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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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

“COUNT IT ALL JOY”

Let us this morning give heed to the help from our Brother James as he has written to his brethren who were “scattered abroad.” God’s people were and are few, widely dispersed, and yet they are united in the hope that sustained James and all who love and serve God.

James begins his message:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall in divers temptation;”
James 1:2.

This seems a rather strange exhortation. Why should we rejoice in falling into temptations, especially as we remember Jesus’ instruction in response to His disciples’ request: . . . “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). A part of his response was:

“ . . . And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”
Luke 11:4.

There could not be a conflict here, for both Jesus and James’ words were of God. The key lies in the words used by James: “. . . When ye fall into divers temptations” and those of Jesus: “lead us not into temptation.” We find the thought of to “fall into” is from two words meaning “all around” and “to fall or light upon.” This expression is used as “fall into” here by James, and also in Jesus’ parable concerning the man going from Jerusalem down to Jericho. This man:

“ . . . fell among thieves . . . ”
Luke 10:30.

This traveler did not seek such circumstances, but they lighted upon him, exposing him to evil and suffering. The world today is rife with evil and violence. In striving to be “in the world but not of it,” separate from its evil, we can be drawn or can fall into its ways which are so appealing to the yearnings of the flesh, but so injurious to the strength of one struggling to be separate. James, recognizing this forthrightly reminds us:

“ . . . every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

James 1:14.

It is our own natural (of the flesh) thinking and wanting which draws or pulls us away from the way of righteousness. On the other hand, Jesus, teaching His disciples to pray, said: “Lead us not into temptation.” To lead is to carry into or toward. God does not do this,

as James confirms:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”
James 1:13.

We, Brethren and Sisters, know temptation only when our yearnings lead us toward that which we know is not pleasing to our Father. Jesus’ further teaching about prayer was clear:
“... but deliver us from evil.” Luke 11:4.

Thus it is necessary to seek help that we do not fall prey to the evils all around us in this present world, but rather that we be pulled out, or rescued from it through His help and also our own determination. During His time of teaching Jesus prayed for His disciples:
“... that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; ...
I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”
John 17:13-15.

If one were removed from the world, isolated from its pernicious influences, there would be no temptation, no necessity to resist it, and no opportunity to please God by doing his will, not our own. In his wisdom our Father has placed us in this position, “in the world, but not of it,” not possessed by it, but fighting against its evils. Jesus, being of a fleshly nature, knew its pull, even as we do. It is impressive to realize that immediately after He was baptized and received the Holy Spirit, he was led into the wilderness where He experienced temptation to use that Spirit’s power for His own benefit. But He resisted, He triumphed over each fleshly yearning. How did He do it? By the word of God: “It is written.” What an immense struggle this was, for He could do anything! What joy He must have experienced as:

“... the devil (His fleshly temptations) leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”
Matthew 4:11.

If He were not subject to temptation, where would be His victory? It was made possible only through His love for His Father and His determination to obey. God’s word, His commandments are as signposts pointing out the right way, even to Jesus. Can we then, Brethren and Sisters, begin to perceive why our Father has placed us “in the world” amidst its evils? As we perceive the world’s wickedness, man’s greed, hatred, lack of strength to say

NO! and refusal to deny self, should we not rejoice in not being a part of this present order which is fraught with the hateful ways of men toward his fellow and toward God? How abominable it must be to Him, the Creator! And it must be so to ourselves as we seek to be godly. What gratitude should be ours to be enabled, armed with the things of the spirit, to bring forth the spirit's fruit, and so resist the flesh. Let us consider for a moment those works which arise from yielding to the "divers temptations": Paul reveals these for us:

". . . the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;
Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.
Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like
. . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
Galatians 5:19-21.

Let us recognize these all around us in the world. Can we not be pulled by them? We realize they are "manifest" or open, outward, but accepted by many as evils about which nothing can be done. We may feel these are not temptations for us; and true, many may not be; but let us examine the list again. Do we succumb to wrath, envying, strife or hatred at times, even if only small inclinations in the back of our minds? How can we more consistently conquer these ungodly tendencies? Paul continues:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
Galatians 5:22-24.

These fruits of the Spirit, the antidote to the poison of our serpent nature, enable us to resist temptation and so put away sin. Is this what Jesus prayed, ". . . that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13)? What was the joy perfected in Him? It was His victory over His own flesh nature, a reality as He cried out: "It is finished" (John 19:30, and ". . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Finished, it is performed, it is paid. Jesus died in perfect obedience to His father's will, a whole life even to its dreadful end, unblemished by overcoming temptation. What joy He did know, even on the cross, as His life slipped away. His work was done, as He had allowed God's word to perfectly govern His living. It took patience; it took spiritual strength and yielding; it took determination in the face of great agony, and above all, it took utter trust in God who required this of Him. Jesus did

trust and thus He was capable, else God would not have required it; and in that certainty, he believed, saying: “. . . not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

James helps us to that spirit of Jesus, as he has written:

“. . . count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations;”
James 1:2.

To rejoice in such circumstances is contrary to our very nature. This is especially so as we encounter those “divers temptations.” Divers we find means widely varying in character. Indeed, we do encounter many and different temptations. To feel—I’ve conquered that one, and now I’m alright—is impossible. Nor could Jesus feel this after the grievous temptation immediately following His baptism. However, do we not find that each time a tempting situation is put aside, we are stronger and thus growing in patience, as James promises:

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”
James 1:3.

Patience requires enduring under, a readying for the next trial which will surely come. In this way we grow, believing that our Father will hear our petitions. Part of faith is to be alert to His word and desires, so that being forewarned, pitfalls can be avoided. James continues:

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”
James 1:4.

If we can grow in patience and allow it to work steadily on “self”, will we not become wiser, stronger, and more spiritually “of full age” (perfect)? In that maturity we may become more spiritually entire, destitute in nothing, as the hand of God responds to our plea: “deliver us from evil.” Thereby we grow in those Spirit’s fruits of which Paul writes. And then he adds:

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
Galatians 5:24.

What joy will be known by those whom Christ at His judgment seat accounts worthy, because they have striven to be like Him, even with all the pain and effort, and ultimately to know that great victory. Can we now see what very valuable help our brother has offered:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”
James 1:2.
J.A. DeF.

A NEW HEART

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God's help came to Israel while captive in Babylon. His word was an appeal to those who could be touched—those who could turn from their waywardness and seek Him once again with repentant hearts. However, there was no yieldingness in their attitude, only bitterness and blame. Thus Ezekiel was told to rebuke them:

"The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?"

Ezekiel 18:1-2.

Israel found themselves captive because of their unfaithfulness and refusal to "hear" His prophets which had been sent over the years to correct and chasten. They blamed their bondage in a strange land, with its trials and tribulations, to God's inability to save—refusing to recognize that they had brought these circumstances upon themselves. Their attitude was full of bitterness without self-recrimination. How typical of the flesh, when under trying circumstances, to complain, feeling there was no hope, and thus turn away from the only help possible. This negative attitude is the source of the adage still used today of one who reacts as "sour grapes," just as Israel did under the bondage of the Chaldeans. The flesh hates rebuke and correction, but His word came in love to prompt the renewal of a softer spirit within any who would respond:

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"

Ezekiel 18:23.

The Almighty's word came clearly and with power. They had been given into the hand of the Chaldeans because of their refusal to obey, and if they would not soften their hearts and turn from their wickedness, they would die without hope. Yet it was not His pleasure that any should perish, but rather he desired submission and repentance that they might live:

"... when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

Ezekiel 18:27.

In bitterness, Israel complained that God's ways were unequal. Through His prophet He answered their charge:

“O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”
Ezekiel 18:29-30.

Their evil, negative thoughts of hopelessness needed to be changed into positive hopeful thinking, and Ezekiel’s role as a watchman and prophet was to point this out:

“Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel.

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

Ezekiel 18:31-32.

How could they change? By creating a new heart within themselves through sincere repentance—a tender heart willing to receive His guidance and instruction towards righteousness. With this hope, the Almighty’s words came through Ezekiel as he spoke of the end promised for all who would obey:

“. . . I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”
Ezekiel 11:17 19-20.

We think of David as one who found himself subject to God’s wrath because of failure. Knowing His mercy, he submitted, while pleading for reconciliation saying:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”
Psalm 51:10-12.

He recognized where that new heart and spirit could come from as he sought God’s forgiveness for his failures. He also

actively sought "the joy of thy salvation." Was this what Israel had overlooked in their bitterness—dwelling on their trials and suffering instead of looking in hope to the redemption that was possible if they but repented and turned again to Him?

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Psalm 51:17.

These are the spiritual offerings so pleasing to Him—a spirit broken from its old fleshly ways, making room for a new heart which strives to honor and obey Him. In this same thought, Paul reminds of God's love in sending correction and tribulation in order to bring about repentance:

"... despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

Romans 2:4.

The natural man does not view tribulation as needful or desirable, despising the spiritual change it is sent to achieve—just as did Israel in Ezekiel's time. Drowning in bitterness (sour grapes), Israel overlooked their need for a new heart and spirit—one that could turn in repentance and grasp with joy the sweetness of salvation and life.

What a great lesson this is for us today, for God is unchanging in His desire for obedience in those to whom He has extended the means to partake of the sweet taste of victory through Christ.

M.C.S.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER
OF DR. THOMAS
(Prior to 1868)

"I have ever taught resurrection first, and judgment afterwards. Saints are raised to judgment before judgment is committed to them. If there were only one class of saints, and that class consisting of the righteous only—that is, who only walk in the truth or Spirit, there might be some reason in and for the issuing from Sheol, Hades, or the invisible state of things, incorruptible. But there were in the days of the apostles, and there have been in all ages and generations since, and will be till Christ comes, two classes of saints—the just and the unjust. The just who contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and hold fast their begun confidence, firm and unshaken to the end, and are always found where the truth is, sharing with it whatever good or evil may befall; and the unjust, who, though 'washed hogs', return to their wallowing in the mire. These 'handle the word of God deceitfully'. They teach for doctrine the commandments of men; they make void the word of God by their insane and foolish traditions or crochets. 'They discuss everything, and settle nothing;' they speak evil of those things they do not understand; but what they understand naturally, or as natural men, such as a vain philosophy and science falsely so called, about which they are always twaddling and trying to harmonise with revelation the natural motions of sins, and emotions of the flesh: in these things they corrupt themselves: these are spots in the feasts of the saints, clouds without water, carried about of winds; they beguile unstable souls, to whom they promise liberty, while they are themselves the slaves of corruption. 'Better', says Peter, 'for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.' These are they who 'sow to the flesh', while the saints of the first class are they who 'sow to the Spirit.' Now Paul says 'whatsoever a man, or saint, soweth, that shall he also reap;' But when shall he reap what in his sainthood he sows? A child, such as Timothy was once, would easily answer this question. But now, 'grave and reverend signors,' and those who ape them in their chirurgical substratum of ecclesiasticism, know not how scripturally to answer the question. They affirm traditions that nullify the truth, some affirming that he reaps as soon as he dies; others, that he reaps when he comes out of the grave, incorruptible and immortal. The former affirm that it is an immortal soul that reaps at death; the latter, that it is an immortal body at the resurrection. Will they tell a simple enquirer how an incorruptible soul or body at death or resurrection, in dying or rising, can 'reap corrup-

tion of the flesh,' and be subject to 'second death?' That which is incorruptible, cannot reap corruption from any source, within or without. Nor can it be said that the reaping of corruption pertains to the present life. This would nullify and destroy the apostle's argument, and be to subject both classes of saints to a common punishment. This state of existence is the sowing time, the resurrection is the springing time, and judgment in the presence of Christ is the reaping time. Paul must be construed in harmony with himself. Paul pointed the Christadelphians in Thessalonica to the Lord's presence, as the time when and place where he would have joy or sorrow on their account. No; reason teaches (and Paul had much to do with reason and reasoning), that for saints who have been sowing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, to reap corruption of the flesh, in the presence of the Lord at his coming, that flesh must come out of the ground flesh, capable of corrupting, which incorruptible flesh cannot. When corruption and mortality put on incorruptibility and immortality, bodily appearance is not necessarily affected. Incorruptibility is a matter of essential being."

UNITY

In the 1970s an attempt was made for unity of Unamended Christadelphians with those of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. By October 1973 three special meetings had taken place of representatives of these two groups, but by the early 1980s it was felt that an impasse had been reached. Nevertheless some wanted to continue reunion efforts. The difficulty of reconciliation however had not diminished in the threequarters of a century since the division into Amended and Unamended fellowships. During that time there had developed other interpretations of fundamental doctrines different to each group, thus making the individual positions way beyond the resurrectional responsibility issue. Each side believe they have preserved "the Truth", but what is abundantly clear, though each party claims to be Christadelphians, is the absence of unity. In fact the very act of trying for reunion generated a great deal of controversy, causing even more disunity.

We find certain comments made over 400 years ago thought provoking.

Thoughts of Menno Simons (c.1496-1561)

"We believe and confess concerning the Lord's holy Supper that it is a holy sacramental sign, instituted of the Lord himself in bread and wine, and left to his disciples in remembrance of him. Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; I Corinthians 11. It was also taught and administered as such by the apostles among the brethren, according to the commandment of the Lord, in which in the first place the Lord's death is proclaimed. I Cor. 11. And is also serves as a remembrance how he offered his holy flesh and shed his precious blood for the remission of our sins. Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:19.

Second, it is an emblem of Christian love, of unity, and of peace in the church of Christ. Paul says, "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of the one loaf." I Corinthians 10:17. For as a loaf being composed of many grains is but one bread, so we also being composed of many members are but one body in Christ. And as the members of a natural body are not disharmonious, but altogether united and at one among themselves; so it is with all those who are in the Spirit and faith true members of the body of Christ. For this reason this same supper was called by Tertullian a brotherly meal or love feast. Thus it is a communion of the flesh and blood of Christ. As Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" I Corinthians 10:16. This communion consists in the fact that Christ has accepted us in his great love, and we are become partakers of him. As Paul says, "We are made partakers of Christ,

if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Hebrews 3:14.

Since it is a sign of such force which is left of Christ, that it is to represent and admonish us of his death, the love, peace, and unity of the brethren, and also the communion of his flesh and blood as was said, therefore none can rightly partake of this supper except he be a disciple of Christ, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, who seeks the forgiveness of sins in no other means than in the merits, sacrifice, death, and blood of Christ alone; who walks in unity, love and peace with his brethren, and who leads a pious, unblamable life in Christ Jesus, according to the Scriptures."

A BIBLE CLASS
"LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS"
James 5:14

These words of our Brother James guide us in our practical as well as spiritual lives. He was an elder, being mentioned along with Cephas and John as "pillars" of the house of God (Galatians 2:9), and was numbered among Jesus' twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2). He often would have been with the Lord, learning from Him and witnessing His miracles. Having received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, would he not be able to heal the sick as well as minister to all needs?

In our chapter under consideration, James advised his brethren to "Be patient . . . unto the coming of the Lord" and to "Grudge not one against another." He also counseled:

"... swear not . . . but let you yea be yea; and your nay, nay; least ye fall into condemnation." James 5:7-9, 12.

Then turning to circumstances which we all observe or experience, the apostle wrote:

"Is there among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." James 5:13.

Let us remember these are the Spirit's words through a faithful brother, providing wise counsel for our every-day struggles, helping us to be subject to our Father.

James addresses another problem which is common to all:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." James 5:14.

Sickness, or as the word means, feebleness, infirmity or weakness, is inherent to our nature, decreed by God in Eden because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Ultimately it brings us to the grave. While death is inevitable, healing is possible for a time, if it is God's will. Recognising this, and having witnessed Jesus' healing power for many, James encourages those who are so weakened to call for the elders, whose prayers joined with those of the one in illness can "raise him up" if it is God's will. James adds:

"... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16.

While physical illness can impact upon our daily living, spiritual weakness can have a devastating effect upon our entire

lives and hopes. Paul reminded his brethren of Jesus' command to meet at His Table each first day of the week in remembrance of Him. The importance of doing so was emphasized and especially in a manner and spirit which is acceptable and pleasing. Thus, there might be true fellowship of the Lord Jesus' life and ultimate victory through partaking with love and discernment of these emblems. Paul warned of Jesus' declaration that one who fails to do so with perception:

"... eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." I Corinthians 11:29.

Then he added:

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." I Corinthians 11:30.

There is a spiritual sickness which can lead only to condemnation and death at the judgment seat of Jesus. James plainly tells us the antidote for this fatal illness, exhorting his brethren to call for the elders to join in supplication for a true healing. The first step for such a remedy is to recognize that one is sick and in need, as Jesus reminds:

"... They that are whole have no need of the physician; but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Mark 2:17.

With recognition that all sin, there must be urgent searching for help and forgiveness, as did the publican who prayed humbly and simply:

"... God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:13.

How can such mercy be found? It is only through an awareness, a yieldingness, and then prayer. This is the reason James counseled any who are sick: "... let him call for the elders", for their counsel and prayer that God might in mercy heal, if it is His will. Why turn to the elders, we might ask? Paul helps us, speaking of those elders who have been given the rulership or oversight:

"... for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." Hebrews 13:17.

Elders are chosen as suitable for the work of overseeing the ecclesia, are experienced in the Truth, and are examples as true fathers lovingly watching over their children. Their prayers are accordingly "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" and therefore "availeth much" towards a spiritual healing. This was

James' strong expressed conviction:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."
James 5:15.

In our mortality, as we find ourselves physically weak at times, so in some difficulties we may find ourselves, sad to say, weak in spirit. Then let us turn to God, seeking His mercy that we may be sustained, corrected, and raised up, if it is His will. Also, let us in humility and trust turn to the elders, confessing our faults" (James 5:16), not only to God, but doing what we must acknowledge is sometimes more hurtful to our flesh, to those brethren who "Watch for (our) souls" with the conviction that:

"... the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up . . ."
James 5:15.

J.A. DeF.

LETTER FROM S.H. AND M.P.B.

"There are some serious errors of fact in your magazine of February 1996 on page 31, concerning Elijah's ascent into heaven.

- 1/ You claim that the word which is translated "heaven" (in K.J.V.) at 2 Kings 2:11, is "shameh." That claim is simply untrue; it is "SHAMAYIM" (pl.lit. "heavens").
- 2/ You claim that the translation of this word ('SHAMAYIM') should be "ALOFT". Where is your evidence?
- 3/ The fact that it is SHAMAYIM which is used in many cases to describe God's dwelling place is completely ignored by you.

Thus Deut, 4:39 "God in heaven above - - -"

Jos. 2:11 "God in heaven above - - -"

There are many more examples also in Scripture.

Surely in the interests of truth and honesty you have an obligation to confess this error in the next convenient issue of the magazine?

The Remnant's reply

We must admit that we cannot claim to be hebrew scholars, so have to rely upon those who are. In the magazine to which our correspondents refer we mentioned the word SHAMEH and our hebrew source of information describes the original as follows:—

"SHAMAYIM" dual of an unused sing. SHAMEH from an unused root mean to BE LOFTY; the SKY (as ALOFT; the dual perh. alluding to the visible arch in which the clouds

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move, as well as to the higher ether where the celestial bodies revolve): air, heaven (-s)."

Now we would not deny that SHAMEH and SHAMAYIM describe God's dwelling place, for they are the original of the scripture which reads as follows:—

"Behold the HEAVEN and the HEAVEN OF HEAVENS is the LORD's thy GOD, the earth also, with all that therein is."
Deut. 10:14

But when the scripture speaks of Heaven in the beginning, as follows:—

"And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day." (Genesis 1:8)

The same original hebrew word, in this case, is describing that which is ALOFT i.e. the sky in which the clouds move. Dr. Thomas described it as, "on the second (day) the atmosphere called Heaven was formed, by which the fog was enabled to float in masses above the deep - - -"

It does appear that our correspondents take exception to our statement that when Elijah "went up" he was taken away (even as Moses was taken away). If we had only the explanations of the language experts to go on, perhaps there would be a need to reconsider whether Elijah was taken into "the heaven of heavens." But the scriptures make abundantly clear that this could not be the case, and therefore the original hebrew must mean "ALOFT" as already suggested in the quotation referred to. Note the following scriptures:—

"- - - no man hath ascended up to heaven - - -"
(John 3:13)

"- - - death passed upon ALL men, for that all have sinned."
(Romans 5:12).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
(Romans 6:23)

"- - - when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."
James 1:15

"These ALL died in faith, not having received the promises - - - they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins - - - these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise - - - that they without us should not be made perfect."
(Hebrews 11:13-40)

"Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."
(I Corinthians 15:23)

RECOMPENSE OF REWARD

In the familiar eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the example of the faithful of old serves as a source of help and encouragement to us today. Paul, inspeaking of their faith, said, "by it the elders obtained a good report." The critical nature of that "good report" was predicated upon belief and faith in God's word—the means of escape from death inherited by the seed of the woman. Their example was used by Paul to impress his Hebrew brethren and us today, with the knowledge that without faith it is impossible to please God and, "... he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Verse 6.)

Paul goes on to cite Enoch, Noah and others who:

"... through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Hebrews 11:33-34.

Any of these perilous accomplishments may seem impossible to us today, yet through faith and God's hand to strengthen, these deeds were achieved. How can we apply that same faith in our living? Paul supplies the answer:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Hebrews 10:35.

Reading between the lines, Paul is saying one must trust in God in order to receive the recompense of reward. What did those faithful of old exemplify in addition to faith, in order to obtain that good report? The answer is obedience to His word. In spite of daunting circumstances and against great odds, they exercised a bold spiritual confidence in God, coupled with obedience, in order to endure the trials and tests that confronted them. Paul goes on to remind his brethren of the only source of that help and strength available to those who diligently seek it:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4: 14-16.

To “come boldly” required a strong faith and confidence in His power to save by those faithful of old. In all of their circumstances, there was the obvious need to apply faith in order to overcome the doubts and fears raised by the flesh—that voice within that says, “I can’t do it—it’s not possible”!

Those mentioned by Paul were outstanding examples of faith. Yet we can be sure there was not just one instance of testing for them, but a lifetime of dedication to patient enduring. They were unwilling to succumb to the flesh’s doubt and fear, instead they walked steadfastly onward in trust, looking forward in hope to His recompense of reward.

We think of Noah, how he stood alone among many who mocked as he built an ark on dry land. He had only God’s word to reassure that what he was doing was right. When the rains fell and only he and his family were saved in the ark, he was justified by God, thus increasing his faith and confidence:

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

Hebrews 11:7.

Those faithful, mentioned by Paul in Hebrews chapter eleven, looked forward in hope to that great reward though yet unfulfilled during their lifetime. Moses through faith left the riches and honors of Egypt for the hope of Israel, trusting in that same “recompense of the reward”:

“By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;
Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

Hebrews 11:24.26.

He valued the hope promised of God, looking beyond his present life and the comforts it could provide, to a hope seen only by faith—promised through His word. Moses was known for his gentleness and meekness, yet displayed a bold confidence in the power of God to save and deliver.

Our own circumstances may seem very mundane in comparison, yet the record of these faithful has been preserved as an encouragement and example, for His promise to us is no less, as Paul reminds:

“... these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Hebrews 11: 39-40.

Let us value the examples preserved of, those elders who “obtained a good report” by striving in like manner to walk in faith, remembering Paul’s admonition:

“... whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Colossians 3:23-24.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

“Persia, Ethiopia and Libya with them - - - ”
(Ezekiel 38:5)

In Daniel Chapter 11 verse 43 it is recorded that the northern enemy of Israel which will also overthrow the land of Egypt will have “the Libyans and the Ethiopians - - - at his steps.” The Hebrew word translated ‘step’ means ‘at his going’ or ‘in companionship with’. Persia is not mentioned in this context, but is certainly joined to the confederacy referred to in Ezekiel chapter 38, including Ethiopia and Libya, which is to make an attack upon the land of the Jews. The inference from this information is of Arab division. Persia (Iran) for example, against Egypt and Arabia.

How interesting, then, is the news which is coming out of the Middle East, but which is not being given any great publicity. Skirmishes are taking place almost every night between the mercenary forces of the Bahrain Government and demonstrators of Shia Muslim villages who are being helped by Iran. It is feared that this conflict could spread from Bahrain to nearby Eastern Saudi Arabia which also has a mainly Shia Muslim population. Naturally the Saudi Arabian government is concerned, and has provided special helicopters and finance to help the Sunni Muslim rulers of Bahrain to resist the threat from Shia Muslim, who want to overthrow the Al-Khalifa family that has ruled Bahrain since the 18th century.

It is an unhappy situation because bombers trained in Lebanon by Hezbollah, which is linked to Iran, have been blowing up seafront hotels. A statement emanating from the Islamic Front for the liberation of Bahrain (whose leaders have been trained in the city

of Qom, in Iran) said it was just the start of what they intend to do. As a result tourism is being scared away and some businesses are considering moving out.

There are many American and British residents in Bahrain, and these have been advised to take very special care, and to keep away from the villages. Details of the troubles, however, are being hidden by censorship, but the United States, which has its Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, and Britain which has an air base there, are concerned, for they are in Bahrain to enforce sanctions against Iraq as well as to keep watch on Iranian intentions.

Bahrain is a breeding ground for discontents. One area displays lavish office buildings and luxurious villas, inhabited by the ruling class; many official positions being reserved for the Sunni Muslim minority. The rest of the population, living in the villages, are often short of water and live in very shabby surroundings. Agents from Iran exploit this grievance, which has resulted in branches of the National Bank, and even some schools being attacked and burned down. The conflict between the Shia and the Sunni Muslim factions has resulted in the deaths of Shia villagers, who have been pronounced "martyrs" at the hands of the Pakistani, Afghan and Sudanese mercenaries employed by the Bahrain government. The feelings generated by these clashes has caused deep division, and made the ruling Sheik Isa bin-Sulman al-Khalifa keep Arabs away from his private areas, yet permitting white and Japanese people.

So the Arab World is undoubtedly divided; and this indicates the building up of an even greater division, when Persia, Ethiopia and Libya will be opposed to Egypt and Arabia in the conflict between North and South.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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

Sundays: Breaking of Bread: 11.30 a.m.
Sunday Afternoon Class: 1.45 p.m.
Midweek: Bible Class: Forestville, Hamburg and Fredonia
Alternate Week: Revelation Study

Following our united supplications, helpful guidance has been granted to a sister in problems at her work, which have been a sore trial. Gratitude is felt for this over ruling, in our father's mercy and kindness.

Invitations for the new booklet, "Religious Doctrines Examined and Questioned" have brought requests which though few, give encouragement in this witnessing.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

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

All here have been most grateful for the visit of Sister Lois Carter from the Hamburg Ecclesia, by which we have been enabled to have first hand information of the welfare of those who are united with us in heart and mind.

The work of witnessing continues, and we are again encouraged by requests for literature, and also for letters, some from far away places.