

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 101: May – August 2017 CONTENTS

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

(*Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19 and Jeremiah 33:6*)

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Editorial

It has sometimes been remarked that God's children tend, unless they take great care, to be marked by the same trends that are in the world. Without doubt, this is, alas, becoming all too evident today, when practices that ordinary people considered wrong and repulsive just a few decades ago are being accepted, justified and even promoted in society; and many in "the church" seem to be adapting themselves, and even their congregations, to the same lifestyles.

But it is not only the blatant expressions of worldliness against which we need to be on our guard. As not of the world (John 17:14 and 16), our outlook, motives, objectives and habits should be different from those who are still held in that system, which is soon coming under judgment. This is not to be achieved by the imposition of legal rules, but by our hearts being engaged (see the article by T.H.R.) with the One who is rejected by this world but is the Centre of another world, soon to be unveiled.

These thoughts lie behind the selection of extracts from the life of Henry Moorhouse. It is also true that we cannot display the character or behaviour that our God and Father desires from us unless the return of the Lord Jesus is before our hearts and minds – hence the piece by E.L.B. I am sure too that we all could do with help as to guidance in our lives; for this I have included the article by J.B.S. I trust that readers will find help and comfort also through the other articles. I am sorry for the delay in sending out this issue.

G.S.B.

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FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

Henry Moorhouse (1840-80) was brought up in a Methodist home but in his early teens kicked over the traces and lived recklessly until, after a deep struggle, he was thoroughly converted at the age of 21. He very soon, without any formal training, threw himself into the preaching of the gospel. He continued tirelessly in this work, travelling widely in Britain and America and sometimes preaching to several thousand, with many conversions. He persisted in this despite increasing illness in his later years and was called home to be with his Lord at the early age of 40. It is said of him that “he was pre-eminently the man of one book” – the Bible, the inspiration and authority of which he firmly upheld.

Here is his view of the dangers to which the Christian is exposed in courting the friendship of the world, as recited in a biography of him, “Henry Moorhouse: the English Evangelical,” by the Revd. John Macpherson:-

In his Bible-readings he was wont to enlarge on the necessity and importance of the Christian’s separation from the world. Grace, in his view, was no more grace, if it blossomed not into holiness. The innate and well-nigh irradicable Antinomianism* of the human heart renders this teaching always seasonable. To some who claim to be disciples of Christ, said our preacher, the ancient triple enemy, the devil, the world, and the flesh would seem to have abandoned the field, and to such, therefore, there is neither foe nor fight. To

** Antinomianism generally means opposition to God’s moral law. Christians have been freed from the law (i.e. from legal requirements) by the death of Christ but should still be “legitimately subject to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21 – J.N.D. Trans.). The proper effect of grace is that we “live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things” (Titus 2:12), whereas antinomianism often led to gross licentiousness. Some have connected it with the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (Rev. 2:15) – Editor.*

others, who believe the flesh to be a source of some danger, the great adversary is only an abstraction; and nobody is fool enough to fight with an abstraction, the mere shadow of an ancient superstition. As for the world, it seemed to our evangelist as if the greater number of Christians no longer regarded it as hurtful to the soul or hostile to God and His Christ. Who that looks around on the churches and on Christians in social life with a spiritual eye will deny that his jealousy was a wise and a holy jealousy, and that his teaching on this head was in good season? In his warnings against its carnal maxims, its seductive friendships, its unholy pleasures, and, most of all, its lying religion, he was wont to wax indignant and to pour out his most scathing rebukes. He drew a picture of ancient Israel, from the shores of the wilderness, where they stood a newly-ransomed people, sending a duly chartered vessel across the Red Sea to fetch flesh and onions and garlic from the land of Egypt. Then another great ship is sent, and still another, until, at length, the great merchant fleet of the famous Flesh and Garlic line is established, with the colours of Israel and Egypt to be hung out on either shore; and what with the new freedom and the abundance of Egyptian good things combined, the Land of Promise is lost to view or has faded into infinite distance. "What!" he might well exclaim with mingled surprise and sorrow, "shall the newly-returned prodigal son, happy in his father's love, rise from the festive board, and, rushing into the dark night, make anew for the swine troughs, dragging the best robe in the mire?"

"Should a Christian go to dancing-parties?" was one day asked by a young convert. "What do you think?" said our evangelist. "Suppose a young lady is affianced to a truly noble and good man, whom she tenderly loves, and there comes in a dastardly ruffian, who murders the bridegroom in the very presence of the bride. Now, if the murderer were to invite the bride to dance with him on the floor crimsoned with the blood of her beloved, tell me, should she consent?"

“Once I was commissioned by my brother,” he went on to say, “to fetch from town a little article in gold which he wished to purchase. This I put into my pocket, where, from lapse of memory, it lay for several days in too close proximity to some leads I happened to carry with me. On recollection I drew the gold from my pocket, and, to my amazement and chagrin, found it had taken on the dull hue of its meaner companions. The lead had borrowed nothing from the gold; its complexion was as grey and coarse as ever; but the gold had lost its beauty, it had grown like its company, it was become dim. So, the world gains nothing from the worldly Christian, whilst, in his unwarrantable fellowship with the world, the Christian loses all his brightness and not a little of his worth. This illustration made a deep impression on the minds of many who heard it; and in one instance the impression took shape in the following lines:-

“I had once a precious trinket
For my watch – a golden chain;
How it glittered in the sunshine,
Thus reflecting light again!

“But my golden chain was carried
Where a leaden plaything lay,
And a few short hours of friction
Wore its brightness all away.

“While the plaything was not brightened
As it lay against the chain,
Whence it stole all-glorious beauty –
(Will it ever shine again?).

“Now the light no more reflected,
Every link seems dark and cold,
As a trinket now rejected,
I can scarce believe it gold!”

To speak and act like the world is only too easy for the Christian to learn. To make the lesson pointed and memorable he was wont to tell of a canary which, placed in the same cage with a sparrow, lost its own sweet song and learned to chirp like its vulgar and unmusical companion. This illustration also found its way into verses, evidently composed by the same hand:- ·

“O my birdie! – like a fairy
With your soft and lightsome wing,
O my golden sweet canary,
How I loved to hear you sing.

“But you listened to a sparrow
With his shrill, discordant tone,
And, my beautiful canary!
All your melody is gone.

“Like a sparrow you sit chirping,
While he’s never learned your song;
He has still his feeble twitter,
Chirping, chirping all day long.

“You have taught me a sad lesson,
Fraught with deep and solemn pain,
That if I with sinners mingle
I shall lose, and they – not gain.”

Fragment

In the two synoptic Gospels, the two men who were crucified on either side of Jesus are described as robbers or malefactors. In John’s Gospel, however, (ch. 19, v. 18) they are simply described as “two others.” How appropriate this is to John’s Gospel, which focuses our attention on the Person and glory of the Son of God, and puts all others into the shade. *Editor.*

POST-TRUTH: EVEN IN THE CHURCH?

‘Post-truth’ was declared by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) to be their 2016 international word of the year. It is defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” This, of course, is really a continuation of post-modernism which denies the existence of truth as an objective, absolute reality.

The word (or term) post-truth came to the fore in a year of political theatre in which the media and politicians all over the world – in their pursuit of a particular personal or communal cause – increasingly made claims and denials which were patently false, even to their acolytes, and yet the untruthfulness was mostly ignored by their supporters. People’s choice of narrative is driven increasingly by emotion, ideology, agenda and pragmatism rather than by truth. Media articles, commenting on the OED’s recognition of ‘post-truth,’ defined the term as describing a world in which the notion of truth has become unimportant or irrelevant in the pursuit of a particular outcome.

Unfortunately, even in the Church, of whom Jesus stated that “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32), the truth is often made subservient to the pursuit of other goals: church growth, academic respectability, dissemination of the Gospel and so on. As worthy as some of these goals may be, unless “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) is taught where and when appropriate, those goals can become hollow shells, devoid of propositional content and meaning.

Extracted from an article by Marc Ambler (CMI-South Africa) which appeared in Creation Ministries International’s Prayer News for April-June 2017; reproduced by kind permission. Creation Ministries website is creation.com.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE

THERE is a peculiar charm, a beauty known to the bride, in the Lord's words, "I am the bright and morning star"! (*Rev. 22:16*)

It is not merely that He is the Morning Star, and has awakened the hearts of a heavenly people to wait for His coming, but here is added "the bright;" there is a special lustre to be noticed, just as those who have observed the planet just before sun-rise at the moment of its greatest brilliancy.

So here Jesus speaks in such a manner that the bride's attention is fixed upon Him; the moment is solemn; the Sun of righteousness is soon to rise, but before this, and before He appears to Israel and the nations with healing in His wings, a great event is to take place. The Lord is about to display that marvellous divine power which shall quicken all those that sleep in Him, and transform all the living saints, calling them up, in the twinkling of an eye, to meet Him in the air.

The bright shining of the star expresses the nearness of the celestial glory (we may be there at the next moment), and the peculiar relationship of the bride to Him who is on the point of calling her up to meet Him.

The enemy has endeavoured, and but too well succeeded, to paralyse the effect in the hearts of the saints, of the wakening up to the truth of His coming, and to His special love to the church; but He is working, and will work in His own, and blessed be they that hear His voice!

If we look around in the world and to its conversation, there is nothing to indicate the rapture. Self-satisfaction, with the cry, "Where is the promise of His coming?" at the same time an uneasy feeling that things are not right after all (as of those who live in the villages under the cone of Vesuvius). Peace and safety! Christendom itself settling down to its most worldly phase, where

Christ is practically unknown. A deadly state of calm before the storm!

It is just in such an atmosphere as this, where every soul true to Christ must feel the weight of surrounding evil, and where the world, with its religion and all, is settling down to judgment, that a peculiar work of God takes place in the very midst of the evil.

The bright and morning star being presented, there is a response at once; a double response, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." How little we have given heed to the blessed Spirit's presence in the church! [I once noticed in the very centre of Christendom, in the greatest of christian temples, a gilded dove, sad effigy and poor substitute for the blessed Paraclete.]

How little we have entered into this great fact, and followed the current of the Spirit's action! Now the Spirit cries, "Come!" The voice, rising from this poor, ungrateful world, goes up to Him who is coming; the time is come for the descent of the heavenly Bridegroom into the air, to call away His own! Notice that the Holy Spirit's action here carries with it the turning of our souls toward Christ. How much is contained in the expression: "the bright and morning Star"!

The bride says, "Come!" It is not merely to be delivered from a world which is getting darker and darker, and from difficulties which thicken along her way; but because of the excellence which she perceives in the bright and morning Star, and the awakening of affections, which have nothing in common with earthly glories, towards Him, whose infinite love and divine splendour are visible to faith, in the symbol "the bright and morning star"!

Surely, though the weakness be felt on all sides, the Lord is calling forth in the Bride the response due to His own blessed announcement. Surely the excellence only to be found in Him (the love, the power, the divine and heavenly glory) is occupying the attention of the saints, and the desire to see Him as He is, shows

itself in the cry: “Come!” which is heard by Him, rising still above all other sounds in the universe, seated as He is, on the Father’s throne.

The blessing extends: “Let him that heareth say: Come!” The heart of him who hears is turned towards the blessed Son of God. He must be everything; His glory, His Person have their true place in the soul before everything else; His coming is thus desired, for His own infinite worth.

Then comes an evangelical message of the greatest beauty. “Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!” Before rising out of the dark atmosphere of this world to meet the Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom, and to be with Him in the light of His own presence for ever, a last appeal is made to the thirsty, and then to whosoever will, to take the water of life freely.

Happy they who are thus waiting for the Lord, and offering, with hearts full of His grace, the water of life to those around. May He still awaken His saints to the true state of things, and to be filled with His own unspeakable excellence and love!

E.L. Bevir (1847-1922); from “Voice to the Faithful” Vol. XXVII.

The Peace of God

Bring me that peace of Thine, O God, which passeth all understanding. It is as the peace of the ocean, which holds depths beneath it. It is not the rest of lifelessness, but the rest of balance. Thy patience is the patience, not of spentness, but of expectancy; it rests in hope. Bring me the peace of pulsation, the calm of courage, the endurance that springs from energy. Bring me the fortitude of fervour, the repose through inner radiancy, the tenacity that is born of trust. Bring me the silence that comes from serenity, the gentleness that is bred of joy, the quiet that has sprung from quickened faith. When I hear Thee in the whirlwind, there will be a great calm.

Dr. George Matheson (1842-1906)

ANGELIC SERVICE

Hebrews 1:14; Luke 1:26-31; 2:7-14; 22:41-43; Mark 1:13.

THE scripture we have read at the close of the first chapter of Hebrews shews us in what way God is employing angels with regard to ourselves. God may employ them in other ways. God has used angels in order to carry out His ways with men from the very earliest times.

I am referring to this, hoping that it may help us to understand the great interest that God has in His people on the earth at the present time. Angels are “sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.” I have no doubt that most of us have been the subjects of angelic service. Even a little child has angelic service, for the Lord spoke of the little ones and said, “Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18: 10). It is most instructive, therefore, to think of God’s care for the wellbeing of His people.

Angelic service lies in relation to what is temporal. Angels know about the church; they see it, but I very much question whether the angels understand what God is doing as the saints know it. God has been pleased to give angels a very great measure of insight into what He is doing, but there are things which angels “desire to look into,” so that we as believers stand in a more wonderful position than even the angel Gabriel, great as the position is which he occupies, or even Michael, the archangel. It says there are things the angels desire to look into – I suppose that Michael and Gabriel are included in that.

Now I referred to Luke’s gospel, to the movements of God with regard to the coming of Christ into this world, and that He called upon Gabriel to go down into the earth and to speak to Mary with regard to the birth of a son. A most wonderful thing to see the measure of light that God was pleased to give to the angel Gabriel, for at that time, as far as we know, no one on earth was in the secret

of what God was about to do. There were those in sympathy with what God was doing, and in a measure intelligent with regard to it, but at this particular moment, as far as we know, no one on earth was in the secret of what was about to take place. God commissioned the angel Gabriel to address himself to this highly favoured woman. He was in the secret of what was to take place with regard to the conception and birth of the Son of God – the holy thing to be born of her was to be called the Son of God. God was pleased to allow Gabriel to take up this position just simply as a servant, and he would enter into what was happening with the intelligence of a servant. God was pleased to make use of this great being – for Gabriel occupied a distinguished place. Michael, as you know, is alluded to as the archangel. Gabriel occupied a remarkable sphere of service even with reference to John the Baptist, and now with the Lord. No one in the religious circles on earth, even Simeon, Anna, and such as those, were informed, but here was an angel taken up by God for this service.

Following the birth of Jesus the time is come for public action, and the angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds. These shepherds were men in whom there was something that God could take pleasure in, and He drew near to them by means of the angel to disclose the marvellous fact of the birth of the Son of God in the manger. If you have noticed the scripture you will have seen how details are given by the angel, “Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” These men had come into the range of what God was doing. God was instructing an angel in order that He might make known His thoughts to these shepherds, and such was the delight of heaven in the moment that had come, that as the angel was concluding what he was doing, the heavenly hosts burst forth, as if to shew their intense interest in what God was doing.

I want to leave the impression by what I am saying that innumerable angels are sent forth to minister to us. This service

is in addition to the service of the Lord and the service of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there is not a day when we are not the subjects of angelic service. I believe that if a brother or sister required special protection God would give an angel charge to be in attendance upon them so that they might be cared for in a temporal way. It seems to give us a sense of the great place the saints have in the mind of God.

Now passing on in the life of Jesus, we find that angels are permitted to serve Him. A most wonderful thing for them! It says in Timothy, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh . . . seen of angels." What it must have been to the angels to see God manifest in the flesh!

In the temptation in the wilderness it says that when the tempter left Him angels ministered to Him. One has thought much of this service. You might ask, What could an angel minister to Him, what could angels bring to Him in the place to which He had come in manhood?

Having met the adversary and resisted every onslaught which was hurled against Him, He accepted the ministrations of the angels. It represents the deep interest of God as placing the angels at His service. You remember later He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of **angels**?" (Matt. 26:53). What do you think would have happened in Jerusalem if He had asked for them? Where would Jerusalem have been if more than twelve legions had come down to Him? Think of the army of the Assyrians destroyed by *one* angel. Think of the might which this represented. But the Lord declined to pray for twelve legions of angels. It shews that in the perfection of His grace He was great enough to sustain that hour without the angels. He would not ask for them, He would trust in God alone. I wonder what the world would think if twelve legions of angels appeared among them on the Lord's behalf?

The saints of God will be tried severely as time goes on, but God, if needs be, will give His angels charge concerning them. It says in the Psalms, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,”* as shewing His deep interest in His people, not only in spiritual things, but in *temporal care*; and we can know both, and rely on both, if we are in the *ways* which the Lord has ordained. The Lord endured that terrible ordeal in the wilderness, and the angels ministered to Him.

It may have been a host, for God can use a host if He will. Jacob was on his way and the angels met him. Jacob says, This is God’s host. They were on his side. I love to think, as I regard the people of God in the world, that the angels are on our side.

Time passes on in the history of the Lord Jesus until the hour of Gethsemane, and there upon His face on the ground, alone, withdrawn a stone’s cast from the disciples, meeting now the awful darkness of all that was to come, realising what was coming, indignation and wrath against all that was contrary to God. He was going to meet all this, the darkness of death and judgment. The enemy was permitted to bring all these things before Him. The Lord was feeling it so intensely that He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And an angel appeared from heaven strengthening Him, and He accepted it; the angel served Him, and the angel ministered to Him, and He went on. It was the care of God for Him in the suffering He was passing through in His holy body. Think of the angel returning to heaven, what would he think?

The angels have been brought into near relation with all that is happening, and the Lord pursued His way and met all that was against Him, both at the hand of God, the hands of men and the enemy. It would have overwhelmed any other than Himself. Think

**Psalm 91 has often been thought to apply especially to Christ but I don’t think we can exclude its application to others – Editor.*

of a person great enough to meet everything that came upon Him from God, unmitigated judgment, no mitigation whatever, and the power of the enemy against a lowly, dependent, suffering man, and the hatred of the world against Him, but He was great enough to stand there in the magnificence of His moral glory, and to meet it all alone.

He bowed His head and He went into death. Every movement of Christ has significance; many movements with us are aimless, but with Him there was no movement without significance. It says, He *bowed* His head and died, signifying that He accepted death. He was great enough to meet it and overthrow it, and yet He bowed His head and died. A Person of the Godhead in manhood, holy, sinless and spotless, went into the domain of death, and He lay there and angels were conversant with what was happening, for in the hour of resurrection an angel came down and rolled back the stone and sat upon it. There was a touch there of heavenly triumph in the action of an angel; when there was no man there apparently available for use, God employed an angel, and he rolled back the stone, and the keepers were as dead men. What a mighty triumph! God brought angels into all this triumph. The angel spoke to the women who came to the sepulchre and said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Think of an angel saying that, "*The Lord*"! Peter was not there; John was not there; the women *were* there – thank God they were there! Angels observed them and they were there to serve those beloved watchers, as if God was bringing in the complete overthrow of what the enemy had brought in in Eden, by seducing the woman. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" – *the* Lord. Mary could say my Lord. No angel could say that. They entered into their service which God gave to them and served effectively.

Now the moment comes when the Lord with measured steps, which ever marked Him, concludes His service on earth like a king in reference to His kingdom, speaking of the things pertaining to the

kingdom of God and commanding His disciples. He is received up into heaven. But God would shew that He uses angels still in relation to His people, for in course of time Peter is put into prison. Rome stretches forth its hand to intercept what the Lord was doing from the throne in heaven. What would He do? He sent down an angel, who went into the prison and smote Peter on the side, and gave him instructions as to what he should do, and led him out. Perhaps the angel did not know what was meant by smiting Peter on the side. I have no doubt Peter understood it. He put his garment about him, put on his sandals, followed the angel, and the great iron door opened by itself, and he led him out into the street.

It is most beautiful thus to see the way in which God has allowed angels to attend upon and serve His people, and they are doing it now and will do it to the end. What a comfort for our hearts!

We are all going into heaven when the Lord comes, and He will come with assembling shout and voice of the archangel and trump of God. It would appear that the archangel will serve here in the translation of the saints.

Paul was visited by an angel, Cornelius also, all shewing that angels are serving the people of God. I have no doubt they are serving us, and will serve us to the end. You may count upon it all the days that remain that they will minister to those who are heirs of salvation. Angels are always there, not only in an accident; it does not say that at all, they are sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. God has sent them forth for this.

It would appear from scripture that perhaps the bodies of the departed saints are in the care of the archangel. Michael contended with Satan with regard to the body of Moses. He said, "The Lord rebuke thee." That was enough! From this it would appear that the bodies of those departed may be in his care. In Thessalonians we read of the voice of the archangel when the Lord descends from heaven, shewing that not only the living saints are attended by the

angels, but those who have fallen asleep also. Now God has given angels this wonderful service to us, and I feel that we should enjoy something of the blessedness of being considered in such a way. It does not say or imply that angels serve people in the world; it says, those who are *heirs of salvation*. These are the saints of God. It is ourselves, those who believe on the Lord Jesus, and have the Spirit of God. These are the ones whom angels serve.

Now with regard to the city in the millennial day of glory, as you know, there are twelve gates – on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. It says: “at the gates twelve angels,” shewing that God has given angels a wonderful place in reference to the holy city; a place thus not only in past dispensations, not only in the present time, but in the day of glory. Angels will be at the gates, not walking on the street of gold, but at the gates. It is wonderful to see the place given to angels there. And, beloved, there are innumerable hosts – we have come to them in having come to mount Zion (Heb. 12:22) – this innumerable host of angels; they are at our service, and with a sense of that we may indeed give ourselves less concern about temporal matters and have more confidence in God, so that we may give ourselves to spiritual things, things in relation to the heavenly Man, Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us lay hold of what is really life. The time is fleeting, the hours fly away from us, and in view of God’s wonderful care for us and the vast and limitless resources which He has at His command, do not let us fear. But rather may we be strong in faith and give glory to God. He will never fail us. If others fear and their hearts fail them for fear, may we trust in the living God, our Father! *Summary of an address by Russell Besley (1872-1934).*

Fragment

Whoso looketh to the white side of Christ’s cross, and can take it up handsomely with faith and courage, shall find it such a burden as sails are to a ship, or wings to a bird.

Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661)

“Afterward”

Hebrews 12:11

HOW happy are tried Christians, *afterwards*. No calm more deep than that which succeeds a storm. Who has not rejoiced in clear shinings after rain? Victorious banquets are for well-exercised soldiers. After killing the lion, we eat the honey; after climbing the Hill Difficulty, we sit down in the arbour to rest; after traversing the Valley of Humiliation, after fighting with Apollyon, the shining one appears, with the healing branch from the tree of life. Our sorrows, like the passing keels of the vessels upon the sea, leave a silver line of holy light behind them “afterwards.” It is peace, sweet, deep peace, which follows the horrible turmoil which once reigned in our tormented, guilty souls. See, then, the happy estate of a Christian! He has his best things last, and he therefore in this world receives his worst things first. But even his worst things are “afterward” good things, harsh ploughings yielding joyful harvests. Even now he grows rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he lives by dying, and becomes full by being emptied; if, then, his grievous afflictions yield him so much peaceable fruit in this life, what shall be the full vintage of joy “afterwards” in heaven? If his dark nights are as bright as the world’s days, what shall his days be? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun, what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in a dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fires, how will he extol Him before the eternal throne! If evil be good to him now, what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him then! Oh, blessed “afterward!” Who would not be a Christian? Who would not bear the present cross for the crown which cometh afterwards? But herein is work for patience, for the rest is not for to-day, nor the triumph for the present, but “afterward.” Wait, O soul, and let patience have her perfect work.

Charles H. Spurgeon.

THE HEART ENGAGED WITH CHRIST

Acts 8: 32-36 and 9:3-5; Philippians 3:7-11

WHAT was before me, beloved brethren, to refer to a little was in continuity of what the Spirit of God has brought before us in a very definite way during our meetings. It has come before us again to-night, and in a way that many of us have hardly looked at before. Perhaps we have all felt how the Spirit of God has really to exclude flesh in our own souls and bring Christ in, but we may have little thought of it as carried out in the assembly. How little the truth of the real character of the assembly is known! There Christ is everything, and the flesh has no place. I would seek to encourage you with the two examples which these scriptures bring before us. I would like also to read two others in order to show how Christ became everything to these people. We must really get *this Person* before our souls, that we should be drawn to Him so that He may become everything to us; and the first man must be displaced by all that is of Him.

I will speak in a brief way (the truth of it has already been before us, I only want to press it further home). I turn for the first example to the dying thief (Luke 23). There you get a man ending his days on the scaffold, the execration of men naturally; but what is remarkable is, that *he* is not the object of their execration, but the One by his side. It is not the hooting of men against a murderer, but the combination of every single character of man against Christ.

I make a remark in connection with the gospel of Luke. You find there more people grouped around the cross than in any other gospel. What came out in the beginning of Luke was, as Simeon said, "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel . . . *that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*" (Luke 2:34, 35). If that blessed Man is in the world He must test every other man. Therefore I think you will find in that gospel all shades and characters of men around the cross, where for His love He had

hatred. There was not one in the whole scene to say, “Do not do it!” All were swept along by the power of Satan; the crowd smite their breasts and return to their homes. It was a dreadful sight, but they go home, and no one says, “Do not do it!” He is the rejected One. This blessed Saviour is the One the world has cast out and will not have.

I return to the thief. He is not execrated by men. Pilate, the priesthood, the mob, are all against Christ. Even the thief is amongst His revilers at the beginning, as we learn from another gospel. But there comes a moment when his soul was held by the Person by his side. It was the work of God. That Man whom everyone was against, and no one stood up for, to Him this malefactor turns round, and his soul is impressed as he looks at the One who is hanging by his side. You may say, How do you know? He turns to the Lord; he owns He was the One who had “done nothing amiss,” and yet was in the same condemnation. He brings before the Lord the thought of the kingdom. The desire of the thief was to be with the Lord in His kingdom. I do not say he understood what its character was, but he was impressed with One the hanging by his side; He had a kingdom and he wanted to have a place with Him whom all the world cast out.

Love had brought Him to hang by the side of the thief who had little intelligence, but the Spirit of God produced the impression upon his soul as to the Person of Jesus; his thought was, I should like to get into His kingdom, to be with Him. You know the blessed answer, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” The Lord answered this desire in a much fuller way than he had expressed it.

I turn to another scene – Stephen, in Acts 7. Here again is a man being put to death by his fellow-men, but the reason is quite different. He is no malefactor, but the martyr of Jesus. He has confessed Jesus, and the world is sending him out after the One he has confessed. It was a supreme moment; a moment that might well engage our attention; we might think how we should act at such a

time. But I see here a man absorbed with a Person. That is what I want that our souls should realise. I see the dying thief absorbed with a Person; I see with all that was transacting round him, there was something between that thief and the Lord at that moment, so that he gave no heed to all that was going on around. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who can tell what that was to the heart of that poor thief. Or what it was to Stephen when he was suffering there! Only now you get this difference – a man "filled with the Holy Ghost." Not only impressed by Him, but filled by Him, "He being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." What a difference from all that was going on around! He looked up stedfastly into heaven. He is now cast out and rejected, as his Master was. Everything that could come upon him is coming; out of it all he looks up. One Person occupies his soul, and by the power of the Holy Ghost he looks up through the heavens. The word is very strong in the original. "I see the heavens opened through." No doubt it was supernatural power that enabled him to testify to the Jews of where Christ is, "Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." But the point I dwell upon is that a man is absorbed with the Person of Jesus. That Person has possession of his spirit, and all that man can do fades from his view. I believe it also faded from the view of the thief; there was only one Person before his soul. So with Stephen; all that man could do faded from his view as he looked up through the heavens and saw the glory of God and Jesus.

Now see the consequence of it; he is like Christ. He says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'" He is leaving the scene of murder and malice, and his spirit going to be with Christ; at the same time he knelt down and prayed for his murderers. Nothing but Christ comes out. Not a bit of

the first man, but a heart absorbed with Christ.

Now we come to the passage I read (chapter 8). No doubt the eunuch was a Jew, though he came out of the country of the queen of Ethiopia (vers. 27, 28); he was sitting in his chariot and reading Esaias the prophet. He does not understand what he is reading, but the Spirit of God was at work impressing his mind with some One, who did not assert Himself in this world, not standing up for His rights; One “led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so he opened not his mouth.” He has arrived at the point that “his life was taken from the earth,” when Philip joins him. The one thought in his soul is – ‘Who is this Person?’ That thought is working in him. Here is a Person in suffering, one not opening His mouth, taking no place here, getting no right judgment from man; and, what man feels more than all, His life taken from the earth: who is He? Philip can tell him. “He preached unto him *Jesus*.” That is the answer, nothing more is said.

But what the eunuch says after is very significant. You do not read that Philip explained anything about baptism; but they come to a certain water, and the eunuch says, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” as much as to say, I would like to take my place with that One in death – as confessing that name, with the One who is gone from the earth. There is the judicial side of His death for us, but His life being taken from the earth He had nothing here. If He is gone from the earth, we go that way too.

There is the effect again I believe, beloved friends, of the soul being absorbed with Christ. There may be different ways in which the Spirit of God works with us, but it is to make Christ everything. In reply to the eunuch’s question, Philip preached to him Jesus.

Now I come to Saul (Acts 9). Here you find one, who has been called the Apostle of hatred against Christ – all the enmity of the heart coming up against Christ in a man who said he had “lived in

all good conscience before God.” In his hatred and opposition to Christ he thought he was doing God service. He is going to Damascus to persecute the saints. A light from heaven shines round about him, above the brightness of the sun: the light of glory appears to him and he is stricken to the earth. He could not deny this light out of heaven. It is not a Person in humiliation now. That touched the heart of the eunuch. Now it is the brightness of the glory that broke Saul down. But the same kind of question comes out: “Who art thou, Lord?” and the same answer – Jesus. “I am Jesus”! Philip’s answer was “Jesus.” It is the same here, “I am Jesus.” That wonderful Person took possession of Saul’s soul.

And now I come to another point which has often been noticed – that was the first revelation that Christ’s body was here upon earth. I do not think we could attach too much importance to what our brother has said, that there is the continuance of Christ upon earth in His body being here. It is an immense thing to get hold of. A person who knows it desires the company of the saints. This truth comes out to Paul, that the saints he was persecuting were Christ upon earth. “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.”

The effect on Paul was this – not only was Christ in glory his object, but for that object he counted all things loss. I read Philippians 3 to show you how that Person filled the eye of Paul’s soul. He refers to it in Galatians, “Not I, but Christ;” and in 2 Corinthians 4, “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” – had shone into his heart; and here we may ask, ‘What for?’ For the shining out, and this is important for our souls: Paul became the vessel of this treasure, but a vessel upheld by no power of man. Not only you cannot bring into God’s temple anything that is of man; but you may depend upon it, the power in which the witness is borne to Christ cannot be upheld by man either. They tried to stone Paul, as they did Stephen; but the Lord preserved the vessel. In Stephen’s death was the witness of a saint gone to be with Christ. In Paul, God’s power preserved the vessel or we should

not have known what we do now about that Lord in glory; through him the treasure has reached us. Apparently a stone might have smashed the vessel in a moment – where would then the light have been for us that we get in Paul's writings?

And let me say the true character of the church is a vessel, a living vessel preserved by the power of God – not a mere formal system, but a living vessel. You and I must have Christ for our object, and as the light shines in and the love of Christ is known in our souls we shall know also what the church is as the vessel of the light. I have brought these examples before you that I may engage your hearts with the Person, and that you may see that that blessed Person is engaged with all that is of Himself down here.

Paul says in Philippians 1, “To me to live is Christ and to die is gain,” but he thought of the saints. Look at his love to them, “To abide in the flesh is more needful for you, and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all.” Look how Christ and His interests dwell in the heart of that man! He looks up and gets that answer, “I am Jesus,” and see how the light came out in him down here, and how the vessel was maintained in the power of God, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”

May the Lord Jesus lead our hearts into it! May He impress our hearts with that blessed Person, for His name's sake.

Address by T.H. Reynolds at Quemerford, May 1894.

Fragment

I have been much helped in seeing that Christ's death was both declaratory and sacrificial, because God was declared, and He died for man. God's righteousness was declared and the grace and love of God set forth. All came out in His death, but it was sacrificial for man. (F.E. Raven [1837-1903] *New Series Vol. 14, p. 27*)

GUIDANCE

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Thus we learn that divine guidance is the privilege, and more, is the very characteristic of God’s people. The grace of God which has saved them, has also conferred on them all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and next to the gift of His own Son, God’s chiefest gift, is that of the Holy Spirit; as the apostle has said, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Guidance must always be from without, and must depend on another and not on oneself. If I am ever so wise in heart and perfect in ways, these will not guide me, though they might show that I have no need of guidance; if, however, I know the need of guidance, I also confess that that is lacking in myself which guidance is to accomplish. But every true Christian confesses to the need of divine guidance; and every Christian is entitled to know it: it is, as we have said, the very characteristic of God’s children that they are led of the Spirit, and if they walk in the Spirit, they will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; thus, instead of following the leading of the fleshly mind and will, they will in all things be led of God.

If anyone asks, as has often been asked, Am I in everything to know and to do the will of God? The answer is simple and affirmative; it is the believer’s privilege so to walk as to please God, to be not conformed to this world, to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that he may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

God has indeed done His part, not only in willing our guidance, but in the gift of His Spirit in whose power we are called to walk. It is not the purpose of God that His children should walk in blindness, nor in doubt in the several steps of their path down here, any more than they should question His grace in their acceptance, nor the

glory prepared which is to be the end of that path. Yet how many a saint who is assured of the love, and of the salvation, of God, who waits for Christ's coming with confidence and expectation, is found full of perplexity in the common matters of daily life, of duty, or of service, as though their God and Father, who has assured them an eternity of glory with His Son, was indifferent to the steps by which they tread their path through this present world, and to all that may befall them by the way. It is good to remember that the path of God's people here is in the mind of God, not separated from its end, and that all His dealings with His saints, all His guidance and direction are only consistent with, and in view of, that to which He has predestinated and called them. Our souls lose much, and the name and the testimony of the Lord lose more, because we separate our life on the earth from the glory to which some day we hope to attain. Hence the present life is often earthly, and formed on the world's model, instead of heavenly in character and hope. From the manger to the glory, the life of the Lord Jesus was pursued in a consistent course, and from the moment when we learn our place and part with Him in death and life, our life should be formed on the same model.

There is no greater subject of exercise amongst faithful Christians than that they should be found in all things in the way of God, and not in the fulfilment of their own selfish wills. To the attainment of this, there appear to us to be three things essential. First, subjection of heart and mind to the word of God; secondly, an acquaintance with the Scriptures which, given by inspiration from God, are able not only to make wise unto salvation, but also to furnish unto all good works; and thirdly, a habit of communion of soul with God. Insubjection to or ignorance of the word of God, or a habit of life and walk apart from fellowship with the Father and His Son, either, or all of these must put the saint outside the place of guidance, and render him incapable of discerning the will of the Lord; just as in nature, the child who either knows not, nor cares for the father's word, and forsakes the intimacy of the father's heart and

home, is found like the prodigal in the life and habits of the “far country.” Moreover, in the degree, however small, in which these things may be deficient, will there be corresponding failure in the apprehension of guidance, and of the mind of God.

Through the insidious working of self-will many a heart which in purpose is upright towards God, is yet often in sore bondage in the many details of life and service. The difficulty of choice between two steps, and of decision on matters sometimes small, but sometimes which we may deem important, often involve deep heart searching and prayer to God for His direction. Could our own will, and the possible or apprehended consequences to ourselves, whether for gain or loss, be eliminated from such questions, the difficulty of choice would be small indeed. It is however the province of faith to guide the soul in these times of perplexity, and faith brings God into the scene, and looks not on its own things but on the things of God. Faith also knows God as Him who is after all the one most interested in the walk and welfare of His people, and who sees the eternal consequences of their steps, while they judge for the most part by the immediate and temporal results. Faith furthermore remembers that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly – that He is able to keep him from falling, able to lead along the right path, and in His own time both justify all His dealings with His people, and confirm them in compliance and contentedness with all His ways.

Now it is a great relief to the upright heart to remember that guidance is promised by God to His people, and that while it is His part to guide, theirs only is to be guided: “I will ... teach thee” and “guide thee with mine eye.” “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” This is the part of God, and whether we are conscious or not conscious of His guidance, He will not fail in that which He has undertaken. Guidance is not necessarily *knowing* that we are guided, but it is *being guided* – “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” – and our

business is to be in that state of soul in which He can lead us as the Father His children, though often by a way we know not. No doubt it is a happy and higher thing to be always so sensible of the movement of His eye and of His hand that all our ways may be ordered in communion with Him, but it is also blessed for the soul to be so sensible of self-judgment and self-renunciation, that the simple and happy heart can leave itself in His hands, and trust in His guidance as a matter of course. This delivers from bondage, and the legal state of so many, who are ever inquiring whether they are doing the right thing; while if the will is broken, the rule of a Christian's life should be that he does not suspect he is doing the wrong one. Still it is well to mistrust self, and the consciousness of the will at work, and sift it before the Lord, though we may in the end discover that the thing desired is the very thing He would have us to do. In nearness to God we solve these questions, as our heart and will become more and more fashioned by His guidance, so will it be not merely by coincidence but by habit that God's will and ours are identical. If then both ourselves and our time are really at the Lord's disposal, we can leave it to Him to dispose of us as He sees good; doing that which the hand finds to do, day by day, without bondage or distrust; and thus shall we be preserved from that perplexity and distraction which so hinders from communion and true testimony for His name.

But there are cases where the Lord will have us in real exercise, and in which we ourselves must choose for God, and it is in such a time that the habit of our life is then most felt for good or evil. If communion with God and His word be our habit, the hardest matters will be easily solved, while, if the contrary be the case, perplexity, ending in failure, must ensue.

The guidance of God is not for things spiritual only, but for the whole Christian life. In his own affairs, in person, home, business, or in the world, the Christian is to count on the leading of the Spirit. Many fail here, and while they look for spiritual guidance in their

service to God, and to His people, and in their sorrows and difficulties, they lean to their own understanding and trust their natural powers and common sense in the things of daily life. It is impossible to estimate the loss and damage to souls through this cause, and through neglect of that power which alone can keep them amidst the whirl, the conflict, and impurity of an evil world. The Christian's house, his home, his dress, his food, are all matters in which he is a witness either for or against the Lord, and all are deemed worthy of the notice of the Spirit of God in His word. Herein is the need which we noticed at the beginning for acquaintance with and subjection to that word, which God has given us by inspiration, and which He uses now by His Spirit for the cleansing of our ways and the perfecting us in the life of faith, and in the knowledge of His will.

The Lord give us to know more of His guidance, and be meet for it with hearts kept free for, and in fellowship with, Him. If we fail, He will not fail us, and so we need not be discouraged. He is our Shepherd, who makes us to lie down, and leads us, whether beside the still waters, or in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He restores the soul. He is with us, whether in the valley, or at the table He has prepared for us, with the head anointed, and the cup flowing; we may say, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. The Lord give us hearts, as the sheep of His hand, to follow such a Leader. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

J.B. Stoney (1814-97)

Fragment

We may divide Matthew's Gospel into two parts. At the end of the first part the Lord says "Come ... take ... learn" (11: 28,29). At the end of the second He says "Go ... make ... teach" (28:19,20) [Darby Trans., NKJV and NIV]. There is a connection between our *taking* His yoke and *making* disciples of others. *Tony Sheldrake.*

POETIC PAGES

Jehovah Nissi

Exodus 17:15

Through scenes of sorrow, sin and shame,
We're kept, Lord Jesus, in Thy name;
Thy name, our banner, tower and stay,
To keep us through this dark'ning day.

Reveal to each, O Lord, we pray
The love that guards the rugged way;
Reveal to each, in power of prayer,
The cloven rock – the secret stair!

Reveal to each Thy Spirit here,
To guard, to guide, to feed, to cheer;
Reveal to each Thy Spirit's power
To keep us through this dark'ning hour!

Reveal, that thus Thy name may be
God's psalm, God's song, God's melody!
To cheer each heart, each soul sustain,
Till Thou, Lord Jesus, come again!

Reprinted from "The Streams," an anthology of poems from "A Voice to the Faithful."

He Careth for You

Said the robin to the sparrow,
"I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so."
Said the sparrow to the robin,
"Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me."

Said the lily to the daisy,
“Little sister, can you say
Why the thought of food and raiment
Fills these humans with dismay?”
Said the daisy to the lily,
“Well, I fear that it must be
That they have no kind Creator
Such as clothes both you and me.

Mrs. Chesney.

Homeward Bound

So He bringeth them unto their desired haven – Psalm 107:30.

We're on our voyage homeward,
'Twill very soon be o'er;
A few brief days more sailing,
And then we reach the shore.

Thy present grace, Lord Jesus,
Has been our strength and stay;
Alike in storm or sunshine –
Sustaining all the way.

In many a deadly peril,
Through many a gloomy night,
Thy love which knows no changing
Has shed its warmth and light.

With what a shout of gladness
We into port shall glide!
And hear Thy call of welcome,
And gather at Thy side!

T. Willey (1847-1930)

NOTE

The Editor trusts that the selection and composition of material for this magazine has been undertaken with the Lord's guidance and that the contents are of moral and spiritual value and appropriate to present needs. The only infallible statement of truth, however, is found in the Holy Bible and the reader is, therefore, urged to follow the practice of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). The Editor is always happy to receive comments and inquiries, and to consider suggested articles for inclusion in future issues.