

MAY 1978

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"

"SELAH"

"WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YE TO BE?"

SMOKING

"THE SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD"

"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

All Communications

W. V. Butterfield
16 Westfield Road,
Cheadle Hulme,
Cheadle,
Cheadle, SK8 6EH

J. A. DeFries
R.D.1. Forestville,
New York 14062
U.S.A.

At the Table of the Lord

The Joy of the Lord is your Strength

EACH YEAR we listen to the words of Nehemiah, a familiar record, yet one which can inspire us to greater efforts to serve God as we perceive his faithfulness. His name, itself, helps us, for it means "comforted of Yahweh." God, in His great wisdom and mercy knows how much we need comforting *and* strengthening in our efforts to please Him. Perhaps, if we discern the strength given to Nehemiah, we can find help for our time of probation.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to Artaxerxes, King of Persia, a position of some esteem in that great empire. In such a situation, Nehemiah may have felt secure, having little to worry about. How easily he could have been content with his lot, but such was not his spirit. We read in Chapter 1:2-4, of those who came to him from Judah and Jerusalem, telling of the affliction and reproach upon those in Jerusalem. As a result, Nehemiah

"... sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." (verse 4)

His reaction was anguish, sorrow for his brethren's sake. How easily he could have felt, "what has that got to do with me", or "no doubt, they must be very wrong to be in such difficulty". He, however, turned to the God of Israel for comfort, for strength; turned to His Word as he prayed:

"Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying . . .

"... if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them . . . yet will I . . . bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there." (verses 8 and 9)

And, he continues, verse 11:

"O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name. . . ."

These words reveal the simple yet great faith of Nehemiah. If only we could maintain such a spirit, would it not bring help and comfort in our needs today, brethren and sisters? This can come about, however, only if we, as Nehemiah, feel distressed, concerned, aware of the needs of each other.

“This is Nothing . . . but Sorrow of Heart”

When Nehemiah, distressed because of his brethren in Jerusalem, came before Artaxerxes to carry out his duties as cupbearer, the king, looking upon his face could discern his sorrow.

“. . . Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. . . .” (Nehemiah 2:2)

Often when we may feel sorrow or great concern, we try to keep it within ourselves; but if it is great sorrow of heart, it will show, and so it was with Nehemiah. How pleasing such a sorrow of heart must have been to Nehemiah’s God, for it was sorrow for His house, for His people; a sorrow that overcame any possible inclination to be unconcerned about Jerusalem, God’s chosen dwelling place with His people. Nehemiah’s mind is an example for us, brethren and sisters, for it is so easy to be content with our lot. We are helped, blessed, comfortable, and can be very busy about our own affairs; yet, in this there is a danger that we don’t want to be moved out of our comfortable circumstances, and therefore won’t be, unless we are sensitive to God’s hand, God’s purpose, God’s house, and God’s people. Unless we, as Nehemiah, know sorrow of heart, can we feel a need for God’s comfort, or, indeed, will we actively seek it, realising that it only is our hope of *eternal* strength and comfort? And, in addition, without that sorrow of heart, we’ll find no comforting to help us face *this* life’s trials and tribulations.

We read how God helped Nehemiah, helped him to go to Jerusalem, helped in leading God’s people in the work of rebuilding the walls of that city, helped to confound the powerful adversaries who sought in every way to hinder this work. Even with God’s help, it was needful to be alert, aware, working with a weapon in one hand, prepared to repel the enemy, so ever present, seeking to overwhelm.

Finally with much effort, courage, prayer, and faith, the wall was completed, and then we read:

“. . . it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this *work was wrought of our God.*” (Nehemiah 6:16)

As the work prospered, as Nehemiah and his brethren refused to be compromised, intimidated or deterred, the adversary saw their utter dependence upon God. They perceived God’s hand so evidently working on their behalf; they realised that it wasn’t just the work of “these feeble Jews”, as they had called them, but that “this work was wrought of our God.”

Perhaps this should remind us, brethren and sisters, that our work, our steadfastness, our trust in God should be so evident that our adversaries will also have to acknowledge — though they may be loathe to do so — that the work done is of God. As we think back over the last week, the last month, could it be seen that here is one with whom God works: here is one comforted of God; or do we appear not much different than those about us in the world? If we are to be His witnesses, must not our living give evidence of Him to whom we belong, whom we strive to serve, and in whom we trust?

“They read in the Book in the Law of God Distinctly”

In response to this great blessing, Nehemiah, Ezra and their brethren turned to the word of the law which they caused to be read to all the people. In Nehemiah 8:2, we see that Ezra began to read the first day of the seventh month. Perhaps as our brethren listened to that law read, they may have heard the words of Leviticus 23:24-25:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

“Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.”

We know that to the faithful in Israel, the feast of trumpets spoke of God’s judgments to come upon the earth, the gathering of His people to Himself, preparatory to the next feast on the tenth day of the month, the day of atonement. The word used for “blowing of trumpets”, we find, is also used as “*to make a joyful sound*”, “*to shout for joy*”. This day of blowing of trumpets was to be a symbol of God’s triumph over the enemies of His people, much as seen in the blowing of the trumpets at Jericho on the seventh day, causing the walls of the city to fall down. Also, in the Revelation, we read of the blowing of the trumpets as judgment after judgment is to fall upon those who oppose the hope of Israel.

As these words of Leviticus 23 were heard by those assembled in Jerusalem, we are told (Nehemiah 8:8):

“So they read in the book in the law of God *distinctly*, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

This was not merely a “reading” but it was done to help our brethren understand, to get the spirit of it; it was a feeding from His word, a help and guide to His people. What was the reaction as they began to comprehend the law? Verse 9 tells us:

“... all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”

Why did they weep? Perhaps it was because they had begun to realise their lack, their failure to keep the law; had begun to realise how they had brought sorrow to God. But, Nehemiah and Ezra spoke to them:

“... This day is holy (consecrated, a sabbath, a day of blowing of trumpets) unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep...”

A day of comfort, of strengthening from God.

“... for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (verse 10)

What was this “joy of the Lord” which was so apparent to Nehemiah and Ezra, the joy they exhorted their brethren to perceive? Perhaps there is help in the words of Jesus to those who had wisely used the talents given to them.

“... Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: *enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*” (Matthew 25:21)

This faithful servant was to be a ruler over many things in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, where all those accounted faithful at Jesus’ Judgment will rule in blessing and righteousness; truly, an entering into the joy of the Lord. Nehemiah and Ezra, no doubt, saw this hope as the law was read, and so spoke to their brethren:

“... mourn not, nor weep... for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:9-10)

The result of their words (verse 12):

“... all the people went their way... to make great mirth, *because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.*”

Does this help us, brethren and sisters, to perceive why the joy of the Lord was their strength on this first day of the seventh month, as they understood His law and His purpose? How blessed they were to have been given Nehemiah and Ezra who read the law distinctly, to cause them to understand, to give them hope and enable them to contemplate the joy of the Lord.

Thus they stood in the midst of Jerusalem, its walls so recently completed surrounded by adversaries, few in number; yet, covered, strengthened, encouraged by the Lord their God. And, in this mind they kept the feast of trumpets to remind them of the great blessings to come.

“For the Joy set before Him”

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul shows our need to be

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who *for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

Was this His strength? Can it not be ours as well, brethren and sisters, as we strive to look toward that time of joy, the kingdom established, the King, the Victor, ruling there, as well as all those who through His Word can keep the joy of the Lord set before them as their strength?

How well Ezra and Nehemiah read the law, giving the sense, causing our brethren to understand. Does it help us as we have read it this morning?

Can we not imagine that as they understood, the brethren in Jerusalem would keep and better comprehend the feast on the tenth day of the seventh month, the day of atonement? They would look to the work of the high priest as he entered into the most holy place with the blood of the sacrifice to make atonement first for himself and then for the people. They would perceive their great need and the merciful provision to make them “at one” with God.

Further in Nehemiah 8:14, we read how

“... they found written in the law ... that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:”

In obedience

“... the people went forth ... and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.”

(verse 16)

These booths were simple, made from the boughs of trees, not ornate or luxuriously furnished, but a covering, as a sign to them of the protection and care of God. They dwelt in these booths and were to

“... *rejoice* before the Lord your God seven days.”
(Leviticus 23:40)

A reminder that God had redeemed and would redeem when Jesus returns. Can we see why Nehemiah reminds us “the joy of the Lord is your strength”? Can we enter into the minds of our brethren as they stood there close by the newly completed House of God, as they heard His law read out, as they renewed their vows, as they rejoiced in His promises, and as they dwelt in booths as a sign of His continual covering? The joy of the Lord was indeed their strength, and it can be ours, brethren and sisters, if we can receive the sense and can be helped to “understand” the wonder of His word to us.

J. A. De F.



Selah

“Value it, considering the End”

Psalm 54

THIS SHORT PSALM OF EIGHT VERSES (including the Title) is divided into two equal portions by the word “*Selah*”. The deeper meaning of this Psalm, that intended for the Sons of God, comes from an understanding of this word. The introduction of *Selah* is a clarion call by the Spirit to heed the lesson of the Psalm, “Value it, considering the End”. This arresting appeal is as important to-day as it was when David wrote the Psalm. What in the Psalm is to be valued? What end is to be considered? The context will help:—

“They have not set God before them. *Selah*” (verse 3)

“For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. *Selah*.”

A first reading of these words, “They have not set God before them”, might suggest that David was referring to the world, but such is not the case; he is referring to those who have departed or are departing from the Truth. Hence the warning is much more pertinent for those who are anxious to be right. One of the evidences of apostasy is self-satisfaction frequently revealed by the obvious desire to refer all possible condemnation and warnings to others. The warning in this Psalm is that some, having the Truth, failed “to set God before them”, or, in other words, disregarded God and pleased themselves. The sharp injunction, *Selah*, will cause every attentive ear “to value this warning, considering the end”; an end which is terrible indeed for the wicked as it is glorious for the righteous.

The circumstances in which the Psalm was written is indicated in the Title, and a consideration of these must help to an understanding of the Psalm and the lesson to be derived therefrom. David says the Psalm was written when:

“The Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?” (Title).

David at the time was suffering from Saul’s mad jealousy, and was compelled to flee for his life. To reason with such a person David knew was useless. When the “roots of bitterness” captures the heart reason immediately departs. At Engedi David had shown Saul how wrong he was, and how sincere were his own motives, for when he cut off part of Saul’s garment he could just as easily have slain Saul; but such palpable evidences make no impression upon a heart

distorted and perverted by the “root of bitterness.” Hence David did not accept Saul’s confession and assurances of good intentions. Subsequent events proved how wise David was, for as soon as the Ziphims or Ziphites informed Saul of David’s whereabouts, Saul set off again on his mad purpose to destroy David. It seems as if David could hardly believe at first that Saul had shown again so quickly his evil purpose:

“David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed” (I Samuel 26, verse 4)

This was the predicament with its grievous trial which caused David to put forth his plaint to God, as recorded in the Psalm:

“Save me, O God (Elohim), 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 set God (Elohim) before them. *Selah*” (verses 1-3)

It was now evident to David that although Saul had so recently recanted concerning his evil intentions against David, Saul’s heart was not changed and he was as determined as ever to kill David. It is not possible to imagine how grievous the trial would be to David. To think that he could have slain Saul, as Abishai would have done, if he had not been restrained by David and did not because the Truth would not permit him to slay the Lord’s Anointed; and now as a result he was in danger of his own life by the one whom he had spared, must have pressed heavily upon David and those who were with him.

David’s sustaining strength in this bitter trial was in the knowledge:

“They have not set God before them. *Selah*” (verse 3)

He knew that since they did not acknowledge the Lord in all their ways, their purpose must fail and although it might take a time, they would certainly come to *the end* appointed for the wicked. The fact that David had no doubt of this shows how strong was his faith, and should encourage us in the belief that the Lord will not forget to reward the adversaries of His children according to their ways. So it is most instructive to look at Saul at this time and those with him who were called to the Truth but had no real fear of God before their eyes. Saul had all the outward show of believing in God, of carrying out in a formal way certain duties in the Truth, indeed was he not the Lord’s Anointed, and yet the fact is made plain as a warning for all time that in his heart he did not believe in God. As David says of him and those with him:

“They have not set God before them. *Selah.*”

It is true that there can be attendance at the meetings, perfunctory reading of the Scriptures, after faith has departed from the heart, but such a life is doomed to failure and shame. The first real trial exposes the hypocrisy, and sooner or later the end appointed of God will be seen. In the case of Saul that end is made dramatically clear. Soon after David had penned the word *Selah* — value the warning considering the end. The end referred to in the word *Selah* is foreshadowed in what happened at Ziph.

Saul, in the course of his pursuit of David, sleeps along with his officers and men. It is a deep sleep — “from the Lord.” Taking advantage of this, David enters Saul’s camp. Abishai pleads with David to let him kill Saul as he lies sleeping, his spear stuck in the ground by his pillow, along with his cruse of water. David’s superb faith is seen in his refusal of such a tempting request:

“Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?

“As 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, verses 9-10)

David deftly takes the spear and cruse of water and gets him away to the other side on the top of the hill. Now he awakens Saul as he calls out to him. Beautiful indeed is the exhortation of David to Saul; a fervent appeal that he might consider whether his ways are ordered by the Lord or not.

“If the Lord have stirred thee up against me let him accept an offering, but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord” (I Samuel 26 verse 19)

David is sufficiently aware, even in the tension of the circumstances, he may have done wrong. If so, he is prepared to make an offering to atone for his wrong. Otherwise, Saul’s project can only be evil; those with him the “children of men”, meaning they are not the children of God, and will certainly be cursed by the Lord. Saul’s confession which follows, is an example of *the end*. David is acknowledged to be right, and Saul only evil:

“I have sinned, return, my son, David for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: *behold I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly.*”

“Blessed be thou, my son David, *thou shalt both do great things and prevail.*” (I Samuel 26, verses 19 and 25)

The *end* of this incident foreshadowed the end which was to come to Saul and his evil companions — shame and death; and the reason according to David, because:

“They set not God before them. *Selah*.” (verse 3)

Selah — says David. Value this, turn it over, considering the end. For a while the wicked may seem powerful and prosper, but they cannot alter or escape from the end decreed by God. The warning becomes all the more powerful and urgent for the Sons of God when it is realised that the failure recorded is concerning those who were called to the Truth, and because they allowed faith in God to cease, left the Truth, and were no more worthy to be called the sons of God but are referred to by David as children of men. David had the Spirit of Christ and would not acknowledge as brethren those who refused to conform to the will of God. The adoption of certain names, the claim of fleshly ties, are shown by Christ and exemplified by David as being insufficient to warrant the use of the salutation “brother”. As Christ says:

“My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”
(Luke 8, verse 21)

Selah — also directs the mind to another end, the end of those like David and foreshadowed in the words of Saul:

“Thou shalt both do great things and prevail.”

David’s faith was built upon this hope as he declares following his *Selah* appeal:

“Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

“For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.” (verses 4 and 7)

It is significant that during the stirring appeal recorded in this Psalm, David addresses the Almighty as “Elohim”:

“Save me, O God (Elohim), by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.” (verse 1)

And so it is clear what David means by asking God to “save him by His *name*.” The name, *Elohim*, used by David, as previous consideration has shown, is what might be termed a Hebrew idiom for expressing the most intense meaning possible. In this case it means all forms of power focussed in One, that is, in God, which thought might partially be conveyed in the English word — *mightiness*.

The appellation *Elohim*, with the understanding of the Spirit, elaborates the title of Omnipotent, by allowing the mind to dwell on the many different forms of power which are all derived from God,

and through an intelligent use of the word are seen as emanating from Him. There is no power for good that is not included in the *Elohim* — the God of Israel. David's appeal was for the exercise of this all-sufficient and all-wise power.

It is by this power that *Selah* has been written — “Value it, considering the end,” and it is by this majestic power that *the* end for all the *sons of men* and the *sons of God* will be achieved.

W.V.B.



What Manner of Persons Ought Ye To Be?

IT IS NOT BY CHANCE, brethren and sisters, that we are often reminded in the Scriptures of that time which will be known as the day of the Lord. Repetition in the Scriptures of the fact that such a day will come is purposeful, designed by God to serve as both a source of encouragement and a means of testing those who hope in such promise. God's word from the beginning has spoken of this day, as God has come to speak to those regarded as His children from Adam to the present. So many have lived with their awareness towards this day; yet, through these thousands of years of promise, that day has not come. This knowledge for us, then, living today, in anticipation of that day, can be a source of trial, a means of testing our belief that that day will truly come, for the subtlety of our flesh and the nearness of the adversary about us can combine to cause a carelessness in our behaviour before God. It is, then, in the mercy and purpose of God that His word, directed to us serves as a constant reminder of the coming of His Son and the events to unfold at that time. It is through the inspiration of God's word that we are put in remembrance in our portions regarding God's promise of this day — to help us keep faith and judge our actions now, lest we fail to value what that day will mean to us as responsible hearers of God's word.

To this end, we are reminded by Peter, in II Peter 3:10:

“... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

We are reminded that at the sudden appearance of the Lord Jesus there will be put into action the events to bring about the end of all that which has defiled God's creation. A cleansing will take place; the fire of the Spirit will run to and fro to purify, destroying all that which is of the world. In light of this day, Peter questions our position, continuing in the 11th and 12th verses:

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

In essence, we are questioned here as to what our respect is unto that day; for if there is a valuing of what that day will mean, it must and will be revealed in our behaviour and conduct now.

Be Ye Holy

Perhaps we can be helped if we stop to consider for a moment, what manner of persons ought we to be, in reverence and behaviour (as that word “conversation” means) before God? Going to Peter’s first epistle, 1:15 and 16, we read:

“. . . as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour);

“Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**”

These are God’s words written here for our instruction, as Peter reminds us what God said through Moses and Aaron to Israel at Mount Sinai, in Leviticus 11:44:

“For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy”

We are required of God, as was Israel, in the spirit to be holy, to have no Fellowship with that which is unholy.

What does it mean to be holy, for on the surface it appears, perhaps, to be something unattainable? We find that the word has many renderings, “to be clean”, “pure”, “blameless”, “perfect”, also “to be separate” or “to be set apart”. We could say, then, to be holy is to be separated from all that which is not clean. Implied, then, for a child of God to be holy, there is required a total subjection to the task of keeping one’s life set apart from all that which is not godly, a task which Paul helps us to understand in his words to the Romans in 12:1 and 2:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Is this not what is involved in striving to be holy, to present our bodies, to give of ourselves, to sacrifice in our living the desires and lusts of the flesh, to put down that which is evil in us in order that we might be acceptable to God, for no flesh can please God, we are told?

Living Sacrifice

To do this, we must take care not to be conformed to this world. We cannot fashion our behaviour or our thinking after those who are of the world. We need to be separate, set apart, in order to be holy. To be sure, this is a difficult task, to make all of our living acceptable to God, for we fail often, but as Paul tells us: by the mercies of God, we can present our bodies as a living sacrifice, we are able to be holy, we are able to stand apart. For God, in His mercy, has made provision through His Son that we can fellowship His perfect sacrifice, and thus makes possible the workings of repentance, as Peter tells us in II Peter 3:9:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Is it not this knowledge, a provision of God, which makes possible that which Paul speaks of to be not conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. This transformation, or as this word means, “to change in fashion”, is speaking of that change which takes place when the man of the spirit takes control over the man of the flesh, thus the means to guard against the conforming lures of the things about us. It is perhaps as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 4:16:

“... though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

Must not our minds and spirits be like this, that our inward man or that which is in us because of the word of God being in our hearts, is able to be brought out and renewed day by day, so as to maintain our place of separation, and thus keep alive the promise of hope before us.

Our striving now must be as Peter continues in II Peter 3:13 and 14:

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

In other words, we are to be found striving to be holy, set apart from those works of the flesh which shall be burned up. Are we, then, looking forward to the new heaven and new earth as we should be, redeeming the time, walking in wisdom toward them that are without, remembering that here, in this life, we have no continuing city, but must seek the one to come? If we are, must we not value that day of the Lord and be encouraged by the help given us of God to remind us of that day so that our manner now is striving to be holy.

M. C. S.

Smoking

IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE BEGINNING of this century that the smoking of cigarettes became so prevalent.

Elders in the Body raised a warning that it was a worldly habit, defiling and so unholy. Those in the Body, who had become addicted to the habit when pleaded with to give it up, made the usual excuses, "What is wrong with it? Show me a verse that says it is unscriptural." So these continued oblivious at the time of the danger they were courting. Now the danger is recognised in responsible quarters.

The Government has taken up an attitude insisting that every packet of cigarettes is overprinted with a *health warning*. So convinced are the proprietors of *Reader's Digest* that they are prepared to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of advertising revenues rather than accept advertisements for cigarettes.

Meet those in the world who smoke cigarettes. It would be interesting to know the proportion of these, who would like to give it up but cannot do so. They have become addicted to the opiate effect. Observe one of these in a meeting when he is criticised. His first instant reaction is a long pull at a cigarette "to steady his nerves" he says.

It is true what a doctor has said that it is the dearest way of dying. It is stated that the last four British male Sovereigns killed themselves through heavy cigarette smoking. The lungs of Edward VII were seized up before he was seventy. George V suffered in his fifties and sixties from chronic bronchitis. Edward VIII died of cancer of the throat. George VI had a cancerous lung removed in his fifties but died shortly afterwards.

How dreadful it must appear to the Almighty that in those who have the "name that they live but are dead", many have become addicts to the defiling habit to the extent on their own confession that "they could not go through a Fraternal without slipping out for a smoke." Will they feel like taking cigarettes to the Judgment?

When one of our members went into hospital, his lungs were thoroughly examined by the doctor, who said: "I can tell you do not smoke."

Let us appreciate the blessing of knowing God's will, that while it may seem irksome at times in not conforming to this world, there are abundant compensations even in this life, with the blessing of the hope of life for ever.

W. V. B.

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

“ . . . I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely . . . ”
(Ezekiel 38:11)

RECENT EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST underline the fact that the Palestinian guerillas in themselves can never be a threat to the state of Israel. Repeatedly they are seen, not in the role of fighting Israeli armed forces, but rather the attackers of unarmed civilians by covert means. These hit and run raids from across the Lebanese border, at the most are only a source of harassment to the population of Israel. If the regular armies of the surrounding nations cannot achieve victory, the Palestinians have no chance whatsoever against the modern state of Israel with its efficient armed forces and its people solidly behind them.

From the scriptural point of view their attitude has been portrayed long ago:

“Behold, O mount Seir, (Arabs) I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate.

“I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

“Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel. . . .” (Ezekiel 35:3-5)

Israel's attack upon the Palestinian bases in South Lebanon this spring was an attempt to eliminate the harassment and put away for ever such an evil marauding enemy. Even a proportion of the Lebanese people would like to see an end of the guerillas. But the United Nations has again stepped in, and thus that tiny nation of Lebanon suffers more and more from outside interference, which does not solve its internal basic problems.

Syrian forces are there; but keeping clear of the Israeli border. A force of Iraqis are reported to have entered. The nation itself is deeply divided, apart from the embarrassing presence of the Palestinians, Moslem and Christian Lebanese are as much at enmity with each other as any Arab is against a Jew. Now many of the Lebanese towns south of the Litani River are in ruin due to the Israeli attack upon the guerilla bases, but the Palestinians who fled live on to re-organise and fight again another day, not only against the civil population of Israel, but against any Lebanese who object to their presence.

How ineffectual the UNO forces seem to be. It has been openly said that the United Nations troops cannot use force, and will not have the numbers and weapons to do so. They have been told they can operate only with the co-operation of the authorities in South Lebanon; and the Palestinians are the de facto authority in Tyre; which is the only territory still held by the Palestinians south of the Litani River.

The Swedish and Persian contingents of the U.N.O. forces were equipped with nothing more than rifles. The French contribution was placed with armoured personnel carriers. But how these can prevent Palestinian guerillas filtering back into the South Lebanon remains to be seen. It was a farcical situation when the Persian convoy was halted by Lebanese Christian troops, who are very greatly opposed to the Palestinians, and have a desire for Israeli presence and protection rather than a U.N.O. so called peace keeping force. Israeli soldiers had to persuade the Christian Lebanese to allow the U.N.O. force to pass.

On the other hand Palestinian guerillas stopped U.N.O. troops from advancing to the Litani river bridge on the coast road north of Tyre. As a result they diverted up a side road leading to Israeli positions at a hill ridge a mile to the east, and established themselves between the two forces.

An Israeli leader has warned all forces in the region, whether U.N.O., Syrian, or Palestinian, that terrorist attacks on Israeli settlements could not be allowed to continue. The United Nations forces must take the strong grip on the region they had promised to take; and Israel has said it "will give them protection if they need it"!

When guerillas opened fire on Swedish U.N.O. troops at a bridge over the River Litani, Israel's army staff offered them help and later gave support so that the Swedes could establish their position.

The U.N.O. is in an invidious position; but Great Power diplomacy which is behind the U.N.O., requires its presence to be there, but certainly not because the Great Powers are at unity over what should be done about the problem.

The United States leaders at the present time, favour, as part of their international diplomacy, Israel's withdrawal from territory it has taken from the Arabs for the furtherance of its security. It has been argued by American military experts that there is no basis for Israel's claim that withdrawal from captured Arab lands (in the 1967 war) would put the security of the country at risk. America says that modern early-warning systems with agreed supervised buffer zones would meet Israel's demand for secured borders.

Israel's Prime Minister however, is not a man to give in easily, to American or any other nation's demands, unless he has security. The following comment which criticises adverse opinion in the national press takes a cool and unbiased view of the situation.

“... It is a measure of Western incomprehension of Israeli politics to believe that had Mr. Ezer Weizman been Prime Minister his government would have been more flexible except on the secondary issue of the Sinai settlements. When it comes to Jerusalem or to the strategic positions along the Jordan, Israel will not yield any more than, say, Poland will on its Western frontiers — though Israel's claims have genuine roots in history and sound strategic justification.

‘Contrary to your interpretation peace and not land is what Mr. Begin's government has been seeking; but who can blame it for being conscious of the “circle of fear”, when Israel's earlier territorial concessions proved so terribly barren? Have you forgotten that some two years ago Israel gave up the control of the Suez Canal, the vital Sinai strategic passes, the Sinai oilfields which satisfied its entire energy requirements and important positions in the Golan? For all these one-sided concessions Israel got nothing but the thorny bouquets which the Western Press periodically bestows on her.

‘On the other hand President Sadat is praised to high heavens for the breakthrough of his visit to Jerusalem. Of course it was one, though somewhat analogous to the husband who stopped beating his wife. But where President Sadat failed dismally — and on this point the entire Western Press is silent — is in not following up his initiative with a genuine effort of negotiation. All he came up with were imperious demands for instant capitulation by Israel instead of the normal and expected give and take. The Western Press could assist the cause of peace by remembering occasionally this elementary truth.’

This give and take will have to come, and will surely come. The scene is being set for such a change, as America strives to bring about better conditions in the Middle East.

Then will come a dwelling “at rest” and “safety”, which will be Israel's circumstance, when the Northern Power intervenes:

“... at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages...” (Ezekiel 38:10-11)

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. Alternative Week: Revelation Study.

The Sunday School party was held on March 11, and was enjoyed by all, young and old alike. The subject of the address was "Salt", reminding us that God uses everyday things to teach of His grace and love.

By the time this is in print, God willing, two visitors from here will be in England, rejoicing in the companionship of the brethren and sisters.

J. A. DeF.



MANCHESTER: Rycroft Hall Annexe, Audenshaw, Manchester,

Sundays: Breaking of Bread: 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: 7.30 p.m. in the ante room to large hall, Wednesday evening.

The writer after a fall and a spell in hospital desires to take this opportunity of thanking all at home and abroad for their messages of sympathy and love, which have meant much as an aid to recovery. It is believed that the supplications of many have been heard, making us feel indebted to all.

During the nursing at home, one nurse has expressed a keen interest in the Truth; and asks as soon as convenient that she may bring her husband for a talk. She describes herself as a "lapsed Catholic"; and in spite of pressure from the local priest, has no desire to return to the Catholic Church.

These opportunities to witness are encouraging, whatever the outcome.

W. V. B.

“PENTRIP”, Black Rock, Portmadoc,

Breaking of Bread: Sundays, 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: Mid-Week.

We were very grateful in being allowed to be present at the Manchester Fraternal Gathering on Bank Holiday Monday 27th March, suitable transport being provided. It is uplifting in having the benefit of such fellowship.

Our thoughts are with all those in difficulty and in trial at the present time, both far and near.

We have had correspondence with some who were formerly with us, but how darkened is the mind which departs from the simplicity of The Truth.

per D. L.

