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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
JESUS CHRIST...WHO HATH ENABLED ME

This week we have been reading Paul's letter to Timothy, "my own son in the faith", he tells us. Doubtless he was close to this younger brother, having worked often with him in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul himself was "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God..." (I Timothy 1:1). He was sent, an ambassador, by the authority or command of God. He wrote to Timothy exhibiting his sense of duty and privilege to faithfully witness to:

"...the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."
I Timothy 1:11.

We recall how he received this divine calling. He was authorized (Acts 9) by the high priest to bring Jesus' followers in Damascus as prisoners to Jerusalem. On the way to Damascus he was blinded by a great light from heaven and heard the questioning voice of Jesus. Trembling, he replied: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Being instructed, Paul was led into the city. What a different entrance this was to what he had anticipated as he went to persecute Jesus' disciples. Blinded and afraid, he neither ate nor drank for three days, until Ananias who was sent by Jesus spoke to him:

"...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus,...hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately...he received sight...and was baptized."
Acts 9:17-18.

Jesus already had revealed to Ananias concerning Paul:

"...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

Acts 9:15.

So began Paul's steadfast commitment - a vessel divinely chosen for this work of such great significance - "to bear my name before the Gentiles. . . ." As he began preaching this gospel which he had so vehemently opposed, what must have been in his mind? He makes his thoughts clear:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."
I Corinthians 9:16-17.

A dispensation is a stewardship in which the steward is responsible for his master's goods committed to his trust, to serve for his master's gain. Paul did faithfully carry out this stewardship, willingly acknowledging his earlier mis-directed zeal, and thereby revealing his spirit, confessing that he:

"... was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."
I Timothy 1:13.

In God's mercy he was not accounted responsible, being without knowledge and without faith. Also, it was done prior to his baptism from which he rose a new man in Christ Jesus, cleansed from his previous wrongdoing. Yet, he acknowledged having been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious to Jesus' disciples and therefore to Jesus and His Father, which must have touched many thoughtful minds.

But what a formidable task lay ahead as he rose from those waters of baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit. He wasted no time:

"... straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem...?"
Acts 9:20-21.

From that time he faithfully spent and was spent in carrying out his God-given stewardship. He did this work with sincerity and zeal, for his mind was:

"... I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;"
I Timothy 1:12.

Paul was profoundly grateful for the privilege of being God's steward, although it involved much hardship and reproach. He wrote of his experiences and of his persecutors:

"Are they ministers of Christ? ... I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes, ... in prisons ... in deaths oft. ... beaten with rods, ... stoned, ... suffered shipwreck ... in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

II Corinthians 11:23-28.

Clearly he met many bitter circumstances. These words were written in A.D. 60, about twenty-five years after being called by God a "chosen vessel". He lived until A.D. 67 or 68, experiencing continual affliction and suffering for the gospel of Christ committed to his trust. He long endured as a faithful steward and rejoiced in the privilege, writing to Timothy:

"... I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;"
I Timothy 1:12.

Jesus enabled him; that is, He strengthened and empowered him. And from the time of Paul's conversion our brother:

"... increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."
Acts 9:22.

From the beginning of his ministry he experienced the "enabling" - this increase in strength - sustaining him for the difficult and dangerous work given as God's "chosen vessel". Often he felt to stand alone, as he expressed to Timothy near the end of his life:

"... no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; ... Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."
II Timothy 4:16-17.

How fearful a predicament! He must have felt, figuratively, in the lion's very mouth. Perhaps he thought back to Daniel who was delivered from the actual lions' mouths, and so Paul through the Lord's standing by was enabled and delivered from the "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion... seeking whom he may devour." I Peter 5:8. He also experienced the Lord's standing by as he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, threatened with death for preaching Jesus' name:

"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."
Acts 23:11.

He soon did go to Rome, witnessing for Jesus' name, and there he ultimately was put to death during the time of Nero. This apostle was marvelously enabled of the Lord in this important work which was entrusted to him. Therefore, he could write with realistic empathy, encouraging those in Ephesus:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong (enabled) in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Ephesians 6:10-11.

The adversary - the enemy of those seeking to please the Almighty - is indeed wily, lying in wait to ensnare, even as Jesus Himself experienced. We all need strength, perception, wisdom to avoid these ever-threatening snares to which the flesh nature gives rise in ourselves and in others. God does enable His people, giving guidance and strength through prayer and trust in His word. Let us listen to Paul as he continued to impart necessary help to his brethren in Ephesus:

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:13.

That strength, that enabling armor is there. It must be sought after, for the Spirit’s instruction is: “take unto you the whole armour”. We need to realize, Brethren and Sisters, our great need for that enabling protection, to pursue it with reverence and zeal. It is the only means of turning aside the adversary’s weapons, ever waiting to weaken our faith and dim our hope. We need to reach out, taking this whole armor, not just a helmet or a sword, but the complete covering, figuratively clad from head to foot with God’s given strength and protection: Loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness; feet shod with the gospel of peace; the helmet of salvation, and the sword - the word of God. No doubt those who in olden times wore a full set of armor to battle may have felt it was heavy, cumbersome, restraining and uncomfortable; but they willingly wore it. They knew it was their life-saving covering! Should we not feel the same, realizing our exposure to the craftiness of the adversary? We need all of God’s protection, all His enabling strength, lest there be a “chink in our armor”, making us vulnerable to the scheming of the flesh.

Paul spoke of this weakness in his flesh, and his awareness is seen:

“... lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” II Corinthians 12:7.

He prayed to the Lord three times for deliverance from this affliction (specifics of which we are not told), but the Lord:

“... said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

II Corinthians 12:9.

Believing and relying on the power of Christ can enable us to submit to His will, conquering fleshly weaknesses. Do we not all need a pricking thorn at times so that we realize how vulnerable we are? Also, how blessed we are as well, that His enabling power is made available if we can, with Paul:

“... take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” II Corinthians 12:10.

We can be strong, Brethren and Sisters, but only as we reach out for that divine strength which alone can “enable”. Paul expressed this conviction clearly for us:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (enableth me).”

Philippians 4:13.

In ourselves, we are often most unable. It is only as we reach out for and apply our minds to the spiritual strength promised and found in His Word, that we can be enabled to conquer our own desires and overcome adverse circumstances.

So let us with gratitude, submit to the Almighty, who holds out His immutable promise:

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:11.

J.A.DeF.

"THOU GAVEST THEM SAVIOURS"

We have been reading the book of Judges, the record of fifteen different leaders whom God provided over a span of several hundred years to lead Israel in His way. From the time of Joshua to Samson, this book reveals how God worked with His people, overseeing their circumstances, often chastening and yet providing deliverance, mercy and grace.

In the first chapter, after the death of Moses, the people began to conquer the land under Joshua's leadership. However, Israel did not follow through to destroy all the inhabitants as God had commanded:

"... Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee." Exodus 34:10-12.

He had made a covenant, promising to be their Deliverer if they would but obey His voice and in faith, cleanse the land of its inhabitants as commanded. In His wisdom, God stressed the importance of destroying the heathen, for He knew that Israel ruled by man's fleshly thinking, and susceptible to idolatry, would soon be ensnared in their practises:

"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice," Exodus 34:14-15.

In spite of these warnings, the record reveals Israel's failure to keep their part of the covenant and destroy the heathen from before them:

"And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?" Judges 2:1

Why had they not obeyed? Certainly fear of the inhabitants, but perhaps the convenience of using them as servants proved to be a temptation hard to resist. Thus many remained alive, becoming a snare in later years, just as God had predicted. When the Almighty's word came through His angel, in sorrow they heard and realized their failure:

"... when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept." Judges 2:4.

Israel's history is a sad record of falling away from His precepts - given in love for their preservation by a merciful longsuffering Father who never failed to keep His part of the covenant. Yet he provided strength and sustenance when they turned back to Him, crying out for deliverance. We read likewise of His mercy in Isaiah's day, as the prophet speaks of a time not yet seen:

"And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee."
Isaiah 30:18-19.

This is the way God has always dealt with His children. He knows their frame, and the flesh's weakness, and provides a means of escape for those who seek Him.

Often we have read how under the judges His people cried out to God for help during adversity and He sent strong men of faith to deliver and lead in His way. Though Israel had faithfully followed Joshua and those elders who remained after his death, the next generation which arose:

"... knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other

gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger." Judges 2:10-12.

In an effort to turn them back to Him, He sent adversaries to afflict them, and when they cried out for deliverance He in mercy, "raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them" (verse 16). Those nations, not destroyed as God commanded, had remained in the land to test Israel during the time of the judges, and proved to be a constant thorn in their flesh - a reminder of their frailty and failure to obey. The Book of Judges ends on a solemn and forboding note and leaves a warning which every child of God must hear:

"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Judges 21:25.

A wretched and disheartening situation, yet predictable when the flesh refuses to heed the reasoning voice of the Spirit and insists on walking in its own way.

Many years later, Nehemiah in an effort to inspire spiritual zeal among his brethren, confessed the nation's shortcomings before God in humility and remorse, reciting their sad history of rebellion during the time of the Judges:

"Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." Nehemiah 9:26-27.

As the tender-hearted in Israel turned to God, crying out for His mercy, His hand was never withdrawn. He delivered from the oppressor and provided a means of escape for those who in child-like humility called out for His help.

As the Great Judge looks down upon His people today, He allows trials and adversity to teach reliance, not on the flesh, but on His help. He has promised deliverance in the covenant relationship extended to those who are His, as they cry out through their Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

M.C.S.

WHAT COMES NEXT ? (Further comments)
A letter from Australia to "The Christadelphian."

"It has been interesting, but unfortunately not greatly surprising, to read articles regarding moves to change the direction of the Christadelphian community. My own experiences over the last ten years lead me to fear we may be heading the way of all organisations which, having been born in earnest contention for a revival of Apostolic truth, then have found a place of acceptability in the world - that is, a slow return to the world.

I have personally encountered brethren who have claimed freedom for Christadelphians to marry whoever they please as long as they are Christian; who have encouraged their children to be active members of local church youth groups; who have defended worship of the Trinity as worship of the God of the Bible just viewed from a different angle; who have described the things Christadelphians believe as merely a "version" of the Truth - - -.

We cannot sit on the fence claiming ignorance as to the line of demarkation between true Biblical Christians and the masses who bear the name in a most unscriptural sense. Having confessed that our beliefs and baptism were essential for OUR salvation at the time we were baptized, surely it is the greatest expression of our love for God and our fellow man to try to help others along the narrow way. Before we allow the basis of fellowship to be eroded let us recall John 1:3 - "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ."

From "The Testimony" Magazine

"It is believed that there are those within our community who would like to see it changed in the following ways:-

1/ A much-reduced Statement of Faith. One suggestion is to have just four items as follows:

The nature of God.

The nature of Man.

The return of Christ to reign on earth.

Baptism of believers.

This would leave the way clear for those who believe in, for example, the pre-existence of Christ, a supernatural devil, the possession of the Holy Spirit, and the death of Christ as our substitute, to be members of our community. There would, for example, be no need to believe in the promises to Abraham and David, nor in the special role of Israel in God's plan, nor in the necessity for Divine judgment. A much-weakened view on the inspiration of Scripture would also be permitted.

2/ Stop claiming to have "the Truth", since at best we can only claim to have a better understanding of Bible doctrines than any other sect. The idea here seems to be that all the churches of Christendom to varying degrees hold right doctrine, but the Christadelphians have proceeded further down the road of right understanding than others.

3/ Have an open fellowship, that is, meetings to which any professing believer in Christ can come and partake of the bread and wine. Actual membership of ecclesias, which would be necessary in order, for example, to vote in ecclesial affairs or speak from the platform, would, however, be limited to those accepting the reduced Statement of faith at 1 above.

4/ Stop judging other professing Christians, since we are told in the New Testament not to judge our brother, and any professing Christian is our brother. What is meant by judging others is saying that their beliefs are wrong, or that they must change them to be saved.

It is not the purpose of this article to go into details as to why these ideas of what our community should be like are wrong. All (or perhaps nearly all) who read the above will know that acceptance of such ideas would destroy the whole basis of our existence as a separate community - - -. Most mature brethren and sisters will almost instinctively not wish to see significant changes in our community. This ought to, though it sometimes may not, arise from a recognition of the significance of the issues involved, rather than out of the natural conservatism that comes with advancing years. The real danger comes in relation to younger members, and there is reason to believe that the chief emphasis on changing attitudes, in preparation for a radical change to the whole nature of our community, is being directed towards young people. - - -

Unfortunately there has arisen a kind of separation culture for young people, with gatherings often not under any proper ecclesial control, although there have been encouraging moves to reverse this in more recent years. Ecclesias will have to do more to ensure that what young people are being taught is sound doctrine and does not neglect vital elements of the faith."

What the "Old Paths" Christadelphian has to say

"We venture to believe that many earnest brethren and sisters will have been shocked by two Editorial articles which have appeared in recent months - - -. It will be readily apparent that the "Christian" body which the sponsors of this "Agenda" hope to achieve would be nothing like the Christadelphian fellowship established by the pioneer brethren and as a necessary warning to

all brethren and sisters, it is wise to notice the methods of operation of those who are working for that conversion.

Although this "trend" or "development" has only been noticed in 1994 by the Central magazine Editors, a letter in "The Christadelphian" for October 1981 shows that the same movement existed at that time. This was referred to in "The Old Paths" for December 1981 --- where we quoted from a letter appearing in --- "The Christadelphian" from --- a former Assistant Editor of "The Christadelphian". (as follows) "At least twice in the last few years (one of them within the last twelve months) private meetings have been called by individuals—that is, attendance, which has been considerable, has been by personal invitation only. At those meetings the Christadelphian position on fellowship has been attacked and the suggestion openly made that the foundation of the community is mistaken and that fellowship with other (usually evangelical) bodies is to be advocated. "The question having been explicitly raised 'Shall we advise members to leave the Christadelphian community or to stay?', the clear answer has been that they should stay and seek to propagate their views secretly, especially among the younger members—the older members being regarded as beyond conversion—so subverting the community from within. There can be no doubt that this process has been going on and that the developments we have seen quite recently are some of its effects. The attitude advocated may fairly be called devious, if not downright dishonest." (end of quotation).

So the "trend" of the "worrying development" deplored in the recent issues of "The Christadelphian" and "the Testimony" are not new ---. The above words --- show that the "leaven" was at work 12 years ago. But as shown in "The Old Paths" --- 1957, it was at work in the Central Fellowship at least 38 years ago. --- When Bro. Roberts' advice is compared with the policies of the Central Fellowship, it exposes the cause of its present predicament. Regarding itself as the One Body, it has outlawed division at all costs. The false doctrine of Ecclesial Autonomy has allowed the seducers to pursue their evil work unhindered. In fact, those who have dared to protest have been accused of bigotry and self assurance and lacking in compassion ---."

Comments from the Christadelphian Advocate

"There is an ancient proverb which states, "First we abhor, then we tolerate, and finally we embrace." An excellent example of this proverb is the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. When the notion that Jesus was God, very God, was first introduced in the first century, it was abhorred and vigorously opposed. By the second century, it was tolerated in many of the ecclesias that had

second century, it was tolerated in many of the ecclesias that had been apostolically founded. By 325 A.D. the Trinity was formally embraced and became an article of faith in Christendom where it remains today. The promoters of the new agenda work with subtlety. No "Manifesto" is circulated amongst the brotherhood in which the new ideas are clearly set forth. Rather the agenda is introduced by questioning Christadelphian beliefs, suggesting changes to our young people and seeking individual converts. Not all articles of the agenda are ever promoted at one time. They are introduced in an attractive manner usually with a show of great intellect and erudition. Once the promoters get past the "abhor" stage and arrive at the "tolerate" stage, the road to the "embrace" stage is paved with success. - - - Most recognise that there is a gulf fixed between the unique doctrines of the Christadelphians and those of the churches of Christendom. Most believe that we should be separate from the world around us both in our doctrine and also in our walk and conduct. The trouble is that the majority of Christadelphians eschew controversy and are loathe to engage in confrontation. Contention is to be avoided at all costs. It is this attitude that made it possible for the Trinity to become enthroned in the early ecclesias. Whenever a minority seek to lead the Body of Christ down a new and unchartered path, it is no time for the "Silent Majority" to be silent - - - let it be known that they disapprove. If they are reluctant to confront the promoter in person, then they should make known their protest by letter - - -. It may be that the time has come for the "Silent Majority" of Christadelphians to PROTEST vigorously and vocally against teachings and ideas which will effectively destroy our heritage as custodians of the Faith that was once delivered unto the saints."

The Remnant's Witness

We believe that the Body of Christ is a unity. That the spirit of Christ cannot go on existing in a people torn and troubled by "every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). Christadelphia is torn asunder in two ways. The claim is that Christadelphia is the Body, even though it has a multiplicity of "Fellowships" under the umbrella of that name. Now we also see that there is a multiplicity of beliefs INSIDE the "Fellowship". This situation brings to mind the warning words of Paul, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." (2 Thess. 2:3) It may be argued that this prophecy came to pass in earlier times. We suggest the thought that there is an application for the present should not be dismissed out of hand.

The warnings in the last book of the Bible are most pertinent for the present state of affairs:-

“--- thou hast left they first love --- repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee QUICKLY, and will remove thy candlestick ---.” (Note the urgency), (Rev. 2:5)

The Ephesian ecclesia did continue, BUT NOT AS A LIGHTSTAND. It had some truth, but not THE TRUTH. “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” (Rev. 3:1) There was still an outward appearance in the Sardian ecclesia, for it had “a name”. But as an ecclesia it was lost, it was dead! The call of the Spirit was to strengthen individuals, and this was the charge to some who were required to be aware of their responsibilities; they would show their repentance at letting the ecclesia so greatly lapse, BY STRENGTHENING SOME, who though not already dead, were “ready to die”. This could not take place by remaining in the dead ecclesia, but rather with those in the CITY of Sardis who had “not defiled their garments” by involvement with the dead.

These words, though applying to ecclesias long ago, are preserved to give present day guidance and understanding. The current situation is a lamentable one, particularly so, in that it has been going on for a long time.

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

A BIBLE CLASS

**"A Woman Shall Compass A Man"
(Jeremiah 31:22)**

God's word through the prophet Jeremiah came to inspire, inform and encourage His people taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. They had been deceived by Hananiah a false prophet, into thinking that their captivity would be brief, however the truth of God's word came to them through Jeremiah's words:

"Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."
Jeremiah 29:5-7,10.

After the seventy years were accomplished, the Lord's promise was to bring them again their their own land—a promise and hope that would sustain them while sojourning in captivity.

However, we must keep in mind it was because of their backsliding into iniquity, forgetting God their Father, that Israel had been sent into captivity. Could they ever recover from this position?—our verse under consideration gives help:

"How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall compass a man."
Jeremiah 31:22.

To "compass" comes from a prime root meaning to revolve, surround, to be a border. An example of its use can be seen in God's comforting promise to Rachel, a figure of Israel:

"... A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.”
Jeremiah 31:15-17.

A reconfirmation of the hope given to captive Israel—the restoration of their own land, and a time of peace and quiet for those who through much weeping, having acknowledged their failures, turned again to Him.

Our verse under consideration also speaks of “a new thing”, something not seen before in the earth—“a woman shall compass a man”. This new thing was first witnessed with the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. The body of a woman encompassed a child born of the Spirit, thus Jesus Christ the Messiah could claim Mary of Judah as His mother and the Almighty as His Father. Surely a thing never seen in the natural order of procreation upon the earth.

Because of His perfect obedience to God, there was created a new covenant predicated upon belief in Him as the Son of God, given as a faithful offering for sinful men who endeavour to walk after His example.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Jeremiah 31:31-33.

This time when His covenant would be written in men’s hearts speaks of the Kingdom age when all the earth will serve Him. His gospel will be proclaimed to all, the curse placed upon the earth removed, and with the blessings of this peaceful realm, all will be required to walk in obedience to His Word. This prophecy would encourage the thoughtful in Babylon, reminding of His glorious purpose to be fulfilled one day for those who obey and revere His name, as well as give hope of the nearer anticipated return to their homeland after the seventy years was completed.

When this new covenant is established, the Lord Jesus will reign over His Kingdom as the Prince of Peace, in turn surrounded and glorified by those who make up His Bride—His brethren and

sisters. This will be the true fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy—"A woman shall compass a man". John was granted a glimpse of that glorious promise in vision:

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.

These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

Revelation 14:1,3-5.

This "new thing" created in the earth, promised by God after man's fall in the garden, is seen fulfilled in the provision of His Son, the seed of the woman, given as a means of redemption for all those who believe in Him and hope to be part of His Bride—the ultimate figure of a woman compassing a man.

M.C.S.

Signs of His Coming and of the End of the World

"- - - there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

(2 Peter 2:1-2)

The deterioration in even formal belief is another evidence of the great decline taking place in the world at large. Recently a Church of England cleric declared:-

"- - - he did not believe in God. 'God' was a concept humanity itself had created and represented no more than the potential for good within the human spirit - - -"

He went on to say that he had no idea of what happened after death. As for the Lord's Prayer, though he kept repeating it, was no more than glorious doggerel. There had been no Virgin Birth, and Christ by definition, was not the Son of God.

This vicar, amazingly, was not only a Minister in a church in West Sussex, he was also in charge of the further training of newly ordained priests, and was involved in the general education of priests.

A Bishop, who was the religious superior of this priest turned atheist, did say his subordinate would have to give up his ministry. But was accused of "intolerance and of failing to accommodate the kind of genuine doubt that is now commonplace throughout organised religion!" The Bishop declared it had been a difficult time, and felt that in God's House, with its many mansions, he had issued an eviction order!! In consultation with senior colleagues he had given this atheistic member of the church twelve months to reconsider. But the recalcitrant parson still stuck to the theme of his recently published book "God With Us", in which he asserts, "- - - there is nothing out there—or if there is, we can have no knowledge of it - - -"

The Bishop however did say that he could have tolerated this vicar's views if he had kept them private and if he had not been such a high-profile figure in the diocese. The Bishop's actual words were, "Having doubts is one thing. Expressing them in the aggressive, assertive manner (of this vicar) is quite another."

The Bishop, incidently, is a traditional church leader of what some would term "the old school"! He had been hitherto involved

had declared, "I would have retired long ago but for the women's issue. I want it clarified and settled before I go." If this Bishop is a stalwart, one wonders what the more liberal members of the church would do in similar circumstances. The amazing thing is that many in the congregation of the atheistic cleric did not want him to go, voicing their disapproval of his being sacked!

How thought provoking are the prophetic words of Peter, "there shall be false teachers --- even denying the Lord that bought them ---."

The following letter to a National Newspaper indicates the measure of public support for this "false teacher".

"Thirty years ago (the) then Bishop of Woolwich, shocked Western Christianity by his book, 'Honest to God', in which he wrote, inter alia, 'the whole conception of God out there is becoming more of a hindrance than a help.' And, 'We can and must get on without a God out there at all.'

'God in us' (the dismissed cleric's) book which has led to his sacking as an Anglican parish priest - - - proclaims baldly what (the Bishop of Woolwich) clothed in scholarly qualifications. But the bishop was not sacked. Nor should (the writer of 'God in Us') have been. Whether he should have resigned voluntarily as unable to subscribe to orthodox belief would have been a matter for personal decision. In the long run it is unwise to try to muzzle a prophet. It rarely works. As an ex-Methodist minister, and since then a humanist I applaud (the sacked minister's) courage."

The assertion of so called humanists that there is a "potential for good within the human spirit" denies the word of God. It implies that man will do good even without the influence of heavenly instruction. Christ clearly taught an opposite, and true perception of what human nature is when He said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." (Matthew 19:17) And Paul the Apostle, a true teacher, declared, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:" (Romans 7:18) Left to himself man would be as the African Ik tribe, described in the book 'The Mountain People', as having "abandoned basic human values of love, kindness, sentiment or honesty, being motivated entirely by individual self-interest." This manifested itself in the most brutal forms. Food being their greatest necessity, they fought for it, stole it from each other, lied about it, and when they got some, stuffed themselves until they vomited, so that they could cram down everything available. Even in times of famine, men who returned to their village after a successful hunt would creep back laden with

meat and then slip out before dawn to sell it elsewhere, without having given their starving wives or children a mouthful. The Ik had long since rejected all notion of family. Children were thrown out at the age of three, and formed themselves into gangs, which raided crops, fought each other, and generally competed for survival. Men would "watch with eager anticipation" as a child crawled towards a fire, "then burst into gay and happy laughter as it plunged a hand into the coals." A woman on one occasion who dumped her baby on the ground while she was working out in the fields, saw that a leopard had carried it off. She was pleased because "she was rid of the child and no longer had to carry it about and feed it." It also meant that the leopard must be somewhere near, sleeping off its meal, so would be an easier kill. "The men set off and found the leopard, which had consumed all of the child except part of the skull: they killed the leopard, and cooked it and ate it, child and all"!

The Ik tribe is an extreme example; but there is a same tendency in these days, even in the civilised world, as seen in the supposition "that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5). And the more the old values of scripture are forgotten because of increasing unbelief, the more the moral deterioration in human nature becomes manifest.

The Apostle Peter leaves a sombre warning concerning times of heresy and denial, when he declares that the ultimate outcome will be "swift destruction", going on to declare, "- - - these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption". (2 Pet. 2:12)

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

As we come to the end of 1994, our minds look back on its joys and strengths. Remembered too is the chastening and sometimes sadness. God's loving and Fatherly care has been felt sustaining in trial, illness and in the work of His house. For this we are grateful.

Mailing of invitations for the "Prophecy" booklet continues each month in the hope of reaching some who may be concerned over the present evil and godless position of the earth's people. Only the return of Jesus Christ can remedy this, bringing light and Truth to this dark world.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.
Thursday: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

Help that is received in sickness and infirmity is a source of much gratitude for such overruling care.

Guidance also in ecclesial matters is a comfort and assurance, as we seek to know what to do in difficult circumstances.