

THE REMNANT OF CHRIST'S ECCLESIA

Origin and Statistics

The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia is the name taken by those who believe and strive to uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. It must be acknowledged that in the earth, these people are very few and have always been so, contrary to the claims of past and present day Christianity. It is a matter of Scriptural testimony that at the time of the near completion of the Apostle Paul's ministry, he acknowledged that "all those in Asia have left me." Of the many who had listened and were converted by his and the other apostles' teaching, only a small insignificant remnant believed enough to hold fast to it. Thus it has been in all phases of Biblical History. Always a few stood fast while multitudes departed.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." *Genesis 7:1*

"...Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." *Romans 9:27*

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." *Romans 11:5*

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
Matthew 7:13-14

The identical picture is given by Jesus Christ in speaking of the end of these times, when He will return for the consummation of God's age-old purpose.

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." *Matthew 24:37*

"...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find (the) faith on the earth?" *Luke 18:8*

Thus, it becomes clear that the people of God, whose desire is to serve Him without reservation, can be in this earth just a very few. This point is made because inevitably questions are raised when "The Remnant" claims to have The Truth.

In the middle of the 19th Century this group, having been helped once again to find the simplicity and austerity of Christ's teachings, took the name of Christadelphian (Brethren of Christ). It was required by the government during the Civil War in this country that all conscientiously opposed to participation must register. Thus, the name came to differentiate these different people from the sects.

It was not long before, repeating the past, some arose in the assembly in protest against a way which was narrow and restrictive, which did not offer ease and convenience, nor did it tolerate men's reasoning as regarding the alteration of God's requirements. As laxity began to creep in, a few who were determined to keep the purity and simplicity of Jesus' teachings obeyed the Scriptural command to separate themselves from those who "preach any other doctrine." Thus, divisions came to be (1864, 1873, 1884, 1894, 1923, 1926, 1933, and 1954) each one signifying on the one hand a departure from Christ's teachings, and on the other hand, a Remnant who would determinedly hold these principles. It was not until 1933 that the name of Christadelphian was abandoned altogether because of the many sections involved in that name, each denoting an introduction of false doctrine and departure from the original. At this time, the name The Ecclesia of Christ was taken, by the few still holding the first beliefs.

In 1954 the evidence of departure in this group brought a further division wherein those still holding Christ's original teachings became known as The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia. The number of these believers is less than 100 in the world. Among these few there are representatives from what the world would call many and all educational and economic levels. As it becomes more clearly understood that faithfulness to Christ's teachings means a making of no importance of all these considerations; wealth, position, education, and ambition, then it will also become apparent that this simple faith holds little appeal for those who are engrossed in this world's calling and goods; nor do those who count this of importance appeal to the Creator. The parable of the rich young man in Matthew 19 illustrates the case. Desiring eternal life, the rich young man asked the Lord what he needed to do. In reply, after learning that he had kept the commands, Jesus tested his faith by requiring that his riches be given away. The young man "went away sorrowing." It was not his wealth, as such, "which prevented him, but rather his attachment to that wealth. It was in a sense more important than God to him. On the other hand, what God wants in a people He chooses to serve Him is clearly stated in I Corinthians 1:26-27:

"...not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Although at the present time this group is comprised of English speaking people, there is nothing which limits it to such. It is recorded that in time to come, and in the Creator's estimation now:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek...bond nor free...male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." *Galatians 3:28*

For faithful members of this body The Truth has taken hold and become in their lives a force overriding every other aspect of living. It is a leveler of all classes, for in Divine eyes all men are equally sinful and unacceptable, and only by a realization of this and a submission to His requirements, can they become acceptable.

Use of the Bible

It will be apparent that to these believers, the Bible is the source of all things; for it is the testimony from God, the basis of all Truth, giving to men, who can receive it, His purpose and requirement with themselves. To this group it is exactly what it testifies of itself.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." *II Timothy 3:16-17*

"...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."
II Peter 1:20-21

Because these records are believed, to The Remnant the Bible is unchangeable, and all, who would serve God acceptably, must submit to what this book requires. It must be acknowledged that where men are permitted to place their ways above those of the Creator, peace is taken away and chaos only can exist. A warning against altering any part of this Word, the Bible, is found in Revelation 22;18-19:

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life..."

In consequence of these words each faithful believer is impelled to submit to a rule and reason, which is above and superior to his own or that of any man. It is seen that this submission, and this only, permits these people of The Remnant to experience the joy of true unity of mind and purpose. Contrary to declarations by onlookers that "one mind" on such personal matters as religion is impossible and a concept unacceptable to society, this is exactly the position striven for in this body. The testimony of the Creator in Ephesians 4:4-6 is the guide.

"There is one body, and one Spirit... One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father...."

This one-ness, and the unity of those who are part of it, is a witness to the fact that God does not require what is impossible to render. In testifying to men that there is only one Truth, and that those who have it and keep it must make themselves of one mind with this written Word, and then, as a consequence, they become of one mind with each other, God testifies against the multitudinous religious sects.

In separating themselves from the world and from much in the way of companionship these believers find amongst themselves a bond stronger than human ties, which unites, even though the few are widely scattered. This bond is kept strong when there is real desire to serve God in absoluteness and to be at one mind with each other on that basis. The Apostle Paul's words are :

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." *1 Corinthians 1:10*

As in every aspect, the requirements on this point are clear, and because of the command to be of one mind, united, this is the constant effort of every faithful member of this body.

Places of Worship

It is recorded:

"...the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."
I Samuel 16:7

Because of this knowledge, The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia does not worship in "churches." Feeling, rather, that worship, to be acceptable, involves not a building, but the heart. Meetings each Sunday are held in a suitable rented room, clean and decent, but unadorned. There is care that it is situated where as little disturbance as possible from outside is heard, as well as, freedom from any interruption or intrusion. The Bible has left a testimony regarding David, whose desire it was to build a "House of God." In II Samuel 7:5,7 the Divine answer is given.

"...Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any... saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?"

It was not that God despised David's offering, for His son, Solomon, did build the House planned and prepared by David, and pleased God in so doing. But, the Creator gives answer to David, speaking of the House which He does desire, and which His faithful followers will seek after and hope to become a part of.

"...the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house.
And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed (son) after thee...and I will establish his kingdom.
He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.
I will be his father, and he shall be my son... And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee... "
II Samuel 7:11-15

This is the House which has been in the mind of God since the beginning. Though it is recorded that David's son, Solomon, did build a temple, the promises here obviously refer to an eternal house and kingdom in addition. In Luke Chapter 1:31-32 we are given the promise to Mary.

"...behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."

It is seen by the underlined portions how clearly and powerfully this later promise to Mary mirrors and in part fulfills the early promise to David. But, the subject in question is a "house" and the record is that God's House, which is the House of David and the House of David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, is a spiritual house, a gathering into One (who it is declared is the "chief corner stone"), of all who would, without reservation, rather be His than any others. The record of this house is found in I Peter 2:6,5:

"...Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house...."

"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." *Hebrews 3:6*

In view of this greater and spiritual House, still in the process of building, it is understandable that those whose only desire is to be part of that House find neither time, nor longing for a house of worship in the ordinary sense. This is not to imply that to build a place of worship is considered wrong. It would be done if circumstances necessitated, but with complete absence of ostentation and spirit of pride and rivalry.

Leadership Duties **Priesthood**

Concerning priesthood, it may be remembered that in dealing with His people, God gave commandment in the Law of Moses for the office of high priest, whose responsibility it was to be the minister and mediator between the people and their God. This, the Bible tells us was a type of a Greater Priest, Jesus Christ, who is now officiating in that same way, as a fulfillment of what this early arrangement promised to faithful Israelites.

So it is that all who would approach God, must find reconciliation with Him, through His Son, the high priest, who is in truth the head of the ecclesia, and who is the mediator between God and His people.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." *I Timothy 2:5*

Speaking of the priesthood under the Law of Moses, the Apostle Paul writes in Hebrews 7:23-25,28:

"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

But this man (Jesus Christ), because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

"...We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." *Hebrews 8:1*

Jesus Christ is both priest and head, the example in all things, and it is according to His own declaration that the practical arrangements for guidance and leadership among The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia are made. His words are to His followers in Matthew 20:25-27:

"...Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them... But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Those who, as elders, take the oversight in the ecclesia, must keep this in mind, and as each member has part in choosing these servants, the responsibility is brought home by attention to the requirements in I Timothy 3:1-7:

"...If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." *1 Peter 5:2,3*

The significant and important aspect of this is that those chosen by the assembly for this important work, are from amongst the assembly. They have been able to know him and observe, and test him, before they assume the responsibility for casting a vote for him. These elders must be selected not because of age, or position, or ties with other elders, but "for their work's sake." The work thus given is considered a privilege and is regarded as first in importance, not to be lightly esteemed, and certainly not able to be bought. The Revelation speaks of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; "which thing I hate," the Lord Jesus said. Nicolaitanes means when translated from the Greek "victory over the laity," and condemns the dreadful situation ecclesiastically speaking, where men are not led, helped, guided and served by their leaders, but rather are ruled by the authority of men — who are, as evidenced by this very ruling, not under the authority of God. Thus, upon all members of The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia there rests a grave responsibility in realizing that leaders are made such by the men who follow them. So, here, as in every thing, the Bible only must be the guide.

Social Philosophy **Relation To, and Attitude Toward Society**

It is significant that this group has chosen to be called an ecclesia, not a sect, not a church. Scholars have translated this Greek word broadly to mean church, and so it is rendered in the English version. However, the intent is lost in this translation; for in the Greek the word is literally "those who are called out," and in this original meaning is found first of all the Divine intention regarding people who are to serve Him, as well as, the reason for the name of this group.

From the beginning God has worked with a few, a people who were compelled by His requirements to leave the world and all that it holds dear to be, indeed, "called out" of it by obedience to Divine law.

As far back as 'Noah there is record of this separation, for it was out of all the world then that this man was saved in the ark with the few of his family — because he obeyed. Later, Abraham responded to the call to leave the ungodliness of Ur of the Chaldees, forsaking much that was valued and many close associates, so as to be

obedient to God's word. This continues to be the testimony throughout the Old and New Testament, and it is the reason for the separation of these people, The Remnant, from all worldly activities, pursuits, and interests. They are a people in the world, but not "of it." For according to God's Word, the world and all the elements of it are not of God, but rather –

"...all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." *I John 2:16-17*

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I John 2:15

"...the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

James 4:4

Because of this Divine judgment upon society in general, as it continues in its own way, the Scriptures demand that God's people —

"...come out from among them, and be ye separate...And (I) will be a Father unto you..." *II Corinthians 6:17-18*

Though this may often entail pain and hardship, the requirements are there, and the comfort is given for these people who will obey. Jesus' words are:

"...every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." *Matthew 19:29*

These people, The Remnant of Christ's Ecclesia, are, while not of this order, a people whose very lives revolve around the consummation of a hope involving a future order. Their position of separation now makes them as the faithful of old were, strangers and sojourners in this world, who because of belief in God's Word can echo the words concerning these ancients in Hebrews 11:13-16:

"(They)...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

For people whose hearts and hopes are fastened on an approaching heavenly kingdom, to be established in place of men's kingdoms, on this earth, loyalty and allegiance, the first obedience and love is to this hope. They do not regard themselves as citizens of this or any other country, except by circumstance of birth, nor do they enter into the political, military, social and cultural attractions and privileges of this life. As sojourners on earth, these people do feel that they have a responsibility towards society. Their work in relation to the world is a matter of Divine requirement that by example and by continuous witnessing in every possible way they are to make known God's purpose in accordance with the commands given in Ezekiel 3:11 —

"...tell them.. .whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Therefore, while a small voice, because it is indeed "A Remnant", these believers continue in contact constantly to place before people God's Word, remaining to help wherever interest is maintained.

This is their position and attitude toward society. As pilgrims and sojourners, they are separate from it. As God's people, they are striving to show in every aspect of their lives and work, what it is that He requires, and so to uphold The Faith.