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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

“THE LORD YOUR GOD...GOETH WITH YOU”

As Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness drew to a close, Moses, at God's direction, reviewed for them the law given at Sinai. They would soon be dwelling in the land and would require some adjustments in the law to fit their changed circumstances.

This morning we have read of God's help as they were to fight against the inhabitants then occupying the land:

“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, hear O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Deuteronomy 20:1-4.

What encouragement and strength God gave His people, as He knew they could very well fear and tremble at the prospect of opposing the seven strong nations that inhabited the land divinely promised to Israel. The army of Israel numbered over 600,000 men, a formidable force, yet the armies of the seven nations were greater and were armed with horses and chariots. The Almighty reminded His people how, 40 years earlier, He had led them out of Egypt, destroying Pharaoh and his chariots in the Red Sea. Shortly thereafter, at Kadesh-barnea, God spoke unto Moses:

“Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan...of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.” Numbers:13:2.

These responsible leaders did search the land and found it was indeed “a land which floweth with milk and honey.” However, they also found it to be a land of walled cities, defended by large armies, among whom were giants. In fear, ten of the twelve sent discouraged the people from going up against them to conquer the land as God had commanded. The other two—Joshua and Caleb—trusted in God and exhorted Israel:

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not." Numbers 14: 8-9.

Much afraid, Israel did rebel, refusing to go in, heedless of God's provision; thus they were condemned to 40 year's wandering in the wilderness, during which all the 600,000 fighting men of Israel died because of their lack of trust in God's promise regarding the land.

Forty years later, Israel again stood at the border of the land. Of the original army, only Joshua and Caleb remained. Those too young at Kadesh-barnea, and those born since, made up a new army, again about 600,000 men. Knowing man's weaknesses, God spoke to these men through Moses and their priest, urging them:

"... let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." Deuteronomy 20:3-4.

Further, the Almighty in His wisdom and mercy gave instruction (verses 5-8) that those who had built a new house, planted a new vineyard, or had newly married were to be excused from battle, as well as the fearful or fainthearted. Such minds would be distracted from a full and whole-hearted effort, and could detract from their brethren's efforts. God's care was that all who were to conquer the land should be wholehearted in this work, assuring that He would go with them.

The first battle upon entering the land, preceded by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, was at Jericho—a large fortified city. Here the Almighty showed His army that He was indeed with them, for Israel had no need to raise a weapon in the conquest of Jericho. God instructed them to march around Jericho once a day for six days, carrying the ark of God, but making no sound, other than the blowing of trumpets by the priests (Joshua 6:10). On the seventh day, at Joshua's command:

"... the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great

shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city...and they took the city." Joshua 6:20. What greater witness could there be that indeed God was with them with overwhelming power, and would continue with them until the seven nations inhabiting the land were conquered?

Brethren and Sisters, we do not have Hivites, Jebusites, and other nations to conquer, as Israel had. But we have had struggles and will continue to have them as long as we are flesh. Our greatest battle is against SELF as we fight to put away mortal yearnings, bringing them into subjection to our Father's word. This struggle against the flesh has been since Eve was deceived by the serpent in the garden. The serpent beguiled her into disobeying the divine command regarding the tree in the midst of the garden, concerning which God had decreed:

"... thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17.

The serpent, "more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made" (Genesis 3:1), tempted Eve, saying:

"...Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4

Eve yielded to her fleshly desires (self), believed the serpent, ate the forbidden fruit, and gave to Adam to eat also. Thus the subtlety of the serpent dominated man's mind. We remember God's earlier decree when He created man:

"... Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" Genesis 1:26.

Through guile, the serpent gained dominion over the minds of Adam and Eve, contrary to this decree, for Eve should have withstood the serpent's subtlety. God condemned the serpent:

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

This enmity has existed between the seed of the serpent (those who deny God's word), and the seed of the woman (those who desire to obey Him). Jesus became the fulfillment of the promised seed of the woman, as he conquered His fleshly nature on the cross, never having sinned.

Our warfare is still against the subtlety of the serpent—against ourselves—(sin in the flesh). So we struggle always to gain dominion over our self-pleasing desires. It must be our constant awareness and resistance as long as we live. But with the help of our Father, it can be dealt with.

We have read this morning of God's command concerning the cities of the land:

“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them... That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 20:16-18.

How wise was God's care for His people, lest they be deceived into the worship of idols. As they conquered cities, utterly destroying them, the fear of Israel grew among the other inhabitants of the land. Those who lived in Gibeon, moved by fear, “did work wilily” (Joshua 9:4), to save themselves from destruction, by deceiving Israel into believing they were not of the land but of a far country, and desiring to make a league with God's people. Joshua and Israel, deceived by their trickery, did make a league with them. How did this happen? We are clearly shown:

“...the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.” Joshua 9:14.

They failed to seek God's guidance, and as a consequence were subtly deceived by the Gibeonites, as they discovered only three days after making the league with them (Joshua 9:16). How strong is the enmity, as the seed of the serpent constantly lies in wait to deceive the minds of those struggling to belong to God, as the seed of the woman! All mortals since Eden have failed, have sinned and offended God, except for the seed of the woman—Jesus Christ—who died on the cross as the unblemished Lamb of God. As He died, having perfectly upheld and honored His father's requirements, He cried out in victory: “It is finished” (John 19:30). He did wound the serpent in the head, the only one who was able to do so.

Each of us, Brethren and Sisters, faces this struggle, this warfare, this enmity within and without. How can we find help to overcome SELF—which by nature rebels against God's commands? Paul helps us as he encouraged his brethren in Ephesus:

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"Finally, my brethren, be strong 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.

What is "the whole armour of God"? Loins girt about with truth; the breastplate of righteousness; feet shod with the gospel of peace; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17). It is striking that all this armour is used to defend the body from injury or death, except the sword of the Spirit - this word of God - which, if taken to heart, is capable of overcoming the adversary, the serpent, sin, which inherently dwells in all flesh.

Let us put on that "whole armour" - of which we speak, and so often need - so graciously granted by the Almighty. Let us put our trust in Him, remembering His words to Israel: "The LORD your God is he that goeth with you...to save you" (Deuteronomy 20:4). Of ourselves, we cannot overcome this fleshly nature which is so often our enemy. We need His help, His forgiveness, His fighting with us and for us. Let us remember the message to Ephesus, given to John by Jesus Himself.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches; To him that over-cometh (conquers self) will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise (Eden) of God."

Revelation 2:7.

It is the gift of God's grace; let us ever value it.

J.A.DeF.

LOVE—THE PERFECT WILL OF GOD

From a study of Philippians, is revealed the degree of Paul's care and love for his brethren as expressed in his letter to them:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:3-5,8

These sentiments are remarkable when we remember that Paul was writing while a prisoner at Rome—taken captive for the name of Jesus Christ. Yet even in the midst of his own personal trials, he reached out to his brethren in Philippi to further their understanding of the qualities God looks for in His people. He felt a keen responsibility to further their knowledge and spiritual growth in the hope they may be found approved at Christ's judgment seat. What are these qualities that we too must display if we hope to be members of His eternal household? Paul goes on to explain:

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Philippians 1:9-11

Paul emphasized the importance of expressing love in every facet of one's living, so that it abound and grow. This same message was sent to his Corinthian brethren as he wrote:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing. Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

I Corinthians 13:1-2, 4-7

Paul was saying that no matter what gifts are possessed or duties one may be privileged to hold in the Body, whether prophesying or teaching etc., all are without merit if not grounded in love for God and for one's brethren. How can this love be expressed? Paul explains in his letter to the Colossians:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness."

Colossians 3:12-14

The perfectness we hope to receive through approval at Christ's judgment seat, can only be accomplished through the mercy of God and the application of love in one's living. John teaches from where this love emanates:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

I John 4:7-8

This love which God has bestowed so bountifully upon his children, must grow and work in the spirit man, permeating his every word and deed and then be reflected to others. This was the message Paul was endeavoring to pass on to his brethren at Philippi. What a true indication of his sincerity and love for them, that even while in bonds at Rome, not his own difficulties but their spiritual welfare was uppermost in his mind: even as previously expressed,

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Romans 13:10-11

If we knew how close we were to that hoped for day of salvation, we would be all the more diligent to apply the spirit of love in every aspect of our living and to all we came in contact with. What a fearful realization it is to know, that all those responsible to the judgment seat of Christ, must answer for every word and deed not motivated by love. With this in mind, Paul wrote to his brethren at Rome saying:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,

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that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Romans 12:1-3

This renewing of mind must be the transformation from natural fleshly thinking to a more pleasing spiritual mind, centered in obedience and love - serving the Almighty through His Son.

Paul's renewal of mind began on the road to Damascus at his conversion. We know he struggled from then on with an infirmity of the flesh, which may have been poor eyesight. This weakness made him ready to acknowledge his own lack of strength, and the need to rely upon the only secure foundation of help there is, through the love of God. This perhaps is the reason why, even though he beseeched God three times in prayer, it was not removed.

If we in the midst of trial can recall Paul's example, who ignored his own personal suffering and endeavored through God's love to extend that same love to his brethren, it can help us grow in the same spirit, that we too may hope to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God", through the extension of His love in all we say or do.

M.C.S.

AN AGE OF COMPROMISE AND UNBELIEF

Clergy and ministers must “keep at the business of preaching” if the Church is to survive, a Methodist preacher, known for his radio broadcasts, declared almost four years ago. He went on to say, “They tell us that the day of preaching is over, mortally wounded by popular entertainment and finished off by television.”

An Anglican Bishop recently appealed for a renewal in religion as follows:-

“The turn of a century and the beginning of a new millennium which will soon be upon us is a symbolic moment, which brings with it a right and proper challenge to us to renew our hope.”

But what do we find? Compromise by many church leaders to cater for those who have a faltering belief. The situation is summed up in the following letter of complaint from a London Rector:-

“The Church of England is to provide services of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child as a way of avoiding ‘the hypocrisy of non-believers having their babies baptised’. To whom is the thanksgiving to be addressed? It looks as if we shall need yet another new service to avoid this piece of hypocrisy.”

A writer of an article for the National Press has made the comment:-

“ - - - few would have predicted the latest assault on our fundamental beliefs would come from the highest authority in the Church of England.”

One of the dignitaries of the Church, in a Millennium message, said, “ - - - we cannot know” that Jesus was raised from the dead, going on to say that his own faith had been “greatly tested and sorely won over the years.” “I can tell you frankly that while we can be absolutely sure that Jesus lived and that He was certainly crucified on the Cross, we cannot with the same certainty know he was raised by God from the dead.” Of course there has been doubt expressed previously. A North of England Bishop some time ago doubted the Virgin Birth and the miracles. The resurrection, he implied was a “ - - - conjuring trick”, and God would not have allowed Jesus to walk on water.

There has been some protest. A tutor of theology at a College University in Durham asserted that the Resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith:-

“If Jesus simply died then there is no hope - - -. The

archbishop is in a very difficult position. I can see he is trying to draw people into the church who perhaps wouldn't be traditional church-goers - - -. Every week I have young people coming to my church: they are studying theology but not all are Christians."

What a situation for a Church to be in! No wonder a clergyman recently made the lament:-

"With its clergy recruitment posters the Church of England sinks to new depths of tasteless trivialising. They reveal mercilessly that the powers that be in the Church think not of ordination to the priesthood - - - but of entry into a job! - - - Thirty years ago, I was told that priesthood was a vocation - - - whose results would rarely be seen in this life."

A century ago a respected writer on religion, P.T. Forsyth, in his book "The Holy Father and the Living Christ", on the subject " - - - if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile - - - " said:-

" - - - we speak of the difference between a dead faith and a living, what we really mean is a difference in the OBJECT of our faith more than its kind. The object determines the kind. The great fundamental difference is between a dead Christ and a living. Living faith is a faith in a living Christ. It is only a living Christ that calls out a living faith, a faith with stay and power - especially power. - - - A living faith, a living Christianity, a living Christendom, means a living Christ. Christianity is more than Christendom but Christ is more than Christianity. The truth of Christ is more than its appreciation by any age of the Christian Church. But Christ himself is more than Christianity. He is more than any truth that can be told about Him, any principle He embodies, or deeds done in His name. Faith in Christ is faith neither in Christendom (or a Church) nor in Christianity (or a system of creed or conduct). But it is faith in the practical reality of His unseen Person, now living, reigning, guiding from His unseen throne - - - ."

What the above writer would say (who died in 1921) if he knew that leaders of his Church are now doubting the actual resurrection of the body of Christ, has to be left to the imagination. Undoubtedly (even in "the form") there is great doctrinal deterioration. This comes about by endeavours to compromise with doubters who proliferate in this latter day age of unbelief. And what of those who say they witness for Jehovah? Their "Christ" has

gone to heaven but left His body behind; so for all their zealous works they are no different basically than the hierarchy of the Church, whose doubts cause grave concern to some who still have reverence for God's holy word.

A BIBLE CLASS
"THE DAYS OF OUR YEARS"
(Psalm 90:10)

In this psalm David imparts an important spiritual message by reminding how brief is the lifetime appointed to man. Compared to the immensity of God's power and might, man is but a very frail and short lived part of His creation. With this in mind, David says:

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."
Psalm 90:12

Through disobedience, man was cursed to become a dying creature, and his days were numbered, as David said:

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away"
Psalm 90:10

Seventy years or twenty-five thousand, five hundred and fifty days does not sound like a lot of time. To a child a day seems long and a lifetime never ending, but as we grow older, the days seem to fly by. David explains, we are allotted a life span of seventy years, and if we should live beyond that, it is usually with depleted strength, much labour and sorrow. With this in mind, we need to value the time given, using it wisely in the pursuit of spiritual wisdom and gain before our probation is over. In this context we think of king Hezekiah, who we are told:

" . . . did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses."
II Kings 18:3-6

Hezekiah enjoyed a fruitful reign because he relied on the Almighty and sought Him often through prayer for guidance and

direction. At the end of his allotted time, when he became sick "unto death", the prophet Isaiah was sent to bring him this news. Hezekiah, distraught at hearing he was about to die, prayed to God for healing and an extension of his life. Because of his righteous walk, God heard his prayer and through Isaiah said:

"Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus said the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years;"

II Kings 20:5-6

How grateful and blessed Hezekiah would feel to hear he had been granted these additional fifteen years. However, those extra fifteen years would prove to be his undoing, laden with "labour and sorrow", for during that time he failed through pride, in displaying to the messengers from Babylon, all the treasures of his house and kingdom.

Going back to Eden, we recall the curse of labour and death brought upon man by God, was first pronounced to Adam after his disobedience in the garden:

"In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Genesis 3:19

This sentence has followed Adam's offspring from that day. Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years before the sentence of death came upon him, for in these early times, man's life was extended in order to populate the earth. However, as the inhabitants increased, also did the years of man's life decrease, so that by Abraham's time he lived to be one hundred and seventy-five years which was considered, "a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people"

(Genesis 25:8).

We too have been given a certain amount of time, in order to prove if we are people of the spirit or of the flesh. Paul's admonition in this regard to his Ephesian brethren charged them:

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Ephesians 5:15-17

We are all dying creatures, and our days being three score and ten or thereabouts, may not seem long. However, in God's mercy we

have been given a hope, that we may escape the bonds of death, being resurrected through a belief in His word, and striving in obedience to walk after the example of His Son. John saw in vision the conclusion of this hope, as those found approved appeared as "new Jerusalem" the bride of Christ:

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Revelation 21:2-4

David grew old and feeble in time, realizing as he neared death, that it was his due being a dying creature. However, his hope was to be resurrected with the people of God, and in the mercy of the Almighty should he be found approved, would enjoy eternal health and vigor in the kingdom - a great contrast to the short lived time appointed to man. He knew that whether man's time extends to 70, 80 or more years, they are full of labour, sorrow and illness - finally ending in the grave. David's last words were a charge to his son Solomon to walk in God's ways - the most important message he could impart before his death:

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself."

I Kings 2:1-3

This hope of resurrection that David shared with God's people from all ages, will be accomplished at Christ's return. In His Kingdom there will be neither illness, pain nor sorrow, while the bounty of the land spills over into never ending plenty with the curse on man and the earth removed. The length of days for the mortal subjects will be extended as Isaiah prophesied:

"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old

man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old;“ Isaiah 65:20

The length of days will no longer be seventy years for His saints - those found approved through His mercy at the judgment seat of Christ, but their lifetimes will stretch unto eternity. No longer mortal, they will be granted vigor and perfect everlasting health as they work in His service and enjoy the earth as it blossoms under His healing grace. Isaiah further describes this glorious age saying:

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isaiah 35:5-6, 10

What a glorious hope is held in store for those who endeavor now in obedience and love to walk after the example of the Lord Jesus, for indeed the days of our lives are full of trouble and “soon cut off”. In the bigger picture, our own personal time here on earth is but a moment. Let us therefore heed David's warning and apply our hearts unto His wisdom and ways while there is yet time

M.C.S.

SPACE

It is, perhaps, not generally realised, how much the world has been spending on space probes during the last 4 decades. In 1957 there was the Russian Sputnik 1, followed by Sputnik 2 shortly after.

Then early in 1958 the United States sent up Explorer 1. Three years later Russia sent up the first crewed spaceship Vostok 1 which was recovered successfully after a single orbit. This was followed by John Glenn in Friendship 7 (U.S.A.) in 1962. He was the first American to orbit the Earth.

In 1963 V. Tereshkova in Vostok 1 (U.S.S.R.) became the first woman in space. This was followed up in 1967 by Soyuz I which fatally crashed-landed on the Earth. Then in 1969 Neil Armstrong (U.S.A.) in Apollo 11, became the first person to walk upon the

Moon's surface. He and his crew brought back lunar soil samples. This mission was described as "a symbol of the insatiable curiosity of mankind."

Since then there has been Luna 17 (U.S.S.R.) November 1970. Followed by Salyut 1, Russia's first orbital space station, April 1971. The United States launched Skylab 2, in 1973, its first orbital space station. In 1975 Apollo 18 (U.S.A.) and Soyuz 19 (U.S.S.R) made a joint endeavour and linked up in space.

Then in 1979 the European Space Agency launched Ariane 1. The U.S.A. in 1981 sent up space shuttle Columbia, the first reusable crewed spacecraft.

Since then (1988) Russia also produced a shuttle craft, which successfully operated to put two Soviet cosmonauts on its space station. From that time space technology has grown, Europe being involved, and more recently Japan.

There have also been space probes to Saturn, Neptune, Venus and Jupiter, and there has even been talk of putting men on Mars, even though the two United States Viking probes that landed on Mars and analysed the soil showed there was no definite signs of life.

These efforts remind one of the efforts made by man in a very early time; which is preserved as a lesson in the divine record, as follows:-

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly ---. And they said --- let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven---."

(Genesis 11:3-4)

Man was indeed ambitious in that early time, he wanted to reach up into heaven. But the effort came to nought. As the scripture shows:

"--- the LORD scattered them abroad --- and they left off to build the city ---."

(Genesis 11:8)

Heaven is not in the province of man; all these modern efforts of men to probe heaven will not bring any real and positive blessing for mankind. Furthermore the question which is prompted by the divine record is most pertinent; will God, who is certainly aware of such modern developments, intervene once more to curb such expensive vanity?

"EARTHQUAKES"

Jesus warned His disciples of a future when there would be:-
"--- great earthquakes --- in diverse places --- ."

(Luke 21:11)

How truly this has come to pass in the Twentieth Century. The following is a list of some of the most destructive:-

Messina, Italy, 28 December 1908. Over 70,000 died. Gansu, China, 16 December 1920. 200,000 dead. Tokyo, Yokohama, 1 September 1923. 143,000 dead. Nanshan, China, 22 May 1927. 200,000 dead. Gansu, China, 25 December 1932. 70,000 dead. Quetta, Pakistan (then India) 30 May 1935. Over 30,000 died. Northern Peru, 31 May 1970 66,000 dead. Tangshan, China, 27 July 1976. over 255,000 died. Armenia, 7 December 1988. 55,000 dead.

It will be immediately seen in the above details, that these events were "in divers places", and they were "great".

At the time of writing (August) there has been another great earthquake in Turkey. It has been estimated to have been as powerful as the San Francisco disaster of 1906. In Istanbul power and telephone lines were cut, and more than 20 buildings collapsed. But Izmit and Golcuk were even worse affected. About a quarter of a million people were out in the open, many of them surrounded with the heaps of rubble of the collapsed buildings. High-rise blocks of flats were worst hit. Typically some minds were raising the question "Was God to Blame." A rational and just reply came from a Turkish official, who bitterly proclaimed, "Not God - the builders." Structures had been flimsily put up in the last few decades, as a result of increased demands for housing. Rusty reinforcement rods had been used in concrete buildings, and also sea-sand rather than washed sand to mix the concrete; the salt in the sea-sand therefore caused corrosion. These cheaply built blocks as a result disintegrated, whereas the better constructions survived as the earthquake struck. The lack of care and foresight by the Authorities is revealed in that it was known that this North-Western area of Turkey with over 90 per cent of the population living there is a "seismic hotspot" similar to the famous San Andreas fault in California! The cost of the damage has been estimated to be more than £25 billion, with Lloyd's Insurance of London alone expecting to face up to £2 billion (it being involved in covering the Turkish State-owned Tupras oil refinery). Though at the time of writing a Lloyd's spokesman has expressed the hope that the

Insurance loss may not be as much as they fear.

Such events, in various parts of the world, are accepted as natural consequences. What is not generally realised is that they have a biblical significance, as shown by the words of scripture.

Note the following quotations:-

“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell - - -.” (Revelation 11:13)

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth - - -.” (Revelation 16:18)

This recent earthquake in Turkey (in which Israeli troops were involved in rescue efforts) brings home to us the fact that the tremors are getting nearer to Jerusalem, concerning which it is prophesied:-

“Then shall the Lord go forth - - - . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof - - - . And ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah - - - and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints. - - - ”

(Zechariah 14: 3-5)

“SIGNS OF HIS COMING”

“ - - - they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of - - - filthiness, so that there is no place clean.” (Isaiah 28:7-8)

The above words are followed with the dire warning:-

“For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the LORD GOD of Hosts a consumption, even determined UPON THE WHOLE EARTH.” (verses 21-22)

The rising generation is failing more and more. Children are proving more difficult for their parents to control, with violence amongst them increasing. A recent report showed that young people aged 11 to 15 have raised their input of alcohol by a hundred

per cent in the last six years. In a survey in 1996 it was found that nearly a million 11 to 15 year olds were regularly drinking alcohol. It was reckoned they were partaking almost six million units of alcohol per week (a unit equals one glass of wine). This trend has exercised the government in how to deal with such a deterioration. A society called "Alcohol Concern" has called for extra money for the treatment of drink problems.

But what of the older ones of "the rising generation"? It is said that they are "dedicated to the high life". Undergraduates in some Universities are found to be loose-livers and as many as two thirds of the students are using illegal drugs; more than one in ten finding funds to enable them to indulge their cravings every week, and some actually consuming such substances every day. These findings are based on a MORI poll conducted amongst students at ten universities. Undergraduates were found to be spending seven times more on drinking than on books for their studies. These people are supposed to be going to provide the nation's leadership for the the next generation!

Britain is facing a cocaine epidemic at the present time. World cocaine production has more than doubled in the last ten years, and the "pushers" are reducing its price, and also are providing it in a purer state. South American harvests of the coca plant have been good, with "drug barons" seeking, as a result, to extend their trade. It is said that the price of a gramme has fallen seventy five per cent in the U.S.A.

A United States medical examiner from San Francisco is stated to have said:-

"Reports of excited delirium deaths in the United Kingdom indicate European cocaine supplies are expanding. Twenty years ago excited delirium was a rare disorder in the United States but that is no longer the case."

A spokesman of the "Standing Conference on Drug Abuse" is reported to have said recently:-

"We have seen a pattern of increasing recreational use in a number of drugs. - - -

We are hearing from various sources, including our members, that there are an increasing number of users, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE. The drug has hit the club scene and as young people have got more into ecstasy

and amphetamines, they have increasingly turned to cocaine as well. The price has come down and more people are prepared to experiment with it."

This, undoubtedly, is a terrible trend and brooks no good for the future. Young people will form the next mature generation; and what will that generation be like, and what will they become?

And look what is happening amongst nations referred to as under-privileged.

East Timor: Since Indonesia took over this country more than twenty years ago there has been civil conflict, and a large proportion of those fighting the Indonesians have been children.

Sierra Leone: In the unsettled state of that nation many young people, hardly more than children, have been issued with deadly fire-arms. They have been trained to kill, but do not have the mature mental capacity to behave with any rationality.

Liberia: Boys have been drugged, for the purpose of their being used by unscrupulous leaders to carry out the desired subversive military activities.

Afghanistan: Children have been constantly used in the fightings in that troubled country. When Fundamentalist Muslims rose against the Communist Government they were used. Later against the Russian troops sent by the USSR to help the Marxist leaders. And are still being used, for even now when the Muslims have gained control, the Muslims are fighting amongst themselves.

Kurdistan: Children are fighting for the Kurdistan People's Party, which is active across Iran, Syria and Iraq.

Lebanon: Young Palestinians in Lebanon are used by the Islamic extremists in disruptive acts against Israel.

Bosnia: Boys as young as 14 years of age were trained to fight against the Serbs.

What future is there for all these young militants, and what good will they be?

The world's condition does make the words of Isaiah's prophecy very meaningful for this time.

"I have heard from the LORD GOD of Hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth." (Isaiah 28:22)

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

Every Third Week: Revelation Study

As this year's end draws closer, the new century brings to men's minds concern created by computer problems, possibly disrupting the supply system of the country.

Governments are printing additional currency, anticipating a year end surge in demand for cash. Emergency items such as generators, batteries, flash lights etc. are in short supply because of "panic buying". Stores are ordering additional supplies of staple foods anticipating buyers stock piling at the end of the year.

Does this not reveal how futile are men's inventions and plans in contrast to God's un failing purpose with this earth?

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

Now that winter is upon us, we inevitably must resign ourselves to these dark days. But there is always hope, for the divine promise is " --- summer and winter shall not cease." So we can look forward to brighter days that will come, along with the new millennium.