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## Would Church Unity Benefit Christianity?

THIS subject has been prompted by reports in the press from time to time respecting the ecumenical movement — suggestions from various church leaders regarding the possibility of amalgamating some of the church systems of today. This applies not only in our comparatively thinly populated country of Australia, but also throughout Europe and the U.S.A., which adds weight to the possibility of unity being attained amongst the churches.

The uniting spirit is also abroad in the business world to a very marked extent today, the reason being a desire for greater financial stability in a very shaky world. The fact that some church leaders are also feeling the instability of world conditions may also be the reason, to a large degree, for their desire to unite, feeling that “unity is strength”.

It may be helpful to review various of the church systems that exist today. Taking the Lutheran Church, one of the oldest of the Protestant Churches, the question may be asked, Was it wrong for Luther to protest against the Roman Catholic Church when he found, from the Bible, that “the just shall live by faith,” (Rom. 1:16, 17), and not by doing penance for shortcomings? Certainly not! It was surely right for Luther to act up to the light granted to him and other Reformers to assist other Christians who became awake and alert to further revealings of light from God’s Word from that time onwards to our own day.

Turning to the Lord’s message to the Philadelphian Church in Revelation 3:7-9, we read—”These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it. . . .” There can be no doubt that this message, in its historical application, refers to the period of the Reformation, when it was the Lord’s time for opening the door of truth, and “no man could shut it.”

Concerning the period in history covered by the Philadelphia message and the separating feature characterizing it, it has been remarked—”This stage of the Church’s history evidently began at the Reformation; and there are many still living (in the Laodicean period) who possess the characteristics described. There is considerable similarity between the work begun at Pentecost and that of Luther and his friends. The Reformation was, in a sense, the beginning of a new era, a dawning of light where all had been darkness, the separating of the true from the false, and a new start in the way of truth. ... During the Philadelphian period, especially during the first and the last phase of it, the faithful have either been

obliged to come out of the nominal temple (church) or have been cast out for their straight testimony”

It has been stated that in October, 1520, when Luther was first made aware of the Pope’s excommunication of him, his words on receiving it, were: “I rejoice in having to bear such ills for the best of causes. Already I feel greater liberty in my heart; for at last I know that the Pope is Antichrist, and that his throne is that of Satan himself.” (Note Rev. 3:9, which refers to the time when the saints shall have inherited the heavenly kingdom with Christ, and shall be worshipped by their persecutors of this Gospel Age.)

That was certainly a noble start by Luther as one of the Reformers under the Lord’s guidance and support, and others have taken up the mission for the truth, against error, ever since. While we are aware that little further progress has been made in Lutheran circles since Luther’s day, yet, would we say that unity between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches today would benefit Christianity? The answer is obvious. No, indeed!

Viewing the matter further, what of the Baptist Church? It is apparent that the very name Baptist Church represents those who became earnest about the matter of water baptism by immersion. They would reason—our Lord took water baptism, and surely that is the correct thing for His followers also. To carry out their desire in this matter they formed a separate church—away from those who were not practising water immersion, some of whom were sprinkling infants and not baptising adults at all. We do know that in their zeal for performing the ceremony of water immersion the reality was not clearly discerned—that is, death baptism with Christ. However, it was a step in the right direction. So, would Christianity be benefited by the Baptist Church uniting with churches which do not practise water immersion? No, we cannot see there would be any benefit by so doing.

Another church, the Church of Christ, could serve as an example in connection with our subject. No doubt the very name taken was with good intention, implying that they really belonged to the Lord. Two strong points with this church are water immersion and the breaking of bread on the first day of the week, the latter being, as they believe, the Lord’s Supper. Here again there was, and still is, good intention, though we know from the Scriptures that the “breaking of bread” with the early church was not the Lord’s Supper, but rather rejoicing in fellowship that the Lord was risen on the first day of the week, and partaking of food in the same spirit as when the Lord “broke bread” with His disciples during His ministry. However, another good decision with the Church of Christ movement was that their ministers would not be termed “Reverend”, and this was a step in accord with the words of Christ,—”Be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” (Matt. 23:8-10.) If, then, the Church of Christ united with those churches that do not as yet see as clearly as they, would this benefit Christianity? Surely not!

Proceeding further, we could consider three additional churches—the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Congregational. These three are very much alike and it is usually these that are mentioned as likely to unite first of all, when church unity is advocated publicly. These churches, in a general way, believe the same truths of the Bible, and mainly hold the same errors. Would unity of these three benefit Christianity? That would mean one large system instead of three smaller ones, and we cannot see any benefit from that.

Supposing, however, that all the main Protestant (churches said, We want to be friends; let us all join together and present a united front to the world and especially to Communism, what would we have? We would have a combination of church people all believing in the immortality of the soul—meaning that when God sentenced our first parents of death, that penalty could not be carried out, because if this theory were correct none of mankind could really die. That in turn would mean denying the necessity for Christ’s sacrifice, as stated by the apostle,—”Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,” and “He tasted death for every man.” (1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 2:9.)

All such combined church people would also have united belief in the erroneous doctrine of the trinity and the hell- fire theory, the latter being termed by Paul a “doctrine of the devil”. There would also be no appreciation of the restitution of all things by all these people of the combined churches. Yet, God put so much importance upon the restoration of humanity, the world in general, during the Millennial Age, that He had it declared by all His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:20, 21.) So, would Christianity benefit from a combination of church people holding teachings so contrary to the Word of God?

The answer is found in Revelation 18:1-5, which please read.—’’Babylon the great is fallen.” Babylon — confusion—and what confusion! “Babylon . . . is become the habitation of devils.... All nations have drunk of the wine (mixed wine; false and true doctrine mixed) of the wrath of her fornication (world affiliation), etc. . . . Come out of her, my people.” Not all in Babylon are Babylonians. In full agreement is Rev. 3:14-17. The fact, then, that the Lord is calling His people out of the mixed Babylonian systems, would their combining benefit Christianity? Not in the slightest!

Indeed, the Scriptures elsewhere confirm what is stated in Revelation, such as the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, in Matt. 13:24-30—’’Let both grow together until the harvest . . . (then) Gather ye together the tares (imitation Christians) and bind them in bundles to burn them (figuratively); but gather the wheat (My people) into my barn.”

The same teaching is clearly and helpfully presented in Matt. 24:31,—’’He shall send his angels (messengers) with a great trumpet (of truth), and they shall gather together his elect (true-hearted Christians) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” This undoubtedly is a gathering **from** the religious heavens, into the fellowship of other members of the Lord’s elect, as further revealed in Luke 17:34-37. “There shall be two in one bed (creed-bed), the one shall be taken (drawn by the truth message out of such bondage), and the other shall be left.” The same lesson is taught in verses 35 and 36, with the explanation so helpfully given in verse 37,—’’Where, Lord? ... Wheresoever the body (food) is, thither will the eagles (sharp-eyed, alert Christians) be gathered together.” Yes, indeed, the Lord’s sheep hear His voice through the message of truth, and gladly respond and assemble together with others of like precious faith for further development in preparation for the heavenly inheritance.

It is very obvious, then, that as the Lord is calling His people out of present-day church systems, should they unite in a desire to perpetuate their existence this would in no way benefit Christianity. Rather, the desire to unite is really a fulfilment of prophecy, that the religious systems feel their weakness, and that the fall of all such systems is not far off, as stated by the Apostle Peter,—’’The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens (religious systems) shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements (various sections) shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also (the present order of society) and the works that are therein shall be burned up,”—destroyed in the strife and friction of the great time of trouble. (2 Pet. 3:10. See also Rev. 6:12-17.)

While, then, any uniting of the nominal churches today would not benefit the cause of Christianity, we would not be misunderstood respecting God’s true Church members throughout the present Gospel Age. The Lord surely desires unity amongst His true Church members, and there always has been and still is unity of spirit, ambition and purpose in the various members scattered throughout the world. From the day of Pentecost the spirit of the Lord has been guiding and blessing all who have been worthy followers of the Master. One instance of outstanding unity is shown in the early Church from Acts 15:22-29. These verses place on record the united decision of the apostles and elders who met at Jerusalem to consider a vital matter concerning the requirements for Gentile believers coming into God’s church. “It seemed good to the holy spirit, and to us,” well testifies to the means of attaining and maintaining the true unity which the Lord desires amongst His people.

Of course unity of spirit in the Lord is something that the church members have had to cultivate, but all true followers of the Master, the meek and teachable ones, have always had the Lord's full assistance in their desire for unity with Christ their Head and the members of His Body, and they have been rewarded in no uncertain manner. Paul exhorts all members to do their part in gaining and preserving the unity of spirit, and which leads to unity of faith, doctrine and practices amongst all God's people. This is shown helpfully in Eph. 4:1-6. "I . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." (See also Eph. 4:1113.)

Again to the Thessalonians we see a lovely spirit of unity manifested in the words of Paul,—“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the holy spirit; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.” (1 Thes. 1:2-4, 6,

7.) And so all down the Gospel Age God's people have always been in complete unity of spirit as they walked in the steps of the Master.

We think also of the period reaching back about 90 years ago, when God revealed an insight into the Divine Plan of the Ages which was measurably hidden down through the Dark Ages, and what a wonderful unity amongst the church members has been in evidence in particular since that time, even to our day. The words of Daniel—“Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (Dan. 12:12), seem to have had their fulfilment, beginning about 1874 with the opening up, by God's favor, of the full message of the Gospel—“glad tidings of great joy to all people.”

The words of our Lord in Luke 12:35-37 have also had fulfilment during this same period amongst those worthy to receive the blessings of the harvest truths,—“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knock-eth, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” Hasn't this been the experience of God's people, God's church, particularly over the past 80 years and more since the fulfilment of these words of Jesus? It surely has! Hasn't this been our own experience throughout our time of appreciation of the Divine Plan of the Ages? Indeed it has; we have experienced the unity of spirit amongst God's people and in association with our brethren throughout this great land, and with those of like precious faith overseas.

While the uniting of the nominal churches would not benefit Christianity, unity amongst the Lord's people has always existed and will continue to exist for the greatest benefit to the cause of Christianity, for all time. This has been effected also without outward show or great numbers adhering to the truth of God's Word, which of course is the only true basis for unity in the Lord and to His cause.

The Psalmist, under the inspiration of God's spirit, gives us a lovely presentation of the true unity amongst God's dear people, in Psalm 133,—“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments.” It will be noted that it is good and pleasant for brethren, not churches, or organizations of men, to dwell together in unity. Yes, indeed,—“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world

may believe (in due. time) that thou hast sent me.” (John 17:21.)

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The brethren of the Melbourne Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend their Annual Convention to be held this year (D.V.) **on** December 25th, 26th, 28th and 29th in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond. Further information for the present from Berean Bible Institute, 19 Ermington Place, Kew, Victoria, 3101.

We should be as careful of our words as of our actions, and as far from speaking ill as from doing ill.

—Cicero.

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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord’s Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

## Visitors from Overseas.

IT was a pleasure for the Australian brethren to welcome Brother and Sister Fay, of U.S.A., to this land for a short visit in September, and we are very thankful to the Lord for the encouraging and refreshing time experienced at the meetings and in fellowship with our visiting brethren. It was good of Brother Fay to use his holidays for such a strenuous pilgrimage to encourage and stimulate the friends with the messages of truth from God’s Word. In these days of world distress such a visit is of special value to the Lord’s people.

Following a visit to a Brother and his family in Fiji, and the brethren in New Zealand with the little group in Auckland, and the friends in Wellington and Christchurch, all of whom enjoyed the visit very much, Brother and Sister Fay arrived in Melbourne on the morning of 5th September. During the four days to the Sunday evening, 8th September, meetings were held each evening, and one for the public on the Sunday afternoon. In between, visits were paid to brethren who were confined to their homes or in hospital in both Melbourne and Geelong. Three addresses given by Brother Fay for the brethren were well attended and much appreciated, the subjects being—“Planting the Heavens,” “Faith Food from Galatians,” and “We Shall Not All Sleep.” Also on the Friday evening, 6th September, a public meeting was held in Geelong with benefit to a few outsiders as well as the friends generally.

The public meeting in Melbourne was well attended, upwards of 100 being present, with an encouraging number of over 20 from the public. The message on “Where is God **in** Our World’s Trouble?” was excellent, rapt attention being given by all for an hour and twenty minutes. Printed copies of this message by Brother Fay are being prepared and will be available to all who can use them to advantage; readers of our “Peoples Paper” are invited to apply for these free copies. Other addresses will also be printed and made available at a later date.

On 9th September, Brother and Sister Fay went by plane direct to Brisbane, with a meeting that evening in Nam- bour, when an address was enjoyed by a little group of friends in that area. Next day a visit was made to Toowoomba for fellowship and a meeting with the friends there, which was also much appreciated. On the 11th September Sydney was visited, when an enthusiastic welcome was given by the family of our Italian brethren and others to our Brother and Sister Fay, the message on “You must be Born Again” also being warmly appreciated.

On Thursday, 12th September, our visitors arrived in Adelaide, and for two days their fellowship and meetings were much enjoyed by the brethren there, with good attendance of the friends in one of the homes of the brethren. From Saturday, 14th to 17th September, Brother and Sister Fay joined the brethren in Perth with fellowship and meetings of varied nature with great benefit to the brethren in that area.

Our visiting brethren left Perth on the homeward flight on the afternoon of Tuesday, 17th September, expecting to spend a day in Hong Kong and Tokyo, and arriving home in San Francisco before the end of that week. Though no doubt tired and weary physically after such a strenuous three weeks during which so much was pressed into the time, this being Brother Fay’s desire, we trust that our dear Brother and Sister Fay have realised very truly the Lord’s blessing in their efforts to encourage the brethren with the Lord’s message of truth. This we feel has been accomplished, and which is surely of great comfort to all who are seeking to walk in the steps of the Master in these last days of the Gospel Age. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

## Perilous Times

(Convention Address)

ACCORDING to Phillips’ translation 2 Tim. 3:1-5 you must realise that in the last days the times will be full of danger. Men will become utterly self-centered, greedy for money, full of big words. They will be proud and contemptuous, without any regard for what their parents taught them. They will be utterly lacking in gratitude, purity and normal human affections. They will be men of unscrupulous speech and have no control of themselves. They will be passionate and unprincipled, treacherous, self-willed and conceited, loving all the time what gives them pleasure instead of loving God. They will maintain a facade of ‘religion’, but their conduct will deny its validity. You must keep clear of people like this.”

Few will deny that today the spirit set forth here largely predominates. Throughout history amongst many nations there have been times of declension and decline, often persisting and accelerating until finally the national status-quo collapsed, giving birth to a new regime. In fact the student of history finds a long succession of such. Nations have risen in the main through difficulty, their subjects being required to live discriminatively, often frugally; but once the zenith of power and prosperity is reached, the wisdom of discriminate living forsakes government and people, and decline into debauchery sets in.

The Old Testament is alive with such illustrations, yet the world from the days of Christ onwards never profited from the profuse lessons, and nations have risen and fallen monotonously from the same cause. The astute mind cannot fail to discern the wisdom of the Creator in imposing upon Adam a “cursed earth”, requiring the continual sweat of man’s brow to eke out a living. In modern language we might say that God did this to keep man out of mischief into which his fallen state would surely tend to involve him.

When God said, “Cursed be the ground for THY sake,” He did not cancel the original magnanimity of His creative mind, either for the earth or for man; He merely saw that in view of the circumstances that had

arisen, it was wisest in man's present interests to delay the ultimate of His purpose. To have allowed FALLEN man to continue in Garden of Eden conditions would far more quickly have obliterated trace of the divine qualities with which Adam was originally blessed, whereas under the restrictive influences upon evil tendencies which the curse inculcated, there have remained even to this day traces of those good qualities among unregenerate men. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God," for He has met every contingency as it arose.

See Ezekiel 16:49. Here we see Sodom's sin and fall. One translation of this reads,—”This was their iniquity (this largely caused it) pride, fulness of bread, and idleness CAUSED BY OVER ABUNDANCE.”

God gave man work to do to keep him from idleness, UNTIL he is ready to use or employ all his time properly; but man has wrought many inventions, and today he has more time to get into mischief than ever before.

As J. R. Miller once pointed out, it makes a great deal of difference in what times, and amid what circumstances and influences, a person lives. Though few, there have been periods and places when piety pervaded life to a good degree; and in such conditions it was easier and not surprising, that the prevailing spirit generally was toward righteous living. But if the times and spirit should be “of the days of Herod” for instance, the lives of the majority will be steeped in corruption. These were the days in which our Saviour was born. It was a country of unbelievers (Matt. 13:57, 58); the state of the religious community can be gauged by the need for Jesus' oft rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees. They were difficult days in which our Saviour lived too.

A discerning mind evaluates the meaning behind the words, “he had not where to lay his head.” He was an outcast of society; few could enter into His thinking nor entertain His way of life, for it was so totally opposed to popular trends. To dare to publicly question the validity of creeds and doctrines of men that could not be substantiated from God's Word, has always, and will today still, place one in a similar position. Generally speaking, arguments and submissions will not be seriously and justly analysed as to whether they constitute truth or not; instead, one is branded with the hallmark of audacity for daring to question the recognised channels of learning and knowledge—the religious theological colleges of the day, “How knowest this man letters, having never learned?”

Yet at all times there have remained devout persons, and in the “days of Herod” there were some too. See Luke 1:5, 6. What a wonderful thing it was, a gem in the darkness, to find two persons, a man and his wife, righteous before God. Little wonder that they should be chosen as the medium for introducing John the Baptist, destined to be one of the greatest of all prophets. These two old people, living amidst almost universal corruption of the priesthood and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, STILL LIVED THEIR OWN LIVES in piety and godly simplicity.

Mr. Miller made a nice point from this, saying, It is not necessary for us to be like other people, if other people are not what they ought to be. No matter how corrupt the times, we should strive to live righteous and godly lives; and if we seek it, grace sufficient will be supplied. The darker the night of sin about us, the clearer and steadier should be the light that streams from Christian conduct. Today, lower standards of life along every line are general everywhere, and the person endeavoring to maintain true Christian principles must indeed become “a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth.” Reproof of predominant evil either falls upon deaf ears, or like the reproof that John gave Herod, it results in imprisonment and beheading—not literal imprisonment and execution maybe, but ostracism that is just as effective.

We note, and realise our impotency to arrest, the breakdown of family life, fashions set to the point of immodesty, and dishonesty in business, etc. Though readily admitting that a good education is desirable,

it seems open to question whether ALL the education today is good. As never before men seem educated in the art of deception. A business man was once described “as smooth as silk, and twice as slippery.” “Shady” business is more and more accepted as inevitable—smooth and slippery meets smooth and slippery, and if you can’t employ such methods in making a deal, you deserve to lose.

In the religious world times are perilous. The so-called Christian world no longer accepts the Bible as its text book. Pure doctrines of the Bible are either repudiated, or so watered down, as to be no more a guide; the real and the true are surrendered to a human philosophy. There is no recognition of a “little flock”, a true called-out church of true followers of Jesus; but a great “get together” movement of all denominations. Because the Bible as it stands refutes such, it is made to bend conveniently.

The following is culled from a publication of 1963,—”A Bible, which will be known as the Ecumenical Bible, is in process of publication. It will be a volume so re-written as to eliminate all and any material to which any group could object.” “Having a form of godliness and denying its power”—has it ever been more literally fulfilled? Without doubt, these are the days in which we are living.

Mr. M. R. DeHaan, in his book “The Days of Noah”, a writer who sees some truth and is blind to much more, makes a good point, however, in showing how well God’s programme is counterfeited by Christendom. Christendom’s goal is — The Conversion of Society; the Reformation of Society; the Abolishment of War; the Unification of all Religion. The writer says, “Their goal is the same as God’s, but there all similarity ceases.”

Yes, indeed, God plans to convert the world, to reform society (we should say to build a NEW society after the old is destroyed), to abolish war and to unify all the world to one religion. We are blessed indeed who know His plans, His methods, His times and seasons for this accomplishment; but Christendom does not endorse HIS methods and ways. They have plans and methods of their own, which will dismally fail.

We are living in perilous times. While we need courage in declaring God’s truth, we also need great wisdom. Like Jesus we need to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” The Christian is still the only “salt” in the earth that can savor the unsavory; he is the only “light” of the world in the dense fog of modernism. Even though in the perilous times of this unbelieving world the “salt” is cast out as insipid, and the fog is so dense that the “light” cannot penetrate, be comprehended, let us renew our faith and courage daily at the throne of grace and remember—these ruling conditions are the very signs of the end of the age, and our deliverance. The great urge everywhere today is “to get with it”; but rather let us watch unto prayer for aid to courageously, “Come out from among them and be separate.”

An amended translation of 1 Cor. 15:33 reads—”Evil companionship corrupts good manners.” Evil company has a pernicious effect on the mind and heart. We become less watchful and cautious when we are constantly with the gay, the worldly and unprincipled. Christians ought as much as possible to seek the friendship and conversation of each other. The longer we watch and listen to a degrading or worldly television programme for instance, the greater the danger of contamination therefrom.

God is ready, able and willing to help us, but He does not make the initial moves. If we dabble in things we know He must disapprove, He will not shield us from the consequences; but if we “put away from us that wicked person”, or

thought or deed, He will not leave us comfortless or helpless, but He will be “a Father to us, and we shall be His sons and daughters.” (2 Cor. 6:18.)

A very good Oxford Bible, with References, India paper, thumb index, Brevier clear type, Persian Morocco binding, is now available at \$9.50. Same Bible with Concordance and Subject Index at \$10.50.

# Jehovah's Witnesses: Who are they? Their Destiny?

(Convention Address Reprint)

(Isaiah 43:1-21.)

THOSE who believe the Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God will not deny that the Creator has a wonderful plan or systematic method of dealing with mankind, during various ages and dispensations, and when completed this plan will glorify God and completely satisfy the desires of all mankind. In carrying forward this plan God has graciously invited the voluntary co-operation of individuals, and groups of individuals, human and spiritual.

It is clear from the accounts in Genesis that God created the first human pair to live happily and everlastingly in harmony with Him upon this planet, as we read—"And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply." (Gen. 1:26, 28.)

Through lack of experience man fell from that perfect state into sin—a disobedience which has ever since brought a trail of woe and misery. This was foreseen and permitted by the Creator; therefore it is an essential part in the Divine Plan and the best means of indelibly impressing upon the characters of His human family (and angels too, by observation) the value of obedience to Him, and the desire for His protection as the only One who can supply their every need and shelter under His love and power.

Look where we will, transgression, sickness, sorrow, evil, wars and death all attest to the fall of man. This is not the natural state of man, as evidenced from the fact that all are seeking, in one way or another, relief from these things, and much study and effort is undertaken to eliminate them.

It is not the intention of the Creator to allow this state of affairs to continue indefinitely, neither is it the wish of mankind that it should continue. Evil and evildoers are allowed to demonstrate the fruits or results of their actions and misgovernment; and we are today witnessing the harvest of confusion, trouble and bitterness from the sowing of past ages and decades—"Men's hearts failing them for fear and apprehension for what is coming upon the earth."

The world in general, and professing Christians also, have not taken heed to God's counsels. As one has said—"The League of Nations failed because they did not take Christ into their council chambers."

Nevertheless, all down the ages, the Creator has had His witnesses that He does exist and is not indifferent to the reign of evil, terror, and calamities through which mankind is passing. He has declared that when these conditions have served their purpose they shall cease to exist, and the righteous and right principles only will remain active in the ages to come. "There shall be no more curse." (Rev. 21:4, 27; 22:3.)

Our text declares: "Ye are my witnesses that I am God.... Beside me there is no saviour." (Isa. 43:10, 11.) Who are these witnesses? To whom do they witness? Whence their origin? They have put their records in books, thirty-nine of them. These books have been written by herdsmen, by shepherds, by judges, by kings, by poets, by sages, by philosophers, by statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of ancient Egypt, and in the schools in Babylon, by rich men, by poor men, by preachers in exile and by legislators. The facts to which they bear witness were written in times of prosperity, in times of bondage and adversity, in times of hostility in wars, in times of victory and honor, in peace, in godly times, in times of unbelief and

rebellion, in times of defeat and captivity.

Being greatly favored by the Creator, God also bearing witness to them by His overruling providence and miracles, they became a target for the jealousy and hatred of many nations, that often manifested toward them the cruel spirit of evil and murder, even to the present time. They are made the scapegoat on which to lay the blame of misfortunes or blunderings, or to divert from politicians' broken promises or misgovernment.

What a stir has been made against a people so small in numbers. They, and also Christians, have been fiercely persecuted. Why? Because the great truths and principles for which both stand are more important to them than their lives. Jehovah, the only true God, is just and true—"Justice is the habitation of thy throne." It is not likely that Jehovah would give His witnesses any law short of His own standard. Listen to His just principles—"Thou shalt not vex a stranger or oppress him . . . Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child . . . I (God) will surely hear their cry . . . and I shall kill you with the sword . . . If you take your neighbour's raiment as pledge, you must give it back to him before sundown." (Exod. 22:21-26.) And again we read—"If you meet your enemy's ox or ass going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again . . . Thou shalt not pervert justice from the destitute when he pleads." "Ye shall have one manner of law for the alien (stranger) as for one of your own country." (Exod. 23:4, 6; Lev. 24:22.) These are samples of some of their laws and standard of justice. Can you wonder why they are hated by dictators? Even an infidel has admitted that their political system was the most practical demonstration of freedom and equality that has ever existed before or since.

Jehovah's witnesses have done more toward the civilisation of the world than any other nation, and these laws were enforced hundreds of years before the rest of Europe and Asia dreamt of anything but absolute rule—dictatorship.

These witnesses were the first light in the unrelieved despotism of the east; they were the light of civil and religious toleration in remote and savage times, the pioneers of liberty and civilizations; and quite a number of them have been winners of the Nobel Prize. What we have in the New Testament is the fulfilment and perfection of the truth to which they witnessed, culminating in that perfect Witness, Jesus of Nazareth—"For to him give all the prophets witness." (Acts 10:43.) He is the "faithful and true witness," the witness of Jehovah." (Rev. 3:14.)

What is it that made these people different, and their living and moral standards so much higher than other nations around them? What is the basis of their special privileges and knowledge, and why were they severely punished for disobedience to their laws? The answer is—"To them were committed the oracles of God." They were an enlightened people. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." "Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen." (Isa. 43:21, 10.)

Why have they remained a distinct and a separated people for hundreds of years? From whence their origin, and who has determined the bounds of their habitation? The answer is given in this 43rd chapter of Isaiah, and is emphasized four times—"Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel." "Everyone that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King." "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." (Isa. 43:1, 7, 15, 21.)

Jehovah takes responsibility for the existence and preservation of Israel. Their existence bears testimony that God exists, and, their experiences, both of prosperity and adversity, bear testimony that Jehovah has created Israel as a nation, and is responsible for their preservation, even to this day. Verse 2 of Isa. 43 says so—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not

overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Also verses 16, 17—”The Lord maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters,” has been literally true in their experiences. Remember also Moses’ vision of the burning bush at the time he was called to deliver Israel from bondage; the bush that burned yet never was consumed.

In Isaiah 17:12-14 the prophet predicts the ruin of Israel’s enemies who came against them like a mighty flood.

The Lord is the keeper of Israel, as verse 3 says—I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour . . . I will give people for thy life.” The fire of persecution, hate and jealousy raged fiercely against them—”When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be consumed”; their enemies were defeated. The witnesses of Jesus also find great consolation in this promise.

As a people they were saved out of their troubles and afflictions; they will have still more, but God’s promises of final deliverance will never fail. They are His people, and His care of them is yet to be a mighty witness to His glory among all the nations.

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am he”—that I exist, that I live, the self existing One. “Beside me there is no Saviour.” There is no one, no dictator, no power, no nation, or combination of nations that can destroy His witnesses. “None shall snatch out of my hand; I will work and who shall turn it back?” He alone is the preserver of Israel—”I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered against thee.” (Zech. 12:3.)

Isa. 43:12-1 inform, I save, I foretell.” Jehovah informed Israel; He gave them His oracles, His utterances; they were given the true religion. He informed them that all nations would be blessed through them. (See Psa. 147:19, 20.) Jehovah had informed them that if disobedient to His instructions He would drive them out of their inheritance, lead them captive into strange lands, and scatter them among all nations until “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” a punishment which all the world knows has come to pass. Israel has witnessed the glory and decay of four universal empires, Babylon, Persia, Greece and mighty Rome. But the witnesses still exist; yes, more than exist; they show definite signs of dynamic vitality which has astonished even their enemies. Truly, they remain a separate and distinct people. Why?

“I am thy Saviour,” saith the Lord. “None can deliver (snatch) out of my hand.” “Ye are my witnesses”—You prove that I am God, the preserver of Israel.

“I have saved.” Many attempts have been made in the past, as well as in recent times, to annihilate these defenceless people, but the decree has always been, “Thus far, and no further.” Suffer they did, indeed, but as a people they were never destroyed. Through one means or another the Lord delivered them out of the hands of the destroyer. You, no doubt, are aware of the two outstanding attempts made to annihilate them—ancient and modern. In the Book of Esther, chapters 3-7, a lengthy account is given respecting Haman, the prime minister of Persia, who, under a Persian monarch obtained a decree from the king to have all Jews destroyed in the realm, because he hated a Jew in an honorable position at the king’s court. But the plot finally failed; Haman the Jew-hater was destroyed—hung on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai. The modern attempt, as all the world knows, was made by Hitler, the German dictator; again the destroyer was himself destroyed and his empire divided. Although about six millions of Jews were destroyed by Hitler, the Jews soon after became an organized nation, established in their own land. One emperor of Germany said, “Leave these people alone, no one prospers who attacks them.” Another writer has said, “Anti-Semitism is the barometer of social decay.” To the ancestor of the Jews the Creator said, “He that blesses you I will bless; he that curseth you I will curse.”

In verse 21 of Isaiah 43 we read, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." You see, the Lord has a purpose in preserving His witnesses. They shall transmit the knowledge of the true God in future times—"The word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2, 3.)

Returning to verse 12, "I have showed." Another translation reads, "I foretell." The Lord has foretold many things

concerning His ancient people, Israel. The history of the Jews was written in advance—their rise to fame, their disobedience, their punishment, their scattering among the nations. Hosea 3:4, 5 states, "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." The Lord has foretold their experiences past, present and future; no strange god or prophet could do this.

To be Continued

## THE QUESTION BOOK

Word to hand from our brethren in Chicago, U.S.A., indicates that the Question Book—Answers to Hundreds of Questions, has been delayed in production, and is now expected to be ready by late spring. Orders placed with us at \$3.50 will be filled as soon as supplies arrive. Further orders may be placed by friends desiring this book.

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