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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"

AT THE TABLE OF THE LORD

THE HISTORY OF THE TRUTH IN THE LATTER DAYS

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

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At the Table of the Lord

“Comfort Ye My People”

These words in Isaiah show us the care of the Almighty for His people. The prophet was commanded to, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem”. The Hebrew word used here is also expressed as “to the heart of”. God’s words, then, through Isaiah, were to the very heart of His people, for their comforting and sustaining. Should they not speak to us in the same way—right to our hearts? And should there not be a response, for it is only by our answer to His Words, that we are allowed to receive comfort?

Contemplation of these words of Isaiah may help us to perceive this comfort, which he was to bring to Israel, and to all who would be of Israel.

In verses 3—5 of Isaiah 40, is found the promise of “Messiah”, the Lord Jesus, His way being prepared by one crying in the wilderness. In this connection, a promise was given.

“The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Such words would indeed speak to the heart of a faithful Israelite—speak of the One for whom he looked and longed, the Messiah, and what He would bring, in fulfilling the promises given so long ago. How very far off this time would seem! These promises had been there since Abraham’s day. What patience and what faith was necessary to keep the hope alive. But how reassuring, these words of Isaiah : “all flesh shall see it”. It will come, for the mouth of our God, our Father, has said it. Can we, therefore, wait with patience, with a lively hope, and also a righteous fear of that day?

A Shepherd, The Comforter

Isaiah speaks again of this wondrous event.

“Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him ; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.”

A reward with Him—a work before Him. What is this work? It is great indeed—to take out a people, belonging to His Father, to bear His Name, and whose reward is to be the gift of life in serving Him in righteousness for eternity. For these who hunger now for His ways and His righteousness, there will be always that comfort spoken of in verse 11.

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

Can greater comfort be found than that given in the figure of the good shepherd, who as Jesus tells us, gives His life for His sheep. He loves the sheep, for they are precious in His sight, and because of that love, there is His tender care—a feeding to be sure each has enough nourishment for proper growth and strength to endure : a care for the lambs, gathered with His arm and held to His bosom, close to His heart ; to protect and guard ; and a gentle leading of fruitful ones, lest any injury or harm should come. Can we not see, in this figure, brethren and sisters, the comforting hand of God, providing through His Son, for our every need, just as a true shepherd would for his flock ?

And having this example of His loving care, do we in our striving to be His brethren and sisters, reflect that same care for those whom we love, careful not to hurt or hinder, but endeavouring to feed, to help, to draw close, those who are like ourselves—striving to be His sheep ?

David who experienced this wonderful comfort, poured out his gratitude (Psalm 23) : “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”. Every need of the sheep anticipated and provided for their good. “He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” For those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, what a joy is found in the paths of righteousness. Further, we find in David’s words : “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” How, we may ask, can a rod or staff comfort ? Perhaps the words of Ezekiel 20 : 37 help. “I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.” It is only those who pass under the rod of correction, who are brought into the bonds of the covenant. Our own nature tends to lead us away from such a covenant, and so God in His loving kindness, provides the rod to chasten, to teach, and so to unite in that covenant.

In addition to the rod, the staff is necessary—that which is given for the support of His people. The record concerning Jacob is that he leaned upon his staff (Hebrews 11 : 21). We know that Jacob halted because the angel of God had touched his thigh as he wrestled through the night ; a life-long reminder that his walk was halting, uncertain in his own strength, and that His staff was needed to support. Do not these words, brethren and sisters, bring comfort to us, speaking to our hearts, as we strive to be bound to the Almighty by that same covenant? Do we pass under the rod, rejoicing at the graciousness of God, that He should condescend to correct ? Do we acknowledge how much correction is needed because of our own inability to walk unerringly in His way ?

“The Lord shall comfort Zion”

Isaiah writes with the words of the Spirit, chapter 51 : 3—

“For the Lord shall comfort Zion : . . . joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”

Is this not the ultimate for which we strive, when His people will know an eternal comfort, shall truly know the Father, dwelling in His presence, able to speak with Him, and express their thanksgiving and praise for His mercy ? Is this not the time when “sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (verse 11), when the voice of the Almighty shall be heard—

“I have put words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundation of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.” (verse 16).

What comfort, if we are permitted to hear the words, “Thou art my people”, when the new heavens and the new earth are established by the hand of the Lord. Do we not need to have these words of God in our mouths, feeding upon them, meditating upon them, that we may have strength for the struggle to go up toward Zion ?

The words of Paul in Romans 15 : 4, tell us, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.” Patience and comfort—how we need these ; and the Creator offers them graciously. Surely, without them, David could not have endured, nor Daniel, nor Ezekiel, and neither shall we. Can we not regard His Word truly as vital food ? If we hunger for righteousness, then here is the way we may hope to be satisfied.

As the rod passes over each of us, how depressed, how grieved we feel ; how anxious too, lest we fail to receive the lesson. How we long for strength. Are we permitted, then, a glimpse into the glories and eternal comforts which may be ours, if we long for them in truth ?

“O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted ! behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires . . . In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear ; and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee.” Isaiah 54 : 11—14.

How gratefully saddened hearts may receive His message of comfort and mercy. We can so easily succumb to fear, and so lose that hope and comfort, for at times the adversary may seem overwhelming, even as it did to the elders and people of Israel at one time, as when Sennacherib came up against Hezekiah and Jerusalem with an overwhelming force. The subtle arguments of Sennacherib were a very real danger. Hezekiah gathered the people together, and "spoke comfortably to them"—to their heart. What were these words which found response?

"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid or dismayed, for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles." II Chron. 32:7—8

The record tells us that the people of Jerusalem "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah". We know that without their lifting up a hand, 185,000 of Sennacherib's army were killed, and the siege was lifted. Can we imagine the relief and rejoicing such deliverance brought, what comfort it afforded to those who seemed so close to being overwhelmed? Such can be, and indeed is, the experience of all those to whom the Almighty speaks comfortably through His Word. If only, brethren and sisters, we could indeed rest in His Words, not seeking our own deliverance; but submitting to His will with the trust that He will comfort in His own way, as seems best for His purpose.

"The God of all Comfort"

As comfort and help is found, can we join with Paul in his words in II Corinthians 1:3—7:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation."

The God of all comfort—our Father! Can we grasp that He, the God of the universe, should reach out to bring solace and peace to a few mere men? and do we show Him our gratitude with lives that do indeed strive to proclaim how we feel? How may we do so? Paul's words continue—"that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." This is indeed love and gratitude. Do we in truth try to speak to the hearts of our brethren and sisters, just as He, the great Eternal, has "come alongside"? Do we take every opportunity to reach out in love and mercy, really trying to understand and look at another's trials through their own eyes, and minds?

The Lord Jesus has told us,

“ . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matt. 25 : 40.

As we call to mind the circumstances in which this was said, we remember how He had told them, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick and ye visited me.” How this must be our exhortation ! Oh, how we do hope to hear the words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father”, because the desire has been to reach out in love to all who are His.

Brethren and sisters, do let us exert ourselves so that we may experience that strength spoken of by Isaiah 40 : 29—31 :

“He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have no might . . . they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; and they shall walk and not faint.”

Do we wait upon Him, looking to Him, working for Him, making our lives a witness to the fact that we love Him, and that we love all those who likewise love Him ?

J.A.DeF.

The History of the Truth in the Latter Days (13)

“Christadelphians and Re-union”

An appeal to all Christadelphians

It will be conceded by all ‘Christadelphians’ that millions profess the name of Christ who are without Him, who are without hope and without God in the world. Sincerity, zeal and devotion are recognised as excellent qualities in themselves, but unless allied to a belief of and obedience to, the One Gospel they are of no value. Man looks upon the outward appearance and is naturally inclined to regard these admirable qualities as being all-sufficient. God, however, looks upon the heart and knows that without the one essential of faith there can be no unity with Him whatever services or sacrifices are made in His name. So important have these commendable features become to many ‘Christadelphians’ that they now openly avow that some in the various Churches and Chapels may be saved. Such a view was never entertained by the early Christadelphians, for they believed and preached that there is only one true Body of Christ ; that Christ is not divided, and that a man is either in Christ, dwelling in the Light, or he is

in the world, in darkness. They were emphatic as to the teaching in the Scripture that there is a clear line between light and darkness, between truth and error.

To read the 'Intelligence' pages of Christadelphian magazines of seventy years ago is illuminating on this subject. In those days the Bible was not doubted and ignored as it is by most people today. Men and women were brought up at least to respect it if not always to believe it. The result was that each month most ecclesias were able to report in their 'Intelligence' columns one or two additions to their numbers. Frequently one comes across such items as—"We are pleased to report the baptisms of James Brown (formerly Methodist) and John Smith (formerly Church of England)." Here in these news items is more than just ecclesial news: they provide convincing testimony to the universal belief of the early Christadelphians that the churches and chapels were places of darkness and that any who would come to the Light of the Truth must come out from them, and be baptised into the one Body of Christ, where alone the Light can be found.

Such simple scriptural teaching is nowadays rejected by many—probably by most—Christadelphians. Frequently the argument is heard that God will judge a man 'according to the light he has received'. This may sound reasonable, but it is certainly not scriptural. Taken to its logical conclusion, and applied not only to Christendom but to all the world, including the totally ignorant amongst say the Indians, Chinese and Africans, it means that they too should have hope of salvation. So also should all young babies and children—that is, if God judges them 'according to the light they have received.' Surely on this basis, to enlighten such is to do them a disservice in that enlightenment increases their responsibility to God! It is an argument which pressed to its logical conclusion can be summed up by the Gentile 'proverb' "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise"!

This innocent-looking 'doctrine' which is openly taught in the churches and chapels, and which has now infected Christadelphians, is usually heard when some devout and zealous churchgoer is mentioned in discussion. How often is the remark heard—"Do you mean to say such a person is without hope?" "In many ways he is better than I, and I feel sure there must be a future for him after this life."

The fault in this reasoning lies in the fact that the great Creator has been left out of account. If the work were of men, then such an argument would be valid. But the work is not of man. In every detail, it is of God and His Son. In the first place every one called to the Truth is first drawn out from the world—by God.

Jesus stated this in the plainest of words when He said, "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him." If the one called responds and is baptised, he is 'born again'—of God, born 'not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.' Because of this, he is privileged to address God as his Father, whose son he now is and henceforth to enjoy the comfort and guidance of the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of God.

Once the fact is fully comprehended that the whole work of the Truth from the beginning to the end is of God, then the contention that a man will be judged 'according to the light he has received' can be seen to be a complete denial of the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul said most emphatically that 'the gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth', clearly implying there could be no salvation without belief in the gospel. He further made it clear there is only one gospel, and that any deviation from this gospel is 'another gospel' which is not the true gospel. He laboured strenuously on behalf of the few in Galatia to point out this essential truth, and to emphasise that if in any particular they moved from the one gospel, then they would lose the Truth, and adds these strong words—

"But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed."

(Galatians 1 v. 8).

How far removed is this from the teaching that a man will be judged according to the light he has received! No, the devout and humble mind will at once recognise the unique position in which the one gospel stands and how precious it is, and how strenuous must be the efforts to preserve it in its purity.

"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost"

But what about the unfortunate man who may not have had the opportunity of hearing this one true gospel? Is he without hope? The answer of the Apostle is clear and to the point —

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost".

(2 Corinthians 4 v. 3).

Words could not be plainer to show on the one hand the power of the gospel, and on the other the position of those who have not embraced it in its entirety.

As though to relieve the mind of any embarrassment as regards the great majority of mankind who have never had the opportunity of hearing the gospel, he adds—

“For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

(v. 6).

Here is an explicit statement that the coming of any to the light of the Truth is not dependent on the work of men. It is a work of God. It is the Almighty who decides whether or when the light of the Truth should shine into the heart of a man. It is not a question of man-made opportunity, but is something dependent entirely on the kindness of God. If He in whose hands nations are but as the dust of the balance and a drop in the bucket should see someone whose heart is towards Him, will He fail to shine into his heart ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’? Will He not bring him to the Body of His Son, just as He did with Cornelius?

The view that many in the churches and chapels may be accepted when Christ returns is a denial of all this. To say that men are judged only according to the knowledge or light they have received would be understandable if it were a question of man-made opportunity. But, ‘the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards him’, and it was because of this that Cornelius was called.

Sincere Christadelphians are invited to consider this matter: to ponder the great change in outlook which has taken place in the relatively short space of eighty years. They are asked to weigh over the inscription on the left hand side of Dr. Thomas’ grave—

“In his works and lectures, he demonstrated the unscriptural character of popular Christianity, and brought to light anew the long lost faith of the Apostles.

“Thy Word is Truth”

—and then ask themselves—was Dr. Thomas mistaken in his attitude to popular Christianity? Were he and Robert Roberts and the early Christadelphians mis-guided in their insistence that any called to the Truth must leave the darkness of Christendom before they could embrace the ‘long lost faith of the Apostles’? Or has there been a great departure from the Faith?

“Come out and be separate, and I will receive you”

If, as so many Christadelphians say today, some in various Churches and Chapels will be saved if they have believed the Truth and been baptised, then why should they ask any to forsake their previous ‘places of worship’ on becoming Christadelphians? Does it not show a gross inconsistency to ask a person on becoming a

Christadelphian to leave his church, when so many Christadelphians believe there may be some in the churches who will be saved? If some can be, why not all who 'believe and are baptised'?

Does it not show that present day Christadelphians have lost the power of the Truth, conveyed in the words of the Almighty—

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, . . . and I will receive you.

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”.

(2 Cor. 6 vv. 17-18).

To have the Creator as a Father! What a wonderful condescension! It is beyond the understanding of the finite mind that the great Creator with such manifest power and glory as seen in the heavens, should look down upon any man and invite him to such a close relationship of Father and Son. Surely One so great, One so holy must be honoured in the way He has appointed if such a blessed relationship is to be permitted.

‘Coming out’ and being ‘separate’ is reduced by many Christadelphians to a profession without action. The works of the world are denied by some and eschewed by others, but how many will refuse association with those who condone and practice worldly evils? ‘Coming out’ not only means denying the evil of Egypt, but also leaving the evil and leaving those who continue to practise the evil. This is the proof of true faith showing a clear understanding of the doctrine of fellowship. The late C. C. Walker spoke for many modern Christadelphians when he wrote—

“In nothing do we feel more bereft than in this question of fellowship”.

The loss by Christadelphians of this essential doctrine, has led them back into Egypt to a darkness which can be felt, so that as you speak to many of the older Christadelphians they are befogged and bewildered at the turn of events over ‘Re-union’. They openly say they do not like it; many say they do not agree with it; but most cannot see the only way of delivering themselves from the darkness—by ‘coming out and being separate’ and leaving an association and a name once so precious as descriptive of those holding the Truth in its purity.

“Withdrawal”—a means of preserving “Fellowship”

To have fellowship with the Father and His Son is the greatest honour to which man can attain. Such glory and holiness is beyond natural achievement. Christendom has so misrepresented divine mercy that the privilege of being allowed fellowship with God is

no longer understood ; rather is it taken for granted. No longer is the condescension of God thoroughly appreciated, but rather is it assumed that God should be delighted with such casual service as can be given without inconvenience or trouble. This God-dishonouring thought has also infected many Christadelphians as is revealed in their emphasis of God's mercy to the exclusion of the conditions upon which it is granted. When the conditions are stressed the reply is often made : "You must not judge . . . God is very merciful . . . There will be many in the Kingdom who thought they would not be . . ." What has happened to these who once had the Truth ? Are they not like Israel who when they lost the Truth and the fellowship of God, were told that they had "no fear of God before their eyes." ?

This fear is not terror, as all know, but a deep reverence born of love, and consequently a fear of hurting the One so loved. It is seen in some families where the child's attachment to its parents is what it should be. The outlook is governed by what would please father or mother, a dread lest anything should be done which would displease. This is true love—true 'fear' in a scriptural sense. It involves looking at one's conduct and the conduct of the Ecclesia as it will affect God, who is felt to be as close as a Father, and who, it is realised, is pleased with any who are 'toward' Him, and yet can be hurt or grieved by any 'froward' conduct, that is, ways opposed to or 'fro-ward' from Him.

Once the mind has in a measure comprehended the greatness of God and been filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for His kindness, then the conditions for the preservation of fellowship with Him seem both necessary and reasonable. How many there are today like Uzzah in the past, who, having no regard for God's holiness, touched the Ark ! He dared not have been near the Ark if his mind had been like David's, whose fear of God was so profound that he could be called a 'man after God's own heart.' Uzzah perished—instantly, dramatically ; a reminder that many who come to claim a closeness with the anti-typical Ark, Christ, in the days of His appearing will likewise perish.

Jesus forewarned of this peril, not only in regard to individuals, but also of those bodies of individuals who lose the Truth through unfaithfulness. This is seen in a striking manner in His reference to the attitude which each in an Ecclesia should show towards his brother—

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against (or before, as in Acts 22 v. 30) thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother." Matthew 18 v. 15.

Here it is seen most clearly that sin not repented of alienates from God and places a brother in a perishing situation ; and so Jesus in His love shows the steps which must be taken to gain such an one who is perishing. How few Christadelphians today realise the simple fact that one who is opposed to Christ in some practice or doctrine is perishing. How mistaken is the idea that mercy should be shown to his weakness. True mercy is to be seen in the efforts made to recover the one who is perishing. First, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." If this fails to recover the erring one then witnesses are to be taken that there might be greater influence to gain the perishing brother. If the brother should still remain rebellious and will not hear, then the Ecclesia must be told, that the whole influence of their counsel and appeal might be rapidly brought to bear to deliver the one perishing. But what if this appeal fails ? Must appeals be continued indefinitely ? Oh no ! it would be dishonouring to God to continue in association with one who is a rebellious sinner, and so Jesus shows that after these three steps have been taken in a spirit 'to gain', then he must be 'unto thee as a heathen man and a publican'. When it is realised how much the 'heathen man' and 'publican' were hated of the Jews then it will be evident that there must be withdrawal from one who is a sinner and who on three occasions has refused to repent. Jesus promises that where this is done faithfully, then 'whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven', a remark which shows how grave is the peril of the unrepentant sinner.

Earlier in His discourse the Lord Jesus makes reference to the whole Body and shows how its position as before God is very similar to that of the individual brother—

"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend (cause to offend) thee, cut them off and cast them from thee. It is better for thee to enter into life halt and maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend (cause to offend) thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire". (Matthew 18 vv 8-9).

These words of the Lord Jesus have been a puzzle to most Christadelphians, who have not seen anything more in them than a general moralising to refrain from evil practice, but surely where such specific details are given, then the words of the Spirit must have a more profound meaning. Is not the picture before the mind

one of the 'Body'—the Body of Christ, which as the Apostle Paul later says is made up of various members, God having set each member in the Body as it hath pleased Him ?

If one of these should cause to offend, then not only is the individual offending brother in peril, but he also jeopardises the position of the whole Body. Those who have experienced withdrawals and passed through division know how hard is the duty of 'cutting off' or 'plucking out' some previously honoured brother who has fallen and will not repent, and yet what is the result if duty be forsaken for indulgence in kindly feelings? Jesus says in words that will startle the devout mind—'the whole body will be cast into hell fire.' Christadelphians will admit that the bodies of the Beast and the False Prophet and the Dragon are to be cast into the fire of destruction when the Lord Jesus returns even if they do not fully appreciate that that would mean the destruction of all present Churches and Chapels. Let it be remembered that these had their beginnings in the Truth, and at some point, through the neglect of the counsel of Jesus, they left the Truth, and their destiny is to be consumed by everlasting destruction. Will present Christadelphians take heed of the frightening peril in which they as a Body stand? They may feel safe in their claim that they have the Truth, but so do many Churches and Chapels. It is only by a whole-hearted acceptance of the words of Jesus that our claims can be decided and we can come to know exactly where we stand.

Concluding appeal

As the History of the Truth in the Latter Days has been reviewed, it is seen that this corresponds with that of former times—a continual need for division for the preservation of the light from the darkness. Those who deplore divisions fail to realise that without the continual dividing of the light from the darkness, the light of the Truth would have long ago been lost. It was nearly extinguished in the days of Noah, and again appears to have almost been obscured when Abraham was called. Israel for a while maintained the light, but eventually failed to do so, and in consequence were removed by God from their land. Later Jesus came as the Light of the world, but how very few heeded that Light, and many who thought they had the light of the Truth were told by Him the light that was in them was darkness. For a while afterwards the early ecclesias rejoiced in the light and were indeed lightstands. The letters to those early ecclesias show how this light began to fail, and the warning finger of the Spirit was pointed against the danger of it becoming extinguished altogether—

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent . . . or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”.

It is not known how long it was before these early ecclesias, who once rejoiced in the light, had lapsed into darkness, but certainly none is found there today. What is the lesson? Is it not that throughout the history of the Truth, both in former times and in the latter days, there will be divisions over-ruled by God to maintain the light and prevent it being extinguished by the darkness?

And so as the history of the Truth in the last hundred years is considered, the mighty hand of God in preserving the Light can be seen—

The division of 1866 removed the darkness of Doweism which professed it was of no importance whether one believed in the immortal soul, or in a personal devil. Suppose there had been no division: what would have happened to the light of the Truth?

In 1885 there was a division over the inspiration of the Scriptures: not that those who were withdrawn from denied that the Scriptures were inspired—their statement on this point seemed adequate—but when put to the test, it left room for error in the Scriptures in certain particulars. If there had been no division the power of the light would have gone. Its authority would have been diminished with the result that the Truth would have become like Suffolk Street wherein there is a nominal profession of belief in certain articles of faith but a refusal to withdraw where these are not upheld.

In 1894 division came through the failure to appreciate that those who were ‘responsible’ but had not been baptised would be raised, a teaching very convenient to the flesh but opposed to the justice and wisdom of God.

In the next thirty years declension from the primitive faith and practice was rapid, but in 1923 God saw fit to rescue the light from the threatening gloom of darkness. Various items of wrong doctrine had been introduced in Britain and in the States, but the immediate cause of division was the refusal of Birmingham to show by faithful action that joining the constabulary was a sin.

Then the light now delivered shone brightly for a while as it had done in the early Christadelphian days, but then came the specious doctrine that possibly all the twelve or more

sects of Christadelphians might contain the 'elect', a view making void the very purpose of division. Once more, in order to deliver the light from the eclipse of impending darkness, there was division.

And so if time were to go on it must be expected this process will continue. In 1933 another division was necessary, whilst in 1954 there was division because some refused to honour the commands of Christ respecting the steps to be taken in dealing with some who were alleged to be evil.

Let the devout Christadelphian review this history and ask himself the question, What would have happened to the Truth if there had been no division? There is no doubt what would have happened to the Truth in earlier times: most certainly it would have been engulfed by the darkness. Events of the last hundred years show in no less degree the need for division without which the precious Truth would most certainly have been lost.

The story of the Truth from the human point of view is very sad, but it will not finally appear so when all those who have carefully maintained the light are seen assembled with Him who is The Light of the world, a relatively small number of the myriads that have been born upon the earth and lived and died, but now a multitude redeemed out of every kindred and tongue and people. As they enter the land they are a glorious company glowing with all the fulness of the light of God Himself, glowing with righteousness, with Truth, with kindness, with peace and with joy, and glowing also with immortality, as Ezekiel saw them. Their light lightens the earth, a beautiful figure which shows their divine qualities and also the divine purpose which is to be fulfilled through them and their Head that 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.' No-one surely would dare to suggest that if any disobeyed God by refusing to come out from the darkness but continued in association with it, they could be considered worthy of association with such a glorious throng. And so the final appeal to Christadelphians is to be obedient to the divine invitation, that through His mercy the glory of His light might be enjoyed to its fulness in the day when He comes who was and will be the Light of the world.

W.V.B.

“ The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the world ”

Fear and consternation has been shed abroad by recent events in Syria and the Middle East. Diplomatic activity in the capitals of the world is at fever pitch as ways and means of “preserving

the balance of power" in that troubled area are frantically sought. Planning and scheming continues in what is really a vain and futile effort to keep at bay the ever-increasing threat of war—a war such as the world has never previously known.

To those who have a regard for the Bible, this strengthening of Russia's influence in Syria stands out as yet another stage toward that great event, the return of Christ to the earth. The holy prophets of God have long foretold that in 'the last days' a mighty host from the north would sweep down through the land of promise, even as far as Egypt. Centuries of silence have passed—"I have long time holden my peace"—but now their words are quietly but rapidly taking shape : so quietly as to make it seem a natural move for Russia to invade the Holy Land. Undoubtedly we are living in the last days, and the great day of God Almighty is nigh at hand.

Rumours of War

When the disciples of Jesus besought Him for 'signs of his coming and of the end of the world', they were told not only of wars which should come, but also of 'rumours of war'. One cannot help but marvel at the way His words in every detail are now coming 'alive' as never before. Rumours of war! For several years now, the whole world has been darkened by foreboding clouds growing blacker every month—the 'rumour' of war (or 'that which is heard of war' as the original rendering means). It is, of course, true that nearly every war of history has been preceded by a 'rumour' or talk of war—but never on the scale of today. Throughout the twelve years which have elapsed since the end of World War II, the hostility and mutual hatred between the 'King of the North' and the 'King of the South' has been open and unabashed, accompanied by war preparations on an unprecedented scale. Each makes no secret of its complete distrust of the other, and preparations for war on the basis that aggressors can only be taught in the language they know, continues to dominate the military, political and economic life of every great nation of the world.

America's contribution to this 'rumour of war' is fantastic. She is spending far more on 'Defence', as she prefers to call it, than on everything else put together. She boasts of having two hundred striking points encircling Russia, capable of causing devastation within a few hours. Even with such mighty power, she can find no comfort. The 'rumour of war' pervades her land, even as it does all lands. Now she is haunted with the fear that the armament race is not being won, and has to acknowledge that the Russian claim to be able to obliterate most large American cities within

two hours may be true. So intense is the armament race, that the short space of twelve years has been sufficient to render obsolete nearly all the armaments of the second world war. New words and phrases replace the old: 'strategic atomic bombs' and 'I.C.B.M.'s' (inter-continental ballistic missiles) are becoming everyday phrases. In a way surpassing anything previously known, we are living in a time of one gigantic rumour of war.

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord"

As the mind surveys the depressing world scene, watching the approach of a "time of trouble such as never was", with seemingly nothing to prevent the Russian invasion of Israel and all that that entails, there comes to mind the warning message of Amos—

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." (Chapter 5 v 18).

There is something sadly ironic about this warning, the very warning which Christ echoed so much. It may seem incredible that of those who see in present world events the signs of His coming, the majority will do so only to their own condemnation. Nevertheless, such will be the case: the warning call of that faithful herdsman of Tekoa still goes forth—"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you?"

The prophet himself supplies the answer. The great day of the Lord is to be for many, "a day of darkness, and not of light." A day of darkness? Can those who really believe in Christ's return, and who can perceive its nearness, be said to be in darkness? Clearly this is what the prophet is saying—a day of disillusionment, described by those telling words—

"as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him."
(verse 19).

Let the mind again make a survey, this time of all the sects which teach and preach that Christ is at hand. Immediately the darkness can be felt! Most sects find themselves divided and subdivided, and many are faced with the difficulty of how to reunite without compromising their avowed beliefs. In most cases, the 'faith once delivered to the saints' is represented as a list of 'truths to be accepted' and 'commands to be obeyed'. Is it surprising that the more devout confess in their hearts to being in darkness? How sad the situation when the Lord of all the earth is at hand!

And what of ourselves, who have been so richly blessed? What a resolve we should make that having been called to the Light, we will never cease to strive to walk in the Light, redeeming the time which we know is fast running out.

J.R.M.