

DECEMBER 1972

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

CHRISTENDOM – AND OTHERS – ASTRAY

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NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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At the Table of the Lord

“DAVID . . . ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD”

HAVE WE NOT FOUND MUCH in the experience of David to help us? In our recent portions, we have been reading of his difficulties and trials. We remember that after he was anointed by Samuel to be king in place of Saul, he was greatly helped by God. We think of the lion and the bear, both of which he overcame in the carrying out of his responsibilities as a shepherd. This experience gave him faith, confidence in God so that when Goliath came and threatened Israel, David, by turning to God, was able to get the victory over the giant and so save Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. How greatly was God magnified in his actions!

After these events, however, things seemed to go badly for David. Saul became jealous, knowing God had turned him away from being king, had taken His Spirit from him and had told him that another should sit upon his throne. It may be that Saul realised David was the one anointed of God. Certainly, he knew that he had lost the Spirit, for I. Samuel 16 : 14 tells us :

“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul . . . ”

Because of jealousy, Saul sorely persecuted David, seeking to kill him. Often David must have wondered—why does all this have to happen to me? I’ve been anointed to be king over Israel, yet Saul remains on the throne; and not only remains, but also is actively seeking to kill me lest I become king in his place.

We are allowed to see his distress (I. Samuel 27 : 1) :

“And David said *in his heart*, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul : there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines . . . ”

We must remember that David had been anointed of God to be king in Saul’s stead only about three years previously according to the chronology. David must have been greatly distressed in his desperation and fear—indeed, “*in his heart*”. Can we put ourselves in David’s place as year after year went by with no apparent progress in becoming king. In fact, it looked further and further off as time went on. He, indeed, must have been distressed, must often have been impatient, tempted to take things into his own hands. Yet, the record tells us how he spared Saul when God gave him power over his life. Can we visualise his temptation as Saul lay asleep before him? “I can end the persecution right now, by killing Saul.” “I can take away the worry of losing my life.” “I can take the kingdom right now.” All these thoughts would, no doubt, pass

through his mind. It was a real struggle for him, much like the struggle the Lord Jesus knew in the wilderness after he was baptised. Who would get the victory, the spirit of obedience in David or his flesh? God had put David in this position to test him, to prove him, to know his heart. It was also that he might learn patience, dependence upon God, and to show him it was only as he turned to God was help—real-needed help—given.

Distress upon distress was heaped upon David. He went to Achish, a land of the Philistines, to escape Saul's wrath. He was prevented from going with Achish to fight against Israel by the intervention of the lords of the Philistines. When he was spared this, upon returning to Ziklag, he found it burned to the ground, his wives and his possessions taken by the Amalekites. I. Samuel 30 : 4-6 :

“Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep . . . And David was greatly distressed ; for the people spake of stoning him . . .”

His own people, his chosen companions with whom he had gone through so much now spoke of stoning him ! Can we, then, visualise his suffering ? Perhaps we *can* enter into that distress in a measure, for we, too, can know great anguish ; we may feel almost overwhelmed by what seems to be unbearable, insurmountable difficulties when there seems there is no way out.

“HOW AM I STRAITENED”

What a comfort it is to realize that we are not alone. Indeed, all the faithful children of God have known such distress. We find the word comes from a root meaning to be *pressed* and is used as *narrow, straitened, vexed*. When we think of being straitened, we think of Jesus' words, Luke 12 : 50 :

“. . . I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !”

What was to be accomplished ? Jesus had already been baptized of John, the baptism of repentance to fulfill all righteousness. Matt. 20 : 18-22 helps us to discern how Jesus had to agonize daily against the power of sin in Himself and how he was pressed until it was accomplished. Jesus told his disciples :

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him . . .”

He further spoke to those who asked to sit on his right hand and his left in the kingdom of God, verse 22 :

“. . . Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of, the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with ? . . .”

Jesus, indeed, *pressed* that it should be accomplished. He was greatly distressed and tells us that we must be also. We find David greatly distressed ; Jesus straitened until God's will be accomplished. Is it surprising that we who are striving to be His brethren and sisters should know distress ? Is it not to accomplish the crucifying of the flesh in us, as it was in David, as it was in Jesus ? It is a struggle, an agonizing struggle, as Jesus experienced.

“ENCOURAGED IN THE LORD”

How can we, then, hope to overcome ? Perhaps, David's experiences can help us, I. Samuel 30 ; 6 :

“And David was greatly distressed . . . but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

David turned to God, encouraging himself in the source of all strength. “*To encourage*”, we find, comes from a root meaning “*to fasten upon*”. David fastened himself upon God. The word is also used as “*strong*”, “*courageous*”, “*be of good courage*”, “*behave self valiantly*”. We find it used in I. Chronicles 19 : 13 where Joab spoke to Israel when they were soon to fight the Syrians :

“*Be of good courage*, and let us *behave ourselves valiantly* for our people . . . and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight.”

Was this the spirit of David in his distress ? To be strong in the Lord, to have good courage in the Lord, to behave himself valiantly in the Lord, knowing God would provide the means in every dire circumstance for his deliverance and salvation.

Can it help us, brethren and sisters, as we are straitened, as we struggle to be subject to Him, crucifying the flesh. Was not David being required to do just that : put down his desires to kill Saul, to take the kingdom that was promised to be his, to end the grievous persecution ? But no, he submitted, was strengthened in his distress, was lifted up in spirit. Do we turn to the Lord for strength, for courage when we may feel overwhelmed ?

“DAVID ENQUIRED AT THE LORD”

Not only did David encourage himself in the Lord at the time of the conquering of Ziklag, he :

“ . . . enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop ? shall I overtake them ? . . . ” (I. Samuel 30 : 8).

His natural inclination would have been to quickly gather together his followers and pursue the Amalekites. But no, he stopped and sought God’s guidance and counsel, asking Abiathar to intercede for him. Would we, in similar circumstances, do the same, brethren and sisters ? Or would we be inclined to take things into our own hands, doing what our flesh might dictate, trying to get vengeance quickly, perhaps violently ?

Again, we are helped to discern David’s spirit of dependence upon God. In II. Samuel 2, we see David’s mind some time later, after Saul had been killed by the Philistines. The death of Saul had vindicated David. He might feel now, I will seize the throne of Israel which has been promised to me, for I would be taking that which is rightfully mine. Yet, we read in II. Samuel 2 : 1 :

“And it came to pass after this (Saul’s death) that David *enquired of the Lord*, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah ? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up ? And he said, Unto Hebron.”

Can we imagine David’s eagerness to take over from Saul ; yet, he asked “shall I go up” ; and not only that, but also, “where shall I go up ?” He was directed to go to Hebron, which was not the city where Saul had reigned over the twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, David reigned first over Judah only in Hebron, and it was another seven and one-half years before he became king in Jerusalem over all the tribes of Israel.

It took a lot of encouraging himself in the Lord, a lot of enquiring of the Lord in the fifteen years from his anointing by Samuel, until the time he did become king over all Israel. It took patience, trust in God and great agonising, great overcoming.

Do not these experiences of David help us, brethren and sisters, as we look forward to a time in His great mercy when we hope to reign as kings and priests in the kingdom of Israel ? Today, each of us knows distress, is straitened greatly at times until it be accomplished. Do we encourage ourselves in the Lord ? Do we enquire of the Lord ? If so, like David, we may, in God’s mercy and grace, reign with the Son of David in His kingdom and may meet David face to face, to tell him how much his spirit has sustained in our long and arduous journey to Jerusalem.

J. A. DeF.

Christendom — *and others* — Astray

The Spirit of the Law the Spirit of Christ
“The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people,
above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”
 (Deuteronomy 7 : 6)

PART 1

THE UTTERANCES of the great leaders of Christendom show they believe that the God of heaven is the God of all peoples of whatever race or creed : that it is His desire that all should be blessed now and in the eternal future.

This view, of course, appeals to the multitudes, for hope is promised to everyone in this life, and beyond the grave. In short—*none is outside the pale of salvation*. All are supposed by Christendom to be God’s children ; some better than others, some worse : but, nevertheless, all “belong” to Him ; all are Christ’s brethren, and all may regard each other in this way, irrespective of being divided into many sects. Christendom offers at a very low price the consoling thought, that all peoples are “brethren of Christ”, and may so address each other.

Perhaps this underlying belief (of which the “others” would do well to take note) is illustrated when the leaders of the major groups of Christendom meet each other, dressed in a most grotesque fashion, and fall upon each other’s neck in a “Christian embrace”.

This trend has grown to be very strong. The under tow of the fast flowing tide is pulling many denominations together into a heterogeneous mass of beliefs and disbeliefs, so that Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Congregationalists and many “dissenters” are working to make all one. The time and money spent in this movement, called by the fancy name—“ecumenical”—is beyond imagination. One little evidence may be quoted as showing what must be taking place :

“Britain’s churches have agreed on a common baptism certificate which, in effect, means virtually all the separate denominations now recognise the validity of each other’s baptism service.

After *two years* negotiations, the British Council of Churches has persuaded 19 major Churches to recognise a common certificate of Christian baptism . . . The certificate states simply that a person has been ‘baptised with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’. It can be used for

both adults and children, and contains a list of all Churches which have agreed to recognise each other's baptism."

There is no respect in Christendom for the *doctrine of fellowship*. Of this they are completely ignorant. Christendom *is* astray.

THE DOCTRINE OF FELLOWSHIP

(Obviously unknown in Australia and by the "others" in all parts of the world)

Since the Division in Australia in 1904, due to one, Bell, introducing the heresy that Christ was not of our nature, the Truth has had a very chequered history. Many have been the attempts to restore unity. It could not be said a spiritual unity, but only a political one. Hours have been spent by committees and leaders whose prime object has been "let us all get together; division must be avoided." This has produced such man-made documents as the "Carter-Cooper" Addendum to the "Statement of Faith", which has proved powerless to effect true unity, and leaves the present position devoid of conviction on many items of *The Truth*. The words of men, like the treaties of nations, will never effect that which is sought. As soon as the ink has dried on the document which has been laboriously designed to create unity, each faction reverts to making their own interpretation, and other errors spring up, tormenting the meetings like the plague, reminding us of what God said when He was not being sought in a true spirit.

"I (will) put the plague of leprosy in a house." (Lev. 14 : 34).

The end of such a house is destruction.

"He shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house." (Lev. 14 : 45).

Is this why the continued efforts to achieve unity on a man-made basis have rather aggravated the situation, than achieved that which is sought? It is confessed by the present Editor of the *Christadelphian* following a visit to Australia :

"There are differing points of view on questions relating to the Atonement, to the Holy Spirit, *and to Fellowship*."

"The Holy Spirit question is not one covered either by the Unity Basis or the Statement of Faith. It concerns, in the first instance, the case of a brother who, on the basis of a personal experience, stated he had been able to speak in a 'tongue'."

Concerning the position generally in Australia the Editor laments:

"Everywhere in Australia brethren expressed their desire for

peace and unity on a sound Scriptural basis ; it is tragic that attempts to pursue this have produced such fragmentation.”

Why, oh why is it, that peace and unity seem as far off as ever ? The answer is because of failure to understand the *doctrine of fellowship*.

This is a serious charge. It requires proof. The prevalent idea amongst the “others”, as seen in glancing through their “news” is that fellowship is companionship. Frequently we read that following a visit of some, their “fellowship has been enjoyed” ; completely overlooking that fellowship does not depend on personal contact (although this can give practical expression to it) ; but is derived from the fact that all members of the true Body are at all times, and in all places in fellowship with the Father, and so can enjoy fellowship with one another.

The same mistaken idea is seen that following a “baptism”, one is reported as having subsequently been “received into fellowship”. Quite erroneous, making the human aspect more important than the divine. Immediately upon a true baptism fellowship is established with the Father, through His Son. Giving the right hand of fellowship should signify this and nothing else.

At the time of previous Divisions—necessary to preserve *the Truth*—there was no tampering by man-made words. The stand taken was “Thus saith the Lord.” All who abide by this must separate from those in error, and those sympathetic to them. Where there is reliance on man-made documents, such as the Statement of Faith, new errors can be regarded as of no importance affecting fellowship. This happened at the time of the Inspiration Division ! One correspondent wrote, like so many of the “others” regarding error :

“To make this matter (the Inspiration of the Scriptures) a question of fellowship would be to add a new item to the basis of belief amongst us. (How many are the times this has been expressed in dealing with heresy). It does not touch the foundation of the faith ; the foundation is the resurrection of Christ.”

Answer by the tormented stalwart for *the Truth*—R. Roberts. Christadelphian 1885, page 23 :

“It may be a ‘new item’ to some. It will not be so with those whose connection with the faith goes back far enough. The inspiration of the Bible has been the foundation of all statements and basis of belief. This seemed so much a matter of

course as to have been taken for granted in many cases.

Every time the Bible has been appealed to on a public platform, in proof of the statements advanced, the inspiration of the Bible has been inferentially affirmed.

What sense would there have been in appealing to a book in proof of the divinity of a doctrine or statement if that book were not of divine authorship? . . . Viewing the Bible as the (possibly erring) word of man, we should stand on a morass instead of on a rock."

Division was the only remedy. It could not be avoided. Attempts to formulate statements to satisfy all parties failed. Those standing with R. Roberts remained on the "rock"; the others sank in the morass of human philosophy and vain deceit.

R. Roberts' voice was stilled by death seventy-four years ago; but though dead, like the faithful of old, he yet speaketh.

"New items" have arisen in the past as at present. They are God's means of proving our faith: whether we shall stand by His Word, even if few, or follow the multitude to do evil. R. Roberts wrote that he would rather be laid in the grave than give up the fight against those calling divine truths by the euphemism "new items".

No wonder Australia and the "others" are plagued and will continue to be, because the *doctrine of fellowship* requires separation from all who deny *the* Truth, and by separating must regard those in error as no longer "brethren" and being without hope.

Christadelphia is divided into many sects, but like Christendom they regard each other, and address each as "brethren", glossing over that which is a denial of God and the appalling fact that these are "perishing" and have no hope. How terribly false is such mistaken charity.

The Scriptures, both in the Old Testament, and the New make clear what is the true *doctrine of fellowship*, which can only be ignored at the peril of losing God and His salvation through Christ. Basically this is the fundamental cause of the chaos in Australia, and amongst the "others" everywhere.

It is intended in the next article to examine the simplicity of this doctrine, first, in the Old Testament, and then in the New.

Meantime readers are invited to apply for our booklets: "The Doctrine of Fellowship" and "The History of the Truth in the Latter Days".

(. . . to be continued)

The Titles of the Psalms

**“SPEAKING UNTO YOURSELVES IN PSALMS . . . MAKING
MELODY IN YOUR HEART UNTO THE LORD.”**

(Ephesians 5 : 19)

Psalm 54

“To the One who overcomes, the Victor, on Neginoth (the harp), Maschil (instruction by meditation) a Psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us ?”

THE TITLE OF THIS PSALM unfolds a severe trial for David as he was relentlessly pursued by Saul ; but ending in the mercy of God for David’s remarkable deliverance, and the abject humiliation of Saul. Let us look at the record :

“Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood ? Now therefore, O King, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down ; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.

And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the Lord ; for ye have compassion on me . . .

See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself . . . and I will go with you.”

(I. Samuel 23 : 19-23).

The Ziphites dwelt in the south of Judah, and should have been aware of Saul’s evil and treachery, and been ready to support the man after God’s own heart—David. It is amazing how opportunist human nature is ; ready to do the wrong things for present advantage. Evidently they thought David’s was a lost cause, and decided that they would make sure to curry favour with the one who would ultimately destroy David. They overlooked the declared purpose of God, that the Kingdom would be taken from Saul and given to David. How faithless they were ! Here we need to dwell for a moment on an important word in the Title :

“MASCHIL”

The word means *instruction*, but more is implied. Instruction can be received or rejected. To “overcome”, instruction must be received. How is this best accomplished ? As *Maschil* implies there must be *contemplation, meditation*. Too great an emphasis cannot be placed upon this important aspect of divine instruction.

Those who are *swift to speak*, and *slow to hear* never meditate in

the deep sense God requires. The divine instruction which should be received is lost in the torrent of words which pour from their lips. Ask them later what has been said, and they have to confess they cannot remember ; perhaps better able to remember what they have said, than what they ought to have received.

Divine help is provided in this exercise in a beautiful natural figure. Look at the cows in the field. They lick up the food—God’s provision—the grass. Then reclining in the sun-kissed meadow they spend quite a time “chewing the cud”. What more descriptive figure could there be of the name given to these cattle : “ruminatory”—to *ponder*, to *meditate*. In their stillness and freedom from all activity they digest and assimilate the goodness provided by God, without which we should never have the valuable provision of milk, cream and butter.

For those who would know what divine instruction is—what *Maschil* is—let their minds dwell upon the kine browsing in the green pastures. It is God’s figure of conveying a very important lesson.

Now to return to the :

TRAITOROUS ZIPHTES

Little did their treachery earn them, or effect any salvation for the one they favoured—Saul. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, skilled in the use of stringed instruments, and as the Title shows encouraged himself by the uplifting sounds of the *Neginoth*—the harp.

“Save me O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.
Hear my prayer, O God ; give ear to the words of my mouth.
For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek
after my soul : they have not God before them. Selah.”
(vv. 1—3).

And the God of Israel, of heaven *did* hear. Although Saul went after David with three thousand men to the wilderness of Ziph—an overwhelming force—when they pitched their camp a “deep sleep from the Lord fell upon them”. Had not David restrained his captain, Abishai, Saul would have been killed. David said :

“Destroy him not : for who can stretch forth his hand against
the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless ?” (I. Samuel 26 : 9).

Instead David crossed to the other side of the valley, and shouted to Saul’s captain, Abner, rebuking him for not looking after his master. Saul awoke. Momentarily, having recognised his own plight and David’s clemency, Saul repented saying “I have sinned.”

By this time David realised that Saul's much stressed repentance meant nothing—"David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

Yet David knew that he could rely upon the God of his salvation, for the melody in his heart as expressed in the Psalm sustained him like the sweet sounds of the harp :

"Behold, God is mine helper : the Lord is with them that uphold my soul." (verse 4).

David knew that Saul's end would come in God's good time.

"And the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him ; or his day shall come to die: or he shall descend into battle and perish."
(I. Samuel 26 : 10).

How quickly this came to pass justifying David's faith. Saul did descend into battle very soon after the last encounter with David, and he perished at the hands of those whom David had previously defeated on Saul's behalf. So the Psalm with its appealing melody for all those desiring to overcome concludes :

"For he hath delivered me out of all trouble : and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies." (verse 7).
(. . . to be continued)

Lessons from the Life of David

In the Land of the Philistines

ONE OF THE GREATEST INCIDENTS in the life of David was his deliverance of his people, through his faith in God, from the Philistines. Yet the record reveals that David eventually went to dwell with the enemy who were idolators. It was a mistake, but David was human and on occasion he faltered as do all God's children.

The thoughts that prompted David to place himself in the hand of such an enemy is recorded in I. Samuel 27 : 1-2 :

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul : there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines ; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel ; so shall I escape out of his hand.

And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maoch, king of Gath.”

David remained with these people some sixteen months in which time he had to be very careful in his dealing with the Philistines, for they had not forgotten his part in those previous conflicts in which they had been overthrown. Hence as the record goes on to narrate on an occasion of an expedition against the Amalekites who were deadly enemies of his own people and from who he brought back certain spoils of battle, he spoke to Achish of attacking various tribes south of Judah, giving Achish the impression David had fought his own people. Achish the Philistine leader felt that such action was sufficient evidence that David was now an implacable enemy of his own people which resulted from the way they had treated him. Such indeed would have been the case had David been a fleshly man, for his heart would then have been filled with vengeance. But this was not so for David was still loyal to his own people and to the house of his God. But his exhibition of apparent enmity to his own people led Achish to regard David as his servant. This appearance of disloyalty was another mistake and it led him into a very difficult position.

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek : and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and

by thousands : but David and his men passed on in the rere-ward with Achish." (I. Samuel 29 : 1-2).

Here was an impossible situation. Achish had given David a sanctuary, even if only to serve the king of Gath's own ends. Could David ignore such generosity ? Yet how could he fight against his own people in protecting the alien king ? The mercy of God is now seen at work, intervening to extricate David from the situation in which he had entangled himself. The over-ruling help came in the person of the leaders of the Philistines who doubted the wisdom of the king.

"And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him : and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us : for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master ? should it not be with the heads of these men ?" (I. Samuel 29 : 4).

David's protest as a result of being told to return, if not merely out of tact for the purpose of giving an impression of loyalty was of no avail. Perhaps he had some scheme for intervening in the battle to the help of his own people, and in their resultant victory protect Achish from ignominy. But whatever his scheme may or may not have been or no plan at all of what he should do in the situation, it was an extremely dangerous one, and God knew.

The time had now come for Saul to die, and nothing could prevent it. The situation was working irrevocably to that end, when Saul in his abjectness sought unto the witch of Endor. David now, at such a crucial time, received a set-back which was a great test of his faith.

"And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire ; and had taken the women captives, that were therein : they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it burned with fire : and their wives, and their sons and their daughters, were taken captives." (I. Samuel 30 : 1-3).

Oh ! What a terrible experience, here was disaster with all lost. Had God forsaken completely ? No, the opposite was really the case ; for the difficulties pre-occupied David at a crucial time and removed him completely from the arena of conflict upon Mount

Gilboa. As David pursued after the Amalekites it ensured his non-intervention in the last battle of Saul, and Jonathan whom David loved. David's distress was very great, for his own people turned upon him in their inconsolable grief and spoke of stoning him, they felt so bitter, but he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

David still trusted in God, and God was not wanting! Seeking for guidance from heaven David said :

"Shall I pursue after this troop?"

The Spirit's answer was :

"Pursue : for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

What a relief, a God-given relief, to give the necessary encouragement and comfort. But there followed an anxious time, and great effort was needed, but the end of the matter saw complete recovery.

Such an account as this shows how God works to bring home lessons and test faith. How even difficult and bitter experiences may be a means of protecting the people of God. Sometimes difficulty follows upon difficulty, and has to be dealt with, and David was no exception to such experience. When David pursued the Amalekites *all* were not equal to the task. With some the desire for the task was there but they did not have the strength, for when David's six hundred men arrived at the brook Besor, two hundred men were so weak and exhausted they were unable to cross it. After the successful outcome, however, the stronger ones looked down upon their weaker brethren and were ready to push them away.

"And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor : and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him : and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

Then answered all the wicked men and the men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart.

Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff : thy shall part alike."

(I. Samuel 30 : 21-24).

Human nature has a tendency to despise the weak, and so at times God brings about circumstances to test His people to see if they will produce the necessary fruit of compassion and love for their weaker brethren which is so essential. For it is a necessary ingredient to a realisation that even the strongest are but of the dust, and are dependent upon the compassion of the Most High, not only for the life that now is, but also for hope in that life which is to come. The weak are just as important to God as the strong. All share in His mercy and so David's men were required to humble themselves in the knowledge that all things are of God ; the victory at that time was from Him ; and each had shared in the part which God had allotted, whether in going forth, or tarrying to care for that which remained to be looked after.

How disastrous it would have been had David allowed those strong characters to dictate such hard and hateful terms at that time ; making no allowance for the weakness of the others.

Surely these things are not merely an historical account, but convey lessons that could have a bearing upon the present needs of these times ; conveying assurance and comfort that God knows our circumstances even as He knew the circumstances of David in those ancient times.

D.L.

“The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the World”

*“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord . . . that ye may know
and believe . . .”* (Isaiah 43 : 10).

THE JEW ! What a living witness he is to the purpose of God, now nearing its completion. The story of the Jew is the story of the world's greatest minority. His history goes back nearly 4,000 years, a history that was ancient at the time when Rome and Athens were mere villages. Where other peoples have become extinct (such as the Mayan, so called civilisation of South and Central America) the Jew was resilient in his reaction to the adversities that came upon him. Why ? “Ye are my witnesses,” saith God. Though a despised and sometimes hated race, hated quite unreasonably, nations have been glad to take advantage of the undoubted talent which this inventive people have been able to use for the benefit of those nations amongst whom they have dwelt. When Columbus began his sailing explorations, it was Jewish Doctors who sailed with his crew, in fact Jewish doctors had for centuries been leaders in the field of medicine. Other Jewish doctors and other Jews later pioneered the Western trail in America by being the first to go inland to trade with the Indians.

Manchester, the provincial capital of England's North West has a considerable Jewish population. In the experience of the writer he has seen their existence in the city has brought a measure of prosperity to the area, and undoubted service to the community in hospitals and in research. About 30,000 Jewish people make up the Jewish community of the Greater Manchester area. This community dates its origin from the reign of George the third. For nearly 200 years Jews have been establishing synagogues, institutions and welfare bodies, which have become well organised and the Manchester area has benefited as a whole. The hospital in the Manchester Cheetham district known as the Jewish Hospital caters for both Jew and Gentile.

But things have not always been comparatively smooth for Jews in Britain. At the time of the Crusaders, there was terrible persecution of the Jews by the English people. Such was the brutality with which they were treated by Crusaders, that 500 Jews committed suicide at York, the so-called provincial capital of British Christianity !

It was not until the time of Oliver Cromwell that things began to improve for Jews in Britain. Cromwell allowed them to return, and

founded a period of stability for Jews, which to this day they enjoy as a distinct community of some half a million people.

On the continent, however, things went from bad to worse. There were the Spanish and German Inquisitions for example. Finally the Nazi Inquisition, as it can be termed, in which six million Jews perished. But the Jew has not been extinguished ; in fact, he is more to the forefront in news headlines now than for nineteen hundred years. With several millions established in Israel, and with ties reaching out to their brethren in other lands the Jew has now considerable political influence in the world ; which is remarkable taking into consideration the great amount of anti-semitism there has been.

Why have the Jews stubbornly held on to their identity ? Four months after the Nazi occupation of Poland in 1939 the Jews of the country were officially forbidden from congregating for prayer. But when the Day of Atonement came in 1940, that day did not pass unremembered. Clandestine meetings took place ; risks were endured ; fears were overcome, because deeply ingrained within those people was a respect for their identity. They did not, could not, and would not lose their identity.

A modern Jewish writer has written recently on the subject of his race :

“Note that our history ascribes several strange things to us that no other people today claims or particularly wants to claim. The first is that we began as a family. A nation of some eleven million souls descends from one man, Abraham, and one tribal house, Israel.

The second thing is that blood is not decisive in this kin-ship. Faith is. A man or woman who undertakes to worship the God of Abraham, and to follow His law given at the hand of Moses, can become a member of our ancient house. In this way, though we are not a faith that crusades for converts, our numbers have much expanded, and we have gained some of our noted leaders and scholars. Scripture, too, tells of such adopted kin. By the reverse way, through apostasy, we have lost a great many Jews. So strong, however, is the identifying strain of Hebrew descent, that a Jew who converts to another faith remains in the eyes of the world a converted Jew, no more ! Descent, then, or faith, determines who is a Jew. So our tradition holds.

The third thing is that our nation came into existence before it had a land.

We received our statutory law from Moses in the desert.

Nationhood for other peoples means first of all living together in one place. The Jews are peculiarly a nation in time. They sprang into being not in a certain place ; for even their father Abraham was a wanderer ; but at a certain time, long before they could call any soil their own.

This fact, I believe, lay under their ability to survive so long the loss of their soil. The Holy Land was their historic fulfilment, but not their origin.

The strangest thing of all is the purpose that our tradition ascribes to our history and origin. It is frankly supernatural. Tradition says the Creator gave our folk the task of bearing witness to His moral law on earth.

This is what the battered phrase ‘the chosen people’ means. Our history, in the Scriptures and afterwards, is in the main a melancholy account of our failure to live up to this high election, and the catastrophies that came from our failure. But the election stands, the mission remains, and we live because these things are so. That is what our faith teaches.”

If these words are typical of the views and reflections of many Jews, then it is obvious that adverse circumstances are not going to shake them from their identity ! Indeed this could not be in any case, for God has spoken !

“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine.

Fear not : for I am with thee : I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west ;

I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back : bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

Even every one that is called by my name : for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him ; yea, I have made him. Let all nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled : who among them can declare this, and shew us former things ? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified : or let them hear, and say, It is truth.”

(Isaiah 43 : 1 and 5-7 and 9).

Note particularly the words of verse 9. Many people, particularly scholars, in these days of unbelief, make a claim that they can shew former things. They produce fossils, and they elaborate theories of how men developed from primitive forms of life. They dig the clay and pretend they can read a message in it, like reading a book !

But dead things, and very doubtful things, are the only witnesses they can bring forth to demonstrate what they declare to have been in former times, relating to former things !

“Let them bring forth their witnesses”, is the challenge of God’s message ! They cannot ! God’s living witness however is undeniable. It stares at the thoughtful, it is before their eyes as a Jew is met in the street. Here is indeed an uncontroversial fact, but one very largely ignored for the world is almost totally unimpressed.

“Let them hear, and say, It is truth”, says God. But for the present, there is little or no response to or respect for this appeal and challenge from the sure message of God, which tells the truth of what happened in former times, from the very beginning of the creation. The Jew is indeed one of the greatest signs of these times, and his continuing importance, so evident in the news media comments concerning his present day activities, whether in Israel or amongst the nations, is a sure indication that the time of the Jew’s advent is near. The time of the return of Christ, who was the greatest Jew of all.

D.L.

News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK : Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread 11-30 a.m. Sunday School 1-30 p.m. Bible Class : Midweek, Forestville, Buffalo, Hamburg and Orchard Park. Alternate week : Revelation Study.

Gratitude is felt for the help and guidance given in working with those who are seeking the way of Truth. That way is not easy but His hand is outstretched if there is a faithful striving to walk uprightly.

Correspondence continues with a few who have responded to our past newspaper advertising, giving encouragement in the way.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER : Memorial Hall, M.A.P.S. Building, Albert Square, Manchester.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread 11-30 a.m. Lecture 3-30 p.m. Tuesdays : Bible Class 7-15 p.m., Onward Hall, Deansgate.

On Saturday, October 28th, we held our Sunday School Party, when following games carefully organised to provide fun and relaxation, consideration was given to :

"Israel : a land which the Lord careth for, the eyes of the Lord are always upon it."

Some sixty or seventy colour slides took us to all parts of Jerusalem and the land, and even gave us a glimpse across the Red Sea of Sinai. It was impressive to have the vivid reality of the land so clearly depicted.

Brother Pinkerton was a welcome visitor on November 4th, enabling us to counsel together on matters affecting the welfare of the Body. On Sunday we benefited by his words of exhortation and lecture.

W.V.B.