

per that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces" (vv. 6,7). Isaiah 62 calls for prayer without rest: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (vv. 6,7). Are we 'watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem' keeping our stations and giving God no rest? These are not prayers for the maintenance of modern political structures in Jerusalem or the easing of relations between the many human parties which compose the modern city. They are prayers for a drastic change and the imposition of God's peace by the hand of the "Prince of Peace".

We are "sons of the stranger", but joined to Israel through the New Covenant (Isa. 56:6,7; Eph. 2:13,14). Our interest is in the people as well as in the city. We feel as did Paul: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). If today Israel is the prodigal son soon to return to his Father, then the present Gentile ecclesia must be the brother left at home, and we must

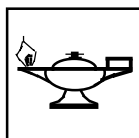
be careful not to be caught by a response which does not mirror the mercy of our Father.

In being allowed to hold "the hope of Israel", and the wonderful blessings we inherit through that hope, our attitude with respect to Israel can only be one of great thankfulness for the part in her future we have been permitted through Christ. We can only desire to bless them, and to promote God's message to the world about her future glory and the blessings all nations will share.

The aim of this series has been to take up the challenge of those who see Christianity taken over by Gentile nations, and Israel forgotten by God and of no significance for us today or in the days to come. It is a view which remains centred in the ideals and aims of "this present world". The Bible, in contrast, presents a refreshing view of the future, with an immense improvement in the fortunes of Israel and the joining of Gentiles on a much greater scale than in recent generations, as fellow-citizens in the Kingdom of God.

Israel's special place in God's purpose has continued throughout His work with her. Let us consider the truth that without Israel there can be no future Kingdom on earth.

(Concluded)



Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by the Publishing Editor

The Law given through Moses*

12. The general nature of the Law

Islip Collyer

IT MAY BE appropriate at this stage to raise some questions which are ever to the front in these sceptical days, and which may be in the minds of readers while perusing our earlier articles. What is our attitude to the Law given through Moses? Do we regard it as coming from God or only as the work of man? Is it among the assets for Christian evidence or is it a liability which may cause difficulty?

The matter can be reduced to a single question: Is it a good law or a bad one? If it has to be admitted that it was a good law, effective and

salutary even in its very exceptional and extraordinary features, then the honest unbeliever is presented with a very difficult problem to account for its origin at such a time in human history. If it was a bad law, harsh and unjust as

* First published in December 1947. It may be noted that Brother Collyer appears to be addressing himself to unbelievers at times, but it should be remembered that in those days *The Testimony* was intended for non-Christadelphians to read, and many copies were put in public libraries.—T.B.

some have affirmed, then a Christian is presented with a difficult problem to explain its position in the Bible and the most emphatic endorsement given to it by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 5:17,18).

There have been customs and practices in human life so harsh and evil that no one in these days would attempt to defend them. There is no temptation for a critic to exaggerate or to be unfair in dealing with them. The most temperate statement of the facts is the most effective condemnation. If critics are palpably unfair in dealing with something they do not like, if they exaggerate and misrepresent, we may be quite sure they are the subjects of blinding prejudice, and that we need to make a careful examination of things they condemn.

Now, surely, sufficient has already been advanced in these articles to reveal some of the excellent features of the Law and to expose the hollowness and unfairness of critical attacks. The Law given through Moses has been condemned because of the unpleasant and revolting matters mentioned therein. Critics have often been wilfully blind to the fact that such revolting evils occur in human life and have to be dealt with.

In our day the worst evils of human perversity are kept out of sight.¹ They are sometimes discussed in the newspapers, with dark hints and vague comments to attract the prurient minded, but they are not boldly faced and denounced. In addition to the general principles for the guidance of human life openly proclaimed to all men, judges have to know of dark and evil things. Doctors have to know of terrible diseases and painful segregations which are necessary in the public interests. Sometimes, indeed, they know of very painful necessities of which the public can never be told. The Law given through Moses deals with all such matters, never merely hinting, never attracting prurient curiosity, and never treating dark and dreadful deeds with that light touch of humour which is popular in our day.

Then the regulations for soldiers at war have been savagely attacked. Perhaps enough was advanced in a previous article² to reveal the complete unfairness of the popular argument under this head. A law imposing restraints which at that time would certainly be regarded by the soldiers as almost intolerably severe has been misrepresented as an invitation to evil. The evil exists in human nature, and is not removed or mitigated by being ignored. When soldiers, far from home and flushed with victory, have cap-

tured homes from which all living warriors have fled, there has been little consideration shown to defenceless women.

The Romans were supposed to have a conception of justice far in advance of that which prevailed in the days of Moses, but they were like savages compared with the standard set in ancient Israel. In Gibbon's history,³ although he does not particularly deal with these matters, there is sufficient revelation of evil to show the urgent need for a restraining law such as that given through Moses. Although Gibbon was assuredly not a squeamish man, there is one story he relates so horrible that he would not put it in the text of the history. It occurs as a footnote written in Latin. Some readers may be acquainted with it. Imagine that vicious Roman general under the restraint of the regulations given in the Law (Deut. 21:10-14), and we have some idea of the aim of the Law in this matter and the effect it would have when properly applied.

In these modern days of cant and hypocrisy people shut their eyes and pretend that the evil does not exist among their own soldiers, or those who for the moment are their 'glorious allies'. It is only the barbarous enemy whose behaviour needs any restraint. The Mosaic Law does not countenance such hypocrisy.

In previous articles⁴ it has been shown that the severity of the Law and the imposition of the death penalty was on a very different plane from that of Gentile nations. Even in Christian England there have been savage hangings for paltry thefts, the object of the severity clearly being to protect the power and property of the ruling classes. Under the Mosaic Law there was nothing of this kind. The death penalty was imposed solely to cleanse the land from fundamental evils and to abolish practices which were abominable to God. Incidentally, we may remark that the application of such severity to modern times would probably remove a larger number of the rich than of the poor. Even in ancient Israel, the severe laws pressed the hardest on prominent and proud men.

The poor were protected as they have never been under any code of law of which we have

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1. How things have changed since the article was written!—*T.B.*
 2. See March 2001, p. 81.
 3. Referring to his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.—*T.B.*
 4. See, for example, March 2002, p. 78.

ever heard. The land was divided among the people at the beginning of their inheritance. By the law of the jubilee they were guarded against the results of improvidence. If temporary poverty forced one to become a bondservant, the bond came to an end in the seventh year.

The poor were helped by the law forbidding agriculturalists to reap the corners of their fields or of their vineyards but to leave good gleaning. They were further helped by the law of the seventh year, which imposed a tremendous handicap on men who were trying to heap up riches, and gave a corresponding advantage to those who were poor. The Law allowed an extra portion to an eldest son, but guarded the rights of younger children and of an unloved wife against the unreasonable will of an unjust man. A change in this direction has been made quite recently in England.

Perhaps for the object immediately in view it is unnecessary to advance anything further. It will probably be admitted by everyone who even tries to be fair that the Mosaic code was far in advance of its time, and that it has exercised a profound influence on other laws in Gentile lands. Some sceptics, indeed, go much further than this, and say that not only the moral code, but also the Levitical ritual, was far removed from the days in which Moses was supposed to have lived. It has been dismissed as an utter impossibility that a nation of recently liberated slaves could march into the wilderness, and that their leader, whoever he was, could go up into a mountain and come back with such a law. So those who repudiate the God of Israel suggest that the Law was post-exilic, and that it came from Babylon.

It would be unfortunate if we became so accustomed to these sweeping sceptical claims as to allow them to pass unchallenged. Repeatedly such attempts have been made to dismiss difficulties by changing the dates. Prophecies which

have been exactly fulfilled have been airily brushed aside as having been written after the events, if there has been the slightest possibility of such postdating. It has been assumed that the writers told lies in the name of God, and that the Jews, in spite of the most scathing denunciations of their infidelity contained in these writings, meekly accepted the insulting forgeries as part of their sacred literature. To the student who has made a thorough and constant study of the prophecies, this oft-repeated claim seems so foolish that it is difficult to understand intelligent men sponsoring such an idea.

The pretence that an insulting denunciation was written by a prophet centuries ago would not be an easy fraud to impose upon a nation, even if the forger refrained from anything which would challenge immediate attention. His task would be rendered much more difficult if the forgery included the claim to have made an exact prediction of events which had recently occurred. It would at least have been a very difficult task to thrust such a forgery upon a nation, even if for some incomprehensible reason any writer had desired to perpetrate such a fraud.

Surely the imposition of a burdensome law, full of vexatious restrictions and difficult ritual, would be still more difficult. It would have been almost impossible to have perpetrated such a fraud, even if it had been most desirable. There was, however, no discernible human reason for desiring to impose the severe restrictions of the Law, even if such a fraud had been easy.

For the moment, however, there is no need to stress these general objections to the critical attitude. They are recognised by all earnest students of Scripture, and have even turned some critics from proud negation to humble and constructive belief. It may not be too much to hope that a consideration of some rather startling internal evidence may induce other objectors to give a reconsideration to the subject.

EU backs formal trade ties with Iran

European Union foreign ministers recently gave the green light to launching formal trade relations with Iran, despite heavy pressure from the US and Israel. The agreement could increase European companies' advantage over their US counterparts once talks are concluded. The EU decision again exposes differences between the Europeans and Washington over how to deal with Iran; the US imposed unilateral sanctions in the 1990s. The Bush Administration views Iran as part of the "axis of evil", along with Iraq and North Korea. The EU says it is essential to engage Iran's political rulers, especially the reformers, as part of attempts to influence the current ideological battle over the country's direction.—*Joan Brooks*