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EDITORIAL.

CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS.

JOHN THIRD.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night it seems he imagined himself as if well skilled on "earthly things" or God's government on earth. Having heard of Jesus' teaching and miracles, he acknowledged him to be a teacher come from God and likely thought if he could but obtain lessons from Him that he would be able to tell men how God ruled angels in heaven as well as how he governed men on earth. Jesus said nothing of the ruler's flattering compliment but proceeded at once to show him his entire ignorance of God's earthly government. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This announcement must have fallen with crushing weight on a teacher of Israel when well assured that he was not born again. He, a ruler in the Kingdom of God, to be informed that he would not even see or enjoy that Kingdom without a new birth! It was man's mind that must be renewed, while the ruler only thought of man's body when he asked how he could "be born when he is old," &c. &c. Had he thus been reborn, he would be no nearer to the Kingdom than before, as that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Jesus taught that God had placed at the entrance of His Kingdom a new birth, partly seen and partly unseen, and tells Nicodemus at the beginning of His own mission what he tells His apostles at the beginning of theirs. To him he says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," and to them, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16. An apostle exhorts those who were in the kingdom, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. x. 22. Each case has the seen and the unseen. The sprinkling of the heart with the blood of Christ is *not* seen but the washing of the body with pure water *is* seen. The faith of him who believeth and is baptized is not seen but his baptism is seen and the birth of the Spirit is not seen while the birth of water is. Jesus does not here explain the birth of water which is seen but tells Nicodemus at the eighth verse how a man is born of the Spirit. We will hear Moses E. Lard on this verse, "First, then, in regard to the word which in our common version is rendered "*wind*," This word occurs in the Greek New Testament 386 times. In 384 it is rendered into English by the term *spirit* or its equivalent *ghost*. Once in the book of Revelation

it is rendered "*life*," when beyond doubt it should be rendered "*a spirit*." But in not a single case in the New Testament except the case in hand is it rendered "*wind*." Now in translating, one great rule to be observed is, to translate the same *original* word *uniformly* in the same equivalent English word unless the sense forbids it. No translation is deemed good which violates this rule, none very faulty which does not. Now since the word in hand out of 386 instances is in 384 of these uniformly rendered by the word *spirit* or by a word of the same meaning, the presumption in favor of a similar rendering in the two remaining instances is as 384 to 2, and when it is remembered that the sense does not forbid this rendering the presumption becomes an imperious necessity, for these reasons, therefore, I render the original by the word *spirit*, understanding thereby the Holy Spirit.

The leading word thus rendered and the whole verse is literally translated thus: "*The Spirit breathes where it sees fit, and you hear its voice but know not whence it comes or whither it goes,*" in this way is every one who is begotten by the Spirit.— ("Living Pulpit," page 247.)

The first translation ever made into English renders the original word the same as Lard; so does the Douey as well as very many of our modern versions. Even the last English version, notwithstanding its great desire to follow the common, gives this rendering in the margin.

This rendering makes the passage beautifully clear. He who is "the light of the world" shows a peculiar pleasure in making the new birth plain to every ignorant and eager pupil. He tells Nicodemus and all who hear his words that the Holy Spirit is the author of the new birth and also how it is brought about. The Spirit breathes or speaks where he pleases and when men hear what the Spirit says and with all their heart believe it, he so enlightens and changes them that they become new creatures. They are begotten of the Spirit by the incorruptible Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. All New Testament conversions are illustrations of Jesus' statement and all allusions to the change confirm his word.

Nicodemus, still astonished at what he hears from the Heavenly Teacher, so clear yet so new and strange, asks, "How can these things be?" i. e., how can a man be so completely renewed by hearing the Holy Spirit speak to him? Jesus appeals to his own knowledge as a teacher in Israel, as if he said: Don't you sometimes find a man so far mistaken on an important matter as to corrupt his heart and life? How do you attempt to restore such a man? Is it not by speaking to him clearly, earnestly and persuasively? If he believes you he will be convinced of his error and turn from it. If he does not believe you he will go on in the wrong course. Now, if you by earnest words of truth and love change a man, is it strange that the Spirit of the Lord by persuasive words of truth and love and power should accomplish in man a change infinitely greater or make him a new man?

We speak what we have seen and know to be true and you receive not our testimony. If I tell you what God does on earth or earthly things and you hesitate to believe them, how can you believe what He does in heaven? And who else has been in heaven to tell you of heavenly things?

Another question that would naturally occur to Nicodemus is this: If the Holy Spirit renews a man by speaking to him, will the Spirit by speaking to him on any subject if he believes it produce the new birth? Jesus clears up such questions by showing that it is a particular truth, and not all truth or even all truth uttered by the Spirit which produces the new birth. The Bible is full of truth uttered by the Holy Spirit, and although it is *all* profitable for the purposes for which God has given it, all truth will not produce the new birth however firmly believed. It is a truth uttered by the

Spirit that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and thereby saved the life of that nation who for their sins were dying from the bite of flying serpents. We may confidently believe that truth and admire the goodness of God to these sinners but such belief does not change our hearts, as the facts concerned them—not us. But Jesus had truth to utter that concerns the whole world and the Spirit breathing that truth would change and save him that believes it. "The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," &c., &c. When Jesus comes to describe the truth that would produce the new birth He seems to linger amidst the wonders of the glorious theme. It was not enough to tell that the Son of Man would be lifted up on the cross to save every one that believes in Him, but He reveals His Father's feelings to a world in rebellion against Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c., &c. Not merely sent Him but *gave* Him. He then was God's gift to men. He left His Son in their hands who, after witnessing His pure and self-denying life, His miracles of goodness, condemned Him to the death of a blasphemer. God spared Him not, but freely gave Him up for us all. He here tells the love of God to man and the blessed consequences of men believing that love and accepting of Christ. He did not send His Son to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He also shows the awful state of the unbeliever and what condemns him.

The grand work of the Holy Spirit was to confirm all that Jesus had said and apply to obedient believers all He had promised. So when Jesus had been lifted up and had died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and risen again the third day according to Scriptures; after He had charged His apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, &c., &c., and had taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He and His Father sent down the Holy Spirit to accomplish the very work He described to Nicodemus. The Spirit filled the apostles and they spoke to the various nations assembled at Jerusalem as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Spirit was pleased to breathe at Jerusalem, that day 3,000 heard the sound thereof and were born of the Spirit; they were born of water and of the Spirit and entered into the Kingdom of God. They were now able to see or enjoy the blessings of that Kingdom. Although some of them were the murderers of the Lord Jesus they then believed in the Son and were not condemned. The men through whom the Spirit breathed are dead but the Spirit yet lives and the truth that caused the new birth then is still the incorruptible Word of God that liveth and abideth forever, and the same promise of Christ still stands in all its power and glory, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

D. C.

OUR correspondents will please take notice that our P. O. Box is now 106 instead of 83 as heretofore.

REMEMBER—the brethren at Milton give a *warm invitation* to all the brethren and friends who can possibly attend the Annual. The Meeting commences the Friday before the first Lord's day in the month.

It will be a great disappointment to the brethren attending the Annual to learn that our editor, Bro. Crawford, will not be able to be present. We all know that he will be there in spirit, but *we all* wanted his body too.

THE Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces met at Amherst, August 21st. According