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ELIJAH'S COMMON-SENSE APOLOGETICS

For the Review.

ONE of the most interesting incidents in the life of the great Tishbite is his experience on the crest of Carmel. There he appears vindicating his faith in Jehovah as the true God and heaping confusion upon the votaries of Baal.

Elijah is all alone or accompanied by his attendant. Before him on the slopes of the mount stretches a large company of people representing the court party of Ahab and the populace of the ten Northern Tribes. He is there as the undaunted messenger of Jehovah. The courtiers of Ahab with the four hundred and fifty priests appear as the representatives of Baal. The mass of the people present belong to neither party. They are in an attitude of suspense. They are halting between two opinions. One day they are disposed to unite with the party of Baal, the next they lean towards the worshippers of Jehovah. They are in a wavering irresolute condition not knowing which to serve.

To these waverers halting between two opinions Elijah makes a proposal. The proposal is that they should serve Him as God who responds to their prayer and comes to their rescue. If their experience goes to show that Baal is ready to relieve his followers in their hour of perplexity let him be served. But if it appears that it is Jehovah who listens to the prayer of His followers then let Him be served. Discover who it is that helps and forthwith begin to serve Him as God.

As soon as the people hear the prophets proposal they feel that it is reasonable and they express themselves to that effect. The fact is that it was scarcely possible for them to do anything else. For the test proposed is one that will appeal to the common sense of mankind everywhere. There is no one but will admit that it is vain to serve a god who will afford no help in the time of need, who will turn a deaf ear to the supplication of his distressed followers, as every one will be prepared to admit that it is sensible, reasonable, worthy of the highest understanding to serve Him whose ear is ever ready to hear, whose hand is ever extended to help. Only show men that Jehovah is both able and willing to meet the wants of His followers and they will be forced to admit that it is unreasonable for those who are too weak to help themselves and too limited in resources to meet their own needs, to refuse to serve Him. Such apologetics will appeal to their common sense and will go to disturb the composure that often characterizes those who assume a non-committal attitude towards the powers of the spiritual world.

In the actual application of this test in Mount

Carmel it speedily appeared that Jehovah was God. For while Baal gave no response to his perplexed followers, Jehovah in an unmistakeable manner responded to the prayer of His servant by coming to His help. The tongues of fire consuming the altar with its sacrifice and licking up the water in the trenches, in response to Elijah's prayer was sufficient proof to call forth from ten thousand throats the triumphant shout: Jehovah is God. They had proof offered them that He was able and willing to help His servant and so they began, as they thought, to serve Him as God by destroying the worship of Baal in the death of his priests.

By the application of the principle throughout the ages it will be seen that among the different claimants for the service of man Jehovah approves Himself as God. Other gods may promise much but their promise fails. Jehovah not only promises but he fulfils His promise in providing a way of escape for His people out of every trial. Mammon will promise to give peace and comfort. When the hour of trial comes he will prove himself as helpless as Baal. Bacchus will promise to make the heart merry and to preserve it in a happy mood but when calamity comes the ear of Baal is no more deaf than his. Venus will speak of a pathway of roses leading to palaces of oriental splendor and gardens of tropical wealth and beauty. But they who yield to the invitation will find the way ending in a ruin whose distressful cry finds no response in the artful enchantress. All these gods will promise very much. In this respect they will almost surpass Baal. But when the hour of need comes they will prove themselves as helpless as he. There will be neither voice, nor any to answer nor any that will regard. Jehovah alone will fulfil the desire of them who fear Him, hear their cry, and save them. What folly then to turn away from Him to enter the service of Baal or Bacchus, Mammon or Venus. Common sense decrees that Jehovah alone is to be served as God. For He can and will help, they neither will nor care.

Elijah's test implies that there can be only one who will be ever able and willing to help. And this is doubtless true. Both Baal and Jehovah cannot help. It must be either one or the other. It cannot be both. He who is able to help in every case must have infinite power, unlimited wisdom and knowledge. He who is willing to help in every case must have infinite goodness, mercy and love. But there cannot be two persons of unlimited power wisdom and knowledge, as there cannot be two persons with unlimited mercy and love. Only one person can embody these attributes. Both Baal and Jehovah cannot be unlimited in their attributes. If the one is the other cannot be. Therefore there is only one person who is ever able and willing to help. And every dictate of reason urges that He be served as God.