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in opposition to the Dogmas of
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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

AND SOME OF THEM OF UNDERSTANDING...

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

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At the Table of the Lord

“WILL GOD IN VERY DEED DWELL WITH MEN ”

IN CHRONICLES, we are reading of Solomon's great work in building the House of God. He carefully built it in accordance with the plan God gave to David. I. Chronicles 28 : 11-12 :

“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern. . . of all that he had *by the spirit . . .*”

Also, verse 19 tells us :

“All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.”

There was a plan, a divine pattern, given to David who, because he was a “man of blood”, was not allowed to build the House of God, great as his desire must have been to do so. How David valued yes cherished that pattern, guarded it, preserved it, gave it to Solomon, the appointed by God, to Build the House. David not only kept the pattern, but also, as we have read, stored up gold, silver, jewels, brass and all the other things needed to achieve the perfection of the pattern. From the time of the promises to David, to the time that Solomon completed the House was about 27 years, a long time to keep the pattern as well as the materials needed for the building of the House of God. Yet, David's mind must have been filled with this work and looking ahead too for the fulfilment of the promises, the coming of the Son of God who would build His House which would be everlasting.

Solomon took over from David at his death and went about building the House with zeal and care following the pattern. Finally, it was done—built upon Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac, and where David offered in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. We have read of Solomon's mind as he finished the temple II. Chronicles 5 : 2-3 :

“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel . . . to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord . . . Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which was in the seventh month.”

How fitting that the House should be finished in this seventh month. It was the time of the day of atonement when the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrifice to make atonement first for himself and then for his people. It was also the month of the feast of tabernacles when all Israel dwelt in booths because of God's care, God's covering of His people. As the ark was brought into the newly completed House of God, we read, II. Chronicles 5 : 13-14 :

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord (there were the singers and trumpeters designated by David); and when they lifted up their voices with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud . . . for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.”

Here was recognition of the Father’s loving care, seen in this House of God. Then, how inspiring, how great a blessing, how great a cause for fear to witness this filling of the House with the glory of God! This would be a wondrous evidence of His dwelling with His chosen people. What a great blessing this would be, especially to those who in faith saw it to be a foretaste of God’s purpose, to be accomplished in His House, to be assembled when the Son of God returns, to truly fulfill the promises made to David, the everlasting dwelling of God with men.

This doesn’t involve just Israel, brethren and sisters; it doesn’t involve just Solomon. It involves you and me, for we long for the day when that house will be formed, when all its members, prepared ahead of time, will be assembled and made His dwelling place and the glory of the Lord will fill that House. As Solomon finished the House, as the ark was brought in, as the glory filled the House, how he would look forward to the Anointed One of God, coming to do God’s will, to fulfill all the promises made to David so long ago. Is it as real to us as it was to Solomon?

Perhaps we can make it more real if we carefully listen to Solomon, II. Chronicles 6 : 4 :

“ . . . Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David . . . ”

Does not God always fulfill with His hands that which He has promised? Do we truly believe this, brethren and sisters, that what He has said will be done—just as surely as that House was built. How needful is faith, trust in His word—faith which helped Solomon in his work of following the pattern given to David. Does not such faith help us to follow the pattern, allow ourselves to be changed, to conform, to the divine pattern. His pattern is not, by nature, our pattern. Yet, we must become shaped to it if we are to be fitted into His House. Let us ask, then, that our faith be increased and strive to work and move, believing in God.

Solomon, further, asked, II. Chronicles 6 : 18 :

“But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?”

It is understandable he could not quite grasp this wonderful reality even though he witnessed that the glory of the Lord had filled the House. Yet, he did realise the closeness of God's presence, for he prayed to God, verse 20 :

“That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou has said that thou wouldest put thy name there ; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place.”

He prayed further that God would respond to His people's prayer in all situations in which they might find themselves—if they valued, *if* they sought His House.

“ARISE. O LORD. INTO THY RESTING PLACE”

Let us listen further to Solomon's words of supplication, verses 40-42 :

“. . . let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength : let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed : remember the mercies of David thy servant.”

Solomon's prayer was for the House and for the priests at that time ; but his prayer went far beyond to the greater hope of Israel to be fulfilled *in the* Son of David. Solomon's mind, Solomon's hope reflected that of his father, for we read David's words in Psalm 132, a song of ascent (as the words “Song of degrees” mean) of going up to Zion, to the House and all it speaks of. Is this hope of Israel, of David, of Solomon, our hope, brethren and sisters ? Is this our sustaining as we look for His coming, a time when the glory of the Lord will fill all who make up His House ? In II. Chronicles 7 : 1, we consider again the result of Solomon's prayer :

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices ; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.”

The Spirit of God, the fire which consumes the flesh, came down and worked in Solomon's sight. Does not that same Spirit work in His House today, consuming the flesh of those striving to be pleasing to God, who are struggling to crucify their flesh ? How meaningful it must have been to Solomon, to Israel, as they saw the sacrifices, the burnt offering consumed by the fire of God, without their own hands being lifted to accomplish it. It was the hand of God ;

it was His Spirit working ; it was God dwelling with men. Was this God's answer to Solomon's question, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth ?" How awful and, yet, how wonderful to contemplate, just as surely as He dwells with us *if* we are working, struggling to be part of His House, to conform to the pattern ! If we are ready to allow the fire to consume our flesh, we shall be permitted, have been permitted as individuals, as a Body to see the Power ordering our ways, bringing us through experiences which curb the flesh and enliven the Spirit. Is not this evidence of His presence with us, as it was with Israel ?

"FOR HE DWELLETH WITH YOU"

God *can* dwell with us. Jesus tells us in John 14 : 16-17 :

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; Even the Spirit of truth . . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

This is the promise of Jesus for those who will make up His House. Does not Paul, further, confirm this in I. Corinthians 3 : 16 :

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?"

It is not an abstract theory or principle. God's presence can be with us just as surely as it was with Solomon, with Israel. It was so very real to them, as the fire consumed the flesh on the altar, and the smoke rose up to the heavens, as the glory filled the House. Can we take hold of these things, brethren and sisters, and be aware, sensitive in all our affairs ? Do we, then, feel His Spirit's dwelling in and amongst us ? Do we react as He would have us do, a people called to be the temple of the living God ? Paul further helps us, verse 17 :

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Does this make us tremble. brethren and sisters, fear, lest we do become unclean, unholy, defiled ? How easy it is to be unholy, unspiritual, following the lusts of the flesh, yielding to personal yearnings rather than seeking the fruits of the Spirit. It is only as the fire consumes that which is defiling, the flesh, that we can hope to keep undefiled the temple of God, our body and, collectively, His House.

God, in His mercy, gives us much help in this struggle to be undefiled, to remain the temple of God, where He is pleased to dwell. In I. John 4 : 12-16, we read :

". . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his

love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit . . . God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

It was love for God that caused David to want to build Him a House. It was God’s love for David that caused Him to promise an eternal House. It was Solomon’s love for God that caused him to build the House of God so carefully, never straying from the pattern given.

What a warning Solomon is for us, brethren and sisters, for we know Solomon left his love for God, and the Spirit of God left him. It can all too easily happen to us ; let us, then, take heed to those things given for our help ; let us put His ways first.

“WE WILL COME UNTO HIM”

In this connection, we remember Jesus’ words, John 14 : 23 :

“ . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

How great is God’s blessing, God’s love for us, for His House—those in whom He is pleased to dwell Let us, then, brethren and sisters, strive harder to grow in love for Him, for His Son, for His promises, so that we may hope He will abide in us, so that the fire may consume the flesh—after which the glory may fill the House !

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 IV.

THE ATONEMENT

CHRIStENDOM has struggled greatly to give sensible meaning to the death of Jesus on the cross.

Doctrine concerning the nature of Christ, and His relationship to the Father, became a great controversy less than two hundred years after the death of the Apostle Paul.

One, Arcus, proclaimed that Jesus was created, and was therefore distinct from and subservient to His Father. Opponents regarded this as heresy, claiming Christ was "very god".

The Emperor of Rome, Constantine, saw in this controversy, which convulsed the Church throughout his empire, a threat to the safety of his realm. Consequently he ordered a "oecumenical council" to discern and *settle* the matter. Constantine, himself, attended, and either by threats or the possible loss of imperial favour, a uniformity was reached, but not unity.

Virtually, "the proclamation of a new doctrine (was made). The creed thus evolved by an artificial unity was no ratification of peace : in fact, it paved the way for a struggle which convulsed the whole empire. For it was the proclamation of the Nicene Creed that first opened the eyes of many bishops to the significance of the problems these treated : and its explanation led the Church to force herself, by an arduous path of theological work, into compliance with those principles, enunciated at Nicaea, to which in the year 325, she had pledged herself without genuine assent."

Out of all these fulminations came the still-born child—"Quicunquevult"—the mummified body of which is still preserved in Christendom as the doctrine of the Trinity ; a jumble of words, and collision of phrases, it would be impossible to beat :

"The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible : and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

. . . As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated ; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

. . . He therefore that will be saved : must think of the Trinity. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation : that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Catholic Faith : which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

Out of this confusion developed the concept in Christendom that Christ was not only a god, but "God the Son", and that His death upon the cross was a substitute for the death of us all, a ransom to expiate the wrath of God the Father against all because of sin.

If this were true, then with the ransom price paid in Jesus' death, none ought to die ! Obviously proved untrue by the experience to which all are subjected, as the Psalmist says :

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.

. . . That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.”

(Psalm 49 : 7-10).

It is flattering to humans to believe all are so important to and beloved of God, that Christ their “God” was slain on the cross, so that they would not die. All this spurious reasoning, so agreeable to human vanity, overlooks :

WHY IS THERE DEATH ?

Only *the* Truth can answer this question, and in doing so show the reasonableness why there is death. A start is best made by comprehending that the present life is a *gift*. Generally, it is felt and argued that having the present life entitles one to a future life, better, happier and without end. God was careful to show from the beginning that we might not even have had the present life : that without any qualifications it is His *gift*. To impress this upon His people God forbade the eating of *blood*, which is the life.

“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” (Genesis 9 : 4).

“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood : I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood.”

(Leviticus 17 : 10-11).

Death is a severe penalty, but this was the punishment upon those who presumed to “eat the blood, the life”, showing how gravely God views such presumption. We are not to *presume* we have a right to this life. It is a *gift* to all, whether short or long. None of us asked to be born. Indeed, we might never have been born, but God in His kindness gave, and we have this life—*as a gift and not a right*.

Due to the sinful nature of our life, from the days of our first parents we are subject to the just sentence of death. Reflection upon what seems so terrible, so final, will allow the mind to grasp that the termination of sinner’s lives is good. The world is in a dreadful state *now*. How much worse it would be—impossibly worse—if the tyrants who inflicted such pain and misery upon their fellows were still alive—the Neros, the Alexanders, the Vespasians, the Napoleons, the Hitlers and the Mussolinis. God is just. His ways are right. Examine ourselves. What good thing is there naturally in

us that would commend us to God and give a claim to life. Jesus knew what was in man. He, Himself, refused to be called "good". Death is a just and divine sentence upon a perverse nature, which can only have hope of life in God's appointed way—through the death of Christ.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

"Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

(Deuteronomy 21 : 21-23. Galatians 3 : 13)

The Atonement—the making of some "at-one" with God is only possible through the death of Christ ; and this cannot be unless the nature of Christ, and why Jesus in the manner of His death was "cursed" is discerned and believed.

"The wages of sin is death," but Christ "did no sin". So why did He die, and why was His death in such a manner as involved *His* condemnation ?

We have seen how Christendom look upon Christ as a god, having a nature different from ours, indestructible, divine. We have also seen how this allows for the exaltation of mankind, as being worthy of such a sacrifice as the death of "God the Son". This belief provides for the soothing idea of universal salvation, a heresy ; for the Word declares that the world is at enmity with God, being ignorant of His purpose, and derisive of His Word. This is powerfully expressed by the Apostle James :

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4 : 4).

Coming back to the question : Why did Jesus who never sinned have to die, and perhaps what is an enigma to most was "cursed" (that is condemned in the manner of His death ? For "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Jesus might have been slain in numerous other ways, but it was foreordained of God that He should die condemned.

A little patience is needed to understand this, and the agreeable reasonableness underlying the Father's will.

To have suggested to Jesus that because He had not sinned He should go on living would have been immediately rejected by Him on the grounds that this would only have prolonged the agony of contending with His native propensities, the *diabolos* in His flesh. Who amongst us, sinners, would like to have our life again, with all the trials, sins and consequent difficulties which arise from our nature. True, life is precious, but looked at objectively it is worthless in a sinful nature.

Jesus had sinful nature, otherwise He would have had nothing to overcome. The heresy propounded in 1873 by Ed. Turney, and now convulsing those in Australia claiming to have the Truth, is that Jesus' nature was different from ours; in a phrase born out of the original controversy He was claimed to have "clean flesh". This false doctrine destroys all that Jesus accomplished, makes Him no more than an actor pretending to destroy the enemy of the flesh, where there was no enemy present; and further undermines the merciful provision of the atonement through the death of Christ upon the cross.

Jesus was condemned in His death. Do not let us slip into the common error that this was because "he was made a curse for us." True, but would God do evil, condemn without justification, that good might come?

When Jesus died upon the cross, condemned because of His sinful nature, this was:

"To declare at this time (God's) righteousness."

Let us alter these words a little; it will help the understanding.

"To declare that God was right."

Precisely the same meaning, but the simplification emphasises the point—*that God was right*. The mind can become so used to scriptural phrases that the profound meaning is not discerned. May we then take this simple understanding that in the condemnation of Jesus in His death—

God was right

How many, or rather how few understand and believe this. Rather they deny God, by saying that Jesus should have not been condemned, and without saying it, that they, themselves, are not condemned. This doctrine of condemnation of all flesh may be assented to by the "others", but only as a matter of form.

In the Christadelphian Citadel, now made to look rather imposing and respectable in the eyes of the world, there are many doors into it, each bearing a different label—"Central", Suffolk Street", "Dawn", "Old Paths", "Advocate" are perhaps the main ones. Some of these doors are wider than the other doors. Indeed, there is no "strait" door leading to life; for all the entrances lead to the same place, the darkness of Apostasy which can be felt. How can there be an understanding of the condemnation of Christ in His death, when the ex-leader of the Dawn, declares that "we are not in a position to condemn anyone in the matter of salvation" inside the Citadel or outside—

THE ATONEMENT — BAPTISM INTO HIS DEATH

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ?” (Romans 6 : 3).

If what has been written has been digested then the mind will be ready to appreciate the provision of Jesus as a Saviour—a saviour, says the record. *from our sins.*

The “answer of a good conscience” in a true baptism is first achieved by seeing Jesus condemned in His death, then realising how much more we are worthy to die, and with hearts full of gratitude being allowed by God *to die*— in a figure ; identifying ourselves with the death of Christ, acknowledging *God was right* in His condemnation of Him, and of us, and on the basis of this confession and repentance being allowed to rise from the watery grave of baptism—“a *new* creature”. This *new* creature has no relationship with the old. Born of “water and the spirit” there is established a new relationship with the God of all mercies, who may now be looked upon as the Father, with the promise that having been “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”, hope for the full baptism by the Spirit may be had, when this “mortal shall put on immortality”.

(to be continued . . .)

**“And some of them of understanding shall fall,
to try (margin) by them . . .”**

(Daniel 11 : 35)

THE DAY IS COMING when many are to awake from the dead, but not all to everlasting life. The reason for this is given :

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do wickedly : and none of the wicked shall understand ; but the wise shall understand.”

(Daniel 12 : 10).

All called to the Truth need purifying, and many will be. They are to be tried, (*tsaraph*) that is be refined. But others are to do wicked things because they are wicked. The Hebrew word rendered wicked is “*rasha*” and means those who are wrong, who wrong God, and wrong others. It must of course, be admitted, that all do wrong, and it is for that reason that where responsiveness to God is shown, some can be purified from wrong inclinations, and so as the scripture in Daniel expresses it, “become white”, and refined. This is a process that all who are to awake to everlasting life and found faithful must have undergone. The fact however remains that many

who have known this simple yet profound truth, have failed to allow God's process of purification and refinement to make them white.

The test which all called to the Truth have to face in one way or another does find many wanting. Some who have been wrong, especially over a long period of time, and upon whom the work of refining has begun to bear, have resisted this process which comes in the mercy of God to turn them from wrong to make them right. This resistance to His working only confirms such in their wrong. By becoming entrenched in their wrongs they become "the wicked" who "shall do wickedly" because they do not "understand" (*bin*) consider. It must be admitted that many have had knowledge, but they have not used it rightly by the proper "consideration" or understanding which is the necessary complement of knowledge. Hence all the divisions of the last 100 years which have rent "the Body".

It is a rare thing to hear people caught up in division say they are wrong, but the patent fact is that all cannot be right. All however almost invariably claim to be right ; thus division immediately indicates that some are wrong, and if the division is persisted in, then those who are wrong, where the Truth is involved, become the "wicked (who) shall do wickedly" because none of them "consider".

The sad end for those who become entrenched in their wrongs is pictured in the phrase concerning some who shall awake "to shame and everlasting contempt". Note the word contempt, (*deraon*) abhorrence, thrusting away. The pursuers of a wrong course may keep their pride when they refuse to allow the purifying process to refine them, but they will not be able to keep their pride in the day of judgment. As mentioned previously all are wrong at some time or other because all sin, but there is forgiveness for those who allow themselves to be purified. Emphasis upon "understanding" or "considering" therefore is important because it denotes care and contemplation.

There were, there are, and there will be some who need the Spirit's particular help because they have a weakness that stands in the way of acquiring the understanding which is the complement of knowledge. An example of a particular weakness is defined in the words of Isaiah 32 : 4 which promises that :

"The heart also of the rash (*mahar*—the hasty) shall understand knowledge."

The hasty of course fail to consider ; and what a stumbling that is ! How weak human nature really is, how prone to excuse itself

rather than admit its errors. Some of the subtle divisions that have taken place in these times have been the result of endeavours of self-justification ; in fact all divisions more or less stem from such a motive, the root of which is pride. Many, of course, have been deceived by the subtle manoeuvres of those who have not only wanted to keep their pride but also a following. Some may not have even known or understood what the issue has been about but that is no excuse. Ignorance is due to a lack ; and lack, or falling short, is due to the working of sin which, in one way or another, causes the lack to develop. The ultimate result, if not checked, is wickedness or wrong, to the degree of being in a position without any understanding or consideration to help the mind in the way of the spirit.

Hence under the law of Moses ignorance was no excuse :

“And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses, Even all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations ;

Then it shall be if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the Lord, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them ; for it is ignorance : and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their ignorance.”

(Numbers 15 : 22-25).

Sin was sin ; therefore anything done in ignorance required a full acknowledgment by means of the sin offering.

People of course can also stray through weakness. They know what is required, but then they weaken. In division they may go with the wrong because congenial friends or fleshly ties pull them towards those who are bent on a wrong course. They may go with the error out of a false sense of loyalty, or they may do it out of fear. Sins of weakness are probably the most common pitfall into which all stray at some time or other, hence the need to become refined, and thereby strengthened and made “white”.

In the garden of Eden the woman knew that she had been commanded not to eat “of the fruit of the tree which (was) in the midst of the garden”. But then she weakened under the influence of the serpent. She knew what she was doing but could not resist the

temptation, which of course was fuelled by the subtle reasoning of the serpent. Hence the words :

“Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” (I. Timothy 2 : 14).

Does this mean Adam was the unwitting victim ? Not at all. The forbidden fruit was undoubtedly distinctive, being pleasant to the eye. He would know what it was when the woman gave it to him, but he sinned through weakness, joining himself to his wife’s transgression because of his affinity with her. This was not the presumptuous sin, otherwise later God would not have slain the animal to clothe the first parents by sacrifice. For presumptuous sin could not have been so covered.

However the warning is clear in Daniel. Not all who are to awake are to awake to life. For some it will be shame and everlasting contempt because they have wasted their opportunity when they could have been refined, but rather have hardened themselves in pride. Such will merit the wages of the presumptuous, who alas have spurned the working of the Spirit and so have lost it.

D.L.

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

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.”

(Jeremiah 25 : 32).

THE SIGNING OF THE “PEACE AGREEMENT” for Vietnam while reducing the scale of war operations in that country promises very little for the future. As one evil is reduced another will take its place

To date there have been two and a half million Vietnamese casualties, there are millions of refugees, and Vietnam’s countryside has been denuded of trees and crops, while cities and villages have been pounded into rubble. America has been deeply involved in the Vietnamese war for eight years, but in actual fact fighting has been going on for a quarter of a century in that troubled land, and this is sometimes overlooked.

What an indictment of human nature this appalling and prolonged agony of conflict really is. To think that men have gone on slaughtering one another for twenty five years, cruelly and senselessly.

Vietnam has been a conflict of the great world powers in miniature ; for East and West has taken sides in what has been really a civil war encouraged by outside interference. The arms bill for the United States and Russia must be astronomical.

Men generally, and particularly the world's leaders, appear to have learned very little from all this waste of lives and human resources. Undoubtedly the United States is glad to be leaving what was virtually a stalemate military situation. The retention of some of her prestige, by the costly but tremendous bombing raids of December and January no doubt has helped her to sign an agreement. But what of the future ? The President of the United States has declared that America will no longer make every other nation's conflict its own or every other nation's future its responsibility. But is this just for the record to give time for Vietnam to recede in the public's memory ?

Early in January N.A.T.O. at the instigation of the American Government was awaiting a reply from the Warsaw Pact countries concerning a suggestion for talks to be arranged for mutual balanced force reductions (M.B.F.R.). At the time of writing, further news is to hand that N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact have agreed to meet in Vienna to open preliminary talks on troop and weapons reductions in Central Europe. There has been considerable debate on which countries should take part in the initial discussions, though the Great Powers appear to be agreed that only those directly involved in the defence of Central Europe should take part eventually after the initial stages.

Almost in line with this political move for negotiations by East and West, talks have been going on in Helsinki in which thirty four countries are participating as a preparatory procedure for a conference on European security and co-operation. Speaking at one of the meetings the Soviet Ambassador listed what his government considered as important for discussion. Namely principles establishing relations between states and measures to safeguard them. This would undoubtedly include the recognition of East Germany. But it is already apparent that the Western Bloc want to avoid any detailed examination of defence questions and troop reductions in Europe in the security conference, saying these things must be left for the M.B.F.R. talks arranged to commence in Vienna. Naturally some members of the Warsaw Pact have complained saying that a conference that is supposed to deal with security, as well as co-operation should consider military aspects.

So the devious and complex procedures of world politics are manifest, by which leaders are claiming to be striving for peace and security .

How the scripture mocks such things when it declares :

“The way of peace they know not . . . they have made them crooked paths . . . ” (Isaiah 59 : 8).

“ . . . They shall speak lies at one table ; but it shall not prosper . . . ” (Daniel 11 : 27).

“ . . . When they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction . . . ” (I. Thessalonians 5 : 3).

It is not without significance that for all the scale down of operations in Vietnam, and the preparation for security talks, the United States Budget for 1974 does not indicate a channelling of the nation's wealth to more peaceful and more useful things.

The President revealed to Congress at the end of January that defence expenditure would rise this year by £2,000 millions. To make room for such an increase there was to be some large cuts in the social and welfare programmes, to equate with the rising armaments cost. In his message to Congress the President asked senators and representatives to place a rigid ceiling on their budget spending before going into ways and means of how they are to spend and allocate. This move appears to be unprecedented. The office of Economic Opportunity is abolished ; a department of government set up by the previous President to wage “war against poverty”. Now there is no specific central Government agency designed to end what can only be described as the abject poverty of many hundreds of thousands of Americans. Four housing programmes will be halted, also seven urban renewal projects. Federal support for hospital building programmes is to end as also the Rural Environmental Assistance Programme. Funds for medical research are to be cut as also grants for the Social Rehabilitation Service ; and the “model cities” programme is to be abolished. But, as stated, there is to be no cut in the money supply for war materials and weapons.

What a sad situation it is that welfare, housing, schooling or health should be subservient to the military requirements, especially in a year when declarations of war activity is supposedly taking place, and talks are being arranged for the purpose of bringing about a reduction in the arms burden and its consequently progressive threat.

The situation really does not have in it a true ring of peace and improvement in international relations.

The fact is, even as Jeremiah's prophecy has so clearly indicated, there will not be peace. Vietnam may have burnt itself out, and is now only left smouldering, but further trouble will come, for God has declared "that evil shall go forth from nation to nation" heralding the raising up of a great whirlwind. The day of the whirlwind will see the return of Christ to bring about, by mighty deed, true justice and welfare.

" . . . For the Lord hath a controversy with the nations."
(verse 31)

. . . as He looks down upon the evil that now prevails.

D.L.

Correspondence

Following the letter in the last issue to R. F. Barnett (the ex-leader of the Ecclesia of Christ, but now having withdrawn from that body) an additional letter was sent as follows :

"Do you agree with the circular of R. Wood dated June 1967, a copy of which was sent to you at the time ?"

A promise was made by R. F. Barnett that he would send a reply to the first letter, which we said we would publish, providing it were received by mid-February. No letter has been received. Those interested will certainly feel that a promise not kept is hardly the act of one desirous of upholding the Truth ; and will be caused to ask why there is a failure to come to the light ? Is it because the questions asked are unanswerable in the light of Truth ?

W.V.B.

From C.A., Australia :

Firstly let me say I address you as Mr.— for I am not able to be sure as to the related positions that exist between yourself and myself. I realise that to be addressed as Brother is open to careless use. Having just had the fortune to have come into my hand a copy of the booklet that bears your name, I address you with much respect and would that I knew just what our relationship one with the other is. The Booklet is "The History of the Truth in the Latter Days". It answers many questions which I have sought for unsuccessfully the few years I have been privileged in the Truth.

I have written to ask you if it is possible to obtain six copies of this booklet and if so what is the cost ?

Realising that the days are not only late but also dark, I am gladened to have been able to read your booklet.

The threatening clouds of the approaching "storm" make my enquiry urgent. So in anticipation of a reply I would thank you.

I remain your interested reader.

Reply :

This letter has only just been received, which we are glad to have, and promise a reply will be sent immediately. Also the six copies of the "History of the Truth in the Latter Days".

W.V.B.

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.

Much evidence of God's hand working on behalf of His people is seen in the events of the last few weeks. How sustaining this evidence is as we struggle to be subject to Him. The blessing of counsel among brethren is much valued and sorely needed as we realize how easily we fail.

The work continues with two who are seeking the way of life, with encouragement and guidance given.

J.A.DeF.

"PENTRIP", Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread : Sundays, 11-30 a.m.
Bible Class : Mid-week.

The following appeared in the Cambrian News, Friday, January 12th—

“Jesus Christ’s birth date :

Your writer, Kay, in her ‘Here and There’ article refers to the Jewish Hunakkah (Festival of Lights) as being in progress at the time of Christ’s birth.

Whilst it is true, that the festival is celebrated in the Jewish month Chislew (Nov./Dec.), all available evidence, both from biblical and secular sources, indicates Christ’s birthday being in the month Tishri (Sept./Oct.).

The Apostle Luke refers to ‘shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night’ (Luke 2 : 8). In Israel all sheep and cattle were, and still are, brought undercover from November until March, as protection against the severity of the winter weather. Further, it is unlikely that the governor Quirinius would involve the populace in a journey to their birthplace, to be registered, in the depths of winter (Luke 2 : 1-6). The prophet Daniel refers to the period of Christ’s Ministry as being three and a half years. Jesus’ death occurred during the Jewish month Nisan (March/April). This too points to the months September or October as being the month of Jesus’ birth.

Finally John the Baptist’s father was a priest of the division of Abijah (Luke 1 : 5). The priestly divisions for temple service were twenty four in number of which Abijah was the eighth. Each period of service was one week, therefore Zechariah would serve in the temple twice per year, i.e., in the months May and October. Allowing time for John’s conception and bearing in mind the previous evidence John the Baptist was probably born in March or April. Since Jesus was six months’ younger than John his birth would take place in the autumn of the same year.

This evidence points to December 25th as NOT being the date of Christ’s birth. Why then is it that this date was chosen to celebrate His birth ?

Yours etc., “Bible Student”, Ffestiniog.

A brother has written to the newspaper in reply to the aforementioned :

The Editor, Cambrian News, Queen Street, Aberystwyth.

Dear Sir,

“JESUS CHRIST’S BIRTH DATE”

Reference is made to a letter from “Bible Student” appearing under the above heading in your issue of January 12th. The evidence is irrefutable, that Jesus was not born on or near to December 25th, according to popular tradition.

The question is asked : “*Why then is it that this date was chosen to celebrate His birth ?*”

December 25th, now called “Christmas” was originally a pagan festival. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated prove its origin. In Egypt, for example the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was claimed to be born at this very time, “about the time of the winter solstice”.

In Babylon at this same time there was the festival of Bacchus, a drunken orgy, to celebrate the re-birth of the sun, regarded as God incarnate.

Rome inherited these depraved revelries called the feast of Saturn which lasted five days.

Eventually, Christianity became infected with these pagan customs ; and what was previously regarded as celebrating the birth of various heathen gods, came to be used (with papal sanction) as a means of commemorating the birth of Jesus.

The answer to the question, why is December 25th, chosen as the birthday of Jesus, is that it is no more than a tradition, a pagan tradition.

It is worth noting because of these indisputable facts Scotland for centuries did not keep “Christmas”, and during the puritanic rule of Cromwell was forbidden.

Tradition dies hard, and was the means of destroying *the* Truth amongst God’s people at the time of Jesus, who said :

“(You) make the word of God of none effect through your tradition.” (Mark 7 : 13).

A question which will appeal to the thoughtful : “*Why is there never any reference, let alone a command to keep in remembrance Jesus’ birth while there are explicit commands to remember His death ?*”

Yours etc.,

On behalf of the Remnant of Christ’s Ecclesia

As a result of us sending a leaflet to the Bible Student a letter has been received here with some very interesting questions.

—per D.L.

NEWTOWNARDS, CO. DOWN, Northern Ireland.

Breaking of Bread, Sunday 11-30 a.m.

Sunday School 2-0 p.m.

Bible Class—Wednesday evening.

We look forward to the first Fraternal in Manchester and to meeting again all whom we haven't seen for so long. As each year changes the world scene almost out of recognition, morally and politically, the times speaking of His return, we can all feel the urgent need of closer association and united efforts to maintain those precious things of the Truth which in God's mercy make us one together and the Body one with Him.

J.P.

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

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

Lectures this month are entitled : "Are Christians" really Christians following Christ ? Each lecture is to show that the leaders of Christendom deny Christ's teaching, as for example in the first lecture : "The leaders of Christendom deny Christ's return, yet Jesus said 'I will come again' ."

Brethren and sisters are reminded of the Fraternal Gathering, to be held, God willing, in the Memorial Hall on Monday, April 23rd. Programmes will be issued later.

W.V.B.