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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

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

"Take heed that ye be not deceived"

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AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD
"IN THIS PRESENT WORLD"

How often help is found in our daily reading of God's word. This morning we have considered Paul's letter to Titus, his "own son after the common faith" (Titus 1:4). A look at the apostle's position as he wrote this epistle may enhance our perception of his valued help. Paul was near the end of his life, having earlier endured one imprisonment in Rome after he had appealed unto Caesar. However, at the time of this letter, he had been set at liberty and had resumed his work of ministering to the ecclesias. He was soon to be taken into custody again during Nero's reign. Within a short time (A.D. 67 or 68), he was killed in Rome by that wicked and depraved emperor.

Titus had often accompanied and helped Paul in his work, indeed was a strength and comfort to him in the hardships which he suffered for the name of Jesus Christ. At the time (A.D. 65) of writing this letter, Paul had left Titus in Crete to work with the brethren there, desiring:

". . . that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:"
Titus 1:5.

Knowing his life would soon be ended, Paul was anxious that those in Crete might be sustained and strengthened in the faith, and so he appointed Titus to "set in order the things that are wanting." To set in order implies a making straight or upright that which was weak and which therefore hindered. What a large responsibility for this young brother! Further, he was to "ordain elders." Elders are those proved suitable to faithfully oversee the ecclesias, experienced in the word of God and the work of the Truth. Paul was most careful to clarify the qualifications needed by those who could be appointed to this most accountable work (Titus 1:6-9). These were directions of God's Spirit which, we must perceive, apply as well today as they did in the time of the apostle's labors. What great care and love he revealed on behalf of Titus and for the brethren in Crete, even though at this time he himself well may have been in jeopardy.

Paul lived and labored about thirty years following his conversion on the way to Damascus. During those years he experienced severe tribulation with suffering and anxiety. However, he also was remarkably helped by the almighty as he labored on behalf of those who sought to be "after the common faith." In that faith he and his brethren knew firsthand of the "... grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . ." (Titus 1:4),

granted from above to His faithful little ones. Seeking to help and encourage Titus, Paul spoke of that grace embodied in the Lord Jesus:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this
present world;”
Titus 2:11-12.

It was hard to live in such a manner, for Paul’s “present world” was indeed evil. Even as he wrote, Nero, Emperor of Rome, was beginning to persecute the followers of Jesus, determined to stamp out the “sect . . . that every where is spoken against” (Acts 28:22). Within a few years, Paul himself was a victim of that evil ruler. Today’s present world is a similarly evil place. As we look about, we see most of the inhabitants doing that which is right in his own eyes, every one demanding his “rights”, even though these “rights” might bring harm and damage to his neighbor. Paul described what the last days would be like:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”
I Timothy 3:1.

Perilous - fierce and dangerous. The root implies a fear and a reducing of strength. Truly fear and terror can sap the strength sorely needed to withstand the evil which Paul’s words describe so clearly: lovers of self, boastful, covetous, blasphemers, proud, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy - and many more pernicious ways. As we examine these perils, it is readily apparent that each one has to do with the satisfying of self - a putting of the flesh’s desires first, and a forsaking of those qualities which are right and pleasing to the Almighty, and which can make for peace. He also speaks of those:

“. . . Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . .”
II Timothy 3:5.

Form may have a semblance of godliness, having a name which speaks of God or of Christ, but denying or refusing the power - the mighty work, strength, and authority which truly is of God; and, to please Him, these must be taken in and become part of one’s life and living. There are two powers which have worked since the Beginning, and still work. The first is that of the flesh, every man’s natural yearnings which direct him only to the pleasing of men; and, the second is the power of godliness from God’s word, which

can direct one in the path of righteousness, denying the desires of the flesh, submitting to the commands of the Almighty. We remember Jesus' words to Peter as he protested Jesus' going to Jerusalem where he would be crucified: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22). Peter's intentions were kindly but only added to Jesus' trial rather than strengthen Him. Jesus replied:

". . . Get thee behind me, Satan (adversary): thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest (think of) not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.
Then said Jesus . . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
Matthew 16:23-24.

How many in this present world deny self (and, do we?), allowing godliness to be the power in their lives? We believe this present evil world is to be greatly changed at the soon return of Jesus Christ. In God's mercy, we have hope of salvation through striving to follow Him, refusing our own selfish ways and taking up our cross. This involves a daily crucifying of the old man of sin, whose impulses so easily beset us. How is this to be accomplished, for the flesh is so willful and our own way so alluring? Going back to Paul's letter to Titus, we are helped:

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
Titus 2:12.

What is meant by "ungodliness and worldly lusts"? John helps:

"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. For 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 2:15-17.

These lusts and the pride of life first exhibited themselves in Eden as Adam and Eve were tempted and took of the forbidden fruit - thereby disobeying God's direct command. The result was death, to them and to all their descendants. This present world continues, as has all mankind, to be motivated by those appetites

native to our flesh. How can we hope to overcome their very strong pulls? Paul shows us, as we have read:

“... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”
Titus 2:12.

Just three requirements - all antidotes to the weakening influence of our fleshly nature. Let us look at them carefully.

Soberly - the word implies a sound mind with a disciplined self. Paul used the thought of a sound mind in his exhortation to those in Colosse:

“Set you affection (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth.”
Colossians 3:2.

Natural wants are purposefully put away by those who strive to live soberly. One not sober is sometimes spoken of as not in control of his actions or thinking. Paul spoke soberly as he witnessed before Festus, who accused him:

“... Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.
But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

Acts 26:24-25.

Indeed, he spoke with soundness, which was based on God's ways and thinking. Let us, Brethren and Sisters, desire to show forth that quality of soberness which in one's mind savours the things of God.

Paul continues his counsel to “live righteously . . . in this present world.” The only righteous way is the way of God, according to His word, guided by the teaching and example of Jesus, with the support of the law, the Psalms and prophets - the whole hope of God's Israel. To do this, the daily food of His word will give nourishment, meet for the strength we need. Also, we need to keep in mind Jesus' words: “. . . let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew Ch. 16:24).

Lastly, Paul exhorts us to live “godly, in this present world.” This involves a devout striving to be like God - a very high calling - and we can never achieve to such holiness. However, by His word we can be strengthened in that desire. Going back to the law, the Almighty God commanded through Moses:

“... Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”
Leviticus 19:2.

Holy means clean, unsullied by sin. How can we be holy, God-like? He said:

“Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD (Yahweh) your God.”

Leviticus 19:4.

Idols! - Today? Yet, we must ask ourselves, What comes first in our hearts and in our lives? Is it God's word and His way? Or, is it our own interests, ambitions and activities? If these are larger in our lives and thinking, we are in a sense worshipping idols. If God and His word is alive, guiding and illuminating our living, this shuts out those activities which take too much of our time and effort; then are we not on the right way, living “godly, in this present world”? Seeking to help from his own experience, Paul spoke of afflictions and persecutions (II Timothy Ch. 3:11), and then added:

“Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

II Timothy 3:12,14,15.

In our time of probation in this present world, what marvelous and unfailing help we are given - to be living in the world and yet not “of it”. Jesus Himself prayed for His brethren engaged in that struggle:

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

John 17:14-15.

Let us lift up our eyes and look beyond this present time, waiting in faith and joy:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”

Titus 2:13.

J.A.DeF.

THE POTTER

In our study of the Book of Isaiah, we learn of the prophet sent to speak against the rebellious house of Israel. His name meaning "salvation of the Lord" was part of God's message, as he endeavored to reveal their wickedness that they might acknowledge transgression and receive again the saving grace of Yahweh. In the first chapter their lack of perception is lamented:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."
Isaiah 1:2.

Isaiah points out how even the beasts of the field were more perceptive of their masters than was Israel of their Father's care. They had forsaken the bountiful source of protection provided, plunging headlong into idolatry and the wicked practices of their heathen neighbors:

"Ah sinful nation a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."
Isaiah 1:4.

A sorry situation, but one typical of the wayward tendency in the flesh which has existed since the fall in the garden, and which will continue until that flesh is totally destroyed as God's purpose culminates. They had provoked Him to anger as did Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed because of their wickedness - all but Lot and his family - a righteous remnant delivered in His mercy.

"Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."
Isaiah 1:9.

Judah and Jerusalem had lost sight of their place before the Almighty - so engulfed in their own pursuits they had forgotten their Creator, failing to give Him honor in subjection and humility; therefore Isaiah with true perception writes:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and has consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

Isaiah 64:6-8.

How simply Isaiah revealed what was required - a submitting under His hand, to be shaped and molded as clay under that of the potter. They were mired deep in iniquity yet His salvation was still held out for any who would heed the prophet's words and bow before Him. Jeremiah uses this same figure illustrating the power and might of God:

"... I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

Jeremiah 18:3-8.

Just as the potter has power over the clay, so the Almighty has absolute power over all His creation. Yet fashioning creatures of free will, he desires to see a willing obedience offered in love and respect.

Paul in writing to his Roman brethren also referred to the potter's work as he taught of the need for obedience and submission:

"... who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Romans 9:20-21.

This lesson may seem simplistic, yet the wiles of the flesh are subtle, distracting and distorting this truth, therefore God in His mercy sent prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul, to warn and instruct His people. For the man of spirit there will be times of blessing as well as fatherly chastening in His love, yet no matter the circumstances, foremost must be a submission, a bending in humility before His greatness by those endeavoring to please Him as Peter exhorts:

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:
Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
I Peter 5:6-7.

Humility and yieldingness of mind and spirit must be evident for the Potter's hand to shape and mold. The clay must be pliable enough to conform to His pattern to become a vessel meet for His use.

Israel's failure was to forget God as their Potter, the One shaping by circumstance, molding by loving chastisement. Instead they took charge of their own lives and allowed Him no part, as was His due as Father and Creator:

“Thus saith the LORD, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?
For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”
Isaiah 66:1-2.

Here is summarized that spirit of obedience and tender love that God looks for; that the spirit man, as clay under His hand, might take in His word, allowing it to fashion him into a vessel pleasing to the Master's use, by displaying godly fear, humility and faithfulness, looking in hope to the promise of salvation.

M.C.S.

THE WORD AND THE FLESH

The words of Psalm 40 focus powerfully on the meaning of Jesus and His great work:-

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required; Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,
I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”
Psalm 40:6-8.

These words reveal how the law of Moses could not save; “- - burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required;” The purpose of God was in the One, of whom the Psalm declares, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me - - - thy law is within my heart.” He who was “the Word - - - made flesh, (who dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Christ was the sacrifice that God required.

Now why was sacrifice so important in God’s purpose? It was because the righteousness of God was involved in it. God had justly proclaimed that death would result from sin, therefore this pronouncement could not be changed. It could only be altered by sinlessness and a sacrifice which would uphold God’s purpose.

All who descended from Adam came under the condemnation of Adam, for all were born to die. Even the infant who had not sinned died when afflicted with a child’s disease. Was this right? Yes! And God showed this in Jesus, who died even though He did not sin, and this was the condemnation of sinful flesh. If the infant had recovered from its disease, it would surely have grown up to be a sinner. As the Apostle John says in his epistle:-

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
I John 1:10.

But Christ did not sin, for He was the Saviour whom God had promised. He was the victor over His flesh by not giving way to the temptations in His body, which for all His sinlessness was mortal and due to subsequently die. It was of God’s grace that Christ was raised from the dead, to become “the first fruits of them that slept” (I Cor. 15:20). This grace of God’s righteousness, could be given because Christ had not sinned.

But what of all the people of God, who have sinned? Those who have remained faithful to Christ are given to Him, to share for ever this earth’s creation which God has prepared for Him. They

will be the multitudinous Bride of Christ, to be the companions of His Kingdom, in conformity to the creative principle, "It is not good that the man should be alone." (Genesis 2:18)

So through Christ the blessing of grace and of life comes to all those faithful to God's merciful provision of the Saviour, who walk in His Spirit. This is a profound, yet simple truth. But declension has endeavoured to distort and make complex. John Bell (of Sydney, Australia) had this to say:-

"Man in his normal condition (referring to Adam) is not dying, but he is capable of death. The transgression --- and sentence did not defile his body, in as much as it did not change his body --- the fall of Adam did not effect any change in his nature; that sin in the flesh is not part of man's present natural state; and, that, therefore there is no 'sin in the flesh' to be destroyed, condemned or removed by the death of Christ."

If this be a correct interpretation, why then is it so specifically declared?:-

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

I Cor. 15:50.

Flesh and blood, then, we see is condemned to a position wherein it is not fit or worthy to inherit God's Kingdom. It is corrupt, (a corruption that came upon Adam and has passed upon all) and so needs to be changed. That change was seen in the risen Christ. And ultimately, through God's grace, will be seen in those who belong to His Son.

A BIBLE CLASS

**“Give Me Neither Poverty Nor Riches”
(Proverbs 30:8)**

In this 30th chapter of Proverbs there is a pouring out by Solomon (Agur meaning “gatherer” is another name used for Solomon), as he laments the wayward persistence of his flesh nature:

“Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.
I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.
If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.”
Proverbs 30:2-3,32.

How often we have witnessed a small child quickly cover their mouth with their hand when they have spoken out of turn or said something they know was wrong - a natural though belated reaction to stop what had already been said. This is the lesson of “lay thine hand upon thy mouth” - teaching the need to actively suppress the flesh’s influence in one’s living, which if unchecked, can lead to pride or vanity. Solomon aware of man’s tendency in this direction, appeals to the Almighty:

“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:”
Proverbs 30:8.

The context in which the above verse is used, suggests that without poverty or riches there would be sufficient provided for one’s daily needs, as the term “food convenient for me” gives the thought of enough - that which is appointed or decreed, as being not too much. Why does Solomon ask for this situation? He supplies the answer in the following verse:

“Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?
or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”
Proverbs 30:9.

If one has riches, it is easy to let pride get in the way, forgetting God as the Provider. If one is poor and needy, there is a danger of becoming bitter, perhaps resorting to desperate means to provide for oneself and family.

The spiritual mind recognizes that God does know each situation, caring and providing all that is necessary for the temporal needs of His children, as taught by Christ:

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Luke 12:27-31.

We also think of Job, recorded to be the richest man in the east, who fell into great poverty and desperate means when everything was removed. Even so he remained faithful, keeping his integrity through it all, and ultimately as the trial ended, his wealth was returned two fold because it had not corrupted him as his adversary charged:

“ . . . Doth Job fear God for nought?

Hast not thou (God) made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

Job 1:9-10.

Solomon likewise was granted great riches by God though he had not asked for them. Wealth was not a priority, instead he desired the wisdom necessary to judge God's people rightly. His attitude so pleased the Almighty that along with wisdom, wealth and honor was also granted. However, in our verse under consideration, he asks for neither riches nor poverty, recognizing through the help of the Spirit, that extremes of either could become snares, as Paul in the same vein exhorted his Philippian brethren:

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
Philippians 4:10-13.

Paul in writing to Timothy, his son in the faith likewise exhorts:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."
I Timothy 6:6-8.

Many have been given great riches by God as a blessing for faithfulness - men such as Job, Abraham, Solomon and David. How does this fit into the bigger picture? A spiritual mind must work diligently to control the flesh's influence - realizing that all benefits come from God, who expects them to be used wisely in His service. Later, near the end of his life, Solomon was one who fell into the trap of loving the things that great wealth could acquire, forgetting his place as a child of God, dependent and thankful to his Father for what had been received. This is the test that wealth can bring, as the Lord Jesus warned, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". (Luke 12:34). If God allows riches or other temporal benefits, He looks for one to respond in gratitude, using them wisely, not foolishly pandering to the wants of the flesh, thus losing one's spiritual balance:

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
Hebrews 13:5.

Recognizing that God will not forsake those who seek His wisdom and care, Solomon says:

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."
Proverbs 30:5.

Trust in God leads to a valuing of His word, which works to develop a spiritual mind pleasing to Him. Also, God will be merciful to those who recognize the flesh's weakness and who struggle earnestly to overcome. This was an early lesson given in love to the children of Israel as God through His prophet Moses warned:

THE REMNANT

"Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;"

Deuteronomy 8:11-14.

It is a test each and every day to put one's living into His hands - to value the constant sufficiency our Father provides and to be thankful for all that He gives - looking in faith to that spiritual portion which He has promised - eternal life to those who diligently seek to serve Him now.

M.C.S.

THE SERPENT

The divine record at the beginning of its witness refers to the serpent. The Septuagint translation of Genesis concerning this creature reads as follows:-

"Now the serpent was the most crafty of all the brutes of the earth, which the Lord God made, and the serpent said to the woman, Wherefore has God said, Eat not of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die. And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God knew that in whatever day ye should eat of it your eyes would be opened, and ye would be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:1-5.

For centuries popular religion has taught of a personal devil, which was behind the serpent, and working through it in the Garden of Eden in the Beginning. The following is an example of such thinking:-

"Adam and Eve, perhaps, had noticed with pleasure and partiality, that the serpent possessed an instinctive sagacity, which more resembled the effects of reason, than that

of any other creature did. And this might suggest to Satan the device of using this animal as his instrument of temptation. For the serpent appeared to speak, but in reality Satan spake by the serpent; as, in the days of Christ, the unclean spirits employed the tongues of possessed persons.

Common sense and the whole scripture lead us to conclude, that the serpent was only the instrument. Satan the real agent, who is therefore called the serpent, the old dragon, a liar, and a murderer from the beginning. The word of God reveals to us the world of spirits, holy and unholy, of which otherwise we should have had no certain knowledge."

Of course, this is the line which those who claim to "Witness" for God take. It is a theory which sounds most plausible. It seems logical in its focus on the event in the Garden of Eden, but in actual fact it is an imagined and assumed explanation. It fails because it ignores God's revealed truth in all His word.

Dr. Thomas gave a true and balanced explanation as follows:-

"The serpent was one of the living things which God had pronounced very good. It was more subtle or shrewd than any of the creatures - - -. Adam named it NACHASH (rendered in the New Testament from a word which means to SEE). - - - It was doubtless chief of the serpent tribe, and seeing that afterwards it was condemned to go upon its belly, it is probable that it was a winged serpent in the beginning, but afterwards deprived of the power of flight. Its quickness of perception of eye and ear, and its skilfulness in the use of them was the part of the goodness of its nature. It was not an evil quality by any means, for Jesus exhorts His disciples to be 'wise as the serpents, and unsophisticated as the doves'. It was an observant spectator of what was passing around it in the garden. It had seen the Lord God and His companion Elohim. He had heard their discourse. He was acquainted with the Tree of Knowledge and knew Adam and Eve had been forbidden it, even to touch. He was aware from what he had heard, that the Elohim knew what good and evil were, and that in this particular, Adam and Eve were not so wise as the Elohim. But this knowledge of the serpent would have remained within him, except that God had given him the power of expressing his thoughts in speech. But it was an intellectual but not a moral creature. It has no moral sentiments. No part of its brain was appropriated to the exercise of

benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness and so forth. To speak phrenologically it was destitute of these organs. Having only 'intellectual faculties' and propensities. Hence, its cerebral mechanism, under the excitation of external phenomena would only develop what (says the Dr.) I would term an animal intellectuality. Moral, or spiritual ideas would make no impression upon its mental constitution; for it was incapable, from its formation, of responding to them. It would be physically impossible for it to reason in harmony with the mind of God."

How apt is this explanation of Dr. Thomas. It was only man and woman who had been given a conscience. When the serpent spoke, clearly Adam and Eve had the option of rejecting its reasoning which cast doubt upon God's word, and so giving due regard to God's revealed mind. In this, of course, they failed with all the consequence of evil as well as of good. But how enlightening this truth from the beginning bears upon the condition of mankind at the present time. The New Testament witness of the Apostle Paul says to the Brethren of Christ:-

"--- In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (the serpent thinker), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (the established course of this world's rule). ---

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ---. But God, who is rich in mercy --- hath quickened us together with Christ, --- and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ (to think on heavenly things as how God would have man to think.)"
(Ephesians 2:1-5)

This deliverance by the Spirit of Christ is a deliverance from what Dr. Thomas so aptly expresses as ANIMAL INTELLECTUALITY. And look how widespread this is at the present time. There is Darwin and his evolution theory taught in almost all the schools and universities. This is animal intellectuality! The belief is that Adam was not the first man. This view has led to the conclusion that the Word of God should only be accepted as a mythical account. So the benefit of God's instruction, from the very beginning of man, is lost to the present generation. It was declared that the man should cleave unto his wife, but this essential counsel is under-mined by the philosophical denigration

of the scripture into myth. Thus the moral importance, laid down for the divine design, with which the serpent was never concerned, is weakened and thrust aside. The consequence is the disruption of family life, husbands and wives breaking asunder, with the children left in a morally wandering condition. God also said in the beginning "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But leaders today think they know better, so that he who should not "bear the sword in vain" (Romans 13:4) is not allowed to act. It is the philosophy of that early murderer Lamech who declared his belief that he should not be capitally punished, with the words, "If Cain shall be avenged seven fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold," which overlooked a special dispensation for Cain in that very early time when there was a need to multiply.

(Genesis 4:24)

So the serpent, in its thinking, has triumphed; and for the most part popular religion is diverted from the truth of the position they are really in, by their belief in a personal devil, on which to affix blame. No wonder the present generation is beset by a multiplicity of evils from which there can be no deliverance; needing divine intervention in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Signs of His Coming and of the End of the World

"Having a form of godliness - - -" (2 Tim.3.5)

The above warning of the Spirit relates to "the last days". There has always been a tendency towards form in religion, but comparing the situation of a century ago to what exists at the present time can be quite informative. Thomas Arnold who was appointed to be Headmaster of Rugby School in 1828 gave the following sermon in January 1831:-

"He (man) must know very little of himself who does not know that his own heart, after all, is his worst enemy; that if all were peace and comfort without, he has still in his own evil nature, until it is changed by the Spirit of God, a worse root of bitterness within.

But what says the last of God's prophets, when proclaiming the preparation for Christ's coming? 'Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse:' How every word of this, is, indeed, a lesson to us now! To remember the eternal law - not that of forms and ceremonies, but that of the Spirit of holiness; the love of God, and of our neighbour, that he who, like Elijah, would do the work of a true reformer, should labour to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers - that is, should labour not only to keep alive the affections of domestic life, for that is not all that is intended, but to turn to one another the hearts of those who are as fathers and children in the state - of those who are in authority, and those subject to authority - of those who, from wealth, rank, knowledge, or character, are fitted to instruct, relieve, and improve, and those, who, from poverty and ignorance, have great need that relief and instruction should be given them."

Dr. Arnold believed that society was failing in this, and warned that if the deterioration continued, "to the extreme of certainty, that God will soon come and smite the earth with a curse." They who should be fathers were showing nothing of a father's care and they who should be children were showing nothing of child like duty. If he were alive today what would he now say?!

The form is even more evident now. The nation acknowledges itself as "Christian", but the slide in standards denotes all the more that such a profession is a mere formality.

Recently a woman priest, wearing gold earrings in the shape of the sun, and a golden head band and gold chasuble had this to say in her sermon:-

"Week by week, we meet here to celebrate the Eucharist - -. Although we use words which are in places theologically dubious to say the least, something important in terms of individuals and community is being expressed - -. The desire for ritual expression exists in all of us, but sometimes the church seems to fall short of meeting people's needs ---. We fail to provide adequate rituals to meet the needs of all experiences, like divorce ---. We ask people to leap through all sorts of hoops of belief before we meet their need ---."

The lady minister said later:-

"What experiences have you had which you would like to be marked in some way? Maybe we can help you. It may be moving to a new house, retiring, a new relationship, celebrating a relationship that has lasted a long time, marking the end of a relationship."

The reporter of these words commented a feeling of being thrilled by the structure of the church building, with an elegant 194 foot spire, visible on a clear day from miles around! What "a form" it all is, worse now than at the time when Dr. Arnold warned of the need to "remember the eternal law - not that of forms and ceremonies, but that of the Spirit of holiness ---."

So has come to pass that of which the scripture has warned concerning the last days:-

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof—."
2 Tim.3:5.

NEWS FROM THE ECCLESIAS

HAMBURG, NEW YORK, *Corner Southwestern Blvd. & Pleasant Ave.*

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.
Sunday School 1.45 p.m.
Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville and Hamburg
Alternate Week: Revelation Study

The recent and severe earthquakes along with other "natural" disasters make us more acutely aware of the Almighty's awesome power, bringing to mind the fearful judgments that will prevail on earth when Jesus returns to subdue all nations and peoples.

Gratitude is the more felt for the hope of His kingdom and for present deliverance from such divine devastation that have come to our attention.

J.A.DeF.

MANCHESTER, *Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.*

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11.00 a.m.
Thursday: Bible Class 7.15 p.m.

The saying, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days", has again been brought to our remembrance. We are in receipt of a letter from Barmouth, North Wales, an extract of which is herewith quoted:

"I was pleased to be given recently a tract entitled 'Prophecies of the Bible' which I read with great joy as having lived in Israel for four years I know the truth of these things that you speak of ---"

The writer requested further articles which have been duly sent. It appears that he had our prophecy booklet passed on to him, which causes us to reflect upon the circumstances that brought this person from Israel to Wales, where indirectly, through another person, he received the witness.