us for the oil shortage, no doubt there are elements of truth in every explanation. The whole truth is hard to come by. Often preachers in their zeal give us only a one-sided

gospel — everything rosy if you'll just become a Christian. The Lord Jesus never left out the blessings but added, "The servant is not above his master." As they have treated Me, look for similar persecution from the world. On these terms will you follow Me?.

We live in an atmosphere of oversimplification, exaggeration, rumors and one-sided reasoning. It is a question, perhaps, whether the majority has any stomach for the whole truth. The writer realizes that his present thinking is "far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife," but there it is. The straightforward truths of the prophet Isaiah were notwanted in his day. Consequently, he was advised to "Prophesy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Pilate, no doubt disillusioned by the events of his day, said as he presided over the trial of Jesus Christ, "What is truth?" This may bother our conscience, but truth must ultimately be reckoned with, if not always here then most certainly in eternity. Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth."

Boat People

Another episode of man's inhumanity to man is being enacted before the eyes of the world. Eventually, it is expected that some one million ethnic Chinese citizens will be expelled from South Vietnam. Just now hundreds are adrift in unfit boats and thousands ghettoed in various places, homeless and unwanted. There are some striking similarities to Hitler's decision to exterminate the Jews. In both cases there was an authoritarian decision to reconstruct society to its liking. This called for the elimination of an unwanted minority. Incidentally, the Chinese have been daubed as the Jews of Southeast

Asia. Being for the most part successful merchants, they have provoked the envy of the nationals. For this same reason the East Indians were ejected from Uganda. The dominant majority quickly capitalize on such suppression. At the same time the government strengthens its popularity. The present situation reminds the free world that dictatorships, whether to the far left or right, can be equally heartless.

Critics of the democracies have often made note of the corruption, crime and lawlessness that seem to thrive under such regimes. The same people praise the orderliness of authoritarianism. Such fail to realize that these governments can ride roughshod over the elements that they deem cannot be assimilated into the world they envision. In the early days of Protestantism it too was considered incompatible to a would-be monolithic church.

Democracy and free enterprise, with all of its failings, comes nearest to giving liberty and justice to all. Nor can it be overlooked that where cold-blooded governments gain an upper hand, then evangelical Christianity eventually comes under its axe.

Man, in substance, is still saying in regard to the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Until He comes, “whose right it is” (Ezek. 21:27), inequities will prevail. What is one man’s justice is another man’s injustice. At least that is how it too often appears. It is heartening to see America again showing signs of its Christian heritage and doing a lion’s share in caring for these unfortunate boat people. We suppose that most of these refugees subscribe to one of the oriental religions. There is no

mention of them pleading their needs; rather it is Christian institutions that are showing the empathy that is within their means. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Resurgence

People at heart are religious. This is witnessed wherever man is found. True, his religion may be base, cruel and immoral; but he believes in something supernatural. All religions that we are aware of espouse some sort of sacrifice. This certainly favors a common origin, probably the dim remembrance of what happened after our first parents had sinned —namely, animals were slain to surrender their skins to cover Adam and Eve. In spite of this, there has always been the tendancy for religion to degenerate. Both history and the first chapter of Romans confirm this.

Christianity has not escaped periods of abominable apostacy and disgusting ethics. Fortunately, there have been revivals — a return to the plain truths of Scripture. Along with this the extra-biblical accretions have been thrown out either because they were harmful or useless in gaining a knowledge of the living and true God. Often such movements were forced underground by persecution, the Waldenses and Lollards being cases in point. Someone has defined Roman Catholicism as one-third Christian, one-third Old Testament ceremonies, and one-third from pagan origins. Catholicism has several parallels with Tibetan Buddhism and man’s penchant for a female deity.

Man’s religious nature is attracted to that which can appeal to his five senses. Hence his love of ceremony, breath-taking buildings and participation in mysteries

that transmit to him supernatural grace. Those who do not appreciate this usually swing to the opposite side of the pendulum and scoff at everything supernatural, making their atheism their religion.

Disillusioned as a result of two world wars, Europe has particularly come under the spell of liberalism in politics and religion. This obsession, however, may be exhausting itself. At any rate, the last two Popes and the present one are now impressively popularizing the Church of Rome. Unlike the Reformation that submitted everything to the Scriptures, the present trend is to glorify the church in all of its historic development. The religious world will love to have it so.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 we are told that prior to the revelation of the “man of sin” the apostasy is to consummate. This apostasy can be none other than that of Christendom. It is smybollically represented in Revelation 17 as “the great whore” and “BABYLON THE GREAT.” We are not saying, of course, that all individuals in this system of things are apostate. In 2 Peter 2:9 we read, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.” The context of this verse refers to none other than Lot. In a coming day the rapture will have removed the saved of Christendom.

The religious amalgum that is to develop in the end time could embrace Mohammedanism. Anyway, this Babylon appears to play an important role prior to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 19. She rides the beast (Rev. 17:3), that is, the secular power, and she proclaims herself “a queen, and am no widow” (18:7). Certainly a resurgence of Mohammedanism appears in the works. The atheistic

threat of Communism may bring these strange bed-fellows together. In turn, this impressive religious bulwark could contribute a vital part in bringing about that vast bloc of nations that will comprise the old Roman Empire. This heady display of ecumenicity will be short-lived, for the beast will turn and rend the "great whore." A duplication of what happened in the French Revolution and the Bolshevic uprising will then take place.

The Current Scene

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Lebanon

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon alerted a large section of the world that this was not just a local war. American foreign policy hinges on having a reliable ally in the area. Only Israel really fills that role. The P.L.O. has vowed Israel's destruction and most Arabs secretly side with them. To keep oil flowing to the West and Japan is the American goal, Israel's pre-emptive strike has so far been successful. The P.L.O. is a state within a state. Because of this and internal interference they were driven out of Jordan and moved to Lebanon. The Lebanese government was unable to prevent this on account of a large segment of its citizens being Mohammedan Arabs. From this base the P.L.O. carried on an indescriminate guerilla war against Israel. Along with this a secret build-up of Russian arms exhausted Jewish patience. In the conflict the retreating and canny P.L.O. took stands in highly civilian areas. Consequently, there was a high mortality among civilians. This has damaged outside enthusiasm for the Jewish cause. The investment of Beirut and the suffering of the innocent have generated a new wave of hate for the Jews, creating deeper animosities. As another observer writes, "They are guaranteeing greater conflicts in the future."

A Lebanon incapable of defending itself shows how essential it is for a nation to have a loyal army to assert its sovereignty. The peaceniks that are so noisy in the

Western nations would have the U.S. unilaterally disarm. The truth is that we live in a world where all men are inwardly deceitful and "desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Hitler could be stopped only by brute force. Israel has no choice as long as a viable P.L.O. exists. We speak, of course, from the viewpoint of the principles of world leaders, especially that of Menachem Begin.

If Beirut is in dire straits just now, what of Jerusalem? It has probably suffered more destruction by invading armies than any other capital in history. Worse yet, it is to be the focal prey of all nations gathered against it during the great tribulation (Zec. 14:2). The obvious purpose of this investment would be to annihilate the Jews as a nation. This revenge will be sweet to Arabs and other nations. No doubt present memories of Beruit will further excite their fanaticism. In this war against Jerusalem the prophet informs us that half of the city will be taken along with the women being ravished. "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." Our Lord confirmed this prophecy of Zechariah when He answered the disciples' question, "And what shall be the sign of thy coming?" He revealed that Judea would be the focal point of the severest hostilities on the heels of His second coming (Matt. 24). Eventually, Jerusalem in the providence of God is "to bear double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1). The excessive amounts of divine judgment upon Jerusalem past and during the great tribulation demonstrate a principle that God judges according to the amount of spiritual light enjoyed. Hence Jerusalem receives "double" for her sins. Our Lord's words emphasize this principle, "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself,

neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required" (Luke 12:47-48). Peter tells us the same principle applies to the church when he writes, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

Some believe that it is going to be harder for the Jews to get out of Lebanon than it was to get in. A government strong enough to assure Israel's security may be hard to assemble. The pretext for Russia to aid and encourage a drive to block Israel's lifeline to her forces around Beruit must look very tempting, but the time is not yet. Providentially, Russia has a food problem and a troublesome Poland and Afghanistan. Khomeini's grand design has met setbacks which includes war against Israel. Persia (Ezek. 38:5) is included in Gog's invasion of Israel. At the present time we may be witnessing the preliminaries of what the Bible defines as "the end of the age" (margin) (Matt. 24:3); we could expect some peace settlement in the Middle East. As Dr. Walvoord writes, "The struggles between Israel and the Arab nations cannot continue to push the entire world repeatedly to the brink of nuclear war. The overwhelming weight of population advantage, proximity to Russia as supplier of arms, and the tremendous power of the oil blackmail give the Arab world the ultimate advantage at the peace table." Israel could well be forced to accept a dictated peace which would guarantee her survival. Walvoord also adds, "The fear of international economic disaster will cause the

more sensible Arab countries, Israel, and the industrialized countries of the West to seek a final agreement at any cost. These realities are now present in our world." This could well be, or lead to, a period associated with the "day of the Lord" — "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Terrorism

Espousers of minority causes unable to field armies resort to terrorism. Members of the outlawed Irish Republican Army have no limits to their foul exercises. The P.L.O. held no scruples about killing Jews, especially those of importance. Italy has its assassins and kidnappers. Then there are the irresponsible (or are they?), such as John Hinckley, who almost succeeded in his ambition to kill the President of the U.S. A narrow escape from death for some, then on the other hand there are the victims.

The U.S. President feels that he was spared to fulfill his mission. Others tend to become avowed fatalists. Solomon was allowed to write his observations on society. He was inspired to write his conclusions. These conclusions found in Ecclesiastes need not be any truer than the words of Satan also found in the Bible. Solomon wrote, "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 9:11). Solomon's "under the sun" philosophy also likens men "as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men

snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." All of this is strongly descriptive of the world. The Christian listens to the One who is greater than Solomon — our Lord Jesus Christ. He taught that a sparrow does not fall to the ground unnoticed by God, and "ye (my disciples) are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:31). Saint Paul refers to his persecutions and afflictions, "but out of them all the Lord delivered me." When he knew his time had come he could triumphantly say, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was often waylaid, yet he lived to the ripe age of 88 and said he "was immortal 'til his work was done." So let the Christian sing, "Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Star Wars

The fear of an atomic holocaust is prevalent in many parts of the world. Now in New Zealand, American warships are refused entrance into her harbours for fear they may have nuclear weapons. Belgium still holds out to the deployment of cruise missiles on her territory. All want the United States to police the free world providing they do not become a target for Soviet missiles. This is understandable but not realistic when facing the avowed ambition of Communism to rule the world. Only then can Communism bring about its paradise. Such can never be, for that role has been left to the return of Jesus who will yet claim His kingly rights as the Son of David. In this connection a comment from experience comes from the great German theologian Helmut Thielicke who lived through Hitler's rise and fall. "So Adam must leave paradise. For everyone of us. that is in the past. And only fools think that it can be reestablished on this earth. As a rule, those who have promised men a heaven on earth have made of life a hell. No, the cherub stands behind us, and there is no road back. We were never promised that the burden of morality would be removed from us."

Up until now the super powers have relied on massive retaliation as a deterrent. Now a new strategy is on the drawing boards. This is to destroy on-coming missiles in midair. The fear that this may succeed has put the

Soviets in a dither which would, if successful, make their tremendous buildup of offensive intercontinental missiles obsolete. Even if this grandiose plan of the President is unattainable, it gives him a bargaining chip at upcoming Geneva arms talks. Obviously the President is convinced that the only way to negotiate with the Russians is from a position of power. The Soviets have won for themselves a reputation for dishonesty in keeping their pledges. With this the United States has little choice but to pursue a course of research into further defensive weaponry. In turn cheaters have a phobia that they themselves may be cheated. Russia is paranoid about being the victim of a strike. The fear of deception is the common lot of those who have abandoned the fear of the Lord. As Proverbs 1:29-31 says, “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They have none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

The American forte at any Geneva talks is equally godless. Humanly speaking, we are probably superior to the Soviets in wisdom (advance technology). Armed might, if we can include our allies and our riches, are beyond dispute. In the stately language of Jeremiah 9:23-24 we find prohibition and encouragement,” Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which execute loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” We fear that the conditional blessings of

the text can hardly be invoked by present America. Our crime rate, divorce, and immorality are only provocative of divine displeasure. The nations of antiquity have fallen more from internal rot than invading armies. Although little appreciated, some of us value those who are calling our nation back to moral purity; and those who are attending collective prayer with the lifting up of holy hands “on behalf of kings, and for all that are in authority” (1 Tim. 2:1-8). Such “salt” is the best preservative of nations. How lamentable that iniquity abounds everywhere we look. Current events seem to reflect this fact.

Time Marches On

It is now 40 years since that historic landmark took place at the Yalta Conference. The late Secretary of State Dulles wrote that the world has averaged a major war every 25 years. The mutual atomic terror has kept the trigger-happy tamed so far and content with so-called bush wars. Yalta did much for Russia. Since its revolution in 1917 Russians had a sort of pariah status amid the advanced nations. Now its quest for legitimacy had been attained. The Soviet Union has since climbed to an eminence that fits into the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel 38 — namely, the menacing “king of the North.” In the bargaining that transpired at Yalta, Roosevelt yielded to Stalin most of the territory East of the Elbe River. In turn Russia would join the war against Japan. The success of the atomic bomb was problematic and the thought of American casualties if Japan had to be invaded must have been uppermost in Roosevelt’s mind. It was a deal suited for the moment with no imagination that it would lead up to the “Iron Curtain”

and the resulting development of most of Europe into NATO; another grouping according to prophecy that could easily eventuate into the resurrection of the Old Roman Empire. The recent anti-Americanism occasioned by the placing of new nuclear missiles in Europe is feathering the thought of an American pullout. The lowering of the American profile in Europe would in turn force them to take a bigger interest in their own defense.

In the current years that we are now considering, the most significant event in the eyes of Bible lovers is the establishment of the Jewish nation and its phenomenal military victories over Egypt and Syria. The present retreat from Lebanon looks like their first setback. However, the original intent was well carried out — the destruction of the P.L.O. With the swirl and hate of Arab fanaticism for both Jews and Americans, Israel is the one reliable ally in the area where the oil supply could be in jeopardy. The prophet Zechariah says that just prior to the second advent of Jesus all nations are going to be embroiled in Jerusalem, which in turn leads up to Armageddon.

The amazing developments in the Far East have not been overlooked in Biblical prophecy. A teeming China, Japan and lesser countries led the late German Kaiser to appraise the spectacle as “the Yellow Peril.” China was a sleeping giant until “The Boxer Rebellion” 90 years ago. Now she is in possession of the atomic bomb. The prophetic book, the Revelation, speaks of the Euphrates River drying up (the removal of the natural barrier), so that “the way of the king of the East might be prepared.” They, too, are headed toward God’s trap — Jerusalem. In fact, we read that all nations under the

spell of unclean, demonic spirits gather to the battle of “that great day of God Almighty.” If the world stage is not being set for its last and greatest drama by current events, we cannot be blamed for so thinking.

The Current Scene

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Edwin Fesche

Tomorrow

Man has an insatiable desire to know what lies ahead. This is attested to by the phenomenal sale of Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth. So far six million copies have been sold in six years. The fascination with the future is not only religious but secular. Witness the sale of almanacs and the hopes that science and politics engender. Man needs to be striving for something more than he has; otherwise stagnation sets in.

Basically, man wants something that will captivate his hopes, for, as King Solomon reminds us, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). The Communist would rob man of his highest hope, heaven, and sarcastically refer to it as "pie in the sky." Their substitution for eternal bliss is to make a humanitarian utopia on earth. After all, to the Communist, man is a long time dead; or is he? That indeed is the question of questions, and conscience, reason and the Bible affirm that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun. Then too, the goals of the activists of the Western World appear to differ very little from that of the Communists. Since so many are to be found in the mainline churches they have been dubbed as "Marxists with a Bible in their hands."

The social gospelers soon discover that violence is an essential, and excusable, resort to push forward their grandiose schemes. Muitman, whom we judge to be one of them, writes: “We no longer view the structures of society as given by nature or by God but know that because they are made by man, they can also be changed by man.” It is not surprising that Multman feels that revolution may be necessary to obliterate the old society in order to bring in his brand of the new. It is true that pure Communism would cancel out the greed that capitalism engenders, but where has there ever been a more productive system? Nor must it be overlooked that Communism breeds its particular brand of evil, particularly the curbs on human freedom.

The “new man” that Marx expected his social order to produce has never been forthcoming. The system ignores that which the Bible and history prove man to be — an incurable sinner. Only the Great Physician of the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ, can effectively operate in this area. Yet this vision of Marx has succeeded in captivating half of the present world and is a serious threat to the rest. It has been well said that Communism may put a new suit on a man, but Christianity puts a new man in the suit.

Another evidence of man’s concern for the future is seen in the popularity of seers. Perhaps the most notable is Jeanne Dixon. One lone prediction catipulted her into fame when in 1956 she announced that “a blonde Democratic president will be elected in 1960 and will die in office.” Not so bad considering its source. Unlike Bible prophecy it supports no doctrine and carries no moral implications. Nor do we hear about the many failures that Mrs. Dixon has since made. Just like the

divine healer's statistics — a complete silence concerning the thousands that do not get healed. Mankind will generally believe all that it wants to believe no matter how impressive are the negatives. This accounts for the seeming poor returns of the Gospel —"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The prophecies of the Bible are an inerrant proof for its divine inspiration. In this connection the words of Isaiah 41:21-22 are bold and challenging: "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come."

Then there are the fanatical votaries of the cults who consider themselves to hold the keys to prophecy. The Jehovah's Witnesses are perhaps the best example. Their agents have a standard approach when doing door-to-door visiting. Incidentally, they evidence a zeal worthy of a better cause. The cult's selling card is its interpretation of prophecy. Their future is an earthly kingdom with all vestiges of the fall removed. To my knowledge no Christian that has been taught dispensational truth affords any encouragement to a Jehovah's Witness. He should easily be able to turn the conversation in his favor. However, the mainline churches encounter little, if any, teaching on prophecy that relates to the future. Too often it is discouraged. Even Calvin gave us commentaries on every book of the Bible but the Revelation. Christians, or professing

Christians, that have not been exposed to “the whole counsel of God” are likely to give a gullible ear to a line of things of which they have heard little about. Some feel that their preachers have cheated them by failing to deal with this important phase of divine revelation. The remedy for this is not to shun any area of the divine revelation.

This brings us to, What saith the Scriptures? Here we can only recommend the afore-mentioned Hal Lindsey’s book and the New Scofield Reference Bible as valuable aids. As to one of the many signs of Christ’s return, we cannot refrain from mentioning afresh the return of the Jews from their two thousand years of dispersion and their national rebirth. This sign is of very recent development. It is too unusual in history to be explained as a random event. We have only to read Ezekiel 37 to appreciate the penultimate nature of this witness to the midnight cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Matthew 25:6).

Energy

Our nation, and the rest of the world for that matter, faces a problem that promises to accelerate with the years until the crisis is reached. It is the foreseen diminishing supply of oil. Former President Ford said, “Somehow, the leadership in this country has to find a way to convince the American people that we’re going to be in desperate straits by 1985 unless we move ahead.” Incidentally, Ford failed miserably in his attempts to do something in this area. So far President Carter and the Congress have come up with little more than rhetoric. Every solution is political dynamite. Some are going to hurt more than others, especially the poor.

Perhaps the fairest solution would be rationing, but it is the most impractical when one thinks of the paper work and the need for government enforcement. Already the government is in the doghouse because of too much interference in the ordinary life patterns of its citizens. Honesty and self-imposed discipline could do the job. Such commodities in society are scarce, especially today. So, the only alternative is for the government to impose eventually its heavy hand. Not only will individuals want their shakes but the nations will be crying for their equal shares. Not only is oil destined to be in short supply, but other essential commodities are on the endangered list. Oil supplies the energy and fertilizers that make possible the massive grain harvests so essential to maintain the top heavy millions of urban dwellers. The changed weather patterns are also occasion for concern.

Anyway, the Bible prophecies of a Czar of international dimensions who decides who will eat and who will not (Revelation 13:16-17). All this is feasible in the kind of world that we see shaping up. There is little doubt that many of the things so graphically described in Revelation could be applied in John’s day or soon thereafter. For instance, Nero, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Mohammedanism. Then later the rise and arrogancy of Popery and the challenge of Protestantism. Martin Luther considered the Turks hammering at the gates of Vienna in his day as the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel. Those who paralleled prophecy with their day were neither losers nor deceived. It certainly brought them to an anticipation and need for the return of Christ. They died in faith and enjoyed the blessed hope.

The momentous happenings of the past now prove to be only rehearsals of the prodigious events heretofore impossible as far as man is able to create history. Now in this computerized atomic bomb world we are catching up with the climactic scenes of the last book of the Bible.

Well, we must get back to the immediate energy problem. There are many who think that it is all a gimmick of the oil barons to raise prices and make fortunes for themselves. In fact, it has been just these people that have been warning us of what we are now facing. No one seemed to listen. Certainly scarcities raise prices on a free market. Put on controls and the black market goes into operation. The freer a society the harder it is to enforce objectionable changes. Like the proverbial ostrich man prefers to hide his head in the sand. That World War 2 was in the making with the rise of Hitler was obvious. His most implacable foes, Britain and France, could not resolve themselves to stop him before it was too late. When given a choice mankind prefers to live it up until, prodigal-like, they have come to the end of their road. Men are even more of this disposition in spiritual matters. Eternity seems to them a long way off. When old and on a death bed will be time enough to prepare for the next world. Procrastination is so convenient. When it comes to the question of personal salvation through the blood of Christ it is, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).

Righteous Overmuch

As a result of the C.I.A. abuses coming to light during the Watergate investigations a sweep of righteous

indignation possessed the conscience of Congress. In one area the cure for unfair practices has been the setting up of “The Senate Committee on Intelligence.” It has recently published its first annual report. An editorial criticizes it as being active on its hunt for abuses, such as wiretapping, clandestine activities and possible abuses of civil liberties but no announcement as to the intrinsic worth of the intelligence gathering agencies.

Senator Moynihan, one of the committee’s members, wrote his reflections on the report. He suggested that one could get the impression from reading the report that American liberties are more endangered from its own intelligence apparatus than our external enemies. Not only this but it puts an intelligence activity into the mold of a strict moral code. In a world like this, such severely limits the purpose of its existence. Not without some irony the Wall Street Journal’s editorial concludes, “Maybe the next annual report will tell us a little more about how our adversaries’ intelligence operations are faring as the committee continues.” Such good ethics that have been formulated, of course, look for the enemy to also obey the rules. Otherwise, out of sheer necessity, the old adage will be resurrected about fighting fire with fire.

As a Christian, and for a Christian, we have not the least quarrel with the maxim, “Honesty is the best policy.” However, we wonder in a cloak and dagger world if there is wisdom in putting our intelligence agents and spies in a moral straight-jacket.

This world is not the kingdom of Christ in its rule with a rod of iron aspect. That is coming. Now grace reigns and

accomplishes its righteousness on this principle. It is no wonder, then, that the present phase of the Lord's kingdom is described as a "mystery" (Matthew 13). Until our Lord comes to literally reign the course of this world is swayed by "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The Christian is not of this world. If normally adjusted to his faith he will exercise a good conscience Godward and manward. As such he is often the prey of the unscrupulous. Instead of insisting on his rights he is admonished rather to "suffer yourselves to be defrauded" (1 Corinthians 6:7). In times of persecution the believer has no recourse but to his God. His calling is to suffer on behalf of righteousness.

The nation of Israel was to obey and submit the outcome to the Lord who had ever proved Himself worthy of such trust. That is one thing, but to jeopardize this multi-everything nation to moral technicalities is another matter. Of course, where there is faith in a living, righteous God then one can afford to exercise the right as he sees it and leave the outcome to God's overruling providence. Such will be able to say whatever betide, "Even so it seemed good in thy sight." The Christian can trust his God and not carry a big stick. The United States had better opt for both.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Fundamentalism

This word of little significance a while back has leaped into widespread significance particularly in the world of Islam. It signifies a return to the basics of a religion and becomes a force behind political drives. The Islamic world, for a millennium a sleeping giant, has been quickened and made to be a convenient tool against the great SATAN — a secular world. The Ayatollah of Iran is the titular head and example of the extremists. Their propaganda or selling point is salvation from Western corruption such as the influence of soap operas, movies, mixed bathing, alcohol and secularism. Such feel that they have a messianic mission to convert all the followers of Islam. If successful it would be a formidable threat to the world's supply of oil. Also, there are restless pockets of sympathizers throughout the Arab world. The one local barrier that exists is Iraq which has held out against Iran's grand designs by six years of war. After that the only nation that could balance Iran's power is Egypt whose present loyalty to the democratic process will come under increasing pressure. Egypt has a large fifth column of Fundamentalists. The fire behind all of this rivalry, killings, hate and cupidity is the undisputed presence of Israel in the area and the vast oil reserves.

As to our understanding of prophecy concerning the end times, we use this term in a very general way and avoid

details. Personally, F. W. Grant is my mentor on the interpretation of the Revelation. However, few could disagree who have given the subject of prophecy a candid inquiry that there are two distinct lineups of the nations. One is for Israel and the other fanatically committed to Israel's annihilation. Again, using the term generally, we see the West supportive of Israel as the only reliable ally in the critical area. On the other hand, the Arabs, at loggerheads over other issues, are unified in their antipathy for Israel.

The Old Testament prophets were principally occupied with the lands to their East and North, excepting Daniel. This was from where their enemies came, the Assyrians and Nebuchadnezzar. In Ezekiel we have the King of the North and his allies again invading the promised land.

The New Testament sees a Western Empire under its undisputed Caesar making a seven-year covenant with the Jews (Rev. 13).

The term "Fundamentalist" has arisen to significance in America. It is an ardently religious segment of society centering around a literal interpretation of the Bible, and pro-lifers, many joining protest marches. It represents a decided recoil from the secularization of society. They form a voting block that no political aspirant can afford to ignore. Extremism begets extremism and polarizes nations and society which can get into the hands of the bigots. The danger is to get so involved in moral issues at the expense of neglecting collective prayer and Bible study.

Much Harm

The Iran-Contra probe, already costing four million dollars, brings to mind an observation of Solomon, “One sinner destroyeth much good” (Eccles. 9:18). The President in his speech on August 12th said, “Just look at the damage that’s been done and the time that has been lost.” He went on to describe the affair as the “Iran-Contra mess” and added that it was a saga of “lies, leaks, divisions and mistakes.” There is the possibility that all of the truth will never come to light. There are two reasons for this conclusion: Casey, head of the CIA, had his finger prints all over the covert operations. His secrets have gone with him to the grave and also much of the damaging printed data has been shredded. However, we live in a world where “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known” (Luke 12:2). This applies to all who are not sheltered by the blood of Christ. A fair trial awaits every sinner at the Great White Throne of judgment. Well might the prophet ask, “What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee”? (Jeremiah 13:21). At that final assize there will be no cover-ups.

The televised hearings of Colonel Oliver North last summer created a national sensation. This uniformed, highly decorated Vietnam hero, handsome, delightfully intelligent and articulate, charmed millions of his viewers, insomuch that some sparked him for the Presidency. A living James Bond, ignoring red tape and with an earned “can do” reputation, North was motivated by his own ideas, right or wrong. Actually, his patriotism championed by his superiors has dangerously muddied the waters of the U.S.’s foreign policy. This Ollmania shows how a majority can be mesmerized by a

personality with an abundance of charisma. This may be an exaggerated example, but the principle is there. Napoleon and Hitler appointed themselves as men of destiny and were so until providentially cut down like Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4). We have yet to see a man arise described as a composite “beast” which all the world will wonder after (Rev. 13). He will have all the outward trappings that will sway a confederacy of nations. The world will have plunged into such a crisis that this Satan-possessed man will be hailed as a last and only hope. He is to be destroyed at the second coming of Christ and at the establishment of His kingdom.

How different was the Lord Jesus, fully accredited as Messiah, King of the Jews, but who came as the meek and lowly One seen voluntarily washing His disciples’ feet. He was certainly not the choice of the world, particularly the entrenched religious element. What grace has been wrought in the heart of some to acclaim Him, “King of kings and Lord of lords”! They are those who have continued with Him in His temptations. To each He says, “I appoint unto you a kingdom” (Luke 22:29). Well might we pray, “Thy kingdom come.” The hearings have been an education to some of us. We have learned more of how the government works, or should work. Also, some of the operations must needs be behind closed doors. A case in point were the preliminaries before Nixon went to China. Henry Kissinger’s advance trip proved a successful secret mission. Some feel there was a genuine opportunity to open Iran, but now all has been bungled. One letter to the editor in the “Wall Street Journal” read, “The Iran-Contra hearings really set the stage for the most

disgraceful spectacle the American people have ever witnessed." Again a quote from the same source, "The hemorrhage of sinister materials, the cascading revelations of secret talks, the detailed reporting of private conversations — all have arctic effect on other governments which take meticulous care of their own secrets." This is still the world's hour and "the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). A born again Christian with an intelligence that Scripture begets, if himself engulfed in politics, may experience what was said of Lot, "that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Pet. 2:8). Christianity has no secrets or initiatory rites; even its mysteries are for those who have advanced sufficiently to be instructed.

When Paul preached to King Agrippa he declared that the subjects of Christianity were not done in a corner (Acts 26:26). May these be the principles of those who seek to serve Him who declared Himself the Light of the world, "but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

The Unavoidable

The United States is a world power whether it wishes to be or not. This entails moral responsibilities that it virtually impossible to run away, from. To do so would leave one world power, Russia. Certainly that nation with its ideology, aspires to such. We, because of our view of Bible prophecy, look for a United Europe to eventually be the dominant world power. As the nations that once comprised the Old Roman Empire become

increasingly aware of their peril, this is reasonably foreseeable (Rev. 13).

The legacy of the Vietnam War has drastically changed the foreign policy of the United States. There must be no direct use of our forces to counter Soviet insurgencies, as was done in Korea and Vietnam. The resort to dialogue (detente) has no rapport with those whose only ambition is power. The other option, the so-called "pious isolationism" by its critics, is incapable of squaring up to the ugly designs with which we are surrounded. As a result, a pragmatic approach has been developed by the so-called Reagan Doctrine. It has little promise of total victory but does hold the possibility of containing Communism — a last resort short of committing U.S. forces to armed combat. Some call the situation "bush war," others an attempt to wear down and exhaust the patience of one or the other side first. The stakes are so high, the two sides so polarized, that neither dares run away. We naturally wonder how long this type of proxy warfare can continue. The introduction to World War II was the so-called "phony war."

Since the close of the last major war we have had "the cold war." Its temperature has varied but with a Communist bridgehead in Central America and the risky situation in the Persian Gulf, matters are getting uncomfortably hot.

If Satan is not "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), who is? The Lord Jesus said, "I pray not for the world" (John 17:9). In His rejection the world has taken sides, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). His holy presence here had brought out all of the latent venom in the human heart. Since then the world has not

changed. Our Lord's prayer for the world in the Second Psalm is that He might come and smash the nations "as a potter's vessel." It is a mercy for the world that He does not yet pray for it. But how soon will the present grace cease? "Kiss the Son, lest ye be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little" (Psa. 2:12). We appreciate the lady who was confused over the different interpretations of prophecy and wisely said, "Well, I'm a pan millenialist." "What is that?" was the rejoinder, "It's all going to 'pan' out all right." All of the different schools wind up triumphantly with the last chapters of the Revelation.

Worship is the believer's response of all that he is — mind, emotions, will, and body — to all that God is and says and does.

—Warren W. Wiersbe

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Inerrancy

Today in the most unexpected Christian circles two sharp and very large wedges have made threatening penetrations. The mainstream of Christianity from the beginning has included in its orthodoxy the impeccability of Jesus Christ and the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Regarding the Person of Christ there are those who are teaching that He so emptied Himself of deity and made Himself so perfectly human that His knowledge was limited; and in the temptations He could have sinned but did not. While the first believers of this teaching remain ultraconservative in other areas, it can hardly be so with the next generation who will push the point further on to its logical conclusion. For instance, how can we be sure He was correct in the great major revelations He brought from the Father, yet be so limited, as is implied, when He inquired as to where Lazarus' grave was? The temptations have been considered by the most reputed theologians as tests to prove He could not sin.

We, however, on this occasion are more disturbed over the many so-called evangelicals who are uncomfortable with the statement that the Bible is inerrant — meaning that the Bible is absolutely without error. Allowances are made for copyists' mistakes. Yet many of these have since been corrected by later copies of the Biblical manuscripts that have come to light. Originally, what

was known as German higher criticism made the human mind the arbiter of what is actually scripture and what has been supplied by unknown editors. At one time this was entertained only by the so-called intellectual big shots, now the aim is lowered to buck shots — the lesser breed of would-be theologians. A well-known private seminary founded only a few years ago on a pre-millennial position and an inerrant Bible has, as far as we can discover, repudiated both. One has only to read Dr. Harold Lindsell's two books, The Battle for the Bible and The Bible in the Balance, to learn how some of the mighty have fallen and their weapon of war, the Sword of the Spirit, is impaired. Fortunately, many who deny the inerrancy of the Scriptures do not display the consequences of this denial in life or adherance to the remaining vital doctrines of Christianity. Once the wedge of error has penetrated the least bit, others will certainly exploit it and drive the error ever deeper. Already from an "evangelical" professor Paul's teaching on women in Ephesians is rabbinical and not Christian. Now there is added to this the denial that Paul actually wrote Ephesians. The main-line seminaries that have been comfortable with inerrancy for a generation or more advocate that the Bible's teaching on "gays" needs to be updated, and so it goes.

Those who believe in inerrancy are lampooned as worshipping a "paper pope" or possessed with a "Book mentality." We once heard of certain Bible readings described as a society for the mutual admiration of the Bible (would that there were more). The moment this writer was born again fifty-five years ago he was immediately endowed with the recognition that the Bible was God's Word. The objections he possessed up until

then melted by the torrent of truth that confronted him. This gift or endowment he considers an accompaniment of salvation. We wonder about those who lack such an essential evidence.

One who cannot go along with the absolutism of inerrancy may not be free of a bit of academic snobbery when he wrote, “but some eschatological fanatic who believes in inerrancy is safe.” Premillennialism is generally scorned by those who have been surfaced by the present controversy. In his book, The Basis of the Premillennial Faith, Dr. Charles C. Ryrie has a significant paragraph. He writes, “Allegorical interpretation fosters modernism. As has often been pointed out, it is almost impossible to find a premillennial liberal or modernist. Among the Brethren, who are supposed to be the founders of modern literalism, liberalism is practically unknown. On the other hand, the great body of modernistic Protestantism is avowedly amillennial. Thus, the allergorical method of amillennialism is a step toward modernism.” As in all such controversies Christ is the answer. It is enough when He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” and “Thy Word is truth.”

Who’s Next?

The United States is again catching the Presidential fever as would-be aspirants commence candidating quite early these days. The number of applicants is large considering only one will win the awesome prize. We are fortunate to be living in a country where the governed select those who are to govern them. Of all the systems of government that man has devised, democracy can allow the greatest amount of freedom to all its citizens. Yet it can be the most fragile if we consider

Nebuchadnezzar's image whose feet were composed of a mixture of iron and miry clay, no doubt symbolic of the voice of the masses and insufficient iron to control them. In order to grant civil liberties to so many elements in a very pluralistic society there must exist a responsible majority. The absence of this contributing balance tends to make democracy unworkable. Witness where it has been tried in what we call the "third world." Democracy, then, must exercise self discipline. When this is lost there is the threat of anarchy or a forceful imposition of the restraints that have been neglected. The English statesman Edmund Burke observingly said, "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more must be without."

So far our nation has shown very little interest in self-restraint. To insure the continuance of the so called "good life" we tolerate a near galloping inflation. Then there are the fearsome crowds with their nonnegotiable demands. Let the other fellow suffer, not them. The economic pay day that can only be postponed by inflationary spending will make the inevitable collapse that much more complete when it does come. Herein lies the weakness of democracy. The electorate is not likely to choose the man who offers blood, sweat and tears until the crisis, that could have been avoided by some obvious wisdom, has arrived.

The book of Judges often repeats this refrain, "There was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In the three hundred year period of the judges the nation was a theocracy. When the people would make Gideon a king after his military success he knowingly replied, "I will not rule over you,

neither shall my son rule over you: The Lord shall rule over you."(Judges 8:23). God only demanded obedience to His laws and in return He would defend them and assured them that their land would flow with milk and honey. The opposite would occur for unfaithfulness. The nation proved itself no Match for such a blessing — hence the need for a king. When the kings did come the nation's density revolved around the spiritual caliber of the king. A good king brought national blessings to his reign. Witness what a blessing David was to his nation.

In Israel's day, when the judges had failed along with the priesthood in Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2), then came God's final remedy, a king. The Lord Jesus did not deny that He was a King when before Pilate. When Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold your King," He was contemptuously rejected by the cry, "Crucify Him. We have no king but Caesar." If the world were fully acquainted with what the Lord Jesus stands for and given a choice it would still be a Caesar or a Barabbas. It will not be until the world has had enough of its Caesars that again God's final answer will be a King. Not only over Israel, but a "King of kings" on a worldwide scale. Following His coming for His Bride, the Church, He will come again to this world to take His throne as David's rightful heir. This time not to be spit upon but to be exonerated where He was crucified, and He is to rule with a rod of iron. In the meantime the mystery of iniquity must reach its apogee. This will result in the manifestation of the man of sin, the antichrist who is to come and who will be the embodiment of sin. He will so represent man's ideals that all the world will wonder after him. The world has always recognized its own and run after them. It would

seem that the world is fast ripening to receive this deceiver.

Then will man's proud waves be halted; evil will never ultimately take over. All will be as the sacred poet wrote, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

Then will come the cry, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

Papacy

The year '79 has prospects, we judge, of being declared the year of the Pope. Certainly his presence can claim bigger crowds than any other living personality. This goes for behind the Iron Curtain too. His native Poland went into a rare jubilation. Our own pluralistic society, if numbers are meaningful, reveals that Romanism can muster an impressive following. Rome, along with most other expressions of Christianity, has been on the skids in the Western world since World War I. Instead, materialism has captivated the minds. This has been accomplished with a prevailing godlessness.

Speaking of atheism, and that is what the modern attitude amounts to, Sir Robert Anderson has given his observation, "Atheism is always a revolt against a false religion, and never maintains its hold upon the minds of men." A recoil from non-religion to religion could be in the offing.

Unless a man is born again and endowed with a Holy Spirit taught understanding of God's Word he will generally adjust himself to one of two options. He will become a religionist or activate his mind along rationalistic lines. This was quite evident in our Lord's

day. The Pharisees were unquestionably orthodox but buried the truth under their accretions. On the other hand, the Sadducees denied the resurrection, angels and spirit (Acts 23:8). The religion of the natural man often amounts to superstition and credulity. In the case of the Roman Catholics, they have no difficulty in believing in weeping Madonnas or that the elements of the Mass become the literal body and blood of Christ and become anew an efficacious sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Nor can we account for Catholic charismatics possessing no sensitivity to the uncertain salvation the system at best has to offer.

The central and distinguishing feature of the Romanist system is the Mass. The pretense of having a sacrifice still offered upon the earth, when the Word of God declares that “by one offering Christ has perfected forever them that are sanctified,” is making a return to the weakness of Judaism with its repeated sacrifices which never made the comers perfect (Heb. 10). The once forever sacrifice of Christ has brought about for faith, “where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin.” On the other hand, the Council of Trent (Romanism) anathematizes those who profess to know that they are saved.

The pompous ceremonies and incantations make Romanism a sensuous religion. It impresses man’s religious sensibilities. There is no embarrassment when it claims to be the only true church. Its boast is sanctity, catholicity, apostolicity, infallibility and perpetual visibility. As to this kind of infallibility, J. N. Darby defines it as, “Take it for true without inquiry.” (Collected Writings, Vol. 18, p. 35). Isaiah said, “My people love to have it so.”

This is not a criticism of persons but of a system. There are no doubt those in its fold who have individually penetrated the added traditions and reached out to Christ alone. Only such are saved, whether Catholic or Protestant, and by the baptism of the Spirit made members of Christ's Body. Such is not always as visible as it should be. The true Catholic Church is in the world, but not of it. Thank God amid Christendom's confusion, "The Lord knoweth them that are His."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

“A Burdensome Stone” (Zech. 12:3)

While momentous events are happening elsewhere, they have been eclipsed by the madness in the Middle East. It is a small part of the world’s land mass, but it invokes the concern of every major power. It has been termed “the crossroads of the world.” The Bible lover can appreciate why God made this the covenanted home of His ancient people. The Moslem sees things differently but arrives at the same conclusion when he says, “Allah didn’t put oil in the Arab world by accident.”

This has made Jerusalem a strategic consideration for all four of the ancient world empires and often a hotly contested scene of armed hostilities. The Crusaders made it their goal but finally lost it to the Arabs. The opening of the Suez Canal enhanced its importance in the 19th century, and the great powers saw the expedience of leaving the area in charge of Turkish inertia.

World War I drove Turkey back to her own borders, and Jewish Zionism, at Arab expense, has kept the area a virtual warcamp to the present. All of this, the Lord Jesus said, “is the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:8). Present events make it strongly appear that we are near the end of what has been a long “beginning.” The episodes of strife that have concerned Jerusalem have been but rehearsals of a yet greater prophetic event,

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem” (Zech. 16:2). Already another of Zechariah’s prophecies is in acute stages of realization, “Behold I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples.” At least President Reagan should appreciate this prophecy as he has to do business with its feisty Prime Minister Begin who defiantly says, “The Jews kneel but to God.”

Religion In Disrepute

At present it is Beirut that is focusing attention, but the real source of the trouble is the possession of a Jewish Jerusalem in the area. Adding to the frustration is the presence of three conflicting religions that contribute to the fanatical madness that requires such a small pretext to inflame passions. The recent massacres of Arabs were performed by so called “Christian” Lebanese.

The Moslems would have no quarter for the Jews if the power to do so was in their hands. Farther away, the Northern Ireland atrocities have also a religious connotation. The irony is that these religions have a Biblical source. As far as Christianity is concerned the critical world does not appreciate the difference between profession and possession. The Bible is careful to state its ethical standards: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). We can appreciate “born again” Christians who must make choices in such a hostile environment. They need the guidance and consolation of the Scriptures, and our prayers.

A Leader

In situations where mindless killings can only go on indefinitely the need is for a strong man who can call a halt to the blood bath. For a dizzy few days it appeared that Lebanon had its man of destiny — Bashir Gemayel. He and his cabinet died from a bomb explosion, obviously the work of his Arab enemies. He has now shared the fate of other moderates who have attempted to come to terms with the Jews. We call to mind Abdullah of Jordan and Anwar Sadat. This recent killing has sent American and European “peace keeping forces” back to Lebanon.

The threat of another such killing now goes to Bashir’s brother who, they say, does not command the popular support that was his brother’s. Certainly the man that can bring peace, any kind of peace, in these strife-torn lands will be hailed as some kind of saviour. The present presents fertile ground for the rise of the antichrist. Or are we witnessing just another rehearsal? If so, each one gets better. The seven-year covenant that the “prince” of Daniel 9:26-27 makes with the “many” (Jews still blinded by unbelief) will include assuring these Jews of their security and the restoration of their temple worship. This “prince” is “the little horn” of Daniel 7:8. He, in order to be a supreme dictator, roots up three lesser “horns” (powers).

Could they be Arab nations still fanatically opposed to the Jews? Anyway, it is obvious that someone or something must soon appear and subdue this caldron of religious and national strife.

Why Intervene?

The reasons behind the occupation of the present "peace-keeping forces" appear to be two. If the West does not, Russia will, and side with the vast amount of anti-Semitism that prevails. This would bring on a confrontation that all who are wise dread. Then there is the oil that must be kept flowing to the outside world. The massacres afford an excellent pretext for this military action, as well as being a moral necessity. If peace is brought about by outside interference it is not hard to envision the Israelis being coaxed to retreat to dictated borders with a guarantee that if attacked the same outside powers will come to her aid. Somewhere in the yet prophetic outlook we have Israel as described in Ezekiel 38:11: "And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely … to take a spoil." This invader of Israel is said to be "Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters" (Ex. 38:6).

In the event of Iran (Persia) winning its war with Iraq it would not be much of a strain on the imagination to hear the cry, "On to Jerusalem," with Russia in full accord. This proposal to annihilate Israel will be completely cancelled by divine intervention. Dr. C. I. Scofield's footnote on the chapter is illuminating. We quote it in part: "That destruction (that is of Gentile power) should fall at the climax of the last mad attempt to exterminate the remnant of Israel in Jerusalem is congruous with divine justice and the covenants." Out of this crucible of fire, this "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), the nation is to discover its Messiah, Jesus Christ (Zech. 12:10), and as the New Testament affirms, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come

out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 12:26).

Certainly startling events are happening in our 20th century. So many events fit into Bible prophecy. To close our eyes to God's revelation of the future is to ignore large portions of the Scripture. Those who ignore prophecy are tempted to make their own forecasts. Such cannot help but see Israel eventually forced to capitulate. (If her enemies had the upper hand at this moment the Beirut massacre would be in the hundredfold.) As to the world at large, science sees that it has dug its own pit — our globe to wind up an atomic cinder. Bible prophecy, linked to the dispensational school, refutes such a doomsday. The Jew is yet to fall into God's favor and become the head of the nations and no longer the tail. This tortured world is to have its golden age when nations shall at last beat their swords into ploughshares (Isa. 2:1-4).

In his comments on the 9th psalm, F. W. Grant has this to say, "The psalm has for its subject the contemplation of that throne of righteousness which the earth has so long desired to see and found not. Christ as the King of righteousness has been refused, and the world has sought all kinds of substitutes for Him in vain! Yet the 'desire of all nations' shall come, and shall be found in Him. He shall be, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'"

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Success

The two political champions of the present are President Reagan and Britain's Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. First, let us look at the latter. Britain has just survived the longest significant strike in its history. The coal miners had been out for nearly a year over the closing of nonproductive mines. Consequently, districts and miners were thrown into economic suspense. A less conservative government would have collapsed as when Heath faced a similar situation. If the sympathetic Labor Party had been in power the miners would not have suffered a decisive defeat. The outcome has further identified "the Iron Lady." Mrs. Thatcher says she needs two full terms to turn England around. At the moment her chances for such look excellent. By May 1987 she will break Asquith's (1908-1916) longest stay at 10 Downing Street. The struggle for national survival is a costly affair for the losers and unprofitable. On the other hand, socialism's concepts of equality soften the spirit to survive in a competitive world. What's the answer? Our Lord who said, "For ye have the poor with you always" (Mark 14:7), did approve of being the recipient of a costly anointing.

An Englishman writes amid the amenities of the welfare state, "We live in a chilly, loveless world where, in political life, the stronger nations exploit the weaker ones, and these in turn goad and irritate the more

powerful by pathetic explosions of narrow nationalism. In social circles business is often carried on as if we were a pack of wolves instead of a band of brothers.

“Men are ruled by the love of money, a root of every kind of evil, and by the cruel laws of supply and demand, which, in their inexorable working, fling out the unfit and the aged on the scrap heaps of society.”

In the U.S. the President is looking realistically at the farm problem. The billions spent on the farmers in subsidies have led to their present plight — enormous surpluses. No doubt the dragonian free market would eventually have brought about adjustments, but not without casualities.

The voice of humanity has always been, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15), especially when confronted with the claims of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Few are saying when brought face to face with the command to repent, “Take the world but give me Jesus.” Christianity is never presented as solving the world’s problems. It can do much for the individual economically (the Christian can be wise in the use of what means happens to be at his disposal), physically (he has peace of mind and no call for alarms), and accepts the present as part of the disciplines that point toward a bright and glorious eternity. Christianity does not take the bumps out of life, but through them we learn to appreciate that “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24).

Geneva

A characteristic way the world feels obliged to go about its business is to be seen in the present arms talks. The

ostensible purpose is to curtail the buildup of atomic weaponry. At the same time Defense Secretary Weinberger informs the committees that Russia is feverishly at work in experimentation and research to make its arsenal superior to that of the U.S. The U.S. can hardly be exempted from doing the same. The President executed an intense lobbying campaign that enabled the additional MX's to pass through Congress, the reason being that it was needed as a bargaining chip. The star war research is to go on apace. It is obvious that each side harbors its suspicions.

All this reflects the kind of world in which our lot is cast. Even when treaties have with their usual fanfare been concluded, they are seldom honored. Belgian neutrality was not honoured by the Germans in World War I. Hitler's unkept word with Chamberlain comes to mind, and Pearl Harbour must not be forgotten.

Daniel tells of two rival kings, those of Egypt and Syria, and their failure to secure peace through negotiation. This prophet relates mostly to "the times of the Gentiles," a large bulk of which has been fulfilled. That is a reliable indicator of those yet remaining. Getting back to the two particular kings mentioned, their actions are past and authenticated history. Yet their deliberations have a modern ring, "And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak less at one table; but it shall not prosper" (Dan. 11:27).

The present deliberations are certainly preferable to an out-and-out arms race. At Geneva the interests of both sides seem to be mutual and it is possible that the talks may go on for months, even years. That the U.S. is the chief actor poses a problem for us premillenniallists, for

we find no Biblical place for the U.S. in prophecy. The late Irishman, William Kelly, in his commentary on Joel wrote over a hundred years ago, “So as to America, I conceive that the young giant power which has grown so fast will sink still faster, probably through intestinal quarrel, but assuredly somehow before that day comes. They will break up into different fragments. Their prime object is to maintain political unity. This is their great ambition, and though it may appear to stand and advance, as everything ambitious is apt to prosper for a time, it will all be blown down before long. For it is a remarkable fact that there is no place in prophecy for a vast influential power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long retained its cohesion. Is it conceivable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by its disolution? However, I particularly wish everyone to understand that this is merely drawn from the general principles of the Word of God.”

Kelly’s Scripturally oriented foresight added, “India, I presume will be part of the northeastern system spoken of here and elsewhere. The British will lose possession of India, as nationalities wake up to yearn after their own distinct position. And such is even now the tendency, which prophecy distinctly recognizes as characterizing the end of the age. The Russian empire, as being itself northeastern, is destined to be the suzerian power there. They may not be aware of the role divine prophecy attributes to them, of their immense success, and of their total destruction under the hand of Jehovah. But Scripture is clear (compare Ez. 38-39). Divine judgment will not slumber.”

Debates

The leader of the “Moral Majority” movement, Jerry Falwell, has developed into an articulate exponent of Puritanical ethics. He has held his own in lectures and open debates in such hotbeds of liberalism as Harvard and Yale. In a televised debate with Senator Edward Kennedy this Pilate and Herod combination aired their views on Africa in general and apartheid in particular. Here the display of cordiality was indeed praiseworthy. It is evident that destiny has raised up a voice for conservatism that is now being heard.

Now Dr. Falwell has graced Oxford University, noted for its wrangling and ventilation of ideas. The main subject was nuclear arms —something more ruffling than apartheid. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, little considered otherwise, has won attention. David Lange, a liberal, has closed New Zealand’s ports to American warships to show his abhorrence of nuclear arms. In the debate with Falwell he said, “There are some things worse than living under Communism,” which he said includes starvation in Ethiopia (better red than fed). At the same time Lange showed his inconsistency when challenged to pull out of ANZUS he refused, saying, “I prefer to change it from within.” He wants the protection but not the responsibility. It is pretty well conceded that the only thing that saved Europe from being overrun at the close of World War 2 by the overwhelming forces of the Soviet was the deterrent of U.S. atomic weapons.

America has the nasty job of policing the free world. We dread to think what would happen if the U.S. would decide to shrink within her own borders. New Zealand

and other small nations would soon be victims of ambitious aggressors. It's the kind of world humans have always lived in. We are learning, or should be, the reality of the fall in Eden's paradise. The bliss of sinless innocence has been forever lost. Those who turn from this world's false ways, and take Christ's redemption are assured of a place in the Father's house (John 14) which, says Paul, is "far better."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Economics

Back in the 60's the world had well recovered from the devastations of World War II. It seemed that the dismal science — economics — was yielding to the new ideas and intent on prosperity for all. No more great depressions and numerous bank failures — there was sufficient underpinning to take care of both. China was taking the "Great Leap," Kruschev was banging his shoe in the U.N. and foretelling that the Soviet economy would "bury" the West. The British thought they were developing a cozy welfare state. The backward nations were getting the expertise and money to bring them too, into the orbit of prosperity.

Just now this rosy outlook is being blurred. All of the diverse experiments are in trouble. Even the Far East countries depending so heavily on the buying power of the U.S. are not exempt.

The October plunge of the stock market and its creation of an air of uncertainty reminds me of a verse I read recently (Isaiah 29:14), "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people; for the wisdom of the wise men shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall be hid." It would appear that President Reagan's supply-side economics is gaining as much suspect as that of John Maynard Keynes. Both systems beaten out by philosophers and

financiers are laced with worldly wisdom. God often allows the pursuits of men to run their course. Nebuchadnezzar could boast of his conquests only to be brought low by God; Belshazzar reached a climax in his hedonism until he was weighed in God's balances. Every form of government (none without their good points) has eventually failed or is now being sorely tested. God wants men to discover that this world is blighted with the Edenic curse. Like Abraham we should "look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Such will not be disappointed. History has and will be, 'til Jesus comes as found in Ezekiel 21:27. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He comes whose right it is: and I will give it Him."

The present financial uncertainties have been referred to as "a meltdown." In other words, bringing ballooning stocks down to realistic worth. The adage says, "It's an ill wind that does not do some good." Now our politicians are belatedly compelled to do something to reduce the nation's alarming budget. In other words, there is a return to basics. With financial orthodoxy so much in disarray, it will be very informative to discover what elective officials can accomplish. The Christian also sometimes needs a real jolt in his life to bring him into new grips with God — "examine yourselves."

The pessimists are beginning to wonder if history is not about to repeat itself. In 1929 the stock market had a dramatic fall and was the harbinger of the great depression. Note, that it is not the Christian now that is the calamity howler but rather the realists of science and finance. Those Christians who have majored on eschatology have for nearly two centuries seen a world

ripening for divine judgments. Certainly a financial wizard is yet to come with dictatorial control over economics, but only world circumstances could reach such a desperate stage as to justify the rise of “the beast out of the earth” who causeth, “that no man might buy or sell” (Rev. 13:11-18).

Rehearsals

Last fall the Los Angeles area witnessed a considerable earthquake. The scientists are giving no comfort as they say the big one is yet to come, and anytime within the next 30 years. This latest shake is just a reminder that the big one will be far more extensive.

At the time of this writing Wall Street is in a state of jitters. Clever safeguards imposed since the 1929 crash so far are working, but one wonders. The traders appear to have lost a lot of confidence — they ought to know. Unless dragonian steps are taken by a timid government to bring the national debt under some control, financial prognosticators see a big money upset in the offing.

While there is some dismantling of atomic missiles, it has been discovered that the Soviets have a tremendous build-up of chemical weapons. Now the U.S. sees the need of catching up. Indeed in such a world the only way to keep the peace is to constantly prepare for war. Many in all this see the build-up for the big one. This means the last two World Wars were but rehearsals of the Great Tribulation.

Maybe the cry to the watchman in Isaiah 21:11 is in order here, “Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?” His reply is significant, “The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire,

enquire ye, enquire ye: return come." Giving this reply a Christian setting the morning is the prospect for the redeemed when the Lord cometh for His own — a morning without clouds. At the same time the night comes for the unsaved —"the blackness of darkness forever." Then there is the invitation to inquire.

The impending events may cause an alarm cry to God for light. Or to quote again from Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

War in the Persian Gulf

The significance of the two wars in Korea and Vietnam was never considered vital by a large number of Americans. This was attested by the riots and unrest in the universities. Our commitment to the treaties made by Dulles was hard to explain to the average man. The present contest in the Persian Gulf is, or should be, more understandable. Oil has become the main ingredient to keep modern civilization humming and prosperous. Allowing the enemies of such to gain the mastery here would occasion the remaining sources of oil to be insufficient and prices to skyrocket. The prospect of such a crisis has triggered our otherwise reluctant allies to action. A multi-national armada of naval power is ample witness to the concern of the free world. Also, a meddlesome Russia must not be counted out.

Where the issues are sufficiently demanding and singular enough to include the interests of many nations, concerted action soon develops. Maybe this will throw some light on a statement made by our Lord and related to His second coming, "For wheresoever the

carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28). The carcass here could be apostate Israel under the sway of a false Messiah, the antichrist. At the same time Jerusalem has become "a burdensome stone for all people" (Zech. 12:3). This attracts "all nations against Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:2). During the great tribulation the interest of "all nations" will be sufficiently challenged to justify their armies for or against Jerusalem. The prophetic Word has all the time been depicting the Holy Land as the gathering contre for the greatest of all wars, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). At the present we only observe trends and principles that make the prophetic Scripture feasible. Just now Iran appears to be "the carcass."

At the moment the worldly prognosticators see a long contest of wills in the Gulf. As U.S. News plainly puts it, "The threat to this flow of oil and its preservation in friendly hands is a direct geopolitical challenge to the West." There is no secret to the grandiose ambitions of Iran to dominate the whole area. (See Ezekiel 38:16). So, some of us cannot be blamed if we with bated breath watch the trends. Again, resorting to worldly wisdom, some are inclined not to push too hard for a cease-fire in the Iraq-Iran War as the world is much safer while the two countries are fighting each other. Henry Kissinger's observation is, "The best news would be if both lost" and consequent exhaustion could eliminate the radicals and make room for moderates. The Christian realizes that his God is the God of battles. He is the final arbiter, only He will eventually "make wars to cease" (Psa. 46:9). God, time and again, makes Himself responsible for

world upheavals: “Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth.” Or, “Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6). On the other hand, world unrest is but fallen man expressing his plight, “the wicked are like the troubled sea.” This obviously is not the age of the Prince of peace. The present is the age of His High Priestly succour to His own who have been made by their spiritual new birth “pilgrims and strangers” in this present scene.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Our Modern Pundits

Man has always been inquisitive regarding the future. Sorcery and oracles (crystal balls, astrology, etc.) still tend to relieve the non-Christians of some of their anxiety and feed their credulity. The Bible is full of prophecy but even many Christians shy away from it as too difficult to understand, or are confused by so many schools of thought on the subject. Also prophecy, along with all other Bible study, requires a measurably consistent life from those to whom it would yield its treasures. The occult has no moral stipulations. Then there is that other cluster of prognosticators of which we wish to write. Their predictions are based on the Wall Street fluctuations, price of oil or rate of inflation. Nor must we overlook some of the distressing conclusions that some dour scientists and environmentalists are voicing.

Ever since F. D. Roosevelt took the United States off the gold standard our social planners and politicians have been enjoying a heyday. Promising something for everybody, “excelsior” could easily have become their watchword. Of course, similar to communism, socialism considers man little more than a stomach. His only kingdom is his middle kingdom — the one under the belt. Our Lord, quoting from Moses, said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Few, it seems, care

to call to mind the parable of the rich farmer. After becoming a worldly success story he said to himself, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). His well planned materialism was short-lived, as he died that night. Our optimists of yesterday must be chagrined as the stark laws of reality come crashing down upon all of us. You cannot spend yourself rich. The economy of the whole nation is threatened with the continuation of deficit spending. Planned economies will never introduce us to the millennium. Man’s fallen nature is ignored. In spite of all the flowery oratory of the expected great society, God’s word is more aligned with the time and states that things will “wax worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13).

The savants that are always promising us a better tomorrow must realize that their predictions depend upon money. Just now we are compelled to listen to those who know most about finance. David Rockefeller, chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank, forecasts “treacherous economic seas and gale force winds enough to capsize” our fond hopes. Economics has been called, not without good reason, “the dismal science.” Keynes labeled gold “a barbarous relic” for a good reason — it meant fiscal discipline. Nor can we wholly blame government that is in the grip of the majority. Recently Canada made a bold attempt to bring some saneness to its coffers. Its perpetrator was quickly voted out of office. A lady mayor of the city of Chicago is wrestling with that city’s red ink and her popularity immediately plummeted. The Scripture reveals to us that the “last days” will be characterized by “lawlessness.” When the so-called “money

tree" (government spending) exhausts itself, then we will really see the mobs taking to the streets.

Another group of fearfuls are the armchair commentators. Their insight into geo-politics is often convincing. They are the fellows in war time that can tell the generals how to win the battles. From this source we are hearing that the super powers are heating up for World War III. They see Russia as having armed herself several times more than would be required for her self-defense. Also, she feels that her destiny is to promote world communism. The role of Russia in Africa through the presence of thousands of "advisors" and proxy Cuban soldiers occasions alarm. Corolary with this is the invasion of Afghanistan, a pincer movement where both adventures meet at the Red Sea and thus control Arab oil.

In all of this the world is just catching up with what the Bible has been prophesying all along. Many of our most respected Bible teachers have understood that Ezekiel 38-39 refer to Russia in the latter days as making a dash into the Middle East to liquidate Israel and no doubt to grab the oil fields to boot. What our worldly prognosticators do not see or know is how the northern invaders of Palestine are going to meet their doom. God Himself is to vanquish them. A rehearsal of what awaits the future besiegers of Jerusalem is seen in the fate of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib in Isaiah 37:36-38.

Another group of moderns is warning us of a possible doomsday. They are reminding us of the effects of a problem that is becoming almost worldwide. Our wastes are creating dangers in land, sea and air. Already there

are some diseases and premature deaths that can be traced to some type of pollution. One pragmatic scientist writes, “Man is an epidemic, multiplying at a superexponential rate, destroying the environment upon which he depends and threatening his own extinction. He treats the world as a storehouse existing for his delectation; he plunders, rapes, poisions and kills this living system, the biosphere, in ignorance of its workings and its fundamental value.” Back in the 30’s when we were preaching in our gospel tent with a premillennial emphasis we were considered by some as “calamity howlers.” Our warning was that Jesus Christ was coming to judge the world (Acts 17:31) in righteousness. To the scientist a combination of natural causes will bring about doomsday. An editorial along these lines caught our eye: “Despite the horrors of world wars and nuclear weapons, scientists have until recently been generally optimistic about the future. But the voices of doom are being heard with increasing frequency and volume. They are not coming from wild eyed, long haired, robed fanatics carrying placards proclaiming the end of the world tomorrow. The modern doomsdayers are sober, respected, responsible scientists who are warning us that the world as we know it is coming to an end. Fairly soon now.”

The materialist’s horizon extends no further than this world. The Christian knows that this world is not his ultimate home. He, like Abraham, “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). The pressing problems of today are preaching to those who have ears to hear that this world is not the grand finale anyway. God has put “eternity” (Ecc. 3:11 margin) in the heart of every man.

We are made for something more than “to grunt and sweat under this weary life.” Says David, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” Or as the hymn writer has put it, “Things that are not now, nor could be, soon will be our own.”

Just now, the United States is caught up in the hurly-burly connected with the choice of its next President for the next four years. Not without some reflection politics have been defined as “the art of the possible.” Which means no matter what system of government is imposed on the nation it can only at best achieve the possible. Changes and revolutions decide who is to get the biggest slice of cake. Often what amounts to one man’s justice is another’s injustice. Then there is that rock on which all human systems eventually founder; it is that stubborn, intractable, recalcitrant thing which the old theologians called “original sin.” What the nation needs, and the world, is that Man who can do the impossible — “the Man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5). “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Silence Of God

Provoked over the affairs of his day, the great British author Carlyle said, “And worst of all God does nothing about it.” Many today feel equally frustrated over world conditions. A seeming unresponsive heaven is one of the big imponderables that Christian and unbeliever alike face since the close of the apostolic era. The charismatics insist that the miracles of the book of Acts are wanting only because of the prevailing unbelief of the majority of Christians. Our personal observation of such shows that sickness and death among them average out with the rest of us. Why such suffering, cruel oppression and national catastrophies? If there were no God we could conclude that man is just acting out his natural tendencies. The problem arises when we discover the claims of the God of the Bible. How can a God of love and righteousness allow such inequities in His universe? This is included among the mysteries. We are taught that “the mystery of iniquity” has been at work since the days of the apostles, or even more accurately since man’s fall in the Garden of Eden. In Revelation 10:6-7 we are told that there would be “time (“delay,” a better marginal reading) no longer.” At that point, obviously still future, “the mystery of God should be finished.” In other words, there is coming a time when God will break through His now silent heavens and openly intervene in the affairs of men. In the

meantime God is allowing iniquity to head up. The world is to fully know the result of its rejection of the testimony of nature, conscience and the plainest teachings of the Bible. Until God makes His promised open display we must learn to live with a silent heaven. The Christian walks by faith and “not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). God has already made His greatest breakthrough. The first coming of Christ was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), another of the mysteries of God. As a result of this the sin question has been righteously settled for every believer and we await the call, either while still living or at death, “to come up hither.” At the same time God has spoken to the world in terms of finality — “Hath in these last days spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:2). Repetition would only weaken the command to listen.

For God to openly interfere in the affairs of men today would introduce some disturbing problems. Absolute righteousness cannot be partial. From our point of view we would prefer to see the hide taken off the Russians, Khomeini and Castro. Rid us of the drug dealers and pornographic literature. Decisive righteousness would have to catch up with all of us; otherwise where would God stop? Our Lord is going to do that one of these days, “Because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained” — Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). Now, “grace reigns through righteousness.” At the commencement of our Lord’s public ministry He cleansed the temple — set things right. Immediately following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He went again directly to the temple and found it had returned to its original corruption.

Were our Lord to straighten out every crookedness unless it was accompanied by universal regeneration, or His personal presence ruling with “a rod of iron,” affairs would not remain correct very long. The Christian adjusts to the principles of this dispensation — namely, God calling out a people to complete the Church — the body of Christ. Parallel with this the world is ripening for judgment. Governmental judgment upon the nations in time and the great white throne judgment for individuals that are without Christ. The sentences on this occasion will be eternal — unsaved one, “flee from the wrath to come”!

The Battle Is The Lord’s

The outcome of a battle has often been a puzzle to the nations involved. Quite often those espousing a just cause have lost the day. (Is there a just cause when one considers all sides of the issue?) Certainly the patriot says, “My country, right or wrong.” In this country the honest pacifist is given other alternatives. No government can tolerate Kent State type demonstrations and remain long intact. The Christian is to obey all the powers that be (civil government) as far as his Spirit-enlightened conscience permits.

Since World War 2 the United States has been forced into the role of policing the non-commuinist world. The consequent wars we have fought have been so far from our shores and wanting in a Pearl Harbour type blitz that a united battle enthusiasm has generally been wanting. Democracies do not seem to sense danger until it reaches their doorstep. Our “no win” wars are understandable when one considers the atom bomb in the offing. The fear of a nuclear holocost imposes some

sanity in the most responsible quarters, at least up until the present. With very little thanks from those who have benefitted from America's role in keeping Communism out of Western Europe, South Korea and Japan, the cost has been great in lives and material, but no glory. With all of America's wealth and might one is tempted to ask if God is allowing this nation's wings to be clipped?

At this time of writing all of us are wondering what went wrong in our dismal failure to release the hostages held by the Iranians in Tehran. The one who leaves God out of the picture blames bad luck. Some blame poorly serviced or aging equipment. Nor can human error be overlooked. Not many perceive in all of this that God might be wishing to get America's ear. God has a distinctive name, Jehovah Sabboath, and that suggests He is the God of battles. He not only deals with individuals on a salvation basis but has a relationship in a disciplinary way with nations. To such God's sermons can be plagues, devastating storms and bloody wars. The prophet Habakkuk could not understand why God would allow the Chaldeans, more wicked than Judah, to vanquish God's chosen people. The sin of Judah was committed in spite of their privileged enlightenment. Sin is measured by the amount of light we are sinning against. America has enjoyed an unusual share of gospel light. As a consequence, our sins are louder to heaven than those of other nations. We should know better. Abraham Lincoln said he was not so much concerned about wanting God to be on his side; he was anxious to be on God's side. More important than MX missiles and nuclear submarines is a nation whose people are substantially moral. The thousands of evangelical Christians who crowded on to Washington's Mall the last

of April were voicing America's greatest need, repentance toward God, humiliation and a return to God's Word, the Bible. Its message is apropos to all nations. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov.. 14:34).

Right And Wrong

We live in a world of good and bad. The thinking man standing in the middle and viewing both must be swayed by one or the other. The philosopher taken up with the good can conjure up a rosy world; or looking at the other extreme he can become a dire pessimist. One such described the world as a prison with four walls, "you can beat your head against them, if you wish, but you won't get out." Those who have read Voltaire's Candide soon discover that it is a satire of professor Pangloss' unrealistic premise that "all is for the best in this best of possible worlds." The three characters of the novel encounter all of the calamities imaginable, but the professor is adamant in his obsession and shortsighted dogma. This year the great French philosopher Paul Sartre died. The snatches we have been able to read about his views and life, not a moral man by any means, put him in the gloomy camp. Faced with life's enigma a Bible believer writes, "Man is neither so miserable as infinite malice could accomplish; nor so happy as infinite beneficence could cause. There must be another dimension where the secret lies." To rule out Satan, as does modern man, only compounds his dilemma. From the Garden of Eden on to the present, man generally has sided with Satan, who in turn exploits man's weakness. Christianity not only accounts for evil but presents man

with a remedy — a salvation to the uttermost through Christ.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

A Sovereign God

A decade ago we heard that “God is dead,” but we were never told of any one to take His place. A low view of God was prevalent in Isaiah’s day. Then it was a penchant for idols. The prophet in his indignation challenged the people to really analyze creation, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power; not one faileth” (40:26). The mortuary statement about God came from a Protestant seminary professor. Now we are hearing from Archbishop Bernadin of Chicago, in his pleas for a nuclear freeze: “The destructive potential of the nuclear powers threatens the sovereignty of God over the world He has brought into being. We could destroy His work.”

To allay such fears there are numerous verses in Scripture that assure the believer that the God of revelation will always have the last word. One of these verses stands out in particular, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psa. 76:10). We have no guarantee that a third World War will not break out. Whenever a nation’s armament balloons beyond all reasonable needs of its defense, then look out! We cannot blame its most obvious victims from matching strength with strength. If history is to be our monitor, such a situation eventually

leads to war. None of us has an assurance that we will not be blown to bits. Millions have met such a fate in the past 66 years; many of them Christians. Believers have a different outlook, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). This world is our “wilderness” to prepare us for our “Canaan.” The Christian discovers he has prepared himself for any eventuality. God does not take the bumps out of life; He is our strength in them. In other words, the man who has prepared himself for eternity, or is ready to die is also a mighty good candidate to live. We are the salt of the earth.

A sister who attends our prayer meeting had just returned from a Bible conference where the subject of the millennium had come up. There was little agreement. Then one woman broke in and said that she was “pan-millennial.” When asked what that is, she replied, “Everything is going to ‘pan’ out all right.” Strange, but all schools of prophecy finalize with God and the Lamb victorious. We, however, are committed to dispensationalism and a premillennial, pretribulation rapture, but by no means making it a shibboleth for fellowship.

This world is a wilderness wide!

We have nothing to seek or to choose;

We’ve no thought in the waste to abide;

We have naught to regret, or to lose.

We quote from another source where the spiritual reasoning is cogent with our own. “After all, the very evils of the world are a blessing, for the existence of these evils emphasizes that to which most close their eyes — that things are not right, and this is so because

men are not right in heart with God. It is easy to see the social advantages which would result from universal application of the ethics of Christ. Nevertheless, the application of these principles to the world without individual reception of Christ as personal Saviour and Lord, amounts to seeking the blessings before the Blesser, the Kingdom conditions before the King, and salvation's results before the reception of the Saviour. When the facts of these efforts are brought out into the light and considered, they reveal the efforts to be not only misguided (albeit well-meaning by those who make them) but a refined and cunningly camouflaged rejection of Christ Himself."

Calamities

The early boast of this century that man was getting better and better every day has been flatly contradicted by the facts of history. Postmillennialism was extremely popular until the advent of World War I. It revived after the Armistice. The war had been fought to end wars and make the world safe for democracy. Prime Minister Chamberlain of England did his utmost to appease Hitler, but the frightful hostilities came. The present United Nations Organization can do little more than debate the world's problems. The man of the world is thus further tempted to doubt the Christian's testimony that God is love.

In reading through the Old Testament and the Revelation, one is struck with the inspired writers attributing every disaster to the direct hand of God. Isaiah is very bold when he says that his God makes peace "and creates evil" (45:7). Again, Amos 3:6, states, "Shall evil befall a city and the Lord hath done it?" The

word “evil” is not normally used for iniquity and lends itself to such English words as affliction, adversity, troubles, and distress. Man in a subordinate way is the instrument, such as the recent massacres and bombings; nor can we leave Satan out, but over and above there is God that rules and overrules. The strange acts of man’s inhumanity to his fellows are reminders of the divine displeasure With the sons of men for their behaviour.

Our Lord used two incidents that occurred in His day to press home the solemnity of divine judgment here and hereafter. A delegation came to the Lord regarding an atrocity of Pilate’s soldiers against some Galileans whose blood had been mingled with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1-4). In reply Jesus said unto them, “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that were in Jerusalem?” Again the refrain, “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” The word “perish” here does not necessarily refer to destruction by a physical calamity but to “perish” in the after life, a danger common to all unbelievers. God has more ways of reaching mankind than through sermons. May the tragedies so prevalent around us today at least awaken some to flee from the coming wrath.

Perverted Freedom

The blessed word freedom has received some outlandish interpretations in our day. To some of us the new things that have been tacked on to our cherished heritage smack more of license and not far from anarchy. No God

above and no master below is the cuddled complex of those whom Jude foresaw when he wrote (v. 8), "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignitaries."

The current argument is that drugs are fashionable; homosexual liaisons have always been practiced and abortions could always be arranged no matter what the law said, and these things "happen anyway." Therefore, they should be included in man's inalienable rights. The fallacy in such reasoning is that legalizing these abominations would not increase their frequency. Actually, the moral tone of society has been changed almost overnight. How quickly can Biblically based morals be eroded by determined liberals. In Kipling's day (turn of the century) it was, "Take me somewhere East of Suez where there ain't no ten commandments, and a man can raise a thirst." Now there is no need to travel abroad to do "your thing." The libertine's paradise is here and the shamefulness of such moral irregularities is being bowed out. The noted English Parliamentarian (a sympathizer of American colonists) Edmund Burke observed, "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without." The military governments that have sprung up around the world are possibly, in most instances, the only alternative to otherwise ungovernable situations. Distress over the lawlessness in the United States has occasioned the surfacing of a vocal conservatism.

The activism of the "moral majority" is an example; also the continued support of President Reagan. We appreciate the brakes they have been able to use to

lower the speed that this nation appears to be travelling down the “broad way” to destruction (Matt. 7:13). As in Jeremiah’s day, “for they have healed the hurt of my people slightly” (7:11), so with this present generation. Then also, if we are on the threshold of the second coming of Jesus Christ, we can but look for this moral decline as one of several signs. Harbingers, the Lord said, would announce His coming, “As it was in the days of Noah; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimestone from heaven, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:29).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The American Century

Providing events do not sour within the next 15 years this century will, with very little contradiction, go down in history as the American Century. The U.S. provided the tip of the scales that appeared essential to decide the outcome of the century's two world wars. For the past 40 years it has been the bulwark against Russian designs in Europe, just as England thwarted Napoleon at Waterloo. The thought of unifying the world has never left the imagination of ambitious would-be conquerors or the designs of religious, medieval Catholics and Mohammedans. Then there are the philosophers who beg the question by assuming that all men are brothers and, therefore, can be persuaded to act as such. It would seem from history that God is allowing every ism full reign until each reaches its dead end. Paul defined it this way, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" until it is consummated by "then shall that wicked one be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:7-8). A monster is yet to come who will be the summation of all human perversity. The wicked Popes, Napoleons and Hitlers were but forerunners of him who is yet to come, "that man of sin."

One of the strangest phenomenons of history is the mergence of the U.S. as a super power. Not by military conquest but by the default of the free world. By this we mean America's preeminence militarily, economically and technologically. The Soviets excel only in the

military field, while Japan and Europe have only economic power. America's former atomic superiority has kept Europe free from wars for an almost miraculous 40 years. Only 40 years ago Europe was exhausted and its cities in shambles. They are now back to normal and could stand up against Russia if atomic weaponry were not the decisive factor. So the U.S. must still play the major role as guardian of the free world. Still, Europe is growing up and is now inclined to chafe under American interference. An Italian commentator explains it this way: "You can tell any two-year-old what to do. When he is 11, it is more difficult, and by the time he is 18 you have your hands full." The Western European countries have done a lot of growing up in the last 40 years, and alliance policies lag behind the changes. Admittedly, good men have come to different interpretations of prophecy. Since it occupies such a large place in the Bible, it justifies the attention it has recieved in these last days. Those who ignore it are negligent of part of the whole counsel of God. Fortunately, all schools of prophecy arrive at the same conclusion that God is going to be the ultimate victor over evil. The writer happens to consider the Darby, Scofield interpretation of prophecy to be the best reasoning based on Scripture. That being the case, we accept that the times of the Gentiles will include the revival of the old Roman Empire, only to be destroyed at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Understandably, no part of the world longs for peace as does Europe. From bitter experience they have learned that war is the supreme irritation of mankind. Von Der-Porten, in his history of the German Navy's World War 2, closes with this reflection, "In the broader power

picture, while some have been seeking Utopia and others retreating to cynical nationalism in the frustrating deadlocks of the postwar world, a remarkable consensus has been tacitly established to enable the feuding great powers to exist for over thirty years without a world war. The atomic threat is not enough of an explanation. A grasp by all sides of the strength of the Western Maritime community has established the power relationships of central Europe. The carefully maintained balance of strength implies a world of some tension, although less tension can be said to exist than in 1939, when Hitler's inner drives dominated the world scene. The balance is not perfect nor is it sure to survive, but it is noteworthy that large parts of the world have been without war for over a quarter of a century, and that wars have occurred only in regions outside of the areas where a rationally understood balance exists." It is forseeable that the world is on the way to that time when they shall say, "Peace and safety," only to be involved in sudden destruction. After all, the heart is not changed and the Prince of Peace has not yet come to enforce His rightful claims. The potential for such destruction only awaits the touch of a button. Praise God, however, He rules and overrules.

* * *

Tax Reform

Perhaps by the time this column gets into print we should know what has been accomplished in the U.S. President's recommendations. That there is unfairness in the present system is the concensus of the majority in this nation. The elimations and deductions are the main

problems and often exploited by the manipulators. Fairness is the slogan; but the beneficiaries of the present exemptions are all up in arms. All argue that their cause is deserving in some way or another. No doubt many highly respected charities would be affected, as they depend mostly on tax deductible gifts. Many are concerned that tax reform isn't going anywhere on account of the many special interests with clout. This time there is, however, the voice of the majority and if the obstructionists are the losers, then the winners are predicted to be the party of the future.

In a pluralistic society where all are actuated by what happens to be their self-interest we fail to envision complete fairness. David, speaking by the Spirit of the Lord, said, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). David did not say "they." Herein lies the weakness of a democracy. Agreement can only come when a crisis is reached. Until then, bickering. Witness the deficit problem ticking away like a time bomb, demanding heroic action, not indecision. David, probably Israel's most successful king, laments his own failure to measure up to his ideal. His attempts to reform were confronted by those whom he defined as "the sons of Belial," and he adds, "they cannot be taken with hands." The sweet psalmist of Israel confessed that he did not possess the iron to rid himself of dissidents. Of course "the Ruler" that David had in mind was his greater Son, the Messiah: "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth … by the clear shining after rain." If there is not to be a literal millennium (as some theologians insist), then this world will never know for what it unwittingly

pants — namely “a king that shall reign in righteousness” (Isa. 32:1).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Crime

After weeks of seemingly fruitless sailing Columbus was enlivened by the report that a log with leaves upon it had been sighted, and later some birds. These were signs of land, although no land was in sight. Soon after the New World was discovered.

The Lord Jesus has covenanted with His own to come back and receive them unto Himself. Also, He is to visibly return to the earth and “His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.” Furthermore, “every eye shall see Him” (Revelation 1:7). We are also told that there will be unmistakable signs that will announce the nearness of His return. The time just prior to His Second Coming could be particularly disheartening to the Christian, especially as he observes the apparent triumph of evil. The Lord has given a seasonal word: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” The present phenomenal build up of the sinews of war are with little doubt destined to contribute toward the war long foretold that will surpass anything heretofore experienced. Another sign that does not take much imagination to declare that it is upon us is the rise and present extent of crime. Since the rise of Methodism and Quaker influence, now nearly 200 years ago, there has been a steady increase in prison reform. In the last 50 years the approach has been more humanitarian than

Christian. Certainly it is not Biblical Christianity that has done away with capital punishment. We are hearing a lot about the prisoner's rights and observing the dispensing of light sentences and easy parole. The victims of crime get little satisfaction from this soft approach. Furthermore, it can feed crime, as there is little to fear from the law enforcement agencies. Prolonged and expensive trials with delayed justice are also conducive to crime.

The observing Solomon wrote, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Anyway, with all our prosperity and amenities, so that no one should actually go hungry in the United States, as well as Canada, crime, and often that of a most disgusting nature, threatens to get out of hand. Certainly this is just what Scripture says of the "last days," and listed in a frightening catalogue of evil are these words, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13).

The world since the fall of man has always answered up to the description given in Romans 1. In 2 Timothy the foundations have been destroyed. Outward Christianity has taken on the features of the world. This brings to mind Kipling's ditty, "The Road to Mandalay." It is about a British soldier home from duty in the Far East. At the turn of the century Protestant lands were characterized by lots of "blue laws," byproducts of course of Biblical influence. The soldier of colonial days is irked by the restrictions enforced in his homeland and he breathes out his preference when he says, "Take me somewhere East of Suez where there ain't no ten commandments, and a man can raise a thirst." Now all has changed in

the West. Here, too, the absolutes of Christianity are little known and let alone feared. Consequently, the hunt for a place to do his thing need not be a long journey. Nor are the slums the hatcheries for crime; its ugly hand is seen in all walks of life. Among the affluent, broken homes and alcohol tend to incubate teen-age corruption.

Let us thank God for the divine institution of government (Romans 13). When law enforcement is relaxed but for a moment pandemonium immediately fills the vacuum. The recent blackout in New York City is a grim reminder of the thin veneer that hides the real nature of society. The Apostle Paul speaks of iniquity as a "mystery" that was working in his day and would continue to do so until it had reached a full head. Preventing sin from reaching its apogee is a "hinderer" or "restrainer." Many of us believe that this "hinderer" is the Holy Spirit baptized Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), the present "salt of the earth." When the Church has been raptured Satan gets his long awaited green light. Not until iniquity has reached its climax, and all of the ramifications have been finally disclosed, does the Lord come to reign in righteousness. That, too, is going to be brought into its fullest manifestation. Then we read, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm 110:3). The voluntary response to God's grace today is a far higher ethical quality than submission to the disciplines of the coming kingdom.

Weaponry

An area wherein the United States needs to be as wise as a serpent and strong as a lion is in the arms race. This is not the time to beat swords into plowshares. Last May, President Carter announced new controls on arms

sales in order to make them “an exceptional foreign policy impliment.” Later he added, “Now it is the consumers’ or customers’ responsibility to convince us that they need those weapons and that the sale of those weapons will be to the advantage of the United States rather than the other way around.” As a result of all of this the European weapons manufacturers stand ready to fill any vacuum thus created.

The British policy is in direct contradiction to our President’s aims. It allows that customers should be able to choose their requirements, and how anxious they are to oblige in this lucrative field of overseas sales. France is not a wit behind in its desire for such business. With a far less self-critical attitude one British salesman said, “If you Americans want to cut your own throats that’s your business.” Such salesmen, and they include Germans and other industrial nations, are working the oil rich countries of the Near East. This is the area where the United States is most concerned and anxious to promote stability. Unfortunately, the sale of arms in this region is the principal means of energy-short nations’ ability to pay their astronomical oil bills.

So it goes. The nations, too, are in this dog eat dog element. All of this must be galling and frustrating to the pacifist. His cause is hopeless whether he realizes it or not. Solomon found this out long ago when he wrote, “That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered” (Ecclesiastes 1:15). This is especially apparent in attempting to mend the bents of human nature. “Right forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne” was the observation of Lowell a hundred years ago. Everything earthly in the final analysis is an

operation in futility. This will always be as long as sin and death are the reigning factors of our present existence. Again, we quote Solomon: “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence they come, thither they return again” (Ecclesiastes 1:7). If we with the support of Scripture paint a morbid picture of this present evil world, remember that some of the world’s deepest thinkers have gone one better. It was Henley that described it as “black as the pit from pole to pole.” Jonathan Swift, the British satirist, mused, “Life is a comedy to him who thinks; a tragedy to him who feels.” The old anti-war marcher, and certainly no puritan, Bertrand Russell, said, “Philosophy proved a washout to me 97 years.” A more balanced reasoning comes from another source and observes, “Man is neither so miserable as infinite malice could accomplish, nor so happy as infinite beneficence could cause. There must be another ingredient, another dimension where the secret lies.”

Christianity holds the secret. In a nutshell it is the discovery of salvation from sin’s guilt and power through Christ’s work on the cross and His present session at God’s right hand, and that from conversion to eternity we are to learn deep lessons that not even heaven could afford us.

Warning

Health officials tell us that one in every four American workers is exposed in his work to substances dangerous to health. Well over half a million are in contact with cancer-forming agents. Most are unaware of these hazards. Now Congress is deciding to do something. If it

cannot force action at this juncture it can “at least,” says Senator Harrison Williams (D., N. J.), “notify them of existing hazards.” A Committee member says, “Employees can’t protect themselves unless they know to what they are exposed in the workplace.” There is lack of complete information in many areas and what could be done anyway in some cases. Coal miners are subject to “black lung.” One also wonders just how much a worker contributes to his health liabilities by his drinking and smoking habits.

Actually, there is no place to hide. There are dangers in most everything we undertake. It is a price we are paying for our high standard of living. So the pressure is on for Congress to legislate on the issue of workers’ protection-education-health care-compensation. We are living in a paternalistic age. Sentinels abound everywhere, watching for any exploitation of the weaker elements of society. One cannot always quarrel with their findings and goals. Too often there is blindness in tight-fisted economics. With the sights set on temporary welfare, man has lost interest in his eternal security. God has cursed the ground for man’s sake; consequently, his search and attempt to produce a utopia down here will always be frustrated. We live in a world of divine laws. Their teachings can be ignored but not their disciplines. While sin and death rule the world, the story of Jesus will never grow old. Like the barking dog running after a car: what would he do with it if he got it? A perfect society would be the ultimate in boredom to those who are still gripped by their sinful nature. That is what the new birth is all about; it prepares us to love righteousness. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his

own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Winds of Change

Back in the 1960s America pledged to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe.” This was heady stuff as the middle 80s is proving when put to the test. Policing the world has sapped much of the nation’s wealth and at the same time allowed the economy to be outsmarted by competitors who are profited by America’s military unbrella. Quoting from the U.S. News, “we are simply overextended, and tougher times seem inevitable.” The article continues, “If America wants to avoid a true catastrophe, it needs to finance its own deficit, and that requires more than the patchwork plans formulated by Congress and the leading presidential canditates.” Further doom is added — “The American century is over.” If what is being said by political analyists were coming from premilennial students of prophecy only a few would be stirred. What we have been saying for nearly 200 years the secular world is beginning to catch up. Noah’s preaching was unheeded until the flood came, then all was realized too late (Gen. 6:3, 2 Peter 2:5).

written in 1870 and based on a biblical viewpoint, are impressive, “As to America, I conceive that the young giant power which has grown so fast will sink still faster, probably through intestinal quarrel, but assuredly something before that day comes. They will break up

into different fragments. Their prime object is to maintain political unity. This is their great ambition, and though it may appear to stand and advance, as everything ambitious is apt to prosper for a time, it will all be blown down before long. For it is a remarkable fact that there is no prophecy for a vast influential power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long contained its cohesion. Is it conceivable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by dissolution? However, I particularly wish everyone to understand that this is merely drawn from general principles of the Word of God."

Just how things will work out for the two nations that are front and centre just now remain to be seen. God is not an American. Atheistic Russia probably hasn't the slightest inkling of its role in prophecy (Ezekiel 38-39) and despite its possible and temporary success under its "Time" Man of the Year — Gorbachev —Scripture is clear that divine judgment will not slumber.

The Primaries

The typical American excitement as to who will be the next President is beginning to dawn. The prospects for either party, say the polsters, are even. So far the Democrats are fielding their hopefuls who have been termed the seven dwarfs. In comparison the Republicans have two candidates of considerable stature that at the time of writing are the front runners. The problems the next President faces are gigantic. They may even catch up before Reagan leaves office. Americans still want everything, more spending, but balk at paying the bills.

Some candidates are still so liberal that they cannot meet a social program that they don't like and with no respect for economics.

Unfortunately none suggest the sacrifices required to solve the national debt, but expect to be elected. Walter Mondale's suggestion of increasing taxes contributed to his downfall. It's the old cry and attitude so common, "Which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10).

There are some upsetting possibilities in the offing. The uncertainty of the dollar's value could bring on a world depression. Upheavals in Haiti have created floods of refugees. Panama and Chile could follow. Somehow the United States cannot keep its hands off South Africa. Israel continues to be the world's prime flashpoint. The average voter has a better knowledge of football scores than geopolitics.

The old question, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" lingers at the time of writing, but can it last until November? Pocketbook issues still are the big factor. It is obvious that God is not allowing matters to be a heaven on earth. As we approach the end of the dispensation, there appears to be an acceleration of the desolations that have been determined (Dan. 9:26). Or Ezekiel 21:27 put it this way. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it to Him." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The U. S. Supreme Court

Of the several books to gain an impact in 1980 was one entitled, The Brethren. No, it has no religious connotation. The brethren referred to are the nine judges that compose the U. S. Supreme Court, long considered the most secretive group in the country. Two Washington reporters seemed to have gained access to diaries, tapes and minutes of the meetings, as well as information from the subordinate lawyers that do research for the judges. Anyway, the book is hardly a eulogy of these supposedly august brethren. For the most part these men are depicted as being very human and at times, some of them, vulgar.

The one Roman Catholic judge displayed some conviction that had its source from Christianity. Otherwise the judges appear to ignore Biblical standards. They arrive at their decisions based on their viewpoint of fairness and practicality. There was no yardstick such as the ten commandments to guide them. As a result they could make abortion legal; pornography could be included in freedom of speech. The death penalty becomes cruel and barbaric. In other words, the law is what these nine men think it should be. We naturally wonder where this new approach to law-making originated. Is it an import from Europe or does our Supreme Court hold the monopoly? Certainly the direction the Court has taken now assumes the law-

thinking of much of our present world. Flexibility and adjustment to the times; not absolutes, are the driving forces behind these decisions. Neither are economics a factor. They decide who is eligible for welfare and when, regardless of the already tight budgets of the cities that must find the money. Crime is the product of an unfair society. Christianity is viewed as just another of the many religions and deserves no priority in the public schools. As a result, every religion is treated as propaganda when introduced to a captive audience.

The decisions made by the Supreme Court become like the law of the Medes and Persians that could not be rescinded. Well-meaning groups that have so far tried to change the Court's decisions on prayer in the schools and abortion are discovering how inflexible are the verdicts of the Court.

One reviewer of the book wrote, "Surely there are many among us who cannot accept the premise that the law is what we happen to think is right at the moment, as that which is given legal form by the legal profession, and on the highest levels by a body like the Supreme Court. There must be a return to the biblical understanding that there are absolute standards of right and wrong, of good and evil. There must be a return to an understanding that there are biblical insights that are valid not for certain people who enjoy going to church, but which are valid for all society."

The Supreme Court savors of the sovereignty of man; he is capable of shaping his own destiny. God has made the laws of nature — gravity for instance, and He has revealed what is right in the ten commandments. Moses could say to the nation of Israel, "And what great nation

is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"(Deut. 4:8). Biblical history, and so does secular, shout from the housetops that nations have prospered or fallen according as they have related to God's absolutes.

The Beginning Of Travail Pains

Upon learning of their Lord's anticipated departure, His disciples —realizing that much of His prophetic mission had not been fulfilled — asked a most natural question. They inquired, "and what shall be the sign of thy coming?" (Matt. 24:3). That the disciples here represent a Jewish remnant and foreshadow a similar remnant after the rapture of the Church is, to this writer, the basis for the best interpretation of Matthew 24-25. However, the introductory words of our Lord are general compared with the specific signs such as the one related to the Jewish temple (v. 15), the lightning (vv. 27-32), and the judgment of the sheep and goats (nations prior to the setting up of the kingdom). In verses 5-6 the signs to be looked for are false Christs, wars, pestilence and famine.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "All these are the beginning of sorrows," or as the NEB renders the clause, "With all these things the birth pangs of the new age begin." As F. W. Grant comments, "The mind of God cannot but manifest itself through nature, as well as the movements and convulsions among the nations of the world; and through specific lessons may have their difficulty, the general one is not hard to read. It is an unrest everywhere which cries from Him who alone has said — who alone could venture to say — 'Come unto Me, and I

will give you rest.' And the cry sounds in His ears, and will find answer."

Let us just look at these "birth pains." That there have been those to have the audacity to claim to be Christ or divine is history past and present. The current deceiver is the man from Korea - Moon. We understand him to say Christ's program has failed. His leadership is superior. The amazing thing is the "many" - from all appearances - fine young people that blindly follow him.

That there have always been wars and always will be until the coming of the Prince of Peace, and for the purpose of peace, can be a statement of observation as well as prophecy.

Since World War 2 the many subsequent wars have been so small by contrast that they have been termed "bush wars." Now faced with Russia's raw aggression in Afghanistan our great democracy feels compelled to beef up its military muscle. A draft registry has been reinstated. Along with this, new machines of destruction are in the works. The idea being that the best procedure is to prepare for war as the most likely way to preserve the peace. Already, so Dr. Tatford writes, "The stockpile of nuclear weapons is sufficient to destroy the whole of the population of the world 50,000 times over, and this takes no account of the suffering which might be inflicted earlier by bacteriological and biological warfare." The issue facing our elected leaders is not simply the preservation of peace—we can have that on Russia's terms—but how to preserve the peace without surrendering world dominion to an aggressor. Yet in spite of all the overtures to prevent the war that everybody fears and nobody wants, our Lord prophesies

that there will be an unsurpassed tribulation (v. 21); its immediate cause being all nations gathered in warfare against Jerusalem.

Pestilence is another sign. Man's ingenuity has wiped out the plagues that used to decimate humanities. Modern sanitation and inoculations have eliminated the scrouges of yesteryear. Yet it has been pointed out, however, that man is "creating" new viruses and seeking new mutants. The latest is a bug to handle the problem of oil spills.

There is the possibility of a germ escaping from the laboratory which could conceivably set off a universal epidemic without natural defenses or medicines capable of coping with such a problem. With the unpredictability of the weather and insects immune to pesticides, famines are not hard things to envision. Generally, in the past these harrassments to humanity have come one at a time. We gather from our Lord's words that as we approach the end they will develop and accelerate simultaneously. Nor must we overlook the earthquakes and the eruptions of Mount St. Helens. Travail pains indeed, as if nature were pressing on the birth of a new and better time. That is contingent upon our Lord's second coming so long foretold.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Will History Repeat Itself?

The arrival of this year makes it 50 years ago that the Austrian painter, Adolph Hitler, became Chancellor of the Third German Reich. Two things particularly accentuated his rise to enormous power. A defeated Germany, chafing under the treaty of, Versailles, was experiencing chronic unemployment and the inability of the Weimar Republic to solve the country's big problems. Second, Hitler exercised an uncanny ability to exploit his nation's miseries.

The United States is facing similar problems; not least is the lack of faith in the government. The results of elections appear to be just a change of hats. Ten million unemployed are asking: "Who's to blame for the mess we're in?" Both political parties blame each other. Each administration promises solutions, but the problems continue to race towards a crisis. Those who ignore the plain discipline from the Bible compel God to resort to other means of communicating.

A situation in Jerusalem during the prophet Ezekiel's day called for a display of divine displeasure "when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of bread thereof, and will send famine upon it" (14:13). Later in the chapter (1:21) God speaks of

sending forth His four sore judgments, “the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast and the pestilence.”

Elihu, in the book of Job, reveals that divine chastening brings one near to the grave in order that he will be disposed to listen to God’s voice. He said, “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter (one who can explain the reason for his trial from the divine viewpoint), one among a thousand, to shew unto man His (God’s)…uprightness” then (33:23).

It is true that the American Nazi Party and the Ku Klux Klan are miniscule, but they are around. Just as disease spreads when sanitation is lacking, so certain political climates tend to spawn one-party extremists either to the far right or left. This is a drift we can expect, especially if we actually are hastening toward the end times. “The times of the Gentiles” are to culminate in a dictator of near world-wide proportion who rises out of the “sea.” The “sea” is a symbol of the masses in their consumate restlessness (Rev. 17:15). From this coming melee arises a man who will have condensed into himself all that fallen man idolizes. He will also be a Satan-possessed man (Rev. 13:4; 17:8). This monster known in Scripture as “the man of sin” and also “the antichrist” and the one who “comes in his own name” (John 5:43), is associated with the “great tribulation.” He is to supercede all that has gone before him, and since his end coincides with Christ’s return he is still in the future. There have been prototypes such as the Neros, some Popes and Mussolini, but that one who is to be the epitomy of wickedness the world still awaits.

Recession

The economics of the Western World continue to sputter. No confident upsurging. The U.S. has its share of woes, certainly the ten percent unemployed. A look in our stores and one soon discovers the scarcity of “made in America” labels on the commodities. Many of the articles are cheaper and better made than the products of the homefront. There are several contributing factors that have brought about this situation. Labor has won fat contracts that are unrealistic in a competitive world. Governments have soaked up capital investments which in turn create real jobs. Unions have insisted on featherbedding and have frustrated wise economics. However, this ill wind is not so bad that it does not blow some good. The salutary effect of our particular recession is that it is creating discipline and economic efficiency. After all, ours is the kind of world society has created. Free enterprise will always out-produce Socialism and Communism and no system is going to be without its victims. Communism’s casualties go into stockades; capitalism’s into unemployment relief lines. The 37th Psalm was one of the last from David’s inspired pen. He wrote, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (v. 25). The born again Christian should not have the expensive appetites of the worldling — alcoholic beverages, gambling, tobacco, divorce and dope. He does not take days off because of sickness produced by his excesses. Not a few are inclined to shun union shops. If Christian conservatism paid off only in this life, it would be a grand deal. However, we read, “But godliness is profitable unto all things, having

promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8).

Financial

While many in the civilized world are occupied with the dangers of nuclear war, they are losing sight of what could be a world-shaking danger from another source. Practically all of those pillars that support modern society are being threatened by financial woes. We are at a loss to discover a government that is solvent. The coward's way out has been to print paper money that like water finds its level; so this money soon drops to its real purchasing power. Money manipulation grants a "quick fix" followed by a backlash. It always demands more of the same, only bigger doses. Woe to the courageous politician that dares to "cold turkey" this state of affairs. As much as our government would like to play "Santa Claus," the means are becoming exhausted. Fifty years of Communist experiment in Russia proclaims that the solution is not there. Rebel and military coups in several Latin American countries, presumably to overthrow the privileged few, have only been an exchange of who's in power.

The enormous debts that countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Poland and the third world owe to outside sources alarm the lenders. A default could trigger a domino effect and bring on a worldwide crisis. To shore up one wobbly member, Brazil, the President, when recently visiting that country, promised them a billion-dollar loan. Such a procedure is hard for our own impoverished unemployed to understand. Actually, the austerity ax is being applied here and feverish loaning going on elsewhere, all representing frantic efforts to

maintain a very fragile solvency. The present financial fears based on realistic facts are simply the fruit of man's doings. We live in a world of laws and if these laws are abused by absurd economics the dictum is "be sure your sin will find you out." There is always a reaping to what has been sown.

In Revelation 6 we have the opening of the sixth seal. It depicts a great upheaval insomuch that those living at the time are led to say "the great day of God's wrath has come." This is merely the conclusion of guilty consciences. There is the mention of a great earthquake and the sun becoming black as sackcloth and stars falling from heaven. Both William Kelly and F. W. Grant in their admirable expositions give good reasons for interpreting all of this as figurative. Something has happened that convulses the whole world. C. I. Scofield describes it as anarchy. The great depression of the 30's gave us a faint rehearsal of what can happen when the financial structure of a nation collapses. The portents indicate that the world could have such an upheaval on a much larger scale than the depression. Would such be another rehearsal or is the world heading for the real thing that comes during the "great tribulation," where none can buy or sell who have not the mark of the beast?

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Mass

The new Roman Catholic Mass since 1963 does not suit all. Now the Old Tridestine Mass is permissable to some groups of the faithful. That the Mass is an exaggeration of the simple institution our Lord bequeathed to His Church none can dispute. This central institution of the Christian Church demands a self-examination from all would-be communicants. Along with this is a candid examination of the institution itself would be a healthy spiritual exercise.

If Scripture alone is to be our guide none can be blamed for seeking to duplicate its simplicity. To such, another writes, “The Mass is a travesty of the Lord’s Supper, which is a feast of remembrance, not a sacrifice of renewal.” Also, “To say that the sacrifice was made once at Calvary and is being offered today is logically to suppose that the crucifixion has lasted from then until now.”

The religious instincts of so many find their Mass most gratifying. It is shrouded with incense, incantations and priestly domain. All believers are priests in this dispensation, and Peter, above all things, who gives us this divine revelation (1 Pet. 2:9), is denied when a priestly caste is insisted upon. In Hebrews 10:10 we learn that the cross work of Christ was “once for all,” finished, complete, making the recipients as such

“perfect” as to their salvation. Whether it be the old Mass or the new Mass its substance is the same and a far cry from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Not of the World

The church proper bears a unique relationship to the world. It is to keep itself separated and unspotted. This raises the question as to what extent the church should involve itself in secular affairs. A liberal theology has become an obsession among some Catholic clerics and not a few Protestants. Some justify force if their demands are not secured by peaceful methods. The political activism that has become so popular in Latin America deeply concerns the Pope. He has warned that too much Marxism has crept into the movement. The tragedy is that the church, whatever discipline it possesses, has never been able to rule itself, let alone the increased complexities out in the world proper. A liberalizing trend within the Roman communion challenges the Papal leadership. A recent survey shows 70 percent of American Catholics sanction abortion, 80 percent birth control and a priest’s right to marry, and 60 percent favor the ordination of women. Charles Curran of Catholic University is a critic of the church’s stand on contraception, divorce and homosexuality. The Dutch theologian Schillebeeck questions such doctrines as the divinity of Christ and His resurrection. Then there is the German author, Hans Kung, who can no longer teach as a Catholic theologian. He falls out on Papal infallibility. Concerning the vitals of “mere Christianity,” these fare even worse in mainline Protestantism. Paul speaks of the time when “they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). As to morals in Romans chapter

one, Paul describes the depravity of the pagan world of his day. In his last epistle (2 Timothy), he sees pretty much the same condition reproduced in Christendom. Both in doctrine and morals there are signs that herald the soon coming of Jesus Christ for His own. Certainly the church that conforms to being but a pilgrim and a stranger in the world (1 Peter 2:11) gives its priorities to continue daily “in prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Then too, the church that has a neutral record with the authorities and owns negligible properties fares better in the revolutions either to the political right or left.

Takeovers

When Castro took over Cuba from a not too popular dictator, he did so ostensibly as a liberator. The outside world was encouraged to believe he was about to establish a democracy. Instead he proved to be a typical wolf in sheep’s clothing. A similar tactic has been used by the Sandinistras in Nicaragua. The so-called “dirty tricks” pose no hindrance to Communist goals. A quote from U.S. News World Report is to the point: “The Sandinistras promote the image of Nicaragua as a small democratic peace seeking nation that is being harassed by a militant giant — a notion that is received well in Latin America, among European socialists and by some political liberals in the U.S.” President Reagan thinks otherwise, and not without some sound reasoning.

Just as the Sandinistras led by Ortega infiltrated Nicaragua with his guerilla forces, so now he is plagued with “contras.” These are guerillas that oppose him and ostensibly have democratic goals. A sort of tit for tat. These “contras” assisted by the C.I.A. have no scruples

about the use of “dirty tricks.” The President is all for aiding the “contras,” but for the present support has been withheld. Here is a case of fighting fire with fire. The ethics involved trouble the American conscience. For this we credit the way the Bible has influenced this nation in contrast to nations that have not felt its impact, especially Communism, that discredits the precious Volume. In a world where anything goes as long as you win, this presents a tremendous problem to those with a conscience. A still bigger testing is the apparent silence of heaven in allowing the success of the godless. Our Lord has a timely word, “It is impossible that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come” (Luke 17:1). Also, He added, “this is your hour, and the prince of darkness” (Luke 22:53).

The Lord distinguishes the difference between His kingdom and that of “the princes of the Gentiles.” Their ambition is domination. His disciples, like their Lord, seek lowly service (Matt. 20:26). Lowell’s “Right forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne” only awaits the moment when Jesus shall literally reign.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Gog

A considerable portion of the book of Ezekiel deals with events that are to take place in the “latter days.” Remarkable details attend these prophecies. Two chapters concentrate on the rebirth of the nation Israel (36-37). At this future juncture in their history, they are to receive the Spirit and they are inviolate to hostile designs. Their particular enemies at this time are seen to be from the north — Russia and her satellites. They initiate a grand invasion of Palestine obviously to settle Jewish identity for keeps. These northern hordes, we are told, are under divine control. God says, “I will put hooks in their jaws.” In the final outcome, the Lord creates confusion in their ranks, for we read, “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will give Gog a place there of graves in Israel …” The prophet Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel, elaborates further on this invasion. We discover that its objective includes, “the land of Egypt will not escape” (Dan. 11:42), and it is added, “the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.”

All of this is interesting in the light of present happenings. One of the sons of Japheth was Magog (Gen. 10:2) whose descendants settled north of the Black Sea. By Ezekiel’s time they had stamped their name on the territory that they occupied. In the latter days, we gather that this area of the earth will produce a

Fuhrer that will answer to the Gog of Ezekiel and the "king of the north" of Daniel's prophecies. Martin Luther thought that the deep penetration of the Turks into Europe in his day was the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. He at least had given some attention to this prophecy. The dispensationalist today gives literal emphasis to the interpretation of prophecy. The Reformers were more inclined to allegorize prophecies relating to the Jews and Jerusalem. To us, when Gog invades Palestine, it is not to be equated with Christendom. The physical blessings promised to the Jews in the Old Testament are not to be spiritualized and then appropriated as the exclusive possession of the Church; the implication being that the Jew has no literal restoration. The center of the later day prophecies of the Old Testament rotate around the Jewish nation and not the Church. Both J. N. Darby and William Kelly brought forth this principle by a respected insight into Scripture, coupled with first class scholarship. Today, we are witnessing trends that strongly approve their teaching.

Now things are happening fast just where we should expect them; namely, the Near East. In 1850, Russia's fondest dream was the mastery of Turkey and a presence on the Mediterranean Sea. Britain and France in the Crimean War checked that ambition. What do we behold today? Russia's tentacles have penetrated deep into Angola. Until recently, she was calling the shots in Egypt; now there is a strong commitment to establishing a Communist regime in Ethiopia. In this area she falls astride the path that the giant tankers must negotiate to keep the free world supplied with energy. Says one commentator. "If the Russians get their way, they will have a federation of satellites around the mouth of the

Red Sea, turning it into a Russian lake and threatening international shipping routes." Another source states, "The Kremlin's chancy strategy: Playing for big stakes." To counter this threat, already military and economic assistance is pouring into Somalia from the United States, France, Britain, and Saudi Arabia. In reading the lengthy account under the caption, "The U.S.-Soviet Struggle to Control the Horn of Africa," in U.S. News & World Report, it was not hard to imagine some pressing reasons that would occasion this northern penetration through the heart of the ancient Bible lands and farther south in Ethiopia.

Not forgetting that we see through a glass darkly at best, still certain things appear feasible in the light of prophecy. When this Gog does make his invasion southward, he will have a string of victories behind him all the way to Ethiopia. Then Daniel tells us, "But tidings out of the east (China) and out of the north (the Western forces have landed on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean) shall trouble him: therefore, he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and to utterly sweep away many." Obviously, he is threatened with a pincer movement to detach him from his base. Thus "all nations" (Zech. 14:2) are unwittingly dragged into Palestine to meet their fate at Armageddon.

The Press

So far, one of the finest bulwarks for the preservation of a free society has been the freedom of the press. Now drastic changes have been and are taking place. The proliferation of newspapers that characterized our society 50 years ago is now no more. Costs, labor troubles, and the popularity of TV have occasioned many

to liquidate or sell out to one of the three chains — the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. In this field it seems that the big get bigger and the small cease to be. These developments, say some of the critics, could degenerate eventually into Orwellian control. Note, it is not the premillennialists who are saying this, but the few stalwarts that are always to be found voicing their good judgment. Orwell, it will be recalled, wrote a novel where, from present trends, he saw a completely controlled society by 1984. We have so often noticed that the world's seers or prognosticators foresee a worse doomsday than those of us who attempt to interpret prophecy in the light of today's happenings. With us, we always point to the Refuge for all who have a mind to flee from the wrath to come.

Another change that we can expect is the quality of a newspaper's contents. It is like reader, like paper. Editorials, analyses or anything that styles of heavy reading is not popular. The edtior of McCalls magazine blames the current attention spans and reading habits on TV. This trend is in evidence in the Christian world. Books that deal with what the Bible calls "strong meat" … commentaries and Bible doctrines … have been eclipsed by lighter material. Several of our fine magazines are no more. This, in spite of the plain command to study the Word of Truth. That study of the Scriptures is a self-discipline that requires cultivation. The reward for such is most gratifying.

Then too, the secular press has been accused of trivializing the news while majoring on the sensational and scandalous. The Washington Star prominently features a gossip column which is generally a peep into

the private lives of famous people. Some good can come out of this if public officials realize that they are being watched and any misstep on their part will soon get into print where thousands of other eyes will feast on their misadventures. Better to be aware, however, of the all-seeing eye of God. Our depraved natures can take considerable pleasure in all forms of another's dissolute behaviour. Some members of society are innocent of the overt acts that they relish in others. Paul appears to have a reference to this quirk when he writes, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but take pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:32).

"In the day of judgment, God will bring into account the secrets of men." Further proof of this revelry in smut is the spectacular growth of sex-oriented magazines. At the same time, Editor Lewis H. Lapham of Harper's magazine says, "It is hard to get people to read a general magazine that deals in ideas." This magazine has experienced a circulation decline. A person's reading and TV habits are likely to register considerably in his everyday behavior. To avoid this trend the Christian should give heed and find his delight in God's Word and get acquainted with the great classics of the faith. Indeed, a drop of ink can make millions think for better or for worse. God has chosen to give a written revelation of Himself. If secular print deserves the following description and usefulness, how much more our Holy Bible.

Lee Hills, board chairman of the Knight-Rider chain, observes, "Print is referable, it is there to reread at your convenience. Print is preservable; you can clip, save and file it. Print is convenient, so you may read what you

want, and when you want to. Print is portable … With print, the reader is in control. He can skip. He can go back. He can observe, he can turn the page or section. It is intimate communication."

As critics see it, print does, indeed, have a special role to play as a disseminator of serious information.

As to our reading of the Scriptures, the late Dr. Harry A. Ironside has left us these guidelines: 1. Historically — "all these things happened" — they are real history. 2. We should read a passage typically and always ask, "What does the passage illustrate or prophecy about Christ and His work?" 3. Dispensationally we should ask, "To what age is the passage primarily addressed?"

Egypt

At this time of writing, the visit of Anwar Sadat to the Israeli Parliament is just recent history, True, there have been no spectacular changes in that volatile area, yet we are inclined to think that the ground work has been laid for such. Egypt, perhaps, receives more attention in Holy Writ than any other one country except, of course, Palestine. Its idolatry and suppression of God's people have, on several occasions, invoked divine displeasure. In spite of its ancient greatness and at one time amazing fertility (in the first century it was Rome's breadbasket), that nation was to be reduced to the "basest of kingdoms" (Ezek. 29:15). Time and again Israel sought Egypt as an ally. Ezekiel tells us, "It shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel." Typically, Egypt represents the world and its relationship with God's people. In this dispensation, it will enclose them in the bondage of its principles. Or if its aid is sought to make spiritual gains, then Christian enterprises will be

compromised and generally gravitate eventually to complete worldliness.

Although Egypt was to be judged, and our hindsight confirms this, it was not doomed to extinction such as Edom (Ezek. 35:9) and Babylon, but it is to enjoy restoration. This recovery is seen to be simultaneous with that of Israel's, according to Isaiah 19:23: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land." There is not much risk in prophecying the downfall of most any nation. One only has to study history. It is another matter to say certain nations will rise Phoenix-like to even greater glories. These are the kind of prophecies often occurring in our Bible and impossible to associate with calculated or fortunate guesswork. Actually, Isaiah's prophecy relates to the mellennial kingdom where again Jew and Gentile will be in sharp distinction. We, quite possibly, are witnessing the trends toward this goal.

Israel's presence again in the land of Palestine gave birth to the rise of Egypt's militarism. In fact, we are told she has fought the greatest tank battles, even rivaling those of Montgomery and Patton, and has indeed come a long way since the writer was there over 50 years ago. Until recently, the country has been under foreign exploitation since the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar.

The present vicious deadlock has been broken. It has made the Israelis, man for man the finest military machine now in the world, emulating their forebears, the Maccabees, who did exploits (Dan. 11:32). They are relieved of the burden of a two-front war. That is, of

course, if all the fair speeches are reliable (Rom. 16:18). The leading Arab nation is the first to recognize Israel's presence in Palestine, thereby breaking Arab unity. It also further assures Israel's security, at least from the physical standpoint. Our eye is upon Gods' assurance in this matter, Russia should be kept at arm's length from the area and also not give that "king of the north" a pretext for invading Egypt until prophecy really gets into gear after the rapture of the Church.

Another observation is the wonder a man with bold imagination and charisma can create. How readily the world will go after such! A Leader could arise anywhere in the free world and give some evidence that he can solve its mounting problems and he would be acclaimed. This is just what will happen when the ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 arises out of the sea, which sea represents the welter of seething humanity crying for an answer to its bewildering frustrations.

Again, we notice that the U.N. was bypassed and Russia and the U.S. ignored. We are not ignorant of the several schools of prophecy that challenge our viewpoint. However, we do believe the pre-millennialists are passing a lot of confirming signposts these days. Our respect continues to deepen for William Kelly and F. W. Grant who have, perhaps more than others, been this writer's mentors.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Gaza Riots

Here is an area where political and ethnic relations have reached a peak. The TV viewings tend to create a biased understanding of the situation — that of Arabs as underdogs driven to desperation and fighting for their rights. This is so, but the real goal is to ultimately drive the Israelis into the sea. The Arabs in the Gaza have the misfortune to be living in conquered territory. It is a bastion of defense for Israel against an extremely hostile Syria. As it looks to this writer the Jews have no choice but to maintain a strong military presence in the area. Whatever, the necessities to maintain the present status must be continued, as other alternatives would give that one step directed against Israel's destruction. For Israel to yield to the demands of the rioters would only stimulate an Arab appetite for more concessions. The avowed position of the 15 million or so hostile neighbours of modern Israel is: "No peace, no recognition and no negotiation." There is little doubt that the rioting is being masterminded by outsiders. This is no brief for Israel as we have also listened to the tales of Arab friends. Many years ago we wrote in the now defunct magazine Help and Food, when the Jewish picture looked extremely critical, that if the Jews are not back in their land by a providential decree they just won't make it. So far they have. As long as Arab leadership refuses to acknowledge the Israeli nation and

arrive at some grounds for negotiation, they have no other choice but to continue hostilities; and the Jews to do anything but turn the other cheek.

Early in the last century an intense interest was aroused in the study of Bible prophecy. Up until then the general consensus of Christendom was that there was nothing beyond Christianity. The approach away from this was keyed in the conclusion that the covenants made to Abram and David are centered in the Jews and, since unconditional, await a literal fulfillment; hence a rebirth of the Jewish nation, and the return of Christ as their Deliverer and Messiah. Among the several signs given by our Lord to announce His second coming is the blossoming of the “fig tree” (Luke 21:29-33). If the “fig tree” here, as elsewhere, is an emblem of Israel, then their national rebirth is a very significant sign of the times.

Their importance as an ally of the West is the human factor in assuring their survival. If the brethren that assembled in the Powerscourt Castle in Ireland expressly to study prophecy were to come from their graves today they would not be surprised as they view the current scene.

Germany

Recent events, for better or for worse, in West Germany are occasioning some second thoughts regarding the nation’s security and interests. The Germans wonder just how reliable the United States is since it has reneged on some international commitments. Also, there is alarm over the removal of strategic nuclear medium range arsenals from their territory, thereby giving

conventional superiority to the Soviets. In the event of war they see their country as the battle ground.

An interview with the former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt reveals that he is an observer of world affairs. He reflects on German weakness saying, “The first little nuclear weapon—say an artillery shell—that explodes in Germany has strategic quality for my country; the war would be over. The Germans would throw up their hands.” After all, Japan capitulated after only two nuclear bombs dropped on their cities. Schmidt deplores the lack of leadership in Europe and appreciates how dependent all of Western Europe is on Washington. He says, “If Western Europe is to become a grand strategic factor, France will have to lead. Nothing can be done by the Germans until well into the next century because of Hitler and Auschwitz.”

The cry and need for a leader and the vague vision of seeing Western Europe a “strategic factor” in world affairs can be extracted from this interview. The substantial boundaries of the old Roman Empire were the Rhine and Danube Rivers. Those of us who appreciate the astute reasoning and lineup of Scripture that concludes in the revival of the Roman Empire have a problem as to the place of Germany in the end times. Not a few have that area allied to the “king of the North.” If our vision of prophecy proves correct, the leader that will be so acceptable to the world, “the beast,” will arise from the city of Rome.

Another line of Schmidt’s pondering is his misgivings over American politics, especially in our choice of a President. He sees them, the candidates, lame on the international scene. However, he has praise for Nixon

and Kissinger, while Carter and Reagan had to learn on the job. The former Chancellor, and now editor of the weekly Die Zeit, commenting on the political campaign said, “America could become mired in impossible promises in 1988. What bothers me most is the prospect that the new President will have talked so much about what he is going to do and the additional welfare he will provide that he will find it difficult, first, to understand how much nonsense he has been talking; second, to make the decision to change the course; and third, to convince his followers.” This observer goes on to say, “So 1989 will be a dramatic year for the new President. Whether he’s a Republican or a Democrat makes no great difference.” The rosy speeches of the would-be President may be contradicted by the harsh realities of the immediate future. There is so much that approximates the days of Noah and Lot that makes it hard to see “God bless America.” A spiritually intelligent Christian will not be expecting too much from this present world. Our ups and downs in this life are included as valued training for a better world.

The Occult

A strange and contradictory thing is cropping up everywhere in our society. We may say contradictory because the general trend in Christendom is to rule out anything supernatural. Where our Bible speaks of creation, or records miracles, they are accounted as exaggerations of superstitions. In other words, all things must be rationalized. Completely opposite to all of this is the use of spiritism, Satanism, witchcraft, and a consultation with the stars.

A cold world of laws with no God above, or if there is a God, He is treated as an absent landlord and brings no comfort to the human situation. Life is too mysterious and our cry for solutions that exceed all human ken call for something supernatural. Since the Bible is not allowed to be our guide, then the alternative is to turn to superstition. It has been said that even if there were no God the need for one is so great that man would invent one.

The New Age phenomenon is attracting large numbers. Its prophetess is the fast moving former actress Shirley MacLaine. Recently, at the New York Hilton, 1,200 followers paid $300 to hear her vagaries—“pain is a perception not a reality.” This is just part of a 15-day tour calculated to net $1.5 million. MacLaine has authored a number of best selling books. The New Age bag contains crystal balls, contact with deceased relatives through select channelers (mediums), and faith healing. Actually, it is nothing new but a revamp of Oriental religions with a bit of Christianity thrown in. Worse yet is the prevalent Satanism. In our rural community three teenagers removed a baby from a recent grave. Later the corpse was wrapped in a plastic bag and thrown to the wayside. Police later searched the homes of the culprits and found artifacts of Satan worship. Drugs play a major role and attendant violence, murder and suicides. It appears to be a middle class menace and parents are advised to look for Satanic emblems in the home.

Global

With too much ease these youths enjoy idleness and easy money, also the use of the family car. Their

energies are not spent in the disciplines of manual work or sports. Sodom's iniquity was, "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her. And they were haughty, and committed abmonination before me; therefore I took them away" (Ezek. 16:49-50). Our Lord said that the days on the verge of His coming would be characterized thus, "Likewise as it was in the days of Lot. Even thus shall it be when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:28, 30). A note from Campus Crusade for Christ in West Germany reports that "young people are turning in droves to the New Age Movement. Poor career prospects and increasing skepticism toward reason and science are basic causes for the revival of interest in astrology, parapsychology, and the occult." The lack of powerful teaching about Jesus Christ in the churches is another blame for such a condition. Nor should we be surprised with such a Scriptural verse as this before us, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Dangerous Imbalance

Ever since the Cuban crisis Russia has striven to gain a nuclear supremacy over NATO. This, from all accounts, she has achieved. A smart Russia, ever since her political drubbing when forced to remove her missiles from Cuba in 1962, has had her wounded pride saying, “Never again!” As long as the American nuclear umbrella over Japan and Western Europe possessed unquestionable superiority a Soviet conventional attack was deterred. This balance is no more. The Economist of London admits, “It is generally accepted that Russia would be likely to win in Europe a war involving only conventional forces, and maybe one involving tactical nuclear weapons.” Hence, the present plans for America are to put its new Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in Europe. Russia’s obvious aim is to coerce Europe into a meek submissiveness in the same way she holds sway over the Baltic states. This strategy of blackmail is alarmingly on the road to success. The source of all the trouble, and who can interpret it otherwise, is the strategic placing of more than 1,000 warheads that assure Russia of military superiority in Europe. Also, in their pocket, are some two million people (many it would appear with a fanatical martyr complex) fiercely arraigned against America’s nuclear answer to the Russians. Such consider themselves better Red than dead.

So, at the moment Western Europe and Israel, humanly speaking, are in danger. The Soviets could well be on their way to rubbing their hands together and smiling as they see their purposes closing like a giant trap. This writer believes that Satan is the mastermind behind this massive buildup of military might never before equalled.

Looking into the Scriptures we discover a personal Devil whose deliberate aim has been to thwart the purposes of God. After the Edenic fall there was the promise of the "seed of the woman" to bruise the serpent's head. Abel was the logical "seed" and was marked out for slaying. Later the dynasty of David was to produce the Anointed One —Messiah. The wicked Athalia slew all the royal seed except a baby that was saved from her bloody hand by his aunt. Later he became King Joash (2 Chron. 22:10). When the Lord Jesus disclosed to his disciples that he was going to the cross (Matt. 16:21), Peter replied, "Far be it from thee, Lord." In this he was nothing less than the mouthpiece of Satan. Our Lord said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).

All through we see Satan attempting to block our Lord from fulfilling the "things of God concerning Him." What then are the purposes as to the future? Plainly, Israel is to be restored and play a major role in the great tribulation and in the kingdom to be eventually the head of the nations. The dominant power in the prophetic lineup will be the revived Roman Empire in some form or other. It will be headed up by the beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-4). This last Caesar is acclaimed, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Getting back to our secular theme with Eurgpe's independence at stake and Israel's survival, both of these, since they are in the purpose of God, are Satan's targets. The premillennial interpretation sees the Mediterranean nations confederate and gaining a superiority over the "the king of the North" — Russia and her satellites. The potential for a strong Europe is there; it only awaits the "man of sin." Certainly a critical stage in world history is on its course to a climax. Our viewpoint comes from Scripture and so is different from that of The Economist of London.

Jerusalem

The Israelis continue to capture the headlines. They have won a significant war in Lebanon but have fared badly in the news media. Branded as aggressors and assassins of innocent civilians, the reason for civilian casualties has not been given a fair airing. An unscrupulous foe, the P.L.O. deliberately holed themselves into civilian areas leaving little choice but to pound them out of their retreats. Now an unsteady peace prevails and the problem of winning the peace has become a multi-national problem. The present situation has introduced another phase of Bible prophecy. In Zechariah 14:1-3 we read that at the approach of "the day of the Lord" God will "gather all nations against Jerusalem." Now to stabilize matters in this volatile area troops from Britain, Italy, France and the U.S. have been introduced into Lebanon. In the final analysis they are there to guarantee the safety of Jerusalem. Poised against that city is an opposing array of enemies. There are Russian "technicians" operating deadly antiaircraft weaponry, all backed up by 50 million human packages

of Arab hate. Begin is far from disposed to put his nation's security in the hands of the peace keeping forces. A member of the Jewish government (the Knesset) gave Shakespeare a new application when he said, "The problem of Israel is simply this — to be or not to be that is the question. The Arabs could lose many times but we Jews could lose only once, and we are finished." The little nation has been dangerously near to extinction since its existence in 1948. The reason for this remarkable survival (one can hardly deny) has been providential. It now has a highly efficient army (according to the Institute of Strategic Studies, fourth in the world), possessing battle-tried sophisticated know-how. Its air force could be rated the best in the world for its size. The accurate bombing of Baghdad's atomic potential amazed the investigators.

Even those Christians who look askance at dispensationalism, with its understanding that the Old Testament prophecies await a literal fulfilment for Israel, can hardly be blind to this school of prophetic interpretation. When first advanced by such teachers as J. N. Darby and William Kelly, there was the well reasoned array of Scriptures. Now we have a plus; we see spiritual conditions, moral laxity and geopolitics developing as could be expected from premillenial enlightenment. Not that we are necessarily saying, "This is it!" but we certainly can be excused from being on tiptoe expectation that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Wars

We learn that there are 164 sovereign nations in the world; also 45 of them are either at war with each other

or suppressing rebellions or guerilla struggles. In the last three years six new wars have started and only two have ended. For instance, there are ten wars in the Middle East (Iran, Afghanistan and Lebanon, to name a few). Ten in Africa and Asia and seven in Latin America and so on. The United States versus the Soviet Union are supplying the military equipment. In some respects the combatants are surrogates of these two major powers. Gen. Ghazali Seth of Malaysia, whose small country seeks to maintain a strict neutrality, has lately increased its military budget 500 per cent and realistically stated, “If we are weak, an outside power will come knocking at our door.” The U.S. presence in Europe has safeguarded that coveted hub of vitality from aggression.

An example of unpreparedness is seen in Judges 19:27. There we read of the vagabond Danites in search of an easy victim to exploit and found it in Laish, “a people that were at quiet and secure: and they (the Danites) smote it with the edge of the sword, and there was no deliverer and they had no business with any man.” In a world such as it is, America has no choice but to arm sufficiently to face all threats. The Scriptures plainly teach, as to the world, “the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17). The peace-nics and rioters, especially the leaders, are often questionable characters. Their dress and unkept hair give them a “gay” identity. With them little thought is given to the revealed fact that lax living invokes the displeasure of heaven. We read, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). The need is for more who constitute “the salt (preservative) of the earth.” No one in this century was more dedicated to

peace than Neville Chamberlain. In spite of all the concessions he made with Hitler, war came. Some of the concessions were at the expense of others but based on an egalitarian philosophy. The leaders of the Free World must face a Russia that is bent on making her Communism worldwide and obviously has a will to do so, as evidenced by a buildup of weaponry sufficient for such a goal. God in His providence has limited the world to four empires according to Nebuchadnezzar's image. Only the fourth (Rome) is to be revived and then go into perdition (Rev. 17:11). The Europe that is so ill-equipped to limit Russia's aims is yet to arise under a dictatorship that will successfully challenge Russia's ambitions (Rev. 13:4). Until the Prince of Peace (the Lord Jesus Christ) comes the dictum for the ever warring world is, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Two Enemies

Biblical Christianity is confronted by two arch opponents; namely, Atheism and Ritualism. The presence of Christ in the world brought these two masterpieces of Satan out into the light. The Sadducees entertained no belief in the supernatural (Matt. 22:23; Acts 22:8). We would label them today as materialists — a euphony for atheists, or thereabouts. A Pharisee was the ritualist — a champion of religious tradition. Today he is seen in those who hold that the church is the only depository of sacramental grace. Each of these systems and their close relatives, according to their natural dispositions, charms their millions of votaries.

In the strange amalgum of human affairs fate has pushed two formidable champions to represent and energize these two great systems. We refer to the present Pope and the new head of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev. Both of these systems were weakening at the top when these two men came into power. Now things are shaping differently. Many of us read Ezekiel 38 and 39 as revealing a powerful king of the North (Russia) shaping significant events during the great tribulation until miraculously destroyed. In Revelation 17 and 18 we see the Roman Church restored in world affairs as a “Queen, and no widow.” Rome was destroyed by the embittered people in the French Revolution and the Bolshevic revolution in 1917. These were rehearsals of

what is to take place on a far greater scale in the end times.

Pope John Paul II, humanly speaking, gives one the impression of being a splendid specimen of manhood. He has considerably revived Catholicism along conservative lines: priestly celibacy and the limited role of women. Along with this a new emphasis is being given to Romanist dogmas. Maryolatry still ranks paramount. He says, “Mary is the source of our faith and hope.” He tells us that the Roman bishops are infallible in their interpretation of Scripture. The “separated brethren” of a few years ago are only received back on Rome’s terms.

These two forceful leaders may be, unwittingly to be sure, expanding their influence toward the prophetic theatre of events that are to reach their climax and destruction in that period so often foretold in both testaments, “the great tribulation.” Certainly these two Satanic systems have men that answer to the description in 2 Corinthians 11:14: “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” Even Communism can boast of its curbs on immorality with a better showing than is being witnessed in the democracies.

Signs

The disciples asked the Lord for the signs that would announce His second advent. In Matthew two lengthy chapters are taken up in reply to the disciples’ question. By the time we arrive at chapter 24:33 several harbingers are mentioned.

One sign particularly is not imminent, that is the appearance of the “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel and appearing in the “holy place.” This can only refer to the Jewish temple that is not yet in existence. This feature does not occur until the middle of the great tribulation. This in turn will occasion a flight from Jerusalem by those of understanding, and hopefully it will not be on a sabbath day. A defined and limited “holy place” and sabbath restrictions are foreign to Christian principles. Obviously, the second coming in Matthew answers the question in a Jewish context. The rapture of the church comes first. Getting back to verse 33 we read, “When ye see all these things, know it is near.” Some of the “things” are in an incipient form right now. With what has happened in 1985 we may be excused for being impressed by the prophecy, “and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.” The famines in Africa have been well publicized. In America social diseases, we call them sin diseases, are reaching plague proportions with no medical cures yet in sight.

Both Testments have strong prohibitions against all types of sex perversions. These objective commands cannot be flouted — “the way of the transgressor is hard” (Prov. 13:15). The plagues poured upon Egypt had their origin from God. God’s governmental reign over the sons of men is to be kept separate from the reign of grace that behooves to the penitent.

The earthquakes are another story. They have always been around (Amos 1:1), but their present magnitude of casualties is explainable by the population density the world over. This too makes hurricanes so deadly. Such visitations are described by Isaiah 28:21. “…that He may

do His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act." Our Lord referred to two calamities in His day (Luke 13:1-5) and applied them as warnings to the living. He said, "Think ye they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Population Explosions

While Westerners indulge in birth control and abortions, other sections of the world are doubling and tripling the loss. The countries and islands that are short on space or resources are fast multiplying their numbers. Mexico loads its excess millions on the U.S. If the present influx continues, it is not hard to envision American cities spawning shanty towns. Florida has a poorly protected shore line. The supply of good water is threatened and exotic diseases are imported. A pertinent question now being considered is our need, room and opportunity for these unwanted and unfortunate victims of a reckless family planning. Are they a judgment on the highly privileged elements of society who have been selfish regarding their own family additions? No system of government can assure the good life when an adequate supply of water is threatened by bulging populations. Worse yet, these teeming multitudes are not showing a popular response to the gospel. A high infant mortality and killing diseases kept populations in balance. Now with the inventions of penicillin and innoculations, there have been introduced into society new problems. Reminding us of Solomon's remark, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." Paul tells us that "by one man's (Adam) disobedience many were made sinners." The Genesis account of the universality of the

fall is the only satisfactory explanation for the bind man has always experienced. A perfect universe is neither practical nor possible until Christ returns to reign. Then the curse will be lifted.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Egalitarianism

Faced with present trends, it appears inevitable that free enterprise and individualism are steadily yielding to the rights of the whole society. A sort of “equal shares are fair shares” mentality has settled upon the majority. Complex as this might seem, its blessings, or otherwise, are being considerably fostered by an ever-increasing government bureaucracy. By this we mean those agencies set up to render social services to about all who can prove they need help. The original goals that prompted these concerns for the underprivileged, however unrealistic, were most commendable — banish poverty from the land. This in turn would decrease crime and disease and stabilize the shiftless elements in society. Admittedly, other factors have contributed to this ungovernable situation, such as high wages and the large numbers that are unemployable in our technical age. As a result, an ever increasing element saps at the structure of a stable society. It is a type of benevolence that feeds upon itself; like the horseleach ever crying, “Give, give” (Prov. 30:15). To placate this segement of irresponsibility demands large numbers of unproductive government employees. Not that the social worker does not work, but his labors are a treadmill affair. This has come to be known as “Parkinson’s Law.”

The more high wages and machinery dispense with otherwise essential workers, the more slack has to be

taken up with welfarism, or make work. The guaranteed minimum wage keeps thousands of teen-agers from finding outlets according to their economic worth. May not all of this be symbolized by the “clay” that was mixed with the iron which composed the feet of the great image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream?

Closely allied to this is the “Right’s Explosion.” This is pushed to the ridiculous, including the rights of prisoners, homosexuals and alcoholics, and completely ignoring the Bible’s dictum that “the way of the transgressor is hard.” All have a right to a good job, house and food, regardless. Drives, motivation and standards of excellence are of little count.

Boston University’s president has said, “Out of well-intentioned but inept concern with equality of opportunity, we have begun to reject anything that exceeds another’s grasp.” Non-negotiable demands are being made on legislators regardless of the hard facts dictated by economics. The rewards of industry and frugality are being called in question. Experts predict a nation in constant conflict with itself as the new theories of rights expand and more groups organize.

A noted Columbia University sociologist says, “A more egalitarian society inevitably requires more government regulation.” All of this runs contrary to the Christian ethic that would have the slave abide in his calling and render his best service to his master. Freedom could be sought within the system of that day (1 Cor. 7:21-24). Yet, wherever the gospel has triumphed, there one will find the most enlightened governments. The liberty to strike and protest, so shamefully abused, is a by-product of Christianity. Anti-Christian systems, such as Fascism

and Communism, not only close churches but forbid dissent. When governments get overloaded with problems, and that appears to be our present course, inevitably freedom suffers.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer labels the present as a post-Christian era. The conservatism that had its roots in Christianity is fast yielding to humanism. Man intends to solve his problems without God. He will always find his noble goals just beyond his reach. The frustrations continually encountered here are intended to teach him to seek a better country. May more follow Abraham, “For he looked for a city which bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

All such is anathema to the do-gooders of today. They little realize that the strains that they are placing on the government can milk the cow dry, instead of stimulating the ambition to rise, the successful are brought down to common standards, these do-gooders forgetting that without mountains there are no fertile valleys. Some are tempted to describe the present as mobocracy. It is significant that the Bible’s symbol for restless populations is the sea, “The waters which thou sawest — are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” It is the ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 that rises up out of the turbulent world situation in the role of a ruthless dictator. We read that “power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” Man will always accept this when the alternative is anarchy. Since Nebuchadnezzar there has never been a man that fills the role so perfectly as this world’s last dictator. Never were forces more vigorous than the present that aim at obtaining a utopia. Over against this the Word of God

prophecies, “This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

All this raises the question of just what is the role of government? The Christian is instructed by the Apostle Paul to “be subject unto the powers that be.” This cannot mean to try and manipulate or attempt to control the government. It is significant that the New Testament tells the role of the Christian husband, wife, master, slave, widow and church leaders, but there are no orders for a political head. The Old Testament contains some vital orders for the kings of Israel. The enforcement of a Christian community such as Calvin established in Geneva or the Puritans in New England soon proved unworkable.

Government has been entrusted to mankind according to the Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:5-6). Christians can and do add their “salt” to whatever system of government may be their lot. A recent book deploring big government sees but one remedy — “a greater degree of self-control.” We should add, however, that this is too realistic and not likely to happen. The same writer, apparently without the aid of Bible prophecy, shows nevertheless a matured insight when he writes, “Unhappily, we have departed from our Judeo-Christian heritage and one of the results of that is an ever-increasing economic psychic dependency on government with the result that we have a government of unattainable goals and unbearable control. Our government reflects our unlimited appetites, and if left unchecked, it will lead to a totalitarian state.”

Actually, the Bible-oriented Christian is in the world but not of it to the same extent as Christ was and is not of

the world. Where faith is operative and enlightened the words of Micah are not amiss, “Arise ye, and depart; for this it not your rest; because it is polluted” (Mic. 2:10).

Sneak Attack?

Once again our top strategists are asking the question, “What are the possibilities for a surprise nuclear attack from the Soviet Union?” In other words, what are the possibilities of another type of Pearl Harbour on a much grander scale? Obviously, such an attack would be designed to accomplish a complete, knockout as far as the United States’ ability to retaliate. It is common knowledge that Russia has built up a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons of intercontinental range that can have only one target in mind. True, America’s capacity to retaliate is enormous, or so we are assured by our defence planners. A U.S. News & World Report article informs us that “the Kremlin has embraced a doctrine not only at deterring nuclear war but fighting one.”

It is somewhat assuring to be told that there are spying satelites circling the globe that could message back that Russia is preparing for such an attack. This could give a few days of warning. It takes only the pressing of a button to signal the missiles into the air on their way to designated targets. When that happens, they cannot be recalled. That is one advantage of the man-piloted bombers; they could be brought back in the event of a mistake or hurried truce. Consequently, the decision-making process before the fatal button is pressed is understandably complicated. So much so, that I again quote from the article: “The biggest fear now among the defence planners is that the system may get into trouble because it is so complex.”

It has been asked, “Where does America fit into Bible prophecy?” This is quite natural, seeing that World War 2 has left the United States the wealthiest and greatest nation in the free world. Strange as it might seem, America is not identified in prophecy. Since American culture is predominantly Western European, many expositors place the United States within the orbit of the revived Roman Empire. This is quite plausible in view of the relations that have been developed in the defence of free Europe and the new Jewish homeland. Humanly speaking, neither would have survived Russia’s ambitions since the end of World War 2 but for U.S. determination. On the other hand, it is not hard to identify Russia’s role in prophecy from Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11. If this “king of the north” is not Russia or one backed by that nation, who else has the clout to invade Palestine and penetrate far into Africa? Certainly, the past has nothing its equal. It must be recalled that these events are in the “later days” and associated with the complete national resurrection of Israel — all twelve tribes.

Getting back to what we have already inquired about regarding the United States, we see that William Kelly considered the problem a hundred years ago. In his lectures on the Minor Prophets, when he comes to Joel he dwells at length on “the day of the Lord.” After reviewing the world situation in his day and the trends that were already set afoot, which we observe are in many instances realities today, Kelly gives his reflections on America.

He writes: “As to America, I conceive that the young giant power which has grown so fast, will sink still faster, probably through intestine quarrel, but assuredly

somehow before that day comes. They will break up into different fragments. Their prime object is to maintain political unity. This is their great ambition, and though it may appear to stand and advance, as everything amibtious is apt to prosper for a time, it will be blown down before long. For it is a remarkable fact that there is no place in prophecy for a vast influential power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long retained its cohesion. Is it concievable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by its dissolution? However, I particularly wish everyone to understand that this is merely drawn from the general principles of the Word of God."

Kelly would no doubt be surprised to learn of America's deciding role in the last two world wars. Also, that she is the bulwark of a war-weakened Europe and the patron of Israel. That America's foundations are threatened by internal strife cannot be ignored. Today, our defence planners are aware that America faces danger from another source — a possible sneak attack.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

All Is Vanity

There were two articles appearing recently in U. S. News and World Report. They took us back to the 60's when two enterprising programs were promoted. We refer to "the Great Society" with its goal to eliminate poverty in America and "the Green Revolution" which was to rid the impoverished areas of the world from starvation. The recent articles in the main showed how both goals failed. The well analyzed conclusions came not from fault finding "Fundamentalists" but knowledgeable experts in their field.

The question is raised, "The Great Society: boon or expensive bust?" From little acorns great programs grew. Now after 15 years and hundreds of millions of tax dollars the blacks who were to be the main beneficiaries, we learn from an authority, are no better off than in the 1960's. Assistance is a two way street. It certainly appears that the government has not been niggardly. We wonder about the motivation of the recipients. To quote from the article, "Of all the Great Society thrusts, the promise of increased education prompted the highest hopes in most glowing rhetoric." President Johnson, the main engineer of this ambitious goal said, "The answer for all of our problems comes to a simple word, that word is, education."

Programs that are largely in the area of give away are at best of limited success. Compare the student who works his way through school and those who are paid to go.

Now that the gravy train is drying up it is discovered the problems have increased. Government programs feed on themselves and develop situations that threaten their solvency. The only solution is least likely to be tried — repentance toward God and faith in His Son as Saviour, followed by a good infusion of Biblical morality.

The Green Revolution has run into trouble. Experiments with wheat and rice seeds produced some amazing results in increased production. The newly cultured plants needed heavy doses of nitrogen and an abundance of water to assure the plants not being burned by the fertilizer. Since the nitrogen is a byproduct of the petroleum industry it is now priced beyond the capacity of a poor nation. Even where the fertilizer is within economic reach of the farmer the water supply is generally wanting. So millions of human beings face starvation or serious malnutrition.

We are in a no-win world. The account of the creation and fall of our first parents are often ridiculed today. The universal effect of this fall cannot be denied. Following the entrance of sin into our world God said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” It is not the intention of God for man to be safely ensconced down here. Ever since the fall God has been saying, often through calamities, “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction” (Micah 2:10).

Abraham, we read, “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb.

11:10). True, we would like a comfortable world for everybody, but powers beyond us such as wars, famines, and pestilence come in uninvited cycles. “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it.” We will say, from our observation, that those who adjust to a fallen world in God’s way, and do not rebel against it, are psychologically and physically best fitted to cope. A quote from C. S. Lewis agrees with what we have been reasoning from Scripture, history and nature, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is I was made for another world.” Another realistic observer of this unequal world concludes, “Man is neither so miserable as infinite malice could accomplish, nor so happy as infinite beneficence could cause. There must be another dimension where the secret lies.” The Communist response to a heaven beyond death is that it is an opiate of the people, or “pie in the sky.” However, after over fifty years of it in Russia, they have not been able to make heaven down here.

“While death reigns unvanquished,

And sin rules the way,

The story of Jesus will never grow old.”

W. C. C. Convention

The World Council of Churches held its ecumenical convention last May in Melbourne, Australia. All of the mainline denominations were represented by their delegates; included were Catholics. Actually 500 delegates from all parts of the world. The agenda was built around the prayer, “Your Kingdom Come.” From reports it was easy to gather that the over-riding

emphasis of the Council was help for the poor — especially Third World Nations — a call to equalize the world's wealth, not preach the saving gospel to every creature.

A German theologian, Professor Ernst Kasemann, in the keynote address said what probably most were expecting and wanting to hear. One of his remarks was, "Resist all temptation to non-involvement in the struggle against 'rich societies' with their unstoppable lust of possession and the unrestrained use of their scientific and technological capacitation to defend their privileges and make whole continents pay for this with their blood." He went on to say, "For too long the old churches have been in league with the powerful and have supported themselves on a bourgeois middle class, while yet neglecting or even despising the cries of the damned in our world."

It is easy to see how this kind of one-sided and subversive speechmaking leads the Council to donate monies to revolutionaries. That the world is full of injustice no honest person denies. Nor can we fail to see where revolutions have succeeded in recent years. It has been a case of changing bosses, resulting in something more tyrannical than the government they have forced to capitulate.

The Council certainly expresses the position of Christendom; decidedly social and certainly with no thought of evangelizing those of other faiths. One gets the thought that Christianity is just one of the great religions of the world. There is no offense of the cross here. What a time bomb would Peter's preaching be, especially when he addressed the ecclesiastics of his day

saying, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12).

All of this pomp and circumstance naturally leads us to inquire afresh, “What is Christianity anyway?” In the mystery parables of the Kingdom the grain of mustard seed has grown into a tree. It has outdone itself and has lost its allotted place in nature. Christendom has lost its simple origins. There is a Christian world, but the true sons of the Kingdom are known only to God. The history of the church as given by most historians “has been but the history of what has usurped her name and travestied her character.” To usher in the golden age is not the task of the church. That is left for our Lord Jesus to bring in the Millennium. He presaged that event when He cleansed the temple of His day with a scourge. He is yet to reign with a rod of iron. In this our church dispensation, we have a strange combination. Satan is revealed as “the god of this passing age” (2 Cor. 4:4, NEB). The Scripture says “grace reigns through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21). Not grace without righteousness, but because of the cross work of our Lord a righteous grace is offered to “whosoever will.” God’s program for this age of so many “mysteries” has been tersely said by James, “At the first God did visit the Gentiles (that was when Peter preached in the house of Cornelius), to take out a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Summit

A Communist has no scruples regarding honor. Consequently, he cannot credit anyone else with higher ideals than his own. As a result, both Reagan and Gorbachev have faced each other with equal wariness. Still, while the opposing superpowers are talking, actual fighting, which eventually seems to be inevitable, is delayed. As former President Nixon says, “In the age of nuclear parity when each superpower has the means to destroy the other and the rest of the world, summit meetings have become essential if peace is to be preserved.”

Despite the smiles, external cordiality and rhetoric, the analysts tell us that little or no substance was accomplished at last November’s summit. Others tell us we will have to wait on history to really appraise this recent summit meeting. The one item that the Kremlin leader tried his hardest to persuade Reagan to compromise upon was the so-called Star Wars capability. This seems to be an obsession with the Russians. If ever achieved it could neutralize the attack potential of nuclear weapons. At the present it appears to be an advantagious bargaining chip for America and her allies.

President Reagan’s formula for peace is to remain as strong as his adversary. The numerous peace demonstrators that abound in all the Western countries

would prefer a unilateral disarmament as a solution to the present rivalry. Neither will assure peace, but human nature being what it is, the adage of a former President, Teddy Roosevelt, has the most pragmatism, “Walk softly, but carry a big stick.”

The Christian who rightly divides the Word of Truth, the Bible, knows that there is no recipe for peace. Righteousness must precede peace, and since man is incapable of bringing righteousness into the world, peace will always be an elusive thing. When Jesus Christ returns to reign, the psalmist has ably described the outcome, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10).

In the light of Bible prophecy two significant events have taken place since World War II. The establishment of Israel as a sovereign nation and the phenomenal rise of Russia to a world power. The Bible says these are occurrences related to the “last days” or “later years” (Acts 15:16 and Ezek. 38). Historically, Russia has played no impressive roles until our times. Ecclesiastically, she has had no Reformation nor produced great theologians. In the area of discovery and inventions she is eclipsed by the West. As to human rights, she has always been backward. Shackled to an atheistic materialism, Russia, nevertheless, has become the world’s number one military power. Such an ascendancy is only to be attributed to God’s permissive will. Only by America’s superior technology, this “king of the North” (Dan. 11:40), late in time to arise, is held at the bit and still has a significant part to fulfill during the great tribulation. Yet, the prophetic dictum is “he shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (Dan. 11:45). What was said of Pharoah will one day be applicable to

Russia, “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the whole earth” (Rom. 11:17).

Time and again we read in Ezekiel the changes on this phrase, “And thou shalt know that I am the Lord.” The context of these affirmative statements is generally associated with judgments upon Israel for idolatry. Russia’s atheism is an equal offence to God and inevitably awaits God’s time clock for judgment. When this prophetic judgment has come, God says, “Thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself: and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. 38:23). How tragic that the world will only know God through His judgments, “For when thy judgments are in the earth, then the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). All because “ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

Terrorism

No matter how benevolent the programs there are always those who are left out or who are losers and victims of exploitation. Thousands have been driven from their homes or livelihood by political takeovers or wars, breeding anger and frustration. Such are inclined to give a listening ear to demagoguery and their latest envy and hate can be fanned to fanaticism. Now we are seeing to what ends the human heart is capable of expressing itself. The prophet Jeremiah said it right in 500 B.C.: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” The definition goes for all of us. Only those who have really tried to be good know

experientially how desperate is “the law of sin” that reigns within us. Then too, some who would never be immoral outwardly, or commit murder, often take pleasure in those that do. Hence the craving of the news media for juicy or exciting incidents.

The terrorists feel this is the only way they can air their hang-ups. In some of the escapades their do or die daring makes truth stranger than fiction. A giant ocean liner was hijacked with 400 aboard. The vengeful Arabs found it gratifying to vent their spleen on one of the Jewish passengers, so they shot Leon Klinghoffer and unceremoniously cast his body into the sea. The recovered body gave evidence to their lie that he had died of a heart attack. The sickening thing with terrorism is that the innocent are generally their victims.

Where hostages are involved the terrorists demand the release of their comrades who are imprisoned. To so trade with terrorists may alleviate an immediate situation. But it would only increase future scenarios. So the present sees American hostages under a death threat pleading, with their loved ones, for the authorities by practically any means to bring about their release. The government has reached an uncompromising stand — no deals with terrorists is the wisest course to take. There are areas in Christianity where one must be intransigent. It is daubed as intolerance and irritating to liberals. But Christianity is a religion of absolutes. The Saviour’s words are unyielding when He says, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Philipp Melanchthon’s oft repeated maxim fits, “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, in all things charity.”

Sports

It has been said that the best things are capable of the worst corruption. This usually applies to religion, marriage and government. Now sports are being debased. Race horses must be tested before racing lest they have been doped. Some of the paraded heroes of the gridiron dope themselves before entering a game. Recently, in Lexington, Kentucky, the baseball stars of the university, 26 out of 33, confessed to reporters that they had taken gifts and favors from boosters in violation of the rules governing college sports. It was like athlete like fan. The expose in the newspapers brought an incredible amount of protest. The editors' excuse was, "We didn't feel we could sit on this information and live with ourselves." The upsetting thing about it all is the total lack of sportsmanship. In this area particularly we expect fair play. Isn't that what sports are all about? Then too, there is approval or indifference to the rules of the game. Anything goes providing one can get away with it. To win is the name of the game.

The popularity of sports is good as it affords an outlet and a getaway from it all for the nation's workers. On the other hand, when we see the thousands filling the bleachers on Sundays compared with church attendance we feel that we are back to the times when the ancient arenas were filled. Contemporary with those ancient days came the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). Nor can we leave out "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). The millions of dollars involved incites cupidity and instability of character. Indeed, "how are the mighty fallen!" Sportscaster

Howard Cosell writes, “Sports have become a murky blur in a morass of hypocrisy, corruption and deceit.” The kids are easily given to make athletes their heroes. This is a trust the stars should appreciate and aim to be examples to impressionable youth. Better yet if the young became acquainted with the heroes of Scripture, too.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Bureaucracy

We hear it said that for every six workers in the private sector, there is one employed by our government (U.S.) or dependent upon welfare. In England the proportion of public employees is even greater. Here we get an idea of how crippling on the economy such a disparity is. The scramble for Civil Service jobs is understandable; an almost guarantee of security in every sector of life. Often the work is minimal. For the ambitious the seniority system of promotion must be frustrating. However, some two million persons are happy with the situation. Now that Civil Service employees are unionized, their wages and benefits outdo most who must work for private enterprise. The lack of challenge and desire of reward for exceptional work can have a debilitating effect; a sort of punch-the-clock complex. When released from work, many appear so constituted that they welcome what affords to them excitement … some form of escapism, sports, gambling and liquor.

Many Christians have no other choice but to live with this situation. Often, we suppose, the car driving to and from work consumes more energy than the hours put in on the job. This cheerless stint with the time clock could eventually undermine a person’s potential. These reflections were stimulated when reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s classic book, The Scarlet Letter. His first chapter deals mostly with his three years’ experience as

a Customs House officer. Although his work appeared active and versatile, especially in meeting so many shipping veterans, he nevertheless entertained thoughts of resigning. This was settled for him by the election of President Taylor, since his position was a political appointment.

Hawthorne felt that his ejection was a blessing in disguise. He refers to “Uncle Sam’s Gold” having “a quality of enchantment, a bargain to go hard against him, involving if not his soul, many of its better attributes, its sturdy force, its courage and constancy, its truth, its self-reliance, and all that gives emphasis to manly character.” In a further observation he wrote, “An effect… which I believe to be observable more or less, in every individual who has occupied the position … is, while he leans on the mighty arm of the Republic, his own proper strength departs from him. He loses, to an extent proportioned to the weakness or force of his original nature, the capability of self-support.” Thus this great writer of wholesome fiction brought himself to the comfortable conclusion “that everything was for the best; and, making an investment in ink, paper and steel pens, had opened his disused writing desk, and was a literary man.”

Christians, too, should find themselves something to challenge them, if their occupation fails to do so. The Lord’s service is a splendid outlet. Here we have an expression of the “Puritan Ethic” that gendered old-time “Americanism.” It is anathema among the intellectuals of today; a putting of the clock back. Say what critics will, it has built a nation of wealth and prosperity that is the wonder and envy of the rest of the world. This recipe to greatness had its source in the Bible. True, America

never was a Christian nation, but a lot of Christianity's by-products heavily contributed to the system. Indeed, most of the present generosities of welfarism are made possible by the momentum built up by free enterprise.

America is now on another course that undermines the work ethic, that flouts Biblical morality and disregards fiscal responsibility. We are told the latter forestalls economic depression. Actually, it only holds off the evil day of reckoning, even as we read in Proverbs 1:30 & 31: "They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

Certainty Missing

To this observer, the Roman Catholic Church has been playing a comparatively low-key since Vatican II. The iron voice behind her dogmas has not been so loud. Then some of her saints have been demoted and the Mass celebrated in the local vernacular of the country where the church happens to be. Some have found it hard to adjust and rebel bishops insist on maintaining the old paths. A few of her theologians have raised the voice of dissent, even questioning the citadel of that church's strength; namely, the Mass and Papal authority. However, if this mistress of Christendom has lately made some concessions and minor retreats, she has in no way disadvantaged herself that the lost ground cannot be easily recaptured.

Last October the present Pope celebrated his 80th birthday. One hundred thousand had gathered in St. Peter's Square and Pope Paul VI was borne into St. Peter's Basilica seated on a golden throne carried along on human shoulders. He was greeted by the

arrangement of a 10,000-voice choir. The aged Pontiff, and very frail, spoke briefly. The otherwise bright occasion was sombered with the Pope's doleful words, "We feel the fragility of human life." He also added, "The fear of God's judgment at the moment of death is always present and full of mystery." In this he is certainly a poor successor to the Apostle Paul, whose name he chose for himself. The one true Church is blessed with the inspired words of Saint Paul just prior to his martyrdom. They are found in 2 Timothy. Lest we raise the excuse that Paul was singularly blessed because of his apostleship, he is careful to add that the blessings of a blissful and even crowning hereafter were "not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

The Pontiff, along with the 710 million other Roman Catholics, are leaning heavily on "the means of grace"; namely, the benefits of the seven sacraments. Such do not convey the assurance of salvation and are in sharp contrast to what the Scripture teaches on the subject. The souls that are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross are assured that they "shall not come into judgment, but are passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Saint Paul further corroborates this when he writes, "There is therefore now no judgment to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Turning to a secular source, Charles Wesley states what can only be gathered from Holy Writ:

God will not twice demand

Judgment from my bleeding Surety's hand,

And then again at mine.

Then, too, there are found among the Apostle Paul's last words: "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:9-10). The words of Peter are just as assuring: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Nor should it be overlooked that we have the departing words of those two other apostles in their second epistles. Therein we find not the slightest hint of so-called "apostolic succession." Both assert the sufficiency and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures for future ages.

Since the Protestant Reformation, the Papacy has set its house in order at least morally. The preceding two centuries to the Reformation defied all attempts to do this. Indeed, Catholicism to this present day is on its best behavior in Protestant lands. Competition among organized churches results in some benefits. The Reformers, not without some strong grounds, interpreted the Papacy as the "man of sin" and the first "beast" of Revelation 13. The behavior of the Pontiffs that was fresh in their memories also gave plenty of credence to their conclusion. With our hindsight and deeper studies into prophecy, we see the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages playing but a faint role of what is to be her part during the Great Tribulation when she fulfils the symbol of "the great whore" of Revelation 17. At this time her departed

daughters, all of Christendom, will be reunited to their "mother." Then, for some dizzy moments, Rome will have achieved her long-sought goal, "to sit a queen, and am no widow" (Rev. 18:7). What happened in the French Revolution and the Bolshevik uprising in miniature (i.e., the church expropriated by the secular power) will be repeated in finality on the eve of the Second Coming of Christ to this earth to reign (Rev. 17:15-18).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Israel

This little country continues to make the headlines. As a Jewish writer observes in the Wall Street Journal, “Since Hitler pointed the way to the ‘final solution’ without being stopped, many people probably still accept the premise that throwing stones and spitting at Jews is normal and even plausible behavior… If those territories of Judea, Samaria and Gaza were populated instead by Mamclukes, Tartars or Georgians nobody would say a word, but since it is Jews… Every day I pray to God to try out, if only for a time, another people as his ‘chosen’, and leave us alone for a little while. It would be just, after several millennia, to test the endurance and spiritual strength of some other nation.” It is as Saint Theresa, a Spanish Carmelite and mystic, of the 16th century reportedly has said, “Lord, your friends are so few, because you are so hard on them.” The witnessing Christian not living in a democratic society also knows the truth of the Lord’s words, “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19).

This same Jewish writer says, “Under no circumstances could Israel allow the establishment of a Palestinian state in those territories, because this would amount to its own suicide.” He sees the hopelessness of coming to any agreement with the Arabs. The heart of the PLO is for the “reconquest of all Palestine.” Any moderate Arab

that would negotiate with Israel is marked for assassination, which has been the lot of so many including Sadat of Egypt. This Jewish apologist continues to write, “If we agree that Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem belong to the Arabs, then we had better start rewriting the Bible.” He is not for agreeing to buy off trouble at the moment with its long-run effect to be suicidal.

Why does Israel who has won five wars against the Arabs feel so wary of conferences and determined to keep its conquered territories? Because it can only lose one war. Behind the boys throwing stones are the big battalions ready to pounce. As the late Golda Meir said, “We Jews have a secret weapon in our struggle with the Arabs—we have no place to go.”

If, and there is good Scriptural support, a dispensational interpretation of the Bible is in principle a correct one, then what is happening in the Bible lands has much going for it. More than Meir’s secret weapon is “a sure word of prophecy.” That is, that the glorious descriptions of a literal Messianic Kingdom is yet to be fulfilled. The key to this is the final spiritual rebirth of the nation of Israel. The present could be the setting of the stage for the great tribulation and the millennium.

The Elections

It is quite largely conceded that democracy is the best system of government that man has yet come up with. Churchill said that it was the best of the worst. The American experiment speaks a lot in favor of democracy. The slogan, let the people decide their government, means power to the majority. Where there is a strong minority the squabbling that can result may hold up

important legislation. At the same time, it does mean that those who lost their vote are still being heard. Considering what man is from the Biblical viewpoint, we wonder that matters work out as well as they do. The Bible's description of man is fully substantiated by history and current events.

In observing the primaries it has been interesting to see democracy at work. One disturbing element has been the fickleness of the crowd. Some will jump and wave banners simply because they have just heard from a candidate exactly what they wanted to hear. They do not weigh what it will take to implement unrealistic promises.

Woe to those candidates who emphasize the disciplines that would be required to remedy present ills. One who did, Peter du Pont, soon discovered that he was a voice crying in the wilderness. Then a favorite may just say the wrong thing, or an opponent dig up something of his past. Many will vote on a single issue or just because they like the looks of their candidate.

That such a system has worked so well in this country should invoke thankfulness. Unfortunately, it is not a panacea for every nation. Human government is a divine institution. The Bible does not tell us what kind. In the Old Testament full instructions were listed for those who would rule over Israel. The Church is in the world but not of it. The behavior of elders, deacons, husbands and wives is fully developed, yet no rules for a king. Presumably those classified as pilgrims and strangers would hardly be found running for an elective office. Ours is to obey whatever powers that be and to disobey

when compelled to respond to laws that violate a conscience that is grounded in the Word of God.

History is filled with examples of humans surrendering to mob psychology. Crowds carried away by promises of revenge, soak the rich, religious intolerance, you name it. Recall how the Jewish leaders could persuade the whole multitude to answer Pilate's question with the cry "Crucify Him." Days before, the whole world was going after Jesus of Nazareth. In the time of the end circumstances will be such that a superman will be hailed as its deliverer. Our Lord referred to him: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:44). So, while we pray for kings and for all who are in authority, we longingly await that bright future when He comes whose right it is, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Democracy

By the time this gets into print the nation will probably know who the two candidates are that will be vying for the presidency of the U.S. Then, let the people preside. Those of a democratic persuasion have demonstrated their popularity. The last elections gave them an influential majority in the House and Senate. At the present an expressed popularity of Jesse Jackson reveals a strong urge to consider the needs, yes, the rights of those who are out of the orbit of prosperity—the homeless, needs of the aging and jobless. If put into effect, a raid on pension funds, insurance and inflation will take place. A serious tap on the energies of the resourceful and a drag on our ability to cope in a highly competitive world will be made. Women who could be

home must enter the work force while the welfare recipients can remain at home duplicating themselves. Prices rise while services diminish as exampled in the rise of postage rates. What we are hearing in the stump speeches has been practiced in England when headed by the Labour Party. The result—lost markets and no longer the world's foremost shipbuilders. If our competitors are working hard, we must match them at their own game. As more socialism is put into operation, such will ultimately prove so much rhetoric. It ignores that man is a sinner. As long as basic Biblical ethics are flouted, men and nations will discover how baseless are their nostrums. Note Mikhail Gorbachev's problems in Russia. Its citizens queue up for staple foods.

In a look at Revelation 2:14-22 we have God's last word to the churches. There has been a succession of development. Quite significant is the name Laodicea, which could mean "rule of the laity." To quote F. W. Grant: "If Christ's yoke is not accepted, the will of man will assuredly assert itself as never before." The people's rights have in church and state become the watch words of the day.

Nor must we rule out "that the way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15). Gambling, alcohol, tobacco and perverted sex are major contributors to man's miseries. Such vitals are off limits to those running for public office. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). God still can show His displeasure with the nations which pay no respect to what has been legislated. "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (Job 40:9).

Glasnost

Theoretically communism should not need changes. Since to them man is merely a stomach, what more does he need above the natural essentials. Russia has no homeless people, we do. With this comparison communism appears as a haven compared with America to those who see no future for them under capitalism. Communism fails to reward the energetic; capitalism does but fails to accommodate the unproductive. It does foster charity. If economic success is the yardstick, then the free world is to be envied, and is!

The university educated leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbechev, inherits an economy where most of his citizens are squeezed into apartments lining up for the essentials of life. He is attempting a dare; he is liberating and modernizing some of the nation's sources of productivity. This means new bosses, layoffs and unemployment.

He is not without opposition. This glasnost (openness), as Gorbachev calls it, has opened a pandora's box. A hegemony such as Russia with her satellites should be at peace according to Marx's economic determinism. Economic forces would overcome nationalism and religion. The Sandanistas expressed it succinctly, "a revolution without borders."

Communism could be the best solution to man's lot if God is left out and man is in an evolutionary process. Russia is composed of 130 nations, or ethnic groups. Several are restless and under glosnost are showing it. We doubt with a publicity-conscious Gorbachev at the helm, whether the army tanks will roll in as they did back in the 50s in Hungary.

Certainly neither communism nor capitalism can cure the world's woes. Atheism is bound to create emotional traumas characteristic of its system. Neither has a society that respects the individual's inalienable rights created a heaven on earth. It does better in adjusting to that individual as created in God's image.

Recently Mikial Gorbechav paid a good will visit to Yugoslavia, a breakaway country from Moscow's centralism. He must have said it with his tongue in his cheek; "Show me a country without nationalist problems, and I'll move there right away." This may give him some comfort as he broods over his own problems. But, why all of this? The "mystery of iniquity" has been at work since the fall of Adam. It is destined to reach its climax. If we are near that point, then world conditions certainly help justify such a conclusion. In a world such as this the Christian cannot be surprised at what takes place in church or state. He is a surprise to himself if he succeeds in keeping himself unspotted from the world since his conversion. The new birth should lead to just that with the accompanying indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For, says Christ, "without me ye can do nothing."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Fundamentalists in Politics

In Colonial days North America became a haven for persecuted Christians of many persuasions. True, the Puritans wanted their colony just their way. There was plenty of room for dissenters to open up other areas, as did Roger Williams, which resulted in the founding of Rhode Island. The founding fathers of this nation knew from history the dilemma European rulers had encountered, and the consequent bloody wars, resulting from their religious involvements. One of the assurances of the Revolution of 1776 was a complete freedom for all religions. Also there was to be a decided separation between Church and State. Now for over two centuries the U.S. has reasonably kept that commitment. Up until the Supreme Court's decision in 1963 to ban public prayers in our schools the nation maintained a Protestant bias. Whatever we might think otherwise, the Court, with no other guide but the Constitution, could hardly arrive at any other decision. Ever since, a conservative wing of Protestants has grieved over this decision and worked for its revocation.

It has required a constant vigilance to keep the government out of religious involvement. In the past it was the Roman Catholic Church that sought to breech this strong government commitment. Time and again they have sought to get government grants for their schools. Sometimes there were subtle attempts to get

around the law. So far, Protestants, atheists and what not have jealously guarded this article of the Constitution. Now, in the eyes of some, the pot is becoming as black as the kettle. Fundamental Protestants are now seeking to inject their conservatism into the political arena. This element has been called the “sleeping giant” of American politics. A quote from U. S. News and World Report says, “It consists according to various polls, of 30 to 60 million Protestants and Catholics — at least 20 per cent of the adult population. For decades, this rapidly swelling group of believers has remained largely aloof from political battles. Now their influence has grown to the point where, for the first time in modern history, all three candidates publicly proclaimed themselves to be born again Christians and considered that label an asset to their campaigns.” The concerns of this conservative wing of the “Fundamentalists” are for the most part laudable. Essentially they are the principles that made this nation great in the first place. TV preacher Jerry Falwell claims registration of 3 million new voters to back conservative candidates. He heads an organization called the “Moral Majority” which includes 70,000 ministers. Another fire brand of the Christian right is TV evangelist James Robison. His fears were expressed in a rally of 17,000 evangelicals in Dallas when he stated, “The stage is set where we are either going to have a Hitler style takeover, a dictatorship, Soviet Communism, or we’re going to get right with God in this country.” In concluding he urged, “It is time for Christians to crawl out from under their pews.”

True, the dangers of socialism are now becoming the facts of life. The drift from moral norms, we fear, has

now become a malignancy. If so, these moral crusades are whipping a dead horse. Then there is the light of prophecy. We are told that it shines for the believer in a "dark place" (the world). It does not dissipate the darkness but occasions the "day star" (Christ's promise to come again for His own) of hope to arise in the Christian's heart. Then there is the promise of "the day dawn" when our Lord reigning as King will usher in a new day for this tortured world. Until then all is man's day, or as our Lord put it when a rabble came to arrest Him in Gethsemane, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). The characteristics of that hour continue until Jesus Christ exercises the rod of His power and inaugurates "the day of the Lord." In connection with this we call attention to a paragraph in William Kelly's commentary on Isaiah 14. "The Lord grant that we may be enabled to profit by all Scripture, using it for instruction and warning, as well as refreshment and joy. All plans for worldly ease and honour will end only in destruction and bitter disappointment. Our business is to work out what God gives us now to do. He is saving souls to be the companions of Christ in heaven. Our responsibility meanwhile is to carry out His thoughts of mercy towards sinners, and His love to and in those that cleave to the name of His Son."

Paul's last words to Timothy were, "Preach the word; in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). This does not mean imposing a Christian morality on those who have not the Spirit of Christ. Then, too, there is always the danger of being carried away with a pet nostrum. When compared with the great doctrines of Scripture

we can be found majoring on a minor. Admittedly, in matters of morality we are in an area where personal convictions will vary. Our Lord reminds us that we are not of the world, and He prayed that we may be kept from the world. As examples we find that neither He nor His apostles launched any campaigns to clean up the immorality and political corruptions that abounded on every hand in their day. A vital link with Christian morality is the touchy matter of separation. There is a categorical command as a prerequisite to faithfulness, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14). The world and merely professing Christians have always eventually shown their hostility to what is basically Christian. The keener the Christianity the sooner and sharper is the hostility provoked. The world is the sphere where it is still possible for the Christian to find himself as a sheep among wolves. For him it is a spiritual wrestling against wickedness in high places. On the other hand, it is the only place where the kind of character can be developed that will invoke the Master’s “Well done.”

A lesson from history is significant. The churches that have played a significant role in politics have immediately been victimized when there has been a revolutionary takeover. Movements that have won a reputation for being politically neutral have been overlooked, or granted some accommodation. Furthermore, they rarely own the properties that incite the cupidity of the revolutionaries. The needs of the Pilgrim Church are simple. A board to contain a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. Nor must we forget the availability of a nearby creek. As a local “body or Christ” it is not dependent upon a benign government and can

adjust and function regardless of the culture in which it happens to be planted. Are we really identifying ourselves with a Christ the religious and secular world cast out? The servant is not above His Master.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Curse

One of the most convincing evidences of the inerrancy of the Bible is mankind's encounter with the primeval curse after the fall of our first parents. One major obstruction to society's felicity is its ever present bout with sickness. The best brains and most money have been arraigned against microscopic germs, viruses and fungi which account for the greatest distress among mankind.

In this area some brilliant successes have been scored. First smallpox inoculation, sterilization in surgery, antibiotics and penicillin. Now, to the chagrin of the doctors, the different microbes build up a resistance to the new medicines. Says one researcher, "We are getting to the point where virtually every organism shows some kind of resistance. We have to be ready for the day when none of our drugs will work on some of these germs." Solomon's observation of the limitations imposed upon this world come to mind: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (Eccles. 1:7). A philosopher recounts his conclusion when he says, "This world is a prison with four walls; you can beat your head against these walls, but you can't get out." While we applaud the amazing advances of medicine (look at the longevity most of us

enjoy), still there is no eventual escaping that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Another case of man’s inability to check or obliterate the inroads of the curse is his encounter with weeds and harmful insects. For a while insecticides worked wonders until the insects built up an immunity to the spraying procedures, calling for stronger applications or new approaches. Unfortunately, the beneficial bugs also were destroyed and birds that fed on them laid sterile eggs. The runoffs from the cultivated field have contributed to the pollution of streams and rivers. This is not to belittle the fact that America has been the principle bread basket for the world for the greater part of this century. In fact, our farmers have been too efficient for their own good. Many are advocating a return to more natural methods — organic farming. No doubt if this had been adhered to in the first place the small farms would have stayed in existence and kept plenty of labour from flocking into the big cities creating pockets of idleness and welfare. Man solves one of his problems only to create others.

In the 107th Psalm we see God authoring the trials of man being “hungry and thirsty” (v. 5) or brought into “the shadow of death” (v. 14). The sailor is reduced to his “wits end” (v. 27) in the stormy seas. All this happens to bring man to a sense of his need of something more than comforts. In dire straits men cry to the Lord for deliverance. Yea, to bring them to repentance, redemption, praise and thanksgiving. God is not allowing men to make a heaven for themselves down here, but rather to emulate Abraham, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

Europe

Twice this century America has come to the defense of a free Europe. After World War 2 most of Europe was financially and militarily exhausted. The Soviet Union stood ready to exploit this situation to its advantage. To counteract this threat the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — NATO — was formed. America's nuclear advantage has so far assured the success of the treaty. In the 35 years of the treaty's existence great changes have come about. Russia has developed, from reports, a nuclear superiority and a massive accumulation of conventional warfare weaponry far beyond her defensive needs. At the same time, Europe has made a spectacular recovery from the ravages of war. To match Russia's nuclear threat on Europe, America purposes to deploy its latest nuclear missiles on European soil to bring about a balance of terror. This plan meets and will meet popular resistance, not wanting stubborn fanatics. In turn American patience with the alliance is running thin. Historical isolationism and America's love to act unilaterally is never far away.

The American umbrella of defense over Europe has perhaps served its day. It contributes to Europe's present weakness. What need is there for maximum effort when America is their rich ally? William Pfaff writes from Paris and concludes that Europe is well able to defend itself. He says, "Obviously the Europeans are a great deal weaker than the Soviet Union in military forces, but that is because they have chosen to rely upon the United States. It is quite within the economic and technological capacity of Western Europe to reverse that choice."

All of this is interesting in the light of our understanding of prophecy. We see Daniel's seventy weeks (Dan. 9) allows for a gap between the 69thand 70th week. In that gap the destruction of Jerusalem took place under Titus in 70 A.D. But Titus was not "the prince that shall come"; he was but a leader of the prince's people.

This then identifies the "oncoming prince" as a Roman. His arrival will mark the beginning of the 70th week along with his covenant with the apostate Jews in Jerusalem — "the many." This coming prince is to be identified with the "beast" out of the sea in Revelation 13. Along with other comparisons with Scripture, this led Bible teachers well over a hundred years ago to anticipate the revival of the old Roman Empire. In spite of Europe's present impotency, compared with the threat on her eastern front, we believe she will further consolidate and finally go it alone insomuch that it will be said, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). William Kelly, in his lectures on Joel, had this to say regarding the United States back in 1874:

"For it is a remarkable power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long retained its cohesion. Is it conceivable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by its dissolution? However, I particularly wish everyone to understand that this is merely drawn from the general principles of the Word of God."

The Papacy

The present Pope of Rome has brought himself and his church into world attention. That the Roman Catholic

Church was flagging before the onrush of Communism and liberalism was evident to those whose interests run along religious lines. In Latin America Protestant missionaries have been surprisingly successful at Rome's expense. The Pope obviously aims to return to his church worldly respect and power.

The Pope's return to his native Poland exhibited a boldness and understandable role to improve the lot of a beleaguered nation. The man himself from our observation is a noble character. But as we ask, "Is all of this necessarily Christian?" Rome, in one sense, has all its eggs in one basket. The mass is the distinguishing centre of the whole system. We quote from their Canon Law, "If anyone shall have denied that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist are continued truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently, a whole Christ; but shall have said that they only are in it as in a sign, or figure, or virtue, let him be anathema." If this be so, then this writer is under a curse and excludes himself from Christian blessings here and hereafter.

The popularity of the mass is evidenced wherever the Pope has gone. In the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews the mass is but a return to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism. We are categorically told, "by one offering Christ has perfected forever them that are sanctified," and "where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin." The teaching of Scripture is plain that Christ is personally localized in heaven in a glorified human body; else what does Easter mean? Rome would have His body on her altars, whereas His glorified present body is forever beyond another crucifixion.

Rome links the mass with John 6 and equates the bread and wine with eating His flesh and drinking His blood. This section of Scripture was uttered well before the last supper and would be true if there had never been an established breaking of bread. The eating here is appropriating Christ by faith. Those who do so have eternal life and are assured of being raised up at the last day. No Romanist is assured that he possesses the two guarantees, eternal life and the blessed resurrection. Christ says all three are indissolubly linked together. Scripture and God-given intelligence identify the mass as a delusion and fallacy.

In his collected writings, Vol. 31, J. N. Darby writes in his scholarly article on transubstantiation, “The notion of a sacramental putting to death a glorified Jesus is as horrible as it is contrary to all-truth.” He then adds his own conclusion, “It is a remembrance of what was His death, and His death is over forever.”

The assignment of the Church today is to walk by faith, not by sight. This largely amounts to the appreciation and appropriation (eat) of the invisible. Such only rests well with those who are born again and seek to be Biblically oriented. Otherwise showy ritualism or emotionalism sits well with those who appear to have made no personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Then too, Scripture prophesies of the complete apostasy of Christendom and in contrast to true believers designated as “the bride of Christ,” Christendom is the harlot, Babylon. We fear that the millions who have waited on the Pope are largely a “loaves and fishes” congregation motivated by nationalism, economics and an easy religious solution resolved by the magic of a sacrament.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Gorbachev’s Dream

The Russian leader is offering the world what every sane person craves for, a nuclear free world. His proposal is to come in stages so that by 1999 there will be no nuclear weapons upon the earth. The first step is to rid each side half of half, “the nuclear arms that can reach each other’s territory.” The vision suggests a millennium commencing with the turn of the century. Is this to make Russia appear as the champion of peace and make Reagan with his insistance on “Star Wars” the real trouble? Certainly those who must reply to this proposal cannot refuse to look at it hopefully and at the same time warily. Does Gorbachev really mean it? Even if he does, does the West want it?

If history is any guide no peace pacts have lasted any longer than ambition or grievances were sufficient to ignore a bond made in a yesteryear. Just now we have two formulas for peace. Gorbachev’s disarmament and President Reagan’s Star Wars — lazer rays, to destroy offensive intercontintental war heads before they reach their target. Reagan’s philosophy is probably the most realistic. The arms race can lead to financial suicide. Abandonment of nuclear weaponry, which is highly improbable, would leave Russia with superior means for conventional warfare. Here is another of those predicaments we are getting used to — a no way situation.

We live in a fallen world and Utopia is simply beyond human attainment. When God says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), God is determined to force that fact home. Man can disbelieve the doctrine, but not the fact. Again, God has said, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until He come whose right it is; and I will give it to Him” (Ezek. 21:24). There can be no peace until the Prince of peace comes, even our Lord Jesus Christ. He is going to unify the fragmented church at the rapture (1 Thess. 4) and regather and reinstate Israel, all 12 tribes and the Gentiles to boot (Isa. 49:5-6). Then will be fulfilled the words, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ; even in Him” (Eph. 1:10). The Christian seeks to adjust to the circumstances in which providence has placed him, seeks the good of the land, is prepared to make a contribution thereto and prays, “Thy kingdom come.”

A Silent Heaven

Most of Europe has been described as a spiritual wasteland. The teaming masses rush by the darkened doors of stately churches. Certainly few are taking any expression of Christianity seriously. It’s an aftermath of two world wars. How could a John 3:16 God allow such carnage and destruction. Lately we have had floods, earthquakes and terrorism and thousands of innocent people swept into eternity. Conditions everywhere are not hard to find that seemingly contradict a loving God. Heaven was not silent when the Son of God walked on this earth. He said, “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). The response was “Away with Him, crucify Him.” God now

speaks through the Bible. There alone will we get explanations for the present imponderables.

Many who feel that their sins are not that bad would gladly judge others who are so much worse. They are the ones who merit God's judgment. They forget God will judge all, not just a few. Also, God's standard of judgment will be according to the amount of light that has been rejected. "What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?" (Jer. 13:21).

God is certainly going to set things right. It is a question of time. Peter speaks of "the times of restitution of all things." There are dispensations, or different ages. Already we have witnessed Eden, prior to the flood, and the giving of the Ten Commandments. Now we are in the age of grace and faith. It is characterized by an absence of miracles. God has spoken in His Word. Mankind is responsible to believe this well-founded testimony. As to events God sends His rain upon the just and unjust. Believers and sinners in many respects suffer alike. Intelligent Christians adjust to the character of the present dispensation — a kingdom of tribulation and patience as John discovered it to be (Rev. 1:9) until Jesus Christ takes His rightful throne for a thousand years. This is the dispensation yet to come of which Peter speaks. Then it will be a rule of "the rod of iron." Mankind would like kingdom conditions without the "rod." That would never do. They would only continue in their own indulgences. The trials of the present age are often disciplines to check the otherwise in-rush and on-rush of evil. A hold up from the eventual apogee, "as it was in the days of Noah." All do well to heed Micah 2:10: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest:

because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction."

The Deficit

While the pro-lifers are rightly concerned over the protection of the unborn the National Taxpayers' Union has prompted seven children in age from 1 to 14 to sue the government for saddling them with debt. This suit filed against Treasury Secretary Jamie Baker is on behalf of 60 million American children under the age of 18. The chairman of the taxpayers' union said, "Today at our children's expense, we enjoy a government that gives us one dollar's worth of services for every 77 cents we pay in taxes. If that isn't a violation of the constitutional spirit of equal protection, what is?" The Bible plainly teaches that what has been sown will eventually be reaped. Everything that is wrong will eventually reach its climax. A famous preacher won notoriety over a particular sermon, "Payday, Someday." This is inevitable. All prodigals must eventually lie in the bed of their making. Third World Nations are in debt and in danger of defaulting. What a need there is for an international financial wizard! If we read prophecy aright we see him in that second beast out of the earth that appears to have the whole world tied to his program. A situation must develop of such proportions that his arbitrary decrees will be accepted, "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:17).

In desperation the two houses of government have passed the Gramm-Rudman act promising a balanced budget by the end of the present decade. Some

draconian cuts in government spending are inevitable. All of the probable victims are crying, “not me.” The act is going to be challenged in court; others have little faith in its success. Otherwise there will be a collapse that will eclipse the great depression. The opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:2) depicts a black sun, the moon as blood and stars falling from heaven. This seems to require a spiritual application and not the conclusions of the victims who decide that it’s the end of all things. A market crash of world proportions could spell the end of the amenities of civilization. Consequent anarchy would call not only for a financial wizard but a world czar.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Israel

As we peruse the secular news of the day, anything concerning the nation Israel catches our eye. A blowup there, if it did not bring about World War 3, would probably seriously affect the economics of the West. The prospect of Arab oil being cut off envisions only a nightmare to the leaders of the free world. Israel is the only reliable ally in that part of the world that has become so vital to Western interests. During a celebration at the White House commemorating Israel's 30th Anniversary, President Carter said to the Prime Minister of Israel, "The U.S. will never waver from our deep friendship and partnership with Israel and our total, absolute commitment to its security." Begin hailed the pledge as "one of the greatest moral statements ever."

Israel at this juncture probably has a keener ear for U.S. assurances of her national security than the unalterable promises of God. It is His land and He has pledged to give it to Israel in perpetuity. The title deed is in the covenant made with Abram, "And I will give thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:8). To make this promise anything but the obvious is to question God's veracity. In the light of this specific promise, the fact that Israel has suffered three exiles can only be counted

as temporary affairs. The prophets abound with predictions of a final and climatic restoration of Israel, never more to roam. Here is a sample prophecy that has never been fulfilled simply because the date has not yet arrived: “Thy people (Israel) shall all be righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work o’ my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa. 60:21). To apply this to the Church that has no promise of an earthly inheritance, is giving vent to unwarranted fancy. A lot must happen to Israel before such prophecies as the above are literally fulfilled. Their past 30 years of spectacular history has led many a Bible lover to conclude that Israel is at last moving in the direction of her finest hour.

Terrorism

The mindless, daring human ferocity of terrorism stuns the better elements of society. Germany and Italy are particularly plagued with this moral cancer. Is it a reaction from Facism? The perpetrators of this type of coldblooded murder claim that their deeds are done in the interests of the very poor. Hence the kidnapping and destruction of industrialists and middle-of-the-road politicians.

It is significant that where there are military dictatorships or communistic totalitarianism, terrorism is checked from showing its ugly head. This reveals that harsh discipline does afford some answers to this problem that will otherwise not go away. The summary execution of capital punishment is the Bible’s prescription for murder. At this point, there is always the problem as to who will cast the first stone. As sinners, all of us, judging other sinners. Yet there are those who

have sold themselves to do evil (Isa. 50:1; 1 Kings 21:20). Unrequitted murdering was one of the reasons for Israel's national judgment. Ezekiel reminded the captives removed to Babylon that their land had been "filled with blood." The murdered Abel's blood cried to God from the ground upon which it was spilled. King Saul's covenant-breaking slaying of the Gibeonites brought three years of famine and was abated until seven members of his family were hanged to make "the atonement" (2 Sam. 21:4). God's decree is "life for life" and human government, of whatever stripe, is not to bear the sword in vain. A sentence of life imprisonment does not, in God's book, expiate for the crime of murder.

Thank God for what the Bible says about the blood of Christ: "That speaketh better things than that of Abel." The very sword that pierced His side drew forth the blood to save.

Popularity

As could be expected, President Carter's popularity has plummeted considerably in the past six months. During his campaign for the Presidency he fired many of the voters with the expectations that their particular problems could be solved if they voted aright. There was something that sounded good for everybody. The politician running for office is either highly self-opinionated that he can keep his promises or he is appealing to those voters who are naive enough to believe him. Then again the candidate is in there to win. To him, nothing succeeds like success. With these things playing such a large role in the rules of the game, hopes are raised on rhetoric and not on honest to goodness reasoning. Now many are aware of their letdown.

The crowd is fickle. Many superficially believed in Christ when they saw His miracles. On another occasion they would come to make Him a king — on their terms of course. The Apostle John tells us, “But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.” Paul told the Galatians that he was not a man-pleaser. The heralds of truth generally bring out the opposition which always proves to be the majority — at least in divine things.

The reed shaken with the wind-complex of the crowd is well described by Sir Walter Scott in his “Lady of the Lake”:

O Lennox, who would wish to rule

This challenging crowd, this common fool?

“Hear’st thou,” he said, “the loud acclaim

With which they shout the Douglas name?”

With like acclaim, the vulgar throat

Strain’d for King James their morning note;

With like acclaim they hailed the day

When first I broke the Douglas sway!

And like acclaim would Douglas greet,

If he could hurl me from my seat.

Who o’er the herd would wish to reign,

Fantastic, fickle, fierce and vain!

Vain as the leaf upon the stream,

And fickle as a changing dream;

Fantastic as a woman’s mood,

And fierce as Frenzy’s fevered blood.

Thou many-headed monster thing,

O who would wish to be thy King!

“Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you.” We might add, it will not last for long.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Half Truth

The nation of Israel, though so little among her neighbors, continues to make the news headlines, and rightly so. This is probably a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, howbeit in most cases unwittingly. The news media for the most part are biased against Israel. A little nation fighting for its very survival is more often than not shown only in the light of Israeli soldiers bullying stone-throwing Arabs. We are not reminded that all of the territory lost to the original Arabs was the result of the wars they initiated; wars with the avowed intent to annihilate Israel.

The avowed goals of the Arabs so firmly committed to the P.L.O. stubbornly reject a political solution. This in turn justifies (or accounts for) Israel's intransigence. They express their dilemma in this way: A choice between land and no peace or less land and still no peace. Israel's only choice seems to be to get the present violence under control. Since force has been initiated by the occupied Arabs, superior force must come into play. The niceties of litigation will be foregone, affording plenty of opportunity for the media to major on half truths. On the human side, Israel's future looks gloomy. The good will of the U.S. appears on the decline and their economy is faltering.

The prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks, to this writer, as interpreted by Sir Robert Anderson, presents the least amount of difficulties. In the tribulation, Israel's protector will be the head of a European coalition resembling a revival of the old Roman Empire. The covenant made for Israel's security to last for seven years is broken in the midst. This letdown will eventually bring Israel as a nation to the end of all human help. Then there will be a real turning to the Lord and this humbling discovery that their long promised conquering Messiah is indeed the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's worth is not realized whether by an individual or a nation until the discovery of our own utter worthlessness — namely repentance.

The Zealot

Of the several disturbers of social tranquillity, not the least are the zealots who oppose the status quo. Generally they crusade as the champions of peace or the cause of the poor and oppressed. Or it can be those of the far right who fear the takeover of the unpredictable mob. The zeal of the leader and his hard-core followers compensate for their lack of popular support. To air their grievances they will often resort to killings. This is a mental disease that plagues so many countries. The zealot's notion of his moral superiority or the supposed rightness of his cause justifies the horrendous means to gain his ends. Mere rules don't matter, nor do the rights of others providing they can be given an odious label, such as "oppressors," "reactionaries," or "fascists." Anyone but of their ilk can be counted as an enemy or a victim. Religion can spawn its zealots also: the Inquisition, as well as today's terrorists both Catholic

and Protestant in Northern Ireland and the rise of Fundamental Mohammedanism. In fact, the zealot may be but a step to terrorism.

The Apostle Paul thought he was doing God's service when he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 8:1). After Paul became a Christian he was more than paid back in kind. Jewish fanatics hounded him wherever he preached. In 2 Corinthians 11:26, Paul's worst enemy comprised his own countrymen. They were known as Judaizers who would have Christianity as little more than a Jewish additional sect, much the same as different Catholic orders, independent, but still under the Pope's umbrella. The zeal of the Judaizers went way beyond the significance of their cause. Get someone to major on a minor and you have it. The zeal of the cults puts most Christians to shame. Then we cannot overlook that glaring example of religious zealotry when 40 Jews "banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (Acts 23:12). They were completely unaware that their designs were against one who was "immortal until his work was done." The Christian needs to acquaint himself with the "whole counsel of God," which will give him a sane balance of truth. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:8).

The Lord Jesus exhibited the right kind of zeal at the first cleansing of the temple. This action brought to His disciples' minds the Scripture, "the zeal of thine house has eaten me up" (John 2:17). Our zeal too, should be for the assembly as Scripturally ordered. This is not a

popular ambition when it involves the scourge on the modern defilers of “the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:17).

The Summit

At the time of this writing the world is analyzing what took place in June at Moscow. Some deep thinkers see real progress; others have serious doubts. The avowed ambition of Communism is world conquest. Has this changed or just been put to rest for a while? When it comes to the amenities of life, free enterprise far exceeds Communism. Half a century of experimentation leaves little reason to argue otherwise. The new and dynamic Russian leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, aims to improve his country’s neglected domestic sector. Hopefully, this will relieve Soviet adventures in areas of unrest. The retreat from Afghanistan encourages some signs of relief.

The mutual destruction of the short range missiles in Europe is another indication that the cold war is over. The skeptics say “wait and see.” No doubt this is the best we can expect where lying and deceit are never far away from solemnly signed treaties — as all history doth record. The Scripture has a pertinent warning for “the children of light” who are not of the night, nor of darkness. What a contrast! We read, “For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1 Thess. 5:3). The British Prime Minister, Chamberlain, said after he had struck a deal with Hitler, “Peace in our day.” Two years later London was being blitzed.

Before the long prophesied “great tribulation” breaks upon a startled and astonished world there will be a prelude of peace. This is how we interpret the rider on

the white horse. He is acclaimed and credited with making world peace, for “who is like the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (Rev. 13:4). It will be a fragile peace, for after the white horse come the three other horses of the apocalypse. We may be hearing the distant sound of their hoof beats. The present drought on the world’s bread basket if not the actual “black horse” (Rev. 6:5) could still be a rehearsal of what lies ahead — the greatest of tribulations.

Practically all of North America is in the grip of a dry spell. The repercussions will begin to be felt by the time this gets into print; namely, higher prices at the food market. As to the reason for this drought the geologist can explain the immediate effects of a high pressure here and the movement of certain air currents. The scientist sees a possible greenhouse effect. Our auto exhausts are disrupting the ozone layers around the earth. In the Bible famines were a common occurrence and often a voice of God’s judgment. All of our remarkable achievements in agriculture are nevertheless dependent upon the ordering of the God of the heavens.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

By Edwin Fesche

The Troubled Sea

Like new wine in old bottles the sweating, seething and teaming masses in nearly every populous country are in a state of ferment. They only await the firebrand orator and they are ready to burst the restraints that keep them in their ghettos. In Poland the powers that be cannot cork up solidarity. The Sandanistas, heavily armed, see a potential “fifth column” in the landless, aimless, redundant shanty town residents that stand ready to respond to President Ortega’s self-styled “Revolution without boundaries.” The South African whites have their problems with a vast majority of blacks. Changes in leadership in the Philippines and Haiti still pose economic problems that defy solutions. The irresponsible fertility of minorities in the U.S. produce laborers that a highly technical economy cannot absord. Liberal welfarism feeds on itself and gallops to such proportions that threaten stability.

One observer has remarked that Christianity is a one on one affair. God is dealing with individuals. “Ye must be born again” is the essential for a genuine convert to Christ. On the other hand, the mobs are the plaything of the anti-Christs and eventually the Antichrist. Mobocracy is a legitimate fear. It took over in the French Revolution until only a strong man could restore order, Napoleon. In Russia it was Lenin. Germany was in a ferment in the 30s, and could have gone to the

political left. Hitler's extreme swing to the right was hailed by most classes as the solution-solver to Germany's problems and the humiliation of the harsh treaty of Versailles.

Many think that democracy is the panacea and the solution for nations in trouble. Yes, if there is a considerable number of stable citizens. As a great English politician of the past said, "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without." We fear in many cases it's either a strong man or chaos. The "beast" of Revelation 13 rises out of the sea. The sea is an emblem of unrest (Isa. 57:20) and that potential exists, even in the most stable nations, thus making an ideal situation and excuse for the rise of the world's last Caesar.

Worship

Some Christian notables have left, and others are planning to leave, evangelical communions. These leaders are showing a preference for what can be seen, heard and handled in connection with their worship. The admonition "to walk by faith and not by sight" seems not to permeate their thinking. Perhaps they have been stimulated by some of the Pope's masses and the crowds that have had their religious instincts gratified. Thomas Howard has left his professorship at Gordon Conwell for the disciples of the Vatican. He tries to justify his action when he says, "I have never met an evangelical who does not lament the desperate, barren, parched nature of evangelical worship." This member of such a reputable family blames the barrenness of evangelical worship on a lack of symbols that penetrate into "the far

reaches of spirituality," and also that there is a decided "lack of the high standards of good taste." As a former Episcopalian this writer has for over 60 years experienced a Brethren assembly celebration of the Lord's Supper as both warming and spiritual. This, we trust, can be accredited to its approximation to the original Scriptural simplicity. It is certainly not a product of a New Testament equivalent of "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1), such as is conducted by a priestly monopoly.

O Lord, we know it matters not

How sweet the song may be;

No heart but of the Spirit taught

Makes melody to Thee.

Sir Robert Anderson in his Buddha of Christendom at least credits the Jews for keeping their Passover as originally instituted for their synagogues, so that a Jew if resurrected would find little difference to what he had celebrated 2,000 years ago. What would be the reaction of a first century Christian to a high Mass? If we but allow our minds to be hypnotized by priests, we shall be prepared to believe the sacrifice of Calvary, the sacrifice of the Mass, apostolic succession, and the mystic efficacy of the sacraments. And shall we swallow all these doctrines without any exercise of heart or conscience, and without any capacity to distinguish between divine truth and human error and superstition? Ceremonies that are so appealing to man's natural religious instincts do not adjust to the dictum of placing "no confidence in the flesh." Of course, we speak of the system, not the real born again believers discovered here and there in such an obviously mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38).

We believe the great “whore” of Revelation 17:1 is also “mystery Babylon” (v. 5) and to represent Christendom finally united and to at least be able to boast, “I sit a queen, and am no widow” (Rev. 18:7). This strange religious amalgum will develop and reach its apogee during “the great tribulation.” The preliminaries for such appear already afoot.

Testing

A spate of serious accidents have occurred which have been caused by the perpetrators taking drugs. This is not to mention the thousands of deaths attributed to drunken drivers on our highways. Then also, a person on drugs is a poor security risk. His habit is so expensive that he can be tempted to disclose secrets by lavish offers of money, particularly military secrets to a foreign power. Now on the point of graduation a naval midshipman was threatened with expulsion because of serious evidence he had taken cocaine. The fact that the Naval Academy makes periodic testings must have discovered justifying ground for doing so. Now army recruits are required to be tested.

As to be expected, those most likely to be exposed try their hardest to prove the unreliability of the tests and also interference with their civil rights to privacy. The dangers imposed by potheads can be of such a catastrophic nature that measures distasteful to a democracy must be carried out. The French in order to screen applicants for particularly important positions call for a sample of a person’s handwriting. The reading of such experts, they say, is remarkably accurate in disclosing character and characteristics.

That humans, many ensconced in well paying government jobs and security, must resort to hedonism for an escape from boredom is a mystery unless we accept the account of man's fall. However, man can adjust and respect the norms of society. As the renowned Malcom Muggeridge once said, "But whatever life is or is not about, it is not to be expressed in terms of drugs, stupefication, or casual sexual relations. The road to the future is not on the wings of Playboy magazine or in psychedelic phantasies."

While we may pride ourselves on being good citizens and qualified for our job, yet, we are still found wanting before a holy God. Just test yourself by His Ten Commandments. In that trial, as it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10). God in His grace can impute righteousness to us when we put faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross on our behalf, where our sins were imputed to Him. Then we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who puts us on the road to holy living. As we once said publicly, "If Christianity only saves us from the imbroglios of the flesh it makes us winners." Actually, it prepares us for the best of both worlds, "but godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

A Look At The Present

There is a tendency to look back and recall “the good old days.” It is not good for a person’s or nation’s morale to dwell in the past. Solomon had something to say about this when he wrote, “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this” (Eccles. 7:10). With an open Bible in our hands we are living in exciting times. From the viewpoint gained from the Scriptures, believers today may be members of that particular generation our Lord described when He said, “This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt. 24:34). At any rate, we are witnessing some of the “signs of the times” shaping up that are harbingers of the second coming of Christ. Yes, just the things that we are commanded to recognize when they appear.

If we are to accept the opinion of two men who have had their hands on the pulse of world affairs, Moynihan and Kissinger, they describe this nation as lacking in courage. Soltzenitsyn, in his Harvard address, said, “A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days.” They blame the Vietnam debacle and Watergate. These men would have us do all that is necessary to halt the advance of Communism in Africa or elsewhere right now. Kissinger rightly argues that where you are faced

with an aggressive foe, you must choose a place where the nation says, “Here I stand.” It would appear that President Carter is going to avoid a real showdown in Africa. With the memories of Vietnam, he would receive few cheers from the citizens. Both the United States and Russia have their Rubicon. Let either side make any daring moves in Europe: if there is time for ultimatums, they will be served; failing this, a war that will exceed anything heretofore. It does not require much imagination to see the Saviour’s words fulfilled, “For there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

Russia has been building up a formidable array of modern armaments in the part of Europe she now occupies. We are told that she has four tanks to NATO’s one. Certainly nothing of this magnitude is necessary for mere peace keeping. As a result, NATO is showing more unity and purpose and America is beefing up its military forces in this area. This is no doubt the best strategy and possible deterrent. The Christian should know why and what he will stand and die for. Only his main interests belong in the spiritual world. Persecution does not make martyrs, it proves them. Also with the evil doctrine and disgusting immorality that Synods and Presbysteries are condoning, J. N. Darby’s formula may be timely counsel: “God’s principle of unity is separation from evil.”

It is clear at the moment that President Carter has made Europe the focal point of U.S. defences. He said, “Let there be no misunderstanding, the United States is prepared to use all the forces necessary for the defence of the NATO area.” Democracies do not rally to the

colors until they are driven to the wall. It is not necessarily cowardice, but it is the only way a government of the people and for the people can acquire popular consent.

These remarks tend to make us look afresh at Western Europe. This is the territory, eventually including all of North Africa, that will comprise the kingdom of the beast out of the sea (Rev. 13). In other words, the revival of the Old Roman Empire. The NATO area has climbed from the devastation of World War 2 to new heights of peace and prosperity. The Common Market has done more to diffuse hostile frontiers than Europe's many wars. This prosperity is the envy of the Soviet-muzzled nations behind the "Iron Curtain". All of West Europe's free countries, as in our own, are given over to a strong socialistic emphasis. The rights of the under-privileged cannot be ignored by the modern politician. Consequently, the campaign promises essential to win votes become unrealistic when one is in office. The masses become disenchanted, restless, and fodder for the demagogue. Terror squads take the law into their own hands and with one goal: to destroy the existing institutions and analyze later. This justified fear of anarchy plays on the fears of conservatism and pushes many to sympathize with the far right as the only assurance of law and order. As for the clay and the iron of Daniel 2, the restless masses could well represent the "clay," while the "iron" suggests the firm hand necessary to control potential anarchy.

The Common Market is such by consent and all this harmonizes with prophecy. The ten horns of the beast, or kings, "have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (Rev. 17:13). Also the Market's

members hover around the mystic number ten. It is not hard to envision a world wide economic blizzard (Winston Churchill's description of the great depression). The collapse of the once almighty dollar could trigger such. With Russia prepared to exploit the situation that would have developed in Europe, a man of destiny could arise in that sector and be hailed as the free world's saviour, and at the same time winning the popular acclaim found in the Scripture: "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4).

Russia

While considering the present scene we cannot exclude Russia. The phenomenal rise of that giant since World War 2 is still occasioning many of us to catch our breath. They are fanatically possessed with the thought that they hold the dialectic of the future, an ideology to be accepted or imposed on the whole world. Of course, this will never be. The image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream gives only four world empires. They have already made their history. Rome, the fourth, is yet to be revived and incorporate into itself all of the fearsome features of the other three empires. This is gathered from the composite and symbolic description of the beast out of the sea.

Through the years we have learned to hold in high esteem the writings of William Kelly. We count him as our mentor when it comes to prophecy. Back in 1874 there appeared in print his reflections on Russia based on his insight into Scripture. Here are some of the thoughts he penned at that time:

“Let me say here that according to Scripture, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Russia is reserved to play a most important part in this great future crisis. For the policy of that vast empire affects the same objects as the Assyrian of the last day. Russia from its position in the northeast is known to seek the lead as suzerain over the eastern powers, acquiring influence politically, so as to be able to mould and guide those vast hordes of central Asia down to the south. It is my conviction that western influence will ere long be completely annihilated in the east, and the dominion of our own country (Great Britain) in India is destined to be short-lived. But this is merely by the way, which if true serves after all to show the importance of having a scriptural judgment on these matters, and how they prepare the mind for what, when it comes, will shake if not paralyze those who have not believed it; whereas, on the contrary, the development of facts, which prepare the way for the immense changes of the latter day, falls in with the faith of those who believe the Word of God. They are not moved from their steadfastness by these things; they are prepared to expect them, instead of being surprised.”

True, the prophets are no longer with us, but we have their inspired writings. With the advent of the “Brethren Movement,” new light appears to have been thrown on the subject of prophecy. It was later synthesized and simplified in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible. It has suffered the sharpest scrutiny and criticism. Of late it has been ably defended by the professors of Dallas Theological Seminary. At the moment, a large segment of Bible-believing Christians are dispensationalists and for the most part can give a good Scriptural reason for

the hope that is in them. Its very fabric is based on the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Defection is rare, if at all, in this area of interpretation.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Modern Wars

The destructiveness of modern weapons is appalling, even if we leave out the atom bomb. Fresh on our minds are the wars in Afghanistan, the Falkland Islands and the Iran-Iraqi conflict. Deadly missiles are relatively cheap and easily acquired. This is certainly so when one considers their destructiveness. One hit on a British warship in the Falkland affair and the whole vessel was destroyed. Their long range, lightning speed and accuracy can easily create trigger-happy commanders. In the case of the U.S.S. Vincennes a sad mistake was made. Yet from recent lessons we cannot be surprised at a shoot first mentality and settle questions later.

On land these fearsome missiles have been exchanged between Baghdad and Tehran making a heavy toll of civilian casualties. Iran, seeking to take advantage of its superior manpower, has sent thousands of infantry into battle. These waves of attack were composed of boys that were mercilessly mowed down without significant gains — a repeat of the tactics of World War I of over the top into no man's land. A million casualties from this war is considered a conservative estimate. The present cease fire is creating a sigh of relief not only among neutrals of the area, but is very agreeable to U.S. foreign policy. If it were not for the West's vital interests, particularly oil, they would have callously left the war to its own destiny. The threat of a dominant power arising

in the area has been stayed for the present. However, in the light of Ezekiel 8 a crusade against Israel includes Iran (Persia) in the end times. A concerted effort is yet to arise whose aim is to settle the Jewish question once and for all — eliminate the nation. Success will almost be their reward and Isaiah describes it perfectly:

"And the multitude of all nations that fight against Ariel (Jerusalem) shall be as a dream of a night. It shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; so shall the multitude be, that fight against Zion (29:7-8)."

This rude awakening to reality will be realized by the second coming of Christ as the Jewish Messiah as prophesied in Zechariah 12-14.

Still on the subject of modern wars we make a different discovery in Afghanistan. There the Soviets poured into the conflict their best men and equipment and were not capable of victory against hide-and-seek guerrillas. This has proved to be their Viet Nam. Yes, Jehovah is the God of battles and the final arbiter.

The Bible has some good advice about the declaration of war. Solomon in his wisdom wrote, "In good advice make war" (Prov. 20:18). Our Lord spoke of a king who, confronted with an aggressor with superior numbers to his own, had better wisely seek a deal than fight. When two boys get into a fight and an adult intervenes the first cry to be heard is, "He started it." So with nations it is the one that initiates the war that often loses public support and sympathy. This has some balancing influence. However, in such a world as this, America has no choice but to arm to the teeth. So we can expect the arms race to continue and even more deadly weapons

for offence and defence to be invented. All proves that this is not the age of Messiah's visible reign, but in the Father's appointed moment He will come and tarry not.

Watchman, What of the Night?

Is a new day about to dawn upon this plagued, overpopulated and war-tortured planet? Both of the men that are now running for the Presidency of the United States of America are promising a new day for all of us. This may turn out to be nothing more than politics, since the electorate is hankering for a change from past failures. This is a trait of human nature, no matter how good things may be new ideas become exciting. We like to hear men prophesy "smooth things." Isaiah encountered this fact when his people demanded of him, "speak unto us smooth things." He did just that when he spoke of the coming Messiah and gave glorious glimpses of that millennial day.

Certainly in the area of geopolitics some balmy zephyrs of peace appear to be descending upon the world. Russia is changing her leopard spots, or is she? The short range missiles on both sides of the European front are being liquidated. The Soviet pull out of Afghanistan creates a sigh of relief. The Arias peace plan for Central America has so far produced a nominal cease-fire. We now have reasons to hope that the blood bath in the Persian Gulf has reached a cessation of hostilities. In the six-year war between Iraq and Iran there have been a million casualties and countless others maimed for life. Many of them boys and teenagers. In the present peace talks the stakes are high for each nation. The fearsome hate that exists on both sides will make negotiations at the peace table extremely difficult. Whatever

agreements are reached will not satisfy the hardliners and the cries of sell out or treason can be expected.

If the present outcome of the Persian Gulf War sticks with neither side being a winner, this will suit the best hopes of the free world, It should also put a halt, if only temporarily, to the spread of a Fundamental Mohammedanism whose aim is to unify all of Islam. This constituted a threat to the access of the West to the world's greatest known oil reserves. Hence the multi-national armada policing the waters of the Persian Gulf. Nations must have adequate armaments to protect their interests in this fallen world. Woe be it if they don't. So far the United States has been taking the brunt of things, but this might be changing, as we insist that our allies take a larger share in the policing of the free world.

The present cessation of hostilities in the Iran conflict could invoke new fears in Israel. Already Israel is surrounded by implacable enemies who are further inflamed by the Arab version of Israel's suppression of the Palestinian rioters. What better excuse for Iraq to initiate a march on Israel. What an opportunity to become the hero and champion of Arab interests. Iraq certainly possesses a battle seasoned army and an armory of modern weaponry. Also she has not been ashamed to use poison gas in defiance of international war codes. Leave God out and the unconditional covenant He has made with the descendants of Abraham and present events do not favour Israel. They may be looking around for more friends besides the U.S. for assurances of their survival. In the light of Daniel the Jews get those assurances from "the prince that shall come".

The ninth chapter of Daniel gives us a week of years that defines the length of “the great tribulation.” During that time a covenant is made with the Jews by “the prince” (who is certainly not the Lord Jesus) for seven years guaranteeing Israel’s survival. Without going into details we do see in the end time the Jews in such a plight that the need for such a covenant becomes increasingly feasible.

Politics

The poor we have with us always, regardless of the type of government. Some just cannot be helped—the way of the transgressor is hard. To care for the unfortunate is certainly a command of Scripture. In the New Testament this obligation is imposed on the church and in the Old Testament upon theocratical Israel. The adoption of humanism into government policies has created a welfarism that has become an acceptable way of life for may. Without some disciplines the thing has been feeding on itself. Prior to the welfare state Christendom did initiate schools, hospitals and hostels. In the New Testament not much instruction, if any, is given to Gentile governments. They are to continue in the tradition of the Noahic covenant to curb man’s propensity to sin and execute capital punishment. A life for a life. Present humanism thinks it knows better. Consequently we have bloated prisons, riots and the murder of guards and the repeat behaviour of escapees and often those on parole. A strict impartial execution of capital punishment may in the long run save more lives, certainly the lives of the innocent. Even the so-called Christian nations echo the Jewish cry before Pilate, “We have no king but Caesar.” The Caesar of the present is

the one that can get the most votes. We search in vain to discover much evidence of the fear of God in the whole process.

Certainly we are gliding ever more toward a government of, by and for the people. Subsidies, child care, farm and bank bailouts, and we could go on. While many will applaud a government that attempts to avert or ease every disaster that threatens, still there is such a thing as milking the cow dry. That there are areas where only the government can act, and should, cannot be disputed. However, let us all be mindful that the more we demand from the government the more the government must demand from us. This in turn curtails free enterprise, the most proved and efficient method of creating true wealth. Socialism and humanism can easily be stepping stones to Communism, the logical goal being security from the cradle to the grave. Fine, if it can be made to work and if man is only a stomach. Economically, Communism accounts for scarcities in the food markets and fails to get the best out of the farmer. Because of this Gorbachev is desperately trying to liberate the Russian economy. True, Capitalism has its drawbacks and can be heartless. If man were not a sinner, and therefore basically selfish, then humanism could produce the material paradise that the politician, more or less, must promise if he hopes to be elected. Actually God is always upsetting man's "tower of Babel," or "shall there be evil in the city, and the LORD hath not done it" (Amos 3:6). Somehow the Lord is trying to get through to us that what happened in the garden of Eden was real and its effect will always catch up with us until the Lord's promised return to the earth. The conscientious voter should consider what is best for the

country, not some single issue. It is disturbing to observe some of the ingredients a candidate must resort to in order to be elected. Sometimes dirty politics. No holds are illegal providing you win. Amid all of this the words in Daniel are consoling, “The most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Moral Majority

A new bloc has entered the U.S. political arena. It is represented mainly by Fundamental Christians; although its membership is open to any whose viewpoint is decidedly conservative. This body of voters feels that it played a considerable part in bringing about a Reagan victory. They now feel that they have sufficient public opinion and numbers to wield a political clout. In politics professing Christians are attached to one of two camps. The label given to these two sides is “Conservative” and “Liberal,” or, the right and the left. Until this last election conservative Christians as such refrained from politics. On the other hand, those of the liberal persuasion worked hard in the area of social needs; in fact, Christian doctrines were considered mostly a hindrance. Now socialism seems to have peaked, at least for the present. The State welfarism that liberal Christianity has backed so heavily has now brought to the nation deeper problems than the ones it has sought to solve. One glaring weakness of the social gospel has been its onesided occupation with the physical needs of the disadvantaged at the expense of moral and spiritual instruction. Consequently, law and order is increasingly threatened. Alarmed, and at the same time crusading, a new Christian right has come to the front with a deep awareness of patriotism and mission to save a floundering nation. It is no surprise at this moment that

they are more concerned with morality than philanthropy.

The liberals are crying “bloody murder” because conservatives have now stepped into the political arena. One editorial has this note, “Jerry Falwell was quite right in castigating the inconsistency of religious liberals who, back in the sixties, dove headfirst into the activist political waters and now suddenly condemned religious involvement in politics when it opposed their own viewpoint.” One opponent of the Moral Majority is Dr. Brown of the Pacific School of Religion who takes out after Falwell in a recent issue of “Christianity and Crisis.” He faults the Lynchburg radio preacher’s book, Listen America, and quotes a passage that is typical of Falwell, who writes, “The sin of homosexuality is so grievous, so abominable in the sight of God, that He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of this terrible sin.” Brown says this is only a partial truth and does so by calling attention to Ezekiel 16:49, “Behold this was the guilt of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, neither did she strenghthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Here is an example where an isolated text can generally be found to emphasize one’s point of view. The professor does not appear to be bothered much about homosexuality but rather the concerns of the poor. From the spiritual standpoint, Falwell is driving home something more important as he warns against gross immorality. Dr. Brown continues to criticize Falwell while adding a little irony when he writes, “it is biblicist, all right, evoking stray verses here and there that support free enterprise, male domination, the death penalty, a hard line on homosexuals, employment of

physical force to bring unruly children into line and so forth." This is, of course, the usual criticism that the Fundamentalists receive from this source: stern on morality but short on comparison. The impression that "born again" Christians are callous toward the disadvantaged is contradicted by history. The best schools and universities have originated from orthodox Christianity and motivation. Slavery under the English flag was liberated through the efforts of Wilberforce who was first a Christian, then a statesman. Prison reform has its origin in early 19th century Christianity. Evangelicals support and run the Rescue Missions; their ratio of foreign missionaries is far in excess to those from liberal quarters. The approach of the two positions is different. Socialism, and Communism would boast of putting a new suit on a bedraggled wretch. Evangelicalism would first want to see a new man in rags, knowing that the rags would soon give way to cleanliness and suitable attire. This latter is a slow and painstaking work requiring patience, and the thing that will count for time and eternity.

With this Moral Majority entering the main stream of American political life there are pitfalls ahead that need to be avoided. There is the danger of polarizing and getting impatient if their goals are not heeded. This in turn could tend to stiffen the liberal wing, resulting not in two contending parties but civil strife. Christian values cannot be pressed upon non-Christians. This was done in Calvin's Geneva and Cromwell's Holy Commonwealth in England. It succeeded only while there was the iron hand to enforce the stern measures. When relaxed, the carnal soon revealed their preference for the former days that had been denied them. We live

in a pluralistic society and we are going to encounter galling situations. Freedoms work both ways. Let Christians use theirs to serve God while we wait for His Son from heaven.

A New President

Ronald Reagan is not only a new President but he intends to introduce a new approach to the country's problems. For decades the country has generally been under the administration of liberal politicians. To their credit they have evened out the distribution of wealth. The poor and underprivileged have considerably benefitted. Unfortunately, this welfarism has come up with some alarming side effects. It has deteriorated the work ethic for many. The government is plagued with all the problems that go with unmanageable debt. All of the former Presidents of this welfare era have made promises of some kind to clean up the mess in Washington but without success. We wonder if Reagan can perform the needed miracle. The promises to do so are certainly to be recalled.

Politics has been aptly defined as "the art of the possible." We wish President Reagan well if he succeeds in doing just that. Naturally, there is the wonder if a free society will stand for the necessary disciplines that attend a sound economy. Then there are the unforeseen disasters, droughts, earthquakes and wars and rumors of such. Nor can we overlook the negative prophecy, "that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2. Tim. 3:1).

A recent evangelical writer adds, "Only one is capable of achieving the impossible — effecting astronomical adjustments, altering topography of the Middle East,

above all, radically revolutionizing that stubborn, intractable, recalcitrant thing called, 'human nature' — the rock on which, sooner or later, every manmade ship of state is sure to flounder!" Another musing on the same subject writes, "Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, with title over all things, but having taken none, with His enemies still in power and to rise up more dreadful than ever; and then all will be put down. Now here it is that people are so deceiving themselves — Christians too. They are trying to improve man and improve the world. Why, Christ was in the world and could not improve it, but Christians are going to try."

In Revelations 5 we observe a strong angel asking for a challenger to open a seven-sealed scroll written within and without. Since the main burden of this prophetic book is to discover who is to reign over the earth, it would appear that the scroll contains the title deeds for such. After it was discovered that no one in the universe was capable of fulfilling the contents of the scroll, "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" prevailed to open the scroll. He is also described as "the Root of David." These two figures of Jesus Christ suggest sovereignty and the long promised Davidic Kingdom. Three times in the Revelation our Lord's reign over the kings of the earth is described as to rule all nations with a rod of iron." This cannot be equated with the present as we are told "so might grace reign through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21). Now God is calling out of the world the Church, the body of Christ. When Christ returns to reign, then this tortured world will enjoy its long promised millennium. Two distinct divine programs. Ours is to adjust to this present church age.

Thy Kingdom come, O God,

Thy rule, O Christ begin;

Break with thine iron rod

The tyrannies of sin.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Terror in the Skies

The ambush and shooting down of the South Korean jumbo jet by the Soviets was another one of these shots which was being heard around the world. Of late the Russians have been parading as a peace loving people. The peacenicks have been especially attentive to this. But to many this has been nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Actions speak louder than words. In the war of words that has been going on since the erection of the iron curtain, Russian propaganda has suffered a major defeat. Heretofore President Ronald Reagan's words sounded to many as if it were he that was picking a fight. Now he unmasks the Soviets as he could not do before the plane tragedy. So too, many are heedless of the Christian gospel's warnings until some trauma hits them personally; then, maybe, they are attentive to the bringer of "good tidings," reminding us of the words in Job 33, "Then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man."

The Russians plainly from this incident would rather be feared than loved. In the Security Conference in Madrid, Secretary of State George Shultz had a face to face confrontation with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrie Gromejko. The Russians made no apology for the affair and justified protecting their "sacred" territory from a deliberate "criminal act."

Also, any future violations of Russian air space would be dealt with similarly. None seem to take exception to the President's appraisal of Russia as a "criminal empire." The slanted account that the Soviet propaganda machine gave its citizens suits only Russian ears. The plane was on a spy mission on behalf of the United States. One Muscovite wrote, "What are 269 lives when it comes to defending 272 million Soviet citizens." No matter how seemingly convincing our circumstantial evidence was there were no wanting replies from the other side which still cries, "Not guilty." So the unsaved can always find excuses that are satisfactory to their own thinking for rejecting the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ upon them. They are apt to say, "Which religion is right?" or "If you have the truth, why are so few convinced?" And so it goes, but God says to all such, "Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man" (Rom. 2:1).

The most sophisticated salvage equipment searched the sea where the disaster took place. The search was particularly for the "black box" in which the last words of the pilots are recorded. This would clear up a lot of the mystery that still surrounds the affair. For instance, why was the plane so far off course as to intrude into Russia's sensitive air space? Was the plane adequately warned before being shot down? With all of the lies, theories and propaganda filling the air and newsprint, the full truth may never be discovered. On the other hand, none of us can hide anything from the all-seeing eye of God. In the final analysis we are told, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). A judge with such knowledge assures all of a fair trial; but "What wilt thou say when He will punish thee?" (Jeremiah 13:21).

The Senate and the House have without a dissenting voice (a very rare thing) passed a resolution condemning the destruction of the Korean Airline Flight 007. Said Senator Moynihan, “The world will have heard this nation speaking with one voice.” He also went on to say, “KAL 007 must never be forgotten; nor must we rest until the world can prevent such a crime against humanity ever happening again.” This is unrealistic and wishful rhetoric. The unconverted American heart is the same as the Russian. Our civilization is little more than skin deep. Remove opinion and laws and fallen man will soon reveal what he really is — a sinner. The fond dream of humanity where nations will beat their swords into ploughshares is not until “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5) are in effect. So it is with Dr. Martin Luther King’s, “I Have a Dream,” which included a quote from Isaiah 40, “The crooked shall be made straight.” We cannot equate this present age where “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life” with the yet future reign of Christ when He wields “the rod of iron” (Rev. 12:5). Then, and not until then, will we have a perfect world. The revolutions of the world where they have succeeded have been little more than a change of hats. They decide who now gets the privileges. Basically, things have not altered since our Lord spoke these words, “Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh” (Matthew 18:7).

Cheapening The Gospel

We were struck with a recent article in U.S. News and World Report. It was a critique of the modern approach to the gospel. The heading was, “A Soft Sell.” Here is a

secular magazine deploring the latest gimmicks used in gospel preaching to catch the ear of the public. If the gospel is so wonderful why must it resort to such bizarre approaches? Movie stars, top-notch athletes or some materialistic achiever are called to the front of the stage for a testimony. Most appear to have no qualms about their worldlinesss. Some of the TV programs suggest Christianity as a sort of good luck religion. Embrace their brand of gospel and one can fall into financial clover, need no hospitalization and always be on the sunny side of the street. But where does repentance come in? Where is taking up the cross and following a crucified Saviour? Where is, “Take the world, but give me Jesus”? What of the plain injunction, “You cannot serve God and mammon”? The lavish appeals for money to maintain the great religious empires some have built up have led one modern critic to question, “Did God create man, or did man create the concept of God to promote man’s selfish interest.” As a result, those with an acquaintance with Scriptural principles turn aside and lament, “How are the mighty fallen!”

The inspired Apostle Paul has a word for this; he wrote, “For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:17). W. E. Vine’s dictionary goes to considerable trouble to explain the Greek word used in this verse for” corrupt.” It means “to peddle, to hucksterize; hence to get base gain by dealing in anything, and so more generally to do anything for sordid or personal advantage.” Sir Robert Anderson reflecting on this matter writes, “A gospel that points to the death of Christ as proof of God’s high estimate of man, and then turns the doctrine of that death into

syllogism, so that men, in no way losing self-respect, can calmly reason out their right to blessing by it, will give no offense to anyone, nor be branded as foolishness. Such a gospel pays deference to human nature, and satisfies man's sense of need without hurting in the least his pride. Such a gospel has, in fact, produced that marvelous anomaly, a Christian world. Even in Paul's day many 'were but hucksters of the Word of God.'"

Getting back to the "Soft Sell" article, we noted later that two letters to the editor were published. We quote from one while reminding ourselves that this is from a secular source: "There are many Christians who oppose the marketing of the gospel as if it were a new brand of toothpaste. Old fashioned prayer, preaching and practical Christian love are the only means that the Bible gives for winning men and women to Christ. As for 'born-again athletes, ordained clowns and clerical disc jockeys,' I ask: when will the modern church realize that worldly and superficial methods produce worldly and superficial converts?"

True, we are not called in "Soft Shell" (notice the word "Shell") America to wear the martyr's crown, but we are certainly called to share the martyr's faith. When Isaiah was called to preach, he was reminded that any results would be minimal for the simple reason the people he was to address were fat of heart, their ears were heavy and their eyes shut (Isa. 6:10). Paul informed young Timothy that in the last days men would not endure sound doctrine, but this was to be no deterrent to his "doing the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). It has often been pointed out that the First Epistle to the Corinthians sets forth the order of a New Testament Church, while the Second Epistle gives us the kind of

minister that such a church requires. The sixth chapter summarizes the qualifications. We quote just the fourth verse, “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distress.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Test Tube Baby

The successful experiment that has produced the world's first test tube baby has created no little excitement and stimulated some lively imagination. This daring work performed in an English laboratory was prompted by a humane purpose —to enable otherwise barren couples to have a child of their own.

We were once entertained by an elderly couple, The wife grieved as she remarked, "Oh, the loneliness of a childless marriage!" Others find it a frustration to which it is easy not to adjust. The sacred writer of Psalm 127 says, "Lo. children are a heritage of the Lord" and "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." Yet, some of God's choicest women, in spite of their anguish and wish, had their patience sorely tried. There comes to mind Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth. Fortunately, they were blessed with the most happy of endings. We are told in another psalm that "our times are in thy hand." Christian couples that happen to be tested in this area should accept their trial as from the Lord.

At present, the test tube experiment appears loaded with uncertainties. In the United States, the morality of the procedure has not been settled. The thing is so novel and unanticipated in the Scriptures that no caterogical statement from that source is forthcoming. We are assured that God is the author and creator of life (Mal.

2:10). Here is a domain, we would think, where Providence should be allowed to rule and overrule.

The birth of Louise Brown has brought a renewed interest in Aldous Huxley's, Brave New World. We were tempted to read it and found it much to our disgust. In this imaginary New World, anything but brave, all of the inhabitants were conceived and gestated in test tubes. By a manipulation of genes, they were bred to fill a particular role in life. The father of this standardization is deified and named "Ford" (sometimes called Freud). conditioned. Just a select few are so conditioned. Just a select few are so bred to become Alphas and Alphas Plus. Everyone is happy, this being the only goal in life; and a universal drug called "soma" assures the maintenance of this condition should any distraction occur such as death. Was this Huxley's millennium, or was he attempting to show the absurdity of a completely controlled society?

Yes, there has been one, and only one, miraculous birth; that of Jesus Christ. He was holy in the womb of His mother and from the womb. "And the angel answered, and said unto her (Mary), The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

He had to be who He was to do what He did. Yes, He offered Himself up to God without spot on our behalf. "For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Then, too, the analogy from human birth is the new birth by the Holy Spirit. This birth takes

the “whosoever wills” into the kingdom of God, makes them children of God, and endows them with eternal life which is imperishable (John 3). It has been catchingly said, “Born once, die twice; borne twice, die once.” Of course, this is only understood by those who accept the revelation of Scripture. The unsaved die physically, followed by the second death in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). The new birth of the Spirit should be the chief concern of all those who are accountable.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Jewish Destiny

On November 1, 1988, the Israelis held their national election. Since the abdication of Menachem Begin from the national scene the country has been equally divided between two opposing viewpoints. With neither side having a clear mandate the nation has hobbled along with compromises. The two parties are Likud and Labour. Yielding to recent Arab hostilities, Labour has been willing to trade some of the captured land back to the Palestinian Arabs for peace and assurance of Israel's right to exist as a nation. The Likud, with its 73 years old Prime Minister Yitzhuk Shamir, said: "They want the West Bank and Gaza." Shamir, in his stump speech, went on to warn, "but what they really mean is Tel Aviv, Haifa and all Israel." Either view, if implemented, is fraught with danger. The more radical Israelis settle for clearing the land of Arabs. In their reasoning, they conclude, not without some justification, as one election poster asks, "Who goes, them or us?' The popular Palestinian goal is to drive the Jews into the sea and no compromises. It is not hard to foresee both sides hardening in their positions.

If the Jew is back in his land in harmony with God's providence, then Palestinian intentions are not to be realized. God has an unfulfilled future for His chosen people. At the request of our Lord's disciples for a "sign" announcing His second coming they were to look for the

sign of the “budding fig tree.” Obviously, this is a reference to the rebirth of the nation of Israel, according to the Hosea 3:4-5, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrafice.” This part of the prophecy has been literally fulfilled from the destruction of the temple under Titus A.D. 70 until the present. However, the prophecy does not end there. But if the already fulfilled prophecy is allowed to be our guide we will know what actually still lies ahead for Israel as the chosen nation. Here it is, “afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” The present wonder that the Jews are actually back in their land is a most convincing bit of evidence that the world is witnessing the preliminaries that point toward the final and climactic goal of God’s earthly chosen people.

The recent election gave the Likud Party a small edge over Labour. This should portend for the Likud to take a firmer hand in dealing with “intifada,” the name given to the 10-month-old Palestinian uprising. This could result in events heating up in the area and giving pretext for outside intervention, to possibly being a catalyst to hasten the stage for the final acts that culminate in the coming of Jesus Christ to reign in righteousness —“whose right is.” Shamir and his Likud will also be finding sympathetic supporters from the fanatically inclined orthodox wing (the fundamentalist element) of Israel’s political spectrum. They interpret and seek to enforce the Old Testament morals and a divine right to the Holy Land. A surprising number of the representatives were elected to Israel’s Parliament.

“New Age”

We appear to be living in a contradictory world. At least this is the impression to evangelical who is inclined to think and wonder. Most of what we consider to be Christendom is a spiritual wilderness. The supernatural, particularly the miracles of the Bible, are relegated to the area of mythology and superstition. Now the Bible carries its own credentials—Just read it! Its difficulties have been squarely faced by able polemists down through the centuries. Most men are constitutionally sympathetic to the supernatural. The world is too big a puzzle for him to be comfortable without something beyond his own limitations. The Christianity he is likely to encounter has been secularized or heavily obscured by an accumulation of tradition.

Along comes the “New Age Movement” with its crass superstitions, and from accounts it is catching on. It appears to this writer to be a composite of everything that is pagan. From its study of astrology the world is about to enter the Age of Aquarius. Reincarnation, Transcendental Meditation, healings, Buddhism, and for some, sort of a millennium is about to dawn. The most articulate leader is, to no surprise, a woman, Shirley MacLaine. To sum it up we would say, “Here is a full bag of eclecticism and basic pantheism.”

Peter, when answering our Lord’s question, said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). The alternatives to an inerrant Bible and incarnate Jesus Christ are so many avenues of error. The natural man discovers or develops an inward guard against Christianity and somehow fears the implications if he dared to repent. Consequently, many will settle for

a watered down Christianity, evolution, atheism or the "New Age" cult. The uncertainties of life, tragedies, health and death are so real, but beyond rational explanation, that men are going to find something to believe and with it is most anything preferable to the Bible and absolutes.

God's prophets in the Bible never maintained their popularity, if they ever had any in the first place. The presence of a prophet supports that there is something to correct. So his message is often one of rebuke and correction, and irritating to his hearers. With our Lord the crowd could one day say, "Hosanna, Blessed is the King of Israel" and another day cry, "Crucify Him." Paul in his last epistle laments, "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." The prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were being constantly contradicted by numerous lying prophets and the people believed them, for they said what was pleasant to their ears. They proved to be deaf to the Lord's warning, "Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to their dreams. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have sent them, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:8).

As in that day, so in ours, we see how prone the people are to error. Again, in this context we quote from the Word of God, "Seek not them that have familiar spirits. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). Yet amid all of this error created in darkness the principle still is, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Yes, there is such a thing as truth and it will be found by the honest seeker.

Half Truths

In the election year of 1988 the U.S. received a real exposure of itself by its own citizens. Both parties seeking elections became adept in exposing the negatives of their opposition. Each candidate had an optimistic outlook; he dare not be otherwise no matter how pressing may be the contradictory facts. Of course, behind the spokesmen are the media specialists, advisers and ghost writers. Their principle aim was only to have their man win the election. The words to Isaiah the prophet can in some instances be applicable today. His hearer's request was, "Say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things," and they even expressed desire for Isaiah to "prophesy deceits" (30:10).

We have been hearing a lot of "smooth things" while the nation is seriously losing on two fronts—namely, education and exports. Our competitors, especially in the Orient, are two to three years ahead of American high school students. Thus we are losing our one-time first place in technology and production know-how. Many of the good jobs promised have gone abroad. We are not told what it will take to bring them back.

Economics has been dubbed "the dismal science" and it is certainly that with the nation that once enjoyed a dizzy height of success now resorting to red ink. A quote may be descriptive of our present complacency: "Outside the walls of every nation what has grown fat and overly fond of itself has lurked a lean and hungry enemy that is our major challenge." Somehow we are constituted as individuals or a nation that the ease we think is so desirable can be nevertheless our undoing.

Moses spoke of his nation reaching prosperity: "Jeshurun waxed fat, thou hast 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). As we view the present, where sin and death rule the way, the Christian realizes this is not his all. As Paul reasoned, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead." This assured a future life of perfect bliss to those who have chosen to make Jesus Christ their own personal Saviour. Those who have it made still face many uncertainties. A quote comes to mind from Mrs. Charles E Cowman's Streams in the Desert. "He builds too low, who builds beneath the skies." The prophet Micah has this to say: "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." A lot of that destruction is detailed in the last book in the Bible, Revelation. A heaven to win, a hell to shun.

In the light of these things many see the church as socially irrelevant if it does not get into the fray of solving human problems. Its members should cease to be dreamers of the felicity of another world, if there is such; rather it should take sides against poverty and injustice. Others say the church should not meddle with political and industrial issues. Just stick to spiritual needs. Here it is bless you if you do and bless you if you don't. Actually, Protestantism did meddle when it was responsible for Prohibition. Just think if the Christian view of sex, liquor and theft were prevalent in our ghettoes, yes, nation wide, what wonders would be the result. But, no, anything but Biblical norms. Then too, the church is called out of the world, "in it but not of it."

We have no king but Caesar is still at the heart of this present evil world.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

The Attempted Assassination

At this time of writing the attempt on the President's life eclipses all other news. We breathe a sigh of relief that his wound promises to heal without leaving permanent damage. The President has displayed a splendid degree of fortitude in his body and spirit. This has increased his popularity and gained further respect from the nation that had already given him such an endorsement at the polls. Persecution does not make martyrs but proves them to be such. As Christians just how dearly are we cuddling our own lives and unwilling to gamble with it for the furtherance of the gospel?

America has the highest homicide rate per capita of any country in the world. This is a paradox because the government is stable and orderly; witness how easily the Vice-President can fit into the normal processes if his superior is laid aside. Such stability is the envy of many governments in the world today. Furthermore, the nation is called to further stability in so many distraught areas in the world in spite of a shameful record at home. Certainly the U.S. is not the sick society that some suspect. Unfortunately, there are some very sick members of our society that exploit the civil liberties the Constitution guarantees. Others are saying it's a bit of the jungle that still resides in everyone of us in spite of the distance in most areas evolution is supposed to have brought us. It is disturbing to encounter the application

of evolution to the complexities of our world. Our best magazines give offhand references to evolution as a scientific fact. Actually it raises more imponderables than sound Christian theology.

The Christian doctrine of original sin means that the potential to commit any and every sin resides in the breast of everyone of us. Our Creator has endowed all of us with sufficient checks to keep us from running amuck. There is reason, conscience, will and history. On the other hand, we need stronger disciplines from without for those who will not control themselves from within. In the Old Testament when the law was enforced there were some eighteen capital offences. God is not soft on deliberate sinning as the law of Moses and the Great White Throne attest. As the hymn writer has put it, “There’s a kindness in His justice, which is more than liberty.” The wise Solomon observed in his day, “Because sentence against evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc. 8:11). Our present laws appear encrusted with technicalities that enable clever lawyers to circumvent justice. One thing is certain, all will get a fair judgment in that last day (Rev. 20:11-12). A soldier about to be court-martialed gained an interview with General Lee for clemency, Lee said, “You will get justice, soldier,” to which he replied, “Sir, that’s just what I don’t want.” The existence of a righteous God demands ultimate justice. When the grace of Christ’s offered forgiveness is rejected, then the sinner must live with this dictum, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going to judgment; and some they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24).

We can thank God for the Divine institution of human government. The moment its iron hand is not felt pandemonium and anarchy immediately erupt, as witness what takes place when we have a blackout. Police and prisons allow most of us to enjoy a reasonable measure of peace and security.

The assailant in this attempt on the President's life had no political axe to grind. The latest accounts tell us that he is just mentally sick — a loner. Often such develop uncomplimentary excesses or habits that could weaken one's natural resistance to demon possession. Otherwise how are we to account for such a mindless act? Nor can we forget that it was an assassin's bullet that killed the heir to the Austrian throne in 1914 which triggered World War I. Certainly this world is ruled (not overruled) "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

The Big Dilemma

All agree that the biggest problem facing our planet is the threat of a nuclear war. The Salt II is dead but not the awesome substance of the debate. The newest weapons are so devastating and frighteningly accurate that it is assumed the power that makes the first strike now has all the advantage. There is no defense against the oncoming missiles. The fear is a massive Pearl Harbour strategy. Even the experts are baffled at the complexities of the problem. In the cards, at the moment, is the possibility of an arms race. Even if the upcoming arsenal is never used the prohibitive price is such that it would occasion an economy of guns and not butter. Brezhnev has seized the initiative and invited a

renewal of treaty talks. The move is adroit. A refusal to negotiate would make Reagan the possible troublemaker. The difficulty is the reasonable doubt as to Russia's honesty. Would they cheat after a treaty is signed? Fortunately, reliable monitoring capabilities are now at our disposal. The treaty way seems preferable to an all-out arms race.

Another agent to perform man's inhumanity to man is the revival of chemical warfare. The reaction to the use of mustard gas in World War I led to an agreement at Geneva in 1925 to ban all use of chemical and biological agents in warfare. This is being disregarded and now we hear of the most lethal gases and deadly germs.

All of the essentials for "the great tribulation" are being assembled. The widespread devastations described in the Revelation are now human possibilities. Still, God may choose to rain His judgments direct from heaven as he did in the days of Josiah; or there could be a combination of both. John the Baptist raised a pertinent question, "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" We would change it to the imperative, "Flee from the wrath to come."

The tragedy is that judgments more often harden men's hearts rather than soften them. Isaiah has to beat a refrain in his early chapters because the judgments falling upon his people were not producing repentance. Four times he says, "For all of this His anger is not turned away, but His hand (of judgment) is stretched out still." In the midst of the vial judgments of Revelation 16 we read that men "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores and repented not of their deeds." The Christian accepts God's overruling

providence. This world is not his home; like Abraham, he looks “for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

Two Approaches

The prophet Isaiah describes the virtues of the then coming Messiah when he writes of His mission to the world, “the government shall be upon His shoulders.” Many of Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Christ have been fulfilled; consider his 53rd chapter. The one relating to government awaits His second coming. Until then nations will have experimented with every system that the ingenuity of man’s mind can devise. Churchill in his readable volumes on The History of the English Speaking People refers to the last two hundred years as the era of “The Great Democracies.” President Lincoln summed it up as “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” Certainly wealth, privilege and opportunity have never been so reachable by so many. Because of the competitiveness of the free enterprise system the disadvantaged have been led to think that their best interests are served by Socialism or Communism. At this juncture in history we observe that these governments fail to produce man’s yearning for a Paradise. Poland reveals that where the masses can break through to express themselves they are disenchanted with Communism. Sweden and England have taken the Socialist route and discover it leads to national bankruptcy. Capitalism is blamed for depressions and recessions. The voters have shown their disgust with welfarism in Sweden, England and now America. President Reagan has a point when he declares free enterprise is the best way to create wealth from

whence eventually come all the amenities. The poor complain that wealth is too slow in trickling down to them. Because man is a sinner equity in government is an impossibility. Those who are advantaged will see to that. Again this calls for the One Isaiah speaks about, “a king shall reign in righteousness and princes (His cabinet) shall rule in judgment.” If there is no literal millenium then this world will never know a perfect government — evolution to the contrary.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Trends

The dominance of America becoming a world power is a misfit in history. It has generally come to the ambitious conqueror. For close to two hundred years England was the world's policeman. Trouble spots were called singeing the lion's beard. England's demise, along with France and Germany, created a vacuum that was an invitation to the adventurers — Communism in particular. America was the only power capable of defending the weakened and weak. Now, like all administrators of discipline and order, America has become the bad guy even among the European beneficiaries. The principle catalyst to cause this is the placing of missiles in strategic places. Satan may want to see Europe fragmented again. In spite of the contradictory outlook Europe is destined to unify and become the protector of Jerusalem and more than counterbalance Russia. The potential is there; it only needs the political antichrist to achieve the necessary consolidation.

Again we observe America entering into something that amounts to a near alliance with Israel, thus furthering hatred from the Arab world. The formidable array of sea and land power in the Lebanon theatre reveals how important it is to preserve Lebanon's independence from Syria. Assad, Syria's leader who is backed by thousands of Russian personnel and the latest weaponry,

appreciates the importance of Lebanon in his antipathy against the Jew. America is blocking this takeover for the present. Assad and Reagan seem to have staked a lot of their reputation on Lebanon's outcome. With suicide terrorism in the struggle the fight is going to be nasty. This at least gives our weary Israel a breathing spell. Apart from the American presence in the Middle East things could look even more bleak for Israel. The original covenant with Abram guaranteed blessing to those that blessed the Jew. In that case America is on the right side. However, Israel will not be ultimately safe until they see Christ their Messiah coming from heaven on that white horse (Rev. 19), and they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

Politics

With the election a few months off the fever for such is breaking out. The democratic party is fielding for their man. It seems that they are recoiling from the present administration's conservatism. Mondale appears at present the front runner. His party, as it ages, can logically only develop further toward socialism. The windup will be a defenseless welfare state. In the event of their winning, it will be because of the present millions of mindless voters whose "me too" instincts are all that counts. On the other hand, President Reagan appears to be saying, "I need another four years to fulfill what I believe is my destiny."

The masses today insist on being heard. If they lose out they are all too ready to take to the streets. The prophecy of Daniel spoke of Nebuchadnezzar's image with its feet and toes, obviously relating to conditions

before the second coming of Jesus Christ. The feet are seen to be composed of iron and miry clay (2:42). Most interpret the iron as conservatism and the clay as the turbulent masses. Whichever becomes victor must resort to some form of despotism to maintain such a position. This is the only alternative to inevitable anarchy. Does America still have a strong, self-disciplined minority sufficient to safeguard our freedoms? The coming elections will be interesting.

Speaking of the circumstances that led up to the French Revolution, the historian wrote, “Millions of fierce and ardent natures were intoxicated by dreams of an impossible equality and a complete social and political reorganization.” A long ago president of Princeton, Dr. Patton, wisely observed, “The only hope of Christianity is in the rehabilitating of the Pauline theology. It is back, back to an incarnate Christ and the atoning blood, or it is on, on, on to atheism and despair.”

The United Nations

This institution has been around since the close of World War 2. It houses representatives from nearly every nation in the world; large or small. Regardless of size or importance each has one vote. Their building, a mini-skyscraper, is situated on the East side of Manhattan Island. Outside and inscribed in marble are the words of the prophet Isaiah, “And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares — neither shall they learn war anymore.”

The subsequent history of the United Nations tends to make a mockery out of the prophecy. As to being influential in stopping wars, the United Nations has fared no better than its predecessor — the League of

Nations, ironically set up after World War 1. That war, it will be remembered, was a war to end wars. Hitler in turn made short shift of the hopeful moralizing of the League of Nations. Now there are those in the United States who feel that the United Nations does not serve our interests. They want out!

The United Nations has been described as the pinnacle of mankind's hopes for peace on earth, but its influence matters little when it comes to stopping wars and maintaining the peace — just a deluge of words and debates. Unfortunately, like all institutions that have such high moral goals they become easy targets to be judged in the light of their failures. The higher the standard the more one is exposed to criticism. The Church of Jesus Christ fares in a similar way. The United Nations' special agencies are providing emergency relief, education, nutrition and medicine to millions of displaced people. Then also it gives a valuable window on the Third World.

It is no doubt man's best attempt to maintain peace in the world. We can count on the United Nations doing all that it can to prevent hostilities before they reach the boiling point. Personally, we hope it and its most dedicated members merit the benediction, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). While enemies have a place and are encouraged to air their differences, they at least are not shooting at each other.

Getting back to the Scripture, "Nation shall not lift sword against nation" seems to justify the atheist's retort, "What has Christianity in its long history done to bring about the peace Isaiah describes." "Dispensational truth," as it is commonly called, has the best answer, if

not the only answer to the problem. Christianity is not a world-changing religion — the proof of this is two thousand years of church history. The good effects that Christianity has had upon the world are but byproducts. The true church is in the world but not of it. “The powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5) do not characterize this present church age. Isaiah’s prophecy awaits the next dispensation and a literal fulfillment.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Disasters

By and large 1986 has been a year of technical accidents, thus calling into question, “Are we really better off with the amenities science has made possible?” The alternative is as has been said, “To revert to low-tech solutions means we have to be prepared to die young of cold, disease and hunger.” The genie of the atom has been released for better or for worse. There is no getting him back into the bottle. The consequent potential dangers are matters our civilized world must learn to live with. The biggest nuclear disaster so far took place in Chernobyl, Russia. We have yet to learn the full effects of the radiation fallout on humans and soil fertility. The Challenger disaster after take-off at Cape Canaveral has left the nation shocked and our space program halted for the time being. Nor must we forget the Bhopal mishap in India, killing more than 2,000 people and seriously injuring many more. Yet India badly needs the chemicals that Bhopal produces to insure her crops from insects.

The Lord Jesus applied a calamity of His day as a voice of warning from God. The collapse of the tower of Siloam killing 18 persons, says our Lord, “Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jersusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5). The perishing here is not physical but what happens to the unrepentant after

death. The man that has repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ is ready to die and at the same time a good candidate to live, for he constitutes the salt of the earth.

Then, too, after the experimental stages of technology are left behind, the general staff takes over from the scientific pioneers. Their punctiliousness gives place to routine and possible human error. As one expert states it, “I’ve always been comfortable with the technologies but not the personnel running them.” “It’s an ill wind that doesn’t blow some good,” so goes an old adage. The recent tragedies are spurring more safety measures and precaution.

We are witnessing the failure of assemblies and individual Christians. This, too, calls for inquiry and a call to “strengthen the things which remain” (Rev. 3:2). Failures can teach us lessons. “Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

God often takes it upon Himself to curb man’s pride. Nebuchadnezzar is a glaring example as he said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30). Before the words had left his lips, he was stricken with humiliating insanity for seven years. Maybe God is reminding us we are not so wonderful after all.

Extremes

When certain social conditions develop an environment is created that can lead to the popularity of demagogues who advocate the policies of the far right or left. Just now both are at work in South Africa. Prime Minister

Botha is in the middle trying to work out a modus vivendi with the moderates of both parties. Most of the young blacks see their interests from a Communist outlook. This in turn tends to polarize many of the white Africans toward neo-Nazism. We quote from a June issue of "World Report": "A bitter backlash from South Africa's radical whites, those who cry, 'Never.' Most dramatic is the growth of the Africana Resistance Movement, right wing extremists unashamed of their Nazi like style." In three months its rallies have drawn more than 20,000 people. The young toughs among them have broken up major meetings of the present Prime Minister's reform policies. This, we judge from "World Report," is a growing movement waving a flag with a Swastika-like symbol. The followers wear brown shirts with a "storm falcon" displayed on the upper arm. A sort of para-military discipline and an anti-Semitic rhetoric can be heard. Along with this is Bishop Desmond Tutu's "Liberation Theology." He said in Montreal, "But there can come a time when it (violence) is justified to overthrow an unjust system. It's the same argument used to fight Hitler." So when the right circumstances are developed the doctrines of the Stalins or Hitlers spring up like weeds. When and if they gain power, in their own interests they become ruthless with their opposition.

If the present moderates can keep in line the two fringe movements a blood bath can be avoided. Otherwise it is not hard to foresee what could happen in that fairest country in that still "dark continent."

Civilization wears a very thin veneer. Man's wicked heart is curbed but not tamed. Whenever man's vital interests have been threatened, whether religious or

political, like Paul before he was converted, the hidden passions of the human heart soon surface. Of Paul, we read, “Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter” against the early Christians he “verily thought” he was doing God’s will by so doing. Paul, along with his Lord, saw the whole world given over to sin. As for Paul, after he became a Christian, he did not stand in the public corners and arraign the municipal corruption of Athens, Corinth and Rome. As another has said, “Whether it was corruption in office, the squandering of the people’s money, or the shameless, open sin in the temples of Venus, he did one thing, and one thing only: he preached the gospel of Christ, declared that it was the power of God unto salvation.” The neutrality of assembly Christians, either black or white, could be an annoyance to the fanatic champions of either extreme.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fescue

The Papacy

Two impressive occurrences took place in Western Europe in 1978. The first came as a surprise to many of the forecasters. Early in the year it looked favorable for Communism to make significant gains in France and Italy, and this, through the ballot box. With the outcome of the voting, Communism failed to secure an influential place in the government of either country. It is now felt by some that Communism has peaked in these countries and demonstrated its ability to capture the electorate. Of course, in the event of a real economic collapse, things could turn out quite differently.

In our understanding of prophecy (Ezek. 38-39), we envision Russian expansion into that most critical area, the Near East. Here, and in the foreseeable future, is the source of Europe's oil — a life or death necessity. To counterbalance this awesome threat to survival will be the resurrection, in some form of coalition, of the old Roman Empire. It too will be under a dictatorship — "the beast" of Revelation 13:1. From its earliest stages, it is dominated in some way by "mystery Babylon" (Rev. 17:5) — generally considered to be apostate Christendom. This then would suggest that atheistic Communism is not for this area of the world. Possibly it will be something politically similar to the dictatorship witnessed when Spain was under Generalissimo Franco.

The second surprise of last year was the rise in popularity of the papacy. Since World War II the Roman Catholic Church has not shown impressive strength or leadership in world problems. Internally there are rebellious elements, such as priests that want to marry and liberals who have attacked the church's dogmas, even papal authority. Its positive stand against birth control and abortion is probably being ignored by a large number of its communicants. The appearance of two new popes in the last year has somehow quickened the appeal of the church to its nominal members, and perhaps to the world. With two requiem masses and investitures given worldwide TV viewing, the church has enjoyed a renowned publicity. Rome has again revealed herself as a master of ceremony. With the religious instinct that resides in most of mankind, the Roman church is well equipped to satisfy. It is a system to which the natural man can readily adjust. However, beneath the extrabiblical appeals to the senses and emotion rests the heart of the gospel. Just how many penetrate the external and lay hold of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, only God knows.

It was my experience to be in St. Peter's when Pope John Paul I made his last public appearance. The building was packed to capacity and the doors closed long before the expected appearance. At the appropriate hour the late pope arrived and immediately acclaim and electrification possessed most that were present. The pontiff sat high on a platform carried by eight men. If the Bible had only laid the foundation for the church building and is to be finished with the superstructures that have been added by church councils and synods, then Rome is to be commended. On the other hand, if the church is to

function only within the context of Scripture, then where such simplicity reigns it will invoke divine approbation at least on that score.

Getting back to the prophetic outlook, we turn to Revelation 17. In this chapter two channels of evil, yea blasphemy, are identified —namely, the scarlet clad woman and the "beast" that she rides upon. The woman is "Mystery Babylon," a symbol suggesting apostasy, and she has mothered many others like herself. John is invited to see the judgment that is to be visited upon her. This comes about by the treachery of the beast (v. 16). The beast ascends out of the bottomless pit and we are told that "he was" present in John's day and "is not" (i.e., not around today). Then this same "beast" (the power that he represents) "is yet to come." The woman "drunk with the blood of the saints" (v. 6) cannot be the imperial power, for that is represented by the "beast." The woman became the persecutor of the saints long after the persecutions under the Caesars. Church history informs us of just when the woman developed the horrors of the Inquisition. Protestantism, and the liberal societies it has fostered, has curbed this bloodthirsty aspect of the woman. Prophecy intimates that the woman, allied with many of like mind, will at last reach her cherished ambition, saying, "I sit a queen and am no widow" (Rev. 18:7). This dizzy and short-lived achievement is to be simultaneous with that of the resurrected "beast" who is also to "continue a short space."

The geographic location of these subjects of prophecy "are the seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." This certainly identifies the city of Rome. So while most

eyes are on Jerusalem these days, and understandably so, let us not overlook Rome.

* * *

Motivation

Having just read a sharp critique of the United States' social reform programs, we quote from the writer as follows: "We have had for over a century now, in this country and elsewhere, an infinite variety of juvenile delinquency programs. They have all been studied exhaustively by sociologists, criminologists, and social workers, and the findings are dismal. Not a single such program works better than no program at all."

To this observer the only programs that work are those where there is a voluntary decision to apply oneself to some purposeful program. Nor does this writer rule out religious conversion. He laments that many prisoners today are reading law books instead of the Bible. They are engaged with their "rights" (?) and not with how they can mend their ways and become useful members of society. This professor of urban values at N.Y.U. places a high value on "opportunity programs." Night school is mentioned and Alcoholics Anonymous is used as an example. He says, "In it, people who wish to cease being alcoholics can achieve that. As for those who prefer to remain alcoholics— well there is no program on God's earth which can reform them."

Drug addiction gets the same treatment. With a reluctant admission of defeat, there continues a mechanical disposition to throw the taxpayers' money at the problems anyway. Of course, what our analyst has observed our Lord has been saying all along. His parable

of the prodigal son is a classic along this line. It was not until the prodigal had made up his mind to say, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18) that events began to move in his favor. Jesus Christ invites all and sundry to Himself — “him that cometh unto Me and I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). He can save from the most stubborn cases of sin.

There was no reason to believe that the writer of the article that so caught our attention was a committed Christian. However, few evangelicals would fall out with his conclusion: “What it comes down to is that our reformers simply cannot bring themselves to think realistically about human nature. They believe it to be not only originally good, but also incorruptible (hence the liberal tolerance for pornography).” Here, indeed, is a flagrant revolt against one of the most patent doctrines of the Bible — we are sinners by nature and practice. The closer we get to the Ten Commandments, the more we realize this fact in our actual experience. Let the best of sinners, as well as the worst, discover and own up to this, then the gospel is as water to the thirsty soul.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Signs of the Times

The Lord having fully disclosed to His disciples that He was going to leave them, it seemed natural to them to inquire, “Well, when will you return?” The disciples of the Lord Jesus were all Jews. As such they were finally convinced that He was their Messiah. Connected with a prophesied Messiah was the assurance of Jewish supremacy and universal peace [Isaiah 2:1-5]. It had been hard for them to adjust their thinking to a suffering Messiah. This is true of most Jews until this day. Yet the prophecies concerning a suffering Messiah are just as plain [Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 13:6] as those of Messiah’s triumph. They ignored the suffering which was to precede the glory [1 Peter 1:11]. This is also a common preference among many Christians who associate themselves with the Scriptures in which they are most comfortable.

The Scriptures depicting the suffering of Christ are now for our hindsight. They give us the clue as to how “the glory that should follow” [1 Peter 1:11] will be fulfilled. Obviously Just as literally as those related to the first advent. The questioning disciples that provoked the Olivet discourse had not the slightest problem with Israel’s glorious future. They plainly now realized a return of Christ [Luke 19:11-27] to fulfill the law [Old Testament] to every jot and title [Matthew 5:18). The disciples’ problem was what sign could be looked for to

announce the second advent. The Jews require a sign—an allowance that seems to be granted unto them. As to the Rapture it has been defined as a "timeless, signless event." However, the church cannot be forbidden the preliminaries that could eventually become tangible signs to the Jews during their "great tribulation." Since the signs occur in the New Testament, present day Jewry is not impressed by them.

Let us review the signs our Lord gave to His disciples. The days of Noah are to be duplicated [Matthew 24:37] with wickedness and complete indifference to Noah's testimony. Consequently, they knew not "until the flood came." Our Lord included the situation in Sodom as a feature "when the Son of man shall be revealed" [Luke 17:30]. The brazen shamelessness of the Gay communities that have surfaced everywhere are openly demanding their rights to a normal place in society. In the wake of the Gays' perverted life style has come a strange and fatal disease—AIDS. In spite of the best scientific endeavours no cure is in sight. This is another instance of divine displeasure in the area of immorality. Again we are reminded of the presence of pestilences prevailing ere our Lord returns to the earth. This in spite of the modern advancement of medicine. Then our Lord said, "and earthquakes in divers places." The one in Mexico City and now in Armenia are graphic demonstrations of the vindication of our Lord's omniscience. Also included are famines. It can be said that these calamities have always been so. Yes, but the present suggests an increase in their magnitude. The most impressive sign and of such recent origin is the establishment of Israel as a nation. The subsequent

developments which are so impressive we generally note in our column of each issue.

Lifting the Lid

Russia in her 70 years of experiment with Communism has discovered some glaring flaws in the system. A semi-return to the old established principles of the free market appears to be in the cards. Their vibrant new leader, Michael Gorbachev, is staking his career on a return of some of the taboos of Communism. His key words to the new approach to his country's economic problems are "Restructuring" and "Openness." At the moment the success of such a drastic turnabout is a gamble. An empire that has been suppressed by dictatorship immediately becomes restless under new found freedoms and desires more and better. It is understandable for his own security that Russia has made Eastern Europe a buffer between herself and Western Europe from which she has suffered two invasions: one under Napoleon and the other under Hitler. This has necessitated robbing the countries of East Europe of their nationalism and economics. Unlike NATO in the West, Russia has created uncertain allies.

Back in the 20's we can recall when the Bolshevicks were convinced that all was moving in their favor. The millennium of a classless society had captivated the workers' and many intellectuals' imagination. Now Gorbachev is making one abandonment—namely, Lenin's dictum to respect only workers' governments. All this along with scarcities is a tacit admission of the unworkability of a closed society.

While the democratic freedoms have been and are abused, it is not the system but man's sinful condition

that limits the fairness devised by the American founding fathers. The built-in checks and balances of democracy is a better means of getting the best out of man, as he is, than Communism's unrealistic approach to human nature.

Christianity had developed into an authoritarian system until Martin Luther. It could only be maintained by the torture chambers and the stake. The religious liberties that have come in the wake of Protestantism leave much to be desired, particularly its proneness to divide. Any freedom is heavy stuff for fallen mankind who finds it natural to rebel even against God's commandments. Yet, here again, religious freedom has been a stimulant for progress and moral stability. However, no one is really free who is void of the saving power of the gospel. That includes mastery over sin. Our Lord contradicted the Jewish leaders of His day who boasted to Him of their freedom and descent from Abraham. He replied, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" [John 8:32]. This paramount liberty is free to all who will believe the gospel and has promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

Can Israel Survive?

For its size this little nation captures considerable world attention. If the Philistines or Midianites had re-established themselves they would hardly excite the antagonism that the Hebrew state had created. Going back to another time when the Jews returned to their land under Ezra and Nehemiah, their first undertaking was to rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. Opposition from the neighbors was instant and for a while successful. If it had been a temple for

Baal or Venus, that could have been tolerated, but not to Jehovah. Today the maintenance of a Scriptural testimony seems to get more of its share of problems to the extent it approximates the truth. Can we not attribute this uncommon amount of attention to a behind the scenes Satan? He knows where God is at work and where to direct his minions to frustrate the purposes of God. This explanation may help us to understand the hidden designs of Yassar Arafat's double talk. With it he has gained sympathizers in the United Nations and world opinion. The Israelis know otherwise and their sole problem now is how to survive. Zechariah prophesies of a time "when all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem." How could so many nations want to get in on the kill of Jerusalem apart from a mastermind diabolically controlling powers? We believe only Satan could bring about such a coalition. When that point is reached Israel will have been brought down to zero. Then appears their Deliverer, even Jesus. That nation is yet to exclaim, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The prophet tells us they are going to ask Him," What are these wounds in thine hands?" Then He shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Not until this point is the "nation to be born at once" [Isaiah 66:8].

At the present the Jews are back in their land God gave to Abram and his descendants. That in itself is to the student of prophecy a meaningful and spectacular wonder. It is the sign of the blossoming of the fig tree [Matt. 24:32,33]. They remain Christ rejectors and are compelled to resort to their own ingenuity. Behind this is an overruling sovereign God. This accounts for their 40 years stay in the land and we believe Arab hostilities will

continue to be frustrated until the coming of the Lord. If, as the ammillennialist says, “God is through with the Jew and the church is now the ‘Israel of God’,” then from that viewpoint we see little prospect for the Israelis. However, they have a lot of unfulfilled prophecies in their favor that only the wildest imagination can apply to the church. In the Abrahamic Covenant God assumes all of the responsibilities, especially regarding Israel’s destiny [Genesis 15].

The recent election in Israel produced a political paralysis. However, the conservative party gained a slight edge. To gain a ruling majority Shamir leans toward accepting the ultra conservatives who in turn want to impose strict Jewish observances. In that case it would not be hard to foresee these “Fundamentalists” arguing for a return of the Levitical sacrifices. A look at Daniel 9:27 reveals a covenant made by the Roman prince [that shall come] for one week of years guaranteeing the many Jews the right to establish their temple worship. Then in the midst of the week he reneges on his covenant which occasions the ceasing of the sacrifice and the oblation. Obviously during the great tribulation much of Judaism will be reinstated. Certainly during the milennium they will be reinstituted to perfection [Ezekiel 43-44]. So our answer as to the survival of Israel in this dark scene is in the affirmative because our eyes are on the prophetic Word. It is important to distinguish between the destinies of Israel and the Church.

The reason we have headed this column with a question is because of the large sale of sophisticated arms, especially to Saudi Arabia. King Khaled put it bluntly: “When we build our military power, we have no designs

on anybody, except those who took away our land and holy places." Present Israel is the size of New Jersey and 90% of its population clustered in cities. It faces a colossal military machine of 17,265 tanks, 2789 combat aircraft and three million armed men from Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Egypt. All this besides the present huge sales of military material from England and China now on the way. Surely God's providence that has brought Israel thus far is not going to allow them another destruction and banishment. In a past dark hour the prophet Isaiah gave them this assurance—"Thus saith the Lord, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass" [Isaiah 7:7].

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Responsibility

The average man of the street has some excuse for his skepticism. He discovers deceit where common honesty could at least be expected. Isaiah lamented at the times when a “standard bearer” would faint. We observe them today falling. When one preacher proves to be a hypocrite, or a politician is discovered to be a “phony,” he can bring reproach upon his colleagues and profession.

The Lord Jesus stated a principle that holds good in both the spiritual and secular realms. He said, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more (Luke 12:48).

We write in this vein because of an unusual breakdown in morality where integrity is of major importance. Earlier in the year a young black reporter for the prestigious Washington Post wrote a feature describing her witnessing a black boy of eight being injected with heroin by his mother’s boyfriend. The author of this poignant story, Janet Cooke, won the Pulitzer Prize for her work. The story was so sensational that Washington’s chief of police demanded more information. The paper was plagued with requests for further disclosures. After a thorough investigation the story proved to be a fabrication.

Commenting on the journalistic let-down, James A. Michener, himself a Pulitzer Prize winner, wrote, “A major newspaper was humiliated and one of the most necessary professions in the world was made to look shoddy.” He added, “A woman reporter of extraordinary talent was disgraced, bringing ridicule upon two minorities which had long battled for good jobs in journalism — women and blacks.” The matter is even more serious when those in Christian leadership fail in their trust. The measure of the sin offering in Leviticus 4 was not the nature of the sin but the position of the one who sinned. The sin of a priest was a different matter than a sin of the common people. Janet Cooke was ambitious and out to win even if it meant deliberate lying. James in his epistle warns against striving for recognition in the church. He writes, “Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall have the more severe judgment.”

Recently morality received a sore wound when a celebrity in the advertising world left her husband, with their four children. Anita Bryant symbolized wholesomeness, and she often appeared on TV advertising Florida orange juice, as well as being pictured with her family, suggesting America and family life at its best. Anita further enhanced her righteous image by leading a successful campaign prohibiting gays from the teaching profession in Southern Florida. With all of this there were Christian connections. How are the mighty fallen! All this but adds to the cynicism so often encountered today. A like occasion may have led David to say, “I said in my haste, all men are liars” (Psa. 116:11). Let us always remember that God has his faithful ones who have not kissed Baal.

The sports world is no exception; horses are doped, stars haggle for contracts that run into millions of dollars. The women's tennis star, Billy Jean King, now surfaces as having had a lesbian affair with her secretary. A news reporter writes, "It is no secret that all professional sports, male and female, have a certain incidence of homosexuality." Of all the perversions of sex, this is the most detestable. The Bible calls it sodomy. The name is derived from a city whose moral *** tu.pitude eventually called for fire and brimstone from heaven to remove every vestige of it from the earth. It is alarmingly significant that when our Lord cites a sign to remind the faithful of his near return He says, "Likewise as it was in the days of Lot, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-29). The little epistle of Jude, verse 7, has a solemn word for those who have abandoned the natural use of their bodies: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The fire and brimstone that consumed their bodies is not to be confused with the Sodomites' souls enduring "eternal fire." Notice also that they are an example for this present lustful age. Paul is very specific about this particular perversion, "Be not deceived, effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). As another has said, "If more Hell were preached in the pulpit there would be less practiced in the community."

The Unpredictable

In the “Lady of the Lake” a motley crowd is seen cheering the king who appraises their acclaim with, “Thou many-headed monster thing, who would wish to be thy king?” The Bible says the wicked “are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa. 58:20).

The chief priests and elders had little trouble turning the crowd from shouting Hosanna to crying, “Let Him be crucified.” Modem society has not changed. Moods and situations can change the temperament of the herd instinct that resides in most of mankind.

Two years ago cars were lined up at gas stations for refueling. An energy shortage that could have brought on a crisis became a natural forecast. The beginning of the end of oil. Now there is an oil glut. A valuable lesson has been learned, or has it been learned, that it can happen again? This Damocles sword hangs over the nation as long as we are dependent upon modern oil. How quickly a warning signal can be forgotten! In spiritual matters too, “He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that, without remedy” (Prov. 29:1).

The lull in the Middle East following the Camp David accord has now been rudely broken. Syria has planted Russian deadly anti-aircraft missiles in Lebanon, and Israel has destroyed a nuclear reactor outside of Baghdad. Arab tempers are so frayed that they could initiate a world war to appease their repeated humiliations from the hands of Israel. The little nation of Israel surrounded by millions who would delight in nothing more than to repeat Hitler’s fury, with even more added zeal and thoroughness, is a marvel in the

world’s eyes. The premillennialist sees God behind the scenes.

A new gimmick has caught on among malcontents with the present order of things — hunger strikes. Those who die becomes martyrs to their cause. Bobby Sands ascends to martyrdom and has reinvigorated the cause of the outlawed Irish Republican Army. He has set an example for Polish activists and some Vietnam Veterans here. It’s amazing what one man or a few can do to influence a large segment of public opinion. Says Solomon, “One sinner destroyeth much good.” We are unaware of the character of the other protestors. Sands was a convicted criminal apart from his political sympathies. The world will choose a Barabbas regardless, if he can promote its interests. The coming antichrist is going to ride on a tremendous acclaim, “and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him” (Rev. 13:8).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Half-Truth

In the West many believe that the Soviet Union is plotting a war against us, or seeking to gain sufficient superiority over the major industrial nations of the world. On the other hand, the Russians are led to believe that the U.S. is developing a nuclear arsenal that is to be launched against them. They have little doubt that the U.S. is the villain in the superpower tensions. This is the result of their controlled news media. The Russians are not told of the numerous deployments of their own strategic missiles that so worry the responsible leaders of the West.

A half-truth can be more misleading than an outright lie. A lie is more likely to be discovered for what it is. The half-truth approach was the Devil's stratagem in the Garden of Eden. The dark side of the forbidden fruit was denied, "ye shall not surely die." Our advertising is artful; liquor ads present all smiles, never the aftermath it can lead to. The cigarette ads picture a super masculine cowboy that catches the eye, not the warning notice. In Matthew 22 we see our Lord finally turning a question on his questioners, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?" The reply was a half-truth: "They say unto him, The Son of David." To this the Lord Jesus replied, "How then doth David in Spirit, call him Lord?" a quote from Psalm 110. To this, we read, "No man was able to answer him a word." David's Lord was David's

God. Since the 110th Psalm was a description of the Messsiah and acclaims His deity, the Jews of that day realized to give that title to Christ would silence all their grounds for rejecting Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ was both David's Son, and also the only begotten Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Here is a revealed mystery for faith to accept, but beyond human understanding, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. 11:27).

In Titus 3:3 Paul gives a good summary of mankind and includes himself before his conversion. He says men of the world are "foolish," defined as, the "lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual, or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation." All this suggests that mankind is gullible and capable of being manipulated. Added to this we are told man is easily "deceived." He is duped by "all manner of unscrupulous words and deeds designed to deceive" (Vine's dictionary). In contrast to this the regenerated Christian, experiencing the renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5), now knows the world from the divine viewpoint, seeing he has passed from its darkness to God's marvelous light. The believer is no longer beguiled by the world's false ways.

"He Maketh Wars to Cease" (Psalm 46:9)

The climactic emphasis of the President's "State of the Union" speech was a repeat of the universal yearning for peace. He said, "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." To achieve this much desired goal is to arm America to the teeth. The former Chief Executive, Richard Nixon, concurs when he says, "We have to be strong enough militarily to take the profit out

of war." Such a formula to assure the peace appears to be the concensus of a fair majority in America and Western Europe. The lessons of history would side with President Theodore Roosevelt's advice, "Speak softly, but carry a big stick." In the light of what the Bible teaches us about the human character, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), we are treating things as they are and not as we would hope them to be.

The alternative to matching strength to strength is witnessed in the fanatical minorities who see unilateral disarmament as the best way to eventually make the aggressor do likewise by following a genuine example. Nixon's reply to such naive hopefuls sounds realistic, "We first have to see the real world, not the idealistic world. The idea if we could only have a summit and if Reagan and Chernenko could only sit down together and we could become friends, is, of course, ridiculous." Nixon speaks of a "real world"; the Bible reveals that "the whole world lieth in wickedness"; the margin reads "in the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). The Christian goes beyond the strong man with his blather, war of nerves and armaments and sees him as an instrument of Satan. The rider on "the red horse" (Rev. 6:4) has had plenty of experience before he initiates "the great tribulation." All through history there has been given to him "power to take peace from the earth." We question whether any of the self-styled "peaceniks" believe in a personal Devil or an inspired Bible.

Actually, there is no formula for peace in a world such as this until Jesus Christ returns a second time to rule with a rod of iron. The dictum is, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these

things must come to pass" (Matt. 26:6). In the light of Romans 13 the Christian living in a democracy should consent to the decisions of "the powers that be." Allowances are made for those who find it impossible to bear arms. Work within the system; don't refuse to register. Go as far as you possibly can, with a good conscience, in obeying the laws of this favored nation. Those who find occasion to rebel against some of the laws and others who desire more government services are only paving the way for Big Brother. Above all, obey this: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions … be made for all men, for kings, and all that are in authority be made" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The Deficit

It is ironic that the President who promised a balanced budget, if elected, has succeeded only in further increasing the deficit to nearly twenty billion dollars. Those who realistically analyze the problem see the need of a quick adjustment. Eliot Janeway says, "We're on notice to avert a catastrophe by 1985."

The Draconian measures that would be necessary to bring about fiscal responsibility cannot be expected from Congress, nor is the President of a mind to curtail his defense spending. So we have a hung situation while the fuse continues to burn toward the blowup. There are faint echoes of letting the problem develop until there is a call for a completely new currency, the old money to be cashed in by a certain date and, we suppose, greatly devalued.

The alarm is being sounded from authoritative quarters, but little heeded. Who wants to be held responsibile for shooting "Santa Claus"? We live in a real world where

payday eventually comes someday. That a financial collapse is somewhere in the future is suggested by “the beast out of the earth” (Rev. 13:11) who binds the world into his financial schemes, “both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,” insomuch that he controls their ability “to buy or sell.” It would appear that the financial prodigality of the last fifty years is demanding some settlements.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Conservatism

Today the ideological wind seems to be blowing in the direction of conservatism. At least this will be so if President Reagan's two appointments to the Supreme Court materialize. Still upsets can be expected from the whims of the voters. The dogooders have enjoyed a heyday since World War II. Such have worn a halo of moral superiority. If you don't line up in their crusades for peace, pro-abortion, women's lib, school busing, to name a few, you are an uncaring individual. The actual fanatical commitment of what they are doing tends to blind them to the dangers they may be unleashing.

Rent control results in abandoned apartment buildings in New York. Abandonment of capital punishment often results in the wrong persons losing their life in prison riots. The rights of immature adolescents have skyrocketed with teenage pregnancies. Castro's fair speeches got the moralizers' approval and Batista was an oppressor. So with the Shah of Iran. Now Africa is all astir and where complete liberty has been gained prosperity for the most part has been lost. Communism has never been far away. Those who secure power by force can only keep it by a superior force. The wreckage left in the wake of liberalism, or is it humanism, is blamed on a penny-pinching government, or any scapegoat that comes to mind.

Is conservatism the answer? It, too, is flawed with human malaise. This much can be said — it better adjusts to man's fallen nature and is most likely to yield to common sense. Its origin stems from Calvinistic theology, and wherever it has been an influence in the world it has brought measurable light and prosperity compared with its surrounding neighbours. The Biblical doctrine of the sinfulness of man is amply proved by the behaviour to be found in every area of society. No matter what form of government sways a country the crafty and lazy are going to find loopholes to exploit. Here welfarism is weak compared with the disciplines of conservatism. Either way, the world's principles are not compatible with those of Jesus Christ.

Brzezinski's Geopolitics

The former national security advisor under the Carter Administration appears in his writings to have a worldwide geopolitical view and grasp of current problems. He sees America as the only challenge to Soviet designs. The Russian ideological edge has weakened (over half a century of Communism has produced no Utopia).

They are falling behind technologically. Their advantages have been narrowed down to "the attainment of clear-cut and politically decisive military superiority." The rivalry of the two world powers is an endless game leading or failing a matter of points, but the military competition must always be matched. Going after Castro and Qadhafi tends to divert public attention away from the Russian grand strategy. West Germany must not be won over to the Soviet bloc. There are some tempting plums from Russia to bring this about; and if

so, everything would be awry in Europe. A Soviet invasion of Iran or Pakistan should call for the action of our present enlarging Rapid Deployment Force. Also, South Korea and the Philippines merit American intervention. Brzezinski views Russia as extremely patient, striking only when circumstances tempt a daring adventure. Actually, the Russian dreams of expansion originated way back with the Czars.

The “Game Plan” sees current arms talks of little worth. The weapons to go after are the intercontinental missiles. Both sides must eliminate their capability of an overwhelming first strike. Cripple one side, otherwise it’s “mutual assured destruction” (MAD). “All reductions and prohibitions would have to be subject to foolproof verification.” Present Soviet secrecy arouses suspicion. Brzezinski writes, “It could prompt American overestimates of Soviet deployment, thereby precipitating American responses that in turn could cause the Soviets to escalate.”

In the Soviet Empire there are pockets of potential resistance, especially the 55 million Moslems. This would give them a dose of their own tactics in the third world. Furthermore, there must be no ambiguity of American intentions. All of this, of course, is well thought out worldly wisdom. God does not appear in the writer’s thoughts. Probably Biblical prophecy has not influenced his thinking. This is God’s world, not man’s, and while men are, up to a point, able to choose their actions, they are not able to choose the results of those actions. Even if there is peace in our little day, after that, what then? The answer: “after this the judgment” of a holy God.

Man's Gullibility

It has been said that man is a religious animal. If he has not found a deity to his liking, he will invent one. Worse yet he may deify himself as we note from this statement, "Is not the whole structure of religious faith an illusion, the God we worship being merely the shadow of ourselves? Thou art man; God is no more. Thine own humanity learn to adore."

Leaving out those who are intensely evangelical, men's sympathies tend to run to humanism or religion in the New Age. Humanism answers to the above quotation; it is atheistic, which in the broadest sense of the word can be considered religion. A close relative would be Communism. The New Age religion is pantheistic. Both feel they have a cure for the world's ills. Since pantheism embraces everything, it can give a home to any religion and philosophy. The New Age is symbolized by a rainbow and its goal is world-wide acceptance. Basically. it is a combination of Zen Buddhism and Western occultism. Successful meditation can release pent up energies that are within us and suppressed by our culture or Christianity. Get rid of obstructing thought (certainly the doctrine of the fall) and whatever else keeps "from tapping that reservoir of magnificence."

Recently we witnessed the Christian film, "Gods of the New Age." The meetings were characterized by hand clapping, body contortions and often resulting in falling to the floor in a trance. A mind over matter approach carries with it the possibilities of healing even terminal diseases. A Gallup poll indicated that ten million Americans were engaged in some aspect of oriental

mysticism. It has been thought that anything is permissible if there is no God and anything is also permissible if everything is God.

To the mind not influenced by the Bible this NAM (New Age Movement) could catch on at an alarming rate. It has optimistic connotations and says a lot of things people want to hear, and that are seemingly geared to escape the frustrations of the present. Again, while the evangelical is putting on his running shoes, error has already run a mile. “Men love darkness rather than light.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Guyana

The mass suicide, and the murder of those who would not self-inflict their death, of some 900 followers of Jim Jones will remain a tragic memory for a long time. It is not necessary to repeat the gruesome details. More than enough has been publicized by photos and written reports. However, some facts from this macabre affair stand out. The leader came on the scene in sheep's clothing. At first, he appeared to mouth the generalisms of Christianity. His particular type of personality appealed to the poor, lonely and gullible. Blacks registered high on the list. The work later took on humanitarian aspects. This won him the respect of the mayor of San Francisco and Governor Brown. They appreciated his counsel in helping the poor. At the same time a religious empire was built up in San Francisco and centred around the People's Temple.

Jones then became a sort of prophet and dire phobias began to haunt him. Drugs cannot be ruled out. Fears of atomic destruction and government interference led him to act something after the fashion of the early Mormons. Jones decided to locate in some solitary corner of the earth and there be free to work out a new destiny with his followers. The sought out paradise in Guyana turned out to be a slave camp and completely under the heel of Jim Jones. News of maladjustments began to filter out and it was evident that U.S. investigations were under

way. One public official about to enter the sacred domain was fired upon and killed. It appears that Jones with his addled mind had prepared himself for the worst should it ever happen to him. An over-supply of poison was on hand to eventuate a mass suicide.

Jim Jones commanded from his followers a complete surrender to himself. From now on he would do their thinking and take charge of their possessions. This shows how ready a considerable portion of the populace is willing to follow a pronounced leader, especially if he associates himself with some religious trappings. We judge Jones to have become a showman and added to this was a hynotic charm that would suggest demon possession. Here is a microcosm of the role of antichrist who is to come. He will be completely Satan-inspired. We read that he will “ascend out of the bottomless pit’ (Rev. 17:8). Where the human situation is desperate enough, circumstances are made to order for the rise of false messiahs. Hitler exploited a defeated and depressed nation and whipped it into all of the concepts that a master race could conjure up. Today we appear to be witnessing a trend toward situations beyond the power of popular governments to cope with. The restless, teeming masses of humanity await to hail and blindly follow this man of destiny who easily impresses them that he is the saviour of the world. A world that has rejected Christ as Saviour and Lord will naturally fall a prey to imposters. Our Lord’s prophetic words are specific in this matter. He said, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive” (John 5:43).

To successfully cope with the problem of what is true and what is false, God has given us two built-in

capacities. We are endowed with the ability to criticize and the ability to wonder. The first enables us to sift evidence. For instance, the Bible states that Jesus Christ arose from the dead. The many infallible proofs for this and the weak points of the deniers lead me to intelligently accept the Bible record as a fact. But, wait a minute, I know of no one who has ever seen a miracle of this nature. So, how can this be? My ability to wonder enables me to believe what I cannot explain. On the one hand, the dogma that the Virgin Mary ascended bodily into heaven and is now its queen, I reject for lack of proofs. To ignore one's ability to wonder makes him a cold rationalist. On the other hand, the ability to wonder, if not checked and balanced with criticism, makes one open to superstitions. When one is born again, he receives the indwelling Holy Spirit who enhances his capabilities for discernment. After reading about the antics of Jim Jones, anyone using his God-given ability to criticize would soon mark him as a phony. One blatant offence of his while in the pulpit was to throw the Bible to the floor and label it a black idol. To further dramatize his contempt, he would spit and stomp on the sacred volume. This very Book speaks of the "mystery of iniquity" as ever working toward its consummation. Its working is ever expressed in outstanding exponents of sin until at last the "man of sin" will appear. On the principle that light rejected becomes darkness, God will send "a strong delusion" that men should believe the lie. What might that lie be? It will be a universal belief in the "man of sin," "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:8).

The Apostle John summarizes what we have been writing in this article when he writes in his epistle,

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

* * *

Egypt

Next to Palestine, Egypt has a bigger role in the Bible story than any other nation. It has, for the most part, been hostile to God’s ancient people, the Jews. Even when mutual alliances were made out of necessity, Egypt proved of little help. In a spiritual or allegorical sense, Egypt is often used as a type of this world (Rev. 11:8). Literally, it enslaved God’s people. When Egypt is looked at as representing the world, it enslaves sinners by its glamour and appeal to the flesh. As such, our Moses is Jesus Christ. In Him our deliverance consists of forgiveness of sins and freedom from sin’s bondage. The Bible-taught Christian knows that he is in the world, but not of it (John 17:14).

Egypt has been the object of God’s repeated judgment. Long after Moses’ bout with the Pharaoh of his clay, Nebuchadnezzar was given Egypt as a payment for his destruction of Tyre. Actually, he was fulfilling God’s purposes on both of these military exercises (Ezek. 29:18-20). From Nebuchadnezzar’s day until after World War 2, Ezekiel’s prophecy has held good: “Egypt shall be the basest of kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations” (Ezek. 29:15). True, Egypt has had some balmy days since Nebuchadnezzar, but they have been enjoyed by her conquerors, the Greeks, and later the Mohammedans.

Until World War I, the Turks kept Egypt for 500 years a land of little significance.

Now all has changed. Egypt has gained complete independence and control of the Suez Canal. Nassar imposed a military dictatorship on the country and his present successor still enjoys the backing of the army. Simultaneous with the rise of Egypt has been that of Israel. The fact that Egypt has suffered two stinging defeats by Israel may have proved a blessing in disguise. It has brought the country to face the realities of independence. Its army now commands respect. Prime Minister Sadat in 1972 showed considerable muscle when he ordered the Russian technicians to leave the country. At this time of writing, Sadat, much to the consternation of his Arab neighbors, has sought some measure of accord with Israel. A treaty is now in the cards following the Camp David summit. Egypt, under its present leadership, has linked its fortunes with the West. Sadat has threatened to change all of this if Israel fails to meet his demands. The whole Middle East is a powder keg. If we were to leave God out, there is nothing forseeable but vicious hates, irreconcilable rivalries, coups and relentless wars. In the event that we are nearing the end of “times of the Gentiles” (and a few discerning people in or out of the Church are optimists), those of us who are now living have arrived at an impressive’ juncture in history. To all who will inquire, it will be found even by the most uninformed that Bible prophecy has a lot going for it. The mere fact that Israel and Egypt are making the headlines today reminds us that this is the area on which prophecy mainly focuses. True, Israel rightly gets the spotlight.

The resurgence of Egypt was seen by Isaiah (19:19, 22-25). It is a fairly safe thing to predict the downfall of a nation. That seems to be the twist of history. One is putting his prophetic gift on the line when Isaiah writes, in spite of millenniums that have witnessed otherwise, that the nation will be converted to the Lord. We read, “In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord.” And again we read, “In that day” there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria. The blessing emanates from Israel which is in the middle of the two countries. In some sense, Israel is to be a third with equals. However, her preeminence is assured in the words: “and Israel mine inheritance.” Israel is the heir and shall inherit all of the territory vouchsafed to Abram (Gen. 15:18).

The altar “in the midst of Egypt” (v. 19) is not the Great Pyramid, as claimed by the British Israel sect. Nor are we to heed the early church fathers who witnessed how well Christianity was ensconced in Egypt. Biblical Christianity has no visible altar. It will be noticed that the phrase “in that day” occurs three times in the passage mentioned. The Pyramid is now; the altar “in that day” is still future. This is true of the highway and Israel in the midst as a blessing. As we look at all that Isaiah had to say about Egypt, we with hindsight and subsequent pages of revelation can check on that which has been fulfilled. The prophecies prefaced with “in that day” are still future. They are just as certain of fulfilment. Their day is coming. Certainly those of us who see present trends as heading in this direction are not without considerable warranted support. As Peter writes: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables” (2 Pet. 1:16).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Rushdie’s Book

A great furor has arisen over a book we have not read, but we are sufficiently aware of its contents to understand that the book’s blasphemy casts an indirect slur on the prophet Mohammet. We refer to THE SATANIC VERSES written by a Moslem born in India but now a British citizen, Salmon Rushdie. The Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran has sent out a religious edict, a fativa, ordering Muslims anywhere to assassinate Rushdie. The author is understandably in hiding and protected by British law. Some angry protest marchers have been killed by riot police in India. The notoriety that the book (it is only fiction) has occasioned makes it a best seller where it can be purchased, as both publishers and book sellers are under the Ayatollah’s ban.

The Moslem cherishes his religion; to him every other is anathema. His charge is to convert the world with the means justifying the end. Its key is note is Islam —“surrender.” Mohammedanism has been a sleeping giant for a thousand years. The establishment of the nation of Israel on their doorstep and their lost battles with little Israel have awakened them. This has helped inflame Arab nationalism and their religion is seen as a unifier over their differences. At the same time they see all that is bad in Christendom, particularly America’s crime record, abortion and materialism. We see the fanatics and terrorists that hail from their quarters.

They are becoming even more impervious to Christian missions. To our chagrin Mohammadanism is gaining ground not only on its own territory, but in the Christianized democracies. Their outward devotion shames the European spiritual wastelands. The Muslims creed is a sovereign Allah (God) whose absolute will amounts to a doctrine of fatalism. It imposes outward modesty upon women and basic ethics. In its contest with Christian missions in Africa it is often more accommodating to the native situation. The allowance of bigamy is a factor. Let's face it, the great Asian faiths are reviving and gaining ground. They are not moribund, but confident, aggressive and decidedly hostile to the Christianity that is generally represented by the Western democracies. The day of supposed white supremacy is over and the Oriental nations intend to let us know it.

Notwithstanding, our Lord's great commission is still His command to the church. The absolutism of the Biblical message is an offense to those who are not in the good of it. Our Lord's sent ones must abound in tactfulness, complete dedication, and, as Dan Crawford put it, "Thinking Black." In other words, fully master and be sympathetic with the non-Christian viewpoint. Who is sufficient for such a calling? None of us; "but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

The Muslim's extremism is another quirk typical of any religion that becomes overly sensitive to anything that would challenge its claims to absolutism. Medieval Christianity was no exception with its Inquisition. It is an indication of insecurity that seeks to liquidate opposition and shuns open debate. As to the basics of Christianity, the death burial and bodily resurrection of Christ remain attested by "many infallible proofs." Israel

in their judicial blindness, after they had rejected “the light of the world,” would think they were doing God’s service by killing the disciples of the Lord. Paul, before his conversion, was driven to this mistaken zeal. How sincere men can become, and yet be dead wrong.

Errancy

A group of seminary professors and theologians have been meeting to discuss their brand of Biblical investigation. All that we meet appear to come with a liberal bias. The premise from which they start is that the Bible is largely, if not completely, a book of human origin composed of myths; the work of editors accepting or rejecting the contents of existing manuscripts, and relating what might be considered authoritative. Also. Jesus Christ would be related as a good Man with religious precepts way ahead of his time. The conclusions of these Biblical scholars meeting last year in San Francisco was that the Lord’s Prayer as we now have it was only partly attributed to the Lord Jesus. This year’s academicians concluded that the Lord never said He would have a second coming. What a pity that these professing Christian divines use their acumen to negate things most surely believed by all Evangelicals.

This business that both the Bible and Jesus did not transcend the limits of the purely human was on another occasion severely criticized by a Chicago daily. A secular source of all places! Now the quote: “We are struck with the hypocrisy and treachery of these attacks on Christianity. This is a free country and a free age, and men say what they choose about religion, but this is not what we arraign these divinity professors for. Is there no place in which to assail Christianity but at a divinity

school? Is there no one to write infidel books, except the professors of Christian theology? Is a Theological Seminary an appropriate place for a general massacre of Christian doctrines? We are not championing Christianity or infidelity, but only condemning infidels."

Secrets Will Out

Among the men chosen by the President for his cabinet was John Tower to be his Secretary of Defense. Immediately he was put into a goldfish bowl. He was accused of having a problem with alcohol and also with womanizing. Along with this he had been watched by the FBI, and that information given only to his judges has resulted in a majority from the House and Senate to declare him unsuited, character wise for such a responsibility as being Secretary of Defense. None questioned his qualifications. This has been a blow to the President—questioning his judgment to pick the right man. There is some chagrin to this as Bush had announced that his administration was to be based on strong ethical standards, a lesson learned from Reagan's problems. The precious time and talent consumed on the Tower debate was scandalous when one considers the pressing problems that beset the nation.

It is an ill wind that does not blow some good. The affair reminds us of the Lord's words to those who were accusing a woman taken in adultery. Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at her. None qualified, and convicted by their conscience left the scene. Character assassination is never lacking when their target is the high and mighty among clerics or politicians. Sometimes an example can have a wholesale effect. At least it was part of the discipline of the early

church, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”

All the charges and countercharges against Tower have been well publicized in the press and TV. The debates have brought to light that considerable drinking has not been uncommon among some of the distinguished gentlemen of the Capitol. Maybe some lessons will be learned by others from this chain reaction.

Another Scripture comes to mind, again our Lord’s words, “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither that shall not be known” (Luke 12:2). Some would not care to have their lives and thoughts brought to light. Yet, our Lord reminds us that nothing is going to be overlooked at “the Great White Throne Judgment.” Then every mouth will be stopped and all found guilty before a holy God whose names were not found in the book of life. Well might the prophet Jeremiah’s question be considered, “What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?” Those who are bold enough to think along this line either develop a profound interest in or appreciation of the gospel. That is what the death of Christ is all about. As an infinite sacrifice He accounted for the sins of the whole world. Just discover your need for such a Substitute, and believe He died in your stead, and God pronounces you justified. Yes, “ There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus.”

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Holocaust Survivors

Last June about 10,000 survivors of the Nazi attempt to annihilate all Jews within their territory met in Jerusalem. Half were from outside of Israel. This colossal reunion restored vivid memories as these veterans recounted their experiences to one another. Prime Minister Menachem Begin addressed this group with words of assurance. He traced modern anti-Jewish feeling back to the great reformer, Martin Luther, who was quoted as saying, “burn the synagogues, put all Jews into stables, let them starve, let them suffer, let them crawl, for the sins they committed.” Begin pledged to defend the Jews from mass destruction. Justifying his belligerance, Begin said, “Israel will never allow an enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction to be used against the Jewish people.” To preserve the memory parents took their children to the Wailing Wall (the only remnant of the ancient temple) and charged them to remember the holocaust. A testament read in six languages vowed that the attempt to annihilate Europe’s Jews “Shall never let the sacred memory of our perished six million be scorned and erased,” and to remember “what an indifferent world did to us and to itself.”

The nation of Israel holds a significant place in Scripture from the call of Abraham on through to the Revelation. Our Lord respected this fact; he said, “I am not sent but

unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). When we get into the epistles we still find the Jew as an entity distinct from the Church. For instance, Romans 9-11 and also this verse, "Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). In the Revelation the 12 tribes are discovered and sorted out in chapter 7. Another thing of note is that the Jew monopolizes most of the Bible's prophecy. True, the world and the Church are not unrelated to these prophecies, but the Jew generally has the centre stage. Closely associated with these prophecies are the covenants made to Abraham and David and their descendants. In a nutshell the Jew was promised correctional judgment if he sinned (Deut. 30:1-3). Next, the Jew has been promised consummate earthly blessings conditioned upon national repentance (Hosea 14). To annul these blessings by spiritualizing them and applying them to the Church is not a consistent way to interpret prophecy. The Jewish race is still in the throes of national punishment — it has all been so literal. Proceeding from the example of the fulfilled prophecies we conclude that the future ones relating to Israel will be just as literally fulfilled. Two things will bring about Israel's long promised blessing; namely, the great tribulation, or as described by Jeremiah, "The time of Jacob's trouble" (30:7). Following this they will say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39), and they will discover that He has the wounds of Calvary as He tells them, "with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zech. 13:6). Further, Zechariah says, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son" (12:10).

Begin, his commitments to the contrary, has not taken into account his Jewish prophets. Israel is yet to endure its consummate trial. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah liken it to a time of national childbirth. The outcome of the time of labour will be, “shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isa. 66:8). The time of travail is given in Zechariah 14:2. “For I will gather all nations against Israel to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the house rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity.”

The investment of the city under Titus was just a rehearsal of this scene. No deliverance came when the Romans destroyed the city. In Zechariah’s prophecy just when the nations are gloating that they have settled the Jewish problem, “Then,” Zechariah says “the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” The New Testament apostle and prophet, Saint Paul, is inspired to write, “For if the casting away of them (the Jews because of their rejection of Christ and the gospel) be the reconciling of the world (the Christian evangel to all nations), what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead” (Romans 11:15). The coming of Christ to deliver Jerusalem is His coming to the earth and is not to be confused with the rapture of the Church which occurs at least seven years before Zechariah’s prophecy when His feet shall light upon the Mount of Olives. The millennial blessing of the Jews fulfills an important part of the Abrahamic covenant, “And in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). The world will profit when Israel is blessed.

At this time of writing the Ottawa Summit conference has just adjourned. Its object was economics, but the fast moving events in Lebanon unintentionally intruded into the discussions. They were deeply concerned with the gravity of events. All appeared that their hands were tied to bring about a cease fire. The Middle East has become centre stage in the world's geopolitics. Most of the world's oil is there and the Jew is the only reliable ally amid an array of unstable governments with one bent — Israel's destruction. A portent that indicates an approach toward the end times. Again, Zechariah comes to mind, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces though all the nations of the earth be gathered against it" (12:3). Again, God says, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass" (Isaiah 46:11).

Luther's Anti-Semitism

The reference to Prime Minister Begin's accusation that the great Protestant reformer was the father of modern anti-Semitism aroused this writer's curiosity. We recall reading snatches of William L. Shirer's monumental history, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, and book reviews years ago. It could be from reading this book that Begin gathered his thunder, or from sources of Shirer's information. On page 236, in the chapter on "Life in the Third Reich" there is a paragraph that gives us the gist of Shirer's reasoning. We quote: "It is difficult to understand the behaviour of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a

passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews and when they were sent away he advised that they be deprived of ‘all their cash and jewels and silver and gold,’ and furthermore, ‘that their synogogues or schools be set on fire, and their houses be broken up and destroyed and they be put under a roof or stable, like the gypsies, in misery and captivity as they incessantly lament to God about us’ — advice that was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler.”

In defense of Luther we should realize he was a child of his day. Course and vulgar language was not unusual for one’s enemies. Luther when describing his co-worker, Malanchthon, gives us a glimpse of himself, “I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike. I must remove the stumps, cut away the thistles and thorns, and clear the wild forests; but Master Philip comes along softly and gently, sowing and watering with joy.” However, Melanchthon was not the man for the controversies of his day; to avoid strife he was too prone to compromise.

Luther did not free himself from all the trappings of medieval Christendom. He must have recalled the material and persecutions of the Inquisition that included Jews on their black list. Then too, he could not account for the Jews not flocking into the new Protestantism. All unbelievers who were not in the church were considered misfits. Luther’s anti-Semitism was entirely religious, not racial. If Shirer had as carefully researched Luther as he did the tons of Nazi records that fell so surprisingly intact into Allied hands he would have had a balanced view of the Reformer.

Luther possessed the highest academic degrees; he was a voluminous writer, and is still read, and he was a popular university professor with hundreds of students clamoring to attend his lectures on the books of the Bible. He was a devoted husband and father; his Christmas hymns touch the believer's heart.

A review in the London Times supplied a partial answer at the time Shirer's book appeared and it was important because it came from the secular world.

"Luther was not the spiritual ancestor of Hitler. Nor can this particular label be affixed to Bismarck. To say that National Socialism was in the main stream of German historic development is to accept the claim which many Nazi writers put forward — men who were only too anxious to give some intellectual respectability to the weird hotchpotch of ideas which make up Nazi doctrine by citing the great names of Germany's past in their support."

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

School Prayer

Prayer was the common practice in American schools until a small majority, especially the atheists, brought about its prohibition. An equally determined majority has been working all the channels for a return of a public prayer time in schools. Last March 20th the issue was brought to a vote. In spite of intense lobbying and hundreds of evangelicals outside of the Capitol praying, they were eleven votes short of the two-thirds majority needed for an amendment. The measure failed said the President (who used his influence in favor) because the Senators, “just didn’t understand it.” It was a case where the lawmakers could not be fair to every religious persuasion, so an abounding majority must yield to the wishes of the few. In our pluralistic society what kind of prayer would be acceptable? Maybe we should be thankful that our basic religious liberties have not been touched. As evangelicals let us exploit what avenues there are to persuade both young and old that no man comes to the Father except through the Lord Jesus Christ, who declared Himself to be “the Way.”

In Poland it is the “war of the crosses.” There crucifixes are to be removed from the schools. In America we wouldn’t allow them in. The authoritarian government is now in conflict with an equally adamant church. The professed atheistic government of Poland brings to mind a reflection from the late Sir Robert Anderson, “Atheism

is always a revolt against a false religion, and it never maintains its hold upon the minds of men." In both of these school incidents the proof is that where mankind can express itself it will have religion of some kind. Would that this human trait were matched by the words of Solomon: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God " (Prov. 2:3-5).

Candidates

At this time of writing the spectacular move to front stage of Senator Gary Hart surprises most the members of his own Democratic Party. He tells them he has some new ideas. To Hart, Mondale would only put the political clock back by revamping the familiar democratic platform. One thing appears, and that is that Hart is far more to the left than his opponent. In harmony with the logic of his party Hart is for sharing the wealth. While in opposition to this, Regan is for creating real wealth. The President's "trickle down" economic versus the "quick fixes" of the spenders will influence many a voter's mind this November.

The great landmark that commenced our modern period of history was the Protestant Reformation. Before that rulership was in the hands of the few, such as kings and the papal hierarchy. Now the will of the people is a deciding factor in the most civilized governments. The inalienable rights of the individual possess the popular mind. Everyone in a free society running for office must convince the voter that he has the best solutions. The weak link in this chain is that the ambitious office seeker

promises more than the economy can bear. Or to fulfill the promise enormous national debts have been incurred that would pose a grave threat to world stability. Thus the modern democrat assures himself that he has the best, yea only, solution to settle the glaring inequalities that still plague humanity.

In spite of all this there are still gigantic tyrannies which no form of government has yet been able to iron out, or probably ever will. The wealthy, the Edisons and Fords; and the pious, hardworking Amish farmer can be likened to the mountains in nature. Rob them of their place in society and of their privileges and you have stopped the fertilizing rivers that nourish the valleys. “Equal shares are fair shares” won’t work. The English philosopher foresaw much that prevails today, “For who is to judge as to these conflicting interests? and who is to enforce the judgment? Class will disagree with class — nay individual with individual: every man’s hand will be against his brother; might will make right upon a scale the world has never seen, until out of the surging sea a power rises strong enough to command once more.” As another has said, “Who can say where the movement for men’s rights shall stop? If they be rights, must it not be unrighteous to stop anywhere?” The most backward third-worlder is beginning to insist, “Me too!”

All of this denies the fall and makes man the measure of all things, or his own saviour. The cross of Christ has judged and unmasked the world for what it is. The world is still choosing Barabbas and rejecting the Lord Jesus. Yet that cross is the greatest of all paradoxes. “The very sword that pierced His side; drew forth the blood to save.”

Population Explosion

The world, and especially the United States, has witnessed some remarkable changes since the close of World War 2. In America the lot of blacks, and other minorities, has greatly improved. Amenities for all in the way of Social Security, complete medical care for the poor and elderly, and assistance to the unemployed are now considered normal government obligations. The nation has been charitable in many instances to the needs of the world. Unfortunately the recipients of giveaways are always crying for more. Solomon describes “the hoseleach crying, give, give” (Prov. 30:15). This has tended to encourage a mindless irresponsibility, especially when it comes to procreation. The swarms of unproductive offspring pose a threat to democratic stability. The Kissinger report on Central America blames an uncontrolled growth of population that the countries are incapable of absorbing as a major problem of those parts. In Mexico City there are 18 million people, half living in shanty towns. Such are a potential for a riot, plague or mass invasion into the U.S. of a redundant population, at the same time threatening to swamp American stock that enjoys its family planning. The Chinese appear to be the first to be taking a realistic approach to population explosion. Situations develop when there are millions of humans with no place to go but up, and there is the cry for living space. Hitler had in mind conquered territory for a “master race.” Obviously he did manipulate those he subjugated. America’s sympathetic approach, food for the hungry and home and welfare for those who manage to enter the country, can be self-defeating as a dependent society ever increases its kind.

Obviously the disciplines of work, disease, famines and wars work out for a balance among the nations. Supposing science were to eliminate all of the effects of the curse that God has imposed upon the world, what then? (Gen. 3). Unless mankind was correspondingly tamed, problems would come from other directions. The Arabs have a proverb, “All sunshine makes a desert.” God was responsible for Noah’s flood, and for the fire and brimstone upon Sodom (Gen. 19:24), and He allowed evil spirits to control kings to declare devastating wars (1 King 22:20 and Ezek. 21:21, 27). We also read, “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6). At this time of writing the nation is grieved over the deaths and destruction of the tornadoes that swept through the Carolinas in late March.

Our Lord called attention to two catastrophes of His day: Pilate’s atrocity in slaying pilgrims and mixing their blood with their sacrifices, and the eighteen that were killed when the tower of Siloam fell (Luke 13:1-5). The Lord then inquired whether they were sinners above others; no, not necessarily. Rather, He said, “… except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” Not perish by a tower falling on them but all are to die; so prepare for that event. This imperfect world, and so beyond man’s power to perfect, certainly has its lessons of eternal value and should also encourage us to heed Abraham’s example, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

Mercenaries

To help protect American interests abroad millions of dollars have been spent to equip and train native soldiers. The predominant Arab representation of the Lebanese army just went over to the other side. Only the embattled “Christian” element remains to fight for an independent Lebanon. This was the American plan but at the moment a hopeless and lost cause. Now in El Salvador its army vastly outnumbering the rebels and better equipped are no match for their motivated enemy. They may be influenced by rebel propaganda that they are only fighting for American interests. History is full of instances where nations have hired surrogate soldiers but of little value.

Money just cannot purchase love, loyalty and devotion; nor even patriotism. Hirelings are of no value in areas where the nobler instincts of mankind are demanded. Now many Christians would be such if they encountered the enmity of the world along with Paul “… as it were appointed to death … Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffetted, and have no certain dwelling place” (1 Cor. 4:9, 11).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Two Viewpoints

An English historian has given an admiring account of Field Marshall Montgomery and his significant part in the defeat of Germany in World War II. In contrast the supreme commander, General Eisenhower, was an overrated warrior. Allowing for patriotic bias and the advantages of hindsight, maybe Montgomery's plan was right to make a dash for Berlin before the Russians got there. The credit, however, would have gone to the British and it was unsuited to American pride. Nigel Hamilton, the British historian, writes, "Forty-one years have passed since Soviet troops stormed into Berlin — years in which the erstwhile Allies of the Second World War have had to live with its consequences, Nazi Germany was irrevocably defeated —but at the cost of a Communist curtain, fortified by Soviet troops. Could it, we ask ourselves, have been avoided?" This inter-allied pique so advantageous to Russia, makes it necessary to keep free Europe an armed camp.

While the armchair historian with his broader and fuller knowledge can point out blunders and their consequences, the Bible teaches us that it is God who finally decides the fate of nations. A humiliated Nebuchadnezzar's confession is to the point, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay

His hand, or say unto Him, what doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35).

We know the American slant of the story from Ike's grandson, David Eisenhower, married to Nixon's daughter Julie and the parents of three children, and a graduate of law school in 1976. Coupled with a love of history and a desire to say something on behalf of his grandfather has led him to write the still uncompleted biography of the famed general and later President. He deals extensively with why the supreme commander of the Allied forces did not focus on Berlin. At Yalta the agreement was to divide Germany into three military occupation zones. Russia, with the Eastern third, included Berlin. The good fortune of the American capture of the Ramagen bridge across the Rhine saw Eisenhower 280 miles from Berlin, while two million Soviet troops were massed only 30 miles from the German capital. Churchill was for a drive east; his aim was to shake hands with the Russians as far east as possible. The English Prime Minister was already beginning to see the outline of what he later defined as "the iron curtain." Ike saw this as political and he as a soldier saw his duty — defeat the German army. The two biographies, both true to facts but seen from different viewpoints, agree in the triumphant outcome. Such reminds us of our four Gospels, facts stated differently but the Saviour's death and resurrection is the unequivocal message. Critics fret over the details and miss the only way of salvation. Several could witness an automobile accident, and each have a different version, but that in no way contradicts that there was an accident.

The Deficit

Those with insight see with alarm the United States' trade deficits. We are importing 26 per cent less than we are exporting. The two countries that lost the last war, Germany and Japan, have won the battle for world markets. Among the several explanations for this is that the victors are strapped with military expenditures. This has allowed the conquered to engage in commercial research and development, in contrast with the energies spent in a constant modernization of weaponry. It is admitted if American wages were reduced to Japanese standards the Japanese would still have the edge because of advanced technology.

This shows how quickly prosperity can be earned by a nation that is not compelled to dissipate its wealth in armaments. We cannot wonder at people dreaming of a warless world and justice everywhere. This longed for idealism can never be when totalitarianism and aggression must be constantly matched. Yes, nations will beat their swords into plowshares. It is a matter of timing. This is man's hour or day (Luke 22:53). The Prince of Peace has been rejected, but His day is coming when He will assert His crown rights and the nations will learn war no more.

Drugs

The wide spread use of dangerous drugs has reached alarming proportions in this favored land. Two star athletes have recently died from an overdose of cocaine. This has caused the nation to investigate the extent of the problem. It threatens to become a crisis that could seriously contribute to the weakening of the moral fiber of the nation. The enormous profits gained by those who

traffic in these illicit drugs make it extremely difficult to control, let alone stamp out. President Nixon succeeded in lessening the supply of opium by subsidizing the Turkish farmers who grew it. This has only shifted to the popularity of South American cocaine.

The attempts to prohibit alcohol, and now drugs, have crashed head on to the national perversity of the human heart. The desperate wickedness in every human heart (Jeremiah 17:9) is kept from being completely unleashed by our God-given common sense and restraints of society. However, just allow ourselves to indulge in stimulants and drug promoted fantasies and the possibility of being hooked is not far away. The sinful capacity of the human heart has broken through the God-given natural restraint. That which has made this breakthrough, sex, alcohol and drugs now becomes a master that few manage to conquer. Here the gospel has a better record than godless counselling.

Our souls naturally crave for something beyond ourselves; a vacuum within us that only God can fill. The Fall has distorted everything about us — the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint (Isa. 1:5). Man, having lost his fellowship with God, is prone to seek illicit thrills. “We are restless until we have found our rest in Thee.” The drug culture is one of the curses of America’s prosperity. It is ironic that the nation that enjoys the highest standard of living has the greatest number of suicides per capita and the biggest drug problem. Our prisons are overcrowded. The steady hand to hold the full cup is wanting. Those who have found their satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ know how to rightly label the soul-destroying counterfeits that promise a way out of boredom, life’s realities and a

tormenting conscience. Just two verses of Scripture are all that is needed, if heeded, to immunize the believer against those temptations that carry such a terrific price tag. They are: “If sinners entice thee consent thou not” (Prov. 1:10) and, “Flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Human Rights

The term “human rights” sounds like a noble and worthwhile goal. However, on second thought, it is difficult to define and could be hard to live with constantly, human nature being what it is. Even President Carter cannot give it a top priority in several instances. In the eyes of foreigners, it is a matter interpreted as an attempt to transplant Americanism into their peculiar situation. It is viewed as suspect and probably unworkable for them. Anyway, we are experiencing its outworking in our own land. Marches, demonstrations, picketing for the rights of women, non-smokers, minorities and paraplegics are representative of only a few of the current areas of human rights.

Notwithstanding the huge umbrella that big government has spread over the society of the United States, and certainly to a degree in Canada, the populace has still been minting new “rights.” An Atlanta, Ga., lawyer and former president of the America Bar Association has said, “Many of the common, everyday risks of four decades ago are no longer acceptable.” He went on to say, “The concept of human responsibility has been seriously eroded. Today, people expect to be protected even from their own gullibility.” Hence, we have an “epidemic of hair-trigger suing” as one jurist calls it. More and more patients are suing their doctors, and even children are suing their parents. A student is

seeking an unbelievable sum from his university for the poor grade he received and the consequent mental anguish. Sympathetic juries have agreed for millions of dollars to be awarded a well organized suit. In such a train of thought, an inordinate cupidity has been generated and a glut of lawyers is specializing in this field which, for them, promises the most lucrative fees. We learn that the United States has one lawyer for every 500 people — ten times as many as France. We wonder how many of those who are engaged in this new drama of life are acquainted with the parable of the forgiven servant. He that was forgiven much contended that his fellow-servants who owed him a little should immediately pay up (Matt. 18:23-35).

Our Lord was teaching us that we who have been forgiven so much — all of our sins — should be considerate toward those who are obligated to us. Cannot some of the misfortunes of life be one of God's methods of speaking to us? The psalmist must have had such in mind when he wrote, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word" (Psa. 119:67).

The three great revolutions of the English-speaking people were led by Cromwell, Washington, and Lincoln, the leadership of Lincoln having freed the slaves. They were sobering affairs and, in large measure, by-products of the influence of Biblical Christianity. Certainly in these cases the abuse of power was sufficient to incite reprisals. In the past, democracy meant only the curbing of despotic powers; wealth and rank were to be respected and the law enforceable. Now the politicians — at least the thoughtful ones — are alarmed over the success of their policies. To where is it all leading? To

people's rights! Who of us cannot discover some grievance that does not call for redress? Someone has defined it as mobocracy. The outcome of this is too often anarchy, and the only remedy for this in other lands has been for the military to take over.

Nor has this excitement for human rights been restricted to the secular world. It now plagues our churches. The final message to the church found in the Bible is given to Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. In light of what we have been saying, the name Laodicea appears more than accidental. It is a compound of two words, Laos meaning "people" and dike meaning "what is right, a judicial hearing," according to W. E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. Here, then, we have the people's rights. Nor should we be surprised to see Christendom get into the act of correcting human wrongs. In many instances the church has forsaken its heavenly calling and has descended to the mundane affairs of the earth. Its activists have joined the civil rights demonstrators and its monies have gone to the support of African liberation fighters. The synods and conclaves of the mainline denominations, instead of engaging in the weightier matters of God's revelation, are dead-locked with matters that merit only a positive "no" in the first place. Some of those matters involve the right of "gays" for the ministry, women for ordination, and the revising of creeds, with collects and hymnals to accommodate their liberal theology. We notice in Scripture that Samson, the last of the judges in the book of Judges, was blinded by his enemy the Philistines. The last king to occupy the throne of David, Zedekiah, had his eyes put out by Nebuchadnezzar.

Now we have the last message to the church and it is informed of its blindness. In this case, spiritual blindness, and with the added tragedy — “and knowest not.”

The otherwise doleful message to the church in Laodicea has its prescription for a cure and a bright hope. This is, of course, a characteristic of all Scripture. Ironically, the challenge is co the individual. We read, “He that hath an ear.” This implies that the mass will remain indifferent to its plight. The immediate remedy is to anoint the eyes with salve. In other words, take a new look at the Holy Bible. Let it be God’s authoritative voice to you. This is the only way Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians and for us can be answered. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph. 1:18). Such will be appraising the vanities of the present with the certainties of eternity. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” The Biblical revelation of eternity puts sense into the present. Otherwise, the fleeting pleasures, the trials and tribulations that catch up with most of us, and the question of life beyond the grave, are all enigmas to him who believes not.

The Peace Treaty

This column is being written while the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt has just taken place. Most of the credit for this must go to President Carter. Things were falling apart in the Middle East calling for something dramatic and courageous. Dominoes were falling. At the same time, pressures were giving way elsewhere in the world: China had invaded Viet Nam, plus wars in Africa where thousands

of Cuban mercenaries tip the balance of power on the side of Soviet interests. These places beyond the Bible lands were bypassed. Israel must be preserved because of its strategic position in the world of geopolitics. Above this, the Bible student who sees things in a dispensational perspective has much to convince him that Israel is back in the land for the literal fulfilment of the many prophecies that primarily apply to them. Then, too, the free world depends heavily upon Arab oil. Apart from the high stakes that the West has in this oil, that area would be of minimal importance. Israel and oil have so aroused the United States that it is prepared to risk a major war. The present dependence upon oil for survival and prosperity makes the stability of the Middle East a top priority of the United States' foreign policy. President Carter has obligated the nation to a frightening financial burden as the price of the peace treaty. Along with this a military presence is the next likely step. The establishment of two American air bases in the area is soon to be a reality.

All of this impresses us as a rehearsal of the peace treaty with Israel that is yet to come. This treaty will be made at the commencement of Daniel's 70th week and by "the prince that shall come." From Daniel 9:26, we learn that it was the people of this prince who, under Titus, destroyed Jerusalem and its temple sanctuary. This identifies the prince as a Roman, or head of the revived Roman Empire. This yet future covenant will assure Israel the right to revive its temple worship for a week of years. In the midst of the week this prince will renege his covenant, and then the great tribulation will be ushered in. This coming prince is "the little horn" of Daniel 7:8 and 25, and his dominance is limited to "a

time, and times, and the dividing of time" (i.e., 3 ½ years). This positive measure of times occurs again in Daniel 12:7 and is picked up in Revelation 12:14. In Revelation 11:2 it is "forty and two months," and in 13:5 "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." This beast, for so he is identified in Revelation 13, is at the end of the period cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

Some are rightly alarmed that the United States should be so heavily committed in this volatile area of the world. President Carter had no other choice but to do something, even if it meant giving away the shop. The Soviets were threatening to close in from all directions on the oil rich lands. Now to keep the treaty from coming unstuck promises to be a constant nightmare.

We appear to be approaching Zechariah 12:3: "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth be gathered against it." Jerusalem has become the key to the Middle East strategy. With this city in the hands of the Arabs or Soviets, the jugular vein, oil, of Western might and prosperity would be at the mercy of enemies. Nor is this viewpoint strictly that of a biased dispensationalist. A few lines from an editorial in The Wall Street Journal gives a secular opinion: "An ominous momentum has been evident in events along the Middle East oil lanes. Events have pushed the administration into another world — where dominoes need propping, aircraft carriers come in handy, and diplomatic spectaculars like Mr. Carter's Egypt-Israel trip depend on the demonstration of American resolve."

It was music to the ears to hear all three signators quote from Isaiah 2:4 — “and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” This, of course, will require real peace. It is a literal prophecy. Certainly Isaiah would understand it this way; so did the recent dignitaries who met on the White House lawn. Our Lord definitely said in answer to the question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” that “Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.” Such is to characterize this age and has been true throughout history. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can make Isaiah’s prophecy a reality. It will be at His Second Coming, when He comes to reign.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Israel

In the years that we have supplied a column for current events we have had a selective eye on the destiny of God's chosen people—the Jews. Especially so since they have become an established nation now for over 40 years. All along they have met with hostility from their Arab neighbors. From the viewpoint of the Palestinians this is understandable.

Up until now the Israelis have had the enormous backing of the United States. Such an attitude throughout history has merited God's approbation, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee" (Gen. 12:3). At the same time to the extent that the Jews have been divinely blessed above all other nations with covenants and promises, (Romans 9:4-5), the same has measured the extent of their discipline for failure and apostasy. In no ambiguous terms their prophets have declared an eventful, national recovery of Israel. The big question is, are these preliminaries to Israel's spiritual rebirth, or just another phase of history?

At this time of writing Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Shamir, has made his visit to the White House. He was to disappointingly learn that the United States has made a basic shift in Near East foreign policy. The Palestinians are to have back land that they lost in war with Israel

and be an autonomous political unity. To this agree the United States, Western Europe and the Soviet Union. If God does not work behind these ominous shadows, then Israel's present future is in doubt. The Jews themselves are divided as to yield to outside pressure or hold on and fight on alone. If Shamir has his way, and the majority are behind him, he will make no concessions that would certainly work to their ruin in the future. It is easy to see that there is not room for two independent hostilities in such a small space. It boils down to what the Orthodox Jews have realized all along, "Either they or us."

It is true that all of our planet belongs to its Creator, God. However, in the land of Palestine God designates a particular ownership for He has said, "The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. 25:23).

So the premillennialist in this instance is not getting his data from the new position of the White House, but waits to see the hand of God pursuing His ultimate purposes for Israel. We do not expect God to work at this time openly for His chosen people. This is the age of the church. When it is removed at the rapture, then heaven will be more apparent in dealing with earthly scenes. All these things are leading up to the time when God will gather all nations against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1).

All the pent-up Jewish hate will have been liberated to reach its climax. Then the Lord shall visibly appear, and His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives and in that day deliver His people.

Then and Now

The end of World War II resulted in the rise of two world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Germany, Italy and Japan were prostrate and the Allies exhausted. The holocaust made it imperative for the Jews to return to the homeland and by a successful war with the Arabs they were able to re-establish themselves as a nation. A few years after the war it was learned that the Russians had an atomic bomb. For better or worse this has stalemated the two superpowers from direct conflict. For the past 40 years this has been the world's lineup. In all of this probably the most significant event was the national rebirth of a few million Jews. At least this is so for the premillennialists. The rise of Russia could well fit into Ezekiel 38.

Before World War II hostilities broke out, we had the "phony war"; now in the past 40 years the "Cold War." At the beginning much appeared to be in Russia's favor. Communism would be the dialectic of the 20th century. Even France and Italy were beset with strong Communist parties. The contest appears to have ended with the West the decided winners. Those behind the iron curtain peeped through the cracks and saw how much better off were the average citizens of the West. An ideological war was going on and time has proved the winner. The principle of the free market and the human drives it stimulates is bountifully productive compared with the monotonous equality of the Communistic comradeship.

Communism is atheistic, thereby denying that man is created in God's image. Consequently, man's needs are only material. If this philosophy were truth that man

only needs succor from the cradle to the grave, Communism would have produced the paradise it has always promised to the slaves of Capitalism. Even when all amenities are met man still yearns for something more. As has been often concluded man was made for God and he is restless until he has found his rest in God. The stifling restraints that atheism imposes upon those who are under its umbrella would only make men, we would imagine, more aware of that vacuum in their life. The recent balloting in Russia approves that when the voters have been given a fair choice, as under "perestroika," the Communist candidates are losers. It is true that the West largely adheres to Humanism, which is basically atheistic but is tolerant towards all religions. At any rate, by their fruits you will know them. The West when it comes to economics can beat Communism at its own promises. Wherever Paul preached, and there were converts close on his heels, there were Jews who would make Christians obligated to keep certain facets of the law. Paul realized that this was Satanic (2 Cor. 11:13-14), and that any form of bondage would curtail the potential of a Christian who was dead to the law and married to Christ. True political freedom has its pitfalls as Gorbachev is discovering when so many Soviet enclaves want independence and, freedom. This is especially so when these countries have been occupied by unwanted tanks and troops. NATO does not have that problem as it is a unity of common consent.

Welfarism

This century fell heir to the great reform movements of the last century. That there were ills enough to combat history does recall. In England child labor in the mills

attended the industrial revolution. Here in the United States it was slavery. The lesser blights of society have been challenged by trade unionism and women suffrage. More recent is the outcome of Civil Rights. When human rights become the object one wonders where they should stop. The criminal guilty of the blackest crime learns of his rights. Outrageous suits have been won which might only be partially the fault of the defendant. Single parents turn a deaf ear to common sense family increases.

Billions of dollars have been poured into education, clinics, subsidized housing and food stamps. All of the humanitarian drives money and brains could conceive culminated under President Johnson's "Great Society." Charles Murray's criticism fits: "We tried to provide more for the poor and produced more poor instead." Now President Bush occupies the White House and acknowledges that his heart is big but government has a lean purse. The problem of how to cater to the needy and not sell the shop has not been solved by elected politicians. The draconian solutions would bring out the rioters. Thousands wait in the shadows for the excuse to do so. Other countries have already attempted to return to fiscal responsibility: Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico to name a few.

Protesters soon go to the streets. The abounding amenities that the lower ranks of society have won, especially since World War II, are tenuous at best. Allow another drought equal to the summer of '88 and our present problems, now held somewhat in check, could burst upon us, such as crime, prison over-crowding, a redundant population, water and other scarcities. Then too, the scientists may be right when they warn us of the

“green house” effect on nature as we have been accustomed to know it.

Why regurgitate these upsetting possibilities? The scientist and economists have been reciting them with their superior secular knowledge for several decades. We can certainly say they are catching up with Scripture. The end of this church age, and many of us feel that this is where we have arrived, is not going to be a church millennium, or a Communist Paradise, or a Socialist’s assurance of security from the cradle to the grave. The iron and clay feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s image foreshadow the conflict of conservative disciplines with the restless masses suggested by the clay. Then the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are yet to reach their full potential as they ride through hapless societies. Since this is “man’s day,” or as Lord described it upon being apprehended in Gethsemane, “but this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53), the Christian is bidden to look beyond the present.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Middle East

This area of the world continues to be a powder keg. Every way the U.S. acts to keep the peace in this troubled portion of the globe is fraught with dangers. An example are the pros and cons that came forward in deciding whether to sell AWAC spy plans to the Saudis. Both arguments were persuasive — a bless you if you do, and a bless you if you don't. Then there was the assassination of Anwar Sadat, and all the well laid plans and calculations of this ruler of moderation could be in jeopardy. A resurgence of Islam is popularizing its fanatics. Also, there is the madman, Kaddafi, drunk with petro dollars, who has no hidden designs and one with which all Arabs agree — eliminate Israel. America's self-interest is to assure the security of Israel, our only reliable ally in the Near East, and to keep the oil flowing to the West. Without the oil the West is crippled, especially Europe. All of this should not surprise the student of Bible prophecy. The centre of world interests is to be Jerusalem, "for I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2). The whole world has a stake in Eastern oil and would fight to insure that interest. The advanced world seems to have all its eggs in one basket. Its economy is dependent upon energy and for the present it comes mainly from oil. Those who have its control could blackmail the have-nots. Certainly the 13th chapter of the Revelation presents a beast — a

man that has acquired international power, and is Devil-inspired, holding the world in an economic bind. Never is such a situation so possible as at the present.

Armaments

Another dilemma is what to do about Russia's formidable accummulation of the most modern weaponry. Now there are credible allegations that they are using "yellow rain" in Afghanistan and Cambodia. This is a new poison derived from contaminated grain. Also, poison gas from artillery shells is rumored. Just as the Spanish Civil War of the 30's was a try out for Hitler's new armaments, so Russia is testing some new horror devices. The agreement to ban such weapons is ignored by those who have designs on successful conquest.

Western Europe and many in this country feel that if the U.S. limits her armaments so will the Russians. A quotation from the Wall Street Journal makes sense, "It seems to us that this development has some rather stark and ugly implications for those who think arms control is something to be worked out among nice guys, if only our guys try a little harder." We can appreciate Europe's concern over America triggering off a war with Russia. They would be between the anvil and the hammer.

Russia is reported to have three to one tanks stationed on her Western frontier. This is not a defense posture; but one of advance. When fighting Napoleon and Hitler, she retreated into her homeland and then counterattacked. Now she intends to fight on other territory. Our Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, warned, "We have to move very rapidly to correct the imbalances, and regain our strength."

If the nations are not heading for Armageddon, it is certainly the next thing to it. How could there be a greater tribulation than the Third World War will be? The pacificists are dreamers. We live in a fallen world. One can deny the Edenic story, but not the facts that come out of it. The hearts of unconverted men are good play-things for a personal Devil. The silence of an Almighty God poses the biggest enigma. Faced with this problem the believer says with Abraham, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” Atheism has no answers or solutions. Faced with such realisms, and worse if we knew the contents of the “White Papers” in the possession of the President and his advisers, the unbeliever could well be tempted to recite, “Out of the night that covers me; Black as the pit from pole to pole, my head may be bloodied, but I’ll keep it unbowed.” Christianity instills confidence, consolation and hope in God’s providence and the assurance of heaven. Outside of this there is only ultimate hopelessness; just make the best of the present.

Reaganomics

We are hearing it said that President Reagan’s honeymoon is over. It is not unusual for a President to come into office with fanfare and a fusion of new hope instilled into the. nation. The President has vowed to shoot Santa Claus. This means cutting the nation’s budget down to the bone. As another has said, “There are no free rides for the sin of overspending.” Unfortunately a generous welfare has spawned a large segment of the population which feeds from the government trough. It is right to care for the poor and underprivileged, but the nation’s generosity has taken

the money that should have gone into the private sector which in turn would produce gainful employment, so billions of dollares have been spent with no compensations. Consequently, bridges are in desrepair, roads need maintenance, and there is no money for sorely wanted housing. The test is now beginning to be felt. Is the medicine worse than the disease? Can a modern democracy stick with a given policy long enough to give it a fair trial?

So far we are witnessing a bloodless revolution. Unlike most which rises up from the bottom of the social heap, this one is intended to give the advantages to those who are supposed to be able to create jobs. One searches in vain for the Bible sanction on any particular economic or political system. Those under democracy and capitalism are probably faring better than those under other systems. Reagan is for reinstating the old Protestant ethic, work and thrift. One thing is certain, “the poor ye have always with you” (John 12:8). For those who are unable to cope, the President promises a “safety net.”

Another look at the economic situation, and this includes the whole civilized world, leads one to wonder if there is such a thing as a solution. The millions of unemployed are the achilles heel of the industrial nations. This problem and others piling upon it are beyond any system of government. Tighten the money supply to curb inflation and interest rates soar and growth is curtailed. Loosen the money supply and double digit inflation is soon felt. Isaiah likens man’s dilemma to a man on a too short bed and the covering is too narrow (Isa. 28:20). Whichever way he turns or stretches he is uncomfortable. If this is the only heaven there is, then we are of all men most miserable. No, there is a heaven

to win and a hell to shun. The calamities that befall us down here are the blessings if they turn our eyes Christward and heavenward.

Their Day

It would appear that the liberal World Council of Churches has had its day. This at least since the smashing victory of President Reagan over the government “do it all” concept set in motion almost 50 years ago with the election of President F. D. Roosevelt. The so-called “social gospel” has enjoyed a long inning. The W.C.C. has championed socialism, at times little more than a hair from communism. Heady with its gains on the home front, it accused America of being an oppressor nation and it developed a liberation theology. This, in their view, justified giving aid and comfort to Marxist forces to overcome white supremacy and capitalism in parts of the third world. Last year the Salvation Army served notice of its withdrawal from the W.C.C. It could not continue with an organization that had supported guerillas who had killed missionaries and destroyed their premises. As if violence could beget goodness! What about the other cheek? Or, slaves submit yourselves to your masters (Col. 3:22). Our Lord, the Prince of Peace, “when He was reviled, reviled not again.” Peter tells us He has left us an example. Most of the mainline denominations are wedded to their commitments, but a considerable portion of their membership is voting with its feet and seeking the comfort of an evangelical testimony.

The program of the W.C.C. has shunned the Christian creeds and is blind and unsympathetic to God’s stated purpose for this age to call out “a people for his name,”

which would be, “in the world, but not of it.” When the disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village, as did Elijah, because it had rejected them, the response to their indignation was, “But He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55). Christianity is not commissioned to change a fallen world. To the contrary it predicts a world where “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7) and will continue until headed up in “the man of sin.”

A natural recoil and rebuttal to the W.C.C. has now come from the evangelical side of Christendom. It has taken the name of Moral Majority. Although not limited to conservative Protestants, such, however, are certainly its organizers. This religious right, no doubt, played a big role in the election of the present President. Here again, we are interferring with a fallen world. In this connection a principle is stated, “He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Rev. 13:10). Obviously, they have taken themselves out of the Lord’s protective hand. We might paraphrase the above quotation, “He that puts himself in the political arena will be a target for political mudslinging.”

We are certainly not contradicting that Christians are “the salt of the earth.” To move, however, from expressing moralism from our preaching and other church activities to actual political involvement is another matter. It distorts the Scriptural view of the Church — a called out assembly, and in the long run will fail just as miserably as the W.C.C. It is like whipping a dead horse. The W.C.C. followed its natural tendencies and wound up Marxist. The Moral Majority could progress to the far right and amalgamate with some

strange bedfellows. The path of the faithful is, “Come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

“Without And Within” (1 Cor. 5:12)

In Apostolic days the Church was a distinct entity from the world; in it but not of it. Shortly thereafter the Church commenced to compromise with the world. Finally, an anomaly appeared on the scene, Christendom. Roughly it was half of each. Generally, Christendom has spurned Biblical principles. Consequently, for those wishing to adjust their church life to Scripture have had no resource but to separate from the main body. Many separatist movements, after generations as such, have often returned to make up another number under the umbrella of Christendom. Present day religious America presents a new and impressive phenomenon — namely Bible churches. Unlike the “Brethren movement” they have but one negative — liberalism. The assemblies, amid many failures, have attempted to rely on a plurality of elders for ministry and conservative financial principles. They have pressed the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to its fullest implications. This “strong meat” that so readily invokes criticism would fare no better in their critics’ hands if dared to be practiced. The more one approximates the truth, the more correspondingly will he attract Satan’s batterings.

Our text which heads these comments limits the church’s judgments to its own sphere. The church has not been given authority, “But them that are without,

God judgeth." This raises an interesting question: "To what extent should Christians attempt to remedy the world's ills?" Generally, the Bible church movement has raised its voice in world affairs. A book that has had an enormous circulation among evangelicals, The Christian Manifesto, could foresee occasions where Christians should rebel. Others have taken up the cudgel against Communism. Some in their ultrapatriotism would have the U.S. out of the United Nations. They lament we did not go all out to win in Korea and Viet Nam. Christendom on the other hand is honeycombed with pacifism, anti-capital punishment, and "rights" of gay people. Some of the issues so strenuously championed are laudable in themselves but the Christian has a higher mission. Furthermore, God has said, "Vengeance is mine and I will repay" (Rom. 12:17). Christian ethics are not workable in a Christ-rejecting world. The religious pacifist would rob the king of his sword, which is his only means to withhold bedlam. Everywhere in the New Testament the Christian is directed to submit to "the powers that be," and never to act or operate in these institutions. Men seek the blessings of Christianity but not the Blesser; the kingdom conditions before the King.

A Dilemma

President Reagan has sworn to protect the interests of the United States. This demands that he must make some crisis decisions. Whichever way he turns he invites the severest criticism. In Central America, for instance, on one hand he is told that it is impossible to control events in that area. Other voices say that the United States is to blame for all the ills in San Salvador and its

neighboring Republics. Either statement oversimplifies the problem and side steps the real issue that the President must face — namely, Soviet adventurism in the whole theatre. For the President it is a “bless you if you do and a bless you if you don’t” situation. Or as President Truman once said, “The buck stops here.” Those in such awesome responsibilities need our prayers. After all, those in secular authority are God’s ordained ministers.

Hitler sought guidance from the stars; King Saul in desperation inquired of a witch. Men who are not in touch with God discover their need of the supernatural anyway. Their danger is to come unwittingly under the control of Satan. We read of Nebuchadnezzar seeking guidance that he considered superior to his own judgment or advice from his counselors. “For the King of Baylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver” (Ezek. 21:21). The popularity of the horoscopes in most daily newspapers reveals how many today feel they are unable to wrestle with today’s pressures without something beyond the physical. The Christian can bring his problems to the Lord and leave them there. In the event that his desires and petitions are not forthcoming he can always lean back and repeat, “Even so it seemed good in Thy sight”!

Olympics

The Soviet pullout along with her satellites has been a jolt to the overall planning of this great international event. We are writing in May when the news is being analyzed from top to bottom. Certainly this event has

yielded to international overplay. Originally it was to search for and honour the world's champion amateur athletes. Now it is a pawn in the dangerous game of geopolitics.

Here was one of the best and wholesome exercises of the "natural man" (the unsaved world). One of the tragedies of this life is the vulnerability of the very best things yielding to corruption. As the psalmist said, "Man being in honour abideth not." The Olympics was strictly for amateurs but the Soviets had their own definition of who is an amateur. The president of the U.S. Olympic Committee is concerned with the existing rules. To him they are as riddled with loopholes as Swiss cheese and "encourage our young athletes to cheat." Then there is the drug problem which some have taken in the past to stimulate their efficiency.

Worse yet the games have now become a political football. The 1980 contests were held in Moscow with the U.S. pullout. Now Russia, tit for tat, defaults. Here again we have a reflection of the spirit of the world — get even! The Christian ethic, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21), is in short supply where Satan, "the prince of the power of the air," holds sway.

The world has a comparable adage to describe human behavior when opposing systems and nations polarize in opposition; it is, "dog eat dog." The present race for the Presidency is not without some dirty rhetoric. Our relations with Moscow have reached a new level of nastiness. The President has been matching the ugly jibes we have been hearing for decades against imperial capitalism. His speeches, intended for a listening world,

tell about an “evil empire” doomed to fail. The Soviets have been accused of “reserving unto themselves the right to commit crime, to lie, to cheat” and would end up on “the ash heap of history.” Writes an observer, “One reason the Soviets announced their boycott of the Olympics was to buttress their argument that relations with the U.S. are very bad.” Obviously they intend to blame Ronald Reagan for all the turbulence, with the hope that he will be defeated in November. Also, their intent is to further convince Europe that America is trigger-happy.

The world has enjoyed few eras of peace. When there are not actual hostilities there is the war of words. King Solomon could say in his early days, “But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent” (1 Kings 5:4). Later, the same Lord that had given him peace now stirs up adversaries against him (1 Kings 11:14-26) because of his tragic failure. God is seen through history and the present to be constantly “overturning, overturning, overturning” (Ezek. 21:27) in the affairs of man. In all this God is attempting to get through to men that things are not right, and that matters will continue this way, even get worse, until Jesus Christ fulfills His promised return and asserts His crown rights.

We have been amazed at the strict discipline, time, practice and energy required of an Olympic contestant. Says Paul, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:25). We feel for those who have been training for this event of a lifetime behind the iron curtain now to be denied in the interests of an ideology that would settle

for nothing less than world domination. The rest of the world's athletes too, were disappointed in not being able to compete with their greatest challengers. The Christian has no fear of being cheated. For us it is, "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded" (2 Chron. 15:7).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Africa

This long-time sleeping giant is now flexing its national muscles. While it remained primitive it was the most fruitful mission field in the world. Now Africa is being subjected to another of the white man's imports — Communism. This, in contrast to the dogged work of the missionary, appears in many quarters as an overnight success. It is more palatable, we suppose, to those who have not grasped the Christian message. Also the missionary's steps have been closely followed by the prospector, and this in turn has brought along materialism and exploitation which has further confused the African mind. Now the vast natural wealth of the continent is coming to light, and so essential if Western standards are to be maintained. Russia and China see this source of raw material in two ways. First, they would like to lay their hands on it. Failing this, they at least want to keep the Western world from capitalizing on it. At the moment they have jumped the gun on the free world. Their successes in the former Portuguese colonies have put them in a position to maneuver favourably. Secretary of State Kissinger has now belatedly moved on the scene. His proposals to the white minorities would have been preposterous two years ago. Now the whites are faced with a hard choice between a blood bath or "shuttle diplomacy." It is questionable whether bullets can stop idealogies when

championed by such superior numbers. Perhaps Israel is an exception to this conclusion, but they have prophecy on their side.

Sadly enough, these black takeovers have so far been conducive to anarchy followed by black oppressive dictatorships. Uganda's Idi Amin has exhibited to date the most highhanded racism. In the areas where the white man rules there is stability and the blacks fare better than in all the black nations. Then there is the matter of timing. Institutions and industries can quickly deteriorate when not in competent hands. There is also concern about the advance of Christianity in an atmosphere where hate, suspicion and racial loyalties have been kindled. We can see an embarrassing situation developing for black Christians. How can they fail to be considered as "Uncle Toms" by the revolutionaries? They could find themselves in the middle in the event of hostilities. We can hope that there is enough Christianity in this latent "powder keg" to call for understanding and moderation. Christians are "the salt of the earth." May that "salt" now work in an area where modern missions have been so signally blessed.

The Apple of His Eye (Zechariah 2:8)

With Egypt for the present pacified with her restored military honour and in possession once more of the Suez Canal, Israel's southern front is quiet. Syria, however, maintains her belligerance. This is not new but a reminder of Old Testament hostilities. Russia has given Syria an almost blank check to purchase arms. This Russian military hardware was to be used exclusively to crush. To the chagrin of Russia, Syria decided to invade Lebanon and is spending a considerable portion of her

military strength in that operation. This is removing the heat from Israel. Consequently, Israel is enjoying an unlooked for breathing spell and time to attend to some of her badly shattered fences. If anything, be it ever so faint, there appears to be a change in the Arab mentality to adjust to Israel's presence in Palestine. Israel's birth as a nation in 1948 and their tenuous hold on the land until now has been spectacular. It has won much of the world's admiration. To the Christian, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

Israel is not to be confused with the Church. Both enjoy a divinely appointed program, and both are heirs of particular promises. Israel's inheritance is earthly. They have been allotted land (Genesis 15:18), a permanent dynasty (Psalm 89:4), and a national conversion (Jeremiah 31:33). Actually, these covenants have had only token fulfillment so far. Attempts have been made to account for this delay. Quite common today is the teaching that Israel's blessings are to be spiritualized and applied to the Church. So, if "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together" (Isaiah 65:25), that means the triumph of the Christian Gospel. Wild and ferocious tribes, when converted, will be brethren dwelling together in unity. We have no objection to this as an application, but it is not sound interpretation. There is unfairness in unduly allegorizing Scripture. The blessings are appropriated and the curses upon Israel are sedulously ignored. The prophecies concerning Israel's future pose the least difficulties. This, then, demands Israel's restoration, and some very significant events in current history support this viewpoint. Then also we notice that the Apostle Paul, long after Pentecost, accounts for Israel as distinct from the

Church and still applies the appropriate prophecies, not to the Church but to a future Israel (Romans 11:26). After the Church has been raptured (1 Thessalonians 4), then follow supernatural interventions in world affairs. “The day of the Lord,” so often mentioned in the Old Testament, and the post rapture judgments of the Revelation, will be as patent as the lightning streaking across the sky from east to west.

After earth’s travail comes the millennium, “for He must reign.” Now grace reigns, then it will be with the “rod of iron.” At last it will be authority in the right hands. It can be pointed out that these climactic events rotate around the Jew. Thus the original divine hegemony will find its perfection in the end times, for “He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:8).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

World Population

Recently we heard a remark to the effect that the greatest threat to world stability is that of overpopulation. In ‘86 it was computed that 5 billion people are now living on planet earth. It has taken only a dozen years to make up the 5th billion. The vice-president of the Population Crisis Committee said, “This population growth is a revolutionary force in the world that we’re not doing much about.” The earth’s population has more than tripled in the last century and the rapid growth continues. This dubious fruitful multiplication is taking place in the so-called Third World where poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and unemployment make life a daily struggle for survival. Thousands of landless nationals are seeking an asylum in the West with millions pressing them to lessen their problem of overcrowding. The popular concept of one-man one-vote as a cure for all ills could pave the way for the tyranny of the majority. South Africa is not appreciating the pressures for instant change front without. There are saturation points where humanism and pacifism dig their own graves. Eventually there are limits that only dragonian methods can maintain the status quo of the comfortable with always the constant fear that revolutionary forces will be unleashed. Half of the problems of the republics south of the Rio Grand is overpopulation. If we manage to rid the threat of Communism, then they will be to a large extent our

wards. A measure of stability can be kept providing there is water and bread to spare, but what are the liberals to do when there is insufficient to go around?

The Bible likens humanity to the troubled sea which cannot rest, “whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isaiah 57:20). We also read of an army crossing the dried up Euphrates River far greater than Genghis Khan ever fielded, but that could be a rehearsal of what is yet to come. The number of this future army is to be “two hundred thousand thousand” (Rev. 9:16). The prophet Joel tells of the day of the Lord and describes a tribulation scene as “multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.” The beast that rises up out of the sea (Rev. 13:1) and brings about an iron-fisted peace, calms the troubled sea. This same beast marshalls the peoples to war hopelessly against the Lamb. Again, it is in connection with vast numbers of humanity: “The waters which thou sawest are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15). Overpopulation fits into the Biblical picture of “the time of the end.” It spells riots, strife, dictatorship and wars.

The Near East

This section of our globe continues to attract more than its share of attention. Why not? It possesses a piece of real estate that God particularly claims as “His land.” “For thus saith the Lord, he that toucheth you (Jerusalem) toucheth the apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8). As the end time approaches and matters really heat up, Zechariah prophesied, “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people” (Zech. 12:3).

The discovery of a bomb attempt to blow up an El Al jet has been traced by the British to Syrian origins. Its President Assad has, with other discoveries, merited the title “Master of Terror.” Britain has broken relations with Syria and is disappointed that her friends are not following suit. But things are not that simple; hostages, terrorism, and arms deals are driving Syria still further into the Soviet camp. The U.S. paid an unprincipled price to free hostages. It has brought disunity in the President’s Cabinet and introduced more confusion, if that is possible, amid the oil rich nations surrounding the Persian Gulf. Immediate pragmatism and not principles will be the reputation of the policy makers. In the light of Ezekiel 38 this area will be caught in the Russian net. There are other reasons why the U.S. is cozying up to Iran. The Ayatollah Komeini is near death’s door and at the moment it is a toss up who succeeds him, another Islamic Fundamentalist, or a moderate. If a moderate, the U.S. sees an opportunity, perchance, of better relations with that strategically located country. It’s the game of geopolitics. It will be interesting to see how events develop in this area that conies within the scope of Bible prophecy. Others fear, like Saudi Arabia, that an Iranian victory over Iraq could inflame the Persian Gulf with Islamic fanaticism and have begun wondering about the U.S.’s intentions in the region.

Sheik Yaniani after 13 years of heading the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has lost his job. He possibly had more control over the world’s economy than any other man. He was the author of massive gas lines and the steepest rise in oil prices. This triggered the world’s greatest search for oil and the resulting

present oil glut. In a way he authored his own downfall. The world's greatest oil reserves are bound to excite the cupidity of nations. It is a necessity the West will fight to protect and others are tempted to gain by force. The whole Arab world is volatile; unpredictable changes and loyalties are likely. This is the main reason the U.S. is the friend of Israel as the only reliable ally. As has been observed, "It is not the holy places, but the oily places," that make the area so vital to the prosperity of the civilized world. Can we not see God's providence in bringing the world's attention to the Bible lands?

Again matters are heating up in Israel. There has been a changeover of prime ministers. The man now in charge is listed as a hard-liner advocating Israeli expansion. Terrorist raids or internal bombing has given the excuse to step up punitive air raids on suspicious terrorist retreats. One of the Israeli planes was shot down revealing that their enemies have access to highly technical weaponry. Now it is rumoured that the Israelis are producing their own nuclear arsenal. Maybe Qadhafi spoke better than he knew when recently interviewed. He said, "America will be harmed because it involved itself for the benefit of the Israelis." The prophet Zechariah wrote, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people" (12:3). Thus the Bible predicts in the end time that the world will again focus its attention on the Middle East. The immediate cause for this is the presence of Israel and oil. Assad envisions Syria to be the dominent influence in the area, but the Israelis stand in his way. When Qadhafi was asked, "Would he like to lead such a united Arab world?" He answered, smiling broadly, "Yes, why not." Then of course he could settle the Israeli problem on Arab

terms. Both are in opposition to the divine covenants, especially, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee” (Gen. 12:3).

Irangate

By the time this article finds its way into print we should expect the mysteries (or are they mysteries?) of that umbrella and coined word “Irangate” soundly behind the nation. It gives the legislators an escape hatch by postponing those inevitable days when they must do something about the urgencies of the U.S. that cry louder each day for attention. Sinners, too, can allow their minds to get so clouded with Christian failures (never hard to find), that they fail to get occupied with their own dire need to repent and believe the gospel.

Many feel that the President should have taken the responsibility of the actions of his subordinates. Then the palpable mistakes could be patched up, if not forgiven. After all, whatever was done was but the carrying out of the President’s policies. Then, too, he was the only one that could get American hostages out. Tearful pleas and almost demands from the relatives of the hostages brought an unkind pressure on the President. The endeavor to do so at any cost was the commanding urgency placed upon the President. At the same time the geostrategic aims to cozy up to Iran had their appeal but were little more than a front for the hostages. Eventually, Persia (Iran) will fall into the Russian camp in the end times (Ezekiel 38:5).

At times there is the acknowledged precedent of the President to act independently in situations where secrecy and timing are essential.

Who can forget Jefferson's Louisiana purchase or F.D.R.'s lend-lease policy to help England in World War II? Such are matters that would be debated to death and lose their worth for pitch and action in parliamentary debate. In a dog-eat-dog world it is hard to imagine that a Christian President could maintain a good conscience in dealing with the inevitable opposition and enemies that only know that winning (no matter how) is the name of the game. At times, right or wrong, expediency demands means to counter the enemy at his own game.

What became of the 500 million dollars perhaps only Poindexter and Col. North can disclose. Presumably all went to the Contras. No one has lined his pockets. Poindexter and North impress one as patriotic servants doing what they believed was best for the country and certainly was the mind of their Commander-in-Chief. All might have gone undetected had not a Middle Eastern magazine revealed that American arms were being slipped into Iran. It was a sort of "be sure your sin will find you out" type of thing. Yet the fuller disclosure of these imbroglios awaits the confessions of those who have taken "the fifth." That there was tacit consent to resort to clandestine methods to gain ends seems most feasible. Says U.S. News and World Report, "Now, every day of confusion, denial and leak is a day of sad subtraction from a Presidency of significant achievement." The observation of Solomon is fitting: "One sinner destroyeth much good." This one incident has jeopardized a whole school of other interests.

The integrity of the U.S. is called into question by our friends and foes alike. If secret deals are going on that ignore commitments and policies, then suspicions arise. The winning back of integrity is far slower than the

process of losing it. If the Christian church had kept true to its original charter (1st and 2nd Corinthians), it might have remained small but a sure refuge to those in this world's bewilderment who might cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Thank God the church's Head can be fully counted upon.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Checks

There are three national ambitions abroad today among the leading nations. Russia obviously wants Communism to become worldwide, then they, or it, could control all opposition and peace and plenty the result. The Arab World would relish nothing better than to liquidate the new nation of Israel. As for the democracies, uppermost in their minds is peace among the nations.

To the chagrin of all three, if our understanding of Scripture is correct, none will reach its goal. As to world empires, there are to be just four according to Daniel's image, which is comprised of four metals. The fourth is iron and stands for the Roman Empire which is to be resurrected before the second coming of Christ to the earth. This will stymie Russian ambitions which could be the natural occasion for such a consolidation of the Mediterranean world. The nation of Israel has some very plain and definite prophetic promises as to its national resurrection (Jeremiah 30-33). Many Bible students believe that the present happenings are the preliminary stages to Israel's ultimate possession and exaltation in their land; then Arab hatred will only be frustrated. As to the democracies, the decree is rumours of wars and their actual occurrence until the return of the Prince of Peace. This in spite of the United Nations and peace pacts.

God holds the nations in check. Throughout history God has withheld an ultimate weapon from the hands of the aggressors. If Napoleon had only had a few machine guns he could have realized his ambitions; or the Kaiser with dive bombers in World War I. Think of Hitler being the first with the atom bomb, which he might well have had had he not chased away some of Germany's best scientists, including Einstein. If it were not for the American nuclear umbrella, what would Russia not be up to? Furthermore, Russia has been plagued with poor harvests and inefficient farming. This gives them some second thoughts. The Arabs simply cannot unite; what hope would Israel have if they did, humanly speaking? When something approaching the ultimate weapon is discovered (like poison gas in World War I; soon the gas mask appeared), it has been countered by anti-measures.

God is sovereign: "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep" (Psa. 76:6). The destruction of the Canaanites was to come about when their iniquity had come to the full (Gen. 15:16). The Babylonian captivity of the Jews was to last 70 years. At the termination God "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia" to allow the people to return to Palestine (Ezra 1:1). God makes no apology for the way He orders events — "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people" (2 Chron. 7:13). True, God often ordered these calamities as judgments. It can be tied to the problem of sickness. There are some that men bring upon themselves; then there are cases that are beggared for an explanation. The Psalms present every "shock and scorn our flesh is heir to." The

sufferers accept their lot as one of the given factors of life; they are to be endured, buoyed up by faith in a God that can be trusted. One of the worst national calamities to befall Israel was the defection of ten tribes and the establishment of the Northern Kingdom. When king Rehoboam sought to quell the revolt by force of arms, God forbade saying, “this thing is from me” (1 King 12:24). It was a situation the king was to live with. In this welter of national and international confusion may we find His covenant and blood support us in the whelming flood.

Geneva

At this time of writing the Geneva Arms Talks are in progress. If the critics are right, the negotiators are going to be around for a long time. Much is at stake. In a real war the only thing that would give the West its hope of survival would be the use of nuclear weapons. Rule them out completely and Russian conventional superiority would probably settle the outcome. In fact, it was the American nuclear umbrella that kept the Russians from further advances into Europe. Again, Russia can always retreat into its winter vastness and then counter attack as Napoleon and Hitler learned. A retreat in Europe is a threat to be chased into the sea. Remember Hitler’s blitz and Dunkirk. It’s the allies that need the nukes. The massive peace rallies in Europe fail to appreciate this cold fact; unless they would rather be red than dead. These impressive peace rallies are strangely more passionately concerned about American nukes than those aimed at them from Russia. Without substantial nuclear backup the Washington team is at a

disadvantage. Russia is more aware of the “the yellow peril” at her own backdoor.

Commenting on the present gravity the British weekly, The Economist, sees the danger of Europe becoming neutral. This could upset NATO. The weekly went on to say, “In the early 1970’s Senator Mike Mansfield almost persuaded Congress to withdraw half the American troops from Europe; in feisty early 1980’s America, neo-isolationism — or let them look after themselves — could spread even faster.”

While the United States and Russia are at present the leading world powers, prophecy does not indicate that the U.S. will play a leading part in the end time events. A Mediterranean Confederacy, or the Revived Roman Empire, will emerge and dominate the scene. A breakdown at Geneva could aggravate this final lineup.

Nor must we overlook the importance of the whole Middle East. Europe is even more dependent on its oil wealth than the U.S. It is the prize that Europe must keep and Russia covets as her reserves dwindle. The OPEC nations will only play centre stage in the world’s imbroglios while its oil lasts. At least this is from the human standpoint and God generally seems to work from human circumstances than by miracles. Anyway Eastern oil is expected to he exhausted in about 30 years. After that, if the premillennialist’s interpretation of prophecy proves to be too hasty, then new trends will arise from other sources. God tells us what He is going to do, but not how. However, we do have a license to observe the signs of the times and venture an interpretation.

The Unruly Member

Under President Reagan, the United States is undergoing a direct change in its political principles. For the past fifty years the politician who could promise something for everyone predominated the elections. The consequent man-made amenities have been costly. By now the nation's money has been debauched. To many, thrift and hard work ceased to be rewarding. The economically productive members of society were overtaxed to feed the insatiable appetite of welfarism. A daring President is in the process of curtailing expenditures and dreams of balancing the budget. It is like taking a bone from a dog. The otherwise hard working and competent budget director, David Stockman, has expressed his misgivings about the economic policies he is supposed to champion. No doubt the new rise in unemployment stimulated his damaging remark to a Washington Post editor, "I've never believed that just cutting taxes alone will cause output and employment to expand."

Stockman was taken to the Reagan woodshed and he has repented and for the present holds on to his job. The President's opposition is making the most of this affair in the hope of returning to business as usual — high taxes, expanded social spending, growing deficits and perpetual inflation. The President's necessary austerity to combat this "more of the same" from liberalism, to say the least, faces hard sledding. Scripture speaks of Israel in its unhalted degeneracy reaching a point "till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16). Stockman may be reaching, from his recent experiences, some realism which he should have wisely kept to himself.

Back to the tongue in James we read that “it is an uruly evil.” The book of Proverbs is heavenly wisdom for our earthly path. Therein we come across this text, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (21:23). In Christian circles, too, the undisciplined tongue can create havoc. Our speech will eventually expose our inward thoughts as our infallible Saviour said, “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34).

Church And State

The politically brilliant Thomas Jefferson has strongly molded the thinking of the United States in the matter of church and state — each was to be mutually separate. This, probably from the evangelical standpoint, is the best solution. However, the liberal churches gave their aid and comfort to human rights, health, education and social services. Fine if limited to their centres, but no, government must foot the bills. This trend has seemingly for the present backfired. The liberal rulings that followed have relieved many from the normal disciplines of life and Opened vast areas for abuse. A recoil from this is the rise of Protestant Conservatism. The goal is a revival of old-time Americanism which is an outgrowth of the “Puritan Ethics.”

The Anabaptists, Friends and Puritans could not tolerate the state-run churches following the Reformation. They wanted no more from the government than a right to earn an honest living and to practice their understanding of Christianity. That persuasion has its adherents today. It is more often found among those who interpret the Scriptures along dispensational lines. Right or wrong, this position does not enjoy the blessings of

Christendom and would perhaps answer to a Christian minority.

The encouragement is “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). The closer any group of believers approximates the divine pattern for the church, there the eyes of the Lord discover His delight. In Zechariah the postexilic Jews were exhorted to not “despise the day of small things” (4:10). In the second chapter we learn that Jerusalem and what was taking place there was “the apple of his eye.”

Those who are in the world, but not of it, should entertain some second thoughts as to how far they can seek the government to enforce their preferences.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Lessons From History

Some years ago we were visiting a country church in East Sussex, England. There were the characteristic markers over the graves of notables of the distant past. The walls, too, were chiselled with names and dates of deceased parish celebrities. One particularly attracted our interest. It commemorated a British Army colonel and gave a list of the battles where he had been a participant. Among them was the bombardment of Baltimore in 1814 and the battle of New Orleans. Both were decisive American victories. The battle of New Orleans in 1815 brought fame to the American general, Andrew Jackson, and became a notable steppingstone to his becoming our seventh President.

The British losses at the battle of New Orleans were appalling as they sought to dislodge the well entrenched Americans. Some 700 British soldiers were killed, and double that number wounded, before they retreated to their ships. Ironically, the engagements took place during Christmas and New Years. Far worse than this was the treaty of peace that was signed in Ghent, Belgium, December 24th, 1814. With no cables or wireless the news did not reach the warring parties.

Unfortunately, there is a prevailing ignorance of the full implications of the great transaction that took place when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. We are

plainly told, “And having made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20).

Because of the lack of understanding of what this implies, it is not uncommon to hear of people trying to make their peace with God. Such are unaware that they are bankrupt before God and are only attempting the impossible, and that is not necessary. The Lord Jesus has so settled the sin question that all the obstacles in the way of peace with God are removed. Now God offers His peace to us. The only responsibility for the sinner is to accept by faith God’s gracious provision. We are not likely to appreciate this gospel bounty until we discover that our sins have made us enemies of God (Rom. 5:10 and Col. 1:21). This is an essential ingredient toward genuine repentance. It can be likened to appetite, which is certainly not the meal but urges one to eat. So Christ spoke about our eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Figurative language, of course; eating is appropriating the repast. It is taking Christ for all that He offers Himself to be for the sinner. This is indeed the act of saving faith. Unsaved friend, all that is essential for your eternal salvation has been accomplished. The present, therefore, is the acceptable time to claim God’s offer of peace. Tomorrow may be a different matter.

The Gospel Brings “Good News”

Reminded by history and surrounded by the horrendous acts of society, we naturally ask “Whereof does this good news consist?” When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus for a sign of His second coming, He informed them that during His absence the subsequent gospel would not essentially change the world. Rather, wars, earthquakes and famines would continue and, if anything, accelerate

prior to His advent. True, some nations have absorbed the byproducts of Christianity — America especially. Still the woes of a fallen humanity persist and catch up with even the most fortunate sooner or later; then comes the end, death. David said, “Unless I had been afflicted I had gone astray.” In other words, what would mankind be without the shocks and scorns our flesh is heir to? Then, too, government plays an important role in containing humanity within certain lines. When General Wolfe was on his way to his great military victory at Quebec, and to his death, he had some premonition of this as he quoted from Gray’s “Elegy,” especially the stanza that ends with — “The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

This jaundiced look at life is most common among the world’s philosophers and they have no solutions. The average citizen enjoys life while he can. Man’s discoveries in science and medicine constitute his good news, but still sin and death are the ultimate conquerors. Amidst this scene of mixed sorrow and creature delight are to be heard the words of Saint Paul, “And we declare unto you glad tidings — in that He has raised up Jesus again” (Acts 13:32-33). This disappoints most hearers because its main application is the joy of knowing it is well with one’s soul for time and eternity. Yet it is often true to experience that the man who values his Scriptural assurance of “the blessed hope” is a good candidate for life here. God honors them that honour Him. “Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen.” Actually Christianity has no solutions for world problems such as nuclear arms treaty, over-population or what is the best kind of government. The world’s cry has ever been “we have no king but Caesar.” So God, with reservations, has allowed

the world's choice which is to grapple with its many problems.

Here the Christian is to obey magistrates and honor their respective world positions. He is instructed how to care for his family and lovingly maintain the marriage tie and keep his children under control. No instructions are given as to how kings and magistrates are to behave. Implying that Christians mindful of their "heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1) are not likely to be found as world masters. "Ye men of God arise, be done with lesser things."

Juvenile Crime

We are informed that between 1950 and 1979 serious crimes such as rape, murder and robbery committed by children have increased by 11,000 percent. The philosophy behind this is to let the child do his thing with discipline at a minimal. This has occasioned the thinking: Don't introduce the child to religion; let him without any influence come to his own conclusions. On the other hand, the Bible teaches much about child training. "Train up a child in the way he should go; when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Parents are to teach the Scriptures. This will be a delightful duty to those who have experientially discovered that God's Word is truth. Wise parents would never conclude not to teach a child practical hygiene like brushing his teeth, but let him alone to find out the results. Well, we are reaping the harvest of child permissiveness. Schools are often bedlam; streets are unsafe from wild children.

This spills over into the colleges. Some years ago the well known literary character Malcolm Muggeridge resigned as rector of Edinburgh University in Scotland.

This articulate social critic now in his later years looks more like an exponent of orthodoxy. The students were demanding freedom to use pot and pills. In giving his reason for resignation he addressed 2,000. He remarked, “How sad, how macabre and funny it is, that all they put forward should be a demand for pot and pills.” He went on to say, “I have no wish to check any fulfillment of your life. But whatever life is or is not about, it is not to be expressed in terms of drugs, stupefaction or casual sexual relationships. The road to the future is not on the plastic wings of Playboy magazine or in psychedelic fantasies.” We wonder subsequently how the university took to heart that soul-searching address.

While the many are alarmed over the threat of an atomic war, fewer fear the results of the moral decline so evident today. Gibbon in his five-volume history of Rome’s decline reveals how the Empire was weakened internally by ease, luxury and corruption. God says, “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). God informed Abraham that the iniquity of “the Amorites is not yet full,” but when that happened they would be conquered and dispossessed. Joshua’s invasion fulfilled this. The Bible speaks of the mystery of iniquity already at work and eventually to come to its full fruition and headed up in “the man of sin” (2 Thess. 2). Our Lord said what characterized the days of Noah and Lot would be duplicated in the world at His second coming. Our Lord added “iniquity shall abound” (Matt. 24:12). It is not hard for some of us to equate the present day as galloping toward sin’s tragic finality.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Calamity Howlers

When the writer was pioneering with a gospel tent, principally in rural Virginia, we used the chart, “Two Ways and Two Destinies.” A lot of emphasis was placed on the second coming of Christ and the fate thereafter of the Christ rejectors. Perhaps if there were a little more hell preached today there would be less practiced in the community. We are referring back to the early thirties. In those days most people were fascinated with their new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his adage coined for the times, “There is nothing to fear, but fear itself.” We have never caught on to just what that meant; but in all it seemed to spell out optimism. To our critics we in the tent were the calamity howlers. Certainly doomsday was not a popular theme. A lot of water has gone over the dam since then. The Big War climaxed with the use of the atomic bomb, and in the two not so big wars which have followed, it was in the last one that America got her fingers badly burned.

Now who are the doomsday fellows? The ecologists and scientists. Every now and then we hear of improved weaponry or other new inventions for human destruction. Yes, destruction of apocalyptic dimensions. Along with this we face a foe that is so intoxicated with a philosophy that will never content itself apart from worldwide dominion. Others before have coveted this unlimited power but have always fallen short of their

goals. According to Daniel's image there were to be just four Gentile world empires. Four and no more. They are now ancient history. Unfortunately for the world the aspirants to absolute power can do frightful damage before they are cut down to size. God allows these belligerent elements to rise up and He uses them as His scourge, then in turn executes His judgment upon them. There is a classic account of this principle in Isaiah 10. There God addresses, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger" to war against hypocritical Israel. After the task has been performed, we then read in verse 12, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." However, that vision of Nebuchadnezzar did include a fifth kingdom set up by God Himself "which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Since the kingdoms symbolized by the four metals proved to be literal, we conclude that the last shall be such. Our blessed Lord is destined to rule with a rod of iron and His present session on the Father's throne (Revelation 3:21), from which now grace reigns, must not be confused with the Son breaking the nations "in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9).

The Christian has the best news around today; in fact, he always has. Man is not going to be allowed to make a cinder out of this world. The guarantee for this, Mr. Scientist, is that there is a God who rules and overrules, and the prophecies of Scripture abundantly prove this. True, the Christian sees the nations ripening for judgment, yet at the same time he has a message of hope for the believer and assures the world that its

brightest day lies ahead. The only alternatives to this are the uncertainties of the infidel. We here use the word infidel as an umbrella word to include evolution, socialism and Communism.

Realities

One of the campaign promises of President Carter was to balance the national budget by the end of his four years in office. Senator Barry Goldwater added to this a little bit of his irony. He who ran for the Presidency on an ultra conservative ticket declared that if the President succeeded in this particular campaign pledge he would be willing to go over to the Democratic Convention and nominate the President for a second term. A radio commentator said if the President succeeded in this area that he would want to elect him as King! Admittedly, when the time comes around there can be a lot of manipulation with bookkeeping, but with the course that the United States has set itself upon, economic stability is out of the question. Deficit spending feeds upon itself. Like the horseleach that is ever crying, “Give, give” (Proverbs 30:15). At first “pump priming” produces an economic miracle, a heyday, a shot in the arm. Then it begins to multiply the problems it is supposed to solve. Now we are seeing the chickens come home to roost. Cities bankrupt, or going so, commodities bought cheaper abroad than produced at home, and consequently higher unemployment. Will Rodgers caustically defined it something like this, “Buying or doing things you can’t afford with money you haven’t got.” The economists with a Wall Street complex refer to deficit spending as the “Dismal Science.” In other words you cannot escape paying the piper. Our

world is so structured that there can be no benefits without costs. There is nothing free, someone must pay. In the case of inflation it is generally the frugal and the industrious who foot the bill. Now that the United States as a nation has built up an astronomical debt our economy becomes increasingly sensitive to any further raids on the treasury. Twenty years ago it was hardly noticeable, but now the dollar erodes by the month.

One economist has written, “There is no surer way to sow distrust of representative government and thus prepare the way for radical change.” Whatever that radical change may be it will not be in the interest of free enterprise we can be sure. In Lenin’s book it was one of the easy ways to destroy capitalism.

The moral lesson is obvious; we live in a world of laws. Everything finally adjusts to fixed principles. This is quickly obvious in the world of science, but in the area of ethics the inevitables are not so speedy. The Ten Commandments are being flagrantly broken all around us and sooner or later they in turn will break the offender. The Puritan Ethic, so much decried today, did square up to realities. In its human approach it was strongly imbued with Calvin’s “total depravity.” It is interesting to note that where Protestantism took root it elevated those nations spiritually and economically. A glaring example of this comes out of a study of the two Americas. Both continents enjoyed about equal resources and area, but in one case it was settled by those who brought over the relics of a corrupted church; the other came with the Bible. Consequently, the United States particularly produced a soil for an economy of sternness and reward. This was not necessarily Christian, but certainly a by-product thereof. Biblical

Christianity dares to regulate for those in its communion, at least, “if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Modern humanism claims more compassion, but in doing so removes essential disciplines. In this connection someone has raised a pertinent question, “When does a welfare state destroy the productivity of the free society that established it?”

Well, if there are laws, reason demands that there be a Lawgiver, yes, God. Creation reveals a powerful and orderly God (Romans 1:20). The Bible adds where creation is silent and tells me that God is love, and has devised a righteous way for a sinner’s salvation for time and eternity. A Christian, if given an equal opportunity, is very likely to be found in some kind of gainful occupation and resourceful in hard times. This helps explain what David observed, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 27:25).

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Honesty

This noble ethic has fallen on lean times of late. Falsification and half-truths have become a way of life. This type of behaviour is found in the top echelons of our society and filters down to the lowest. Those who lie in high places set an example that is quickly found to be a convenient excuse for lesser breeds who seem convinced that honesty is not their best policy. The prophet Isaiah (10:18) describes the reason for a general breakdown in society in this manner, “and they shall be as when a standard bearer fainteth.”

Reports abound of cheating in our schools; Wall Street is reeling with scandals; bogus immigration papers are filed and false samples are submitted for drug testing. A glaring example of unprincipled professionals was disclosed by a California coroner when he declared that the late entertainer Liberace had his lawyer, manager, publicist and doctor all lie about the actual cause of his death, which was AIDS.

A concern over this disintegrating force in our society is being strongly felt in the secular world. What the Bible has been saying all along, and is generally ignored, is that there are such things as truth and falsehood. Men fancy that they live in a gray area, but reality finally spells things as black or white. Truth eventually has a way of surfacing. The former White House press secretary, Jody Powell, observes, “There is a growing

degree of cynicism and sophistication in our society — a sense that all things are relative and that nothing is absolutely right or wrong." All of this is a sign that Christianity is lessening its hold on the man of the street. Back in Victorian days he may not have been a born again Christian but Christian influence exercised a benign effect on the culture of the past. A song written by Rudyard Kipling — "The Road to Mandalay" — is about an English soldier that had seen service in the colonial days in the Far East. He's now back home but can't adjust to the Victorian strictures. He cries, "Take me somewhere East of the Suez where there ain't no Ten Commandments and a man can raise a thirst." No need for that lament today.

This prevalent moral miasma that clouds our day must not be allowed to corrupt the disciples of Christ. If so, it cripples their power and testimony. Cost what it may we are commanded to be always found "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Never should we forget that we are members of Christ's body, the church, which is defined as, "the pillar and ground of truth."

Europe's Jitters

Two incidents that took place in the fall of 1986 have occasioned Europe to have some second thoughts — the wild concepts that were tossed around at Reykjavik and the maverick relations with Iran. Europeans were dismayed that the U. S. might remove the atomic missiles so recently placed in different parts of Europe at great political risk in each particular country. The mere mention of this has further humiliated these once proud nations of their over-dependence on the American nuclear umbrella. General Bernard W. Rodgers, NATO

supreme commander, told the U. S. Congress that the "zero option" would create a substantial risk for Western Europe. Russia's conventional forces have an overwhelming superiority over all that Europe can at present muster. We quote from an editorial: "The grandiose concepts so carelessly tossed around in Iceland are a reminder that visionary disarmament is no substitute for detailed, balanced arms-limitation agreements and may even be a device for discrediting worthy efforts to create a less dangerous world."

The director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, Admiral James Eberle, said, "But there was some good news, too. Europeans now realize they must do more for themselves." There is in a consolidated Europe the potential for world power. In spite of its exhaustion after two world wars in this century, that area is to rise again. A sane comparison of Scripture with Scripture, particularly Daniel and Revelation, reveal that Europe's final revival will bear semblance to the old Roman Empire headed up under a supreme Caesar. A weakend America engulfed in its own affairs could quite logically necessitate, in the name of survival, such a development. However, this is our understanding and comes not so much from recent trends as from the general principles of the Word of God.

The Apostasy

St. Paul gives us two signs that are the harbingers of the day of the Lord. They are "the falling away" and the revelation of the "man of sin." This revelation is given in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 & 4, and its immediate application was to assure the Christians at Thessalonica, although

sorely persecuted, that they were not in the day when God will avenge the earth. These signs still await fulfillment while present-day trends certainly appear to point in their direction.

The falling away is rendered in our Bible margins, “the apostasy.” Interpreters have generally limited this to Christendom. Yet, an historic event in the fall of 1986 may suggest that this final apostasy will be so complete that it will embrace every religion. Under the leadership of the Pope there was an invitation to the representatives of every religion to assemble at Assisi (the home of St. Francis) to pray for world peace. Present were the dignitaries of Christendom’s sacramental churches, medicine men, American Indians, Rabbis, the Lama of Buddhism and others. Here we have it — Catholics minus biblical Christianity and all religions treated as equals. Since Christianity is “the truth” it considers everything outside of it as a mission field. This is the offence of the cross.

The mention of signs to announce that the coming of the Lord is at hand does present a problem. So many of the prophecies concerning the Lord’s second coming suggest something sudden and unannounced, confirming it to be a timeless and signless event. If we put in here the secret rapture of the Church we have solved one difficulty. Then follows “the great tribulation” and here signs of the Lord’s coming to set up His kingdom will occur. As others have pointed out, the first advent of our Lord at Bethlehem comprised a series of events — the virgin birth, cleansing of the temple, crucifixion and resurrection. So our Lord’s second coming will comprise a number of events: the rapture,

the tribulation, the descent of our Lord to the Mount of Olives and His glorious reign.

The Current Scene

The Current Scene

Edwin Fesche

Inflation And The Bible

There are times when situations develop that give a nation nowhere to turn; the alternatives are nil. The two invasions that the little country of Belgium has suffered in this century are examples. In Isaiah 28 the nation Israel faced a crisis. The great Assyrian power had risen and the land of Palestine was in the path of her conquering armies. In their desperation they sought Egypt as an ally. This, in the light of Jewish orthodoxy, is described as a covenant with death. To press home the plight of his nation, the ancient prophet used a graphic illustration. We quote his own words: “For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.” No ease from stretching oneself out; no warmth from the stinted cover. Everything Israel thought of turning to for help afforded no reliable succor.

Coming across this verse in Isaiah 28:20 led me to consider the problem both the United States and Canada face with inflation. Certainly the present stop-gap solutions to this problem bring no ease to the thoughtful. Ever since the menace was first felt, the United States government has jumped from one corrective to another. One is to put the economic brakes on, which does succeed in slowing inflation but it produces unemployment, especially among the make-work projects of the government. When this happens the

pump priming is again restored. Like the man in bed with the too short covering, he can make himself comfortable on one side at the expense of getting cold on the other.

Of course, the only remedy to inflation is a balanced budget. To bring that about would create hardships that would threaten the survival of any popular government. The remedy is worse than the disease. However, when the dollar approaches the zero mark, then we will admit that the medicine would have been much milder than the disease. Meanwhile, it looks like our leaders will continue to palliate the symptoms instead of dealing with the real cause.

Are there any lessons that the Biblically oriented mind can gather from inflation? We think there are. The first was the abandonment of the gold standard. This freed money from a yardstick. There was no standard. From then on, currency has been borrowed or just printed to meet an ever-accelerated demand. As a result, we have a floating currency. Like water, it will ever find its level. Standards are absolutes and that is a dirty word to the modern politician and educator. Flexibility is the order of the day. The pressures of the moment will decide the amount of morality we will apply in meeting any given situation. This practicality is workable for the present, but we happen to be in a world of laws. Call this what you will —facts, reality or truth — such will ultimately prove their orthodoxy. Or as the adage goes, “Payday some day.” True, the laws of morality are not as patent as those of mathematics and physics; they can be tampered with but not broken without final judgment. We do not break the Ten Commandments, they break the offender.

Inflation is extravagance. It creates an artificial prosperity. A plentiful supply of unearned money stimulates spending, not thrift. On the other hand, the thrifty see their savings eroded. In fact, inflation is a covert tax. Those who would earn their self-sufficiency by putting by for a rainy day are tempted to spend with the rest or put their money into real estate. The parables of the Lord, certainly those of the pounds and talents, teach that there is a reward and advancement to the industrious. A man's standard of living was measured by his worth. In the Bible, the lazy were not entitled to eat. God's love is tempered with firmness. The discipline of necessity creates inventiveness and responsibility. Many a strong man has been robbed of the will to be resourceful by unwise handouts. As a consequence, we have moved from a society of rugged individualism to one of entitlement. One does not earn a raise in salary, it's coming to him. Welfare is considered just as much due at the end of the month as a well-earned pension. With money no longer stabilized by gold or productivity, prices will continue to rise and services will become too expensive or unobtainable.

All of this is far cry from the Biblical or the so-called "Puritan ethic." Present day welfarism is dependent upon inflation; otherwise who could raise sufficient taxes to pay the bill? Witness Social Security as it attempts to balance its outlay with more income. Our humanitarian principles ignore that man is fallen — a sinner. Capitalism certainly approximates Biblical economics. It accommodates far better to man's sinnership. Let's face it, heaven will never come about down here. God has cursed the ground for man's sake. He's better off doing what work is available, or that he can do, than be idle.

Inflation, like everything that is sinful, feeds on itself. It produces no remedy and eventually only makes worse the disease it is trying to correct.

A movement is now gaining acceptance that would demand of the government to live within its income. This would be like taking a dope addict off his habit by the cold turkey method, and most certainly placing our politicians in a straightjacket. The cry is, “What are we to do in an emergency?” Of course, the hard-nozed approach to that problem would be to have a reserve surplus for such occasions. Unfortunately, the euphoria that inflation has created demands an austerity if it is to be remedied, and we question whether an elected government could bring this about.

It is disturbing to know that one of the ingredients, according to Lenin, for the overthrow of free enterprises was to debauch its currency. The Scripture says, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). It is probable that the United States, which capitalism once made the envy of the world, will continue to water down the dollar until that once almighty dollar is unmasked and its real worth, or worthlessness, is discovered. Yet, even if we were in the most stable of societies, wealth and health have a way of taking wings. Hence the wisdom of our Lord’s philosophy of life: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where either moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

A Vacant Throne

Many months ago the Shah of Iran yielded to public pressure and left his throne and country for what he says is a needed rest and vacation. Many think it will amount to an abdication. Was it not Shakespeare who said, “Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown”? The fabulous amount of petrel dollars that have poured into Iran has become a major source of that nation’s troubles. In this train of a heady prosperity have come some of the evil influences of Western civilization. At least this is the thinking of fanatical Muslims. The Shah was for catching up with the West and succeeded in putting his country’s clock forward considerably. The new revolutionary government is for putting the clock back and adjusting things to an Islamic culture. Time will tell. Many, especially the women, have tasted (for them in particular) a new wine of freedom. So far it appears that the country has just traded one type of tyranny for another that can be more demanding than that of the Shah’s.

We cannot name a country today that is not facing some kind of insoluble problem. A population explosion, a bully neighbor, unemployment and inflation. Another source of distress can be from extremists, often operating underground and masterminded. Such can organize riots, demonstrations and bombings at opportune times. Then there is a coup or the assassin’s bullet that could change the course of a nation overnight. The assassin’s bullet from a crazed youth was the immediate cause of World War I. Why write in this vein? We read time and again in the Old Testament that when sin abounded, God in turn sent wars, famines and pestilence. The present is a reflection of the moral

condition of the world. This is especially true in lands once enlightened by the Holy Scriptures. One of the graphic descriptions of our God's disposition toward the children of men is "as an eagle stirreth up her nest" (Deut. 32:11). Or again, we read, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21:27). Current events are constantly reminding us of what the Bible has been saying all along that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). God is not allowing the world to get too cozy, else men would forget eternity. The words of Micah 2:10 will be heeded by those who have ears to hear: "Arise, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even a great destruction."

The God of the Bible abounds in love and grace, yet there is a judgment and a hell. There is no Santa Claus image about our God; mere sentimentality is far from Him "who will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7). God allows sinful men to go so far. We are told that God holds the mastery over nature: "Thou rulest the raging of the sea" (Psa. 89:9). Equally so does God rule and overrule in the affairs of the world. Again we read, "Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou re-restrain" (Psa. 76:10).

Things looked black for Isaiah when his patron and king, Uzziah, died. History proved that any misgivings he may have entertained were not unfounded. At the announcement of the king's death, he was given to see another throne. In his prophecy, he states: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." This is the throne that is to assure the final victory over sin. Just now because of the atoning blood of Christ, we have

a throne of grace. The day is coming when the occupant of that heavenly throne, the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to assert His crown rights. Nor is this an exclusively Biblical viewpoint of this world's system. James Russell Lowell's observation led him to write: "Right forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne." Yet he envisioned in the dim unknown future the "scaffold" ultimately in full charge. In the meantime, Lowell added that God was "keeping watch above His own."

All of the teachings of the New Testament centre around the cross work of our Lord Jesus Christ. While the book of the Revelation is no exception to this rule, we do find that its emphasis is on the throne of Christ which is finally described as "the throne of God and the Lamb." Commenting on this theme, F. W. Grant wrote: "Heaven! And the first thing the apostle sees is 'a throne' and 'One sitting on the throne.' It is the first necessity for all blessing, for all stability and for all rest of heart. It is the assurance of order, of peace, of concord, of congruity: over all, a real, personal, living and sovereign God. Not a democracy, but an absolutism; not laws which execute themselves, but the will of the All-wise, All-holy: fixed rule in free hands. It is this that sin would have overturned; and which has proved itself impossible to be overturned; whose eternity alone assures the absolute security of all else, Well may all the crowns be cast before this throne, by which all are sustained and served. The sovereignty of God is surely the joy and triumph of every redeemed soul."

Trends

As a result of elections it appears that many have had enough of big government. In Britain there is now a

woman Prime Minister — the first in the history of that nation. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher is an avowed conservative and is not ashamed of the epithet given to her, “the iron woman.” She will likely polarize the two situations that are current today: socialism and conservatism. They cannot live with each other. Whichever ultimately dominates will be enforceable by going to one or the other extreme — communism or facism. It is our conjecture that the drift of the West will be anticommunist and develop into a fascist dictatorship. France and Italy, which have the strongest communist constituencies, have kept communism from gaining an upper hand in spite of a very close margin.

The United States will probably see the lines clearly drawn. The fact that a strong “Kennedy fever” is surfacing reveals a decided preference of some for even bigger government participation in our affairs. At the same time there is a noticeable recoil from this trend, and it is possible that the Republicans will nominate a decided conservative. The result of the election will be interesting and reveal the nation’s preference. We would not be surprised if there was a conservative victory. Whether by “the divine right of kings,” the ballot box or a revolution, God rules and overrules in the affairs of men. The Christian obeys whoever is in authority as far as his conscience permits.

Two Hymns

Two Hymns

Edwin Fesche

Mr. Edwin Fesche of Westminster, Md., is a steady contributor to Focus (see his column on “The Current Scene”). In this brief article he provides some interesting insights into the lives of two men whose divergent paths represent the difference between mere religion and vital Christianity.

The last century produced two men whose influence and example made an impact on Christianity in their day and on into ours. Both men were, within a year, the same age. Each man stood at the extreme ends of the Christian spectrum. We are referring to Cardinal John Henry Newman and John Nelson Darby.

The Cardinal turned from bright prospects in the Anglican Church of England and became a Roman Catholic. Darby, a curate of the same church, left that connection; nor did he find any other that measured up to what he saw of the church in the New Testament. He consequently became a separatist of the first order. To him any countenancing of evil in doctrine or morals called for personal removal; otherwise, defilement could come from association. In fact, Darby coined an adage to express his conviction, “Separation from evil is God’s principle of unity.” The Cardinal was equally concerned about church unity and in his famous apology states his reasons for becoming a Romanist. In the main, it was his search for a visible unity which he could only find to his satisfaction in the Roman Catholic Church.

Both men were accomplished scholars and motivated by their matured convictions. The Cardinal was impressed by outward claims and appearances. We doubt whether his sincerity could be challenged. On the other hand, Darby went directly to the Scriptures and acted solely on what he concluded they had taught him.

Just before Newman made his dramatic change, he went to Italy to interview the Pope, but saw only his legate. His return to England involved him in a short passage in an orange boat to Marsailles, France. The vessel was becalmed and took considerably longer than expected to make port. Annoyed by the delay and possessed with the great pros and cons that were going through his mind, Newman quieted himself and wrote his well-known hymn, “Lead Kindly Light.” Obviously, that light led him into the bosom of Rome. Since then these words have been on the lips of many who find their way confusing. One has only to read Corrie Ten Boom’s, The Hiding Place, to discover that those distraught people found the words fitted into their situation. The hymn strikes a chord in every religious heart. Its charm is emotional and hardly doctrinal; a Unitarian could sing it.

Four years later, in 1837, Darby wrote on the same theme. We will quote some of his lines.

Rise my soul! Thy God directs thee;

Stranger hands no more impede:

Pass thou on! His hand protects thee,

Strength that has the captive freed.

Light divine surrounds thy going;

God Himself shall mark thy way;

Secret blessings richly flowing,

Lead to everlasting day.

Though thy way be long and dreary,

Eagle strength He'll still renew:

Garments fresh and foot unwary

Tell how God hath brought thee through.

Compared with Newman's hymn Darby's is little known. It will only strike the chord of those who truly feel themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims" with the Father's house as the ultimate rest.

Saint Paul, stating his situation before his conversion, said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus" (Acts 26:9). Some persons appear to possess a natural bent toward a religiously oriented life. They are attracted to historic claims, impressive ritual, family associations and sometimes monkish disciplines. Paul describes the latter as "a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body." The margin paraphrases the remainder of the verse, "which really do not honor God, but only satisfy the flesh" (Colossians 2:23). One of Satan's arch wiles is to deceive us into thinking we are doing God's service when actually we are only unduly religious.

Those who have read the history of the Reformation find it hard to have much sympathy for Rome. There are some good reasons for believing that Rome is "the mother of harlots" in Revelation 17 and to heed the positive call, "Come out from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

The Cardinal, in our humble judgment, calls into question his particular “kindly light.” Better is the light of Scripture that calls for a separation from vessels of dishonor and a path that invokes the “reproach of Christ.”

Up to Bethel

Up to Bethel

Edwin Feche

Edwin Fesche presently makes his home in Westminster, Maryland, and for many years has served the Lord primarily in the Baltimore area. To readers he is perhaps best known for his splendid column, The Current Scene, which appears in Loizeaux Bros.' quarterly magazine publication, Help & Food.

The meaning of Bethel is simply "house of God." In this country we are in the habit of designating any building set apart for Christian worship as such. The patriarch Jacob did not entertain any such generalism. He had other altars but there was only one that he named Bethel. Here it was that he had the vision of the ladder reaching up to heaven and the angels ascending and descending thereon. After twenty years of exile Jacob is commissioned back to Bethel. Somewhere in the lonely pasturelands of Padan-aram the angel of God spoke to Jacob in a dream, saying, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointest the pillar, and where thou vowest a vow unto me; now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred" (Genesis 31:13).

A Rough Road

Jacob's journey from Laban's country to Bethel was both frustrating and embarrassing. True, he was deservedly still under divine discipline. Still, we find God intervening on his behalf and saving him from Laban's wrath. In spite of Esau's show of belligerence, coming to

meet Jacob with four hundred men, Jacob discovered that his alarms were unfounded. Time had healed Esau's thirst for revenge and we see the brothers embracing each other. Actually if Jacob had been enjoying the limits of his faith he could have been possessed with peace instead of alarms. Was he not in God's path by obeying the summons to Bethel? At Peniel we find Jacob left alone and seeing God face to face. The result of this encounter was that Jacob was both crippled and blest. His name is changed to Israel. Journeying on Jacob arrives at Succoth some twenty five miles short of Bethel. Here, for some unexplained reason, land is purchased and for all intents it appears that Jacob is prepared to make this place his residence. Along with all of this he erects an altar and calls it El-elhe-Israel (Genesis 34:20). It is quite evident that this sojourn at Succoth is settling for something less than Bethel. For this act of limited obedience Jacob pays heavily. The behavior of some members of his family had caused him, as he said, "to stink among the inhabitants of the land." Certainly Jacob would have done much better to have proceeded right on to Bethel. The practice of settling for something less than what God has revealed in His will for us is all too common. It may account for some of the disastrous situations that some believers encounter. Jacob was no doubt not lacking in reasons for his decision to stay at Succoth. At the same time it was clear that he was not motivated by implicit obedience.

Complete Obedience Necessary

While still stung by what had happened, we read, "And God said unto Jacob, Arise go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make thee an altar unto God, that appeared

unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (Genesis 35:1). God has always maintained a way and place where He will meet with those who seek Him. The particular place in Genesis. was Bethel. Later on it was the tabernacle and then the temple. In this dispensation of grace it is "where two or three are met together in His name." Today the church is analogous with Bethel for we learn that it is the "habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). At the same time divine worship is evaluated by the degree in which God's goals or principles are approximated. Immediately we find that God's standards are in conflict with our base reasoning and preferences. This is amply illustrated by Jacob's attendance at the altar he erected at Succoth. He was obviously on low ground. Inconsistencies with a wholesome relationship with God were tolerated. When the situation became "Up to Bethel" instantly there was a proper searching of his heart. We find this expressed in Jacob's command to his household, for we read, "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments" (Genesis 35:2). We search in vain for such an exercise as this until God is being met on His own terms. It is as the psalmist wrote, "Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever" (Psalm 93:5).

The New Testament gives us a whole epistle with the express purpose that we may know "how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). There are two basic requirements if this "house of God" is going to be visibly expressed on the earth. First, an atmosphere must be

created where the behavior that is enjoined can be practiced. Next, that the household of faith consent to the rules or principles. In harmony with this line of thought Paul writes elsewhere, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Essentially, then, the church is a family where even the elders that guide are but brothers among their brethren. Certainly not a caste with overbearing titles. Women are not to preach or teach in proper church meetings. The figure of the church as a “body” suggests completeness and the interdependence of each member upon the other. Ideally it should come behind in no gift making each congregation a sovereign unit.

The Blessings of Complete Obedience

However, the purpose of this article is not church order. Our present burden is that our local assembly connections will yield to us a little bit of heaven while on the earth. If it cannot be found here where else shall we go? To separate from much that is appealing in Christendom, and even Fundamentalism, can be costly, especially to some. With such a price tag are there comparable compensations? The answer to this question can only be yes to those who give a high enough priority to the church as revealed in the New Testament. It was not until Moses had reared up the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him in the mount that we read, “So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:33, 34). It is not only that we do God’s service, but that we do it in His way. It was

allowable for the Philistines to move the ark about in an ox cart, but not for David. For this he was rebuked when the Lord smote Uzza (1 Chronicles 13:9). After this David must have done his homework, for we read, “Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever” (1 Chronicles 15:2). It is God’s purpose in this age to reveal his manifold wisdom to heavenly onlookers through the operations of the church. A decided step in this direction on our part would be to encourage the saints to meet according to the New Testament pattern. Not that this would necessarily cause the fire to fall, but it would certainly be a movement toward inviting the divine pleasure. The Psalms of degrees (120-134) were probably sung by pilgrims as they approached the temple in Jerusalem. As we read these short Psalms it is easy to discern a buildup of holy excitement. Obviously it is occasioned as they near their goal. As the local church becomes “a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:22), experientially will its joy and worship increase accordingly.

Our local churches today, which should certainly be “Bethels are not dependent upon buildings and organizations, but on born-again believers; “living stones” as Peter calls them. They could commence with two or three who meet most anywhere suitable. They must meet in His name. The name suggests quality. We search our grocery shelves for certain brands because of the reputation they have established. Since we are gathering unto Christ, not a man or a sect, we should reflect the name. Such a gathering will have a tremendously attractive power. It will appeal to those

who are primarily concerned about God's chief interest on earth today, His house, the "bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:32). Attractive as a gathering of the saints can be, it is equally repulsive to those lacking spiritual discernment, or to those who are morally in a state of incompatibility. It was so in the early church, for we read, "and of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:13). Here is a good basis on which to build up a fellowship, namely attraction and rejection. An ideal assembly can be a vehicle for evangelism also. Paul contemplates this when he writes, "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25). The local assembly is Satan's target and the saints' goal. Every spiritual inch gained will be hotly contested, but the prize gained is worth every contest. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee" (Psalm 84:4).