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The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia

in opposition to the Dogmas of
Papal and Protestant Christendom

A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
THE DAYS OF NOAH

Our recent readings in Genesis have taken our thoughts to Noah and his circumstances. They remind us of our present world beset by violence, fear, terrorism and anxiety. In Noah's days:

"... God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5.

Noah's time was approximately 1750 years after the creation and the fall of man, when Eve listened to the serpent in the garden.

Lamech, the father of Noah, spoke concerning his son:

"... This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed." Genesis 5:29.

God had cursed the ground because of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden. Ever since, there has been enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). For 1750 years that enmity existed until in Noah's days:

"... God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

Genesis 6:12-13.

Why did God speak with Noah? He knew him to be a righteous man who:

"... found grace in the eyes of the LORD ...

Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:8-9.

Of all the earth there was only one (and his family) who found grace with God, for he walked in accordance with God's word, subject to His will.

Does this situation remind us of today's world that is indeed filled with violence, and is corrupt before God? There is great turmoil in the Middle East (God's chosen land), terrorism envelopes the earth, pollution defiles it, and yet the thoughts of man's heart are obviously evil continually, being focused on pleasing self rather than his Creator. Much effort is being exerted to correct this sad position, to no avail. Plans are made in high places, but never really accomplish rest, peace and tranquility; failure is usual.

God had a plan in the days of Noah for those who would walk

in His ways. He said to Noah:

“Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.”

Genesis 6:14.

God gave Noah directions for building the ark. It was to be made of gopher wood — cypress, which is resistant to water and swells when it is in contact with water — ideal for building the ark. In addition, Noah was instructed to apply pitch within and without to further make it waterproof. It is impressive that the word used for pitch is “kaphar” — meaning to appease, to make atonement, or to reconcile. It is related to the Hebrew feast Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. The ark ordained by God was protected by His means of atonement, included in His plan for this earth.

Looking further to His plan, we find the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall. It needed to be a large vessel to contain the animals which went into the ark, two by two, except for the clean animals (those suitable for sacrifice) were to number seven, male and female. It also was built with rooms and had three decks. When we consider the size of some of the animals — such as an elephant, hippopotamus, giraffe, etc. — much space would be needed. There were lions, tigers, as well as lambs and calves which needed to be separated, lest they be devoured, hence, there were separate rooms. Also there was need for much food to feed all the animals, fowl, creeping things, as well as Noah, his wife, three sons, and their wives.

Believing God’s word that He would destroy the earth with a flood, Noah, over a period of 120 years, built the ark as their promised means of survival. When we contemplate the size of the ark, and the need to gather the required animals, we can see why it would take such a long time. If Noah and his three sons worked 50 hours a week for 120 years, it would take approximately one and one-half million man hours — a tremendous work! In addition, Noah witnessed during these long years as people ridiculed him for spending his time building a boat in the midst of dry land. He would explain God’s plan for the salvation of man from the flood which would surely come. But no one listened! Nevertheless, he built and witnessed to God’s purpose with the earth in faith and trust in His promised plan.

At the end of the 120 years, God warned Noah:

“For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that

I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.”

Genesis 7:4.

Noah hurried to fill the ark according to God’s command. In the 600th year of Noah’s life he, his family, and all creatures entered the ark. The flood came on the seventh day as promised by the LORD, and engulfed the earth. We can imagine the panic among the people outside the ark as the waters steadily rose. As they saw the ark floating and themselves drowning, they would remember Noah’s witness to God’s plan; but it was too late, as every living thing upon the earth perished.

Noah and his family rejoiced at their deliverance from destruction, and patiently, gratefully waited for the flood to subside. On the seventh day of the seventh month, the ark rested upon the mountain of Ararat. In the first month of the following year, Noah removed the covering of the ark and saw that the face of the ground was dry (Genesis 8:13). His inclination would be to quickly open the ark and go out upon the dry ground, after almost a year in the ark. *But he remained, faithfully waiting for direction from God. Finally, God spoke unto Noah:*

“Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons’ wives with thee. Bring forth . . . every living that is with thee . . .

And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth . . . went forth out of the ark.”

Genesis 8:16-19.

As Noah went forth, he would look around at the newly dried out earth. What would he see? There would be no living creatures — only the bodies, bones of those who perished. There would be new vegetation growing since the waters had receded, to provide food for the animals with Noah. How grateful Noah would be for God’s grace as he and his family were saved from the destruction of the world! What patience he showed as he waited for God’s word to leave the ark. He rejoiced, built an altar, and offered burnt offerings to God in thanksgiving for God’s grace. The Almighty:

“ . . . smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake . . . neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.”

Genesis 8:21.

Further, the Almighty promised:

“And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with

your seed after you; . . . neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Genesis 9:9-11.

God established a token of this covenant — a rainbow in the cloud. Today we see the beauty of the rainbow in the cloud after the rain, and remember God’s grace in providing a plan for Noah’s salvation.

Today that same plan is in place, seen in the provision of Jesus Christ as a means of salvation for all those who, like Noah, strive to be just, perfect, and walk in God’s way. No man, except the Lord Jesus, is ever perfect, always just, and always walking in obedience to God’s commandments. We fail and seek forgiveness — atonement through the provision of His Son. He is a mediator and redeemer, the anti-typical Ark, for those who in faith look to God’s plan for redemption.

Paul spoke of the faith of Noah:

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

Hebrews 11:7.

In today’s evil world let us, Brethren and Sisters, look to Noah’s example of faith, trust, patience and total dependence upon God’s plan — the promised salvation for those striving to be subject to His will, not their own. Let us keep our minds fastened upon that hope, as revealed to John on Patmos:

“ . . . 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.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new . . .”

Revelation 21:3-5.

J.A.DeF.

MASCHIL OF ASAPH

Psalm 78

We have read recently from David's words another of the psalms entitled "Maschil of Asaph", or "Instruction of the Gatherer". These pruned words came as David was inspired by the Spirit, leaving instruction for our help to know what the Gatherer looks for in us. It is clear for whom this instruction was intended, as David wrote to those called out to obey His word:

"Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth." Psalm 78:1.

It is interesting that in verse 2, David speaks of this word through parables:

"I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done."

Psalm 78:2-4.

We know the Lord Jesus often taught the people through parables, which caused His disciples to ask:

"... Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

Matthew 13:10-13.

He went on to repeat Isaiah's prophecy, saying:

"... By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Matthew 13:14-15.

The Spirit within the word was to do the same, giving insight and perception to those who would see from the heart, but hidden from those not diligently seeking.

David's psalm continues, reminding Israel of their history —

their deliverance from Egypt as they passed through the Red Sea, guided always by the pillar of cloud by day and the fire at night, with their sustenance provided by God in the wilderness, through the manna and water from the rock. All this His power had provided yet:

“They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;
And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.”
Psalm 78:10-11.

Here is an example of how difficult it is for the flesh to comprehend, even when it sees and hears, except for the help and understanding given through His word, which supplies insight and perception to those who seek Him.

God knows the frame of man — the Gatherer knows those who are to be gathered unto Him — those who recognize the frailty of their flesh nature and seek His word for spiritual strengthening:

“But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.
For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.”
Psalm 78:38-39.

We might ask, how could Israel awakening in the morning to see the cloud and the reflective glow of the pillar of fire by night, ever doubt His presence with them? Yet David reminds of the many times they did just that:

“How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!
Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.
They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.”
Psalm 78:40-42.

They saw with their eyes but not with their heart. They allowed doubt and unbelief to creep in and corrupt their thinking. Yet even after they tempted and provoked Him, He guided them as a shepherd does his flock. Why? Because He knew that among the thousands, there were a few who still looked to Him with faith and hope.

David was one whose heart was tender and able to be touched when rebuked. All fail and need correction. Is this the key to pleasing Him — to walk after His precepts with a humble spirit, willing to be taught and corrected when wrong, as did David?

“He chose David also his servant, and took him from the

sheepfolds:

From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."

Psalm 78:70-72.

Because of his integrity, God knew David as, "a man after his own heart" (I Sam. 13:14). His integrity was again noted, as God spoke to his son, Solomon, on his ascension to David's throne:

"... if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and will keep my statutes and my judgments:

Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel."

I Kings 9:4-5.

Through the words penned by this tender hearted servant of God, we are greatly helped as he instructed not only Israel, but ourselves, that we might hear with our ears and see with spiritual sight in order to walk before the Almighty in hopes of one day being gathered unto His eternal habitations.

M.C.S,

FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF THE COMING AGE (1865)

"Nature"

--- When we turn to what is called "nature" there are a few things which may be perceived to touch upon Scripture and reflect the character of God, but without it insufficient of themselves "to justify the ways of God to man" or reveal in any wise his design. In Scripture we have God's character as benevolent and beneficent beautifully portrayed, but in nature apart from the revelation of Scripture we look in vain for this. In nature we see death reigning over and apart from man, and beside it nothing indicative of a future to kindle one ray of hope beyond the boundaries of the grave. Doubtless there are many things which appear good and kind on the part of the Deity, but like as scripture where it refers to the physical of nature we are met with equally apparent contradictions.

We feel impressed with the benevolence of the Creator while

we look upon the earth green with the verdure of spring, adorned with the grandeur of summer, and laden with the fruits of autumn, listen to the choristers of the grove, and mark the playful gambols of the beasts of the field, but another impression seizes us when we observe the lark in its lofty enjoyment pounced on by the hawk, the harmless sheep torn by the wolf, the lion and the tiger watching for their prey. - - - And in looking for the justice of God besides, we observe the sun shining, and the rain descending on the just and unjust alike, and there APPEARS no respecter of persons. We see fields burdened, the labour of the industrious husbandman laid bare and brought to grief by the force of the hurricane, the ship with its freight of living souls engulfed in the storm, the city with its thousands of inhabitants overwhelmed in the earthquake, the devastation of war, famine and the plague, and in reflecting on these sights we are prone to ask where in all this have we either justice or beneficence? In these reflections we have no base on which to build a safe and consistent opinion of the character of God apart from the revelation of scripture.

But turning to this revelation, we have his plan of making all things work together for good to those who love him — and in a grand development of this — his having the greatest good for the greatest number in his view, his controlling all things in heaven, and in earth, to work out a salvation not for a few only, but for a whole world; in which salvation all the families of the earth will be blessed, in which they will fight no more, neither labour in vain, nor bring forth fruit for sorrow, in which the wolf will dwell with the sheep, the cow with the bear, the leopard with the kid, and the lion shall eat straw with the ox - - - the whole a magnificent picture of the benevolence and beneficence of God. Nothing like it is to be found in what is called a study of nature. Thus we are taught that without the Bible, we have no means of appreciating the character of God, as to serve us in worshipping him with our whole heart and soul; in spirit and in truth. - - - It must be studied therefore apart from science. Science can throw no light upon it in these its own affairs, and far less can a metaphysical philosophy which hath its origin from the ancients.

BAPTISM AND THE STATEMENT OF FAITH

A recent comment published in an Ecclesial Magazine (not connected with ourselves) reads as follows in this quoted extract which concerns lapsed members:-

“--- There is a more fundamental problem to be addressed; how to ensure that those who are baptized are sufficiently well grounded in their instruction and sound in the faith, that they do not lapse. As a community we ask each member honestly to uphold the doctrinal basis summarised in the Statement of Faith. These doctrines are fundamentals of our faith and should not be compromised. But if we have members who are questioning our faith and practice, we must acknowledge the possibility that it may be the consequence of weak tuition or ALACONIC PRE-BAPTISM INTERVIEW. --- there are a number of things we urgently need to do.

To ensure that our teaching is at all times that of the full gospel. ---

Give a sound and substantial interview before baptism and do not let our overwhelming desire to baptize cause us to give but a cursory one. There must be a reasonable understanding of all basic doctrines whilst allowing for growth afterwards.

When it is revealed that we have honest doubters in our midst, let us provide a way whereby the matter can be aired. An open debate often reveals the ability of the debater rather than the truth. ---”

It is obvious from the above that there have been misgivings about procedures and their results. To be lax about a unity of belief, is a failure to uphold fellowship. To be more concerned about the acquiring of numbers than of an essential unanimity, reveals a losing sight of what the Body of Christ really means. When it is revealed that a candidate for an Interview, prior to Immersion, has not had a right, or repentant approach, or a proper belief in all the essential principles, of the Truth, how can it be accepted that such, though immersed, has had a valid baptism? The scripture is very clear about this. In the case of John the Baptist it is recorded:-

“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.

And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw MANY of the Pharisees and Sadducees

come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

And think not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham to our father - - - " (Matthew 3:5-9).

So John refused baptism to those who had a flawed approach. Now if John had been lax and had desired to baptize all who came to him, would it have benefitted even the flawed? The simple answer of course is that those lacking in understanding or who suffered an impediment in their thinking, which marred what should be a fulsome repentance, would have gained no real benefit whatsoever.

The duty of care to seek out what is in the candidate's mind, falls upon those who endeavour to bring to baptism. But the candidate also has a responsibility, for if he hides an insincerity which is either not discovered, or not revealed until a later time, then any lack of blessing and a resultant unsettled state of such a false position in the Ecclesia, is what can be expected, and what such really deserves. That such an inappropriate association with an Ecclesia can happen, is testified by scripture, as the apostle John declares:-

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19).

Jude also warns:-

"- - - Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

For there are certain men crept in unawares. - - -"

(Jude verses 3-4).

Paul also declares:-

"- - - because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus; - - -" (Galatians 2:4).

Paul, when such falsity was revealed, stood his ground and upheld the Truth, as he says:-

"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue. - - -"

(Galatians 2:5).

Pioneers of the Truth, such as R. Roberts, have had such enemies. These have been insincere associates or they have been of the category of those who started well, but declined from the narrow way, overcome by their own thinking of their flesh, which was lifted

up in pride. The division over the Inspiration of the Scriptures is an example of the injury to the Truth such can cause.

This is an important subject, bearing on the welfare of the Ecclesia, whose duty is to act when impediments to true fellowship are brought to light.

“JUDGE NOT THAT YE NOT BE JUDGED - - - .”

(From “The Ambassador” 1867)

One of the great mental infirmities to which human nature is subject, is that of giving a verdict or judgment upon things which they do not understand. In the language of scripture, “they speak evil of things which they understand not” and there is not wanting in every society a class of persons, censoriously inclined, who have an inveterate propensity to magnify the MOTES in their neighbours’ eyes, into very uncomely, sight-destroying BEAMS. To form some kind of a judgment, however, upon things which we see and hear, is a natural instinct, and a very useful and important one — for without it, we should be deprived of that tact and sagacity essential for carrying on our affairs, for self-protection and preservation, and for proper discernment between right and wrong; this is the lawful, legitimate use of the faculty; but like all other faculties which we inherit by natural descent from the first Adam, it has been sadly misused and perverted, as the natural consequence of the blindness and perversion of judgment manifested by the father and mother of our race.

Many persons, labouring under this very unhappy inheritance, allow their judgment to revel in the mazes of conjecture, supposition and imagination, concerning “other men’s matters”, and finally decide to condemn the apparently real ways and conduct of others, the inmost recesses of whose private affairs, it is impossible for them to fathom — pronouncing judgment upon things which they understand not. Judgment used in this way, is misused and perverted, and is a fruitful source of mischief in any society, but especially among the faithful in Christ who desire to live in peace, love and harmony with each other. There is a natural judgment, and there is a spiritual judgment — or in other words, there is a judgment according to the flesh, and there is a judgment according to the spirit. When we became members of the spiritual family, we must not assert the right to judge our fellows according to fleshly rules, but

according to the divine standard, by which all are to be judged. Let no one judge or condemn his brother on account of some infirmity or weakness of character, which causes no special violation of gospel, principles, or divine commands; the one who does this, is himself the subject of a great infirmity — and, as often happens, is far more culpable, than the object of his censure or condemnation.

It is well understood that all men and all women are compassed with infirmities — otherwise what need have we of a saviour? Our Lord said, “I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” — that is, he came not to call the righteous in their own estimation, who, in reality were sinners, but those who knew that they were sinners — with honest and good hearts, notwithstanding all the sins which they had committed — sinners, possessing a love for truth, and consequently with unsophisticated understandings — that is, understandings untrammelled by the intricate meshes and webs of the serpent’s deceitfulness. Such sinners as these were considered fit receptacles for the truth of God, by which they might be cleansed from all unrighteousness. - - - Those who have in truth been born again and are in reality the children of the kingdom, will not be guilty of heinous offences, or outbreaking sins; but still they maybe, and frequently are guilty of trespassing against the commandments of God in a greater or less degree, according to the differences in their natural organisations and temperaments; but is it permissible for them to continue in this state of trespassing during the whole of their christian course? Assuredly not; shall we sin because grace abounds? asks Paul — God forbid - - - . It is not only necessary to abstain from committing sins, there are virtues to cultivate, and graces whereby to adorn the gospel of Christ. - - - Let us bring forth the fruits of the spirit, which are “love, joy, peace, long suffering, patience, meekness.” “Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, BOWELS OF MERCIES, kindness, humbleness of mind; being tender hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” May we never rest satisfied, until we have so cultivated our hearts as to possess BOWELS OF MERCIES. A heart filled with tender mercy and loving kindness, is not likely to be severe in judgment upon fellow heirs of the saint’s inheritance. The more our hearts are filled with love toward our brethren for the truth’s sake, the less inclined we shall be to judge them at all; but if at any time it becomes necessary to exercise the faculty of judgment in any particular case, we shall be careful to judge righteously, according to the Written Word, and not according to fleshly standards.

A "Remnant" comment:

How failing of the balanced judgment, which the above article endeavours to show, have those been (no longer with us) who used "binding and loosing" as a stark defining line, to forbid the return to the Ecclesia, of some who, having departed, ultimately, in repentance, sought to return, and did return.

"- - - THE EARTH WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE."

(Genesis 6:11)

Day by day reports of shootings, stabbings and violent assaults are put out by the news media. Some places in the cities are not even safe in day time, but certainly they are very dangerous when night falls. Country areas also are proving to be more vulnerable, where once it was thought they were remote from the cruder elements of society. Gangs steal cars and make for the villages where they know wealthy pickings are available which they take with violent audacity. Even the children are affected by bad behaviour; the percentage who have been involved in unlawful acts is quite high.

The United Kingdom, of course, is not the only violent place. Reports from the U.S. are similar; and a correspondent in New Zealand confirms that that beautiful country also suffers deterioration.

What a horrific account came from Australia a little while ago. A twenty-year-old young woman was thrown from a high road bridge in Bundaberg, a quiet Queensland town; she was on holiday from Britain. The thug who attacked her wanted her handbag containing a small amount of cash, credit cards and mobile phone, which are missing. Her friend who was with her on the holiday, but not with her at the time of the attack said, "I can't believe she died all for the sake of her handbag and mobile phone."

Now there is bad news from Russia. Previously it was noted for austere regimes who had strong control of its peoples. But now tourists to that country are being warned that they could become victims of racist attacks. Neo-Fascist "skinhead" organisations are rising up. They are particularly against visitors of African or Asian descent. Tourists are advised to take great care in crowded places, especially street markets. One of these groups was reported to have sent messages to several foreign embassies, including the United

States and Japan, threatening “a war against all foreigners”; these had the choice of leaving Russia or being attacked if they remained. Universities in Russia employ security guards, and allow students to operate self-defence patrols because there have been frequent attacks upon them especially on fee-paying foreign students.

All this is a very grey picture of the World at large, but brings home to us the pertinent words of Jesus Christ concerning the coming divine intervention:-

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matthew 24:37).

A BIBLE CLASS “THE FORMER DAYS”

Eccl. 7:10

Solomon, the son of David and king over Israel who penned Ecclesiastes, was given great wisdom from God. However, he used this wisdom, not only for the accumulation of spiritual knowledge, but also to his detriment to search out and know the world’s wisdom:

“And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”
Eccl. 2:10-11.

By using this wisdom to many ends, he concluded from all that God had wrought in the earth, “there is no new thing under the sun.” (Eccl. 1:9).

Man has been given life as a gift from God, with the hope of an escape from death unto life eternal in His kingdom of peace to be established upon the earth at the end of His purpose. Our task is to use the time given during our probation to learn His word and endeavor to walk after the example of His Son, that we may hope for approval, in His mercy, at the judgment seat of Christ. In this endeavour, Solomon advises:

“Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely

concerning this.”

Ecclesiastes 7:10.

We often hear people say, “those were the good old days” while reminiscing about their childhood or younger years. Yet we know there are trials, tribulations as well as blessings in every age— “there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). Does not yearning for an earlier time show a lack of contentment for the present? It is a very natural failing, for when the children of Israel faced hardship in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt, they quickly forgot the hard bondage and suffering they had endured and remembered only the pleasantries, though few they were, complaining bitterly to Moses:

“Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Exodus 16:3.

When tribulation in the form of hunger, thirst or the rigors of the journey came upon them, they longed to be back in Egypt, forgetting they were slaves under a cruel master.

God in kindness led them through the wilderness providing water from the rock, and bread every day in the form of manna. Yet still they murmured, growing tired of the manna, looking back with longing to the variety of foods they knew in Egypt.

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.

But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes.”

Numbers 11:4-6.

Instead of looking forward to the land promised, as did Joshua and Caleb, the multitude looked back, because the path ahead seemed too hard. Their tendency so typical of the flesh, was similar to Lot’s wife as he and his family were delivered from Sodom. As the angels of God brought them from the city they urged them to:

“ . . . Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.

And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” Genesis 19:17, 24-26.

This is the reaction of the carnal mind, to look back, yearning for those things satisfying to it, rather than looking ahead in hope. Fear can weaken one’s faith and resolve to look forward, especially when a new barrier seems to block the way. There was no way for Adam and Eve to go back and undo their failure in the garden, their only hope was to move forward, trusting in the provisions God had promised for them and their descendants.

David was an example of one who looked forward in hope, for many of his psalms end in “Selah” which translated means, “value it considering the end”. He looked forward to the end of God’s promise, and endeavored to walk acceptably before the Almighty in the hope that he might be found approved in that day.

We all have a tendency to look back in nostalgia to the past. Why? Perhaps because those times were easier when we were children, without the responsibility of adults, not yet having experienced the trials and tribulations that come to those who endeavor to walk after the example of the Lord Jesus.

We know from the Scriptures that the end of a matter is far better than the beginning, as confirmed by the vision given to John in Revelation showing the end of God’s purpose with His people:

“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 21:3-4.

John has also told us that those so blessed, who will reign with Christ as kings and priests, are those who:

“... came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the LAMB.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” Revelation 7:14-15.

With this glorious hope set before us Brethren and Sisters, let us heed the wisdom of Solomon:

“Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.”

Ecclesiastes 7:10.

M.C.S.

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

“--- I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.
---” (Zechariah 12:3).

Britain found it a heavy weight up to 1948 when it relinquished its Mandate. The United States is now endeavouring to shoulder the difficulty. At the time of writing suicide bombers from the Arab World have been causing fear, misery and grief in Israel. What a sad comment came from the United States President when he voiced the following:-

“When an 18 year old Palestinian girl is induced to blow herself up, and kills a 17 year old Israeli girl, the future itself is dying.”

However, the President voiced some optimism when he said that he knew peace in the Middle East was possible “because in our lifetimes we have seen an end to conflicts that no one thought could end”.

As Israel endeavours to deal with the terrorists it finds there is little sympathy for its plight. European Union Ministers have denounced Israel for “genocide”. It appears that anti-Semitism is beginning to arise, as there have been incidents of attacks on Jewish Synagogues. Even the Pope has voiced criticism saying he “rejects unjust conditions and humiliations imposed on the Palestinians --- reprisals and revenge attacks --- do nothing but feed the sense of frustration and hatred.”

What is not realised is the wicked machinations emanating from other Arab Powers. The leader of Iraq, it is reported, is offering parents £18,000 to persuade their children to become suicide bombers. For families to qualify for the payment their teenagers are required to “strap explosives on themselves and go out ensuring that in killing themselves they take Jewish people with them”.

But it is not only Iraq that is encouraging Palestinian terrorists. The leader of Iran has called for more suicide bombers, also urging the Palestinian leader to “become a martyr rather than surrender to

Israel". He went on to say, "the enemy is losing its morale and is feeling weak. It does not see a bright future for itself." Bombers had "become aware of the power of martyrdom and the enemy's weakness in the face of it."

A political comment from an observer of Middle East events gives a fairer picture of what is happening as follows:-

" 'General' Arafat may not have ordered these pathetic young idealists to kill themselves and other innocents. But his life of deception and double cross has created the conditions in which such martyrs thrive - - - those who blame the Israeli leader for risking a bloodbath (by his striking at the terrorists in their own territory) ignore some uncomfortable truths.

First, the real suffering of the Palestinian people has been imposed by Arafat. The Palestinian authority under his leadership has turned down offers of a separate homeland. The latest rejection 18 months ago destroyed the premiership of moderate Ehud Barak, who made historic concessions.

Second, Arafat's ruthless anti-Israel stance is not shared by all Palestinians. Many want him replaced by a leader who could offer prosperity in place of conflict.

Third, even Israel's Arab neighbours acknowledge it has plenty to offer the region.

Many envy Israel's status as the only democracy in the Middle East and wish their own states were as tolerant.

But hardliners hope a few more atrocities will one day force the Jewish nation to pack its bags and leave."

The United States President, of course, is exasperated with the Palestinian leader. One of his comments revealing his feelings is reported as follows:-

"He's (Arafat) been given plenty of opportunities. We had — we thought we had — a ceasefire arranged. We were that close to a ceasefire, and next thing we know, there's a suicide bomber that hits. We thought a couple of months ago that we had an agreement. The next thing we know, he's ordered a shipment of arms from Iran. He's got a long way to go."

United States aid to Israel is about two billion pounds per annum which America is glad to give to the Jews who are regarded, perhaps, as the only true ally in the Eastern Mediterranean. This however is part of the burden which America carries in its concern

about the former Palestine. But there is not only the weight of financial expenditure, there is also the threat of Arab action against the U.S. because it helps Israel. At the time of writing there has been anti-American activity in Bahrain, where the U.S. Navy has a large base. Thousands of demonstrators marched on the American Embassy and fought running battles with riot police. The hostile crowd threw fire bombs at the building, also breaking the windows. There was also violence in Amman, the Jordanian capital. But what was so ominous was the threat from Fatah in Lebanon, the faction linked with Arafat, which has warned that if the Palestinian leader suffers any harm, this will result in worldwide attacks against American interests.

It is a real threat. After all the American effort in Afghanistan, the terrorist organisation Al-Qa'ida still exists and is offering £35,000 rewards for dead Western people and £69,000 for live prisoners in Afghanistan.

And what a sad commentary is the words of Israel's leader, "all this happens in a period when Israel's hand is stretched out in peace - - - but all Israel got in return was terrorism, terrorism and more terrorism."

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

Witnessing to the general public concerning God's plan for this earth continues with limited response. This work has covered the majority of cities, towns and villages county-wide, with enough response to encourage future effort.

The annual summer outing is planned (God Willing) for August 17th when we look forward to the pleasure of summer outdoor activities.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.

Thursdays: Bible Class 2.00 p.m.

True unity is from the Eternal God through the spirit of His counsel. What a blessing this is for the Ecclesia, when difficulties that occur in this imperfect life arise, and Brethren and Sisters come alongside to help resolve matters which sometimes perplex.