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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

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 that ye be not deceived”

“AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD”

“THE WORD IS VERY NIGH UNTO THEE”

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“WHAT IS TRUTH?” (PART 4)

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“NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS”

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At the Table of the Lord

“TAKE AWAY THE DROSS . . .”

How much help is found in the wisdom of the Spirit recorded for us in Proverbs. We are not alone in valuing that help, as our recent portion reveals:

“These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.” Proverbs 25:1.

Hezekiah was a faithful king serving God and trusting Him in a time of testing. Perhaps the fact that he had these Proverbs copied out reveals how much he appreciated them, and by them was helped in his struggle to obey God. They can be a source of strength, wisdom, and instruction for us, Brethren and Sisters, as we engage in that same struggle.

Sometimes as His word is read, a particular thought seems to impress a seeking heart. Such appeared to be the case this morning as we have read:

“Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.” Proverbs 25:4.

This is just one thought among the thousands found in His word, but what a help it can be for each in our striving to be “vessels meet for the master’s use.” What does the Spirit have in mind for us as we listen to these words? First of all—what is dross? It is a waste material which floats upon the top of a metal as it is being refined; it is skimmed off and thrown away as of no value. For example, in silver—tin, lead, or iron can be present as impurities. These detract from the usefulness of the desired metal. If iron is mixed with silver, it becomes hard, more brittle, and consequently, not easily formed without breaking. Gold is another element whose properties can be changed when mixed with other substances. We are aware that twenty-four karat gold is pure, but it is very soft and wears away easily. Fourteen karat gold is a mixture of fourteen parts gold and ten parts of some other metal, making the gold not only less valuable and expensive, but also harder so that it will not easily wear. Sometimes there is advantage to adding another metal to silver or gold, but in doing so, the ability to be easily formed without breaking is diminished or lost.

In Exodus, we perceive God’s instruction to Moses concerning

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the vessels and furniture of the tabernacle. Everything in the holy place and most holy place either was to be made of or overlaid with gold; and wherever gold is spoken of, the divine instruction is to use "pure gold".

"Thou shalt make a mercy seat of PURE gold."

Exodus 25:17.

"Thou shalt make a candlestick of PURE gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made" Exodus 25:31.

Pure comes from a word meaning to purge; the pure gold would be that which is cleansed of all foreign material. Why is this necessary? The candlestick, the cherubim, the mercy seat—all were to be beaten out of one lump of gold. If that lump were impure, it would be less capable of being formed by hammering—by the repeated blows which would slowly shape it, causing it to conform to a pattern. It would break under the pounding of the hammer. We are told that Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah was appointed by God for this privileged and responsible work. Of him God said:

". . . I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, . . . to work in gold, and in silver . . ."

Exodus 31:3-4.

This name Bezaleel is made up of two words: one being God, and the other—shadow or protection. So here was one given a measure of God's Spirit, under the shadow or protection of the Almighty and thereby ordained to the vital work for the tabernacle, carefully following the pattern given to Moses. As Bezaleel worked, beating out the pattern, if the gold broke under his hammer, he would be forced to discard this lump of gold as impure, not suitable material. He would get another lump to work into the ordained pattern. We know the mercy seat, the incense altar, and the candlestick all speak of the Lord Jesus who has been beaten out, pressured to conform to the pattern given by His Father. He was able to be shaped into this exquisite and perfect pattern because He, although flesh, was being made pure, refined, and so was able at the end to become our mercy seat, our altar, and our candlestick. We have, Brethren and Sisters, the hope of being part of that antitypical light and the golden cherubim, but only if we too are able to conform to the pattern, to be beaten without breaking, being soft and pliable in the hand of the Almighty.

Silver as well as gold was used for some of the vessels of the tabernacle, because in its pure state, it too can be easily shaped.

Silver and gold are called “noble” metals because they do not rust, nor burn away when exposed to heat. This particular property of nobleness, enables them to be refined, made pure of other less noble metals. How can this be accomplished? The impure gold or silver is placed in a furnace and heated until it melts. Air is then blown through the molten metal removing the un-noble impurities, which then float so they can be skimmed off as dross and discarded. If the process continues long enough, all that remains in the furnace has been purified. As one then looks into a furnace, the gold or silver shines clearly and with beauty, having been totally purged. This makes one think of Daniel’s three friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image, and so were cast into a furnace. The intense heat had no effect upon these faithful men of God. The king said concerning them:

“ . . . Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Daniel 3:25.

Why was the fire unable to harm them? Was it because of God’s care and protection for these men who had shown that their faithfulness was pure and noble? As a result, Nebuchadnezzar said:

“ . . . Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have . . . **YIELDED THEIR BODIES**, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.” Daniel 3:28.

These faithful men “yielded” their bodies to the fiery death rather than serve any false god. To **YIELD** we find means to surrender, to pay, to give. It implies a giving up something we dearly want. This reminds us of Paul’s words:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . that ye present (yield) your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God . . .
And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds . . .” Romans 12:1,2.

How can we yield our bodies as a sacrifice, Brethren and Sisters? The figure in the law helps us to see how a sacrifice must be placed upon the altar, allowing the fire of the Spirit to consume the fleshly parts. What is left is ashes—the cleansed part—the acceptable part, the pleasing part which has come forth from the

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fire—noble, purified, and holy. This is the work of the refiner's fire. This is that of which Solomon wrote:

“Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.” Proverbs 25:4.

Our Father, the Refiner, is working with us, seeking to purify us in a like manner. This fire hurts badly as it burns away our un-noble qualities; but it will leave behind a purified material, more capable of being formed into a vessel fit for His use. Can there be any higher calling than this?

The prophet Malachi asks:

“. . . Who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, . . . And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall . . . purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

Malachi 3:2-3.

Only as there has been a refining, a taking away of the dross, can there be an offering of self, and a standing before Him in the day of His coming. Brethren and Sisters, we feel that fire burning, hurting, purging out the dross. Do we rejoice in this, recognizing it is a spirit process in each one—and through it, we hope to become vessels for His holy purpose? These thoughts should make us very humble indeed, and take us to Paul's words:

“If a man therefore purge himself . . . he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” II Timothy 2:21.

This present time is our preparation, when the fire, the refiner works. To what end does this work point?

“. . . That he (God) might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” Romans 9:23.

“Vessels of mercy”—vessels receiving His preparation, His refining, and so abundantly, His mercy!

As the perfect Refiner works, ennobling our characters by the removal of those harmful impurities, let us rejoice in this mercy. Let us utterly yield ourselves, enduring the hurt which is needful, hoping and longing to come forth vessels which give Him pleasure, as being meet for His use.

J.A.DeF.

The word is very nigh unto thee

In our recent portions in Deuteronomy Moses' words to the children of Israel related to them the means by which their well being could be sought in the sight of God. We read in the 30th chapter the verses 11-14:

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

Moses with these words was reminding the people that God was close at hand and would provide, indeed, “. . . the word is very nigh unto you”, if only they would let that word be a power in their living. In relation to this, Moses reminded them of the covenant relationship they had with God as he says in verse 15:

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.”

These words concerning the land were significant, for they were now at the border of the promised land. A land Moses was not permitted to enter, but was allowed to see from a distance. This warning from Moses to choose goodness and life and to put away evil was God's requirement before Moses' time and is still the requirement for us today, and the outcome of not heeding this warning is stated in verses 17-19:

“But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

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I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passes over Jordan to go to possess it.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”

It seems an easy enough choice, who would not choose life over death? Yet our flesh can get in the way and can turn us away from God to serve idols. Our idols may be intangible, not the idols of silver and gold as spoken of in the scriptures, for an idol can be anything that becomes too important in our lives and takes pre-eminence to God. When Moses spoke about life and death, blessing and cursing he spoke from experience, for he at times failed and for one such failure he was denied entrance into the land. He realized there was only one hope of life and that through God’s provision, as he says in the 20th verse:

“. . . that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest **cleave** unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land.

We read in Isaiah a consistent message, reinforced again for our help:

“Therefore thou has forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they **please themselves** in the children of strangers.

Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots:

Their land also is **full of Idols**; they worship the **work of their own hands**, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.”

(Isaiah 2:6-9)

These words of God through Isaiah were spoken to a wayward people who had turned from God’s covenant, forsaken His laws filled their land with idol worship. What was to be their end? The 11th verse goes on to tell us:

“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone

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shall be exalted in that day.”

And verse 18:

“And the idols he shall utterly abolish.”

In the day of the Lord we know that those who will not bow down will be destroyed, and only God’s purpose will be exalted in that day. There will be no place for idols in God’s purpose, nothing to come between God and His people.

When we look up that word idol we find it means, good for nothing or no value. This is what Moses tried to reveal to the people in his day. What good could they do to attain unto God’s promise? We remember when Moses was in the Mount 40 days as we read in Exodus 32:1-6:

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.”

verses 3-6

“And all the people brake off the gold earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.

When Moses descended the mount this was the scene that greeted him, and what was his reaction? (verse 19)

“And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.”

We remember too that had it not been for Moses’ quick action and intercession that God would have destroyed the entire congregation. (Deut. 9:19-20)

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“For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also.

And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.”

Here we see the abundance of God’s mercy and grace that he turned from His wrath and forgave those who would humble themselves and seek forgiveness for their idolatry. What a help these words of Moses are to us today for we too need to protect ourselves from idols which cause us not to hear and see as we should. How can we be helped in this regard? Peter’s words in I Peter, chapter 5 helps, starting in verse 6 exhorts us to:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

To do His word and cleave to Him we must humble ourselves, for we have read that in the end only the purpose of God will be exalted and only as we conform to His plan can we hope to live. Our cares must be given to him, casting or conforming our living to His requirements so that He will help. The 8th verse goes on:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

As we think on these words we are able to reflect upon Moses’ life, mindful of him as he stood on the edge of the promised land being 120 years old according to Deut. 31:2: “And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

Although not allowed to enter the land, he was able to see it and the hope of this sight strengthened him to speak to his brethren then and to us today to help us value the word of God that it is

very nigh unto us, in our mouth and in our heart as long as we value that power of that word and seek to apply it in our living. In this way as we suffer, it is to help us to be established, strengthened and settled to reveal that the word of God is truly in our mouths and in our hearts.

M.C.S.



At a Fraternal Gathering—Part 1

“If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob . . .”

(Jeremiah 33:25-26)

“Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee . . .”

(Jeremiah 12:1)

Here is Jeremiah’s acknowledgement that God is righteous and the recognition of the prophet’s own unrighteousness—‘Righteous art thou’. We ask the question, what is righteousness, but justice, that which is right according to God and endorsed by the word of God? (i.e. just and right) When we consider that the purpose of God is to produce a nation of righteous, just, people like unto the Lord Jesus we are enabled to see the vital importance of righteousness and how we need to strive to emulate the example of our Redeemer, who proclaimed the righteousness of God in the manner of His death that man is only worthy to die, and **only** on the basis of this belief is there hope given of eternal life.

By nature we are not righteous—we are unjust—as is fully acknowledged by the prophet in his declaration—“Righteous art **thou** O Lord, when I plead with thee: pet let me talk with thee of thy judgments.” What was Jeremiah’s plea. What did he want to know? It was, Why do the wicked prosper? This was and is a fair request and requires an explanation. Why should the wicked prosper and those who acknowledge the righteousness of God have to suffer? “. . . Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” Why?

David had similar thoughts as we can see from Psalm 73:3, 8, 11-16:-

“For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

And they say, How doth God know? and there is knowledge in the most high?

Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me”.

But the answer to David which is the answer to Jeremiah also is in verse 17:

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; **then** understood I their end.”—which is death and the grave for the wicked.

Yes, by nature we are unrighteous and unjust as acknowledged by the prophet—“righteous art thou O Lord.” This is true wisdom which is only given to those who are called to become righteous. “To you it is given to know the mysteries of God” but to them—the world—it is not given and “Wisdom is profitable to direct.” We cannot improve on the words of Solomon when he says wisdom is the principle thing, to get wisdom and with it to get understanding, because if we do not understand we are like the beasts that perish.

“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” (Psalm 49:20)

“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment and equity; yea, every good path.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.”
(Proverbs 2:1-11)

Job adds to this chapter 28:28:-

“ . . . Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

The purpose of God is to produce a race of righteous people like unto the Lord Jesus, characters like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. The record helps us greatly in this by the Apostle Paul in Romans 4:3, 20-25:-

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Also a picture of the righteous is given in Revelation 7:13—
“What are these which are arrayed in white robes? . . .” Which are the symbol of righteousness and the time is coming for the fulfillment of this when those who have suffered for Christ’s sake while the wicked have prospered, will rejoice with everlasting joy. Great things are in store for the righteous, no more pain, sorrow or tears. Confirmation of this is shown in Jer. 33:25-26:

“Thus saith the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my

servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.”

But it is of no avail to us if we cannot say from our hearts and truly believe like the prophet—“Righteous art thou O Lord.”

JS



At a Fraternal Gathering—Part 2

“. . . thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me and tried mine heart toward thee . . .” (Jeremiah 12:3)

Before dealing with the verse under consideration, it is necessary to refer to verse 2 which forms part of the context of this subject. We can see the chapter as a whole is speaking about God’s people who were in transgression because of unbelief. Allowing themselves to become entangled in wordly ways resulting in their embracing a doctrine astray from THE TRUTH. The scripture reads as follows:

“Thou hast planted them, yea they have taken root, they grow, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth and far from their reins.”

Let us note the first phrase—“Thou hast planted them.” This could not mean that because God had planted them they would always remain planted,—that once a brother of Christ, always a brother which is obviously erroneous,—yet there are many that hold this view. Was this doctrine preached by the Apostles? How did Paul view his position in his day? Did he not fear that “having preached to others he himself would be a castaway”? Israel under the law were offered a choice, having been planted by God they could obey or disobey. So they were given a list of blessings and cursings for which ever way they decided upon.

Let us consider now the parable of the sower. The seed that fell on stony ground endured for a while and then withered away because it had no root. There was also the seed that was sown but

later the growth became choked with nettles and thistles. We have seen it happen in our day; because of neglect "the plant" fails to survive. It is only the seed that is sown on good ground which bears the fruit which becomes delight to the Spirit. How readily God is blamed in effect, for the faults of men, instead of realising that man himself, enveloped in transgressions, allows the love of the Truth to grow cold, which leads to many retrograde and painful difficulties. The Apostle says "They will not endure sound doctrine" so they allow themselves to be seduced. Does not Christ's words in Matt. 15:13 help us on this subject:

"Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

This verse makes it very clear that those who have been involved in an unrepented transgression will only receive rejection at the judgment seat of Christ, who will say, "I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity." This cannot mean that Christ had been unaware of their presence, but rather because of neglect of the commands due to the lack of love for the Truth, brought about departure from the living way, and so unrecognition by Christ. With these thoughts in mind may we now look at the next verse:

"But thou O Lord knowest me: thou hast **seen me** and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and prepare them for the day of slaughter."

In order to get to know anyone, there has to be constant interest in their conversation and general manner of life. For there is a saying that 'you do not know anyone properly unless you live with them.' An alternative for the word "know" is "to acknowledge" or "discern". God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart so He is able to prove faith in Him by trial. If one is faithful, faith in God will be proved to be like gold tried in the fire. To pay lip service and merely occupy a seat in the meeting means nothing.

Coming now to the next phrase of the consideration we read:

". . . Thou hast seen me and tried mine heart toward thee"

Another rendering for this word SEE is "To see in vision" or "provide". God in His all-seeing power looks and provides and gives to each one all that is necessary for salvation, not necessarily all that we want. It may be that we pray for certain things and our prayers are not answered, for to pursue an unwise course could lead us into trouble and result in departure from the living way.

Finally there are the words:-

“. . . Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and prepare them for the day of slaughter.”

The word for slaughter is self explanatory, for it is a literal destruction and this meaning is used in a similar way in the word ‘pull’ which is ‘drawn away’ or ‘rooted out’ or ‘broken off’. In order that we may clearly understand what God is teaching, may Jeremiah 7:30-31 be of help:

“For the children have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord, they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name to pollute it.”

The next verses tell us what the evil was, for there was the building of the high places and the worship of idols. Were they allowed to remain in the House of God? The law taught that the leaven (of malice and wickedness) had to be removed, which meant a complete withdrawal from those who were engaged in evil work; for such were spiritually outside the camp, without hope. Verses 33-34 of this same chapter shows the result of failure to keep this instruction:-

“And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beasts of the earth and none shall fray them away.

Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, the voice of gladness and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, for the land shall be desolate.”

What a sad state that was and just as this happened to the people who left the principles of the Truth in the past, so in like manner will a similar destruction be witnessed when Christ returns.

Wheresoever the carcase is thither will the eagles (the saints) be gathered together, but think of the carcase. However, those who remain in the house of God, faithful to the end, will abide therein for ever.

WGB

At a Fraternal Gathering—Part 3

“Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife . . . The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant . . .” (ch. 15:10-11)

Some people thrive on strife. In the world men become famous as the victors in times of strife and war. King Christian II of Denmark, Norway and Sweden was called "The Angry" because his temper was ungovernable. He was called King Christian, but the name was hardly appropriate to his character.

The writer Thomas Fuller said that "Anger is one of the sinews of the soul; he that wants it hath a maimed mind." Queen Elizabeth the first said, "Anger makes dull men witty, but it keeps them poor." George Bernard Shaw going even further said: "If you strike a child, take care that you strike it in anger, even at the risk of maiming it for life. A blow in cold blood neither can nor should be forgiven." This was possibly *mischievous witticism* on his part, but certainly not speech tending towards calmness and peace. From the mouth of these great ones of the earth is really advocacy for strife. There is also the old hymn to consider, attributed to Francis Pott, who died in 1909, "The strife is o'er, the battle done; Now is the victor's triumph won; O let the song of praise be sung, Alleluia."

How different was the cry of the faithful prophet Jeremiah in ch.15:10:-

"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me."

Jeremiah did not relish strife. He was not after victory over his opponents. But in his duty to the call of God men were at strife with him because of the message of God which he conveyed, and which they neither liked, nor accepted as being the message of God. But this was not the work of a man who thrived on strife; to the contrary he was sad at the opposition to his testimony. He had told the truth, he had predicted, through the Spirit's message, the punishment coming upon the rejecting people because of their failure. This placed his testimony in opposition to that of the deluded false prophets, who as a result acted and spoke most viciously against him. Yet he knew that he must continue his witness, which from experience would bring more denunciatory cursing upon himself. He must tell them the truth, which they had not wanted to hear.

We can imagine the taunts and accusations. "You are unkind" — "You are inconsiderate" — "What things you say to people who are trying to be right" — "How upsetting you are" — "You do not

speak these things with a proper brotherly spirit”.

“Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention . . .”

To be treated as a mischevious, malevolent person when trying to help, is a considerable trial. He could have understood such bitterness if he had been a fraudulent ower of money or had been an oppressing moneylender. But he had neither been a financier or money manipulator, dealing in usury, which casts such a bad odour upon the people engaged in those things.

Yes, Jeremiah was cast down as a result of all the trouble in which he was involved but which he had not sought. He did not want strife; he did not want the contention, he did not desire to use The Truth as a weapon, as the manner of some has been. This is very evident from that cry, “Woe is me”.

What an example was, **and is**, Jeremiah! He had no personal victory over the opponent and did not desire such a victory. Just that he had a work to do, and because of his respect for God went on in the divine work. But being human he felt depressed at the long duration of trouble which came upon trouble. This resulted because “he was a Jeremiah”, to use a term which has sprung into being as a result of his dogged persistence in the work to which God had called him to undertake.

But God never leaves His servants without encouragement to balance with the sorrow, and so to help their faith. Therefore to Jeremiah came the encouragement:-

“The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.” (verse 11)

“It shall be well”—this is something that can be looked forward to most certainly. The people of God may be a few; indeed only a remnant; but “**Verily**, it shall be well.” From the unexpected source will come help in the time of evil affliction. “I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well.”

God can and will cause what is normally in opposition to what the truth stands for, to provide for His remnant in the time of their need. What a comfort is this promise; given to lift up the heart in a time when there is trouble upon trouble, and depression because of the resistance to the work of truth from some who should know better.

Should we give up then because there is no response to the message? Of course not if the work of God requires us to go on.

Let us hang on to the anchor of God's most assuring promise, "Verily it shall be well with thy remnant."

Jeremiah, in an earnest of the final deliverance, had some marvellous deliverances and preservations of his well being. Such blessings came when the enemies' hand was caused to extend help in Jeremiah's need, and this would emphasise to him that God does not fail His people.

So comes to mind that most solemn promise of the Most High:-

"Thus saith the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take away any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them." (ch. 33:25-26)

The vicissitudes of any of the people whom God has called to be His own have a divine limitation placed thereon, according to the wisdom of The Eternal. So just as day and night, and the stars, continue in their steady courses in relation to the heavens and the earth; so the unswerving mercy of God to His people will continue; for God has promised by those very eternal works of His Almighty hand:-

"I will . . . have mercy on them"

DL

What is truth? (John 18:38)—Part 4

THE SERPENT

It has been said almost universally that the tempter in the garden of Eden was a person, a fallen angel, who acted in opposition to God, and is still at work with his angels to bring about the downfall of all who allow themselves to be misled by his influence. But what saith the scripture?

"And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything **that creepeth** upon the earth after his kind" (Genesis 1:25)

Of course it is true to say that the serpent did not creep at the

first; its decline, which was a curse, came upon the animal later. But all that creep upon the ground to this very day are the handiwork of God, whatever they used to be like. The scripture however is more explicit:-

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any **beast** of the field which the Lord God had made . . .” (ch. 3:1)

There is no licence in these words for the theory that a “fallen angel” entered into the animal, through which it spoke its tempting language. The word of God clearly says this beast was already more subtil than the other beasts before it became a tempting reasoner. Its wrong and evil work of course, was condemned because all that is wrong is divinely and justly condemned.

“And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou are cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” (verse 14)

Those who philosophise say that the serpent in Eden is an allegory, the animal has been used in the divine message as a type for tempting evil, which has been such a downfall for man. In a sense this interpretation can be accepted up to a certain point, but to deny the literal meaning of the record is to deny Christ. Jesus said:-

“Ye are of your father the devil, (diabolos — diabaino “to cross or pass”: ballo “to throw”) and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

The serpent lied in its subtlety, it threw its reasoning across the divine command, it caused Adam and Eve to cross or pass the God given demarkation line. The fact that Jesus says so shows that He believed that the serpent did what the scripture says it did. Furthermore the Apostle Paul in endorsing this Truth says:-

“. . . I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 11:3)

Finally it is recorded of the promised blessing to come:-

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the

serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." (Isaiah 65:25)

The lesson of the serpent and all its fall into a lowly position amongst the beasts which God made in the beginning is not to be forgotten. It is to be a symbol as well as a fact, reminding of the original lie which was thrown across the boundary of the divine law.



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

". . . there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers place." (Matthew 24:7)

Jesus said that the above troubles would be the "beginning of sorrows". In the same vein the message through the letter to the Thessalonians is:-

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child" (1 Thess. 5:3)

The earthquake upon Mexico city was of considerable magnitude likened in effect to that which came upon San Francisco in the early part of this century. At the same time the famine continues in Ethiopia and Sudan. But combined with these devastating events there is a new and fearful pestilence.

The World Health Organisation recently issued a report on the deadly Acquired Deficiency Syndrome (Aids). This illness has reached epidemic proportions for it has now been detected in forty-three countries. There are millions of carriers of the virus who are symptom-free, but capable of infecting others. Scientists are not optimistic about developing a vaccine for this complaint which has spread from the high-risk groups to others who are not drug addicts etc. It is not merely passed on by blood transfusion from contaminated sources as there is a warning about avoiding contact with toothbrushes and razors and that the virus is in the saliva of those affected.

THE REMNANT

Here then again is another sign, for though Bubonic plague appears to be a thing of the past, this deadly new disease stalks the earth, destroying the body's immune system, rendering those who are infected by it unable to fight off illnesses which normally would be of no great consequence. The effects therefore of this Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome are incurable and lead to death, and there is increasing alarm about carriers of this malady working in food preparations etc.

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, Orchard Park.

Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

Supplications are made on behalf of those who are ill or in weakness, that God's healing may be granted if it is His will.

We are grateful for a continued opportunity to witness in small ways and further for inquiry as to the origin and substance of the Remnant's beliefs. We ask that guidance and help be granted in all His work, both within the house and to those interested from other directions.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 10.30 a.m.

Thursday: Bible Class 7.30 p.m.

In these troublous times how valuable it is that we can feel the unity in our midst which is such a great privilege.

Surely the Truth requires unity for that is what we are called to.