

The Man on the Door-Step

A New Religion that is a Perversion of the Old.

TOM

Hello Jane. What's doing?

JANE

Nothing much, but I am glad to see you, Tom. I want to get some information from you.

TOM

Information, Jane? On what? You are not often short of information.

JANE

This is about a man who called at my door last week, and spent a good hour talking about his religion.

TOM

Religion as a door-step topic of conversation makes me suspicious. What religion was it?

JANE

He called it Seventh-Day Adventism, and at the end of the conversation I was a bit confused as to what it was all about. It was not Christian as far as I could make out, though he used the name of God and of Christ quite often. I wish you could tell me what it all means.

TOM

It would take a better man than I am to make that religion plain. It is full of contradictions and absurdities.

JANE

But why is it called Seventh-Day?

TOM

Because its main doctrine is that the Sabbath Day should be observed on Saturday and not on Sunday.

JANE

But that is not enough to build a religion on, surely!

TOM

I agree with you, but the fellow on your door-step didn't think that. To him the Fourth Commandment, in the exact form we have it in the Moral Law, is the chief commandment of the ten and the foundation of the whole of religion. It is so vital to them that our: final destiny is involved in ,our obedience to it. Or, as they put it: 'Our decision about the Sabbath involves eternal life or eternal death.'

JANE

Why don't we observe the seventh day as the divine Sabbath now?

TOM

We do observe one day in seven as sacred to the Lord, and that is the same division of time as the Fourth Com-mandment requires. But we have good reason for transfer-ring our day of rest and w.orship to the first day of the week.

It is the day on which the two greatest events in the history of mankind took place, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, both of them the reservoir of spiritual strength for mankind. It is clear that we have the sanction and example of our Risen Lord for this change. During the forty days, on earth following His resurrection, it was the first day of the week that He met His disciples and communed with them about the affairs of His Kingdom. It is significant, in this connection, that in the experience of the Church that day became the Lord's Day and was associated with outbursts of spiritual revival. For the Individual Christian, too, it meant, and still means, beginning the week with God, and finding in His worship the power that sustains him throughout the working week ahead. The sense of the Lordship of Christ over the whole, of the working week is thus made meaningful.

JANE

I think I understand that, but there is something else that disturbs me. What did my visitor mean by 'soul-sleep,' a word which he often used?

TOM

This is very important as it has a direct bearing on the doctrine of human immortality. This new religion holds that the soul cannot exist apart from the body, and that 'when the union is broken and the breath departs from the body the soul ceases to exist.' This condition, strangely enough, is called 'soul-sleep,' though the soul is held to have gone out of existence, which does not happen when we sleep!

JANE

But does the resurrection of Christ not disprove that?

TOM

Yes definitely, but this new teaching holds that Christ in the incarnation only assumed 'human flesh,' and not human nature constituted of body, soul, and spirit, and that His humanity was extinguished when He died on the Cross.

JANE

Does that mean that Christ is not in our nature now?

TOM

Yes, it means exactly that.

JANE

I think the Lord gave many proofs of His true humanity during the forty days that He lived on earth after His resurrection. And He seemed anxious to demonstrate that He was 'the same Jesus.' If He did not take our humanity to Heaven with Him He cannot be 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' as the Scripture asserts.

TOM

That is perfectly true. It is a totally dark outlook on human survival after death that this new religion gives. It teaches that at death we are like the beasts that perish, at least till the resurrection. The Bible declares with utmost confidence that 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord'.

JANE

Can you tell me what it means to have in its title 'Adventism'?

TOM

It means that they believe that there is to be a personal advent of Christ to this world at any time. Dates have been fixed from time to time for this advent, but all of them were proved false. But if Christ has no humanity, it is difficult to understand in what form He could return to this earth. There would have to be a second incarnation.

JANE

I noticed that this man spoke frequently about 'salvation.' I wonder what it means.

TOM

Very little in fact. For one thing they hold that there was nothing of what we understand by atonement effected by Christ's death on the Cross. Since Christ was in this world merely in 'a body of flesh' He could not make atonement for human sin. What He did, we are told, was to lay down 'the condition of atonement,' but the true and final atonement was to be effected in Heaven, and that was yet to come. In any case 'salvation', as they understood it, is a matter of keeping the Moral Law, and if our obedience

breaks down at any point our salvation is lost. Forgiveness is also placed on strange foundations. They accept that God's grace can grant us forgiveness of sins, but it is given 'subject to our full obedience to His law'. It is a new conception of the meaning of forgiveness. The Christian doctrine of justification by faith is ruled out.

JANE

What puzzles me is that my instructor seemed to have found all this in the Scriptures, and yet I do not recognize it as part of my Bible.

TOM

You are right, Jane. It is not in the Scriptures as we know them. The fact is that they add to the Scriptures the substance of visions given to their own followers -mostly women -and however self-contradictory they are they accredit them with authority higher than that of the Scriptures. The result is that we cannot have any intelligible discussion with them, as you will have discovered yourself. So much of this strange doctrine is the product of unbalanced minds and acute neurotic conditions.

JANE

Thank you, Tom, for all this information. I hope the result will be that I shall appreciate the observance and worship of the Lord's Day more than I have done. To the Seventh-Day Adventist the Sabbath is a yoke that crushes, to me it is a wing that lifts me into the liberty wherewith God makes His people free.

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