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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

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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
"O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD"

In the Psalms we find the meditations of David as he sought to please God. They are recorded to help us in our desire to praise our Creator, thanking Him for His wonderful works, His mercy, and His grace extended to those who, like David, love and fear Him. David is an example for us as he turned to God, especially in times of trouble, distress or affliction, from which there seemed to be no way out. At such times, our minds go to Paul's assuring words to his brethren in Corinth:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I Corinthians 10:13.

We are tested by the Almighty in many ways through His knowledge of what we need, enabling us to more perfectly praise Him. The word for "able" is *dunamai* — used also as can, power, might or to be possible. From this word comes the English word dynamo — a generator of electric power which enables much of man's machinery. What greater generator of power is there than God! He can enable His children to endure all things which He places upon them to prove their trust in Him and His unlimited power.

Jesus was tested all through His life, and was able to get the victory over His fleshly yearnings by unflinching trust in His Father. Even on the cross He cried out in His struggle to overcome.

"... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:46.

Jesus in His agony was seeking God's help, as did David who also cried out with the same words (Psalm 22:1). God had not left or forsaken Jesus, nor David, but as we read concerning Hezekiah:

"... God left (forsook) him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

II Chronicles 32:31.

Hezekiah failed this proving, for he boasted to the Babylonian ambassadors of his riches and achievements, which were the result of God's power on his behalf. Jesus was tried in a similar manner, as God left him on His own for a short time. He endured the trial, giving glory to God. Shortly thereafter he died, in obedience to God's will:

"... Knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, ... he said, It is finished: and

he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit."

John 19:28-30.

The Lord Jesus was the victor over His flesh nature as He fulfilled all of God's purpose in Him.

Brethren and Sisters, can we not feel at times that we too may have been forsaken as trial, oppression, illness and affliction weigh heavily upon us? What is the antidote to such fleshly feelings? David helps us in one of his Psalms, expressing his mind in times of trouble:

"Why art thou cast down O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" Psalm 42:5.

What a natural feeling as one comes under testing! David had the antidote to such carnal thinking, as he continued:

"... hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." V.5.

Hope involves a trust, a patient waiting, a sure dependence upon the Source of all power, in the belief that He will provide relief in His own time and purpose. Our brother experienced this deliverance and expressed his mind in the Psalm read this morning:

"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Psalm 107:1-2.

He remembered Israel as they wandered in the wilderness and:

"... found no city to dwell in.

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them."

Psalm 107:4-5.

Here was a time of trial, of testing for God's people. What would they do in such hardship? David continued:

"Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:6-7.

They found no city to dwell in, until God in response to their cries led them to a "city of habitation" — an abiding place such as He had promised to Abraham, and also to David. What mercy the Almighty showed to His people, who would put their hope, their trust in His word, and in gratitude respond: "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good." Indeed, David expressed his mind several times in this Psalm:

"O, that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and

for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

Psalm 107:8.

To those with such a mind, God will provide a "city of habitation" — an abiding place in His kingdom. Jesus spoke of that purpose to those who were under affliction and troubled:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions (abiding places): . . . I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 14:1-3.

We look with hope and trust unto that promised "city of habitation" — the "new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Revelation 21:2). This is the hope of Abraham, of David, of all those who in trouble and weakness turn to God, crying unto Him. The word "cried" (used by David in Psalm 107:6) comes from a root to shriek, to cry loudly, urgently, in intense need. Do we not need to cry in such an urgent way, as we may find ourselves overwhelmed by trouble, distress, illness? Whatever God places upon us in His wisdom and mercy, is it not to see where our hearts are?

David further helps us to grow in such ready confidence in God's mercy and power. He wrote in another Psalm:

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Psalm 27:1, 3.

"Confident" involves a trust, a hope and a sureness — not because of one's own abilities, but in the strength and mercy of the God of all comfort. In this mind David further spoke:

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidest, Seek ye my

face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." Psalm 27:5-9.

Here is the habitation, the abiding place which we seek, where we may see His face turned toward us, as a father turns in love to his children—caring, leading, correcting, chastening, carefully guiding in the right way. Here too in this tabernacle, we can offer sacrifices of joy, thanksgiving and praise to the One who is our light and our salvation.

Returning to Psalm 107, we can understand David's cry:

"O, that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31.

To "praise" — as used here — means to hold out the hand, lifting up the hand in thanksgiving for His wonderful works (miracles) that He performs for His people. This is His merciful kindness seen in the provision of His Son, the Messiah and Redeemer, the unspeakable gift of God. When our cries are answered, when God hears our urgent supplications, do we hold out our hands, lift them up, reach out for His hand, which can lead us in the right way? Do we continually praise Him — not just when delivered from trial and affliction, but every day, remembering His goodness and His continual mighty works?

David further recognized that in all this, God also:

". . . setteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock." Psalm 107:41.

Those who in reverence strive to praise and glorify Him, are "set in families like a flock" as the sheep of His pasture, led by the Good Shepherd. David uttered this cry:

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand . . ."

Psalm 95:6-7.

As "the sheep of his hand" let us worship, praise, and bow down before Him, reaching out in thanksgiving for His loving care. Let us, in loving trust and hope, put our hands in His, as he leads us in that right way.

Meditating upon these words of our Brother David, written over 3000 years ago, as we find help in times of trouble, let us keep in mind his conclusion:

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD."

Psalm 107:43.

As we find help from David's meditations, perceiving more fully the unfailing lovingkindness of the LORD, can we lift up our hands, joining in David's spirit:

"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

Psalm 107:1.

J.A.DeF.

BLESS THE LORD O MY SOUL

No other place in the Scriptures expresses the need to bless God for His mercy extended, as recorded in Psalm 103 written by David. He begins this psalm in an endeavour to bless God with his entire living as he writes:

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Psalm 103:1.

David goes on to speak of all the benefits granted through the Almighty's mercy. This word mercy is described in the Concordance as, "to show kindness" and comes from a prime root meaning "to bow the neck". As God looks down upon those to whom He has given the knowledge of His purpose, He has bowed His head in kindness towards them — the exercise of One in complete authority who looks down in pity and love.

From the beginning, God has shown a willingness to pity and spare, but in order to receive that mercy, one's mind must be as David's, giving praise and thanksgiving not only by word but through an obedient walk — one that reflects His mercy and kindness:

"Bless the LORD, ye his angels (messengers), that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure."

Psalm 103:20-21.

This is how those striving to be his angels or messengers are identified — by doing his commandments. To obey His word is to bless Him. What is required to keep His commandments? We are told by David several times in this chapter:

"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." Psalm 103:11.

God looks for a fear or reverence of Him, a fear of failing to keep His commandments or to displease Him through disobedience. And in return for this reverence, He will extend His love and mercy:

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Psalm 103:13-14.

God created man from the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the spirit of life for one purpose only — that His creation would give Him pleasure. However, because man is a failing creature, there is no hope of pleasing Him without His mercy, nor to come to the end of the hope He has extended:

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Psalm 103:17-18.

His covenant promised that He would be a Father to His children if they would endeavor to walk in obedience before Him. To those who seek to please Him through their living, will He extend innumerable blessings, as David writes:

"Bless the LORD O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Psalm 103:2-5.

God has provided all these blessings out of love. Yet in times of hardship or illness, we are tested to see if we will remember all these benefits by remaining steadfast, crying out for His help and deliverance and ignoring the clamoring of the old man of flesh within.

Moses was instructed by God in the plans for the tabernacle to build a mercy seat. It was to be placed in the most holy place and from there God would commune with His people. Israel would see His presence by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night over the tabernacle. No one but the high priest, and only on the day of atonement, could approach before the mercy seat, yet by

seeing the cloud or fire rising above the tabernacle, the people knew God was in their midst. The source of all mercy was near at hand, guiding, directing and blessing the tender hearted, if they in turn would in obedience to Him, show mercy and kindness in their living:

“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide: neither will He keep his anger for ever.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” Psalm 103:7-11.

The Lord Jesus in preaching to the multitudes on the mount reiterated all the blessings from God which would come upon the obedient, and how fitting to read that mercy will be bestowed upon the merciful:

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

Matthew 5:7.

This final mercy of which the Lord Jesus speaks, will be granted at His judgment seat, where those who have endeavored to display mercy and truth throughout their living will be granted the greatest blessing of all — the gift of immortality. This is further confirmed by David in Psalm 85 as he writes:

“Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each each other.” Psalm 85:9-10.

How great a blessing, Brothers and Sisters, is this extension of mercy. Let us then embrace this understanding and commit our living as did David, to blessing His name in all we do.

M.C.S.

TRIBUTE

A recent court case has again brought to attention a pastor and preacher who is against being subservient to Authority.

Some time ago policemen on patrol were somewhat puzzled when they saw a car in front of them with the number plate DEUT 818. On contacting the car registration centre, they found such a number could not be traced. They stopped the preacher's car to ask necessary questions and were told that the plate referred to a bible quotation, namely Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 18. This reads:-

“--- thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers - - - .”

“God”, said this preacher, “is the only source of power.” He admitted having no car tax or M.O.T. (certificate of vehicle road worthiness). Asked why, he said, “the Lord says I don't have to. He lets me know when anything needs doing.” He was also found to be without car insurance but he was sure he was covered against eventualities as “God had offered to protect him from accidents.” The court, of course, found him guilty after he refused to plea. On being told he was fined £150 with £50 costs, he told the magistrates, “I do not expect to pay it.”

An incident in the life of Jesus has a bearing on such a stance, as follows:-

“And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes - - - .”

(Matthew 17:24).

Peter's affirmation indicates that Peter knew that Christ would not be against paying such money. According to Josephus this was paid annually by all above 20 years of age; and this undoubtedly was in conformity with what is written in the book of Nehemiah:-

“Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;

For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering - - - .”

(Nehemiah 10:32-33).

Matthew's record shows that Jesus was aware of the question put to Peter, and of Peter's reply:-

“And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the

kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him. Then are the children free." (Matthew 17:25-26).

Kings who levied taxes did not levy of their children but rather of strangers (that is of those not of their own family). When Jesus therefore made the comment, "Then are the children free", He was alluding to His own position as God's Anointed with whom Peter and the other disciples had a special position. The true and sublime position of Jesus was that He was the unrecognised head of the Temple of God. Meanwhile those who had the worldly position of control in Jerusalem's Temple, had turned the service into a money making scheme for themselves; charging Jews of the diaspora for changing foreign currency, and in the selling of various creatures, for the offerings which worshippers wished to make.

Did they deserve tribute aid then in this work? No, they did not. But it was part of the present evil that prevails. Jesus showed that He waved His privilege not to pay because it was necessary to avoid offence. Hence:-

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and given unto them for me and thee." (Matthew 17:27).

Jesus, obviously, had no money. But why such a curious way of obtaining the tribute money? If Peter had any doubt about whether they should pay, he would have no doubt after this miracle. The marvellous provision was a spiritual confirmation the Christ's needing the required tribute payment, this was given by overruling heavenly awareness. It showed that paying the tribute was the right thing to do.

In these days a proportion of the tax paid goes towards the development of evil weapons of war, and other questionable expenditures. The example of Christ shows us the way to go. And what an appropriate miracle it was. Jesus was not using His power or His position, (as were some of those contemporary Jewish leaders) to make money. The provision for which Peter was instructed to seek, and for which he was to make some effort, was to be sufficient to enable the payment to be made, thus safeguarding the position which Christ continually upheld, of giving no offence to those around Him in mundane matters and responsibilities.

A BIBLE CLASS

"COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME"

Acts 5:41

We are helped as we consider this subject, knowing the circumstances that prompted the apostles' rejoicing in their persecution. They had just received the Holy Spirit, enabling them to go forth to preach the gospel, as Jesus had commanded them:

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts 2:3-4.

This God-given ability to speak many languages enabled them to witness to many whom they otherwise could not have reached. Peter immediately did speak of Jesus to those who were amazed at the apostles' ability to speak with tongues:

". . . God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Acts 2:36.

Some of those who listened were pricked in their hearts:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Acts 2:41.

Not all who heard the apostles' preaching were touched, for the Scribes and Pharisees persecuted them and forbade them from further preaching in Jesus' name. In faithfulness to their God, John and Peter replied:

". . . Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:19-20.

When the apostles diligently continued their witness concerning the name of Jesus Christ, the high priest and his followers:

". . . laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

Acts 5:18-20.

In obedience, the apostles returned to their work of witnessing, and in their determination said:

"We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:29.

Again the apostles were brought before the council; who, having beaten them:

“... commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus Christ, and let them go.” Acts 5:40.

With God’s help, the apostles:

“... departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Acts 5:41-42.

Our brethren, sustained and encouraged by God’s Spirit, rejoiced that they were privileged to do the work given them, even though it brought public shame and painful physical punishment. We might ask: How could they have rejoiced in such circumstances? Was it their love for God and Jesus, His Son, which helped them endure and even rejoice at the privilege of being deemed worthy to serve Him? They would have in mind the recent death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in obedience to His Father’s word. They would remember Jesus’ instructions before His ascension:

“... All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:18-20.

With this hope and promise, the apostles did go forth, did rejoice at the privilege of doing God’s work, being “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Paul, one who was also called of God to be a faithful witness, helps us as he wrote:

“... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2.

Jesus agonized to keep under the desires of His flesh, in obedience to His Father. He suffered great shame by his adversaries — even as He was crucified between two thieves — and was helped to do so by His joy to do His Father’s will. He looked to the end of that

purpose, the joy of eternally being at God's right hand, as king over His kingdom. Our brethren, the apostles, would have shared in that joy, sustained by the same hope of eternal life, as they went about the work given to them, inspired to follow Jesus' example. We remember Jesus' words to Peter:

"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

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 16:24-27.

How difficult it is to deny (say NO) to the desires of our flesh, to crucify our own longings and ambitions, putting to death the old man of flesh. It is a daily struggle to grow in the one way of life, even bearing shame, yet rejoicing that God has called us to belong to His Son now and eternally. Paul wrote to his brethren in Thessalonica:

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, . . . because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity (love) of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."

II Thessalonians 1:3-7.

To have hope of being worthy of such blessing, one must strive to be deserving of such work, and willingly suffer shame for His name's sake. Our brethren rejoiced in that privilege, willing to lose their lives, for the joy set before them, inspired and sustained in their following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

J.A.DeF.

CHRIST AND HIS BRETHREN (The Ambassador 1866)

“Christ is the Father of the sons of God, being the first Son of God, as Adam is the Father of the sons of man, being the first man, or as Abraham is the father of the faithful, being the first believer of the promises, which still remain to be fulfilled, and, consequently, requires the same faith as he exercised.

God created man a changeable creature, and had he remained innocent and possessed a family, these would have been as he, changeable too, and so incapable of immortality till after the change; but, offending he became not only changeable, but mortal, and so death passed upon him and his posterity, “As in Adam all die”, so in Christ shall all that are in him be made alive.

The old man, God created mutable, the new man he has created immutable, and hence those who are in the new man now, will be raised by the same spirit as raised up Jesus the first son, the first new man, the new creation, and made new creatures too, immutable, immortal. Thus will the sons of God be multiplied, so that in place of three, there will be many Gods. The Deity in Christ his first-born, and in them, his other sons, or Christ’s brethren, and the whole in the Deity’s substance. Himself unchanged and unchangeable, notwithstanding the same one — I AM. The term “God” does not imply that Jehovah is simply “God”. “I have said ye are Gods” shews Jehovah’s own use of the term. Jehovah is more than God. He is the Creator; the Great First Cause, the Great Supreme, the Most High God; so that there are lower Gods. It is His Godship he multiplies, NOT Himself. He does not divide with any one His supremacy, His infinitude. How could He? As it is “impossible for Him to lie”, it is as impossible for Him to multiply Himself, or even make any one His equal. Therefore, of Christ, His firstborn, it is said, that “when all things shall be subdued unto Christ, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto the Deity, who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” The all things refer NOT to the whole circle of Creation.”

"- - - IF YE BITE AND DEVOUR ONE ANOTHER - - -."

(Galatians 5:15)

In writing to the Galatians, Paul extolled the liberty which the Spirit brings:-

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1).

Judaizers were at work in the Ecclesias to the detriment of the peace and unity which the gospel had brought to Believers. These were forceful personalities endeavouring to press their interpretation of what the Truth requires upon their fellows. They reprobated responsive gentiles who had failed, as they thought, to accede to the Old Testament requirement of circumcision. This work had a veneer of righteousness, but Paul pointed out what the true position was:-

"This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Galatians 5:8-9).

The work of Judaizers was leaven in the Body. Moreover it not only led to wrong conclusions, it also brought disturbance and suffering. Hence the Apostle's warning:-

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5:13-16).

The original greek word rendered bite is explained by the greek dictionary to be figurative of thwart. Certainly the Judaizers were thwarting the work of Truth.

With these thoughts in mind we look at the situation admitted in one of the main Ecclesial magazines (not in fellowship with us). We quote from this as follows:-

"Imagine for a moment two young children who both decide to play with the same toy. There is rarely any prior discussion about the subject. - - - One child just tries to snatch the toy away from his friend. The harder he tries to remove it, the more strongly and fiercely his friend grips the desired object. Soon a veritable tug-of-war develops,

the toy acting as the rope, and likely to be destroyed or rendered useless by the undue pressure exerted on it. - - - Transfer this scene to the adult stage; to the things of the Truth and our world wide Brotherhood. At different times, and sadly it is still true today — it is as if the ecclesial world is torn apart by opposing forces. Strong pressures exerted at the extremes sometimes threaten the stability of us all, as if the combatants are heedless of the collateral damage. No one seems to take stock of the situation, and total destruction is threatened."

The writer of this article here quotes Galatians 5:15 - - - he then goes on to say:-

"Extreme positions can be adopted by just a few, leaving the rest of the ecclesia battered and bruised, like the broken toy destroyed in the conflict. This can occur whether the subject under discussion is important or trivial — either can result in serious damage. Some of the issues that have recently affected different parts of the Brotherhood BECAUSE THE ADOPTION OF EXTREME POSITIONS HAS MADE THEM CONFRONTATIONAL, are marriage problems, the interpretation of prophecy and Revelation, the Holy Spirit, the Atonement, the form and content of ecclesial worship, the role of sisters, the form of address in prayer, and what constitutes suitable clothing for brethren and sisters and young people. - - -

Take, for example, the question of our ecclesial worship. In some quarters events are organised where the style of meeting is hardly distinguishable from a pentecostal gathering. Little regard is given to the apostle's comments about restrictions on sisters taking leading roles in worship; the style and content of musical items blurs the distinction between our understanding of the gospel message and the position of other groups in Christendom - - - the use of scripture tends to be of short texts supporting a pre-determined theme rather than the Word of God itself providing the real foundation. - - -

Contention occurs most frequently when one faction tries to extend the boundaries of our agreed doctrines or practice, and another tries to describe them more exclusively. Both of these actions are schismatic and divisive. Yet ironically their proponents each claim that they act only out of love.

Loving and upholding truth is often the justification for seeking to draw the boundaries more closely; and acting more lovingly towards others (either our brethren and sisters, or those outside the Brotherhood) is usually the justification for extending the envelope."

This is a sorry picture of what is occurring in the worldwide grouping of ecclesias. It is a startling inconsistency. What good is the witness against the babylon of all the differing religions and sects if the same "babylon" is occurring in the ecclesias? How pertinent is the warning of the apostle Paul, who shows that persuasions of faiths and practices not required by God's holy word, are truly a leaven; and as this continues to persist, it leavens the whole lump.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

"God shall send them strong delusion - - - ."

(2 Thessalonians 2:11).

The visit of the Pope to the Ukraine during the summer stirred up a reaction from the Russian Orthodox Church. Its leader accused Ukraine's Eastern-rite Catholics of harming Orthodox establishments. But there was also criticism for the Pope himself. The Orthodox leader said the Pope's visit to the Ukraine was a breach of etiquette. He should have sought for an Orthodox agreement first.

The Pope's visit, however, was a determined attempt to mend the thousand year rift between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. The purpose of the Papal visit, it was said, was to encourage Ukraine's three million Catholics who follow the Eastern rite (the Greek Catholic rite) but who assert they belong to the Pope and to Rome. The Russian Orthodox Church leader in Ukraine, did try to get the Pope to postpone his visit; but the Pope was too ambitious of his programme of extending Catholic influence to agree to a delay. His appeal to the Orthodox Religion was to forgive the injuries of the past.

The Division between Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox came to a head in 1054. Pope Leo IX sent legates to refuse the title of Ecumenical Patriarch, to the Patriarch of Constantinople. At the same time Leo insisted that the Patriarch accept the Catholic description of the position of the Son in relationship to the Father, as stated in the Catholic version of the Nicene Creed. The Patriarch refused, and rejected the claim of papal supremacy. Reciprocal excommunications followed.

It is obvious that the present Pope is keen to bring these two great sections together. This in itself is a great sign.

It is interesting in this context, to look at some of the comments Dr. J. Thomas made on this subject. — Speaking of the uprise of Roman Catholic power he said:-

"Sixty years after the death of Cornelius AD 252 - - -" the Catholic and Apostolic Church, Mother of the Faithful", was invested with the sunshine of imperialism, and constituted the religion of the State. The bishop of the Antinovation association in Rome, now became "the Bishop of Rome", and a spiritual prince of the empire. Before this change of fortune, he had but a bare precedency in respect of rank which had been tacitly yielded to him as bishop of

the church in the metropolis of the empire --- . But matters underwent a very great change after Christianity had received the sanction of a legal establishment. --- The Council of Nice was convened - - - AD 325. It was assembled by "the Mother's" imperial protector and proselyte, to extinguish by their final sentence, the subtle disputes which had arisen in Egypt on the subject of the trinity --- , the Greeks appeared in person; and the consent of the Latins was expressed by the legates of the Archdeity of Rome. The session lasted about two months --- . Liberius, the bishop, died AD 366 --- a violent contest arose respecting his successor - - - the Catholics were divided into two factions, one of which elected Damascus to that dignity, while the other chose Ursicinus, a deacon. The party of Damascus prevailed and obtained his ordination --- . The other party, enraged at its failure, set up separate meetings, and eventually had their favourite ordained also --- to such an extremity was the dispute carried, that great numbers on either side were killed in the quarrel --- . "How much more rationally," remarks Ammianus "would those pontiffs consult their true happiness, if, instead of alleging the greatness of the city as an excuse for their manners, they would imitate the exemplary life of some provincial bishops. --- ." Damascus was contemporary with "Theodosius the Great" who --- addressed a letter to the divided Catholics of Constantinople, and told them that "it was his pleasure that all his subjects should be of the same profession as Damascus, Bishop of Rome, and Peter, Bishop of Alexandria; that their church alone should be denominated "Catholic" who worshipped the divine Trinity as equal in honour, and that those who were of another opinion would be deemed heretics. --- Theodosius set up --- the rule of his subject's faith - - - illustrated by his expulsion of all from Constantinople who would not subscribe the Nicene confession of faith --- . This intolerant --- oppressor is surnamed "the Great", and by scribes of the same superstition declared to be "very dear to the Catholic Church."

Dr. Thomas then leads on to the Council of Chalcedon concerning the position of Rome in the West, and Constantinople in the East.

A canon of the Council of Chalcedon expressly declares this principle of primacy in voting equal privileges to the Bishop

of Rome and the Bishop of Constantinople, because the east, then called New Rome, was also the Royal City; Leo, of Old Rome, however, indignantly rejected this co-equality in primacy, he would be first - - - . It was time, therefore that some pretension should be set up that would so awe the world, that a divine supremacy should be accorded to its bishop, independent of the former plea. The pretension that seemed to meet the urgency of the situation, was that of the Bishop of Rome being the lineal successor of the Apostle Peter; and that by virtue of this successorship, he possessed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and had divinely intrusted to him the power of binding and loosing. - - - The clergy were all assumed to be the successors of the apostles; but the Bishop of Rome claimed to be successor of "the Prince of Apostles" - - - .

Dr. Thomas, then, we see, succinctly describes the course of events that brought about that final schism a thousand years ago. The present pope is now trying to close that chasm. With a history like that it will not be easy. But what is so amazing is THAT HE IS TRYING TO DO IT. And at the same time he is bolstering his own Catholic supporters who are living in the Eastern Orthodox sphere. Such a trend undoubtedly will bring about that final position in the world described in the book of Revelation:-

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

(Revelation 19:11).

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." (verse 19).

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

Contacts with our Manchester brethren both in ecclesial counsel and personal letters are a source of help and encouragement for all here.

All are grateful for this love and care in the work of His house and in our daily living.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

As the year proceeds, we are grateful for the continuing help received for the work.

The word of God is inexhaustible in its provision both for the witness and for our own personal guidance. God certainly does not leave us comfortless.