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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
TWO MANNER OF PEOPLE**

It is at times difficult for us to enter into the minds of our early brethren as they, in obedience to God's word, determined to be His separate people, strangers and pilgrims looking and living for a kingdom to come.

It was to Abraham that the Almighty gave great promises as we have recently read. These promises still form the the foundation of our faith, the hope of being heirs to these promises through a true baptism into the Lord Jesus who is the seed of Abraham in whom the covenant will be accomplished.

Let us briefly consider all the blessings God promised to our brother. He would become a great nation, his name made great, those who blessed him would also be blessed, those who cursed him would themselves be cursed and in him would all families of the earth be blessed. Additionally, the Almighty promised all the land of Canaan to be the possession of Abraham and his seed and that this seed would possess his enemies' gates, thereby conquering them. All this was covenanted with Abraham for God saw his faithfulness. Indeed the Lord spoke of him as, "Abraham my friend" Isaiah 4:8. What joy this must have brought to him, to be the friend of the Almighty God. Having in mind these promises, let us briefly look at Abraham's life which truly exhibited his unswerving belief in God. At the first he lived in Ur of the Chaldees (later to become Babylon), and from here God called him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and go to a country which the Lord said, "I will show thee." He was seventy-five at that time, yet in obedience he left all behind, utterly trusting in his God. Still Abraham longed for the son who would become his heir, but Sarah was barren. It was not until twenty-five years had passed that Sarah, his wife, under God's hand brought forth Isaac, the son promised. Isaac grew and thrived, taught of God and His promises by Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham lived to see his grandchildren, as Isaac's wife Rebekah, gave birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. In the hundred years since leaving Ur, the faithful seed of Abraham consisted solely of Isaac and Jacob. In all that time, Abraham and his family sojourned in the promised land of Canaan, dwelling in tabernacles (tents) as

strangers and pilgrims. Paul tells us he, "... looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). His only possession in all of that land was the field which he purchased as a burial place for Sarah his wife, and where he, Isaac and Jacob also would be buried.

In these circumstances we can understand he might at times have felt, "How can so few become the great nation God promised; when shall I possess this land?" Yet in faith he lived, and still faithful he died, certain that God's promises could not, would not fail. He looked to the seed of promise, Jesus Christ, whom he knew would yet come and in the ordained time establish in that land the kingdom of God, ruling over the earth, bringing blessing to all its families.

Going back a bit earlier, how Abraham would rejoice at the birth of his own son. He was named Isaac (laughter) for both he and Sarah had laughed when told by an angel that they would have a son in their old age. Yet the Lord did indeed visit Sarah so that she conceived. When Isaac was born she exclaimed with joy:

"... God hath made me to laugh (rejoice) so that all that hear will laugh with me."

Genesis 21:6.

As Abraham approached the end of his life he would rejoice in the divine provision of his two grandsons, Jacob and Esau. We have read this morning:

"... Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife ...

And Isaac intreated the LORD ... because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."

Genesis 25:20, 21.

He would have earnestly prayed during those twenty years before his sons were born, until God in kindness fulfilled His promise of the continuation of Abraham's line. Before the twins were born we read:

"... the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus?"

Genesis 25:22.

Troubled by this struggle, in faith she went to "inquire of the LORD" who responded:

"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

Genesis 25:23.

"Manner" comes from a Hebrew root meaning "walk". God told Rebekah there would be twins born whose walk in life would differ one from the other, resulting in continuous struggle. When the time came, Esau was the first born, then the younger whose "hand took hold on Esau's heel" (Genesis 25:26). Thus began the conflict, the two manner of people. Esau having the birthright was the heir or inheritor. The younger was called Jacob meaning "to take by the heel" or "supplant". As the boys grew, their ways of life differed:

". . . Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."

Genesis 25:27.

The elder was skilled in hunting and probably was often in the field seeking prey. Jacob on the other hand, was a "plain" man. This word plain is used as perfect, upright or undefiled, revealing his faith as Paul later spoke of his "dwelling in tabernacles (tents) with Abraham and Isaac . . . heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9-10). Jacob looked in hope for that city whose builder and maker is God. In this hope he valued the birthright, the privilege of being Abraham's and Isaac's heir, but he was the second born. Becoming grown, he was able to buy it from Esau, whose manner of life was such that he "despised his birthright" (v-34) and sold it to his younger brother for a bowl of pottage, saying in his hunger;

". . . what profit shall this birthright do to me?"

Genesis 25:32.

Indeed here were two manner of people whose leanings, loyalties and ambitions differed and they struggled against each other much of their lives.

In this world there are yet "two manner of people". There are a few who, like Jacob revere God, believe His promises and vow to bring their living into subjection to His Word. The vast majority are a different manner of people who, like Esau, place little value on

God's word, desiring the more tangible and beguiling things of this life. These walk in their own way and so have no hope of the inheritance to be granted when Jesus returns to possess the gate of His enemies and to assemble those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham.

As we struggle to be a "plain" people, striving to walk in that straight and narrow way which is the Almighty's desire, let us, Brethren and Sisters, hold fast the words of Peter:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . .
Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (manner of life) and godliness,
Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God . . .
Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

II Peter 3: 9-12,14.

As strangers and pilgrims, let us be diligent, striving to be a "plain" people—upright and undefiled, failing but forgiven through Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham. Let us look with fervent faith to the promised Kingdom of God when all those judged righteous will be blessed as, "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

J.A. DeF.

THE AUTHORITY OF HIS WORD

Through the record of Matthew, we are privileged to hear the Lord Jesus' words, as during His ministry he sought to teach and reveal the spirit of understanding, love and truth contained in the Law.

Those to whom He preached were often a mixed multitude—some truly desiring to hear His word, some who came to refute His teaching and the curious who came only in the hope of seeing a miracle.

The chief priests and the elders came to argue and question His authority, no doubt jealous and displeased at the multitude's interest and adulation. They had established themselves through tradition and ritual as leaders of Israel, and feared their positions were being usurped by this great teacher, whom many believed was the promised Messiah.

From Matthew we read that Jesus went up into a mountain and there taught the people, revealing the spirit of love and mercy within the Law which the Scribes and Pharisees lacked and could not convey. When he had finished speaking:

“... the people were astonished at his doctrine:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

Matthew 7: 28-29.

Not only would the multitude be astonished at the power of His word, but so also would those Scribes and Pharisees, and in an effort to trip Him up asked:

“... By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”

Matthew 21:23.

Knowing their minds and their evil intentions to ensnare Him, He answered with a question:

“... I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

The baptism of John, Whence was it? from heaven, or of men?”

Matthew 21: 24-25.

Their deviousness was clear as they reasoned among themselves:

“... If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, neither tell I you what authority I do these things.”

Matthew 21: 25-27.

The faithful would believe in the baptism of John—that his work prepared the way for the One promised. Now listening to the enlightening words of truth from Jesus, many would believe that this was surely the One of whom John spoke—the Messiah and Son of God. Knowing the minds of these unbelieving elders, Jesus presented a parable to illustrate their faithlessness:

“... A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented, and went.

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him.”

Matthew 21: 28-32.

There was no question of His intent to rebuke the Scribes and Pharisees for their lack of faith, pointing out that the harlots and publicans had allowed the Word to change their thinking, and could hope for the Kingdom through repentance. The elders, full of pride and vainglory, valued their positions before men more than their own salvation, and were unwilling to recognize their human frailties and need for repentance.

Jesus went on in another parable for the benefit of the Scribes and Pharisees, concerning a householder who planted a vineyard

and leased it to husbandmen to care for in his absence. This spoke of the responsibility given to Israel's spiritual leaders to teach and nurture God's people through His Word. When the householder sent his servants to collect the fruits of the vineyard they were beaten and killed by the husbandmen. Hoping they would respect the authority of his son, he too was sent. But when the husbandmen perceived it was the heir, they seized and killed him as well. Jesus ended the parable with this question, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" (Matthew 21:40). The elders' answer displayed their understanding and perception of God and His ways:

"... He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

Matthew 21:41.

Being schooled in the law, they knew the correct answer, but ensnared by their own traditions and pride were unwilling to apply its spirit of love and mercy in their living. Jesus' reply left no doubt to their position:

"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Matthew 21: 42-44.

God's mercy and grace would be extended only if they could repent and accept Jesus' authority as the Son and Heir. Sadly, because of their fleshly pride, they were unwilling to fall in submission upon that stone and therefore plotted to destroy Him:

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."

Matthew 21: 45-46.

In contrast, Peter reveals the hope of those who unlike the

chief priests and Pharisees, receive His Word and accept that Cornerstone with joy:

“To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.”

I Peter 2: 4-5, 7.

Peter goes on to speak of those who will receive His mercy, kindness and ultimate salvation as, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”, because they have endeavored to control the persistence of their flesh natures through the Spirit’s gentling process.

Let us value these words of understanding, lest we fail to recognize, with fruits meet for His approval, the Lord Jesus as the true authority of our hope and salvation, “ the chief cornerstone, elect, precious”, and the ultimate power of God’s word.

M.C.S.

RESURRECTION

Alexander McLaren, the religious expounder of Victorian times, wrote:

“It is not merely the physical facts of death and change that makes us strangers here, but the directions of our desires, and the true affinities of our nature. If by these we belong to heaven and God, then here we shall feel that we have not to lay our heads, and shall ‘dwell in Tabernacles’ because ‘we look for the city.’

What a contrast between the perishable tents of the wilderness and the rock-built mansions of that city! And how short this phase must look when seen from above! . . . What must the earthly life of Abel, the first who died, look to him even now, when he contrasts its short twenty or thirty years with the thousands since? and, after thousands and thousands more, how it will dwindle! So to us, if we reach that safe shore, and look back upon the sea that brought us thither, as it stretches to the horizon, miles of billows once so terrible will seem shrunken to a line of white foam.”

So the belief is that men are in heaven, therefore what need of the body? And those who claim to be witnesses for Jehovah take up this stance when they declare that Christ is Spirit, and the shell of His human body has been left at one side.

The scriptures however declare abundantly of a hope in the resurrection of the human body as a deliverance from death and the grave. Popular religion which preaches heaven going at death realises this, and so being in a quandry teaches that ultimately souls will return to their bodies for the resurrection and judgment of the last day. This teaching is absurd, if it be true that one has already been judged worthy to go to heaven. But the absurdity is not much less in those who declare belief in “immortal emergence” from the tomb for the accepted ones, at the resurrection of the last day. Where is “the judgment” in such a teaching? Christ defines the simple truth in His words concerning “the judgment”:

“And these shall GO away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Matthew 25:46.

If the righteous go “into life eternal” they are not already immortal.

The dilemma of popular religion concerning "the soul and resurrection" was recently highlighted when priests were reported to have puzzled over a double burial. They had been approached by two sisters, whose mother had recently died and been cremated with a funeral service. Both sisters, who live some distance apart wished to be able easily to visit their mother's ashes. After some thought, they concluded that the best way to manage this was to have half the ashes buried in each church. One of the priests involved asked the religious authorities for advice on this procedure. A Church of England committee did not seem to have a clear answer, the comment was made:

"In England I don't think she can be divided in half, but that is because of legal issues rather than theological ones. The burial of cremated remains has to be registered and certified . . . She could be sprinkled. But sprinkling ashes is quite separate from burial . . .

There is a service for the burial of Christian ashes, it refers to 'the cremated remains' . . . the liturgical solution is to omit the definite article and bury 'cremated remains', rather than 'the cremated remains'."

These religious deliberators however, went on to say that there was still a theological problem. For a belief in the resurrection of the body is a way of asserting the unity of a person: that human beings are both body and soul. Separating the parts of the body suggested that only the spirit matters, which is not Christian orthodoxy. It can be done: early Christians had to confront the difficulties which arose when a martyr was eaten by several wild beasts. But there is a clear Christian preference for a body to be kept in one piece.

An inconsistency is immediately evident in this comment, for it is impossible to conceive that in cremation a body is kept in one piece.

One of the Anglican committee deliberating on this issue declared opposition to the idea of dividing the ashes of the dead mother. He went on to declare that sprinkling of ashes was a form of paganism saying:

"I think it should be discouraged because it is really a bit superstitious. It would be better for the ashes to be buried

in one place and think of the dead as being among the unnumbered multitude of Heaven."

So an entangled belief is glaringly obvious in the statements of the clerics. They say the body matters just as much as the spirit, but then hold the belief that the spirit is enjoying life in heaven while the body remains in its tomb on earth. The simplicity of the Truth is denied or overlooked which in the words of Christ declares:

"... the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation."

John 5: 28-29.

A BIBLE CLASS

**“There is a friend that sticketh
closer than a brother.”**

Proverbs 18:24

The Proverbs reveal the the wisdom of the Spirit through the divinely inspired words of Solomon. Today’s study provides an aspect of that wisdom as we think about a “friend” and a brother. Some we know may be either of these but not necessarily both. The key to understanding could be in the word “friend” which is also used as one loved or beloved, implying a warm, deep and sustained affection for another. An example or two can help us see what are the results of being a “friend”. Abraham was known as God’s “friend for ever” (2 Chron. 20:7) because of his love evidenced by faithful obedience to God’s word. David, too, was such a friend of God who Himself testified, “. . . I have found David . . . a man after mine own heart . . .” (Acts 13:22). Clearly love—with all its warm and faithful attributes is the bond of a real friendship. A true friend often places his friend above himself.

To be a brother implies a blood relationship, a family kinship which includes a close and loyal love, but also may not ever reach the faithful, marvellous caring that marks a tried and true friendship. Indeed at times there arise in family relationships bad feelings, bitterness and painful quarrels between brethren, often long enduring, being engendered and fed by the flesh. Esau and Jacob are an example. They were twins yet there was no love shown by Esau, but rather in time hatred, culminating in his determination to kill his brother. Jacob had earlier bought from his older twin brother the birthright (which Esau legitimately inherited, but despised) and thus Jacob obtained Isaac’s blessing.

Through love, then, a true friend “sticketh closer than a brother.” A cleaving or close joining, a true and loyal affection is basic to being a friend. Adam expressed his important close association as he spoke of Eve given to him as a “help meet”—one who sees a need and is lovingly ready to give the most valuable help. He said:

“. . . This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh . . .

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

Genesis 2: 23, 24.

The good and godly bonds between a man and his wife are based on a love which strives to transcend those of kinship and to develop in the true unity and trust which will be seen between Jesus Christ and His bride, mortals being now joined to Him in love and obedience.

Moses spoke to Israel as they were about to enter the land, reminding them of the many who died in the wilderness because of unbelief. He pointed out:

“But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.”

Deuteronomy 4:4.

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, two of those who had been twenty years or older at Kadesh-Barnea still lived. These two who in trial feared God and continued to “cleave” in obedience were Joshua and Caleb. Only these, plus Moses and Aaron, could be accounted among the true friends of God.

We can discern who are those friends, closer than a brother, from Jesus’s teaching to His disciples:

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you.”

John 15: 12-15.

It is through His love that we know what God requires of us, how we must walk to be “friends” with our Father and His Son. Indeed Jesus lay down His life as a means of joining to God those who were His.

How precious then are the bands of love which promote a cleaving together in a closer bond even than that which exists between brothers in the flesh. How blessed we are to know so sublime a relationship as brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus, thereby joined as “friends” as long as we continue, growing in love for God by keeping his commandments.

Perhaps the first part of our verse reveals the responsibility this precious relationship brings:

“A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: . . .”
Proverbs 18:24.

Both these words tell us much, being derived from one, meaning to tend a flock, and also as shepherd or pastor. Those who are friends indeed must be friend-like, acting in love by serving, caring and by example, filling each others’ spiritual needs, supporting one another as the Almighty has promised to those who turn to Him in obedience and love:

“. . . I will give you pastors (friends) according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

Jeremiah 3:15.

David helps also in this privilege and responsibility as he wrote in his Song of Ascent (or going up to Zion):

“Pray for the peace of Jersualem; they shall prosper that love thee:

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

For my brethren and companions’ (friends, pastors) sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee.”

Psalms 122: 6-8.

The peace of present day Jerusalem and more so, of the heavenly city of those now striving to serve God, can be brought about only by the coming of Jesus Christ to gather those who are His and each others’ friends and companions, men and women who “sticketh closer than a brother.” These are to be forever united, His bride who will become to Him, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”, bound together as “friends” and brethren for eternity.

J.A. DeF.

TEACHINGS OF THE ORACLES OF GOD

(An extract from the Herald 1856)

"The unity of the Spirit knows of but 'One Baptism', which is not for non-believers, nor for mis-believers, but for intelligent believers of the truth only. The apostles taught no other use of water in connection with the 'One Faith' and 'One Hope of the Calling', than that of the immersion of the subject. And this the reverend knaves of the Apostacy know full well . . .

The 'One Body,' or ecclesia, termed 'the church', is the aggregate of those who have been the subjects of a 'call out of' the Hebrew and other nations to God's kingdom and glory, and who have obeyed the call in believing the glad tidings thereof and being baptized into the One Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. These . . . called-out ones are God's clergy, lot, or heritage of kings and priests; and besides them, he has no other clergy. All not of this class are wolves in sheep's clothing, who, being hirelings, would not spare the flock. Their craft is the speaking or perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Of such beware!

In the days of Jesus, men believed his preaching; nevertheless, the Holy Spirit was not given to them—(John 7: 38-39): therefore the gift of the Spirit is not necessary to work faith in them, or to enable them to believe.

The glorification of Jesus preceded the gift of the Holy Spirit. When given, the Spirit guided those who received it into all the truth, and showed them things to come.—(John 16:13): hence it is styled 'the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.'—(John 14:17). In the days of the apostles, this Spirit was given by God to those who obey Him.—(Acts 5:32). Men, therefore, who are ignorant of the truth, or who teach contrary to the truth, or who are ignorant of the things to come, or who do not obey the truth, or who undervalue the written testimony for Jesus, or who believe, or respect, the sentiments of all Christendom—whoever else may have the Spirit, such practise deception upon themselves in imagining that the Holy Spirit, 'the Spirit of Truth', resides in them, presiding over their thoughts, words, and actions. The Ghost of the Apostacy, which is the spirit of error, is the only spirit they possess."

Note. It is on the above premises that the Statement of Faith was formulated which declares of Doctrines to be Rejected:

Clause 25.—That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.

This statement certainly does not preclude that it is through the Spirit Word that man believes; this word entering into a sincere receptive heart (as seed to grow) changes a man, bringing him to a condition of mind for acceptance of baptism, and so be brought into the way of The Kingdom. So necessary, as Jesus declared to one who needed to fully understand the Word of Truth:

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

John 3:5.

Unless a man believes, and he cannot believe unless he understands, he cannot be born of the Spirit however much he reads the word of God. A man of flawed approach and knowledge cannot change into a “new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17); and water of itself cannot effect a change. These thoughts also bringing into perspective the scriptures:

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

Romans 10: 14-15.

This passage defines the way in which the Truth operates, to bring responsive hearts to essential knowledge, and therefore to baptism.

R. ROBERTS AGAINST PARTIAL INSPIRATION

The Bible's Enemies and Friends

The new theory may be expressed in the old Unitarian *formula* with which we may have been nauseatingly familiar from childhood; that "the Bible is not the word of God, but *contains* the word of God." We know what this theory has done for them. It has eaten out the whole power and marrow of the word of God, and left them starving and dying in the present wilderness of human life—theorising about morals and social improvements, but faithless of the gospel and disobedient to the apostolic commandments. The next step, in natural logical order, is that of modern Unitarians, who hold that the Bible is a good moral book, in some parts of its teaching, but not historically true where it goes contrary to human experience; that it is inspired in a sense, but only in the sense in which Shakespeare is inspired. It is the natural result of this to hold that Israel was not miraculously delivered from Egypt; that Moses and not God is the author of the Jewish Law; and that Christ did not rise from the dead. The last stage is represented by Atheism, and good-bye to hope and all moral incentive. The doctrine now recommended has its logical issue here.

The Bible can never command or retain its place as the supreme mentor of human life unless its absolutely divine character is recognised. Its histories will never be studied as they require to be, or its hopes practically blended with the motives of human action, or its self-denying precepts adopted and acted upon in human life, where there is the least suspicion of the presence of a human element in its composition. This suspicion saps confidence: and the lack of confidence leads but too easily to a neglect to which we are naturally pre-disposed. Society is a desolation today because of this. The divine authority of the Bible is not recognised. If it were recognised, as it has been hitherto among the brethren, there would be that application to it in constant reading which would purify and ennoble with righteousness and hope. Instead of this, it is regarded as a venerable piece of literary antiquity, good in its way, but not deserving of the first place in human life and, on the whole, inconvenient and even hurtful, if it is put into that position.

All confidence in it as the word of God has been undermined in the general ranks of society through the influence of learned but

false theories. A few have had that confidence restored, with the result of light and comfort and righteousness entering into their dark lives by the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation. And they cannot stand by unmoved while the principles are being promulgated which, if successful, would lead us back to the old quagmire, and destroy the foundation of hope and purity, whether intended or not.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

"I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end . . ."

Ezekiel 35: 4-5.

Even as Israel has been making endeavours to come to terms with the Palestinians, Arab factions have continued their disruptive, murderous campaigns. The suicide bombers sent by the Hizbollah guerillas have caused death, dismay, and fear amongst Israel's civilian population. The Israeli Government, though greatly disturbed, has tried to keep to its determined path of reconciliation with its former enemies. But patience was broken when Hizbollah began the bombardment of Galilee with Katyusha rockets from Southern Lebanon. This was made possible because local Lebanese were supporting Hizbollah, and their intimate knowledge of the terrain enabled them to have small, mobile teams to fire upon Israeli settlers, and then quickly move away from their firing positions before the forces of Israel could retaliate.

Now the ancient prophecy declares, "Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel . . ." "I will lay thy cities waste . . ." These words, of course, relate to God's final judgment, which will deliver His people. But as one considers the import of the prophet Ezekiel's words, and that whatever the Arab peoples do, they will never be allowed to succeed in their purposes to overthrow Israel. Is it not significant, that Israel,

small nation that it is, was able to respond to Hizbollah's hatred with great punitive action, laying the territory of the Hizbollah's sympathisers waste? The account of a journalist, reporting from Southern Lebanon, makes interesting reading in this context, as follows:

"The sound of the Israeli jets power-diving over the main road from Tyre to Qana sent us scurrying to the window. There was a rumble of bombs to the east and black fingers of smoke shot into the sky. When we reached the scene of the air strikes, there was a 30 ft. crater in the highway and the olive trees were blessed with a fine grey dust from the explosion. The Israelis were cutting the roads all across Southern Lebanon.

Over the hills of this poor, stony land, they were blowing up the ancient highways, isolating Qana from Tyre, Tibnin from Qana, Ghandouriyeh from the Litani river. They have now bombed three of the bigger water reservoirs, cutting water from 20 villages in the north and another 15 to the south, turning fertility into a future desert . . . The scale of the war in Southern Lebanon and of Israel's debacle in this hopeless conflict is obvious to the U.N. statisticians who daily log the outgoing and incoming fire of both Israel and the Hizbollah. In the 14 days since Israel's offensive began, for example, U.N. troops have recorded 523 Israeli air strikes in just their own area of operations, along with 23,000 Israeli artillery rounds fired into Lebanon. But in the same period the Hizbollah have managed to fire 1,100 Katyusha rockets at Northern Israel, more in a fortnight, than in the past 20 years, and were yesterday still retaliating with missile fire for the Israelis destruction of the very infrastructure of Southern Lebanon."

At the time of writing it seems that Hizbollah have had enough for the time being; and with the help of the U.S.A. diplomacy a ceasefire has been arranged. But it is only a temporary measure as the scripture so clearly prophesies. The "perpetual hatred" is still there, considerably assisted by the intransigence of the Syrian government towards its southern neighbour. And even a section of the Palestinians disagree with their chairman Yasser

Arafat who has called for the abolishing from the Palestinian Charter the clause which calls for "the destruction of Israel." Those who are against the diplomacy of Yasser Arafat declare opposition to this "changing of the charter as this is against the goal of our people. We cannot change it until Israel recognises our national rights."

So there is a continuance of a deadly threatening situation which tarnishes Israel's way of life, and though Hizbollah's people have again experienced desolation, their hatred is not assuaged, that will only come through the irresistible hand of the Most High, at a time when Arabs shall come to know, even as the prophecy declares, "that I am the LORD."

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

We have suspended for the summer the monthly mailing of invitations for the "Prophecy" and "Doctrine" booklets. There has been moderate response and it is planned, God willing, to resume in September.

Sister L. Carter injured in a fall during her visit to England returned in June and we welcome her back, grateful for her recovering. There is much gratitude to those who so lovingly and willingly cared for her. Supplications of all are for her well being with sincere thanks to our Father for guidance and healing.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

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

We were grateful for the safe return of our Sister Lois Carter to the United States after her prolonged stay here.

The visit has been good for the building up and understanding of the blessing of the fellowship, which has been given in the journey of our lives in the Truth.