

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 89

May – August 2013

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH
(*Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19*)
NO. 89: MAY– AUGUST 2013
Editorial

Most of the articles contained in this issue are of older origin but of course God’s truth does not change. I remember a brother in the Lord saying many years ago, ‘If it’s the truth, it’s not new; if it’s new, it’s not the truth.’

There are, alas, those who assert that Christianity is evolving but I believe it was against such notions that the apostle John wrote, taking his readers back to what was from the beginning – to the furthest beginning, before creation, in his gospel (John 1:1,2), and, in his first epistle, to the beginning of Christianity (1 John 1:1), when the Son of God was here on earth in a condition of flesh and blood to be heard, seen and handled. Moreover, he exhorts us to let that which we have heard from the beginning abide in us (1 John 2:24) and warns us against those who move away from that (2 John 9), which verse could well be rendered “Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ ...”

It is unsurprising that God’s truth does not change, seeing that He Himself does not change (Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17) and “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come” (Hebrews 13:8) – He who is Himself “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). There is indeed much scope for exhortation, counsel, encouragement etc. in the *application* of the truth to present conditions – how much we need that! – but the truth *itself* is as unchanging as the God from whom it comes.

If readers intending in future to rely on the website to read the magazine would make sure that I have their e-mail address, I will let them know when the next issue has been posted. *G.S.B.*

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THE SECOND MAN

(1 Corinthians 15:47)

THIS remarkable title belongs to the Lord Jesus, and is only found in this passage. As the second Man He stands in contrast to Adam, who was the first. We should have thought that Adam's firstborn son was the second man, and historically and literally he was; but we have to pass all down the long line of genealogy extending over thousands of years before we come to Him to whom this title properly belongs – it is Jesus, son (as was supposed, though in no sense really so) of Joseph, son of Heli – and right back to Seth, who was of Adam, who was of God (Luke 3:23-38). The first man is of the earth, earthy, i.e., made of dust, but the second Man is from heaven. He is of heavenly origin, while the first was earthly. He could say, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven." (John 3:13). The first man was but a figure of Him that should come, that is, the second (Rom. 5:14). The first was never the man of God's purpose, in whom all His glory was to be established and eternally displayed. It is in God's Son, Jesus Christ, that all the promises of God are yea and Amen (2 Cor. 1:20). The first man sinned, and having brought God's judgment of death upon himself, he was cast out, with his wife, from the garden of Eden and became the head of the human family, who all bear his image, and are all under the judgment of death as sinners. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy" (ver. 48).

But before he was thus driven out, God, in pronouncing a curse upon the serpent, had spoken of the "seed of the woman" who should in due time bruise the serpent's head. This is the first mention in scripture of the One whom we are considering as the second Man. The godly, through all ages, were looking for the "promised seed," and when the fulness of the time was come He appeared – for "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," a real man, born of woman, and an Israelite under law – to work redemption and bring men into the blessing of sonship. (Gal. 4:4,

5.) Thus the second Man came, in grace, into the midst of all the moral wreck and ruin, which is the result of the first man's departure from God. He came to bear the judgment, as He only could do, the judgment of God which was lying upon men. So He has tasted death in all its terror for everything and every man (Heb. 2:9, 14), and thus has removed the sting of it for His people, and broken the power of Satan, who held them in bondage through fear of it. "The end of all flesh" (Gen. 6:13) has really come before God in the death of His beloved Son: in that death man, according to flesh, sinful and ruined, has been removed in judgment, never more to be recognised after that order.

The second Man – the heavenly One – stands now on resurrection ground, for death could not hold Him. But He is not alone. The heavenly ones stand in Him and are *of Him*. He was alone in death, as the "corn of wheat" (John 12:24); but in resurrection He is the centre of a vast throng who have commenced a wholly new history as "*risen with him*" (Col. 2:12, 13) and quickened with Him too: there is indeed and shall be yet "much fruit." "As is the heavenly [one], such are they also that are heavenly" (ver. 48). He is the head of a new and heavenly order of man, and to Him and that new order do believers to-day belong. It only remains for Him to exercise that power which belongs to Him, and we shall drop for ever all trace of the "earthy." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (ver. 49). Meanwhile, as we, by the Spirit, behold the glory of the Lord, we are even now transformed, morally, into His image from glory to glory, and thus reflect something of His glory ere the day dawn when it shall be the light of the universe (2 Cor. 3:1 8.) May we better know how completely we have been severed by the death of Christ from all that is of Adam, and enter more into our place of privilege and blessing as associated with the second Man – the heavenly One – who is risen from the dead.

THE LAST ADAM – A QUICKENING SPIRIT

(1 Corinthians 15:45)

THIS title, belonging to Christ alone, is found nowhere but in this passage. Scripture never speaks, though Christians often do, of the second Adam. Christ is the second Man, but He is the LAST Adam, for there is none to follow Him. He stands alone, too, as Man, in this title and character, for though truly Man, He must be a divine Person to be a quickening, that is, a *life-giving* Spirit. He is one with the Father and quickens whom He will. Believers are quickened already: they have heard the voice of the Son of God and they live. They have passed out of death into life but they still await the mighty operation of the last Adam, who (John 5:21-26) will change their bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like His own body of glory.

As the last Adam He closes in death the history of the fallen, sinful race descended from the first, and, as risen from the dead, He is the source and giver of life to a new race, of which He is the Head.

The subject of this chapter (1 Cor. 15) is resurrection, which applies to the body, and that is the connection in which our blessed Lord is spoken of as the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit, risen from the dead, and so in a new condition – the same holy Person, unchanged, but in such an entirely new and changed *condition*, that the most intimate of His disciples did not recognise Him when, only three days after His death, He appeared to them in resurrection.

Man brought in death, and it is Man in the Person of Christ who will completely annul and destroy it in the power of resurrection. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (ver. 22).

Resurrection and a new condition in spiritual, glorious bodies is an essential part of God’s purpose for His saints.

Our mortal bodies shall be quickened because of His Spirit that dwelleth in us (Rom. 8:11).

Again, we read, “Our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body [*or, body of humiliation*], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20, 21.)

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (v. 44). We are in the natural, and we await the spiritual, “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. 5:1-5.) With this the Lord, as the last Adam, will clothe us at His coming, and then “mortality [shall] be swallowed up of life.”

Meanwhile God, by His Spirit, is carrying on His work and ‘forming Christ in us’ while we are in these “natural” bodies. That work (see Gal. 4:19) will abide for ever and be displayed for His glory in the bodies of glory, with which we shall be clothed.

Our body is even now the temple of the Holy Ghost which we have of God, so we are exhorted to glorify God in our body (1 Cor. 6:13, 19, 20.)

So it is written that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in his body, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10.)

How careful we should be then as to the use we make of our bodies, so that the work of God’s Spirit in us may not be hindered.

We should present our bodies a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1).

They should be held as dead to sin, so as to be governed by the Spirit, who is life (Rom. 8:10.)

The whole truth of the matter, reaching its climax, is summed up in these few verses (1 Cor. 15:46-57) which we will quote from the Darby Translation:

“But that which is spiritual was not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual: the first man out of the earth, made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. Such as He made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones. And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one. But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility.” Then, as to how it is all to be brought about: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must needs put on incorruptibility, and this mortal put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the word written: Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Let it be, then, in the meantime our one concern that God may be glorified in our present mortal bodies.

May we know how to bear about always in our bodies the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may shine out! Thus, while waiting for the accomplishment of all, we shall be able to say, though still in the scene of death, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

The above two articles have been extracted from “The Believer’s Friend,” Vol. 1 [1909]; they were attributed to A. S. L., almost certainly A.S. Loughnan.

Fragment

Experience ought to strengthen faith; but there must be present faith to use experience.

J.N. Darby, Practical Reflections on the Psalms (Psalm 78).

FAITH'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN EVIL DAYS.

(*Jude 17-25.*)

IT is quite clear the apostle Jude writes for and contemplates the last state of things: what comes under the Lord's eye, and what the saints have to meet. He is showing the resources are the same even to the very end, when such a state of things arrives as is depicted in the earlier verses of the epistle. This we see thoroughly fulfilled in the history and present condition of the church. But the Spirit of God gives us a word of cheer, to carry us on at this time, when things are outwardly and inwardly so depressing. In Peter's second epistle the Lord tells us what would be the corruption inside, whereas Jude unfolds the apostasy, that is, departure from first estate.

Jude addresses the faithful, however, and says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Four sweet words – "*Building,*" "*praying,*" "*keeping,*" "*looking.*" "Building" – take care you do not pull down. What the Spirit prescribes here is building; this is beautiful, because Jude is describing decay, and dissolution, as the fruit of the corruption all around. Faith is peculiarly sweet to the eye of the Lord when all is going to ruins. What is the warrant for saints meeting like this? – "building yourselves up."

It is the end here, and there is a resource which is competent for the state of things, and enough to keep the saints joyful. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the expected and suited state of the saints always. Is it not to be the same now? Surely. As the history of God's people darkens, God ever raises a light; the deeper the darkness, the brighter the light. This principle is sweetly illustrated in the Old Testament, and I turn to three scriptures which show that the greater the ruin, the brighter the light, where faith was operative.

First, 2 Chronicles 30. Things were bad enough in Hezekiah's day, with doors shut, and lamps put out, but he addresses all the people of God, and they came together and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, taking advantage of a privilege God allowed (see Num. 9:11). "Great gladness" prevailed, so they determined to have other seven days, and we read "they kept other seven days with gladness" (30:23). Hezekiah got simply before the Lord, and as a direct and natural consequence, "there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem" (ver. 26).

They were very palmy days in Solomon's reign, doubtless, but these were even better than they. You find, too, that when all were thoroughly happy before the Lord, they began to be occupied with the Lord's interests. The people brought in the tithe of all things "abundantly," and the priests and Levites were "encouraged" (31:4, 5). When they began to give, the Lord began to bless. As the joy in the Lord rises, the interest in and care for His things break out, and "heaps, heaps" (vers. 6, 7) meet the eye of the gladdened king. The Lord has given us a brightening up many a time, but, alas! how soon we sink down. So was it also in Judah's history.

Secondly. Things got very low indeed till Josiah's time. Then there was another revival. Evil was judged (2 Chron. 34:3, 7). Then "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord," and "Shaphan read it before the king" (vers. 14, 15). The word of God produced repentance and humbling, and thereafter "Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem" (chap. 35:1). And the record is given, "And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept" (ver. 18). It was the most remarkable passover since the kingdom had been established. Not even Solomon's could approach it. What an encouragement for faith!

Thirdly. But, alas! enjoyed blessing will not keep the soul unless the eye be single; so deeper failure follows; the people go away again from God, and then into captivity. God's grace, however, never gives up His own, and, through mercy, there is partial recovery in Ezra's time. A remarkable revival occurs, and many return from Babylon to God's earthly centre, Jerusalem. This is but a type of what has happened in our days, in which the Lord has worked blessedly by His Spirit, revived interest in His word, and gathered back His saints to divine ground. Nehemiah, following Ezra, begins to build his wall. That was separation. Ezra built the temple, Nehemiah the wall, and many true helpers had he. Nearly all were in the work, sisters and all. Some built two bits, notably the Tekoites (Neh. 3:5, 27), though of them it is said, "but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord" (ver. 5). *Verbum sap.** But the Lord notices every mark of devotedness, evidenced by repairing the wall, whether it be "Shallum and his daughters" (ver. 12), or Baruch, who "*earnestly repaired*" (ver. 20), or the priests "every one over against his house" (ver. 28), or Meshullam "over against his chamber" (ver. 30), for I suppose he was but a lodger.

Again does the word of the Lord become precious, and heeded (chap. 8:1-8), and what good cheer it brought verses 9, 10 indicate, as "this day is holy to the Lord" twice fell on their ears, and "the joy of the Lord is your strength" was the trumpet call of the Spirit. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." How beautiful! If our hearts are delighting in Christ there is always strength and power, and understanding too, so the next thing is, they kept the feast of tabernacles. They anticipated the millennium; in fact, there was more apprehension of the mind of the Lord at this moment than there had ever been in their previous history – for "all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of

* *Abbreviation of 'Verbum sat sapienti' – 'a word is enough to a wise man,' or we might say, 'enough said.'*

Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness” (ver. 17). Never in the brightest day of kingly power did such a thing happen. I just show this principle in the history of God’s people, that if there be faith, and a desire to follow His word, the darker the day, the brighter will be the blessing, if there be only obedience; and the further into the ruin you trace them, the bolder does faith become in its action.

In Jude, who speaks of days of church ruin and failure, we are encouraged to expect great things, if only faith be in exercise. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” This evidently is the revelation of God – Christianity as such – on which we are to build. The trowel is ever to be in the hand; “building up,” not pulling down, is our business. The Christian is not an “Iconoclast” – a destroyer of idols – but a builder, an unfolder, and living expositor of the truth.

One brother was speaking this morning of the Holy Ghost as the Testifier of Jesus, and here the Spirit of God is the abiding spring of power, realised by our having none, and, therefore, in dependence, we are to be found “praying in the Holy Ghost.” Joy in the Spirit is the result of our yielding ourselves unreservedly to the care and guidance of this abiding Comforter of our heart. We shall thus only be kept to the end, walking in “the communion of the Holy Ghost” and “the comfort of the Spirit.” We were exhorted to love this morning, but how can it be maintained? Here we get it: “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Yourselves the objects of love; born of God, you cannot help loving. If kept in the enjoyment of the Lord’s love, it flows out, you cannot help it; there is no effort. No apple-tree *tries* to grow apples. Do not try to be anything; you keep yourself in the love of God, and you will be like the Son of God; you cannot help it. The atmosphere we live in will tell upon us, just as the ointment on Aaron’s head went down to the skirts of his garments and diffused an odour wherever he went (see Ps. 133). If we get near to the Lord we shall carry away some of the savour of

His presence. We always become like the thing we are occupied with.

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not the Lord’s coming exactly, but the effect of it. It is connected with our being taken out of this scene, and into our home – heaven. We know we are welcome there – that it is our home: the Spirit even now conducts our hearts there; the more you go, the more you get the sense of the welcome there.

Christ is there, and Paul was always pressing thither by the pathway of resurrection from among the dead. It was his goal. When you wake up in His likeness you will say, “Bless the Lord, His mercy endureth for ever.” The deepest desire of the heart will be gratified when we reach the spot the Lord is carrying us to. Do you mean it is not a mercy? It is the greatest mercy the Lord can bestow upon us. We have to serve here, and He is to be manifested in us. But if every saint here were caught up this afternoon before four o’clock, each would draw a deep breath and say, “Thank God, that is the greatest mercy I have ever known; I am out of the world for ever, I am with the Lord, and like Him, and shall never wander from, or be unlike, Him again.” The Lord, in His grace, keep us, and encourage our hearts to go on “looking.”

How beautifully the epistle closes with a doxology of triumph: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Is not that thought lovely? “With exceeding joy.” That is not ours, but the joy on Christ’s part, when He presents to Himself that Church He has loved, and cherished so faithfully these eighteen hundred years. It will be the day of the gladness of *His* heart.

The Lord enable us to go on “building” (do not drop the trowel!), “keeping” . . . “praying in the Holy Ghost,” and then “looking.” That fills up the whole life of the saint, and the next thing is, we find

ourselves gathered home in the cloudless perfection of His own presence.

Well may we sing –

Lord, we can see, by faith in Thee,
A prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine, in light divine,
In glory never fading.

A home above, of peace and love,
Close to Thy holy person;
Thy saints shall there see glory fair,
And shine as Thy reflection.

O how we thirst the chains to burst,
That weigh our spirits downward;
And there to flow, in love's full glow,
With hearts like Thine surrounded.

No more as here, 'mid snares, to fear
A thought or wish unholy;
No more to pain the Lamb once slain,
But live to love Thee wholly!

No more to view Thy chosen few
In selfish strife divided;
But drink in peace the living grace
That gave them hearts united!

Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray, –
That prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine in light divine,
In glory never fading.

The article on Jude's Epistle was by Dr. W.T.P. Wolston (1840-1917); the author of the hymn was E. O'Shaughnessy.

FACE TO FACE

Esther 1:13, 14; Revelation 22:3, 4; 2 John 12, 13; 1 Corinthians 13:12, 13.

I have been thinking recently about seeing the Lord's face. I suppose it is something we all think about as we get older and our time here upon earth is shorter and we are conscious that the day will come when we shall be with the Lord, whether by the article of death or whether He comes for all His saints.

One of the great promises of Scripture is that we shall see His face. When I looked it up I was surprised to find that as far as I could see there are only two Scriptures that directly speak of seeing the Lord's face – many about seeing *Him*: “when He shall appear, we shall be like Him;” says John in his first Epistle, “for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2 KJV). But of those two Scriptures which speak of seeing His face, one speaks of our seeing His face and the other of seeing Him face to face.

I started by reading in Esther of these princes, the wise men, “the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face.” The king in those days was unknown personally to most of his subjects, not like today with newspapers and television and pictures of the Queen in the press. But the king of Persia was a remote figure and to have access to him and to see his face was a very great privilege indeed. And that's what these seven princes had; they had access to the king and they saw his face.

So seeing the king's face was a great privilege and that I think explains what we have in Revelation. The verse I read relates to the world to come, the millennium, and to the holy city, Jerusalem, that comes down out of heaven from God. John is shown it and the river of water of life and he comments that “no curse shall be any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face; and His name is on their foreheads.”

“His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face.” What a wonderful privilege it is for His servants to serve the Lord in glory and to see His face in glory. “If any man serve Me, let him follow Me;” the Lord said, “and where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). Here they are, His servants, and those who are His, I believe, are all numbered among His servants, and we shall see His face; what a wonderful privilege to see the face of our Lord and Saviour in that day of glory in the world to come.

“His name is on their foreheads;” I think that is in contrast to the mark of the beast. The Lord has His own and they are recorded, and clearly seen by all to be His own. “Night shall not be any more, and no need of a lamp, and light of the sun; for the Lord God shall shine upon them, and they shall reign to the ages of ages.” We share in His dominion; how blessed, how wonderful these things are!

Before we come to Corinthians, I looked for any other Scriptures about seeing the Lord face to face and the nearest I could find was the endings of John’s Second and Third Epistles. J.N. Darby has translated it “to speak mouth to mouth,” but in the Authorised Version you will find it is to “speak face to face.” Darby has translated it directly from the Greek and I think this is the literal Greek, but it’s not an expression we would use today – “mouth to mouth.” We would far more likely say “face to face” and I think the translators of the Authorised used the equivalent English expression rather than the literal Greek one.

So that’s why I read it as John looked forward to intimacy of fellowship with the elect lady and her children and with the beloved Gaius in the third epistle. There he says “I hope soon to see thee, and we will speak mouth to mouth.” There is an intimacy of fellowship between the Lord’s people today and it’s something that we shall have in fuller measure when we are with the Lord.

So I read from 1 Corinthians 13, a wonderful chapter about love, and then at the end of it Paul speaks about today, seeing “through a dim window obscurely” (*Darby Translation*), or “through a glass, darkly,” as the Authorised Version has it. The idea is of a window of obscure glass. We are thankful for all that we have at the present time but it’s only like looking through an obscure window compared with the reality when we are with the Lord.

Then Paul says, “Now I know partially, but then I shall know according as I also have been known.” So he says “now through a dim window obscurely, but then face to face.” There is something about a person’s face, isn’t there? You remember when Paul called over the elders of Ephesus to Miletus and spoke to them, they heard what he said but the thing that affected them most was that he said they would no more see his face. And they all wept at the thought that they would no more see the face of the apostle they loved and who had been among them and had taught them and had introduced them to the most wonderful truths. They had great affection for Paul and they wept when they heard they would see his face no more.

The face of a man is very expressive. Our faces can express love or hatred; we can express interest; we can express boredom, and so on. What the individual is thinking is expressed in his or her face. And I think that when we see the Lord face to face we shall have a fresh understanding of His love for us.

So Paul says, “Now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love.” And the hymn, I think, says rightly,

“When faith and hope shall cease,
And love abide alone,
Then shall we see Thee face to face,
And know as known.”

Faith belongs to down here; we have God's light in our soul that we've responded to. We have the wonderful hope of being with and like the Lord in glory and of seeing His face. But the day will come when it will be realised and we shall see Him face to face; and, as Paul says, "then shall I know according as I also have been known."

May we be encouraged in the prospect we have before us, dear brethren, for His name's sake.

Word given by Tony Sheldrake at a meeting for ministry at Selsdon, Croydon, on 2nd June, 2013.

THE MAN OF FAITH

1 Samuel 14

I MERELY wish to call attention to the prominent features of the man of faith in the midst of general weakness and despondency. This man is Jonathan, and it is sad to think that his end did not correspond with his beginning.

Two striking objects come before us in this part of the word of God, and are presented vividly to our minds as they stand out at the end of the chapter, where Jehovah's perfect lot is cast, and one of the two men is taken. The first of these Israelites is Saul; the second, Jonathan, his son. The first, the representative of the flesh, fully and fairly developed; the second, the man of faith, whose confidence is in Jehovah, and by whom fleshly resources are counted at what they are worth – that is nothing: "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (ver. 6).

Saul's principles are well understood in the world in which we live. Look for one moment at the last verse in this chapter: "When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto

him.” It is what is called “the secular arm.” An army of muscular Israelites, commanded by one who was a head and shoulders taller than all the rest; this force should destroy the Philistines. It reminds us of Frederick William’s regiment of giants,* and in God’s mind and ways it was of no more use than that; faith (and without faith no man shall fight God’s battles) does not rest upon the arm of the flesh. Bravado, and not power, characterises Saul; see for instance verse 36, where the king speaks loudly enough: “Let us go down . . . and let us not leave a man of them.” Alas for Saul! Instead of exterminating the Philistines, he himself was slain by them, and the crowned head of Israel carried off by the uncircumcised.

But another thing should be noticed: Saul is here presented in a religious light. It is religious flesh that is before us, than which nothing is more terrible. I recollect passing before the statue of Louis XIV at Montpellier, and the remark being made to me that the man was never so terrible as when he became religious under le Tellier, and began to work on religious grounds. We shall see that the flesh is not only an obstacle to God’s work, and to faith, but a source of active opposition and persecution. Another Saul, later on, of the same tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), and intellectually a head and shoulders taller than the rest, may serve as a specimen of what the flesh is worth when fully developed and religiously educated. (Compare Acts 9 with Phil. 3.)

But let us return to Jonathan. Whilst the crushing yoke of the Philistines was felt in such a manner that no one dared come to the front; whilst the very establishment (and here I use the word in the sense of the religion which God Himself had established in Israel) was dumb (see vers. 19-37), Jonathan carries out God’s thoughts by faith, and that outside of the established order in Israel.

* *Known as ‘the Potsdam Giants,’ a regiment created by King Frederick William I of Prussia (1688-1740).*

Beloved brethren, I have often said that it is not for us to make war upon existing things in Christendom, though I would make a great difference between the religious form that has been developed, and that which God had set up in Israel. I have often thought that a great part of some people's gospel is a denunciation of popes, cardinals, and ecclesiastical hierarchy. This may do for Exeter Hall, but it is not *our* vocation. No, beloved, we are called to *act* by faith, and let us notice the way in which faith acts.

Jonathan knows that when Jehovah works it is not by many nor by few. His language is that of faith; he calls the Philistines "the uncircumcised" (ver. 6),* and finds a response in the young man who bears his armour. May God raise up such now! These two men act, and act in such a way that they would have been termed madmen by all those who are not walking by faith. They laboriously clamber up a narrow and stony way, between the frowning peaks of Bozez and Seneh, to attack the whole fortified camp of the Philistines! Beloved, may we be kept from fanaticism! But I venture to say that if we walk by faith at the present time we shall be called madmen, and even by those who should have been our friends. This rough path among the rocks, with knees bruised, is *God's* way. Listen! At the very first blow, twenty Philistines are struck down, and as the faithful two proceed, the whole uncircumcised host trembles and melts away; the very ground under their feet trembles! The God of Israel was there! I once was in the midst of a dire earthquake, and no one at that moment wished to speak of "seismic" causes. No! one felt God's power, and there was fear. God, the Lord God of Israel had come in, and the victory would have been complete but for Saul. Where is our faith, beloved brethren? Is it not blessedly true that God is for us even in these sad days? And if God be for us, who can be against us?

* Notice that Saul uses the term "Hebrews" (13:3), which is not the name faith gives to Israel. The Philistines say "Hebrews." So small a straw shows which way the wind is blowing!

But let us notice the immediate effects of the rout of the Philistines (vers. 21, 22). In the 21st verse we find some apostate Israelites – they had *Philistinized*; I mean got under the power of the Philistines, mere Hebrews: they are delivered. So have I seen some worldly Christians saved out of their moral subjection to the enemy. In the 22nd verse the cowards who had been hiding in Mount Ephraim show their faces. The two classes (apostates and cowards) being delivered, pursue the Philistines, a most useful occupation. Show yourselves, and come to the front!

But a word as to Saul. He hinders the work. The Urim and Thummim “answered him not” – how solemn is God’s silence! And he makes a rash fleshly vow in the 24th verse in the form of an imprecation, forbidding any refreshment to the people till he should be avenged of *his* enemies. “Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on *mine* enemies.” His enemies! For Jonathan they were Jehovah’s enemies. I trust, beloved, we do not speak of *our* enemies (I allude to human beings).

Fleshly religion, “touch not, taste not, handle not,” leads to positive evil. The beautiful little episode of the honey in the forest, brings out most beautifully the fact that what is *naturally* good may be used in moderation to refresh a weary warrior. So Paul was refreshed by a little brotherly intercourse (a little taste of honey at the end of a stick, Acts 28), before confronting the terrible emperor. Saul can only hinder the work, for the people, if they had been properly fed, could have followed up the victory; and this religious, ultra montane,* forbidding to eat, only led to positive sin, for the people devoured the cattle with the blood (ver. 32). So it happens with all those who would go against nature. Notice, too, that Jonathan (ver. 29) is not afraid to speak out, and to state things as they are: “My father (he says) hath troubled the land;” truth and

* According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, this means ‘advocating supreme papal authority in matters of faith and discipline.’

faith walk hand in hand. So later on when Elijah is accused of troubling Israel, he says in all simplicity: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house." Saul had been a sad obstacle to the work of God.

The persecution of the man of faith has been alluded to. Thus Jonathan (indicated by Jehovah's lot, in government in Israel, as the culprit) must die, according to Saul. But God will not allow His faithful servant to fall. God acts always sovereignly, above His providential government on earth; I mean always sovereign, when faith is in question, an active faith above the influence of surrounding misery. Jonathan who had acted with God is delivered; and we may trust God to deliver and bless those who are working with Him. As to our relationship, beloved brethren, it is not as Jehovah that we address Him, but as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and may this blessed relationship be known in true faith, as we face the enemy at this very end of the conflict; for surely the Lord's coming is nigh, and the triumph near!

May He give us to walk by faith!

Reproduced from "A Voice to the Faithful" Vol. XXV (1891), where it is attributed to 'E.L.B.,' almost certainly E.L. Bevir.

THE PROPHET THAT SHOULD COME INTO THE WORLD

This paper has been prompted by an inquiry from a young Christian about verse 21 of John's Gospel, chapter 1, a young Muslim having questioned her as to who was meant by "the prophet." The verse reads: "And they [*the priests and Levites from Jerusalem*] asked him [*i.e. John the Baptist*], What then? Art thou Elias? And he says, I am not. Art thou the Prophet? And he answered, No."

The fact that John had already denied that he was the Christ (verse 20) suggests that the priests and Levites saw the Christ and

the Prophet as two distinct persons. Perhaps the woman at Sychar's well was more enlightened on this point than they were when she said, "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when *He* comes, He will tell us all things" (John 4:25). If she meant by this that the Christ was also the promised Prophet, she was right, as we shall see.

A Special Prophet is Promised.

We can read of the promise of a special Prophet in Deuteronomy, chapter 18. Firstly Moses warns the children of Israel against the sources from which they should *not* seek communications (see verses 10 and 11), namely he "that useth divination, that useth auguries, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that inquireth of a spirit of Python, or a soothsayer, or one that consulteth the dead." Such warning should be heeded today, when some people expose themselves to evil influences by studying horoscopes, consulting mediums, etc.

Then he points to One to whom we *must* listen:

"Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of Jehovah thy God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And Jehovah said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. A prophet will I raise up unto them from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that the man who hearkeneth not unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him" (verses 15-19 – Darby Translation).

“A Prophet from the Midst of thee, of thy Brethren.”

This prophet would be from among the brethren of Moses and the children of Israel whom he was addressing. In the New Testament we find the Jews described as the Lord’s own people: “He came to His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). In writing to the believers at Rome, Paul says as to Israel, “of whom, as according to flesh, [is] the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Romans 9:5). Again, in writing to the Galatians, he says, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law ...” (Gal. 4:4,5). So the Lord Jesus fulfilled the prediction that the Prophet would come from among the people of Israel.

“A Prophet Like unto thee.”

The Prophet was also to be “like unto thee,” that is to say, like Moses. We can perhaps consider this in two ways. Firstly, Moses was *a man of flesh and blood*. In Philippians 2 we read that the Lord Jesus emptied Himself, took “His place in the likeness of men” and was “found in figure as a man” (verses 7 and 8). The writer to the Hebrews says, “Since therefore the children partake of blood and flesh, He also, in like manner, took part in the same” (Heb. 2:14). Of course, the manhood of Christ was unique, without sin; but He nevertheless, in wonderful grace, came into a condition of flesh and blood.

Secondly, while the Lord Jesus does, of course, far exceed Moses (as we read in 2 Corinthians 3:7-16 and Hebrews 3:3-6), there were, nevertheless, distinctive features of Moses and his role which point us to the Lord Jesus Christ. We see these similarities in Numbers 12. In verse 3 we have the feature of *meekness*: “But the man Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth”. The Lord Jesus was able to say, above all others, “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). And he fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (ch. 9, v. 9) “Behold thy King cometh to

thee, meek, and mounted upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Matthew 21:5).

Then there is the *intimate relationship* which Moses enjoyed with God, who said:

“Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make Myself known to him in a vision, I will speak to him in a dream. Not so My servant Moses: He is faithful in all My house. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him openly, and not in riddles; and the form of Jehovah doth he behold” (verses 6-8).

We must always bear in mind that Jesus is Himself God, as we have seen already. But as having taken His place in manhood He did not assume to speak or act from Himself; He spoke the words His Father gave Him to speak and did the works His Father gave Him to do (John 5:36; 8:28; 12:49). Further, in contrast to those to whom He spoke, who had “neither heard [God the Father’s] voice at any time, nor seen His shape” (John 5:37), Jesus was able to say that He spoke as having seen the Father, as knowing Him, and has having come from Him:

“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is of God, He has seen the Father” (John 6:46);

“I know Him, because I am from Him, and **He** has sent Me” (John 7:29).

“I came forth from God and am come [from Him]; for neither am I come of Myself, but **He** has sent Me” (John 8:42).

We do not know what representation of Himself God showed to Moses, what exactly is meant by “the form of Jehovah doth he behold.” We do know, however, that in response to Moses’ desire – “Let me, I pray Thee, see Thy glory” – God placed him in the cleft of a rock as He passed by and covered him with His hand, but allowed him to see Him from behind, saying “My face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:17-23). Clearly the way in which Moses beheld God fell far short of what the Lord Jesus spoke about as to His having seen the Father. Nevertheless, in his intimate relationship

with God and in his coming out from the presence of God to speak the words of God, Moses is surely a figure of the much greater One who should come and, conversely, the Lord Jesus in these respects too fulfilled – indeed, *more than fulfilled* – the prediction that the Prophet to come should be “like unto” Moses.

Space does not allow us to consider in detail the question that might be asked as to whether or not any subsequent prophet before the coming of the Lord matched the criteria stated in Deuteronomy 18. Just two remarks should suffice on this point. Firstly, we have the clear statement at the end of that book, “And there arose no prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah had known face to face.” Secondly, as we shall see, the people of Israel themselves were still expecting such a prophet when the Lord was here.

“Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.”

God considered for His people in their desire not again to witness the sounds and sights which had caused them such distress at Sinai, and so in future He would communicate with them through Moses as mediator. Indeed, reading Hebrews 12:18-21 we find that Moses himself was “exceedingly afraid;” in the succeeding verses, however, we see the great contrast between the experience of Sinai and our having come “to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant” (v. 24). How good and gracious it was of God to consider for *us* and come to us in the lowly and attractive manhood of Jesus! “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

Sinner, see thy God beside thee,
In a servant’s form come near,
Sitting, walking, talking with thee!
Sinai’s mount no longer fear.

(Adalbert Cecil)

So the Lord Jesus has come speaking the words of God to us in a way in which we can bear them.

Public Reaction.

So how did those people who expected a coming special prophet view the Lord Jesus when He came? As regards the religious leaders of that day, the record is plain that, with a few exceptions, they adamantly refused to acknowledge His Person, His works or His words. In our day too we need to beware of religious leaders who are leading people astray. But what of the common people? We have already suggested that perhaps the woman at the well of Sychar realised that Jesus was *the* promised prophet, but other passages of Scripture tell us more explicitly that people did recognise Him as such.

After the feeding of the five thousand – a sign which is, exceptionally, mentioned by all four gospel writers – we read: “The men, therefore, having seen the sign which Jesus had done, said, This is truly the prophet which is coming into the world” (John 6:14). This was their response to a *work* of the Lord Jesus. Then in the next chapter we read of a response to His *words*: “Some out of the crowd, therefore, having heard this word, said, This is truly the Prophet” (John 7:40). How often it is the case that ordinary people are much more open to acknowledge the reality of a situation than intellectuals and officials who are biased by adherence to their own agenda!

Later preaching.

But the question of the Prophet who should come into the world did not cease to be spoken about when the Lord Jesus suffered and died. After He had been buried, had risen again and had ascended into glory, the gospel concerning Him began to be spread abroad, often prompted by amazing happenings which required explanation. One such incident was the miraculous healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, recorded in Acts chapter 3. In response to the amazement of the people Peter explained that God

“has glorified His Servant Jesus” and, despite their having rejected Him in favour of a murderer, would even yet send Him to them to fulfil the things “of which God [had] spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began” (Acts 3:21). How great is the grace of God! – that although the nation of Israel had treated God’s Son so ignominiously and cruelly, He was prepared to regard that as a sin of ignorance (verse 17) and send their Messiah back to them. What an answer to the prayer of Jesus, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)!

In speaking of the Lord Jesus in this way, Peter draws scriptural support from the very passage we have been considering in Deuteronomy 18, saying:

“Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you out of your brethren like me: him shall ye hear in everything whatsoever he shall say to you. And it shall be that whatsoever soul shall not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people” (verses 22 and 23).

So Peter’s preaching combined grace with warning; on the one hand the over-abundant grace of God that would rise above all their sin, but on the other the warning of judgment if the words of the long-promised Prophet were refused.

The early chapters of the Acts tell us that many thousands of Jews and Jewish proselytes repented and accepted Jesus as Saviour, Christ and Lord. No doubt those were the people Paul had in mind when he said, “Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to election of grace” (Romans 11:5). The nation as a whole, however, continued to reject Christ as their Messiah and this rejection was demonstrated in their angry refusal of the testimony of Stephen. But he was a faithful witness and again they were reminded of the text from Deuteronomy 18 (Acts 7:37). Alas, rather than heed the message they killed the messenger and the Jewish nation has since – from the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 and onwards – paid dearly for their rejection of God’s Son. The Bible teaches us that God will yet – in times of tribulation

– work among a remnant of His earthly people to produce a new nation, “and so all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26). But that is another subject.

Our Response.

Now, having considered the scriptural teaching as to the Prophet who should come into the world, we may well ask, how does this bear on us today? Surely, first of all, we should be full of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus, who, though Himself so very great, was prepared to take in wonderful grace a position in which He should be likened to Moses, accepting a place of meekness and lowliness among us and bringing divine communications to us from the presence of God.

Secondly, may we appreciate in a greater measure the importance of heeding the words of the One whom God would raise up. Let us remember what is said in Deuteronomy 18:19: “And it shall come to pass that the man who hearkeneth not unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.” The Lord Jesus said, “The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall in no wise pass away” (Matthew 24:35). It is no light matter for any of us to be acquainted with the things that the Lord Jesus, the great Prophet from God, has told us; we are responsible for what we have heard. The Lord Jesus Himself said:

“He that rejects Me and does not receive My words, has him who judges him: the word which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

“He that loves Me not does not keep My words; and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but that of the Father who has sent Me” (John 14:24).

“For whosoever shall have been ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His glory and, and [in that] of the Father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26).

Our eternal salvation depends on our reception of the Person and words of our Lord Jesus Christ. But then as believers on Him we need to listen to all that He says for our moral preservation and spiritual well-being. What lovely promises He has made to those who keep His word:

“Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an opened door, which no-one can shut, because thou hast a little power, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name. ... Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, *I* also will keep thee out of the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:8-10).

The Lord Jesus is more than a prophet. If He said concerning John the Baptist, “Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet” (Matt. 11:9), how much truer must this be of Himself! But among the great range of His names, offices and glories there is this, that He is the fulfilment of the promise that God made through Moses as to the Prophet who should come into the world. Let us all acknowledge Him as such and treasure all that He has told us, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to put it into practice, remembering what He said: “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

The Editor.

Errata

Unfortunately there were a few typing mistakes in WPT No. 88 which escaped the checking process; this was not as thorough as it should have been as there was a very short window within which to authorise printing, or accept a substantial delay.

Page 8, last paragraph, line 1: “al-important” should of course have read “all-important.”

Page 9, 1st para., last line should end “with God’s thought for me.”

Page 10, three lines above “Chapter 2” the first few words should have been “and there is no conflict there.”

Page 13, 2nd para: the end of the 5th line should read “It is not here merely ...”

Page 14, 3rd para., 1st line should be “I must seek the good of *all*.”

Page 28, about halfway down “assaults if the enemy” should, of course, read “assaults of the enemy.”

I apologise for all these mistakes, which have been corrected in the version which appears on the website. *Editor*

When we are sinners away from God, we hide *from* Him; but when we are forgiven and brought back, we hide *in* Him. *Robert Bacon, December 2009.*

POETIC PAGES

A poem entitled “The Two Solitudes” appeared in the last issue. Here is a more recent poem based on the same incident, recorded in chapter 9 of John’s Gospel:

Blind from Birth

I want to tell the story
of the greatest Man on earth
and what He did to me
a beggar blind from birth.

People asked what I had done,
as they all tried hard to find,
someone to blame, Dad, Mum,
or **me** for being blind.

But Jesus said “ I’ll bring in light
for the whole world and for you,
for this man’s lack of sight
will show what God can do.”

I heard him spit in the dust,
(How could I know what that meant?)
and smeared my eyes with mud,
“Wash in the pool called ‘Sent’ ”.

When once I’d found my way there
In obedience to His call,
I washed my eyes with care,
And then returning – SAW!

Now, I’m an ord’nary sort of man,
and although I told them plain,
none seemed to understand;
they asked and asked again.

Pharisees hurried to say
He was a sinner for sure
for on a Sabbath day,
He worked to make my cure.

But if they had been so sure,
Why ask what I thought of it?
So since they asked the more,
I said “He’s a prophet”.

My parents said it was true
I had been blind all my life
but dared not say they knew
Who’d given me my sight.

Then back to me came those Jews
again to hear my story
All seeking to refuse
To give Him his glory.

“Give God glory”, they told me,
“For we know that man does wrong”
“I was blind, now I see,
where d’you think that comes from?..

“Can’t you see? He must be good
God hears Him. Who on this earth
has cured, who ever could,
a man who’s blind from birth?

Surely He must come from God”
“Is that how you speak to *us*?
Out of our synagogue!”
Out there I saw Jesus.

“Do you believe in God’s Son?”
I asked him, “Who is He, Lord?”
He who spoke that very One!
I believed and I adored.

They are blind who know they’re blind,
Blind are they who proudly say
they see. All are born blind,
Blind in a moral way.

God sent One to be the Light,
for all those who **want** to see;
But those who refuse sight
Stay blind eternally.

J.J. Grayling

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.