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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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At the Table of the Lord

“She hath done what she could”

AS WE READ OF THE EXPERIENCES of the Lord Jesus during the last days of His life on earth, there is much to encourage in *our* striving to please His Father, and ours. Those days were extremely difficult as He struggled to obey God, contrary to His own natural desires. His fear was lest *He* fail and so all the purpose of God spoken of in the Law, the Psalms, and the prophets be denied.

When we think of Jesus, we are inclined to feel He possessed super-human strength — ability beyond which a mortal man might have — to help Him to overcome His fleshly thoughts. This was not so, for while He was strengthened of God, ministered to by angels, sustained by the Spirit, it was because of His righteousness that such help was given. As we have often considered, when baptized of John, He submitted “to fulfill all righteousness”; for Jesus was determined to honour God by obedience at whatever cost to Himself.

As we, then, read of His life, His experiences with His disciples and with the scribes and Pharisees, we can perceive a bit more clearly what a great and increasing struggle it was for Him to endure, not to be cast down and thus give up the fight against His flesh.

There was much to tempt the Lord Jesus to forsake the way of righteousness, but at the same time, there was much given to encourage Him. Perhaps, brethren and sisters, if we can grow in perception of the help given, can discern His determination to use that help, we can be strengthened in our own fight against the temptations which so easily beset us. We fail, but He *never* failed, so we can profit by His words, His spirit, and His experiences.

The record in Mark 14 tells of several events in Jesus' life which either helped Him or tried Him. All these events happened in His last days on earth as a mortal man. Indeed, it was close to the time of the Passover when Jesus instituted the feast of love we have partaken of here this morning. He knew His final and greatest trial was soon to come.

Bethany was the scene of one of these experiences, in the house of Simon the leper:

“ . . . there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.” (Mark 14:3)

There is not much detail given here in Mark; but when we look at Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8, we learn a great deal more about this woman who anointed Jesus, and by doing so encouraged Him in the struggle to obey His Father's commands. We find in John that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. It was the same Mary of whom we read that she "sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word." (Luke 10:39) Of her, Jesus said to Martha her sister:

“. . . one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

In the record in John, we are told how Mary anointed Jesus and how, as a consequence the "house was filled with the odour of the ointment." (John 12:3) Can we perceive, brethren and sisters, the love which motivated Mary in this work? Can we discern what a help and encouragement this act of love must have been to Jesus as He was struggling to serve God, to die in obedience? Why did Mary do this? In love? Yes! Love, with which she was filled, for several reasons. One was that Lazarus, her brother, was raised from the dead and restored to Mary and Martha by Jesus. But, there was more, for Jesus said of her:

"*She hath done what she could*: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." (Mark 14:8)

Did she show by her anointing that she recognized Jesus' work, His life of sacrifice, His readiness to die as God required Him so that all His brethren and sisters might have the hope of salvation? She loved Jesus, for *His* love shown in this obedience and recognizing the extent of His agonizing of His need, she did "what she could." How grateful Jesus would feel for her perception, her readiness, her love for Him. It is an example for us, brethren and sisters, as we are seeking in love to help each other and to emulate Him. How much a coming along side in a time of need is valued, can help, and can provide perhaps that extra boost we need to overcome a particular struggle we may be undergoing.

"The house was filled with the odour"

Jesus, we are told, loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Why did He do so? Was it because they loved Him as they saw His giving of Himself for them; and in return they delighted in giving of themselves. Is our spirit like that of Mary who "*did what she could*", not just with words of love, but with actions which filled the whole house with a sweet odour, demonstrating to all the fulness of her love for her Redeemer who was about to die for her salvation?

Yet, it is a salutary lesson to see that, in spite of her demonstration of love:

“ . . . there were some that had indignation *within themselves*, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

“ . . . it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And *they murmured against her.*” (Mark 14:4-5)

Was this an expression of love for Jesus, a recognition of His love for them in giving His life? The record in John 12 helps us to perceive the mind of those who expressed this thought, for we see this was Judas Iscariot’s mind. In verse 6, we see why He spoke in this manner:

“This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”

His motive was not love, but selfishness, seeking only his own gain, his own desire; and we know, ultimately this desire led him to betray the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. An extreme case — we might think — but when we consider what was the primary cause of Judas’ defection — it was desire for self only that influenced his thoughts and actions. Did these words of Judas help Jesus? Did they anoint Him against His burying as did Mary? Obviously, the answer is No; they brought sadness and pain to Jesus. How unlike Mary who did “*what she could*”. Can Mary’s example help us, brethren and sisters, to do what *we* are able, even at considerable cost to ourselves, to please God, to show love by helping each other to become better brethren and sisters of Christ? Can we inspire one another to do what God wants us to do, to do what Jesus has done, to put away the desires of our flesh, in a figure crucifying it? This, we know, is not easy, for many things can and do interfere.

“The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak”

We have an example in our recent portion in Mark 14. Jesus was in the garden, after the Passover. He was soon to die and agonized to do so in obedience to His Father’s will. He knew He needed help, and said to His disciples:

“ . . . Sit ye here, *while I shall pray.*

“And he taketh with him Peter and James and John. . . .”

(Mark 14:32-33)

He sought God’s care through prayer, and took with Him the three disciples who were probably closest to Him. He told these three:

“ . . . My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: *tarry ye here, and watch.*” (verse 34)

From these whom He loved, He sought support and comfort. We know Jesus' mind, expressed thus:

“... Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” (verse 36)

Because of this spirit of submission and trust, His prayer was heard, and we know:

“... there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” (Luke 22:43)

The Father, in love, responded to His fervent plea, and so Jesus did find the strength He knew He needed to overcome. What of His beloved disciples?

“... he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? *couldst* not thou watch one hour?” (Mark 14:37)

Did these three do what they could? Or, did they fail their Lord in His hour of need? Jesus appeared to single out Peter. Why was this? Was it because Peter had expressed that great love for Jesus, that great determination to help Him? Yet, we remember, previously Jesus had called him a “Satan”, an adversary because rather than help, he had hindered Jesus’ determination to submit to God’s will.

Jesus could easily have been vexed with Peter here in the garden, angry perhaps because of his failure to truly help Him, but no, even when the three slept, He spoke in love:

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.” (Mark 14:38)

Do we need to realize, as did Peter (and his brethren), more fully how very weak the flesh is? The spirit, as was Peter’s, is often willing, but the flesh, with its desires, its demands, gets in the way. We are like Peter, brethren and sisters, and we do not always take heed when we fail. Soon after this, Peter denied the Lord Jesus three times and for this was caused to weep when Jesus turned and looked upon him. Was all this, this need to recognize the weakness of the flesh, part of Peter’s becoming changed by the Spirit, as Jesus had said to him:

“... when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren.”
(Luke 22:32)

Is it something we need to realize, to work against as part of our converting, becoming more Christ-like, more of the Spirit and less of the flesh? We have seen those whose spirit has been ready or

willing but whose flesh, being weak, pulled down until the hope of salvation was lost. How loving were Jesus' words:

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. . . .”

He, who knew the love of the one who had *“done what she could”*, and who also witnessed the willingness of those who wanted to do what they could and failed, seeks to warn us, *“Watch ye, and pray. . . .”* Can we do so, brethren and sisters, more persistently, more perceivingly, with importunity, as we find ourselves in these last days of shaking so that we may hope to have the strength to be among those who cannot be shaken and so remain?

J. A. De F.



Christadelphians then and now

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT for the older generation to see that Christadelphia is no longer a separate and distinct community; but is really a part of Christendom. This is confirmed by statements in some of the Christadelphian periodicals. The chief magazine — “*The Christadelphian*” — by allowing articles on the “Origin of man” showed that it no longer belonged to the “sect everywhere spoken against”, but was part of the base amalgam — Christendom. Another Christadelphian periodical clearly showed that their “brethren” were going along the broad way claiming companionship and a working together with the Bishop of Woolwich, the author of the infidel book — “Honest to God”. To the older generation of Christadelphians this must seem dreadful. What can they do? Protests have been raised, but to no avail. Where the leaven has started its evil work, the whole will be leavened. The only possible course of righteous action is “To come out and be separate”. In doing so consideration will be given to the divine statement:

“There is *one body*, and one Spirit . . . , one Lord one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all. . . .”

(Eph. 4:4-6)

The notion that numerous and separate “fellowships” can collectively constitute the One Body is utterly false as a cursory examination will clearly show. God has chosen to describe His people as the “Body”. This can no more be divided and live than the natural body. It is only when the evil of philosophy is allowed to enter that the simplicity of the Truth is obscured, and indeed lost. Over a hundred years ago Christadelphians *then* understood and believed this as is seen by the following statement of Robert Roberts:

“We have identified ourselves with the truth in its purity, without mixture or compromise, and please God shall adhere, without flinching, to this policy to the end. . . .

We should rejoice to feel at liberty to pursue a broader policy; but we yield to the claims of judgment and conscience. The genuine article or nothing is our motto. The brethren of Christ (who are obliged to distinguish themselves as Christadelphians) are among the denominations what Israel were foretold to be in the world: ‘The people dwell alone and are not reckoned among the nations.’”

But *now* the hedge between those claiming the name “Christadelphian” and Christendom has been broken down. How otherwise

could the plea be published and not annulled that they are engaged in the same work as the Bishop of Woolwich, in endeavouring to save a people from the "brink of disaster"? The Bishop of Woolwich has shown in his book that he is ignorant of the purpose of God; has no notion of what is God's salvation in the Kingdom of His Son, and consequently his writings are a snare rather than a means of saving a people for the name of the Most High. To condone these as is clearly the case in the Christadelphian *Endeavour* magazine is a denial of the faith and shows an embracing of the world of Christendom. How vast the difference between the Christadelphians *then* (a hundred years ago when they were indeed the sect everywhere spoken against) and now when their attitude is no less than friendship with the world which is enmity with God.

Many Christadelphians are aware of the truth of these words but seem to lack either courage or faith to take the necessary action. Protest is not enough. Action is necessary. The words of holy writ are clear. "Come out and be separate and touch not the unclean thing." Not easy, but imperative if the promised salvation is to be obtained. The temptation is to close the eyes to what is happening, and go along with the many in the "broad way which leadeth to destruction."

It seems to be forgotten that the claim to a name — "Christadelphian" — means nothing in these days, for many professing this once sacred name have deserted the principles of the Truth, and become part of Christendom. The heresy has been made worse, by the declaration published in 1927 that notwithstanding the divisions it was stated that it was believed that some from each would be found on the right hand side of the judgment seat. A pleasing notion calculated to make friends with all claiming the name; and enemies of none even in the world.

Divisions.

It is most important to know what is scripturally involved in "divisions". The first days work in the creation was the forming of light. The record states:

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called night." (Gen. 1:3-4)

This "*division*" is a testimony to all of God's purpose with those He calls to His Truth. Such must leave the world of darkness, and by doing so condemn it as being altogether ungodly, and be joined to God, who is light, and rejoice by walking in the light.

In the former Christadelphian days this meant a severance with former friends in the world; some of whom were genial, kind and amiable. This was not easy, but it was known and believed that "friendship with the world was enmity with God." Experience quickly showed the truth of this. To go with former friends led to conversation and activities alien to the truth. It was soon evident that there must be a break. Certainly "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed".

During the latter-day history of the Truth men have "arisen speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them". These experiences, doubtless over-ruled by God are a test to prove the faithful in the wilderness journey. Such defectors did not advertise themselves as such. On the contrary they claimed to be upholding the Truth. This is seen in the person who was responsible for the Inspiration Division in 1885. A former parson by the name of Ashcroft in a magazine he started in opposition to the "*Christadelphian*" very subtly suggested that the scriptures need not be inspired where this was not necessary, as for example the number of horses and chariots possessed by certain kings. This suggestion was a deadly poisonous seed. The libertines took hold of it to justify conduct previously condemned. Nothing was any longer sacred. Had it not been for the valiant and courageous stand of Robert Roberts it is possible the Truth would have been lost. His unflinching and uncompromising attitude maintained the doctrine in its simplicity and purity that the Scriptures were wholly inspired. Ashcroft by his former training as a parson was an eloquent speaker and possessed of clerical geniality made a great appeal. Only condemnation of such heresy by division could save the Truth. This led to a group, although having lost The Truth, still claimed the name, and started a separate meeting in Birmingham — leaving the Temperance Hall they met in Suffolk St. and became known as the "Suffolk St. Christadelphians". They were heir to all the heresy of partial inspiration, and they showed their departure from the Truth in a generally lax attitude. Their broadening of the way made it easy to make converts. Having departed from the Truth there was only one place to which they could go — into the darkness of the world.

In the course of years the main body of Christadelphians had departed into the world, so there was no difficulty in a "re-union" with the partial inspirationists in 1957. Their leader, more of a politician than an upholder of Truth, succeeded in what appeared by numbers as a great triumph in re-uniting the Suffolk St. Christadelphians with Temperance Hall. A triumph in numbers at a total loss of the Truth. Such is the position of Christadelphians now. Numbers greatly increased, but the Truth lost.

THE REMNANT

Certain more particular groups of Christadelphians have extended the hand to these by stating that they believe some from the various sections of Christadelphians will be found on the right hand side at the judgment. This means that Christadelphians *now* have by what appears to be charity, condoned heresy and consequently lost the Truth.

W.V.B.



Contentment

AS ANOTHER CALENDAR YEAR draws to conclusion, we are prompted to reflect upon our witness and life in the Truth. How needful it is for us to evaluate our calling in respect to God's purpose to be accomplished upon the return of the Lord Jesus. We have the record of John the Baptist who witnessed to Jesus' first coming.

Let us look into the record of the life of witness of this man to find the help afforded, as we struggle during our lifetime of probation to witness likewise to the glory of God. We read in the first chapter of John the 6th verse:

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”

Immediately, we see the special position of John; he was sent by God, sent by the Spirit. When we consider the word “sent” used here we find it comes from two root words which mean when combined, “to set apart”. John was set apart by God, according to the plan revealed to the prophet Isaiah and Israel more than 600 years before John's witness. We read in Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3:

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

We know God's purpose in setting John apart. He was sent to witness to Israel of the coming of Him who was their hope, that light to shine in the darkness to lead them to life. How dark Israel was at the time of John's witnessing, how very lost in that darkness they were, how very far from God, a “generation of vipers”.

We can perhaps perceive how difficult a task of witnessing this would have been for John. The magnitude of the work placed in John's hands was great. Yet we know John was not overcome in his work. John had success in this work for we read in Mark chapter 1 verse 5:

“And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”

John was helped in doing that which was required of him, helped by the Spirit, the power of God which worked in him to strengthen and sustain him as he in faith strove to accomplish his work. John's trust in God was great as was his determination to fulfil his duty to God as he submitted to the will of God.

Here we are helped as we are shown John's example, for we too have a work given us by God to witness, although not in sackcloth. It is a witnessing to those around us and to God that we are different, a peculiar people unto God, a separate people whose sole work is to keep God's commands. In striving to do this work are we not also set apart? Each of us has been called out by God and given responsibilities. This work we have, the keeping and the doing of God's word, places us in situations which are difficult, situations which try and test us, to determine if we will be overcome by failing to press forward. Must we not realize the help John was given in his great work and lay hold on that same help which so strongly sustained John and helped him to accomplish God's purpose? It is the same help which God extends through the Spirit to us, that same help which is given as we put our trust wholly in God and as we reveal an earnest desire to do our part.

We are further helped by the example of John as we see his spirit revealed — as he preached to those who came unto him questioning. We read in Luke chapter 3 the 10th through the 14th verse:

“And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do, then? He answereth, and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do the same.

Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.”

The spirit of John discerned here in his answers is one of love, righteousness and moreover contentment for the position in which one finds himself. It is obviously a spirit which permeated John's living for we read in Mark 1 verse 6 that:

“John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;”

John's raiment was of camel's hair girded with a leather girdle and this we find was the same attire worn by Elijah the prophet.

We remember that Elijah was sustained by ravens in the wilderness, because of his faith in God. This faith that Elijah revealed worked in him the development of a powerful spirit to perform the will of God. Was this not the same sustaining faith and spirit which John

had developed in him? We read in Luke chapter 1 verse 17 concerning John at his birth:

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

John would have known of these words from his youth and we find he was indeed satisfied with that which he had been given, the raiment of Elijah which was a constant reminder of the power and spirit God had vested in him. The locust and wild honey, a daily provision provided in the wilderness would remind John that indeed God was caring for him. In Luke 1 verse 80 we read concerning John's youth:

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.”

John, as he grew, increased in spirit and does this not confirm that from the experiences of his youth he came to learn a contentment for his lot, for one is surely not allowed by God to grow in spirit if not satisfied or content with that which God has given. Paul's words in 1 Timothy 6 verses 6 to 8 speak the same message:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain; For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Godliness with contentment is great gain, the opposite would be impossible. No doubt John was filled with a “godliness with contentment” and this spirit of contentment revealed to God his valuing of the position in which he was placed.

Must we not examine our spirit along these same lines? Are we content with the position we find ourselves placed in by God? There is a constant danger, brethren and sisters, that we might forget God does provide for our every need as he provided for Elijah and John, and that His provision is right for us, to nurture the development of a right spirit within us. To nurture that growth we are helped by the example of John, and preserved by God to strengthen in the work he has set us apart to do. We have revealed in this example of John the Baptist the all important lesson of contentment, of being content in the work God has set us apart to do, to be content with the provisions God has granted. It is a lesson all of God's children have had to learn, a lesson which is learned through experience, as our brother Paul so well states in Philipians 4 verse 11:

“... for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

To be learned is the fact that God does and will strengthen as He sees a satisfaction for whatever position each may find themselves in. Such a spirit of contentment says to God that we are satisfied and appreciative of the calling and hope set before us.

We are helped then through the example of John the Baptist, Elijah and Paul to realize what God looks for in us, that spirit of contentment, to help us develop the qualities essential in order to maintain our hope of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

The words of the Lord Jesus who in going about His Father's work did so with a perfect contentment, are of great help likewise as we read in Matthew 11 verse 11:

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Must we not allow these words to echo constantly in our ears, for in the spirit of these words is embodied the great mercy and grace of God, that we are valued by God, that God seeks us as those He has set apart to be His and grants the means of so doing through Christ. Realizing all this mercy, all this blessing, must we not strive to show God and those to whom we are required to witness that without a doubt, we are truly content with our lot as clearly as John revealed a contentment for his.

M.C.S.



A Journey to New York (*Part 4*)

The First Day of the Week.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE VISIT came along, and our host, as was customary on Sundays, had arisen early, and soon we were sat down to the American breakfast, not unlike an English breakfast in some respects, but with more fruit than is wont in the Mother Country. Arrangements were carefully timed, there was no feeling of excessive bustle; rather a leisurely preparation for the day ahead, but with eye upon the clock to ensure no last minute rush. Indeed, we found that timing was essential, for quite a few miles were to be covered before the day had gone.

Setting off for the meeting place we descended the hill into Forestville, a whole panorama of vineyards, cornfields and woods stretching before us. Joining the coast road we headed for Orchard Park some thirty-five to forty miles away. The car forged ahead at a steady even speed and eventually we arrived at the pretty suburb of Buffalo. There the Sister we had travelled to collect was awaiting us.

Turning back on our tracks we now headed south west in the direction from which we had come for our destination was Eden. This is a quiet little town with less than a thousand inhabitants. The meeting hall was in an older type building, tree shaded at the side, with a grassy plot at the rear. The upper room was adequate for our needs, and there was a cool basement, equipped with essentials, where lunch was to be partaken.

The little flock, quietly and expeditiously prepared for the Breaking of Bread meeting. This was quite an experience. There we were in a foreign land, thousands of miles from home, but the unity of belief and the single mindedness was essentially the same as in our own land. The right hand of fellowship which had been conveyed across the seas, extended by Brethren and Sisters in Britain, was given, and reciprocated by those who undoubtedly had those Brethren and Sisters in mind and heart.

After the Memorial meeting and lunch, there was to be an address for the Sunday School upon this particular occasion. The subject was "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them". Simple, if yet a sublime theme, but nevertheless not the easiest of tasks to put over in word and illustration for young minds. That the lesson was grasped, somewhat, however, was evident in the answers given to questions asked by the speaker, who sometimes had to ask the same question from more than one angle to elucidate that there had been some comprehension.

Following this enjoyable and beneficial meeting together we departed from the Sunday room and returned on our way to Forestville. After resting, it was arranged that we should go to another Brother's home for an evening meal. He came to collect us, and again we descended the hill into Forestville, and passing through, we travelled a short way eastward. The repast had been carefully prepared, and after consuming this bounty we gladly took a walk with the Brother and his family. We had come well equipped for this little expedition, for our host had thoughtfully provided walking boots, our size, for this expected event. As we walked through the fields past the rows of vigorously growing vines, we found the track somewhat muddy, and realised what care for us had been shown.

How well do the vines grow in this area of New York State. But it is not merely a matter of suitable soil and climate; good husbandry also, we found is necessary, if the vineyards are to be successful.

Apparently the originator of grapes in America was Columbus who planted vine in Haiti in 1494. Later Lord Delaware imported grape vines and vine dressers from Europe in 1619. Many varieties of vine were introduced into New York, following Delaware's initiative, mostly in the Colonial and early statehood periods. But fell victim to the indigenous insects and diseases. Selectivity and hybridization was then worked at by the grape farmers, and hardy varieties began to proliferate, commonly called "slip-skins" having a juicy and tender layer of tissue between the skin and the deeper fairly tough pulp, so that the skin is easily separated from the pulp and seeds. One of these varieties is the well known Concord, which constitutes about three-fourths of all plantings in the eastern United States. Its clusters are small to medium in size with shoots and canes comparatively thin. Primarily the fruit obtained from this species is for table use or crushed into sweet juice. But there are other varieties such as Fredonia, Golden Muscat, Niagara, Ontario etc. The vines we passed, as we had our evening walk, were being cultivated for the winery. The planting distances were two or three times those of most other grape-producing countries. Stakes had been driven into the ground and long trellises had been made, comprised of a bottom wire, perhaps less than three feet from the ground, and an upper wire perhaps four feet or more from the foot of the vine. These wires ran horizontally along the long rows of vines, with stake supports, at intervals for the wires.

It was about these wires that the tendrils of these fruitful trees were wrapped, and by which their upward growth was supported. Row upon row of grapes marched before us, like an army; it was an impressive sight; and as we examined we saw the clusters of fruit were already forming abundantly. How fruitful is the good earth!

This rich and fertile region of the Great Lakes, with its suitable humidity, brought such a thought to the forefront of the mind, especially as we contemplated the rapidity of the growing time, and in particular the Indian Corn, which almost seemed to visibly grow as we surveyed the rich green fields.

This walk in the countryside was a suitable end to a tranquil and most rewarding day. After which, as night drew on, we returned to the home of our host.

to be continued



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

“Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?” (Ezekiel 38:17)

NO GOG, OF THE LAND OF MAGOG has ever descended upon the land of Israel in history. Yet there is this prophecy which says:-

“... In the latter years that shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.” (Ezekiel 38:8)

Many of the ancient prophecies foretold the descending of a northern power upon the land of Israel. These writings had a fulfilment, firstly when the Assyrians attacked from the north, and later when the Chaldeans attacked from the same quarter.

Now “the latter years” have come, and unmistakably there is only one Northern Power, the like of which the world has never seen. In the immensity of its might it stretches from the Baltic in the west to the borders of Alaska in the east, and right down to the gateway to Japan.

Recently the Japanese government has been investigating a report that a major Soviet build up of military forces has taken place on a tiny island in Hokkaido. There are actually four islands, Shikotan, Kunashiri, Etorofu and Habomai. From their names, they were obviously Japanese at one time, but they have been occupied by Russia since the closing days of the War in the Pacific at the end of World War two. A new military base has been completed on Shikotan. This is only a few miles away from the Japanese eastern coast, the Russian forces there are said to be highly mechanised. Russia obviously feels confident in its power. What a change there has been since the beginning of this century when Russia was severely beaten by Japan and had to tread warily for a time to avoid antagonising the Japanese.

China, however, is in a much more vulnerable position than Japan. It has a long border with the Soviet Union. The Chinese leadership seem to be continually contemplating what they should do about their powerful neighbour, which obviously they do not trust. It seems significant that they recently thought it prudent to send their Chairman to visit Western Europe. His talks with Western leaders

were aimed at stressing that Russia has imperialist policies and has made efforts to encircle China through control of Indochina, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The Chinese leader urged a strongly united Western European defence force; this according to his view would continually divert Russia from military adventures in Sinkiang, China's north western province, and from Manchuria, the heavily industrialised, and therefore valuable region in the extreme north east of China.

But Russia is building up its power in every direction, using subterfuge and intrigue to infiltrate as well as dominate.

Israel's main antagonist now in the Middle East is Syria. Its President who visited Moscow two months ago, has recently been in a weak position because of growing opposition to his regime. The Syrian leader on the occasion of his visit asked for the best Russian planes with which to resist the capable Israeli air force, and also for Russian troops to help defend the seat of government in Damascus.

Russia's ruthlessness is seen in its holding back of the armaments he asked for. It would seem that Russia is biding its time in readiness for an organised coup to overthrow the Syrian President. According to investigations made he now has only real support amongst the Syrian Alawi community, who mostly live around the President's home in the town of Latakia, and form a mere tenth of the population.

Though the Soviet leadership and the Syrian President have no significant political differences, it seems that the Russians are calculating that the Syrian leader, as their ally, is expendable, because of the erosion of his popularity. The safest way to head off a coup against him by an anti-Soviet faction would be to help a pro-Soviet faction to overthrow him. Time alone will show the depth of Russian wiles, and the outcome of their scheming. It does seem that considerable expenditure is earmarked by the Soviet Union for political subterfuges wherever, and whenever, an opening is presented for exploitation.

They have in the past attracted Western diplomat defectors to Moscow, to help them study political situations in various parts of the Western World, so that they might be the better enabled to use any situation to their best advantage. This is diplomatic war, which has, for example, brought Ethiopia and Libya on the side of Russia.

Another avenue along which Russia is advancing, and gaining strength is the scientific one. A former Commander of Nato speaking a short while ago to the British Israel World Federation Congress said that from 1945 until 1953 the United States had a monopoly of nuclear weapons, but by 1969, America had lost its strategic

supremacy. He went on to speak of the immediate future as follows:-

“Within three years the Soviets will have the capability of destroying most American land-based missiles in a surprise attack. The Americans will not be able, in the same time scale, either to strike with sufficient accuracy at the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile force, or to develop means of protecting their own.

“There was no Western response to the Soviet deployment of their medium range nuclear missiles, the SS20 and the backfire bomber. Europe had no effective anti ballistic missile defence, nor any deterrent against the world’s most advanced missile, the mobile SS20. This is the third time in my life that the security of this country (Britain) not to mention the West as a whole — is in peril. Never has the world situation been so grave and dangerous since the Second World War.

“All the signs are that the thirst of Soviet imperialism is likely to be directed against the raw material-producing areas on which the economies of the West and Japan depend. The oil of the Middle East, the minerals of Central and Southern Africa, and the resources of South-East Asia are obvious targets.”

In the context of this speech it is worth noting that Soviet oil production is on the point of declining, and that shortly the communist bloc may need to import oil. Russia has admitted that she has not had any major success during the last six years in her search for more oil, and that new giant oil fields must be discovered regularly if growth in oil production is to be sustained.

The outlook is that Soviet oil production is likely to fall to ten million barrels a day by 1985 in contrast to eleven and a half million barrels a day in 1978. Such figures show the Soviet Union to be the world’s leading crude oil producing nation, and therefore a considerable reduction in production to which that nation is accustomed is liable to tempt this great power into acquiring control over Arab oil.

In fact a Russian strategist and consultant on Middle East affairs has published a book entitled “The Near East Conflict”, which explains how Nato would be crippled if its access to oil and communications in the Persian Gulf area were imperilled. The book even explains how the Arab-Israeli dispute can be exploited in the Soviet interest.

Almost everything the Soviet Union is doing builds up into the unmistakable picture that here is the power of which the ancient prophecy has spoken:-

“Thus saith the Lord God; art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel.”

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 and Orchard Park. Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

We are encouraged by two recent contacts which appear to be sincerely seeking help and are grateful for the opportunity to serve.

The letters and cables from our brethren and sisters in England are a continuing source of comfort and lifting up in the midst of trials and difficulties.

It has been with sadness that we have found it necessary to withdraw fellowship from E. Stokes, and from P. Stokes because of the embracing of a false doctrine and failure to be of one mind with the ecclesia in their work.

The "shaking" continues as the day of Jesus' return seems ever nearer.

J.A.DeF.

"PENIKIP", Black Rock, Portmadoc.

Breaking of Bread: Sundays, 11.30 a.m.
Bible Class: Mid-Week.

We have been pleased to receive strength and counsel from Bro. W. V. Butterfield on 21st October. The help being from Jeremiah 17 — and we appreciate the effort made at this time. The weather was sunny and pleasant and much appreciated.

The witnessing continues, two enquiries having been made during the last month.

per D.L.

MANCHESTER: Ryecroft 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.

A few letters continue to arrive admiring our stand for the Truth. We would that this might lead some to a more positive action — a seeking to become part of the One Body; for it will be recognised that the Body of Christ is *one* and cannot be divided. Our help will be gladly extended to those who are earnestly seeking.

W.V.B.