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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

REMEMBER YE THE LAW OF MOSES MY SERVANT

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NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

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Except a man be born of water and the Spirit

(John 3 : 5)

In considering these words of the Lord Jesus, let us remember that they were addressed to one of the Pharisees, Nicodemus, who came by night to be taught by Jesus, whom he confessed had come from God. How significant that Jesus immediately speaks to him of the Kingdom and of a new birth.

The heart of every true Jew longed for the restitution of His Kingdom, but this new birth—what was it? How, reasoned Nicodemus, “can a man be born when he is old?” The Lord Jesus replies :

“Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

This word, *born* means to beget or bring forth. Nicodemus knew of the teaching and baptism of John, and could understand bringing forth from the water of baptism. The being born of the Spirit was another matter, but of it, John had said, “. . . He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (John 1 : 33, 34).

So this Son of God is now explaining by example of “earthly things.” He says, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (margin—from above) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.” (John 3 : 8). This is the way of the Spirit. Now, “If I have told you of (these) earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” (Verse 12).

“As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.” (Ecclesiastes 11 : 5).

If we keep clearly in mind that all things are accomplished and all life is sustained by the Spirit of God, we begin to understand that the new-born babe lives by that Spirit, is nourished and grows to full stature by that Spirit, and dies, and its body returns to the ground, only when that Spirit is withdrawn and returns to God who gave it. As is the natural, or earthly, so is the Spiritual, or heavenly.

John records, chapter 1, verses 12, 13—“But as many as received him, (The Lord Jesus, the *Light*, the *Word*, the *Life*) to them gave he power (right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : Which were born not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How? By the working of His Spirit. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope . . ." (I Peter 1 : 3). "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . . love one another . . . being *born* again (anew), not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." (Verses 22,23). "Wherefore . . . *as new-born babes*, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Peter 2 : 1, 2).

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift . . . cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat he us with the word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." (James 1 : 16-18).

"And now, little children, abide in Him . . . If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is *born* of him." (I John 2 : 28, 29). "Beloved *now* are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." (Chapter 3 : 2). "Beloved, let us love one another . . . everyone that loveth is *born* of God, and knoweth God." (Ch. 4 : 7). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is *born* of God . . . For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." (I John 5 : 1-5). "We know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God *keepeth himself*, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (Ch. 5 : 18).

Here we recognize that if the inner man is fed with the word, nourished and growing, he is in obedience to his Father ("He keepeth himself") and sins not. There is integrity in the heart, and failures due to the frailty of flesh are forgiven as supplication for mercy is made each day. Paul reasoned, "We should serve in newness of spirit."

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal . . . for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. . . ." (Romans 7 : 14-23).

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Verses 20 and 24).

He is delivered from the sin that dwelleth in his flesh (verse 17), when he is sealed at the Judgment in Mt. Sinai, and marches with the Lord Jesus to Zion, "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more." (Psalms 133 : 3).

Returning again to Peter's exhortation (I Peter, ch. 2) we note that the creature born anew desires the milk of the word, *that he may grow*, and we find that the milk is not the only food which nourishes this spirit creature. He must, if he develops properly, soon take strong meat. The Apostle Paul reasons, "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; *for he is a babe*. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5 : 13, 14).

So we see a babe born by the will of God, by His Spirit begotten of "incorruptible seed," being fed by His Word—milk first, then strong meat—being ministered unto, then able to minister.

"*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : That we henceforth be no more children. . . .*" (Ephesians 4 : 13, 14).

So we are able, as that full age is attained, to understand that "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God. . . ." (I Corinthians 2 : 12), partaking of that strong meat, in the Apostle's warning. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the *Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* If any man defile (destroy) the temple of God, him shall God destroy : for the temple of God is holy, which (temple) ye are." (I Corinthians 3 : 16, 17). "What ! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (which is) in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Corinthians 6 : 19, 20). It is possible, then, to destroy that new-born babe by failing to nourish it with the Spirit word. Food from another source will not sustain, and persistence in substituting something other than the requirement of God will cause The Spirit to withdraw. As in the natural, so in the Spiritual—withdrawal of the Spirit of God means death.

How much is involved in those words spoken by the Lord Jesus—

"*Except a man be born of water and (of) the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*"

Indeed there is not a true baptism or birth of water unless there is also a *birth of the Spirit*. The old man (the flesh) dies, and is buried in that baptism, while a new creature in Christ Jesus arises. From that time on, the man of flesh must, as the Apostle Paul teaches, "die daily," and the spirit creature must be nourished and grow to full stature while in this "earthly house." "For in this (tabernacle) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with *our house* which is from heaven . . . that mortality may be swallowed up of life." (II Corinthians 5 : 1-4).

It should be carefully noted that one is to be "clothed upon"—mortality is to be "swallowed up"—the creature is to be "changed." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. . . ." (I Corinthians 15 : 52). Immortality is a gift granted to the man of the Spirit who has "overcome" the man of the flesh. (Revelation 2 : 7).

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life." It is something those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek. . . ." (Romans 2 : 7). It is not birth, but the glorious climax—the goal reached by those who were born babes and, nourished on the Spirit word, grew to manhood in Christ Jesus.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of His Spirit." (II Corinthians 5 : 1-5). John declares, "Beloved, now are we the Sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is." Like the Lord Jesus, the spirit man clothed in Spirit body, then will fully belong to God, being completely Spirit.

J.A.DeF.



Remember Ye the Law of Moses My Servant

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (contd.)

(Exodus 20, v. 14)

To think of the Law as a power to help rather than a restriction to defeat natural desire, is the thought expressed by the Lord Jesus. His desire is not merely to expose human weakness, but to show how it can be overcome. The value of His counsel is inestimable when the miseries of broken marriages, children destitute of true parental care, and the ravage of certain diseases are considered. Sodom could not have been a happy place. Lot, who dwelt there, was :—

"Vexed with the filthy conversation (conduct) of the wicked." (2 Peter 2, v. 7).

By the mercy of God this terrible blot upon the earth with all its fearful miseries was removed ; not before, however, the care of God was shown to those who were trying to please God. Only three were finally rescued from the destruction which suddenly transformed a luxuriously fertile plain into a bleak awesome pit, deeper and more deadly in appearance than anywhere else on earth. Time has not effaced the ravages of the destroying hand, which to this day :—

"Are set forth for an example, (of those) suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude, v. 7).

“ The great city . . . Sodom and Egypt ” (Rev. 11, v. 8)

This is the Spirit's description of the great city and its citizens in the time of the end. Apparently following Christ, the head of this city will appear on the balcony of the Vatican on the day which Gentiles call “ Good Friday.” With upraised hand he will pronounce his blessing, regarded by his followers as the blessing of Christ, to—

“ *Urbi et Orbi* ” (The city and the world).

But the true estimate of the great city and the world merits no blessing, but the strongest condemnation as being like Sodom and Egypt.

Due to the failure of marriage in all countries, and the consequent depriving of correct instruction to the children, the great city and the world are now like unto Sodom. The whole of man's machinery for the propagation of his views is becoming tainted. Magazines which at one time were useful and permissible are becoming dangerous. In all matters care will be exercised by the brethren lest in this age the position overtakes them as it did Lot, who was :—

“ *Vexed (kataponeomai—wearied out, caused to sink) with the filthy conversation of the wicked.*”

“ *For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed (basanizo) (greatly distressed) his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.*”

If righteous Lot were nearly overcome, then certainly must the “ righteous ” be on their guard in the days of the latter-day Sodom. They must be careful to keep away any influence which would poison the minds of parents or children, lest the purity enjoined by the law, and contained in the Spirit of Christ, should be lost. The warning in connection with Lot's family is alarming. In the final crisis even his sons-in-law failed, as did his wife. And perhaps there is no greater danger confronts the brethren and sisters at the present time than the intrusion of “ modern ” ideas in dress and manners which will tend to vitiate the purity of the Spirit. Conventional control is very lax because it has no real basis. Things frowned upon yesterday are condoned to-day, and tomorrow are regarded as the “ things to be done.” Care must be exercised lest in our families the same subtle process be allowed to do its evil work.

There will be care, too, that this does not lead to slovenliness in dress or habit. Just as a bride would wish to meet her bridegroom spruce, tidy and cheerfully dressed without ostentation, so the habit of sisters and brethren will be regarded as expressing a similar care for the One with whom they are privileged to meet. Brushed hair, brushed clothes, and a neat, clean and cheerful appearance will signify the importance which each attaches to meeting the Son of

God. The Truth is a wonderful balance, and blessed indeed is the one "rightly dividing the word of Truth."

"A great mystery" (*Eph. 5, v. 32*)

"The way of a man with a maid" was too wonderful, said Solomon. He could not discover the power of mutual attraction which, when regulated by divine counsel, is so beautiful to behold. The cherishing of each other, the protecting, the singleness of purpose, the utter unselfishness leading to an exhibition of true love is something which only the divine hand could produce. This is the standard which the Spirit demands of marriage. Its secret powers responsible for such attainment are truly a mystery, given of God. They are not there merely for the satisfying of the flesh, but for a remarkable witness to the high purpose of God. Speaking of marriage the Apostle Paul said:—

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (*Ephesians 5, vv. 31/32*).

Men and women are drawn to the Lord Jesus by the Power of God. This power cannot be analysed and expressed in scientific terms. Nevertheless the power is there. It is real and very great. Expressed in a word, it is the power of love. The closeness of the bond in betrothal expresses what words could never do—the uniting power of love joining every brother and sister to Christ. The true marriage will always display the purpose of God graciously revealed to His children—the gathering together in One of a people, prepared as a bride for her husband.

Such unity is extremely precious now, as it is and always will be in the happy marriage, each caring for the other, each preferring the other, and each and all cared for by the Lord Jesus and the Father. Such unity is also extremely precious, because in a sense it will never end. Only the vessels containing it will be altered. They will be made glorious within and will exhibit the glory without when the marriage of the Lamb is come.

Never have bells pealed, or rejoicings been heard at any time which will compare with the exultation felt and expressed by the bride in that day, singing the New Song to the accompaniment of harpers harping with their harps. Adorned with the precious ornaments of the Spirit, resplendent as a glistening jewel, she will know that she may rejoice in the company of her beloved for ever, and He in gladness will say:—

"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away . . ."

Let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (*S. of S. 2, vv. 12/13*).

For the preservation of such glories, through the merciful kindness of the great God of Israel, the command was given :—

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

“Thou shalt not steal” (*Exod. 20, v. 15*)

Four simple words which express this command reveal one of the greatest of human weaknesses. The tendency to steal affects all peoples, and all stations in life. The easy gotten gain by stealing is a sore temptation to many, and ranges from petty pilfering to robbery with violence. The motive is the same throughout: to acquire something without effort or cost.

Nations, who are nothing better than the individuals in them, are affected with the same malady. Their desire to possess what is not theirs inflames their passions. These are represented as legitimate national aspirations. If unsatisfied by peaceful means then they are prepared to fight. Their going to war is described as a necessity—and always in the cause of what is right and against what is wrong. Many times such wars have been waged under the blasphemous banner of a holy war. Nations will never be cured of their evil propensities as nations. Indeed, nations can be no better than the individuals composing them. That is why the method of the Spirit stands out above all philosophy in that the purpose of God is to deal with each heart. With everyone appreciative of what is right, then each family will be right and so will each community and nation. The effect of righteousness will be peace, “quietness and assurance for ever.”

The Word reveals how the burning passion to steal is the cause of war, and in these days the potential cause of a catastrophic world-wide war.

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”

Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4, vv. 1/3).

Let the mind dwell on the words in italics :—

“Come they not . . . of your lusts that war in your members?”

The mind becomes used to the “flesh” being condemned in the abstract: to a condemnation of general and universal weakness: to a condemnation that is impersonal and in a sense is more upon the world than the listener to the Spirit’s exhortation. Such a theme becomes an inoculation to the mind, preventing it from fully appreciating what is the “flesh” in oneself, and so diminishing the grave problem each has to deal with in himself. The searchlight of the

Spirit upon our hearts exposes very ugly tendencies, which could never be overcome apart from the help of God. Those latent tendencies when seen on the world-stage of human activity are productive of all the pain and suffering, the grief and mortification which inevitably come in the train of war. Nations may have their counsels to exhort each other to behave as men, but until every one in each nation rises to this duty such counsels must fail.

“ He that stealeth a man . . . shall surely be put to death ”
(*Exod.* 21, v. 16)

It might seem to present minds that such a great evil could never arise; that men would never stoop to “stealing” their fellows, making them captive as slaves or servants. The history of the world shows how man, once he has acquired the power, will descend to anything to satisfy his greed. He will steal his fellows’ goods, and if allowed, he will steal his person. It is perhaps true to say that every great nation has been guilty of this shameful act. In recent times the Spanish in North and South America, the French in Indo-China and other colonies, Britain in India, and America a hundred years ago aided by Britain in the acquiring of negro slaves from Africa. The divine command condemns such acts in the strongest terms, and even nations, though ignorant of the Truth must suffer when God’s law is flouted. The Spanish have lost her American possessions, France is suffering in Indo-China, and is losing her colonies. Britain has lost India, whilst America are made to bear the burden of an internal colony of negro population which she would like to lose but cannot.

God’s law is supreme. It can never be improved upon, nor can it be neglected without suffering and loss.

“ If a man steal an ox or a sheep ” (*Exod.* 22, v. 1)

“ If a man steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it: he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” (*Exod.* 22, v. 1).

The equity of divine law is always delightfully just. There are no anomalies as with Gentile law. Never any need to feel that someone is a victim of an unjust law as is so often the case at the present time, making even Judges suggest that the law be altered. This dreary process of tinkering with the law has been going on in the British Parliament for more than five hundred years, and yet the lawyers do not appear to have finished. When God’s law was given it was complete, perfect, good and just. How striking the contrast. Go in a solicitor’s office and see the walls covered with law books, which are consulted from time to time, and of their issue there seems no end. The masterpiece of divine law on the contrary

is contained in a few pages, which, when regulated by the Spirit, supplied the needs of the most perfectly governed nation upon earth.

In this part of the law a difference is set between one offence and another; for stealing an ox restoration must be fivefold; for a sheep, fourfold. The essence of justice is here expressed: the greater the offence, the greater the punishment. An ox is more valuable than a sheep and so the punishment by way of restoration is increased from four times for a sheep to five times for an ox. This principle would be carefully observed by the judges in all their considerations and dealings with different types of robbery. In the case of a man caught stealing in daylight he must restore double: one having taken a sheep or an ox was required to pay four or five times, and if a man had been stolen then death was the penalty. Such was the scale of penalty in the administering of divine justice.

For those who could not pay the penalty the divine economy in Israel afforded a simple solution.

“If he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft” (Exod. 22, v. 3).

The only hope remaining to such an one was the year of release when he would be allowed to go free, subject to certain conditions.

The beauty of these divine laws was deeply impressed upon the minds of godly men. David knew the spirit of these laws. When indirectly accused of his sin by Nathan in a parable which allowed David to express his mind, without his realising that it was he who was to be condemned, David with heat said:—

“As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing (stolen the poor man’s only lamb) is worthy to die.

And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.” (2 Sam. 12, vv. 5/6).

How dreadful David would feel as the words of the prophet fell like lead upon his mind:—

“Thou art the man!”

Zaccheus, to whose house Jesus brought salvation was clearly animated by the Spirit of God’s law. When told by Christ that he would come to his house, Zaccheus said,—

“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore to him fourfold.” (Luke 19, v. 8).

The precious power of divine law is seen whether the godly or ungodly be considered. The exaltation which the power gives to the godly is at once a delight and blessing to behold. The countenances of David and Zaccheus would bear the imprint of honesty and integrity, nothing furtive, nothing shifty. Trust and confidence

would be engendered by their presence, and to responsive hearts the profound feeling given that truly they—

“Loved their neighbour as themselves.”

A sampling of the ungodly is like tasting a broth without salt. There is nothing whatever which appeals to the taste. Their company will be avoided, their companionship never sought. Their countenances hardened by deceit, and with the feeling that they would take any advantage, they become in their degradation a witness to the excellency of divine power ; not by the presence of it, but by the utter lack of it. Instead of being now fashioned in the image and likeness of God and grown to be like Him in mind and character, the absence of essential virtue makes them nothing more than “brute beasts.” Although greatly honoured on occasion by the world, they deserve to perish and will certainly do so before the hand of Him whose power is supreme.

(To be continued).



A few names even in Sardis

The letter to the angel of the church in Sardis is often used to suggest that withdrawal from any evil ones in an ecclesia is not only unnecessary but wrong and rather that brethren have a duty to remain where there are unfaithful brethren in an endeavour to put such right.

Whatever be the thinking of man is of no moment. The object of every devout student of the Word is to find the mind of God on any matter and resolutely pursue the course which it indicates. What is not always realised is that the discovery of the mind of God in one portion of Scripture must of necessity be in agreement with the revelation of God's mind in another. Indeed, the first work of exposition of any passage after ascertaining the meaning is to show that the principle of Truth in that meaning is reflected throughout the Word. Any attempt to put forward a principle on some particular passage alien to the tenor of God's revealed will, must of necessity be wrong. Here then is a guide in deciding whether the letter to Sardis requires separation from the dead or is an exhortation to remain with them.

Examination of the suggested teaching that brethren must remain with the “dead”

It is not revealed in the letter to Sardis how much evil had been allowed to develop for it to become “dead.” Let us suppose, however, that God required faithful brethren to remain, then it will immediately be seen that the principle is propounded that God does not require separation from those whom He deems “dead.” If this

be a principle of Truth then it should be possible to go to the Law and the teaching of Christ to show how that this same principle is taught, and find that, both in the natural and spiritual, contact with the dead was allowed and indeed required by God. Let the Word be searched from one end to the other and nowhere will this principle be found either in the natural or in the spiritual. Does it not seem then that it is alien to the mind of God ?

A further exercise for the thoughtful mind believing it is right to remain with the dead is to consider the apostasy after the days of the Apostles which led to the development of the Roman Catholic church. If it were right to remain with those deemed by the Spirit to be dead because of one or two errors, then why not when three or four have been embraced or more, and so on until by following the suggested teaching that it is right to remain with the dead, it would be claimed that the faithful can be found in the dreadful Roman Catholic apostasy 280 years after Christ. It is obvious that separation would have to take place much before that time arrived, and if so, then at what time ? Surely it could only be when error of any kind has been embraced by an assembly *who will not repent*, and in consequence, Christ departs.

In conclusion under this heading those who believe that it is right to remain with the dead have a duty to show that the principle which they propound is taught throughout the scriptures both in respect to the natural and the spiritual, and also to show on what scriptural basis they would have delivered themselves from the Roman Catholic apostasy which came about through the progressive departure from the Truth.

Examination of the teaching that brethren must separate from the " dead "

The condition of the Sardis ecclesia at the time the letter was received was that it had a name that it lived but was dead. This obviously means that Christ had departed for He and He alone is the life of any ecclesia. With Him an ecclesia is alive and without Him an ecclesia is dead. Departure from the Truth in Sardis must have been such that Christ had left, with the dreadful consequence that the ecclesia was dead. What of any who chose to remain in the assembly ?

It is significant that there were some in Sardis who had not *defiled their garments*.

This word has a particular scriptural significance in relation to the dead. Separation from the natural dead was taught in the Law and from the spiritual dead in trespasses and sins throughout the Word. In the Law :—

“ Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp . . . whosoever is defiled by the dead ” (Numbers 5, v. 2).

This teaching was the spirit of Christ, was to lead to Christ. How striking was the object lesson to the brethren and sisters in the days of the Law that separation from the dead, natural dead, was imperative to help them appreciate the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of God and the need for separation at all times from sinners. Let it be remembered by those who would dismiss the Law as being of secondary importance to the teaching of Christ, that such do Christ a grave injustice because He said that His teaching was based upon the Law and indeed not one jot or tittle of the Law should pass until all be fulfilled. A difficulty which need not be gone into here, but which could be readily met by the Spirit of Truth is that the spirit of the Law is the spirit of Christ.

In the teaching of Christ and the Apostles the whole world is shown to be dead in trespasses and sins and that one receiving the gospel is invited to—

“ Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you.”

“ And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty ” (2 Cor. 6, vv. 17/18).

The position of those responding to the mercy is defined in the word ‘ecclesia’ meaning, as is so well known, ‘called out,’ that is separated from the dead world to be alive in Christ.

With the knowledge of what was the mind of God what must the faithful few have done in Sardis. They would know from the spirit of Christ in the Law that contact with the dead meant defilement of their garments, hence to receive the words of commendation they must have come out and separated from the dead, otherwise their garments would undoubtedly have been defiled. Is not this the important message of this letter, showing the need of separation, and yet not one that is to be done in a spirit of exultation or self-righteousness but with a recognition that deliverance has only just come in time to save the faithful from defilement, from being ready to die. Those who have passed through an experience similar to that which overtook Sardis will know how dreadful the situation seems on looking back ; how near one was to being swept away by the apostasy and how needful the exhortation to be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, are left, that are ready to die.

If it be thought that more is being put into the letter than sanctioned by the spirit, it must be remembered that God conceals His mind in His Word and it is not on the surface, giving opportunity for those who are children, to search, to seek, to ask, and at last be granted an understanding. The Apocalypse is essentially a book of

sign and symbol, of cryptic phrases which would remain hidden were it not that in the mercy of God the Law and the Prophets have been preserved so that with the aid of these the apocalyptic secrets may be discovered. Let it be noted that in every one of the seven letters in either the symbology or the message there is some reference to the appointments of the Law or to those who lived under the Law which must show it is impossible to understand these letters unless the spirit of Christ in the Law be fully appreciated.

Those receiving the spirit of Christ, which was the spirit of the Law at once will realise the graciousness of God's message in the letter to Sardis, to be aware of developments that can arise in the history of the Truth ; that ecclesias, like individuals, can depart from the faith and that where this happens Christ does not remain with such an assembly. Death of the assembly ensues in spite of a continuance of activities and profession of the name, and the burden of the letter to the messenger to Sardis is to come out and be separate, otherwise defilement will take place involving all in divine disgrace and death. What encouragement the few have, who with courage, will hearken to the spirit's message and will separate, for in the day when Christ appears they are to be declared as worthy and be privileged to walk with Him in white, signifying that they were right when many thought they were wrong.

W.V.B.



The Signs of the Times

One of the most impressive facts about the Scriptures is that they are quick and powerful with a living message for today. The popular idea that the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, is nothing more than ancient history of a primitive people searching for God is quickly dispelled by a careful perusal of its pages. Instead it is soon apparent that every prophet of God, even when writing of contemporary events, had his mind projected forward to a great and final fulfilment when the whole purpose of God would be consummated.

The prophet Habbakuk is an example. He was granted a vision in which he saw the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation" march through the breadth of the land. As though to indicate there was to be a particular final fulfilment, he was told to :—

"Write the vision and make it plain . . .

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Habbakuk 2, v. 2).

In much the same way, Daniel having been instructed by an angel of things which should come to pass, was told to :—

“*Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.*”
(Daniel 12).

Similarly Ezekiel, prophesying of a great northern confederacy which would come down on the land of “unwalled villages,” a land which had seen a wonderful “resurrection of dry bones,” explicitly declared :—

“*It shall be in the latter days*” (Ezekiel 38).

Such references as these suggest that although there may have been “historic” fulfilments in the past, there is to be a great and a final fulfilment at a time variously described as “the appointed time,” and “the latter days,” *when the prophecies would live and speak as never before.*

In order to appreciate more fully that this time, of which so many prophets have written, is now upon us, it is helpful if the mind can first be detached from the maze and confusion of contemporary events. If a mental sweep of the world’s history since the time of Christ is then taken, the way prophecy after prophecy has suddenly begun to *live* becomes staggering and frightening.

There are the many prophecies referring to the regathering of Israel in the land of promise. For nearly nineteen centuries Palestine has been desolate and largely uncultivated, unable to support more than a meagre population. It has hardly been a land of *promise* as Abraham would have understood it.

But what a change in the last ten years ! To the historian it may be interesting and remarkable : but to the servant of God it is wonderful and fearful, for Ezekiel’s prophecy of the resurrection of dry bones is beginning to *live* and to *speak* with untold power, a striking indication that these are the days to which the prophets of Israel were mentally projected as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Consider too the land north of Israel. Throughout the centuries Russia has remained a downtrodden and backward people, playing only a secondary part in the history of the nations. It has been said that Russia in 1914 was little more advanced than England in the middle ages. This may well be an exaggeration but it is clear she has never been a major power during the 2,000 years since the time of Christ. Now however in the forty years since the first world war, Russia has become so mighty and powerful that all the world lies in fear, wondering what her next step may be. There she is apparently able to come down upon the land at any moment. The mind is compelled to remember what Habbakuk was told—that the vision was for *an appointed time* and at the end it shall *speak* : and who will deny that the vision is indeed now beginning to speak?

So also the many prophecies against Moab, Edom and the children of Ammon are now beginning to come alive. With the coming of the motor car and the aeroplane, the Arab countries, so enriched with oil deposits, are enjoying an importance they have not know for many centuries. Instead of being despised and scorned they are now finding themselves being offered the advances of the great powers, who both covet their oil and desire their well-being as a "buffer" between east and west. Who would have thought fifty years ago that the great nations of the world would shortly be competing for the affections of the Arabs and their near neighbours in the Middle East? To the servant of God looking back over a span of 2,000 years it can mean only one thing: we are living in the appointed day when the vision shall *speak*.

In the immutable wisdom of God the world stage is now being set before our very eyes. Israel is there back in the land; the king of the north with all his hosts is there, and so also is the king of the south. The Scriptures declare that there will be a conflict and that it will be in the land of Israel and the surrounding nations. Ten years ago, the contending kings were allies! Now they are openly hostile. Wherever there is trouble, be it in Korea, in Berlin, in Trieste, or daily at the United Nations, it is East against West or, from the prophet's point of view, North against South. Men and women everywhere can see the conflict coming and wonder where the "flash point" will be. God says it will be in *His* land, Israel.

A leading world statesman recently declared that "the whole of that area (the Middle East) can at any time flare up into a blaze, the consequences of which none of us can foretell." So the nations and their statesman tend to regard Israel as just another storm centre, and a very dangerous one. To those privileged it is another example of the Word of God *living* and *speaking* as never before, vividly confirming that:—

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie."

What encouragement there is in the exhortation which immediately follows:—

"Though it tarry wait for it; ; because it will surely come it will not tarry."



News from the Ecclesias

Beeston (Notts.)— Adult School Room, Acacia Walk, Beeston.
Sundays: Breaking of Bread, 11.0 a.m. Sunday School,
2.0 p.m. Bible Class, 3.0 p.m. Thursdays: 7.45 p.m.

We are looking forward if it is the Lord's will to having our Sunday School Party on Saturday, January 28th, 1956. We send

an invitation to the Brethren and Sisters hoping the children of the Manchester Ecclesia and those of our Brother and Sister McDonald of Enfield will take part.

We had five strangers at our lecture on November 25th.

R.G

Criccieth.—Pentrip, Black Rock, Portmadoc. Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.0 a.m. Revelation Study, 3.0 p.m.

It is proposed to have a lecture in Portmadoc on January 7th in the hope that some of the local people, who inform us of their difficulties in attending the lectures during the summer, may now find their opportunity. It will be interesting to see if an effort is made this time.

It is very encouraging to hear of the effort of two more who have now been permitted to find the Truth. per J.H.W.

Eden, New York.—Grange Hall, Church Street. Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.15 a.m. Sunday School, 10.0 a.m. Revelation Study, 1.30 p.m. Bible Class : Mid-week alternately in Forestville and Hamburg.

Correspondence continues with Canadian contacts, affording opportunity to witness and warn. Most especially encouraging is the persistent enquiry from Vancouver, B.C. In all this work, we pray for the Spirit's guidance, so that God and His Truth alone be honored.

It is a joy to know of the courage of those whom we now greet as Brother and Sister McDonald. In obedience to the command to make "diligent inquisition", they have found the way of life. This is to walk in the fear and dread of God—not of man.

It is planned to have the Sunday School Party on Saturday, January 28th.

Please note the change of address of Brother and Sister DeFries, to R. D. 1, Forestville, New York. J.A.DeF.

Manchester.—Memorial Hall, Albert Square, Manchester.

Sundays : Breaking of Bread, 11.30 a.m. Lecture, 3.15 p.m.

Thursdays : 7.15 p.m. at Onward Hall, Deansgate. Law of Moses Class : Second Saturday each month at 3.30 p.m.

On Wednesday, November 30th it was the pleasant duty of one brother from Beeston and one from Manchester to witness the good confession of Malcolm McDonald of Enfield London who was baptised into Christ on that day. We rejoice in the encouragement given to the work which has been going on for some time. Brother and Sister McDonald in their witness to the Truth in London will be a source of strength to each other in this important duty and will be ministered unto as occasion requires by the rest of the body.

Arrangements are being made for an effort for Christadelphians in Birmingham some time in February or March. W.V.B.