

CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

SAMUEL G. CRAIG, Editor

ETHEL WALLACE, Assistant Editor

Published monthly by
THE PRESBYTERIAN AND
REFORMED PUBLISHING CO., Inc.
525 Locust Street, Phila., Pa.

JANUARY, 1938
Vol. 8 No. 9

\$1.00 A YEAR EVERYWHERE
Entered as second-class matter May 11,
1931, at the Post Office at Philadelphia,
Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Editorial Notes and Comments

"AS JEHOVAH THE GOD OF ISRAEL LIVETH BEFORE WHOM I STAND"

THE words which stand at the head of this column supply the key to the understanding of one of the greatest characters in history. Elijah was what he was and wrought what he wrought largely because he heartened and encouraged himself by the thought, to which they give expression. The significance of this utterance, however, is not exhausted in the light it throws on the career of the great Tishbite. It is also freighted with significance for those of us who live today. As we stand on the threshold of a new year, facing conditions (modern Ahabs) fitted to appall the stoutest hearts, well will it be for us if we too are able to hearten and encourage ourselves with the conviction that was Elijah's.

These words, uttered in the presence of Ahab, bear witness, in the first place, to the fact that Elijah was thoroughly convinced that Jehovah is the living God. In his eyes this was the fundamental difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the surrounding nations. The latter were not alive, they had no existence other than an existence in the minds of their worshipers. It was otherwise, however, with the God of Israel. He possessed objective existence. He was a living, all-powerful Person Who thought and felt and willed in the highest and fullest sense these words can bear. Of this Elijah was as completely convinced as of his own existence.

These words bear witness, in the second place, to the fact that to Elijah God was an ever-present reality. It is possible to think of God as real and as alive and yet to think of Him as a far-away reality. It was not thus that Elijah thought of God. For him He was One in Whose presence he ever lived, from Whose eyes he could not escape if he would. There are those who would have us regard such a conception of God as a modern conception. Such is not the case. No doubt there have been periods

when there was a strong tendency to over-emphasize the transcendence of God just as there have been periods like the present—at least previous to the rise of Barthianism—wherein men showed a marked tendency to unduly stress the immanence of God; but that affords no warrant for saying that the thought of God as an ever-present reality is a modern discovery. Not only does it find expression in all the great creeds of the Christian Church, it is a thought at least as old as Elijah.

Again, these words bear witness to the fact that Elijah thought of himself as the servant of this living, ever-present God. The words, "before whom I stand" make this clear if and when we consider their meaning elsewhere in the Old Testament. They are used, for instance, in Deuteronomy in the description of the office of the priests, "The sons of Levi shall stand before the Lord and minister unto him"; also in the words that the Queen of Sheba addressed to Solomon, "Blessed are thy servants and blessed are the men that stand before thy face continually." Hence the words, "before whom I stand," meant for Elijah essentially what the words, "whose I am and whom I serve," meant for Paul.

Do we carry about with us the consciousness that we are the servants of the living, ever-present God? If not, we lack a sufficiently realistic outlook upon life. And that because we are God's servants and as such are responsible to Him whether or not we acknowledge it. It is not for any man to say whether his position will be that of a servant of God. We have no more choice at this point than we had in determining who would be our parents. Moreover just as we had no choice as over against our parents save to decide whether we would be obedient or disobedient children, so as over against God men, without exception, have no choice save to determine whether they will be obedient or disobedient servants. They may have it within their own power for the time being to go their own way, to act as though they were masters in their own right and as such answerable to none, but none can say, save in idle boast, that they will not one day appear before the judgment seat of God and there render an account—

was in relative decay when Tyre was in its glory, would remain today, as prophesied. Nor to expect the extinction of Bethsaida and Capernaum, "exalted unto heaven" in Christ's time, while Tiberias remains. Keith lists about 140 fulfilled prophecies as to peoples and nations, and over 140 concerning Christ's advent, life, death, influence, etc. 'Tis said "A single fact is worth a thousand arguments" unsupported by facts. The cumulative weight of the Bible's fulfilled prophecies evidence the sureness of the yet unfulfilled ones, and the supernatural source of the record itself.

(e) Superhuman Insight and Knowledge: The Bible speaks with superhuman assurance and certainty on matters concerning man's being, duty and destiny—about which men long guessed, disputed and contradicted themselves. It answers implicitly, for example, the age-old question "If a man die shall he live again?"; it throughout presents both the ideal and the motive force for the union of personal religion with high morality—a union distinctively Biblical! The writers—save one—were from a *naturally* materialistic, narrow, unspiritual and unliterary race, and mostly reckoned unlearned men; yet all wrote on these sublime themes with as much confidence and simplicity as if treating very obvious and elementary truths. Prof. Margoliouth of Oxford says "The moment Jewish literature separates itself from the Bible (its) originality perishes." Fitchett says the race "for one brief golden hour was the channel through which the Spirit of God flowed into human history; but the channel is not the river." So the writers refer all their statements to God's illuminating influence; they confess to speak simply as God's messengers to men, and clearly show that their supreme regard is only for God's glory, "that in all things He might have the preeminence." "Thus saith the Lord" prefaces their messages. "No honest and merely human historian ever dared to write thus," says Lee; and Clarke writes "Neither Koran nor Zendavesta utter claims like these, that profess to proceed out of the mouth of the Most High." Were these claims untrue, the Book making them would have long ago perished; instead, it has flourished. The only logical conclusion from the unique character of its contents is that the Bible is "God's Word"—hence authoritative.

(3) Adapted to Men's Needs: The Bible has been termed "The contemporary of all ages"—and peoples. Nature does not reveal its Creator sufficiently for all man's mental and moral needs; he is estranged from God—spiritually callous, weak and enthralled; he needs new spiritual life, health and guidance—for a victorious life here and fitting for the endless life. He needs principles and precepts for material and social welfare, truth to correct and uplift his mental vision, sure and lasting objectives to inspire spiritual faith, power and service. This Book meets all man's needs for life and light, whenever he truly follows its teachings. It opens the door to hope and escape from evil; it provides the authoritative answer to the universal and otherwise unanswered vital question, "How should man be just (right) with God?" This, only a supernaturally divine revelation

can show; this is the need and mission of the Bible. Its truth is seen in its fruit of multitudes of redeemed souls in every age and clime; the spiritual rebirth and upward growth of those who believe and obey this Book distinguish it from all other religious books and mark its divine source and authority.

(4) Influence and Preservation: As the thought and teachings of this Book—immeasurably above those of any other writing—mark its divine authorship, so also does its moral and spiritual influence on men, families and society. Contrast the civilization and life of peoples uninfluenced by the Bible—which space here also forbids to illustrate. Suffice to say that if the Bible had done no more than purify peoples from the pest of lewd gods and goddesses, it would have shown its divine source and authority. But it has regenerated, elevated and blessed persons and peoples as all other books have not.

From the beginning of the Christian era this Book has successfully withstood the fierce and persistent attacks of its enemies, the treachery of false teachers, the mistakes and misinterpretations of friends; had the Bible been a merely human product, it would have long since perished. Yet it lives and greatly influences—even when unrecognized—men's standards of life and literature today; not an occasional copy, but millions, and translated into hundreds of languages. That it should thus survive, and amid a general wreck of the literature of the most advanced and polished peoples of contemporary antiquity, is further evidence of its divinely authoritative character. Every effect must have an *adequate cause*! "What need we any further witnesses?"

UNDER GRACE

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Romans 6:14.

For the sinner the law has nothing but demands which he cannot fulfill and curses for which he cannot atone. The law is weak through the flesh and has no power to redeem from sin's guilt or power. It is Christ who has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. It is by His obedience and righteousness alone that we are justified. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that has made us free from the law of sin and death. These are the guarantees that sin will never again have the dominion over the believer.

But what is sin? Sin is the transgression of the law. The believer, then, is not free to sin but to righteousness and righteousness is simply conformity to the law of God. He is not redeemed by obedience to the law but he is redeemed unto it. He is created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The law of God is the rule of life. It is here the antinomian perverts Scripture and destroys the souls of the simple. The moral law is the reflection or expression of the moral perfection of God and is therefore the immutable standard of obligation and norm of righteousness. To deny the permanent authority of the moral law is to deny the holiness of God. God is holy. "Ye shall be holy for I am holy." —JOHN MURRAY.