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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

CHRISTENDOM - AND OTHERS - ASTRAY

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN ELIJAH

SIGNS OF HIS COMING AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD

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At the Table of the Lord

“PRESSED IN THE SPIRIT”

AS WE ARE READING the Acts, we realise that, as with all Scripture, this book has been written and preserved by the Spirit of God for the benefit of His children. Its help is obvious, as unfolded before our eyes are the acts of our brethren, acts of faith, of love for God and for His Son. All these are recorded to show us how great is the help given to God's children struggling to serve Him.

As we read of the hardship, the suffering, the reproach that our brethren knew, we marvel at their courage, their faith, their strength. Men like Peter, Paul, Stephen, John, Luke gave all their living to the service of God, and the serving of those who are God's. Men like Stephen died, glorifying God in their lives and in their death.

How, we ask ourselves, did they do it? The trials we face seem minor in comparison; and, yet, what a struggle we know in striving to submit to God's Hand. If we can perceive their strength, it may help us to better face trials and difficulties in our struggles to obey God. We must, in all this, recognise that God requires of His people evidence that they love Him more than self. So, whether it was Stephen, John, Paul, Peter, or whether one of us today, there must be an agonising to overcome as did the Lord Jesus, to get the upper hand over our selfish nature. It is in God's mercy and kindness that we have so many examples of those who have struggled, and with His help, have been counted as faithful. There are given for us, as well, examples of those who have failed, who have lost the race and so are without hope. Let us, then, seek the help the Spirit intends as we are permitted to read of the Apostles' acts.

In our recent portions, we have seen Paul and all that he did in the work of witnessing to the Word of God. We recall his words, "I will very gladly spend and be spent . . ." (II. Corinthians 12 : 15). And, from this can perceive his desire to give of himself to God for his brethren. *To spend*, we find, means *to consume*. He was indeed consumed in the work of God, by subjecting his own desires in everything to the will of God.

We might ask, How did he do it? How was he able to be so self-less? Our portion for today in Acts 18-5, helps us by revealing the source of his strength. We read "*Paul was pressed in the spirit*, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ." Here, help was given to Paul in a particular need. *To press*, we find, means *to constrain, to be in a strait, to be straitened*, and gives the thought of a great force pressing upon one to bend in a certain direction, thus shaping one's mind or heart. Perhaps, it helps as we realise Paul's position at the time. He was preaching of Jesus as the Messiah to

His own people the Jews, those who had rejected and crucified Him as an impostor. His teaching brought upon Paul much persecution, reviling, threatening ; he was stoned, imprisoned, threatened with death. In such great difficulties, his natural inclination might have been to refrain from witnessing to those who so grievously treated him, who were so hard-hearted and contentious. He might have been tempted to preach of Jesus only where he felt his words might be heard, might be valued. We all know how much easier it is to avoid a situation that is difficult than to face it in faith and suffer whatever may be required, trusting God knows and is ever present to protect and care for His children.

Paul may have felt this way in Corinth. But, to strengthen and move him, he was "*pressed in the spirit*", constrained to testify for Jesus. So, he suffered what was required of him by God. As Paul felt his spirit being pressed, moved by the Hand of God in the way He wanted Paul to go, how grateful he would feel. He would have no doubt as to what was required of him and so could move in faith, in confidence.

Brethren and sisters, we need this same *pressing in the spirit*. We are called upon to face many difficulties, many trials ; we are tested every day to reveal whether our spirit is in unity with *the Spirit*. These trials may be big ones, requiring great faith, great courage ; and we have all known them, have known, too, the help granted to face them. Then, too, there are the smaller trials we face each day at work, at home, in our relations one with another, in countless ways. These, too, reveal our spirits. In these trials, then, whether large or small, if we are sensitive, there is a realisation that we, too, are being pressed, that God is pushing in certain directions, directions which are not the way we would choose to go.

"HOW AM I STRAITENED"

The Lord Jesus well knew this, for by it, His spirit was brought into subjection to the Spirit. In Luke 12 : 50, we remember His words :

" . . . I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !"

We know how greatly pressed He was until the purpose of God in Him was accomplished. He knew the blessing and the pain of this pressing right up to the time He could say in victory. "It is finished", and died, the unblemished Lamb of God. As we are striving to be the faithful brethren and sisters of the Victor, we are required to take up our cross and follow Him. In such circumstances, we will find we are pressed in the spirit. Jesus said to His disciples, Matthew 20 : 22 :

“ Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with ?”

How are we pressed until it is accomplished ! It is in God’s mercy that this is so, for without such loving care, could we ever hope to overcome, to find approval at the judgment seat of Jesus ? If we have responded to this loving provision, we can hope to be numbered among those, like Paul, like Stephen, like countless others who may ask in hope, “Lord receive my spirit” ; and in the end may find a place at the right hand of Jesus. If we are so blessed, we will be able to tell Paul and his brethren how grateful we were for his example as we, too, feel the pressure bending us in God’s way.

It is essential, then, brethren and sisters, that we look at our lives now—today—that we recognise the need for this force to bend us in the right direction, to help mould us in the image of Christ.

Going back, then, to Acts 18, we can see the result of Paul’s being pressed and, therefore, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. Verses 9 and 10 :

“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace : For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee : for I have much people in this city.”

The city was Corinth and in that city many turned to God because of Paul’s zeal in proclaiming Jesus. He remained in Corinth for a year and a half, verse 11 tells us. How grateful those who responded to Paul’s teaching would feel that he had been *pressed in the spirit*.

As Paul taught and saw these responding to his words, how grateful he would feel for having been straitened. As he saw this blessing, he would recognise that it was only because God was with him in this work that he could know the pressure. It is only those whom God loves as His children that He moulds, directs, presses in such a manner. Let us, then, strive to respond to that love as we know Paul did, for he wrote II. Corinthians 5 : 14 :

“For the love of Christ constraineth (presseth) us”

Is it not true that love can motivate and inspire more than any power known to man ? As we feel, then, this power from Him, let us be subject to it, allowing it to bend us, to form us in a way that is pleasing to God ; and pleasing God, it is inevitable that we will please and love our brethren. Let us respond with an outpouring of that love, showing how truly this pressure is forming within us the godly qualities which love begets.

Let us measure ourselves by this standard which the apostle has given us, I. Corinthians 13 :

“Love suffereth long and is kind.”

Love like this bears circumstances and is gentle and useful. This is the thought we get from the original word—gentle, but also useful. The gentleness is on behalf of one in need and is done with care, and does not mean merely soft. Are we like this—gentle even when provoked, even when repeatedly provoked ?

“Love envieth not . . . vaunteth not itself . . . is not puffed up.”

In the love of Christ, there is no room for love of self, asserting itself in envy and pride. Vaunting oneself is to brag or boast, and how many subtle ways the flesh can find to do just this. But, Jesus' love in us will gradually crowd out these abhorrent traits. It is the constraining power upon our spirit.

Love “doth not behave itself unseemly.” “Unseemly”, we find, means disgracefully, disorderly. To behave without grace is ill suited to the qualities of one striving to be a child of God. How often we must confess to behaviour which lacks and is unseemly. But, the love we see in Christ and are striving to develop in ourselves can and will control our behaviour in a way that will help us be pleasing to God.

As we read further in Paul's message, we see how the love of Christ does indeed press. It causes us to believe all things, hope, endure ; and it never fails. Let us, then, brethren and sisters, think about this as Paul must so often have done as he steadfastly spent for his brethren and for God. He knew how marvellously “the love of Christ constraineth us.”

So, as we read of the Acts of the Apostles and are strengthened by them, we realise it is a wonderful thing that we, too, can be *pressed in the spirit* ; not just now and then on the occasion of some great trial, but every day. God works through circumstances, through brethren, through our daily portion, through many channels, but always with the purpose of changing us from our natural, selfish attitudes to a character like unto the Lord Jesus Christ. What a lot of pressure it takes, brethren and sisters, but how blessed we are to know it.

J. A. DeF.

Christendom — *and others* — Astray

The Spirit of the Law the Spirit of Christ

PRESENT-DAY LESSONS IN THE MEAT OFFERINGS

THERE IS MUCH TALK in the world, especially in Christendom, of love. Yet on every hand its power is seen to be diminishing as mankind becomes eroded by bitter hatred and strife. Authorities flounder as they turn first in one direction, and then in another in trying to deliver their peoples from the engulfing swamp of the present "permissive society".

The only remedy is the power of love. Its generous and ample fountain is completely neglected in these days, with the sad and sickening consequences seen in most families and all peoples. May the supreme blessing of being able to discover the source of true love be realised :

"Therefore love is the fulfilling of the *law*." (Romans 13 : 10).

To neglect the Law, to deride the Law, and yet talk about love is no more effectual than an untrained child presuming to repair a broken-down car. He may talk about what he is going to do, and boast of his ultimate success, but such an one is defeated before he starts because he is ignorant of the basic knowledge on the subject.

The popes, priests and parsons of Christendom are in a similar case when they so frequently discuss the merit of love and its imperative need, but are profoundly ignorant of the Law of God which is the only means of teaching men what is true love. Hence, Christendom whilst speaking much of love, spends most of its time and wealth in strife, war and bloodshed.

The words of the present Pope, show the dreadful plight of what is called Christendom.

"While the world could be celebrating the Christmas story," the Pope said, "its attention has been diverted by events which public opinion finds deplorable—this persistence of war in various parts of the world, certain court proceedings, delinquency and violence, which are increasing the cases of robberies, blackmail, abuses, torture, extortion, and crimes." He added : "The world seems besieged by a malaise of disorder." "Taken altogether," he said, "this is not peace, this is not civilisation, this is not Christianity."

How correct he would have been if he had added "Christendom is astray."

Perhaps it will also help to realise how much the mighty, the noble, and the learned are astray in dealing with the present social problems, when in Lancashire, England, a conference is to be held

by the Chief Constable, the Bishop of Blackburn, sixteen Mayors and six M.P.'s wherein it is to be proposed that there should be a demonstration as an "urgent call on Christian men of all persuasions to demonstrate in an act of witness by marching as an act of dedication and personal commitment." The slogan for the demonstration, the Bishop said, would be "For God's sake". A further quotation from the report is interesting :

"The Chief Constable was asked whether, in view of the wording of the leaflet, the demonstration was to be against the permissive society. He replied that, as a Chief Constable, he would not like to try and define the permissive society."

Does this not make us realise that great men would be wise though they are "born like a wild ass's colt" ? And how blessed we can be in being delivered from such vain speculation so that we might be able to drink of the copious fountain provided by God in His Law, and so learn to suppress out native tendencies and be embraced in a love which is divine and has the promise of being eternal.

While we do not like to add a remark about the *others*, those who once had the Truth, in this context, it would seem to be a failure of duty not to point out that they have come to look upon the Law in much the same way as Christendom.

If the shepherds can be allowed to say that the Law is the "Mammon of unrighteousness", then the poor sheep may only drink of the waters which have been fouled by their feet. We hope that some of the readers will perceive how dreadful is this apostasy in the eyes of God, and resolve to deliver themselves from such a hopeless situation. Now may we as "little children" turn to the living fountain of love, with minds delivered from the learned in the wisdom of this world, and from the tradition of false elders, and see that in what may appear to be an obscure part of the Law, there is a "feast of fat things".

THE MEAT OFFERING (Leviticus 2)

The description of this offering in English gives the idea that it is flesh, whereas the offering was to be compounded of fine flour, oil and frankincense.

A handful was to be taken by the Priest who was to "burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord."

As was pointed out last month, the word "sweet" literally means *rest*. The means whereby Yahweh would *rest* or dwell with the brother who perceived what was involved in the offering, and so made it in faith. If his mind could be instructed in such exquisite

mercy, may not our minds be similarly helped by being joined to his. Fine flour is the main ingredient of bread, so is descriptive of that bread from heaven ultimately seen in the Messiah, which if a man eat he shall live for ever. For the figure to be seen in all its beauty and power it was necessary that the flour should be blended with oil, that is the Spirit, and with frankincense illustrative of true joy. Only through the understanding being enlightened by the Spirit could the simple offering of fine flour take on such a deep meaning; and lead the mind to the only source of true joy.

The meat offering was always required to accompany the burnt offering. This enables us to see that from the beginning, from the time when Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, there would be an accompanying meat offering of flour or bread. Later, it is recorded that Abraham partook of bread and wine. Christ at the last supper ordained that these should be emblems of Himself, of His body and of His blood. The faithful partake of these emblems each week. In doing so the unity of God's purpose may be seen from the beginning, a fellowship with all from the days of Abel through to the time of Christ and since; of all who have discerned the imperative need of partaking in some form or another of the bread from heaven. If when Jesus comes, one is found faithful, how great the blessing will be to find that there is this common bond and unity with all that have gone before in the simple belief that without the bread from heaven there could not have been so great a reward.

NO LEAVEN

The Law forbade that any meat offering should include leaven :

“No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven : for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire.”

(Leviticus 2 : 11).

It almost seems that the Almighty has created leaven for the express purpose of instructing the faithful on how insidiously sin may work and bring about the destruction of the whole Body of believers.

The basis for this clear understanding was laid when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt. They were not allowed to bring with their dough any leaven. For seven days after the Pass-over, they were only permitted to eat unleavened bread. So important was this ordinance with its divine teaching, that any, who during those seven days ate leaven, were to be killed.

We are indebted to the Apostle Paul to confirm what we feel is the teaching here. That we are to be on our guard of introducing leaven that belonged to our former life, or permitting the uprise of any spiteful, malicious or wicked way. He says :

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened, For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us :

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

(I. Corinthians 5 : 6-8).

How necessary it was then that in the meat offering leaven should be excluded. For the offering was “most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire”. Meditation upon what the Apostle Paul says with regard to our position at the present time, will show us clearly that the practical lesson given to our brethren of old, is to be interpreted today in not allowing any sin to work in ourselves or the Body, knowing full well, that if we do then the end will not only be destruction of ourselves but of the whole Body. Failure to “purge out leaven”, those who will not repent of their sins or are prepared to fellowship evil doers which puts them in the same case, has resulted time and again in the leavening of the Body necessitating division without which the Truth would have been lost. The leaders of the others will give lip service to these words, but when it comes to action they mistakenly allow what they call charity to override the requirements of the Truth. This has caused the loss to them of the Truth with apostasy becoming worse and worse.

“NEITHER SHALT THOU SUFFER THE SALT OF THE COVENANT OF THY GOD TO BE LACKING”.

(Leviticus 2 : 13).

How illuminating is this instruction which was given to the brethren of old. The lesson is simple to discern and when understood will immediately appeal to every reasonable mind.

Food cooked without salt is tasteless and unappetising. In this direction one only has to remember what is said at the dinner table, if salt has not been put with the potatoes. From this natural basis so easy to understand, and appealing so much to reason, it should not be difficult to realise what the lesson was when God said, that the *salt of the covenant* was not to be omitted from the offering. Just as salt in the natural makes that which is appetising, tasty, and desirable, so the *salt of the covenant* was to make the meat offering similarly appealing and acceptable to God.

Every week, perhaps every day, thousands of offerings in one form or another are made to God. Efforts for charity, bazaars, whist drives, collections, and a host of other similar activities, often imposing on the offerers a good deal of work yet of what value are they in the sight of God ? To men they are all important. In their view they give the passport to a future life without any doubt.

Human goodness in this form is readily taken on every hand as a substitute for obedience to God. But where in any of these offerings is the *salt of the covenant* ? Unless in the offering, in the offering of our lives, there is an understanding of the covenant which can be made with God, and a striving to be obedient to its requirements, then although we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor, or give our bodies to be burned it profiteth nothing.

How simple then is the lesson to be derived from a consideration of the meat offering with all that was to be associated therewith. We must partake of the bread from heaven as we see the life thereof in the great High Priest. Our lives must be dedicated to His service—not in fulfilment of our own conditions or desires, but by a complete submission to the covenant which we have been permitted to make with the great God of heaven, and by which we are honoured to be called His children and brethren and sisters of His beloved Son.

(. . . to be continued)

The Spirit of Christ in Elijah

WHEN WE THINK of the magnitude of the task for which the Bible has been preserved we marvel, especially as we see it capable of equipping diverse people of divers generations with a complete way of life ; and a way on so elevated a plane that it can make them worthy of the blessing of divine nature, through a redeemer. If we realise this high purpose of the scriptures, we might at first be surprised at what we are given. Only a mere fraction of the Word is precept, yet all is given for the same purpose—to convert our lives, that we might have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

The Bible is not a concentrated course on discipline, as a worldly syllabus would have it : with many repetitive exercises and tracts to be learned week by week. Superficially, it appears in the main a history book centred on the fortunes of one nation, with biographical studies of a number of individual characters—some good, many bad. Only a few of the books and epistles have what might be called concentrated precepts—such as the Law, Proverbs, and some epistles. Many days readings, therefore, do not really come under the heading of direct commands, yet in each day's portion, surely we ought to find adequate and abundant food from heaven to keep us and help us in the way of salvation. The question is how well this spiritual food is applied in directing our lives in the same way as Christ—the way of salvation ?

This great power for good in the readings is often concealed in some degree ; in historical accounts which may be dramatic, or emotional, spectacular, or homely. The natural thing is to read the narratives as history, as Christendom would if they read the Bible at all. But this would not accomplish the desired end of helping to keep us in the way of salvation. Nor is it sufficient even to sigh : "What a wonderful brother Elijah was", for instance and leave it at that. Truly he was a great prophet, and a wonderful example of faithfulness in most difficult circumstances. But surely there is direct help for us in his remarkable life-story, and others. This is the way God cares for and helps His "little ones" if His "little ones" care for Him.

LESSON AND COMFORT FOR ADVERSITY

Is not one of the beauties of a life-story—even as spectacular as Elijah's—that if we are trying to please God, even we can say : "Here is a kindred spirit ; a fellow sufferer in this world." Even though he was a great prophet, and valiant in trying to follow God, he suffered severe set-backs, led a hard life, knew times of great mental strain and physical exertion.

How do we feel if we have made a great effort to order our lives aright, and still we are hit with a sudden set-back or calamity ? Is there any impatience or bitterness ? Is it not some comfort and help against such evils, to know that such an exemplary brother as Elijah suffered as much or worse ?

After a courageous and spectacular victory over the adversary, when the prophets of Baal were slain ; instead of a blessing and rest, the exhausted Elijah had to flee for his life to the privation of the wilderness. Besides knowing how the faithful heirs of the kingdom have suffered, it is a help also, and guide to us to call to mind Elijah's attitude in a time of stress : instead of complaining or commending himself to God, he remembered his own unworthiness, saying :

" . . . it is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life : for I am not better than my fathers." (I. Kings 19 : 4).

Thus some words of Christ were fulfilled in spirit nearly nine hundred years before Christ appeared :

" . . . When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do." (Luke 17 : 10).

So these historical accounts help us to keep from sin, and fashion us like Christ, if we take to heart the record. There are many things in this short narrative in the First Book of Kings which can be an invaluable help to all generations to fortify in certain circumstances.

This short biographical picture of Elijah begins in I. Kings 17 with his bearing a message of evil tidings from God to Ahab, King of Israel—wicked and unscrupulous. This message concerning the drought was to make Elijah the most hated and wanted man in Israel. Great courage was required for this task, but let us not think Elijah was naturally more courageous than anyone else. Was it not his complete trust in God that gave him the courage to bear evil tidings to the King ?

In spite of faithfulness, and God's presence with him, Elijah had to flee from home, and suffer because of the drought. He would be comforted in the miraculous provision of foods from the ravens, but this would have been a long way from luxury. Even worse was to follow : the brook Cherith, where Elijah was hiding, dried up. Without water, would it mean giving himself up ? A severe setback but surely not a direct punishment.

Could not incidents like these be a strength to us, if we have made special efforts to be faithful and still we are hit with tribulation ? Not that we should just shrug off the evil without entertaining the possibility of a lesson for us. We are all in the flesh, and need to learn many things, as Elijah would recognise, but does not his case prove that God must chasten and scourge children of whom He approves, as well as punish children with whom he is angry ? So with Elijah, should we not be ready to see if there is a lesson for us when things go wrong ?

Then, as we know, Elijah was sent to Zidon, where he was entertained as a man of God, bringing a blessing to the widow—his hostess—in the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal not wasting. But later, tragedy strikes the house as the widow's only son dies, and Elijah is now held to be the vehicle of a curse from God ! What a difficult situation in which to be placed : but does he remonstrate angrily with the distracted woman which is what many people would do ? Once again, he that trusted in God turned to Him for rescue from this predicament. Sure enough, because Elijah had been so faithful, the boy was brought back from the dead.

So in our lives, when all things are going well, we can enjoy basking in God's wisdom and guidance, but are we not going to be tested in adverse circumstances to see whether we deny God in some way ? Adversities—even minor—can embitter us if we regularly respond to them wrongly. But if we are tempted to murmur or be angry, is it not our food from heaven to remember cases like Elijah, who themselves manifested the Spirit of Christ by turning towards God in time of trouble—and not away from Him. For whether God brought the affliction that we might suffer even after well doing ; or whether we brought it on ourselves as a punishment,

the Almighty is still the only One who can deliver from all difficulties and sorrows.

**"THAT THIS PEOPLE MAY KNOW THAT THOU ART
THE LORD GOD."**

Before the Lord could send rain from the heavens upon Israel, there was a great work of purging to be done. As usual the true prophet was overwhelmingly outnumbered by the false teachers—and false believers.

After the failure of the false gods to come to the aid of their followers, we have a very important reminder of what a pure heart is like in the motive shown by Elijah in I. Kings 18 : 36-37 :

"Lord God of Abraham . . . let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel . . . Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

Are we not given this for a reminder that any work we may do by way of witnessing within the Body, or to outsiders, should not be to show how right *we* are, or to turn unbelievers to *us* ? We do not want people to believe in us, for it is God who is the only One who will do them, or any of us, good ; though we may be vehicles of His message.

So the express desire of Elijah was not to show how right he had been, but that the people might turn to God, their saviour.

Another important lesson is seen in Elijah's zealous action to put away evil after it had been condemned. How much easier it would be to say : "The battle is won, the people have seen the right, the false prophets are put to shame ; let that suffice." But Elijah knew the wisdom of God : that to let the prophets of Baal continue in Israel would mean that soon many more of Israel would be carried away to their death by their teaching.

The principles apply equally to us today. the *Christadelphians* have failed lamentably in putting away wrong teaching and wrong doers, with the result that the leaven has spread hopelessly, and God cannot dwell among them in consequence. Must we not also be most careful not to allow the same sort of thing to creep into the Truth ? For we know "How great a matter a little fire kindleth."

A little wrong doctrine here, and a little wrong doctrine there can only be cleansed by proper repentance. It is folly to say : "Don't take any notice of brother or sister so-and-so ; I have told him about it, but it falls on deaf ears." If it is a doctrinal matter, such an attitude is only laying up trouble for the future : in fact such an attitude is in itself wrong doctrine, for we are told the proper way to deal with wrongs in Matthew 18.

At the end of I. Kings, chapter 18, we have help when we feel we are praying for something which must be according to God's will, yet there is no speedy answer. A searching and judging of ourselves may be required, for there may be more than one thing to put right before God can give an answer. However, we see from this instance in the life of Elijah, that though the great wrong of Baal worship had been put right, the answer did not come immediately, but only after the importunate prophet had made repeated and earnest requests to God.

This is very different from the attitude that : "Now things have been put right, we only need a brief request to obtain a blessing." Such an attitude fails to take into account that where there has been sin, there is unworthiness. This fact immediately confines everyone of us to the dependence on the grace of God for any and every blessing. For as, says the apostle, "By grace ye are saved."

Even Elijah would admit that "Scarcely the righteous be saved"; as even the righteous will have felt at times "I am not better than my fathers". But saved they will be, because, being needy, they have turned to God to direct their lives.

A.E.I.

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

“O LORD, REVIVE (preserve alive) THY WORK IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS, IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS MAKE KNOWN ; IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY.”

(Habakkuk 3 : 2).

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING this pleading of the prophet which is a yearning expression of the heartfelt feelings of the faithful through times of sadness and difficulty, the mind is introduced to the divine response to such a prayer :

“God came from Teman (the south) and the Holy One from mount Paran.” (verse 3).

As the mind considers the increasing trouble in the world, how comforting is the divine assurance that God will preserve His work. He will send His Son at the appropriate time.

The year that has passed has been a grim one, and to the man in the street there is no sign that there will be an improvement, or a change for the better in the new year. The commencement of Anno Domini (after the Master) 1971 has very little significance for almost all mankind except as the marking off of time and an opportunity for celebration at its commencement. But to the faithful it indicates that the day of salvation is nearer. How greatly the world needs to be saved, and the people of God delivered from the bondage of sin and death. But unlike the promises of men, God's promise will not fail, “though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come.” (Habakkuk 2 : 3).

The faithful are required to exercise patience in their waiting for the revealing of the divine hand. Christ declared :

“Behold the fig tree (Israel) and all the trees ; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” (Luke 21 : 29-31).

But though Israel as a nation has begun to shoot forth after a period of eighteen hundred years, when apparently dead, and all hope lost it is only a beginning. A calamitous situation, figuratively depicted by Habakkuk, hinders the true prosperity of Israel :

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail (Hebrew, lie) . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3 : 17-18).

Israel, the fig tree, has been held back from full growth by the cold blasts from the northern enemy, and the shrill breezes of the Arab foe. It cannot flower in such an atmosphere, and until it flowers there will be no "fruit".

Recent news from Russia reveals how the North continues in its policy of not "giving up" those who desire to return to the land of their forefathers. Though two of the Jews sentenced to death in the Leningrad Hi-Jack trial were reprieved as a result of critical world opinion, the substitution of 15 years imprisonment in Soviet Labour Camps is very severe for an alleged plot that was never carried out. The fact that eleven Jews sought to get out of Russia by illegal means really indicts the Soviet authorities. Desperate means would not be resorted to if Jews were allowed an option in their desire to respond to the call of their fatherland. There are about three million Jews in Russia, many of whom may have no desire for anything other than Communism. But it is believed that half a million of these wish to emigrate in the first instance. Not only is there a "keeping back" of such but also endeavour is being made to suppress even a Zionist tendency. Such as the studying of Hebrew and the singing of Hebrew songs. Youths have been arrested by secret police for doing these very things. The charge made by the Soviet authorities was one of "spreading Zionist and anti-Soviet propaganda."

World Jewry have been deeply disturbed at the news of what is happening to their brethren in Russia. Thoughts of the Nazi persecutions of a quarter of a century ago come flooding back into their minds and they are sorely grieved. Orderly protest marches have been held by Jewry in the western world, in some cases their ranks have been swelled by gentile sympathisers. The nation of Israel itself is critical ; as a result the gulf between Jerusalem and Moscow widens.

Turning the attention to the land of Israel itself, news to hand at the time of writing is ominous. After an uneasy period of ceasefire between Egypt and Israel the new Egyptian President has commenced to prepare his people for a possible new conflict. He has begun to talk of the necessary withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories if the ceasefire along the Suez Canal is to continue. In reply the Israeli Prime Minister has denied a claim by Egypt that Israel has ground to ground missiles, but said she had reliable and detailed information that there are today in Egypt land-to-land rockets of Soviet manufacture that were supplied to Egypt by the Soviet Union. This threatening factor does not endear Israel to the demand or the request that she withdraw from the territories that have greatly benefitted her strategically. But Israel is endeavouring

to avoid confrontation with the Soviet Union. To escape conflict with Soviet pilots the Israeli air force has not made a deep raid into Egyptian territory since April of last year. But the fact that Russians in 1970 arrived in the Middle East with pilots and missile officers on active service though a threatening turning of events, and apart from the war years of 1948, 1956 and 1967 probably the worst year for Israel, Soviet intervention has brought the American opponent of Russian imperialism to a new level of commitment in military, economic and financial aid for Israel. Israel has begun to hope that now the Israel-Arab situation is raising the conflict from local to global proportions there may be an end of the Middle East war, but not of course peace.

Israel is thinking on the lines that fighting has become too dangerous to undertake, as it has been for years at the border between West and East Germany, or North and South Korea. In other words the great powers may exert political pressure on the Arabs to stop another conflict for the present.

But look at the overall situation as seen through the eyes of an important British politician :

“The Middle East is the cradle of Western civilisation ; but it is also the oldest battlefield in the world. The nineteenth century saw the European powers drawn into the rivalries of the region—at first the French, and then ourselves, the Russians and others following. These interventions began a process of tremendous change—then the emergence of Israel as a state with ideals to capture the imagination, but with a troubled history which has resulted in dangerous tensions with her neighbours, tensions which have given rise to war on three occasions in the past twenty-five years. Finally there has been the spread of political revolution through the Arab states, with violent change and drastic shifts of alignment. Throughout this turbulent period the great powers have retained their deep involvement in the region. Partly this is a matter of historic commitment. Partly it is a matter of vital oil reserves on which the Middle Eastern economy is based. And partly it is, as it has always been, a question of strategy because in spite of the changes our century has seen in transport and communications and the art of war, this region still lies across Europe’s way to the East and Russia’s way to the South. That is part of the background to twenty-two years of recurrent violence in the Middle East—tangled strands of emotion, religion and ideology, with each side sure of the justice of its own cause.”

The latest news to hand is that the Soviet Union has promised

“unlimited” military and political support to Egypt because it regards Egypt’s victory in confrontation with the United States and Israel as essential. This report follows recent talks in Moscow between the new Egyptian President and the Russian Government. At the same time Jordan, impressed by the promises and support that appears to be making Egypt into a powerful entity, and desiring to be in the right place at the right time, has again declared through its Chief Minister that the battle with Israel was the country’s prime object.

Further south in Africa the tangled skein of political intrigue and involvement worsens with the arrival of China with its largest single aid project it has ever undertaken. Secondarily in the African Continent to the Soviet building of the Aswan Dam.

Four thousand Chinese technicians have already arrived to direct the £167 million contract with two African States for the building of the Zam-Tan Railway. The Chinese physical presence in Africa for the years ahead could mean not only difficulties for the West but for Israel as well.

As the mind considers all the circumstances surrounding the Middle East and the South, the realisation that presents itself is of the utter hopelessness of Israel’s ultimate position in the ordinary course of events. But Israel is the “work” of God, through the divine promise to Abraham and the fathers. Millions of the diaspora (the scattered) would also ultimately be lost in identity but for this fact.

“O Lord, revive (preserve alive) thy work in the midst of the years”

. . . was the prophet’s plea. God will come from Teman (the south) to do this.

D.L.

Correspondence

In reply to a Letter from W. J. Livermore, Brantford, Canada, dated October 1970 :

Delay in acknowledging this letter is because it was received by sea-mail, and has taken a long time in transit.

In the letter the contention is made that since Jesus addressed an audience of believers and unbelievers, His command—"whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery"—applies to both, making both classes responsible to this principle.

None is responsible until enlightened, but in preaching the Truth its principles must always be clearly stated : for the benefit of unbelievers who might thus be caused to leave the darkness and come to the light ; and to confirm believers in "the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus."

In coming to *the* Truth, the sins of darkness are buried with the old man :

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you : but ye are *washed*, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (I. Corinthians 6 : 9-11).

When a person is buried into the death of Christ he is dead—dead to his old life, dead to his old sins, no longer to be accounted responsible for these in the new life commenced in Jesus.

We are not surprised that our last paragraph in the correspondence in our issue of August 1970 "puzzled" our correspondent, which read :

"That his views on marriage and divorce are not essential to salvation, or words to this effect, because he will not judge any not accepting them as being rejected by Christ at the Judgment. What a waste of time therefore it seems that he should endeavour to press certain views which by his own admission are not really important !"

Since he now says "his views on marriage and divorce are not essential to . . . 'judgment'", his comments on this show that he is on the horns of a dilemma.

First he says his views on marriage are "essential to salvation". Then immediately contradicts this by saying "I have not said all who differ with me won't be saved".

It is for our correspondent to extricate himself from his self-made dilemma, and say which of the two foregoing opposite views he believes. Time is short and precious, and must be used carefully for the salvation of any who will give heed.

We were reluctant to reply because of the accusation made against us of duplicity—not that this worries us because we feel readers will readily judge the falsity of this charge, and must therefore tend to weaken our correspondent's argument, and lower him in the esteem of his readers.

W.V.B.

The Origin of Man

Letter from E. Fletcher, Mentone, Victoria, Australia :

Thank you for the article "Origin of Man" which I have now read and will return to you by surface mail.

It was very fair to allow R. T. Lovelock to air his views in the pages of the magazine, so that brethren and sisters could assess the arguments from it, for themselves and equip themselves better for arguments against those in error, in religious circles as well as out in this scientific world about us, we must be "Thoroughly furnished" and able to give an intelligent answer for the hope that is within us, a thing those who belong to a sheltered community could not do.

REPLY :

It will not be necessary to remind readers of the subversive work of those suggesting that Adam was not created in the way the divine record states, but was selected from an existent race.

The letters which appeared in the *Christadelphian* show both the shock and condemnation of such teaching. Although the author of this article was finally withdrawn from by a majority vote, nothing has appeared in the *Christadelphian* to condemn this denial of God's Word, and also to condemn those who were and are prepared to fellowship the holders of such heresy.

The readers will perceive that this is where our correspondent fails to appreciate the doctrine of fellowship in suggesting that heretical views can be set forth in the supposed organ of the Truth without them being condemned on the pretext that they should be discussed so that all might be "thoroughly furnished". Thoroughly furnished in what, one may ask ? Perhaps our correspondent does not realise he is suggesting that this should be in heretical views. A proof of how far apostasy has beclouded the minds of those who once had the precious Truth as promulgated by Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts.