

MARCH 1992

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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"NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"THEY SHALL KNOW THAT THERE HATH BEEN A
PROPHET AMONG THEM"

Once again we are impressed as the purpose of God unfolds in our three readings this morning. Each confirms that purpose; each strengthens our faith; each adds its sustenance to encourage in our endeavors to walk that narrow way "which leadeth unto life".

First, we consider Ezekiel, one of those taken captive to Babylon with Judah's King Jehoiachin. In the fifth year of the prophet's captivity he saw a vision by the River Chebar. He saw a whirlwind, a great cloud, with fire infolding and a brightness. (Ezekiel 1:4) "Brightness" is used in other places as shining. David was familiar with this phenomenon shown as he recorded God's word to him concerning the ruler to come:

"... He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, ... as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." II Samuel 23:3-4.

How essential to life is that clear shining. By it, all creation is nourished and thrives. This brightness after rain takes us back to God's promise to Noah:

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

... when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

And I will remember my covenant, ... and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Genesis 9:13-15.

The bow is not possible without the sun seen through the mist of rain, the clear shining. Also we remember John's "mighty angel" vision of Jesus Christ:

"... clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun. . . "

Revelation 10:1.

This is a reminder of the beauty and glory of the Messiah when He returns in great power.

Ezekiel further tells us more of what he saw in this vision of fire and brightness:

"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. . ."

Ezekiel 1:28.

The prophet, overwhelmed by this glory, fell upon his face in fear and reverence. Then he heard "a voice of one that spake", the voice of God bringing His message for the prophet to carry to His people:

"... Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me. . ."

Ezekiel 2:1-2.

Can we share a sense of Ezekiel's feelings as he heard that voice? He tells us, "the spirit entered into me when he spake. . ." He needed and was revived by that help from the Almighty, who then revealed His purpose toward Israel concerning those rebellious people who were so impudent and stiffhearted:

"I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God.

And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."

Ezekiel 2:4-5.

What a hard responsibility was Ezekiel's, especially difficult where he faced a forbearing or resistance and a consequent hatred and enmity as he spoke, "Thus saith the LORD". They knew he was a prophet among them, one of many whom God sent "rising early and sending them", to speak to His people. Some heard, feared, and responded, honoring God. Most forbore, ruled by a different fear or greater desires than for the Almighty. These scoffed and persecuted, seeking to silence their tormenting witness. Yet Ezekiel continued, for God had told him:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

Ezekiel 3:17.

A watchman is one who leans forward, peering into the distance, and warns of approaching danger, faithfully guarding his master's property. Ezekiel did not fail in the charge given by the Almighty, taking His message to Judah again and again: "Thus saith the LORD." Indeed they were made to know that surely here

was a prophet. Some heard, most refused, yet Ezekiel continued in the often painful work which God had commanded.

In Acts we are reading of Paul's works, and that of his brethren who were also to be as prophets, proclaiming: "Thus saith the LORD." This morning we have seen them in the synagogue of the Jews in Iconium where they:

"... so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."
Acts 14:1-2.

Nevertheless the brethren were stedfast:

"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
Acts 14:3

In response to their refusal to desist, an assault was made against them and attempts to stone them. Paul and those with him fled to Lystra and Derbe, and "there they preached the gospel" continuing in that work: "Thus saith the LORD." Among those at Lystra who heard was a man crippled from birth. Paul:

"... stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,
Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on they feet. And he leaped and walked."
Acts 14:9-10.

The impotent man responded to: "Thus saith the LORD", and Paul, perceiving his faith, healed him so that he not only walked, but could actually leap, probably for joy and gratitude. Paul in this wondrous feat had spoken "with a loud voice", not only so the impotent man could hear, but also that all those who stood by would better realize God had sent this prophet to them. Many in Lystra responded and desired to make gods of Paul and Barnabas, offering sacrifices to them because of their wonderful works. The Apostle, appalled at such an action, cried out:

"... Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God..."
Acts 14:15.

Thus through Paul's mighty works and his proclamation of God's word, many of Lystra came to know there were prophets from God among them. Quickly after this, however:

“ . . . there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.”
Acts 14:19.

How difficult now were the brethren’s circumstances! As the disciples stood about Paul, mourning his apparent death, he revived and “rose up, and came into the city”. How confounded would be those who had stoned him, seeing the unmistakable evidence of God’s presence with and care for Paul. He and Barnabas departed the next day to Derbe. What loving care the Almighty revealed on behalf of His witnesses who had so faithfully spoken His word. The record continues of the encouragement in Derbe:

“ . . . when they had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, . . .”
Acts 14:21-22.

With such help and with his great faith, Paul did not hesitate returning to those cities where he had been so persecuted. He wished to strengthen and support those who had heard and believed that there were indeed prophets among them, surely testifying: “Thus saith the LORD.”

Going back now to I Kings, we have read of Elisha, an earlier prophet sent by God to continue Elijah’s work of speaking His word to Israel. When Elijah was sent to “call” Elisha, he “cast his mantle upon him” (I Kings 19:19). This mantle had been used by Elijah to cover his face as the vision of God appeared to him. There upon Mount Horeb (Sinai), Elijah beheld as:

“ . . . the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. . . .”
I Kings 19:11-13.

It was this mantle, the covering Elijah knew was necessary lest he look upon God, which he cast upon Elisha, calling him to the work of prophesying to Israel. A few years later, when it came time for Elijah’s work to cease, Elisha’s faithful ministering and compan-

ionship to him right to the end is mentioned. Prior to that, after dividing the waters of Jordan with his mantle, Elijah had said to his companion, Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee", and Elisha asked that he might have a portion of his spirit. Shortly after this, when Elijah was taken away in a whirlwind with a chariot and horsemen of fire, his mantle fell to the ground. Elisha took it up, and so received the double (duplicate) portion of Elijah's spirit for which he had asked. Elisha quickly proved the power of that spirit as he smote the waters of Jordan with the mantle and they again parted. Those who witnessed all this were moved to exclaim, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" (II Kings 2:15), recognizing that here indeed was another prophet among them. Elisha used this power to do mighty works, showing all Israel that truly he was sent of God. We have read this morning of Naaman, a great man in the Syrian army, but a leper. An Israelitish maid, a captive and servant in Naaman's house, spoke to his wife:

"... Would God my lord (Naaman) were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."
II Kings 5:3.

Even in Syria it was known that there was a prophet in Israel, and so the king sent his officer, Naaman, there to be healed. The king of Israel, hearing his plea, despaired, without faith or power, fearing retribution from Syria. But Elisha, hearing of this, sent to his king, saying:

"... Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."
II Kings 5:8.

Naaman, doubting and refusing, but persuaded by his servants to heed Elisha's instructions, was miraculously healed as he washed seven times in Jordan. He returned to his own country and his king, now believing in and convinced of the power of Israel's God:

"Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: ..."
II Kings 5:15.

Naaman no doubt spoke of God's power to his king and others, so even in that alien land the people knew indeed of that prophet in Israel.

We, Brethren and Sisters, have listened to these prophets today, have seen their works as they spoke: "Thus saith the LORD", and were watchmen. Even like those who actually saw and heard, may not our souls also be "confirmed" to continue in faith, recognizing, with the faithful of all the ages, that:

“... we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22.

Jesus Himself used the examples of Elijah and Elisha:

“... Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.
But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, ...
But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.
And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian.” Luke 4:24-27.

Jesus reminded them of these men to teach of Himself as a Prophet. He proclaimed to His people: “Thus saith the LORD.” However, in response they:

“... when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” Luke 4:28-29.

These, like many, would not hear but forbore, turning their backs upon the Son of God who is to fulfil all the promises made through the law, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Let us never forbear to hear when it is spoken: “Thus saith the LORD”, lest we be cast out when Jesus returns. For He comes to judge righteously those who know His word. We do not receive visions as did Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel and Paul, but we do have the record of these holy men of God who, inspired by what God had allowed them to see and hear, just as surely speak to us now through His Word.

J.A.DeF



AN EVIL SPIRIT FROM THE LORD

We are familiar with the background of Saul, a man anointed king over Israel but one who failed in obedience to God's Word. In the time of battle with Amalek he neglected to destroy all the people and animals as commanded, sparing the king's life and allowing Israel to save the best of the sheep and oxen as spoil. Also at Gilgal, before a battle with the Philistines he failed to wait for Samuel as commanded, and through fear and lack of trust, intruded into the

priest's sacrifice, bringing God's displeasure and rejection. Because of these grievous failures, Samuel brought God's Word to him:

"... for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." I Samuel 16:26,28.

God found another to be king over His people, a man after His own heart, instructing Samuel to anoint David, the son of Jesse:

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward." I Samuel 16:13.

God's Spirit was caused to come upon him because David was of a yielding mind, willingly obedient, and left Saul because of his history of stubbornness and rebellion, however:

"... the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him." I Samuel 16:14.

One might ask what is an evil spirit from the Lord and how could anything evil come from God who is only good? When we discover the origin of that word "evil" as used here, we find it means spoil, good for nothing, and is used as harm or misery. This was not wickedness coming from God but rather intentional trial through difficulty and adversity that brought from Saul evil reaction in anger and violence.

Job knew such testing and suffered without bitterness:

"What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job 2:9-10.

Job knew both good and evil is sent from the Lord and that man must learn and profit spiritually from difficulty, in order to be more pleasing to God.

"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" Amos 3:6.

Amos reveals that the Lord sends evil—again not in a sense of wickedness, but as trouble or distress to try the hearts of His people or to bring punishment upon those who rebel against Him, the sure fruits of evil. However, the faithful are not left without knowing why this has come:

"Surely the LORD God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7.

God does create evil in sending affliction when He knows it is needful, just as Saul knew trouble because of his waywardness. When he realized the Spirit of the Lord had departed and affliction had come, he was greatly frightened, and in this fearful state, sought David's music to soothe his troubled mind.

"And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And it came to pass when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." I Samuel 16:15-16,23.

When the flesh is afraid it often strikes out blindly, venting anger and frustration on whoever is nearby. David could quiet Saul's terror at first, but as it festered and grew, so did his jealousy, knowing David was pleasing to God and a favorite of the people. The gentle harpist sent to quiet this troubled spirit was soon the object of Saul's rage, as his rebellion against affliction refused to submit:

"And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul."

I Samuel 18:11-12.

The Spirit of God can come as one of blessing and good or one of difficulty and affliction to try the hearts of those who seek to serve Him, thus determining if they will continue in His ways even though beset by fear and worry. God's affliction at times is sent in graciousness, helping one to consider, who may be straying from His precepts. Will there be a lashing out with contention because of difficulty or sinful reaction, or will there be a yielding, knowing this is brought with a Father's love for His children's spiritual well being?

David recognized that trials and affliction were brought to gentle him as evidenced by his reaction to Shimei's cursing:

“. . . behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

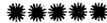
Then said Abishai the son of Zeruah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

And the king said. . .so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.”
II Samuel 16:5,9-10,12.

David's response was based upon spiritual reasoning, trusting in God, not taking revenge as the natural inclinations of others urged him to do. He submitted to the circumstances, knowing they were under God's control, whereas Saul sought to control events to his own liking and therefore would not be tempered by the adversity, but hardened in rebellion and continued wrong doing. By these examples may we more fully value God's merciful hand upon us to guide and direct, accepting with submission, considering with care, and thereby learning from what God in His wisdom has placed upon us.

M.C.S.



PARTIAL INSPIRATION—the trouble of 1885
(continued)

Letter to R. Roberts from G.T. of Tranent

“It is with pain I hear of the untoward situation of affairs in relation to the Truth. It seems a crisis is coming. May we come through the fire purified and strengthened. This situation has been manifestly looming for some time, but who, among the sons of men, could have even guessed at the course which events have taken? Your words of warning have been ringing in our ears for some time; but to be honest and candid, I was one of the number who thought you were calling too loudly. We could not judge accurately, not having all the facts of the situation. I thought your remarks on bro. Chamberlin were equally applicable to the projects of bro. Ashcroft, and yet you seemed to endorse the latter, while censuring the

former. This was the result of not knowing all the facts. Now matters are much clearer and more comprehensible. You have my sympathy in your trial, for the situation must be specially trying to you. How saddening it is to hear our revered brother (now deceased) Dr. Thomas, so criticised, by one, too, who, if he only knew half as much, would be mightily furnished in the things of the Spirit. We must wait and watch patiently."

Letter to R. Roberts from A. of Bideford

"I thank you, dear brother, for your uncompromising adherence to and defence of the faith once (for all) delivered to the saints. It is a grief of mind to all who desire to see the truth maintained in its purity, to see such men as brethren Ashcroft and Chamberlain taking up such an attitude as they are doing in regard to the holy Scripture. I am in weekly receive of the Aeon but shall not renew my subscription when the first six months expire. I have also received the specimen number of the Biblical Exegetist, but shall not subscribe to it. One cannot help loving such men as brethren Ashcroft and Chamberlain as long as they adhere to the truth as revealed in the word, but when they begin to undermine the reliability of the Scriptures by denying that they are as a whole the inspired word of God, and by placing 'popular literature' side by side with the writings of prophets and apostles, I can no longer love, but grief at once fills the void left by vanished love. May our Father spare you, dear brother, and give you strength to fight the battles of the truth as you have so long and so manfully done. And also dear brother Shuttleworth, who is a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.
(to be continued)



THE REUNION RE-EXAMINED

An extract from the Old Paths Magazine

"When the Unity agreement (the accepted basis of Reunion between the Central and Shield Ecclesias in Australia) was presented and adopted, those who opposed it (such as the now "Old Paths" group of Ecclesias) claimed that it allowed Brethren and Sisters who held error to be accommodated within the Reunion.

Until recent times any thought that such accommodation was possible was strenuously denied by the "Central" group of Ecclesias, and the reply by several "Central" Ecclesias to the ACC assessment (which reject it as "misleading, scripturally indefensible and potentially divisive") had the capacity to end the matter once and for all.

It is now evident that many of the matters detailed in the ACC document were an accurate assessment of the situation, as evidenced by the more recently published "1958 Revisited, and that in fact there are those in the "Central" Fellowship who believe that the Unity Agreement did and does provide room for their erroneous views.

As the Unity Agreement removed the former "Central" practice of automatic withdrawal from an ecclesia which retained an errorist it does not provide sufficient basis for inter-ecclesial action to ensure the removal from fellowship of those who clearly hold error. This is confirmed by Bro. Keith Cook's comments (under the heading of "The Fellowship Aspect") included in the Ecclesial Calender attached to the July 1989 Logos.

Item 3 states that as part of the Agreement "'Central' ecclesias were to no longer implement the practice of automatic withdrawal from an ecclesia which retained an errorist". This statement supports the view held by the Old Paths group of Ecclesias, that from the days of the Pioneers to 1956 inter-ecclesial action to ensure removal of errorists was practised (a view consistently denied by "Reunion")

Item 2 states that under the Unity Agreement each ecclesia was " - - to accept the responsibility of acting against errorists in their midst - - -". Sadly, this ideal has not worked, and this is recognised by the present editor of Logos who, under the heading of Dishonest Fellowship, wrote (July 1989 Editorial) that "the Brotherhood has been afflicted for decades with strife and turmoil resulting from dishonesty in practice and teaching." It is unfortunate that rather than review the basis being used, the editor has chosen to appeal to the honesty of the Brethren concerned to "declare themselves - - - and remove themselves from association - - -".

It is quite apparent that the Editor of Logos has a very different view of the Unity agreement to those Brethren who published "1958 Revisited", and those who provided the substance of the ACC assessment.

As stated above, prior to the implementation of the Unity Agreement (and on numerous occasions since) the Old Paths group of ecclesias in Australia maintained that it allowed for the accommodation of error. We again suggest that these problems are not new and always have been the result and clear demonstration of an unsound basis of fellowship rather than the result of mere dishonesty.

The book "The Accepted Basis of Unity in Australia" contains a section on "Doctrinal Error Exposed" and includes a commentary

on the two aspects of sin (pages 62-63). In endeavouring to smear with "Andrewism" those who believe that sin nature separates from God, the 'Basis' leaves the way open to the fellowship with those who deny that "sin in the flesh" exists (clean flesh). This approach is the same as that used in the Carter-Cooper Addendum where Clauses 5 and 12 of the BASF were altered. This then allowed its acceptance by those who were unable to believe that Adam's nature underwent a physical defiling change which was transmitted to his posterity, including the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Remnant's Comments

Why has re-union (1958) gone wrong? Is it because the doctrine of fellowship was not fully upheld? Fellowship means unity. It may be said that where there is human nature there can never be absolute unity. It has to be admitted that individuals do have differences of opinion, that character and style varies. But when it comes to scriptural unity there should be no problem. The word of God has placed on record fundamentals of belief. All who subscribe to and uphold His Spirit's instruction, which gives understanding to the simple, (Psalm 119:130), are bound to be in unity. Where there are doctrinal differences some are bound to be in error, and therefore failing to humble themselves to God's working with them through His Word. This can only mean rejection, for any who "abide not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 John verse 9) This seems to us the simple position of the Truth. It is when men try to get round this principle for various reasons that complications arise, and become chronic situations which worsen in the entrenchment which ensues with the lapse of time. The errorist does not like to be told that he is wrong. But if an endeavour is made to come to terms with his views to "bridge the gap", it is a pandering to man and does not honour God.

Tradition of the past, from pioneering times says:-

"No faithful brother or sister could engage in "worship" with those who are not "in Christ Jesus"; and only those are in Christ Jesus who have been "baptised into Christ" (Gal.3:27)

"Our Father who art in heaven" (Luke 11:2) is an inscription that can only be used by those who are the sons and daughters of God by being brothers and sisters of "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35; Heb.2:11).

How then, can those who repudiate doctrine be accepted as brothers and sisters? The scripture gives a clear warning, "- - - he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John verse 11).

N.B. Our readers are invited to send for our free booklet The Doctrine of Fellowship.

A BIBLE CLASS

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” (James 2:19)

Our consideration and its context is used as an example by James to illustrate the great importance of faith and works existing hand in hand. As James says, it is easy to recognize that there is one God, for even devils believe and tremble, but adds, it is more important to realize that faith without works is profitable for nothing:

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”
James 2:19-20.

There are other examples of this enlightening illustration that “devils also believe and tremble”:

“And when he (Jesus) was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.
And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”
Matthew 8:28-29.

Also:

“And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
Saying Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.”
Mark 1:23-24.

Devils were not supernatural beings, but simply afflictions, maladies, mental or physical which at that time, were not understood, and so one suffering such were termed as being possessed by devils or unclean spirits. In these examples, even those “possessed with devils” recognized the son of God and the power that was His. To acknowledge Him is important, but not sufficient. It is quite another thing to accompany that knowledge with works which uphold that belief.

This was the kernel of James’ message—even “devils” can recognize God’s power and agree that He is One, as we see:

“For he (Jesus) had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."

Mark 3:10-11.

If a man says he has faith in the gospel of Christ but does not reflect the gentleness of His teachings, then his life becomes an empty form. Therefore, James impressed upon his brethren to prove their faith with charitable fruits of the Spirit as evidence of their sincerity:

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

James 2:15-18.

A practical application of this understanding is seen in Paul's conversion on the way to Damascus. After hearing Jesus' rebuke, he fell down before His power, trembling:

"And he (Paul) said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Acts 9:5-6.

Paul was convinced of the power before Him, and with great fear quickly asked what God would have him to do. He was ready to put his new found faith into works, unlike a hearer only of the word who:

"... is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

James 1:23-24.

One's natural face takes us back to the word "genesis" the beginning, at which time the first couple through yielding to temptation were sentenced to mortality, becoming sinful creatures, by nature given to their own desires. Only by steadfast effort against fleshly thinking can one confirm a claim that he has faith. One who

believes, but shrinks at the idea of hindering or restraining his own ways, continues on as before, his living untouched by the power of the Word, has not truth in reality. Contrast this with the truth of James' words:

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
James 1:25.

One may feel to have truth, but to move in faith, and change one's thinking to conform to Jesus' example, is the only way to please our Father and share eternal life with His Son. The faithful man trembles in reverence and awe at the power of God and gladly does his best to serve Him through works.

M.C.S.



"THEIR WORM WILL NOT DIE "
(From "the Christadelphian")

Bro. --- writes: "In Isaiah 66:23-24, the prophet describes how in the Kingdom all people will go to worship the Messiah in the Holy City, and on their way will look on the burning carcasses of the sinners who will be condemned at the Judgment Seat, 'for their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched' (NIV). From this it would seem that the fire will go on burning for the thousand years, perhaps like the burning bush which was not consumed. But that would surely add a note of imperfection and ugliness to the otherwise delightful state of the kingdom."

Extract from the reply in the Christadelphian
to the above

"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:0) As the learning of righteousness by those living in the earth is the main purpose of the thousand years, the constant spectacle of God's righteous judgment of rebellion is not something which detracts from the delightful state of the kingdom, it is an essential part of the process which will produce the final state of perfection. Yet it will still be argued that the idea of everlasting or continual fire does not well accord with the revelation of God's mercy and love. However, the judgments of God are upon "the men who have transgressed against me" (Isaiah 66:24) those who knew what was required and willingly chose to rebel. There would be little purpose in striving to be

obedient if God's standards could easily be swept to one side. As there are guiding principles which will be applied by Jesus in the kingdom, their imposition necessitates that rejectors will be punished."

The Remnant's comments on the above

The Remnant would respectfully point out what the context of the chapter in Isaiah says:-

"For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many."

(Isaiah 66:15-16)

All who oppose the word of the Lord transgress against Him. Were not the men of Sodom transgressors, whose fire was not quenched? But obviously when the fire of judgment had done its work at that time there were no carcasses to look upon. The idea that carcasses will be exposed to a burning flame, like the burning bush which was not consumed seems to us an incongruous analogy. The burning bush concerned life not death.

Dead bodies are to be covered by earth (ie. be removed) as being unclean; this is what the Spirit shows. Ezekiel tells us of the care that is to be exercised in this respect concerning the bodies of the destroyed Gogian host, "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may CLEANSE the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them ---." (Ezekiel 39:12-13) To suggest some bodies will still be exposed over a period of time as a lesson to the nations would be a form of linking the spiritual with the mundane as seen in embalming ancient and also modern, where there are dead statesmen on display. And almost a lending of support to those who claim to witness to the Truth, and who suggest that Christ is Spirit (which of course He is) therefore His former earthly body will be on display only as a carcase, in which the wounds in the hands and side of that former travail will testify to converted Jews of that former suffering. An explanation they give to the scripture "--- they shall look upon me whom they have pierced ---." (Zechariah 12:10)

R. Roberts' exposition on this subject, we believe, is sound and helpful, from which we will quote extracts:

"(Gehenna) became the receptacle of rubbish in general, and received the carcasses of men and beasts. To consume the rubbish

and prevent pestilence, fires were kept perpetually burning in it. In the days of Jesus it was the highest mark of ignominy that the council of the Jews could inflict, to order a man to be buried in Gehenna. In one of Jeremiah's prophecies of Jewish restoration, the obliteration of this valley of dishonour is predicted in the following words: "And the whole valley of the DEAD BODIES and of the ASHES, and all the fields unto the brook of Kedron, unto the corner of the horse gate, toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord." (Jer. 31:40) - - - it must be interpreted as a type rather of the judgment revealed, than of one imagined - - - and is one that will take the same form as regards circumstance and result. "They (who come to worship at Jerusalem in the future age) shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Isaiah 66:24)

The reader will observe a similarity between these words and the words of Christ in Mark 9:44-48, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." - - - In the first place, the undying worm and the unquenchable fire must be admitted to be symbolical expressions. The worm is an agent of corruption, ending in death. Fire is a means to the same end, but by a more summary process. When, therefore, they are said to be unarrestable in their action, it must be taken to indicate that destruction will be accomplished without remedy. The expression cannot mean immortal worms or absolutely inextinguishable fire - - - but that in relation to the object of its operation, it should not be quenched till the operation was accomplished - - - the worm that preys upon the wicked will disappear when the last enemy, death, is destroyed and the fire that consumes their corrupt remains will die with the fuel it feeds on; but in relation to the wicked themselves, the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. The expressions were borrowed from Gehenna, where the flame was fed, and the worm sustained, by the putrid accumulations of the valley. - - - at the resurrection, the wicked will be punished with the punishment characteristically pertaining to the age of Christ's advent."

We hope these apt words of R. Roberts will help our readers to consider that looking "upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed" is a scriptural expression not intended for absolute literal interpretation, as also shown in the figures of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire.

Signs of His Coming and of the End of the World

“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

(Jeremiah 6:14)

The above words are in context with the divine declaration:-

“Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, ---

O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth --- for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.” (verses 22-26).

The break up of the Soviet Union is thought to have removed a dangerous confrontation from the world scene. And there are some who, purporting to be Israel’s friends, either inside or outside that country, would have the Jews believe that it is now peace, therefore they ought to generously come to terms with their Arab neighbours.

But the ancient prophecy, which, though relating to the past, also prophesies for the future, tells us otherwise. Furthermore even before it comes to pass, there are already portents that show there is no real peace.

For example Syria is acquiring new military equipment and aircraft from Russia and eastern Europe. Also missiles from North Korea making it possibly the fourth greatest military power. Additionally Iran is re-arming very rapidly, and unlike Syria which is prepared to negotiate with Israel, declares that Israel has to be destroyed; and is engaged on building its own nuclear bomb at the present time. If things continue as they are Iran would doubtless achieve nuclear bomb production because it is a country with large natural resources.

The leader in Iran has not held back his feelings, he has said:-

“The continuation of multifaceted jihad (holy war), strengthening the intifada and continuous struggles are the only ways to regain the rights of the oppressed people of Palestine.”

He has gone on to say that Muslim countries should unite to support the holy war until Jerusalem is freed from Israeli rule.

“Over-reliance on the arrogant powers, the United States in

particular, contradicts the lofty interests" of the Islamic area.

So the cry "--- Peace, peace ---" is mere words, "--- there is no peace ---."

The threat from Iraq, of course, has receded, due to the "Desert Storm" attack by the mainly United States forces, preventing Iraq producing the nuclear bomb which they had almost completed, for they had already successfully tested a device required to detonate an atomic weapon, and had produced weapons grade plutonium, and uranium, when the Desert War commenced. However Iraq's subjugation is now seen to have only given Israel a temporary respite. To Israel there is no peace, nor to the world at large, when conditions for example in the far east are taken into account.

Why should the United States postpone troop cuts in South Korea? Because they suspect North Korea is developing nuclear weapons, and that country had refused to open its facilities to international inspection, saying the South Koreans must first give up their reliance on American nuclear weapons. America is sufficiently concerned as to agree to cancel joint military exercises with South Korea, to get North Korea to agree to nuclear inspection.

The world is really entering another dangerous time. The Soviet Union is broken up, but greater problems and threats are beginning to emerge, for which the only solution is the return of the Prince of Peace.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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

Help granted to our two sisters in Manchester over their worrying family problem is gratefully acknowledged and we rejoice at the beneficial outworking under God's hand.

The counsel and contact with our brethren and sisters in Manchester is much valued for its help in the continuing ecclesial work and in maintaining closeness in these last days.

Witnessing continues to both Christadelphian contacts and to the general public as we seek to "cast bread upon the waters".

J.A.Def.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.
Thursday: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

In various ways our witnessing continues. To some overseas, and to others close at hand. Such activity is a source of encouragement and strengthening, even though largely the message falls upon deaf ears.