

DECEMBER 2000

A Monthly Magazine issued by

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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What faith he showed, knowing that God provides His mercy and help for those who trust in Him in times of trouble.

Hezekiah's prayer was heard. The loving Father added fifteen years to his life. In addition, He declared:

"And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;

Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward."

Isaiah 38:6-8.

What assurance the Almighty provided for His faithful king, because he had sought Him in the time of oppression. His plea had been:

"... O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me."

Isaiah 38:14.

"Undertake" conveys the thought of a binding together as seen in a rope or cable. The king appealed for God's strength and help in his distressing circumstances. His spirit of submission and thankfulness is very clear as he spoke:

"What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul."

Isaiah 38:15.

How does one go softly? Jacob's mind is a help for us as Esau his brother urged Jacob to go with him.

"And he (Jacob) said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir."

Genesis 33:13-14.

Jacob's care was for his children and his cattle; he was thinking of others, not himself.

Another example can help us in our determination to go softly. Ahab was an evil king who served idols, urged on by Jezebel, his equally evil wife. When he was warned of judgment to come upon himself and Jezebel:

"... he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly."

I Kings 21-27.

In response, the Lord spoke to Elijah his prophet concerning Ahab: "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." I Kings 21:29.

The flesh, by nature, does not go softly, for it thinks of "self" first, is impulsive, and certainly is not humble. But how pleasing is that spirit which impels a man to go softly, yielding in obedience to God's way, not his own. Because of that spirit seen in Hezekiah, God heard his plea — "undertake for me" — and did cure his illness and did defend Jerusalem from the power of Assyria.

We are further shown Hezekiah's spirit as Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sent his army against Jerusalem, threatening to destroy it. When these threats were reported to Hezekiah:

". . . he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord."

Isaiah 37:1.

He went softly, and also sent messengers to Isaiah, God's prophet, seeking help, as he said:

"It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left." Isaiah 37:4.

Hezekiah's concern was for "the remnant that is left." What was that remnant? Just ten years earlier, the armies of Assyria had destroyed Samaria, and taken the ten tribes of Israel captive to Assyria:

"Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them." II Kings 18:12.

These did not submit to God, did not go softly, and were overwhelmed by the Assyrian power under Shalmaneser.

Hezekiah would be very aware of this, and would fear lest such should come upon Judah and Benjamin, "the remnant that is left." However, there was a difference under Hezekiah; Judah and Jerusalem were serving God, going softly, seeking His help. The same Assyrians threatened Jerusalem and Hezekiah, saying:

"Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah . . . saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem

shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

Isaiah 37:10.

Even his enemies knew of Hezekiah's trust in God! When these threats were brought to Him, Hezekiah:

"... went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD . . .

Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only." Isaiah 37:14-15,20.

The king prayed that God would be glorified before all nations, thinking of His honor as well as the saving of the "remnant that is left." The Almighty heard his prayers, and Jerusalem was miraculously saved. Not an arrow was shot into the city (Isaiah 37:33). Hezekiah's life was extended fifteen years. What joy, what thankfulness for the great mercy God showed, as He did "undertake" for His remnant that was left.

The Almighty has always been with a remnant, a few who in faith strive to serve Him, obey His word and walk softly. Isaiah helps us as he speaks of this remnant throughout his work of conveying God's word to His people. First, he warned his people of evil to come because of their unbelief:

"... the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

Isaiah 1:8.

Samaria (the ten tribes) was taken captive by Assyria, and Jerusalem was like a "besieged city." But God was merciful in delivering that besieged city — the remnant that was left — as the prophet spoke:

"Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Isaiah 1:9.

The Almighty further strengthened Hezekiah, reminding him of the "day of the LORD":

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return . . .

And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.”
Isaiah 10:20-22,27.

In his oppression under the yoke of Assyria, Hezekiah would remember these words as he came to God, beseeching Him: “undertake for me.” Jesus helps us to do likewise, Brethren and Sisters, as He spoke:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30.

Further, Isaiah spoke to Hezekiah as he sought God’s undertaking for him:

“And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:
For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

For I shall defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.”
Isaiah 37:31-35.

Surely God did “undertake” for Hezekiah, even as He caused Isaiah to write:

“Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

And even to your old age I am he: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”
Isaiah 46:3-4.

What comfort, what mercy God extends to His remnant! Even to their old age He will “undertake” for those who trust in Him.

We are a few, Brethren and Sisters, struggling to be of “the remnant that is left,” seeking God’s guidance and strength as we

look to the promise of that day of deliverance and redemption, if it is God's will. Is our prayer and resolve like that of Hezekiah and David?

- "Undertake for me"
- "I shall go softly *all my years*"
- "I am ready to halt" (Psalm 38:17)

J.A.DeF.

"A PERFECT AND JUST WEIGHT"

Recently we have read from Deuteronomy of the laws and ordinances that were part of God's word which came through Moses to the children of Israel. Many of these laws dealt with the practical aspects of everyday living, helping Israel to remember their place before God on a daily basis. One such example is found in chapter 25:13 regarding weights and measures:

"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

Deuteronomy 25:13-15.

Today this thought of divers weights seems to have little relevance in our living, however, to those at Moses' time, all purchasing, selling and bartering, whether it be for small items of daily food or larger costly items was transacted by weight or measure.

A weight was a standard measure that all were to use, but there was always the temptation to have a different weight tucked away — perhaps fourteen ounces when it should be sixteen, and thus gain an advantage over another. God, knowing man's mind, was aware of the flesh's propensity to yield to temptation, therefore He commanded: "... thou shalt have a perfect and just weight". To the perceptive, it would speak of their own spiritual measuring before God, as He looked into their hearts and minds. Would He find therein equity and justice towards others, or deception and dishonesty? By using only just weights and measures, they were displaying a desire to please Him in every facet of their living.

When the Lord Jesus began His ministry, He taught the spirit of the law, and said regarding the spirit of a just weight and measure:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Matthew 6:24.

This statute to Israel regarding weights and measures was to reveal the intents of their heart. They could not serve God and keep an unjust weight — their hearts and minds must be singly focused upon serving Him and not themselves. Speaking of this singleness of heart, the Lord Jesus said:

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Matthew 6:22-23.

The Lord Jesus taught that to introduce a “little” evil or deception into the body, is as if the whole body is full of darkness — and thus hated by God. Some in Israel may have felt this law of a just weight to be a minor matter and not of much consequence. Yet to the Almighty, this infraction was loathsome, for it mirrored a heart yielding to fleshly temptation.

“For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.”

Deuteronomy 25:16.

Just as leaven is added to bread dough, increasing in volume as it grows, until the entire mixture is full of leaven and risen to the baker’s requirements, so too is a “little” evil or fleshly thinking. It is introduced into one’s living, perhaps in a very small measure at first, until as with leaven, it is dominant, with all remnants of the spirit man extinguished.

Solomon in his great wisdom, given by God, also wrote of a just weight:

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.”

Proverbs 11:1.

A balance is a scale which weighs a commodity according to the weights which are built within it. A false balance is not accurate and cheats either the buyer or the seller. Today we don’t give much thought to this problem, for in the United States there is a government Department of Standards which routinely checks the scales in grocery stores or gas station pumps to be sure they are accurate. However in Israel’s time, each would depend upon the honesty and justice of one another.

We read in Revelation of the vision of God's kingdom on earth, given to John, and a picture of those allowed into that holy habitation:

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:25-27.

Here again is revealed the unchangeableness of God's word, as only those who display the same qualities of justice and righteousness, as outlined under His law, will be allowed in His mercy, into that kingdom of peace to be ruled by His Son.

The Lord Jesus' life was an example of spiritual perfection. He fulfilled the law in a spirit of love and obedience, to become the just and true standard by which we must measure our own living.

What a help is found for us today in His word, whether it be from the law or from the spirit of truth exemplified by Christ, that we walk in singleness of purpose in all we do, endeavoring to please our Father. M.C.S.

"RESURRECTION OF THE FAITHFUL (1867)"

"The dead in Christ SHALL RISE FIRST" — (1 Thess. 4:16). This is plausibly presumed to mean that the righteous will be gathered from the grave before those who are to be rejected. Detached from the context, it seems to mean this, but interpreted in the light of the context, it assumes an entirely different complexion. Paul is not discussing the position and salvation of "the dead in Christ", in reference to another class of dead. Were he doing so, no other meaning could be put upon his words that that contended for by those who deny the judgment, but it will be observed that it is in reference to A LIVING CLASS, and not a dead class, that Paul says "the dead in Christ shall rise first". Let the reader peruse Thess. 4:13-18, and he will see this. Some of the Thessalonian believers had died, and the survivors seemed to be under the apprehension that the deceased were losers by death, as if they would miss something by being out of the way if Christ should appear. Paul writes to correct this feeling. Having alleged the resurrection of the dead at the manifestation of Christ, he says, "this we say unto you by the

word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord SHALL NOT PREVENT (precede, or go before) THEM WHICH ARE ASLEEP. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, (that is, before the living are saved). Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (away) together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever (or, according to Griesbach, "ALL") be in the Lord." The comparison is between the dead righteous and the living righteous, and not between the righteous dead and the wicked dead. Hence the statement - - - which is much relied upon by those who deny the judgment, does not bear in any manner upon the question whether the unjust rise at the time when "Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead".

But the objector may say, although this point may be surrendered, that the whole of this quotation from 1 Thessalonians is dead against the supposition that the unfaithful are to take part in the "meeting with Christ;" they are not recognised in any way; there is no place in the scene described by Paul for a judgment which is to include them. The answer to this is, that the argument is good ONLY ON THE SUPPOSITION THAT PAUL MENTIONS EVERY DETAIL CONNECTED WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD. Does he do so? The objector, eager to establish his case may unthinkingly say, "yes," but from this position he must instantly withdraw, because he will find that details admitted by him to pertain to this event are omitted in Paul's description. There is no mention of the change of the living from the mortal to the immortal. There is no mention of reward meted out according to works. There is no mention of even the mild judgment-seat believed in by those who deny a judgment for life and death. Hence, even to harmonize with the objector's view, the existence of ellipsis in the chapter must be admitted. Now, if there are ellipses at all, there is a place for the truth of the matter, for surely the way to fall in a scriptural ellipsis, is to procure the matter covered by the ellipsis, from other parts of the word. Adopting this principle, there is no difficulty in dealing with the chapter under consideration. It was quite foreign to Paul's subject that he should introduce the judgment of the unfaithful here. He addresses himself to the consolation of those in Thessalonica who were mourning the decease of some who had died in the faith. Hence the position of the faithful, generally viewed in connection with the advent, naturally forced itself upon his attention, to the

exclusion of details not bearing directly on that position in its ultimate form. He lays hold of the consolatory features connected with the coming of the Lord, and presses them upon the attention of the mourners for their own sake and the sake of the dead. He exhibits in one bold, brilliant sketch the triumphant issue from death of both the living and the dead saints at his appearing, and pointing to it, says "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." But are we to say that because he does not mention the judgment-seat here, there is no judgment-seat? — that because he does not say here, the saints must all appear before the judgment-seat to receive the reward of good or evil, as their lives will be shown to have been, therefore, the statement that he makes to the Corinthians (that they will) is untrue? that because he does not say here that hidden things of darkness will be brought to light, and shame poured upon those who are ashamed to confess the Son of Man now, therefore the statements elsewhere that declare both will be done at the coming of the Lord, (1 Cor. 4:5; Mark 8:38) are not to be accepted? The very proposal brings its own condemnation.

Footnote

This subject brings the thought, that though these days are days of "small things", the Truth will certainly not die out. There will be some alive "who remain" at the coming of the Lord.

"DREAMS"

The question was once asked of us, "Why do we dream; whatever can be their purpose?" The thinking behind the question, was that the absurdity of dreams seem to achieve no purpose or benefit. But there is indeed a place in human life for dreams.

Dr. S. Freud, the Austrian psychiatrist, who was mildly interested in religious subjects made the following comment about dreams:-

"The dream is fundamentally nothing more than a special form of our thinking, which is made possible by the conditions of the sleeping state ---. That the dream should concern itself with efforts to perform the tasks with which our psychic life is confronted is no more remarkable than that our conscious waking life should so concern itself, and I will only add that this work may be done also in the preconscious ---."

This pronouncement hardly touches upon the real meaning of the

dream process. When God created man, He created in man the ability to dream. It was, and is a wonderful feature of His magnificent and vast purpose. Through dreams God has visited men, to convey startling and awe inspiring aspects of the outworking of His Truth.

In the scriptures there are many descriptions of God's special approach to men who were chosen to receive a dream message. How impressive have been these dream revelations. The visitation of Jacob at Bethel is one example:-

“And he dreamed and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; --- And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” (Genesis 28:12-15).

To see a ladder in a dream, so enormous that it reached up to God's heavenly presence, is a very impressive evidence (even though not actual) of a truly spiritual fact. God, though He is so very great, is not remote; He is in touch with the people of His Truth. Jacob clearly saw in his vision evidence of the angels that carry out the word of the Most High, though they are not visible except on very special occasions. Spiritually God's messengers are constantly ascending and descending, even as that dream of Jacob depicted of their going up and down upon the dream ladder.

The vision sustained Jacob through all the severe trials he experienced in the land of his exile. The dream was of such magnitude and so vivid the words he heard were indelibly impressed upon his mind.

Dreams then, we see, add to the power of the heavenly message. Therefore men are made to have dreams, and because of this God has visited His people by such means from the very Beginning. Of course, the vast dream experiences of mankind are absolutely void of anything really meaningful, and certainly not recipients of God's communications.

But this fact should not detract from the importance which dreams have had in God's great work of revealing His Truth. And of the undoubted impression these make upon ourselves, as we read about them in God's preserved Holy Word.

“SO MUCH THE MORE AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING”

(Hebrews 10:25)

As we read this tenth chapters of Hebrews, we are listening as Paul exhorts his Hebrew brethren to maintain their faith in Christ Jesus and not slip back into their former practises under the law. He urged them to move forward and cleave to the spirit, as exemplified by the life of the Lord Jesus:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Hebrews 10:35-39.

Paul continues in the familiar eleventh chapter of Hebrews, to recite the record of courage and patience of many of the faithful, like Abel, Abraham, Jacob & Moses — those who did not “draw back” but who embraced the spirit of the law, looking forward in faith to the hope promised:

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Hebrews 11:39:40.

What a powerful argument Paul puts forth, reminding that even with the faithful acts described — these did not receive the promise. They sleep in death, awaiting in faith the coming of the One promised to bring resurrection and a call to judgment for the responsible.

From this background, he wrote our verse under consideration, encouraging his brethren to continue on in faith, as time moves on toward the end promised:

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the

manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:23-25.

This was a call to readiness — to remember what God’s word had promised and the need to help one another in this endeavor. How can this be done? Paul explains by, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”, in order to exhort and encourage one another in the way. Some in Paul’s time may have felt this unnecessary, yet Paul warns against complacency, for as time draws on, one never knows when the time of probation will end, with an awakening to resurrection and judgment.

Earlier in Hebrews, Paul similarly wrote:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Hebrews 3:12-13.

How important is the need to be ready and watching — endeavoring daily to walk after His precepts and encouraging one another in the way, for tomorrow may be too late! In a similar fashion, Paul wrote to the Corinthians reminding:

“We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.)”

II Corinthians 6:1-2.

Many of us have been taught by our parents or elders the practical adage, “never put off to tomorrow, what you can do today”. How much more poignant is this bit of wisdom when applied spiritually.

Going back to our verse under consideration, Paul goes on to warn those once under the law, who have now embraced the spirit of Christ, of the dire consequences in store for those who do not heed the approaching end:

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under

two or three witnesses:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Hebrews 10:26-29.

The endeavor to draw nigh unto Christ and faithfully walk after our Father's precepts, must be a lifelong pursuit, requiring all of our strength and commitment. As we feel time quickly drawing to a close, based on the signs given through His word, let us encourage one another in love, Brethren and Sisters, as Paul has reminded, for He is even at the door. M.C.S.

"THE BEAST AT THE TIME OF THE END"

(Exposition 1866)

It was impossible, in a single beast, (Daniel's) that should represent the political and chronological completeness of the system symbolized (as extending over more than twenty centuries) to introduce a symbolization of the particular shape of the beast system at the moment of its destruction. This is done in later visions, seen by John in the isle of Patmos, in which the fourth beast of Daniel is divided up into several beasts, for the purpose of illustrating subordinate and internal features of the system represented. According to these we find that ten horns figure conspicuously at the end, as well as the beginning, of the little horn (time, times, and a half) era. (Revelation 17:12, 14). "The ten horns which thou sawest (on the head of a scarlet-coloured beast, verse 3) are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." Here there is no mention of an eleventh horn plucking up three of the ten by the roots, because it refers to an entirely different period of history from that represented by the ten horns on the head of Daniel's fourth beast. It shows us the constitution and attitude of the beast at the time the Lamb, as the Ancient of Days, comes to give its body to the burning flames of destroying war, from which it appears that the original ten-horned phase of Daniel's fourth beast is to be resuscitated at the era of its destruction, and not only resuscitated, but established

on the basis of corporate unity. That is to say, the ten kingdoms into which the fourth beast system is to be divided at the end, are to unite in a unanimous policy, under a single head. They are to give their power and strength to the little horn blaspheming power (separately symbolized as a scarlet-coloured beast) for the purpose of carrying on war against Jesus, when he has manifested himself in the earth as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The beast will thus act once more as a living unity, but this time, a ten-horned unity — a confederacy of the kings of the Roman territory, formed for the purpose of mutual self-defence against the power which will have threateningly appeared in the east, and of whose real nature they will be entirely ignorant, until over-whelmed in the fearful whirlwind of His destroying anger. (Jer. 30:23, 24).

Footnote

One hundred and thirty four years have elapsed since the above was written, with not the slightest evidence in the situation of that time, that Europe would ever be united politically. But the Brethren of that time had strong faith in the message of the Bible. Their faith is certainly justified by what we now see in modern Europe.

A BIBLE CLASS

“NO MAN IS ABLE TO PLUCK THEM OUT OF
MY FATHER’S HAND”

John 10:29

As we contemplate Jesus’ words, it helps to look at the circumstances in which they occurred. He had just spoken of His work as a “good shepherd”:

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

John 10:14-15, 17-18.

As a result of Jesus’ words:

“There was a division therefore again among the Jews for

these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

John 10:19-21.

Some of these Jews demanded of Him:

"... If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

But ye believed not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:24-28.

Jesus spoke very clearly concerning the relationship between Himself as the good shepherd, and those sheep which knew His voice and followed Him. Why did they so trustingly follow the shepherd? Was it not because they knew Jesus, valued His care for them, even to His willingness to lay down His life for them? Jesus' words to His disciples help us discern what such "following" involves:

"... if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24.

To those who thus struggle to follow Him, the good shepherd, Jesus spoke of the blessing they would know:

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27.

To those who did follow Him faithfully, doing works pleasing to His Father, Jesus spoke, as our subject tells us:

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

John 10:29.

What great mercy and grace is shown to those who strive to be faithful followers of Jesus! Such are under the shadow of the Father's wings, as David (a man after God's own heart) has expressed:

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see

light.

Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me." Psalm 36:7, 9, 11.

Those who put their trust in the Almighty and truly seek the covering of His wings, are protected from being plucked out — as long as they strive in obedience to walk after the good shepherd. There are always distractions, the yearnings and temptations of human thinking and desires, which can lure one out of the way, in spite of a determination to never stray. This is the "self" which must be denied, conquered, lest there be a plucking out — not by "any man" but by this "self" which exists in every one. It is that which Jesus warned against:

"... Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name (posing as shepherds), saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."

Luke 21:8.

Do we realize how easily we can be led astray, out of that narrow way which leads to the kingdom of God? David recognized this danger; yet on two occasions he sinned grievously, but wholeheartedly repented and was forgiven. His mind is expressed in fervent prayer for help:

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Psalm 19:13-14.

How easily self can gain dominion, ruling one's thinking — thereby causing the loss of the overshadowing hand of the Father.

The Almighty, in mercy and love for His children, has provided His Son as their "good shepherd" who has laid down His life for those who are determined to follow Him, denying self. These are sustained by the hope of eternal life when the Lord Jesus returns to judge His people, as He has promised:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, ... then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come,

ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Matthew 25:31-34.

His true sheep, having been granted immortality, will ever be bound to God and to His Son, so that nothing can pluck them from their hands:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:28.

Here is fulfilled the hope of those who in patience and faith have followed their shepherd who laid down His life to make it possible. How great will be their joy, thanksgiving and praise offered up to the Almighty for the provision of that good shepherd who has so lovingly led them.

J.A.DeF.

"SIGNS OF HIS COMING"

"--- Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

(Jeremiah 6:14).

Israel is trying to come to terms with Arab opponents, urged on by Western Powers. It is a situation that reflects the position at the time of Jeremiah the prophet whose message is preserved for us:-

"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

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

(Jeremiah 6:13-14).

So the fears of the people of old were assuaged. But the Spirit, of course, knew what would ultimately occur:-

"Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts --- ." (verse 19).

"Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth."

(verse 22).

"--- against thee, O daughter of Zion." (verse 23).

When this happened of old, other nations were affected as well as Israel. And so will it be at the latter day fulfilment of this prophecy.

The cry at the present time is, "Peace, peace". Last August,

1000 religious and spiritual leaders met at the United Nations for the millennium world peace summit. They pledged themselves to “work together to promote the inner and outer conditions that foster peace”. They appealed to the followers of all religious traditions:-

“To co-operate in building peaceful societies, to seek mutual understanding through dialogue where there are differences, to restrain from violence, to practice compassion and to uphold the dignity of all life.”

The Pope has also been at work to bring peace and unity in religion. The Vatican’s Declaration DOMINUS IESUS intended for bishops and theologians engaged in dialogue of various faiths, has been referred to by one of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church as follows:-

The Pope “has not worked unceasingly for Christian unity over the past 22 years for his initiatives, to be dismissed as ‘supremacist’, nor have I spent 17 years as co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission for our work to be regarded as irrelevant. Of course there are doctrines that are crucial to a Roman Catholic understanding of the Church, but ecumenical dialogue is meant to elucidate these truths in the light of the strongly held convictions of other Churches and ecclesial communities.”

So there are these efforts to “promote the inner and outer conditions that foster peace” as pledged at the “World Congress of Faiths”. And world concern, as a result, is eased. But can there be peace, when there is no real peace?

Consider the following difficulties in which the ‘United nations’ has been involved in the last ten years:-

Iraq-Kuwait observation mission	1991
Georgia observation mission	1993
Bosnia and Herzegovina mission	1995
Croatia observation mission	1996
Kosovo mission	1999
East Timor transitional administration	1999
Congo observation mission	1999
Sierra Leone mission	1999

The United Nations (for the promotion of peace) has more than 12,000 personnel always available for transportation to trouble areas. Is trouble then getting less? Look at last years figures. These

statistics do not, of course, include the horrific conflicts in former Yugo-slavia, and the Allied forces war against Iraq.

Will peace eventually be achieved? The scriptural answer is that it is a very shallow peace; how can it be otherwise "when there is no peace"?

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

Recently one here has been called for jury duty. A request for exemption based on scriptural evidence has been submitted to the authorities. A postponement until February has been granted, when an appearance before the authorities will be required to substantiate our plea for exemption.

Our supplications and thoughts reach out on behalf of those in illness, depression and sorrow, that healing may be granted as it is our Father's will.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

Undoubtedly there are some amongst the Ecclesias who feel concerned and uneasy about lack of unity over doctrine and practice. Our endeavour has been to point back to the standard of an earlier time. The change that is now perceived, sadly, follows a trend seen, from time to time, in the history of the Truth over the ages and the generations.