

Words Of Peace & Truth

No. 111: September – December 2020 CONTENTS

	Page
Virtual (<i>La Bonne Semence</i>)	67
God is Faithful (<i>E. Rogers</i>)	68
Fragment (<i>J.B. Stoney</i>)	69
An Earnest Appeal (<i>C.H. Mackintosh</i>)	70
Two Companies ... (<i>G. Cutting</i>)	71
When I come ... (<i>J.L.</i>)	73
Bible Songs (<i>S.J.B. Carter</i>)	75
What is Truth? (<i>F.E. Raven</i>)	87
Swimming against the Tide (<i>Editor</i>)	91
Poetic Pages	94

WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH

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

No. 111: September – December 2020

Editorial

We can distinguish three elements in the preaching of the gospel, as may be seen in Paul's Epistle to the Romans: the **background** to the gospel (our position as sinners and the revelation of God's wrath from heaven); the **gospel itself** (God's righteousness, available to all "by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"); and the **response** to the gospel which God looks for from us (repentance and faith – faith in Christ and in the God who raised Him from among the dead).

It seems to me that likewise three elements are needed in ministry to the saints: **warning**, because we are never out of danger down here, having the flesh (old nature) within us and an evil world around us; **teaching**, the essence of which must surely be – as with the preaching of the gospel – the presentation of Christ, in whom all truth is embodied; and **exhortation** (with encouragement), that we may walk worthily of our calling. I trust that all these three aspects are present in this issue of the magazine.

One theme which features in this issue is the danger to which people are exposed today, in a "post-truth" society, from virtual reality and social contagion. This can surely only be met by the presentation of the real truth, centred in the One who only could say "I am ... the truth." The articles on pages 67 and 87 in particular bear on this concern and the remarks I have added from page 91. The piece by F.E. Raven, in his typically condensed style, may require thoughtful study but I am sure it will well repay this.

G.S.B.

*Editor: Geoffrey Bacon, 58 Byron Avenue, Coulsdon, Surrey,
England. CR5 2JR Website: www.wordsofpeaceandtruth.co.uk
E-Mail: g.bacon707@outlook.com Tel: 020-8660.2915*

Virtual

“Surely man walks among that which has only an appearance (or, in a vain show)” – Psalm 39:6.

“Ye turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” – 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

Little used before, the word “virtual” has taken on much more meaning with the digital revolution.

Our screens can present us with images that do not correspond with any reality, virtual images. By means of the internet you can have virtual contacts with fictional speakers. By social networks, you can also create virtual friendships with people whom you will never meet except by means of your screen. Our life can thus become more and more disconnected from reality. This environment of dream, or of nightmare, removed from the fundamental realities of life, is it not a danger?

What are the realities? The Bible invites us to reflect on our relation with God, the Creator of all that exists, on the origin of the evil which pollutes our humanity, on the meaning of our life, its fragility, its outcome, on death, what is beyond ... That has nothing virtual; these matters are closely linked to the reality of my existence, now on the earth.

The answer to these questions, God, who is a Spirit and invisible, has come to give us in Jesus, His Son, born into this world, a Man among men. ***Jesus Christ is not a virtual Person*** but indeed a living Person, who desires to enter into the life of each of us. He offers deliverance from sin; this is not within the sphere of illusion, but a reality which can actually transform my life. God proposes, not a dream, but the reality of a life which He desires to fill with His presence and His love.

Translated from “La Bonne Semence” (The Good Seed), 4th September, 2020.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Paul has opened this first letter to the believers in Corinth crediting them with genuinely spiritual characteristics “sanctified in Christ Jesus ... called saints ... the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ ... in everything enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge ... waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As we well know the believers in Corinth started well but were not demonstrating grace in their behaviour, not acting like their Saviour, not respecting each other properly, not stepping up to their Christian responsibility of demonstrating separation from the world out of which they had been called. They should have behaved differently and Paul’s purpose in writing was to rebuke and instruct them about these things.

Before Paul continues further with his letter, he rounds off his opening credits by emphasizing that the means of reaching their expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus would be by the Lord Himself, “Who shall also confirm you (keep you strong) unto the end .. blameless (without accusation) in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 8). His final reinforcement in our verse 9 is that the God who by His grace had given them so much, is faithful; that is, He will stick to His promises and not fail to carry them out.

Isn’t this for our assurance and encouragement too, that God has not commenced anything in us that he will not perfect and finish? Paul wanted them to understand that, although they had knowledge about God’s eternal purposes for them in Christ, they, like us, must recognize and depend on the faithfulness of God who had called them. God being faithful would make it certain that they would be kept to eternal life. I am reminded of Philippians 1:6,

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Then Paul goes on to say what God has done: “by whom ye were called;” the individual effectual calling by God which had led them to accept the gospel and be saved. What a precious thought that they and we, like believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been called personally through the Holy Spirit’s working; but to what end? – “unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” What a further lovely thought this is for each of us! What varied aspects of such exalted fellowship we could enjoy in our quiet moments as we think that through. We are by God’s faithfulness and calling brought into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ of unimaginable privilege, with its present enjoyment, hopes and promises; but not only this – God intends this fellowship with Christ to have a powerful impact in our everyday behaviour. It is with Jesus Christ our Lord who not only died for us; He has risen and ascended to heaven and is our Lord. Doesn’t that tell us how vital it is to recognize His Lordship in everything that we do? How challenging is that! “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death” (Phil. 3:10). How differently we would behave if we were to realise more fully that we are passing through this world in fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord. Over it all is the unfailing faithfulness of our God upon whom we can depend for everything.

May these thoughts be a blessing to us.

Edwin Rogers, 2020.

Fragment

Prayer will never compensate for neglected action; it leads *to* action – seeks light and strength *for* action, but if I use not the light I already possess, no amount of prayer will obtain more for me, for if I believe not the revelation which I have received, I am not prepared to receive more – *J.B. Stoney on Joshua 10:7.*

AN EARNEST APPEAL

Christian reader, I feel constrained to make an earnest appeal to your heart and conscience, in the presence of Him to whom you and I are responsible, and to whom our hearts and ways are fully known. I do not mean to judge you, or speak invidiously to you. Neither do I wish to write in a bitter or complaining spirit. I only desire to stir up your pure mind – to wake up the energies of your new nature – to exhort and encourage you to a more earnest zeal and whole-hearted devotedness, in the service of Christ.

The present is a deeply solemn moment. The day of God's long-suffering is rapidly drawing to a close. The day of wrath is at hand. The wheels of divine government are moving onward with a rapidity truly soul-subduing. Human affairs are working to a point. There is an awful crisis approaching. Immortal souls are rushing forward along the surface of the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. In a word, the end of all things is at hand. "The days are at hand, and the effect (*or accomplishment*) of every vision" (*Ezekiel 12:23*).

Now, my reader, seeing these things are so, let us ask each other, how are we affected thereby? What are we doing in the midst of the scene which surrounds us? How are we discharging our fourfold responsibility, namely, our responsibility to God, our responsibility to the church, our responsibility to perishing sinners, our responsibility to our own souls? This is a weighty question. Let us take it into the presence of God, and there survey it in all its magnitude. Are we really doing all we might do for the advancement of the cause of Christ, the prosperity of His church, the progress of His Gospel? I candidly confess to you, my friend, that I very much fear we are not making a right use of all the grace, the light, and the knowledge which our God has graciously imparted to us. I fear we are not faithfully and diligently trading with our talents, or occupying till the Master return. It often occurs to me that people with far less knowledge, far less profession, are far more practical,

more fruitful in good works, more honoured in the conversion of precious souls, more generally used of God. How is this? Are you and I sufficiently self-emptied, sufficiently prayerful, sufficiently single-eyed?

You may, perhaps, reply, “It is a poor thing to be occupied with ourselves, our ways, or our works.” Yes; but if our ways and our works are not what they ought to be, we must be occupied with them – we must judge them. The Lord, by his prophet Haggai, called upon the Jews of old, to “consider their *ways*,” and the Lord Jesus said to each of the seven churches, “I know thy *works*.” There is a great danger of resting satisfied with our knowledge, our principles, our position, while at the same time we are walking in a carnal, worldly, self-indulgent, careless spirit. The end of this will, assuredly, be terrible. Let us consider these things. May the apostolic admonition fall, with divine power, on our hearts, “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2 John 1:8).

C.H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

TWO COMPANIES – A CONTRAST

Matthew 28:11-15; John 20:19

In the Scriptures which I have read there are two distinct companies brought before us. In Matthew we have a company of Christ-haters; the religious world of that day produced this company. In John we have a company of those who loved the Lord, and that company now forms the assembly (*or church*). Everyone really belongs to one or other of those companies. The Spirit has come to bring heavenly things before those who form the assembly, so that we should find our interest in them; those who form the other company are those who cast out the heavenly Man. With which company do we associate? Take an

illustration: I will suppose the case of a mother with her children. Her husband, through the hatred of another family, has been banished. After a time the members of this family make pleasant advances to the children. The children, taken by the seeming friendliness, say to the mother, They speak so kindly and seem so exceedingly agreeable that there can surely be no harm now in responding to their overtures. But what answer does the mother give: Remember, that whatever they may say or do, *they hate your father*; they hate the one who loves *you*.

Let us each challenge our own hearts, and say in which company are our hearts found? Are we subject to the smiles of the world? Let us not forget what the world has done to our blessed Lord. The holy Spirit would impress us with the awfulness of belonging to such a company, and with the blessedness of belonging to the other, the family of God.

Three things characterise the company that found its place outside of those closed doors, and three things in the very strongest contrast characterise the company inside. Depend upon it there was no fellowship *that* day between the two. On the contrary, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ could not do otherwise than create a great gulf between His crucifiers and those who really loved Him; and the coming of the Holy Ghost only made the gulf more apparent. And it will be the same to-day if the Holy Ghost has His way with us; there must of necessity be a great gulf in our hearts between the company outside and those within.

Three things characterise the inside company – LOVE, JOY, PEACE; all three were there. 1. He *loved* them; they knew it, and in response loved Him. 2. The moment they apprehended His presence, *joy* filled their hearts. “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord” (*John 20:20*). 3. His first word to them was, “*Peace* be unto you” (*vv. 19,21*). It was a foretaste of heaven,

and the Holy Spirit can still so make Christ's presence known to us as the inside company that we get a foretaste of heaven also.

In the other circle. 1. Hate was there; they hated Him without a cause (*see Psalm 35:19 and 69:4; John 15:25*). 2. Selfishness was there; the soldiers took the money. 3. Trouble and disturbance were there, for He whom they hated was risen. I have no doubt that the devil himself was greatly disturbed when Christ rose from the dead, and had to cover his blunder with the greatest lie that was ever invented. All was discord; no peace was there. Why is there strife and sorrow and discord in the world? Because of the hatred that refused Christ, and of the selfishness that is in it. The only bit of heaven the world will ever know is the bit which they see in us. Love, unselfish love, and peace and joy are what we know inside, and as we are able to show a little of what we enjoy inside to those outside, we are witnesses for Christ here.

Ministry by George Cutting at Burford, July, 1901.

WHEN I COME; TILL I COME; TILL HE COME.

IT is of all importance to know that we are in the charge of the Spirit and at our Lord's charge, as set forth in Luke 10:35, for I take "the host" (*or, "inn-keeper"*) to set forth the Spirit in charge of the people of God, and the "two pence" and "whatsoever thou spendest *more*" to show how we are here entirely at another's charge. We notice that the "two pence" are not given to the man who was delivered, for if it were it would have failed, as everything else has failed that has been put into man's hands. But God is wiser than men; the supplies are put into hands that delight to minister not according to our need only, but according to the fulness of God's grace. Christ was here the Comforter, but, He having gone on high, "another Comforter" is here, who has come invested with power and authority from Him: power to keep us and authority to conduct

us into all things that God has for His people. God reveals them unto us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10) This is indeed the Spirit's day, and we are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit (*individually*), nor (*as a company*) to quench the Spirit. If we either grieve or quench the Spirit we shall not get the good of what is entrusted into His hands for us. Oh, then, to live and walk in the Spirit and so be kept clear of the works of the flesh, and to be in no way indebted to the flesh to live after the flesh! for God's things do not lie that way. It is also in the measure in which we realise that we are down here at the Lord's charge that we shall know how to "occupy" (*or, "trade"*), as He said, "till I come" (Luke 19:13). Otherwise we shall put much of ourselves into any little service which we do for the Lord; it is His work, not ours. If ability is given it is *from the Lord*. If we are called to serve it is *for the Lord*. We have to go on, as He said Himself, "till I come." Christ has gone on high to receive the kingdom (*verse 12*). He is soon returning: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me" (Revelation 22:12). Oh, to be among those who will hear that word: "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Do not be occupied with your service, but with Him whom you serve.

There is another blessed thing we are called to do "until He come." Having freed us from self and given us liberty to serve, He calls us apart to show His death till He come; He desires that we should have "Himself" before us; not only what He has done, great as that is, but Himself as the Object of our affections. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (*John 20:20*). It is the greatest privilege a company of His own can have on earth to show the Lord's death "till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). May the Lord keep us true to Himself until the end. J.L.

Taken from "The Believer's Friend, Vol. II (1910).

BIBLE SONGS

*Job 38:1-7; Exodus 14:31 and 15:1; Numbers 21:17,18;
Revelation 5:6-10.*

THE four scriptures referred to speak of four songs, and these songs form a kind of compendium of all the songs of the Bible. The first song is connected with *creation*; the second with *redemption*; the third is suggestive of *life*. “Spring up, O well” indicates divine vitality, the spirit of life springing up, the living water springing up unto everlasting life (John 4). Later on in John’s Gospel the Lord speaks of “rivers of living water” flowing forth from the inward parts of those who have it. But the water cannot flow forth, it cannot go out in blessing to men until it “springs up,” until it goes up in worship to God.

Then the final song is connected with *glory*; “Thou art worthy” – that is the summary of it. That is the song which shall before long reverberate throughout creation at large, the song that you and I shall sing for ever and ever: “Thou art worthy.”

The Bible is full of songs. It is the best song-book there is, because its songs last. The world’s songs get stale and become obsolete, and others have to be composed to take their places; but Bible songs live on, and the oftener we sing them the more we love them, and the better we sing them.

I dare say, as regards what is outward and audible, we are all ready to admit that we might sing a little better than we do. If a tune is started too high or too low, it is excruciating or depressing. If the wrong tune is started, there is a breakdown. God is the God of harmony, and all in touch with Him love harmony. There are also suitable tunes to certain hymns. However, all this has to do with what is outward and audible: it is not everything, yet it is something.

Still, what we want to get at is heart melody; as the apostle puts it, “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (*Ephesians 5:19*).

The morning stars singing

We were saying that the first song we read of is connected with creation. Jehovah asks Job about a hundred questions, and he cannot answer one of them. All these questions are connected with creation. The only Bible that Job had was the book of Nature. Of course he learned a great deal of God by divine intuition, but objectively his knowledge of God was entirely culled from creation. So God challenges him concerning “the foundations of the earth,” as to whether he knows upon what they were fastened; and “who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

We know that the foundations were fastened upon a fallible creature, who fell; and that the first man, Adam, was the corner stone, and he gave way. The result was that when he gave way the whole fabric of creation morally fell to pieces. But now another creation is coming into existence; it is what Simon Peter calls “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (*2 Peter 3:13*). That creation will not be fastened upon a fallible creature, but upon One who is a divine Person; and He who is now the chief Corner Stone of the assembly, will by-and-by be the chief Corner Stone of the universe, and there will be no breakdown with Him. Then once more the morning stars will sing together, and all the sons of God will shout for joy.

As soon as sin came into the old creation, discord came in, and the morning stars ceased to sing together. Many of the morning stars have been singing since. We are among the number of the morning stars. They suggest the whole company of the saints.* Doubtless

locally there has been some singing together. But how many of the morning stars do not sing at all? Others do not know how to sing, and others sing all out of tune. But by-and-by everything is going to be brought into harmony with God and there will be unity. And the morning stars will once again sing together, and once again the sons of God – all of them – will shout for joy.

The saints take character from Christ. If He is the Morning Star, they are the morning stars;* not the evening stars that indicate the coming of night, but the morning stars, the harbingers of the day. You will remember that Paul, in writing to the Philippians, speaks of them as “irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” The word translated “lights” refers to the rising of the heavenly bodies. When you go out and look up at the stars, what do you think? You think they are fair and they are bright and they are pure. There you have normally the saints of God all over. Then when you look up you feel also that those mighty stellar orbs do not belong to this sphere, they belong to another creation. Now, when the world looks at us, that is what the world ought to feel. But there is something else. The stars, although they do not belong to the world, are used by the world,† and so it is with the saints of God.

What a prospect it is for us to contemplate: that day when the morning stars will sing together and all the sons of God will shout for joy. John says, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” (*Revelation 21:1*). Then he says, “I heard a great voice out of heaven.” I think that is all the sons of God shouting for joy. What does that great voice say? “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.” Surely that will be enough to make all the sons of God shout for joy!

* *The speaker was, I apprehend, using the morning stars figuratively.*

† *Perhaps this is a reference to navigation by the stars.*

The song of redemption

In considering this song, we must remember that man is a sinner, thus he can only sing on the ground of redemption. There is no singing in Genesis, because in Genesis God is not presented as having a redeemed people. There is nothing said in the Bible about singing until we come to the Red Sea. Exodus 15 is the opening of a new economy. We have plenty of new things brought in there. **Singing** is a new thing. **Redemption** is a new thing. Redemption is never mentioned by God's people until the Red Sea song is sung. Then we have **holiness** brought in, which is a new thing. Holiness ever follows closely in the wake of redemption. A redeemed people must necessarily be a holy people. Righteousness is the law of the kingdom, but holiness is the law of the house. "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever" (*Psalm 93:5*). So in the Red Sea song Jehovah is celebrated as "glorious in holiness."

Then we have something else; we have a **habitation** coming in. "I will prepare him an habitation" (*Exodus 15:2 – KJV*). In Egypt there was not that thought. Prior to the Red Sea, the thought of God having a habitation down here amongst His people was not spoken of. In the garden, before our first parents fell, God visited them. And Joseph, on his dying bed, said to those around him, "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land" (*Genesis 50:24*). But at the Red Sea Moses and the children of Israel sang, "I will prepare him an habitation." God visited His people in Egypt, but in Egypt He did not dwell among them. They did not want Him: they wanted to keep the destroyer out. But across the Red Sea we have the affections of the people kindled, and they wanted God to come down among them and to dwell in their midst. What a word is that, "I will prepare him an habitation."

Then another new thing is *salvation*. Nothing is said about salvation prior to the Red Sea. The word is not mentioned in the Bible before Exodus 14:13, except in the solitary instance of Jacob blessing his sons, where he says concerning Dan, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah." But there it is a matter of prophecy. God never had a saved people until His people stood on the Arabian banks of the Red Sea and sang the song of salvation. What a song it was! It took in the whole scope of the purpose of God. "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea." The horse refers to the *power* of the world, for it was that which drew the chariots of Egypt along; and the rider the *wisdom* of the world, for the rider guided the horse and controlled him. The power of the world and the wisdom of the world are both gone for faith and for God in the death of Christ. Israel in the full power of accomplished redemption celebrated in song that great fact.

Then it speaks of Israel going across the Jordan, entering the land, and possessing their inheritance. Then we get the millennium brought into view, the world to come: "The Lord shall reign as king for ever and ever." What a song it was! I wonder how many of us can sing it? Well, I am learning it, and you are learning it. Miriam and the women simply sang, "The horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea." They took in present grace; they said nothing about future glory. They were beginners in learning the song. Ah, we have to learn the song by degrees, like Miriam and the women.

I wonder if we have all started with the blood in Egypt? The blood in Egypt was the start of that great journey from Egypt to Canaan. Doubtless prior to the people being under God's perfect shelter there was a work of God in the souls of many of them, even as now there is a work of God in many souls who do not know the gospel of the blood. The gospel of the blood is needed as much now

as ever it was; there are souls this day who need it. You may preach to them the gospel of the Red Sea, the gospel of the brazen serpent, the gospel of the Jordan, but you will not help them. They want the gospel of the blood. They feel that they are sinners and deserve the judgment of God, and they want shelter. It is the gospel of the blood that reveals God's perfect shelter from judgment.

Jehovah predicted a terrible midnight that should come upon the Egyptians. He said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night" (*Exodus 12:12*). And so it was, and only those who were under the shelter of the blood were safe from the sword of the destroying angel. So now God predicts a terrible midnight that will come upon an Egypt world, and He tells it far and near that only those who are under the shelter of the blood will be safe. Moses said to the children of Israel, "The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." Characteristically as to the many there was no difference. There were good, bad, and indifferent under the shelter of the blood, and there were good, bad and indifferent among those who were not so sheltered. Character went for naught. The blood made the difference, the great difference in the sight of God.

There may be two individuals who outwardly are much alike, but in God's sight there is a great deal of difference: one is under the shelter of the blood and the other is not. Have you sheltered your soul thus? That is the start of the heavenly journey. You must put your soul under shelter of the blood. You must use the hyssop, which, like despised faith, is regarded with contempt by the world. God did not say, When I see *you*, or when I see your *hyssop*, I will pass over you; but, "When I see the BLOOD, I will pass over you." It was not a question of their estimation of the blood, but of God's estimation of the blood. It is not our faith or character that shelters from judgment, but the blood. That is what God sees.

How blessed it is to be thus sheltered, and to know that we are safe!

But there is more. When the people came in full view of the Red Sea they had to see something. In Egypt they were not told to see anything. God said, When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you. But when they came to the Red Sea, then they had to see something. There was the host of the Egyptians pursuing in their rear, on either side the impassable mountains that could not be scaled, and right ahead of them the deep waters of the Red Sea. They were hemmed in; they could do nothing. Then Moses cried: “Fear ye not, stand still, and *see* the salvation of the Lord.”

I wonder if we have all seen the salvation of the Lord? Oh, you say, I have seen Jesus dying for my sins upon the cross. That is all right, thank God for that. But that is not what we get here. “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (*Exodus 14:13*). You see what Jesus has done for you; that is well. Have you ever seen what God has done for you? The Apostle Paul says, speaking of justification, “For us also, to whom it shall be imputed” – if we believe on Him who died on the cross? No, “If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification” (*Romans 4:24, 25*). Have you believed on God? Have you put your confidence in what God has done for you? He has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and He has set Him on high, as a significant token to us that He is satisfied with what Jesus has done. Oh, if that is the case, if you have believed on God, then you have obeyed the word, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”

But there is something further. Israel had to be brought under the cloud. The apostle says in writing to the

Corinthians, “I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1, 2). Have you put your soul under the cloud? You say, My soul is safe under the blood. So far, so good; but what about the cloud? The Egyptians boasted they were going to do terrible things upon the children of Israel. But God, as it were, said, You must reckon with Me first. And so the cloud went from before to behind the Israelitish host, came between them and the pursuing Egyptians, and the people of God found themselves under the cloud. How blessed to know that we are under the cloud, that we are covered and controlled by the divine presence, that we are kept there by the Spirit’s power.

Again, there is something even further. Israel was a saved people when they saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians upon the seashore. We are told, “Thus the Lord saved Israel ... and Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians ; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel.” The song was the result of the clear understanding of what they were! The children of Israel were saved. They were made safe by the blood, but they were not saved by blood.* The blood never altered their condition; the blood left them as it found them – a nation of slaves. It did not save them from Egypt, though their salvation was based on it. Strictly speaking, scripture never says we are saved by the blood. We are justified by the blood, and cleansed and

** That is to say, although they were saved from **judgment** by the blood, their salvation was not **complete** until they were delivered from Pharaoh and Egypt; the word “saved” (here meaning ‘to be given safety or ease’) is not used until Exodus 14:30. See also Romans 6:14 – Editor.*

redeemed by the blood. The blood is the basis of everything, but scripture says we are saved by water. Not baptism, although baptism is a figure of the thing, but death – the death of Christ.

Both the blood and the water came from the side of a dead Christ. The blood cleanses judicially, the water cleanses morally. Do we know what it is to be saved from an Egypt world by the death of Christ and His glorious resurrection? It is very necessary for us to apprehend the import and the meaning of salvation. None but those who know where the death and resurrection of Christ has set them know intelligently what salvation means.

The song at the well.

Now, turning to the song at the well, Israel entered the wilderness with a song, and they left the wilderness with a song, but in between were murmurings. This is just like the experience of some who get to heaven in the long run. In their young converted days it was all song, and then came the murmurings. By-and-by the deathbed came, and the song came back again. There is no reason why it should be so, but, alas, such is the case.

Israel at the close of the journey found that they were just as bad in themselves as they were at the start. The flesh never gets better:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (*John 3:6*).

Israel murmured at the close of the journey, even as they murmured at its start. What was the remedy for the serpent’s bite? The brazen serpent. The brazen serpent had no blood in it. The brazen serpent represents Christ being “made sin for us” (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (*Romans 8:3*). There you get the brazen serpent; Christ

made a curse for us (*see Galatians 3:13*). Balaam's parables come after the brazen serpent. Balak wanted Balaam to curse the people, but how could he after the brazen serpent?

At the close of Numbers 20 we have the end of the wilderness order of things – Aaron stripped of his sacerdotal robes and dying. Then we get a new thing brought in, we get life. As soon as ever the brazen serpent came to pass Israel made progress. They set forward, and toward the sunrising, that is, on their way toward Canaan – the purpose of God. Up to that time it had been all wandering. As Psalm 107 puts it, “They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way.” There never is any real progress in soul until we reach the brazen serpent, until we see the end of man in the flesh in Christ's death.

Then the springing well comes into view. The people sang, “Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it” (*Numbers 21:17*). The princes dug the well; the nobles scooped out the rubbish with their staves. I do not think they used any pick and shovel, nor could they exactly dig with staves. The well had actually been dug, but then, you see, it had got choked up with rubbish. Ah, the rubbish gets into our souls and chokes up the well, so that the living water does not spring up as it should do. The princes of the people and the nobles, what are they for? What are leaders in the assembly of God for? What are those who minister to us for? Surely to clear the rubbish from the souls of the saints, so that the living water may spring up.

But, mark you, they did it with their *staves*. The staff is the symbol of pilgrimage. It is no use a man taking the place of being a spiritual guide and instructor in the assembly of God if he is not in his everyday life a pilgrim. There must be the staff. We affect others by what we *are*! They did it, too, under the direction of the lawgiver. The Lawgiver for us is not Moses, but Christ. We are “under the law to Christ” (*1 Corinthians 9:21*,

*KJV; or, “legitimately subject to Christ” [Darby Trans.] – not under **the** law, but under regulation – Editor).* Thus we do all under His authority.

The song in the glory.

Now we come to the final song, “Thou art worthy.” The challenge goes out throughout the universe, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.” Mark you, it is not a question of brute force. Many have tried to get world power by brute force. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, all tried, but in vain. The Man who is going to be set over all things is the Man who is worthy of the place.

John weeps because no one in heaven or on earth is found worthy. One of the elders says to him, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” John lifts up his eyes, and instead of seeing a lion he sees a lamb. In the Greek it is a diminutive; it is “a little lamb.” When heaven sets forth the power of God, heaven sets forth that power under the symbol of a little lamb. “The weakness of God is stronger than men” (*1 Corinthians 1:25*).

He takes the book and the four living creatures fall down and worship Him, as do the twenty-four elders, the whole company of the redeemed. Thus they sing, “Thou art worthy.” “Many angels” John hears speaking; they echo the strain. Then he says, “Every creature . . . heard I saying.” They all take up the same strain: “Thou art worthy.” What a song that will be which we shall then sing! It is called a new song. Why? Because it will be a new song to the universe at large. The universe never heard such a song before.

We said that the Bible is full of songs. The song of Moses and the children of Israel was at the start. When Moses

came to die, oh, what a lovely song he sang at the close. We have, too, the song of Deborah, full of prophetic utterances, and the song of Hannah, full of thanksgiving. Then we have David's songs. The Psalms have sighs, but the Psalms have songs. If there had been no sighs there would have been no songs. As the poet says,

“David's psalms had ne'er been sung,
If grief his heart had never wrung.”

Then there is the song in the days of Hezekiah. “When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began, (2 *Chronicles* 29:27) and the song went on as long as the burnt offering went on. That means for us that our song will never cease. Then we come to the song of Mary, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour” (*Luke* 1:46, 47). We have, too, the song at the last supper: “When they had sung an hymn, they went out” (*Mark* 14:26). Christ sings now in the presence of His brethren, in the midst of the assembly (*Hebrews* 2:12), and we have heard and known that song.

Then think of the song that Paul and Silas sang in the Philipian jail (*Acts* 16:25), and what an effect it had upon the prisoners! Beloved friends, we used to sing,

“I feel like singing all the time,”

but let it not be only a matter of feeling, but let us do it. If we taste the joy of the Father's house, we shall not be slack in the matter of singing. When the elder son drew near to the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. “Music and dancing” there means “symphony and chorus.” Symphony and chorus, as perhaps some of you know, are two Greek words spelt in English letters, and those are the words in that scripture. Symphony means *harmony*, and chorus means *unity*. Give me a company of believers, however small, who are singing thus, who are characterised by harmony and

unity, and I will show you a company that is attractive. When that testimony goes forth, those who hear it feel that those who give it have something worth singing about, and, like the elder son, they get interested and begin to inquire.

Well, may we sing more and sing better. Only the Lord can teach us and lead the song: "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). The apostle does not say your hearts, but "your heart," for he supposes that the saints are of one heart. One heart and one song – that is it.

Notes of an address by S.J.B. Carter (1858-1938); date uncertain.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

I THINK this is a legitimate and important subject of inquiry – and the more so as by the inquiry we are enabled to apprehend what sin is in principle. It is certain that in the coming of the Son of God into the world, the two great forces that were in conflict were the truth and sin.

Before going further into the subject, it may perhaps be assumed that truth is, on the one side, the setting forth and expression of what is of God, and therefore in nature divine, and, on the other, the consistency of the creature morally with the position in which God has set it. It is evident that on the latter side only could sin come in, and consequently sin can never be coextensive with truth.

In Christ we see the perfect realisation of truth. He is the truth. In Him has been fully set forth what is of God in nature and character before men; and, at the same time, He has maintained before God, in true moral suitability, every position which as man He was content to occupy in His presence. He set the Lord always before Him (*Psalms 16:8*).

Of God, as such, it is said He is true; but not that He is the truth. In the Son is the expression – He is the Word. Hence it is not difficult to see that Christ is the test of everything.

Now sin in its fullest character and development sets itself to oppose and resist the truth. Had not Christ come and spoken to the Jews, they had not had sin (*see John 15:22*), and the logical conclusion of this resistance of the truth is, that the man of sin takes advantage of the rejection of Christ to shew Himself as God (*see 2 Thessalonians 2:4*).

The beginning of sin was, I judge, when the creature turned to itself as an object, and so ceased to have God as such. It departed from God. That is first seen in the devil, who sins from the beginning (*1 John 3:8*), and abode not in the truth (*John 8:44*). He first became enamoured of his own beauty, and puffed up, and afterwards, as it seems to me, coveted a position that God had given to man (as head and centre of a system) and had not given to an angel. Morally, Satan ceased to be in the truth of the creature. His position he could not change, but was no longer in moral accordance with it.

The same may be said of man. Being tempted, he sought to be as God, knowing good and evil. He, too, became an object to himself; self came in, and sought elevation, and he ceased to be in moral consistency with the position of the creature, though he could not alter that position. He stood not in the truth. The climax, as we have seen, is in the man of sin, the son of perdition. Backed up by Satan and worldly power, he opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God, or worshipped, and sets himself in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. He virtually says there is no God in the heavens, and man on earth is God.* He has truly become an object to himself, and would be to others. He has wholly ceased to be in the truth of his position as a creature.

* *Can we not see this developing around us today? – Editor.*

Now sin being such, and working in this way, it is evident that it must ever resist the truth, since in the truth there is the setting forth, not only of what God is in His blessed nature, but of what the creature should be before God. As we have seen, all this is found in Christ, and, in taking away the sin of the world, He Himself comes in as the Truth. But this must be gone into a little more in detail.

The Son of God has come forth, become Man, not only full of grace and truth, but Himself the truth. This seems to point to a wholly new order of things in the universe, in that everything, instead of standing on its own footing of responsibility, will be established in and maintained by Christ. The first great step in this is in His having become man. Though truly God, and ever expressing here what was of God; yet, having come into the position of the creature, He never ceased to be in moral suitability to the position He had taken. Perfect Godward, in love, dependence, and confidence, He pleased not Himself. And all this comes out most distinctly in His death. In obedience He laid down a life in which sin had no place, and on which death had no claim; but was, in suffering, in perfect moral accordance with the character of God, though made sin that He might remove it from before God, and be Himself eternally separated from it, that He might in result take away the sin of the world, so that there might be a new creation in those that had been of the old. Hence we have sin removed, while Christ abides, the truth.

We arrive now at this point, that all is shut up in Christ. In Him alone is the eternal security of blessing – since in Him, not only is God’s nature displayed, but everything, every position in heaven or on earth, is headed up in Him in whom it will be set forth suitably to the character of God who created it.

Hence in the millennium it is not so much man, as Christ, that comes into view. He, so to speak, covers all. All is secured and maintained in Him. He fills all in all. It is of moment to see how everything, law, old covenant, flesh, old creation, the world have

all been brought to an end before God in Christ, and that He remains who is to fill all in all. He is the new starting point, in whose death the true judgment of God has been expressed in regard to everything, while He Himself, as Man, is the truth, the expression of what is according to God's mind as to everything, be it man, Israel, or what not.

Now Christians are of the truth, having part in the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and holiness of truth (*Ephesians 4:24 – see note in Darby Trans.*). This is, of course, looking at them abstractly as in Christ, born of God. In this sense they cannot sin, being the offspring of truth, and not simply being responsible to abide in the truth; nothing can come from them but what is of the truth.

As to practically abiding in the truth, it is a question of grace, and faith that finds its delights and enjoyments in all that Christ is, so that we are maintained under the power of what is of God and divine, and morally in keeping with it.

The above is but a very bare and brief sketch of the subject, but may be of interest as opening up in measure how completely sin is to be displaced, and how in its place we have, in the coming in of Christ, the expression on the one side of what is divine; and, on the other, the maintenance and security of every position which God has created; the perfect triumph of truth over all.

Article by F.E. Raven, extracted from "Voice to the Faithful" Vol. XXIV (1890); see also Ministry by F.E.R. New Series Volume 7.

Note: The same author in another article said:

"I have no idea of attempting to form the minds of people, but I would seek to set forth that which will have its own effect upon you morally. I want you to be affected by **the truth**, and the truth is **that which may be known of God** – that which is revealed. This ought to have the most powerful influence and effect upon every one of us." (*New Series Vol. 11, p. 362.*)

SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE

“These shall ye eat, of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, they shall be an abomination to you” – Leviticus 11:9, 10.

“And their word will eat as doth a canker (or, will spread as a gangrene), of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred (or, gone astray)” – 2 Timothy 2:17, 18.

Perhaps we are all affected more than we realise by the trends that are moving all around us. I remember it being said when I was a youth that if we do not set ourselves against the current of what is in the world, it will come in among us – that is, into the church. Sadly, this is now all too apparent today. Tides flowing strongly in the world around us are, alas, plainly exhibited in that which claims to be the church of God. The lack of reverence toward God and of respect for God’s word, the Holy Bible; the changing roles of man and woman in the home and in society; the loosening of restraints on human relationships; the breaking down of the divine institutions of marriage and family; and interference in human gender, are some of trends in the secular world which, to varying extents, are affecting the outlook and practice of professing Christians.

When the Synod of the Church of England voted in 2014 to consecrate female bishops, the Bishop of Manchester was reported as saying, with approval, “we’ve shown that we’re keeping up with the spirit of the age.” Alas, he also claimed that the Spirit of God was in the change. The apostle Paul wrote, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). To identify the Spirit of God with the trends running in the world, is – to understate the case – a big mistake. Indeed, the Lord Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit would come

to testify *against* the world (John 16:8), as He Himself had witnessed against it “that its works are evil” and was hated in consequence (John 7:7).

So what of our position as Christians in the midst of this world and of a corrupted Christendom? Well, the Holy Scriptures are our only reliable guide. The whole of the New Testament declares both the character of the world and what should be the Christian’s attitude towards it. Among other passages, the Apostle Peter exhorts us, “Save yourselves from this untoward (*or, “perverse”*) generation” (Acts 2:40); Paul tells us that the Lord Jesus “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4); James exhorts us to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) and John writes, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). Someone may observe ‘but God so loved the world’ (John 3:16). In the gift of His own dear Son He has indeed shown His loving attitude towards us all, but the system that man has built up under Satan’s influence is hateful to God and, when the present period of His grace has expired, will come under His fearful wrath. I suggest, therefore, that the first thing we need is a right judgment of the current world system.

But another thing is apparent: we are in ourselves powerless to stand against the influences of the world, any more than Adam and Eve, in their innocence, were able to withstand the wiles of the serpent, or than the children of Israel in Canaan could resist the influences of the nations around them. We are, however, in a better position than they were, for we have as our Saviour and Lord One who has overcome the world (John 16:33); and, as believing on Him, we have been given the Holy Spirit to indwell us and unite us to Himself, the risen and glorified Christ, in whom we have ample resource. John tells us that “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). We cannot live in a vacuum; if we are to be delivered from the love of this present evil world,

we need to be engaged in heart and mind with the One who has been here on earth but is here no longer; He now lives to God (Romans 6:10) but is soon coming again and “every one that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

Then there is another thing. Christ Himself as our object is the full expression of the truth (John 14:6) and the Holy Spirit, as bearing witness within us, is also said to be the truth (1 John 5:6). It is the knowledge of the truth that exposes the character of everything else. The Lord Jesus said, “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32). I remember a little experience of this in my own life. Studying the philosophies of the Greek writers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle at school I found them quite unconvincing, even pathetic, despite the great regard in which they have been held through the centuries. Why? Because even then I knew something of the far greater wisdom contained in the scripture *of truth* (Daniel 10:21; John 17:17). It used to be said that a bank clerk could detect a bad note by his frequent handling of good ones. The knowledge of the truth is the best way to discern error – better than digging into and analysing the latter.

Satan ever seeks to beguile us as he did Eve in the garden of Eden. In this “post-truth” society he is successfully getting many people to be guided by their *feelings*, ignoring the *facts*. Christianity stands on facts, especially those relating to the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return of Christ. Even my salvation does not rest on my feelings, but on what God has *declared* concerning His Son and those who believe on Him. But around us we have poor people affected by peer pressures and “social contagions” – ideas that, to quote our verse from 2 Timothy at the head of this article, spread as a gangrene and take hold of people, so that they are left thinking they are suffering from a topical state of mind or body (even, we are told, to the extent that the chemistry of their brains is affected and they develop associated symptoms), or that they are male inside a female body (or *vice*

versa), or that the feeling that they have towards someone else is love and quite natural, when it is actually what the Bible names as lust, and so on.

That is another thing at which Satan is busy – mixing up the labels. “Woe” says the prophet, “unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness” etc. (Isaiah 5:20). He is busy applying words like good, moral, natural, fair etc. to what is bad, immoral, unnatural, and unjust. Perhaps the worst thing is that religious leaders – even some so-called “evangelicals” who previously taught differently – are now promoting this evil agenda, even to the extent of trying to suppress the proclamation of the truth and outlaw the offer of sympathetic help to people who are troubled about their tendencies.

But armed with God’s word, and never trusting in ourselves, only in the Lord, we can stand in the face of the evil that is swirling around us. In other words, we will develop fins and scales and be able to swim against the current. Never mind that “they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same sink of corruption” (*1 Peter 4:4 – Darby Translation*). G.S.B.

POETIC PAGES

What Name is that which sounds so sweet,
And seems to tell us “All is well,”
And whereso’er that Name we meet,
It echoes forth, “Emmanuel”?

*’Tis JESUS; Name we love to tell,
Which every name doth far excel.*

What Name is that which whispers, “Peace,”
And sends thro’ every breast a thrill,
Which bids the tearful mourner, “Cease,”
And raging billows, “Peace! Be still”!

’Tis JESUS, Name we love ...

What Name is that which tells of Love,
And sweetly says, "I died for thee,"
And now is calling from above,
"Lean hard, beloved one, on Me"?"

'Tis JESUS, Name we love ...

What armour does that Christian wear,
As he in war goes forth to fight?
What mighty standard does he bear?
Who's that He ever keeps in sight?

'Tis JESUS, Name we love ...

What Name is that which sweetly falls
Like notes of music on our ear,
And which in death's dark valley calls
"Lo! I am with thee, never fear"?"

'Tis JESUS, Name we love ...

And now what Passport does he hold,
As he the spotless robe awaits?
Who gives to him that crown of gold,
And opes for him the heavenly gates?

'Tis JESUS, Name we love ...

What draws that glorious strain of Praise
From shining choirs around the throne?
And what new Anthem's that they raise
That's so harmonious in its tone?

*'Tis JESUS, Name we love to tell
Which every name doth far excel.*

H. D'Arcy Champney (1854-1942)

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.