

SEPTEMBER 1988

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

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

"...THOU...SHALL NUMBER THEM BY THEIR ARMIES..."

This morning we have listened to God's instructions at Mt. Sinai recorded in Numbers. It may be helpful to realize that Israel camped in the wilderness of Sinai for nearly a year, arriving there the third month after leaving Egypt (Exodus 19:1), and leaving in the following year on the twentieth day of the second month (Numbers ch. 10:11). During this time the tabernacle had been built and sanctified, followed by the first passover since Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month. Israel then was numbered according to God's instruction and moved from Sinai, following the pillar of cloud on the twentieth day of the second month. This long time at Sinai was needful, for the law was given, the pattern of the tabernacle also, and its building accomplished. All this pointed forward to their hope of an inheritance, a land promised, a kingdom to be established. God also revealed His ultimate purpose to those of faith through the Messiah to come.

The Almighty bestowed His counsel and the working of His hand with His people to help through the journey to the land promised. As we read His precise instruction in Numbers, Brethren and Sisters, we too can be guided in the Father's way. Let us then look carefully at some of the necessary help given to Israel before they were to begin their journey toward that goal.

In the first chapter of Numbers, God instructed Moses to number each male of Israel twenty years old and upward after their families, by the house of their fathers - thus identifying them as His children and establishing their place in Israel. He commanded:

"...number them by their armies." Numbers 1:3

The Hebrew word for army is TSEBAAH which is used in one of the names of God: Yahweh-Tsebaah, or LORD of hosts. Israel was His army, His host in the wilderness. We are told that:

"...all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty." Numbers 1:46

Truly a mighty host, God's own, His ecclesia in the wilderness. How great a blessing to be so numbered! Following this impressive work, God's plan was given for Israel's arrangement around His tabernacle. They were not to haphazardly pitch tents, but according to His given order:

"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle shall they pitch." Numbers 2:2

An assigned place for everyone. Each knew his appointed place - there was the ensign, the standard identifying it. As a consequence, there would be no confusion, no milling around when the cloud halted and Israel pitched their tents. To the east was the standard of Judah; to the south Reuben; to the west Ephraim; and to the north Dan. Closer to the tabernacle, protecting it, making a separation, Aaron, Moses and the sons of Aaron were at the east, while the Levites closely encamped around it to the south, west and north. What an imposing sight that camp of Israel must have been! Six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men counted would require a vast number of tents to accommodate them and their families. Perhaps as many as a half million pitched about the tabernacle. The cloud resting over it and the ascending smoke of the sacrifices would be visible to all. What an orderly arrangement, planned with divine precision. Balaam's reaction comes to mind. When he saw Israel "abiding in his tents according to their tribes", he was moved to exclaim:

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"
Numbers 24:5.

Here was an enemy of Israel, overwhelmed by the vastness and beauty of what he saw, with God's presence in the midst. Thus Balaam was moved to bless rather than curse Israel as was his intention.

It is impressive to us, is it not, how Israel was led to do God's work with detailed carefulness, with reverence and perception of His holiness. They would, if desiring to please, exercise themselves to give the very best of attention, effort and workmanship. This, after all, was God's way. He wanted it so, and faithful brethren and sisters would be meticulous to obey their Father. How orderly the camp would appear as each family, each tribe pitched its tent by its standard in accordance with God's plan.

David was also one who, knowing God's plan, cherished it and was moved to write:

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."
Psalm 84:1-2.

This hope of a place in the Lord's house among His people sustained David as it must have done for the faithful in Israel as they pitched "far off about the tabernacle" - but having a part in it through their offerings for its building, and in the hope of one day being a part eternally.

Further we see a purpose in the way Israel was directed as the cloud

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would go up and they were to journey. It was not to be done by taking down their tents and going forth in their own way. Moses was instructed to make two trumpets of silver for "the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps":

"When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey..."
Numbers 10:5-6.

At the sound of the trumpet each camp of Israel would go forward in a designated order, removing any possibility of uncertainty:

"In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies..."
Numbers 10:14

Next we are shown that the:

"...tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle."
Verse 17.

Gershon and Merari had specifically assigned tasks. The sons of Gershon were to bear the curtains, coverings, hangings and cords, while the sons of Merari were to bear the boards, the bars, the pillars and sockets.

Next in order:

"...the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies..."
Numbers 10:18

And then:

"...the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other (Gershon and Merari) did set up the tabernacle against they came."
Verse 21.

Before the Kohathites could carry the holy things of the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons had to cover them and put in the staves, for a good reason:

"...the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die..."
Numbers 4:15

How guardedly they would bear these holy things which had been painstakingly covered, all aware of the holiness, meticulous not to touch lest they die - doing their work with reverence and a awareness of their grave responsibility and privilege. God's foresight is seen as when the Kohathites arrived at the place where the cloud indicated - "Rest". They would find the tabernacle set up and prepared by the sons of Gershon and Merari going before. Thus Aaron and his sons were able to place the holy things in their

appointed place without delay.

Following the Kohathites came the armies of the camp of Ephraim, and last of all the camp of Dan. We are told of this work:

“Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.” Numbers 10:28

Can we see why Moses was instructed of God to “number them by their armies”? They were counted among those belonging to the Lord of hosts. They were His children - laboring for Him. What a great favor to be so numbered, and more - a great blessing to be shown what God required and planned, and to have been given a part in that plan. We need to think on this, Brethren and Sisters. Can we be thankful enough? Can we be too “careful” ever?

Truly the Almighty was with Israel, going before when they journeyed, dwelling over the tabernacle when they rested in their tents. His presence was always there to see, in the cloud or fire - yes, but also in the arrangements. Alert minds would realize this as they were counted a part of His host, in the passover, in the company of Israel around the tabernacle, and in their journeying. It helps us to comprehend more fully the power and the might of Yahweh that was with Israel at Sinai, and as they travelled on their journey to the promised inheritance.

Today, Brethren and Sisters, we feel very small indeed in comparison - only a few, but how helpful to realize that for His children in this present generation, His presence is near to lead and instruct, to scatter enemies and to abide with those seeking above every other consideration, to be His alone. Do we feel that presence which we pray is here this morning? In the round of daily activities are we conscious and grateful that He is there? Do we respond by appreciating and acknowledging His careful instruction, and by obeying? Do we wait for His indication in our lives - His direction? Do we carry out His assigned work with all our hearts, most carefully, counting it a privilege and a grave responsibility - even as did the sons of Kohath, Gershon and Merari? Do we each assume our assigned place doing before all else what is our part of the work as the people of God? And in all this do we rejoice in being numbered among those working for the promised inheritance when Jesus returns?

This work, this blessing, this responsibility was made very tangible to our brethren at Sinai as they were prepared for their journey toward the inheritance promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet, we remember, of that great multitude only two were allowed to enter the land - a sobering thought indeed!

Shall we be numbered among the great and blessed host, the symbolic 144,000 - who will be found written in the Lamb's book of life in the day of His judgment?

J.A. DeF.

SONGS OF DEGREES

In the Psalm portions recently read, we have studied those entitled "Songs of Degrees". There are fifteen of these, from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. Four of these are entitled, "A Song of degrees of David" and one, "A Song of degrees for Solomon". In most of them there is mention made of Zion and a looking forward to the hope held out for those who are struggling now to be the children of God.

When we look up that word "degrees" it helps us to better understand the intent of these psalms. The word degree means elevation, with the thought of a journey to a higher place. The thought of projecting the mind to a higher plane also comes from the prime root of this word which means, to ascend. Perhaps these Songs of Degrees are to be looked upon as songs of ascent, not only of a going to Zion or attaining unto the hope God holds out, but also the need to place one's mind on a higher plane now during our time of probation. These psalms also bring out various aspects to be contemplated in our living as we walk now in hope of one day receiving the blessing promised to those found worthy. This ultimate hope may be achieved only as we move toward that higher elevation in mind and spirit each day of our living. Let us examine these Songs of Degrees to find the spiritual help they can afford.

When we look at Psalm 120, the first of the Songs of Degrees, we see that it speaks of the need to seek God's help in times of distress, for David says in verse 1:

"In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.
Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."

Here is the essence of one's relationship with God revealed, that in distress there is a need to look for help through prayer to the Almighty, and to know with confidence that He is always there to answer, as David said - "he heard me". To ascend to a higher plane, away from the distress and pulling down of the flesh is so very needful and can be done by seeking God through supplication.

Perseverance in calling unto God is also a requirement in the struggle to overcome as verse 1 of Psalm 121 says:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

also verses 7-8:

"The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

How well these words of David put into perspective the understanding that God knows those who are His, and is aware of their circumstances at all times. It however, requires perseverance and trust to

keep this thought in mind during times of trouble and uncertainty and to remember that it is only God who can deliver us from these trying circumstances. David knew from his own experiences that he would be protected and preserved by God, and we too, should think back upon our own tests and trials and remember how He has preserved us as well. As He has delivered in the past, so will He do again if we call upon Him.

To those whom God cares for is held out the promise of an everlasting peace and prosperity, free from the worries and tribulations which beset us in this life. Psalm 122 speaks of this longed for time as in verses 6-8 we are told:

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.”

We know that the Kingdom of God will be a place of peace, ruled in righteousness by the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, even now to those who are seeking that eternal dwelling, there is granted a peace of mind as there is an understanding of God’s will regarding them. “Peace be within thee” - this will be true in the time to come when peace will pervade the entire earth, yet a measure of that peace can be attained within us even now if we allow our hearts and minds to rise above the thinking of the flesh.

Psalm 123 particularly speaks of the need to seek God’s mercy as verses 3-4 brings out:

“Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.”

We need the mercy of God and His help to strengthen our resolve to overcome the contempt that the flesh holds for the things of the spirit. The first verse of this psalm and the 8th verse of Psalm 124 indicates once again where this help is to be found:

“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.” (Psalm 123:1)

“Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 124:8)

Again we see the thought put forward of lifting one’s thoughts in prayer to a higher place - to the heavens from whence the help of God can come. The flesh looks for deliverance in other directions or minimizes the true help that can be granted from the Father of all mercies. How can we avoid falling into this doubting trap? Psalm 125:1 brings out an aspect which can help - the need for trust:

“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.”

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How important this trust is in time of trial and testing, for to "be as mount Zion", one's thinking must rise above, ascending the problems of this world with its inherent evil, and instead focus upon a higher plane of righteous thinking. Only those who struggle to walk uprightly, moving in ways pleasing to God can hope for His help and mercy. If we can please Him now in this life, there is the hope of redemption held out as Psalm 126:1-4 explains:

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the LORD hath done great things for them.

The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south."

The ability to escape from that captivity of death that the flesh places on us is only possible as God's hand works to redeem from the bondage of the enemy within each one of us.

The title of Psalm 127 is different in that it is a Song of Degrees for Solomon, written by David perhaps to give fatherly advice as verse 1 says:

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

If this was advice for Solomon, was it in contemplation of the house he was to build, that care was to be taken that it conform completely to the builder's purpose? The example of Solomon perhaps speaks of God's purpose - that it cannot be frustrated, for only those who hold onto that word and conform to it have a hope in that heavenly building. For though he was the son of promise and was given great blessings, he squandered the eternal hope held out to him for the momentary satisfactions that this flesh craved. His example should strike fear in us, lest we too do not conform to the example set forth by the cornerstone of that temple, the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 128 sets forth the blessings that will be given to the man who does conform and fears to offend God in any way as verse 4 says:

"Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD."

God's righteousness will prevail and Psalm 129 speaks of it and of those that are afflicted in verses 4-5:

"The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion."

Nothing will prevent God's purpose from being accomplished and those seeking to be part of it. However, the flesh can confound our purpose if we allow it to control our thinking. Psalm 130 summarizes what our character must be like during our time of sojourning. Do we display the gentle spirit of David as expressed in verse 5 of this psalm?

"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."

Waiting upon God to provide that help which His word speaks of takes patience. Those promises given to David took time to come about as he waited for them, and some will only be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

As there is a journey Zionward there is bound to be failure because of the flesh, yet the message of God is clear. The need to recognize that redemption is possible but only through a patient, persistent conforming to His pattern set forth in the example of the Lord Jesus.

Psalms 131 speaks of a yielding to that hand of God and the need for humility in aligning ourselves with the standard of His Son, as verse 1 says: "LORD my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."

As we contemplate the road before us, humility is needed as we travel along in order to value the help and mercy of God as David did. How much we can learn from David - and especially to remember that God works only with those who are His.

Psalms 132 reminds of the covenant relationship granted only to those who please Him as verses 12-13 explain:

"If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore."

For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation."

As we are privileged to understand the purpose of God, we must value this relationship granted, as children of a loving Father. It is sometimes difficult to keep it always in the forefront of our thinking, yet David came through the same tests of the flesh that we experience today and wrote these Songs of Degrees as a reminder of the lofty calling which is ours. Let us then endeavor brethren and sisters to always keep our minds and spirits ascending to that hope that is set before us - a hope only granted to those who can put away the flesh's influence as they walk Zionward together in the spirit of Psalm 133 verse 1:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

United in that one hope, the concluding 134th Psalm summarizes for us the uplifting thoughts of mind and spirit that we are to embrace as the children of God:

"Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the LORD.

The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion."

M.C.S.

Jesus and the Evidence

The struggles and fears of those who were very close to Jesus are clearly shown in the divine record. When Jesus was no longer among them they were afraid, having seen Jesus taken and crucified. Doubtless we all likewise would feel afraid if we saw someone we loved nailed to a stake of wood by enemies. It would seem to the disciples a strange and huge gap in what had become their way of life when it appeared that Jesus was lost to them. But it was to be only a temporary gap, even though things would never be the same.

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” (John 20:19)

The doors of their room had been carefully secured, so that they could not be surprised by their enemy, for they were apprehensive. But suddenly, Jesus was among them! What a shock to find someone else appear on the inside of the barred room, while the door remained securely fastened.

Luke’s record tells us that they were terrified and affrighted. Was this a spirit, which they had heard their contemporaries talk about in their superstitions? Jesus, of course, could have knocked on the door and then entered in the usual way. But would they have been less startled in their frame of mind by such a knocking? Would they have believed that the voice accompanying the knocking was the voice of Jesus? Would they have opened the door? So we see the thoughtfulness and kindness in the way Jesus came to them.

This is Christ’s example to us, This is the Spirit of Christ. Jesus does come to His people in the best possible way, considering their weakness and their need. As we ourselves seek to be instructed by His Spirit, are we not then shown how Jesus is to be brought to others in our seeking to witness on His behalf? Bearing in mind reluctance of some to metaphorically open the door, because of frail unbelief.

When Jesus entered the secured room, it was not to terrify, or trouble the eleven disciples, for He acted quickly to assure them. “Peace be unto you,” and then:-

“And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.” (verse 20)

As they looked at the pierced hands and the pierced side, this indeed was clear evidence to reassure them. How important is evidence. Jesus wanted them to see the evidence! to see the evidence concerning his body. It is the Satan purporting to be a divine messenger, which wants to hide the evidence. So the cry goes forth, "Repudiate—repudiate—don't look at it—it is contention." But we are assured, as we look at the example of Jesus, that when the disciples saw the evidence in the very body of the Lord Jesus, they were glad. They were joyful because the doubts were removed. Jesus wanted to convince them with the evidence. This evidence helped them to see the Lord. The scripture expresses it clearly, "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Jesus wanted to reassure them and establish them in this new gladness.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (verse 21)

Jesus said to them AGAIN. Peter had denied his Lord. Other disciples had fled from the Garden of Gethsemane leaving Jesus alone in His great trial. But Jesus said to them three days later, "Peace be unto you." Then after showing them the evidence that He was the resurrected crucified body of Christ, he repeated, "Peace be unto you."

Can we ever reach to such a spirit? Yet here in the divine word is help, here is guiding instruction, to encourage us, for the consideration and care of Jesus for His eleven disciples is the measure of His consideration for us. Of course, Jesus wanted His disciples' faith positively increased. He wanted them to be strongly impressed by the help He had given. So Mark's gospel record is that He "—upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." Let us note, the words are not, that He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, but because:-

THEY BELIEVED NOT THEM WHICH HAD SEEN HIM AFTER HE WAS RISEN.

How easy it was at the time for those elders to say within themselves, that their distraught sister had imagined she had seen Jesus. Mary Magdalene, in their mind, was but a weak woman, her evidence obviously then was dismissed. Let us not overlook the fact (which the disciples at first did) that Jesus came to her first. Jesus shows we must not despise the evidence of any, however apparently weak, and thought to be insignificant!

Let us consider the injustices, in the House, experienced in these

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times. The hierarchy so often have had their own views, and the weak and despised few who have put forward their evidence have been ignored by the Ecclesias. Lack of care for the evidence which the apparent weak ones have attempted to show reveals an ignorance of the example of the Lord Jesus. But if the disciples took no heed to Mary Magdalene, Thomas took no heed to the disciples.

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

(John 20:24-25)

Thomas, we see, was determined to be ignorant. Some can be like this, can they not? They hold to their own view in the face of the clear witness of others. It is a sad lack. Of course, the disciples could hardly make much of it seeing they had just failed over Mary Magdalene's evidence. This shows that one's own failure does make it more difficult to help when another fails; hence the need to learn through the divine record, how to avoid being in such a weak position.

But Jesus also came to Thomas with the clear evidence; Thomas not having met with his fellows on the next first day of the week.

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

(Verses 26-28).

We see Thomas would have spared himself the description “doubting Thomas” if he had trusted his brethren more. It is a great lesson! But Jesus was compassionate, and so He came to Thomas with undeniable evidence. Here then in this simple and yet profound testimony is the instructive example of the Lord Jesus, and we have His words to encourage us:

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

(John 20:29)

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A BIBLE CLASS

"...THAT HE MIGHT SEEK A GODLY SEED..."

Malachi 2:15

Some background may help in our consideration of this subject. Malachi was sent to Jerusalem during the time in which Nehemiah had returned to Babylon. Conditions in Jerusalem upon his return were evil. Eliashib, the priest, was allied to Tobiah, the enemy, and gave him a chamber in the house of God. No tithes were provided for the Levites, necessitating their working in the fields for their food, neglecting the house of God. The sabbath was not kept; also Jews had married wives of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab (Nehemiah 13:4-31).

It was to those given over to wrong-doing that Malachi was sent as God's messenger - which is the interpretation of his name - to bring them back to God. The evil dealt with in our particular subject is:

"...Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."

Malachi 2:11

As Israel questioned this - "Wherefore?" - God's reply through Malachi was specific:

"...Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."

Verse 14.

Of the "wife of thy covenant" God further said:

"...Did not he make one?..."

Verse 15.

This takes us back to Eden where it was said:

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Genesis 2:24

Here, in the very beginning, is a figure of Christ and His bride. Paul enlarged upon this in Ephesians 5:32 -

"...I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Returning now to the message from God: "Did not he make one?" the record then asks: "And wherefore one?" The answer of the Spirit is:

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"...That he might seek a godly seed..."

Malachi 2:15

The aspect of a godly seed again goes back to Eden where God, after the failure of Adam and Eve, declared to the serpent:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head, and thou (the serpent) shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15

The ultimate seed of the woman is Christ, who bruised the serpent nature in the head when He died upon the cross. He was an unblemished offering, never having succumbed to the temptation inherent in His fleshly nature. Through that victory Christ is now with His Father as a mediator and redeemer for all who strive to serve Him, as a faithful wife serves her husband, moved by love. God is seeking still a people who willingly belong to Him through being faithfully joined to His godly seed, Christ. Those who earnestly strive to do so will be "(His) companion, and the wife of (His) covenant" - and will become His bride when He returns.

Judah, at the time of Nehemiah and Malachi, had lost this precious relationship and hope because:

"...Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord,... and hath married the daughter of a strange god." Malachi 2:11.

This example of Judah's apostasy is a grave warning for those who are striving to be of the woman's seed, giving over their lives to serve Him in single-heartedness, and to care for and serve those who are His. In desire now they are His bride-to-be, looking in hope to the time when He returns to gather them to Himself if they have stood fast - His bride for eternity.

God is seeking a godly seed. Let us take heed to His warning through Malachi, His messenger. Let us examine our offering, our worship. Is it pure, or is it diluted by the flesh's interests? Is it defiled by a strong leaning to a way which He might consider to be an idolatrous way? Let us take care and fear lest, like Judah, we should turn from our first love and lose this precious hope.

"...Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth." Malachi 2:15.

J. A. Def

WHO ARE MY BRETHREN?

When Suffolk Street left the Truth in 1885 by their refusal to stand by a wholly inspired Bible, were they still "brethren"? The quickly given answer by many Christadelphians today is "once a brother always a brother". Reference is usually made to a brother in a natural family who may become a renegade "However great his evil, he is still your brother" it is said. In this an important difference is overlooked. In the natural family, a man is born a brother of any other children, but in the family of God, he becomes a "brother" by "adoption". The fleshly natural tie is indissoluble, but the spiritual one is not. The tie may be preserved by faithfulness, whilst unfaithfulness breaks it. Jesus explains this:

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother."
(Mark 3:35)

The context shows that any, at any time, refusing to do God's will, ceases to be a brother.

At the time of the Inspiration Division those in Suffolk Street were referred to by Robert Roberts as "brethren in offence."

"Brethren in offence" are not true brethren but false, like those who troubled the Ecclesia in Galatia, of whom Paul wrote:-

"That because of false brethren unawares brought in; that they might bring us again into bondage."
(Galatians 2:4)

"Brethren in offence" or false brethren are not true brethren and therefore are not, as Jesus shows, His brethren. To continue to use the term "brethren" or "brother" in view of the misuse made of it in connection with false brethren, is not only unwise, it is wrong. Its use may "soften" the effects of a Division, which if it be a true division, is a dividing between right and wrong, a dividing between "soul" (flesh) and spirit.

In a division the flesh is delivered to the adversary outside the camp. It has no further affinity with the Spirit. To continue the use of the term "brother" may be a Gentile courtesy, but it does disservice to the Truth in marking what has really taken place - the separation of those who will stand for the right from those who refuse to do so. It is largely because of the free and unwarranted use of the term "brother" by all "Christadelphians" that all sections, including the more strict, have come to persuade themselves that they all severally make up the "brotherhood", although they are divided into twelve or more groups, and taken

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collectively, embrace many heresies and engage in worldly practices. Many of the older "Christadelphians" sadly confess how true this is and that the barrier between them and the world has gone.

With these thoughts in view we consider the evidence of the departure of Temperance Hall from the Truth and ask the question - "What is, or was, the underlying cause?" Is it not that the doctrine of Fellowship - the protector doctrine of all the teachings of God, has been forsaken? This seems to be amply confirmed, for C. C. Walker wrote in the Magazine in Jan. 1921:

"In nothing do we feel more bereft than in the question of fellowship."

How sad to read a confession of this kind, when the Scriptures have laid down so clearly the basis upon which God and His Son will dwell with His people. The Apostle John shows that the essential is to "walk in the light" and that "walking in darkness" by one or more, or a whole body of people, will take them from the fellowship of God. To speak of "fellowship" other than on the high plane shown by the Apostle John, is meaningless and confusing. There can only be one "fellowship", not many fellowships, as are often spoken of by "Christadelphians". God is holy, and we are weak and do sin, but the Apostle shows how sin, which alienates from God, can be removed. "Walking in darkness" means refusal to confess sin and remove it in the appointed way. To claim fellowship with God in such circumstances is a denial of His word. Where a body of people like Temperance Hall have condoned sin, and have not confessed it and purged it out, then they too "walk in darkness". To speak of the mercy of God in such circumstances is entirely beside the point, for mercy is only for those who confess and forsake sin and seek forgiveness through Christ.

And so Temperance Hall, the once revered centre of the Truth, has taken its departure into the world as it has lost the doctrine of Fellowship with the understanding of what separation from the world really means.

The re-union with Suffolk Street is one more great proof that this is true. Suffolk Street lost the doctrine of Fellowship when they refused to deal with those who denied the inspiration of the Scriptures. Since then they have "walked in darkness" not confessing their sin and seeking forgiveness. Now Temperance Hall have joined hands with them and so darkness walks with darkness.

Division then has been a God given instrument whereby the light has been preserved from the darkness. Those who speak against division deny one of the blessed provisions for the preservation of the Truth.

Let those who prefer unity (if it can be called that) and numbers at any price, in the mistaken belief that in this way all will be preserved in the light, consider again the natural creation of light and darkness, and the divine separation of the one from the other as a witness to the work of the Spirit, showing that there is no fellowship between light and darkness. Where darkness is embraced by a body of people, that is, where teaching is held contrary to sound doctrine, and will not be forsaken and confessed as wrong after a suitable opportunity to repent, then such a body must inevitably lose the fellowship of the light, which means no less than the loss of the life-giving fellowship of the Father and the Son.

A review of this majestic and divine provision is continually necessary to impress upon the mind the wonderful mercy of God, whereby sin-stricken men and women may enjoy the fellowship of Him, which means life, providing they determine to "walk in the light". This does not mean they will not sin, but it does mean that when they do sin they will be prepared to confess their sins, forsake them, and in true contrition seek forgiveness in the appointed way. This divine aspect of the division of light from darkness with all the life-giving properties which in God's purpose shall be seen, is summarised by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11:19:-

"For there must be also heresies (divisions) among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

Present day apologists for error are reluctant to observe the power of the spirit of Christ in the law. They are prone to dismiss it, no doubt because its teaching is so inconvenient to their wishes with the general observation as has already been remarked. "We are no longer under the Law but under Christ." They do not realise that in so saying they are putting a difference between the spirit of the Law and the spirit of Christ and are denying an elementary fact of the Truth, that the spirit of the law is the spirit of Christ.

(to be continued next month)

J.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

We have been asked some pertinent and appropriate questions recently from a correspondent whose confidence we wish to keep, yet at the same time we think it desirable to quote the remarks made, in part, for the benefit of our readers.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

We enjoyed reading the other material you last sent us particularly the articles on divorce and fellowship. We do have some questions on same and they are:

1. As you obviously do not regard other Christadelphians as your brethren, should they apply to join you do you require re-baptism?
2. What scripture do you believe supports your position re Christadelphians and not regarding them as brethren?

In relation to divorce, we both are impressed with your stand, but do wonder why if you do not consider God recognises marriages in the world (which is a valid point) when and if a divorcee applies to join you, the logic would not allow him or her to marry, if in fact God has not recognised the previous marriage?

THE REMNANT'S ANSWER

Question 1: We do believe that it is essential for a candidate for baptism to perceive the whole truth. Therefore if there was an immersion into "Partial Inspirationists" etc. etc. it would be our duty to baptise such a one if they came to us. How can an apostate Body baptise into the truth?

Question 2: Christ is The Truth; where there is departure from it, therefore from Christ, how can those in obvious declension be truly described as Brethren? If all fellowships constitute the Truth it would not matter to which one belonged. In fact it would be very wrong to remain disunited, as there is only one Table of The Lord. The actual position however is that if one or more leave one group to join another group, fellowship is withdrawn by those they have left. Inconsistency is also shown when the assertion is made "We are not the judges of any man in the matter of salvation", and yet from time to time news which is published concerning withdrawal of fellowship often adds the sentiment "It is hoped there will be repentance before it is too late."

Question 3: (re Divorce). We believe that the Truth forbids divorce.

But if divorce and re-marriage has taken place before coming to the truth, then "let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God" (1 Cor. 7:24).

In other words the position of those who have re-married should stand and the ecclesia should accept it. However, if one comes to the Truth who has been divorced and has not re-married, the enlightenment of the Truth forbids the divorced one to re-marry. This can be a great test of faith, but not an impossible trial for Jesus said, "—there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (Matt. 19:12).

The principle is made clear, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39). As for the position of a couple where one is in the Truth and the other not, "Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife— If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." (1 Cor. 7:10-13).

There is no licence in these words for one to repudiate the unbelieving spouse so that there can be marriage to one in the Truth. The crux of the matter is, "—as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all ecclesias." (verse 17). Deviation from this clear teaching has brought sorrow, contention and disunity. One has only to think of a case where a divorced single person coming to the Truth may find subsequently that the one from whom she or he has divorced has also, somewhat later, come to the Truth. If there is no impediment of a re-marriage is it not made clear what should be done, if there is a desire to once again establish a home? Is not the Truth, in its simplicity, a true safeguard?

LETTER FROM D. J. B.

Thank you for sending me recent copies of "The Remnant". I have found them interesting, but have been rather saddened by the proportion of the magazine which is pre-occupied with long-past disputes and divisions. I cannot see how such a pre-occupation can be in the spirit of Christ, whose prayer for His disciples was "that they all may be one". It is clear from the magazine that you follow events in the Christadelphian community with interest, and I would hope that after reflection you may be able to join us in a united witness to the Lord we love.

THE REMNANT'S REPLY

Our correspondent would have been quite right saying concerning past troubles, "I cannot see how such a pre-occupation can be in the spirit of Christ, whose prayer for His disciples was "that they all may be one," if those declensions and schisms had been repented of and put right.

Obviously they have not been rectified hence the entrenchment of the various groups in the consolidating of their respective positions.

How then could the Remnant join for a united witness to the Lord when there is such division and fragmentation, which is the result of the past disputes referred to? Surely a hiding of the facts would not dispose of the present sad condition of things.

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

"Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia." (Isaiah 18:1)

The words of Dr. Thomas are still apt in describing the attitudes of world powers. One example reads as follows:-

"—The Lion-power will not interest itself in behalf of the subjects of God's kingdom, from pure generosity, piety towards God, or love of Israel; but upon the principles which actuate all the governments of the world - upon those, namely, of the lust of dominion, self-preservation, and self-aggrandizement—they will settle in these countries of the Red Sea, to which they will be attracted by the riches to be acquired through their connection with the commerce of the east—"

Recent news of Britain's ten billion pounds order to supply Saudi Arabia with a complete air force and navy which will replace the United States as the main military supplier of the Middle East, is very significant.

Britain has made this arrangement in the face of Israel's objection to the re-arming of an Arab State which is a potential enemy.

Saudi Arabia, of course, has plenty of money because of its large revenue from Arabian oil; and this is the pre-eminent motive for Britain agreeing this deal which will produce a hundred advanced fighters and bombers designed to combat the most modern war planes. Helicopters and a fleet of the most modern mine sweepers will also be supplied.

This commercial arrangement, it has been said, may promote further arms orders from other states in the area.

But the ancient prophecy foresaw such an event. Hence the words "Woe to the land shadowing with wings." As a chief arms supplier, involvement with the politics of the nation so supplied is not negligible. Problems and difficulties will arise in due time as a result of this enormous business deal.

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MAGAZINE NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER 1988

HAMBURG, NEW YORK, Corner Southwestern Blvd. & Pleasant Ave.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday School 1.45 p.m.

Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville and Hamburg

Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

By the time this is in print one from here will be, God willing, enjoying the companionship and help of our brethren and sisters in Manchester. All are grateful that this trip may be permitted by a gracious Father and all anticipate the closer bonds each such visit may foster.

J. A. Def

Manchester News

Manchester, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

What a tangible thing is fellowship, it demonstrates the sublime fellowship which exists as a result of wonderful divine condescension which grants to those who are called, spirit bonds with The Father and His Son.

The real evidence of the Truth's working is conveyed when closeness is perceived with those who are from afar even as with those who are near.