

Words Of Peace & Truth

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WORDS OF PEACE & TRUTH
(*Esther 9:30; see also Zechariah 8:19*)
NO. 92: MAY-AUGUST 2014

Editorial

This editorial is being written a few days after the Church of England approved the consecration of women bishops. Probably most of the readers of this magazine will deplore this decision but there may be lessons for all of us to learn from it, that we may be the more confirmed and strengthened in what is right according to God's truth.

In the first place, the decision is a further step in departure from the word of God. Let us remember that Satan's subtle deception of Eve began with, "Yea, hath God said ...?" Paul states quite clearly in 1 Corinthians 14 that the women should keep silent in church, it being a shame for them to speak. Various stratagems have been adopted to dilute or overturn this instruction but it – and the apostolic authority behind it – remain valid. Then in 1 Timothy 1 Paul again sets out the differing roles of men and women, enjoining firstly "I will therefore that men (*i.e. males*) pray everywhere" and secondly "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." Then he goes on to say, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Further, he explains why there should be such differences between the roles of men and women: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression."

The simple choice for us – not only on this issue but in everything that arises – is whether we listen to human reasoning or

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submit to the word of God. The Lord Jesus is our great Model; when tempted by Satan He could have marshalled all kinds of argument against him but He simply said “It is written ... it is written again ... it is written” (Matt. 4:1-11). Changed times and fashions are often pleaded for departure from the Holy Scriptures, but what great changes had occurred in the period of almost 1,000 years between God giving the law to His people Israel and the day when Haggai lived! Yet God said “The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and My Spirit, remain among you: fear ye not” (*Darby Translation*). In our own dispensation we have John’s exhortation: “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:24).

Secondly, some opponents of the measure apparently voted against their conscience for the sake of unity. Surely any unity based on the allowance of what is wrong is spurious. We indeed need to bear with one another in love, “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace,” as Paul enjoins in Ephesians 4. We all have our idiosyncrasies and failings and none of us understands anything as we ought to understand it (1 Corinthians 8:2). But to suffer a bad conscience by condoning the contravention of the plain words of Holy Scripture in important matters of Christian faith and practice cannot be excused. Paul exhorts Timothy to maintain “faith and a good conscience, which [last] some, having put away, have made shipwreck as to faith” (1 Timothy 1:19). In John Bunyan’s *Holy War* “Mr. Conscience the preacher ... did his utmost to keep all his good documents alive upon the hearts of the people of Mansoul;” nevertheless, the Diabolonian Doubters re-took the town “and Mr. Conscience they so wounded, yea, and his wounds so festered, that he could have no ease day nor night, but lay as if continually upon a rack; but that Shaddai rules all, certainly they had slain him outright.” In my own lifetime I have known those who went against their consciences in important issues and it seemed that they never fully recovered their spiritual strength.

Thirdly, The Times (15th July) also reported one bishop as saying “that we’re keeping up with the spirit of the age but also the spirit of God.” What a travesty of the truth this is! We cannot be doing both. Paul says that “*we* have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which [is] of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). That chapter alone throws into stark relief the contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. The church should *not* reflect the principles or trends of this “present evil world” (Galatians 1:4) but be like the moon shining against the background of a dark sky with light borrowed from the absent sun. Paul says “that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons (*or children*) of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ...” (Philippians 2:15).

Lastly, it has been reported that the eventual passing of the motion to appoint women as bishops was the result of mediation processes and the employment of professional facilitators. Is this how matters should be resolved in the church of God? – as if we were dealing with an industrial dispute or a political settlement? We read in Acts 15 of a major problem that affected the early church but it was settled by men of God speaking to the assembly in the power of the Holy Spirit and with recourse to the Holy Scriptures, so that it could be said afterwards, “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.” Paul later wrote, “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

All of us who profess Christ are part of Christendom and should mourn over its increasing corruption, as Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah lamented the transgressions of their people – see the ninth chapters of those books. But let us seek grace from the Lord Jesus to conduct ourselves in present conditions with both humility and faithfulness – and even with joy (Neh. 8:10) – in a way that honours Him while we await His return. G.S.B.

THE BELIEVER “IN CHRIST”: CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER

Romans 16:7; 8:10

I suppose one can say that Christianity, in one way and as far as we are concerned down here, consists of two things; firstly, that we are “in Christ;” and, secondly, that Christ is in us. The former is in view of blessing and the latter is in view of formation of character. The youngest believer is “in Christ.” The Corinthians were said to be “babes in Christ,” so the youngest believer is in Christ and you cannot improve upon that.

One blessed Man has been here and accomplished God’s will, satisfied God’s heart, met the claims of righteousness and divine judgment against sin, and, for God, has removed the whole question of our guilt from before His face. And not only that, the whole history of man right down from Adam’s fall has come before God, and the man that brought in the offence has been removed in judgment. Wonderful! And, further, the One who has done it has been raised from the dead and God has established in Him, in resurrection, the only ground of blessing. So *that* Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is before God, and God’s eye rests upon him; His heart delights in Him. God has found the whole answer to His need in Him. And every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is now transferred from what he was as a responsible being in Adam and has come into blessing in Christ. He has come under a new Head; he has come under Christ; stands before God and is accepted before God in all the value of what Christ is to God and what He has done for God. So we cannot improve in any way upon our place in Christ. Of course, we grow in our apprehension of it and I would like to suggest that every one of us should consider what the Christian’s place and blessings are so that we might grow in our apprehension of them. Now, if we see what our blessings are in Christ we shall be delivered from the world which is dominated by

what came in by Adam – sin. So, let us just contemplate this great matter, that we are in Christ. Paul says of Adronicus and Junias that they were “in Christ before me.” That is, they came into all the blessing that God had secured for them, and for us, in another Man. No striving on our part will increase it, no prayer, no activity or reading the Word or taking on labour for Christ will improve it. That is how we stand in God's presence in all the worth of that blessed Man who has accomplished God's will.

The other side of the truth is that Christ is in us. We have read in chapter 8 of Romans, “If Christ be in you ...” That is the great triumph of the moment, that whereas Satan sought to exterminate Christ and the name of Christ from the earth, God's triumph is that Christ is maintained here in believers. In other words, our blessings are in Christ; but Christ is in us in view of our being formed in the character of the Man in whom God has found His delight. Now one or two references to what that means.

Paul speaks in chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians about the “meekness and gentleness of the Christ” – “I entreat you by the meekness and the gentleness of the Christ.” He speaks about “the obedience of the Christ” in the same chapter. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians the problem was that there was the exaltation of the wrong kind of man and so he brings in the teaching of the cross to counter that. But in the Second Epistle he is bringing in the characteristics of another order of Man – what the Lord Jesus is. Our brother has been speaking about His lowliness; here we have his meekness. *Meekness*, I understand, means His perfect submission: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” He submitted to every indignity at the hand of man. He submitted to the will of God and went forward in meekness to accomplish God's will. What an answer to all that we find in this world – man's aggression, man's self-exaltation – man's world! God has another world and another Man, and He is marked by meekness –

submission to God's will. He could say, "Not my will but Thine be done." He submitted to His Father's will. Wouldn't we like to be like that? Christ in us means that the meekness of the Christ begins to take shape in us. It is so easy to become aggressive, self-assertive, to take up cudgels for oneself. The Lord Jesus never, ever, did that; in the sight of God He was meek.

And then it speaks about his *gentleness*. Think of Paul speaking about that to the Corinthians. *They* were not like that. Our brother referred to Luke 22 and I think it is one of the most beautiful chapters, where the Lord Jesus is amongst His own. There was strife among them as to who should be the greatest, and the Lord so gently says, "I am amongst you as the one that serves." How gently the Lord Jesus corrected the strife among His disciples – gentleness. Paul speaks about that in 2 Timothy. He says at the end of chapter 2, "A bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all." We need to be gentle towards one another. He also goes on to speak about meekness – "in meekness setting right those who oppose." So we find that meekness and gentleness are to characterise us in any service we do.

Chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians also speaks about the *obedience of the Christ*. Wouldn't we love just to be here with that attitude of obedience. It was by one disobedience that sin and all its consequences came into the world. But think of the Lord Jesus being led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. Satan came into the garden of Eden and man fell by disobedience. But God's blessed Man came into the presence of Satan to be tempted in the wilderness forty days. What marked Him out there? Perfect obedience: "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which goes out through God's mouth." That is the principle of obedience. Let us see that character formed in us.

We read in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 3 of the *patience of the Christ*. We need to learn patience by contemplating the patience of the Christ. Psalm 40 says, “I waited patiently for Jehovah; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” The Lord was the patient Man. That very Psalm says, “ears has thou prepared me.” That patient Man came to do God’s holy will and by His perfect sacrifice all the sacrifices and offerings that had gone before were superseded.

Then Scripture speaks of the *love of the Christ*: “that ye may know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge.” The blessed God would draw us into a sphere of love where all is filled with the love of the Christ. The Holy Spirit is given to us to strengthen us in the inner man, that the Christ may dwell through faith in our hearts, so that we may know the love of the Christ.

Then finally I want to make a reference to the *law of the Christ*. “Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ” (Gal. 6:2). The Lord Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest to your souls.” That is the law of the Christ – His yoke.

It is a wonderful thing to realise that our blessings are “in Christ;” but Christ in us is for the formation of character and that is the great work of the Holy Spirit. That is why the Holy Spirit is here and that is the triumph of God in the present day. We have been thinking about the general decline and the general corruption that fills the world. The moral triumph of God is that that blessed Man who is in God’s presence is in us and is to be formed in us in view of His character being expressed down here in this world. May the Lord encourage every one of us to feed upon Him, to be occupied with Him and to walk in His light, for His name's sake.

Alex Walker, Edinburgh; 14th November, 1996.

Joy and Peace in Ordinary Life

Philippians 4

The apostle returns to the practical exhortations addressed to the faithful, with regard to their ordinary life, that they might walk according to their heavenly calling. “Rejoice in the Lord.” If he even weeps over many who call themselves Christians, he rejoices always in the Lord; in Him is that which nothing can alter. This is not an indifference to sorrow which hinders weeping, but it is a spring of joy which enlarges when there is distress, because of its immutability, and which becomes even more pure in the heart the more it becomes the only one; and it is in itself the only spring that is infinitely pure. When it is our only spring, we thereby love others. If we love them *besides Him*, we lose something of Him. When through exercise of heart we are weaned from all other springs, His joy remains in all its purity, and our concern for others partakes of this same purity. Nothing moreover troubles this joy, because Christ never changes. The better we know Him, the better are we able to enjoy that which is ever enlarging through knowing Him. But he exhorts Christians to rejoice: it is a testimony to the worth of Christ, it is their true portion. Four years in prison chained to a soldier had not hindered his doing it, nor being able to exhort others more at ease than he.

Now this same thing will make them moderate and meek; their passions will not be excited by other things if Christ is enjoyed. Moreover He is at hand. A little while, and all for which men strive will give place to Him whose presence bridles the will (or rather puts it aside) and fills the heart. We are not to be moved by things here below until He shall come. When He comes, we shall be fully occupied with other things.

Not only are the will and the passions to be bridled and silenced, but anxieties also. We are in relationship with God; in all things He is our refuge; and events do not disturb Him. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything, He knows it

beforehand; events shake neither His throne, nor His heart; they always accomplish His purposes. But to us He is love; we are through grace the objects of His tender care. He listens to us and bows down His ear to hear us. In all things, therefore, instead of disquieting ourselves and weighing everything in our own hearts, we ought to present our requests to God with prayer, with supplication, with a heart that makes itself known (for we are human beings) but with the knowledge of the heart of God (for He loves us perfectly); so that, even while making our petition to Him, we can already give thanks, because we are sure of the answer of His grace, be it what it may; and it is *our* requests that we are to present to Him. Nor is it a cold commandment to find out His will and then come: we are to go with our requests. Hence it does not say, you will have what you ask; but God's peace will keep your hearts. This is trust; and His peace, the peace of God Himself, shall keep our hearts. It does not say that our hearts shall keep the peace of God; but, having cast our burden on Him whose peace nothing can disturb, His peace keeps our hearts. Our trouble is before Him, and the constant peace of the God of love, who takes charge of everything and knows all beforehand, quiets our disburdened hearts, and imparts to us the peace which is in Himself and which is above all understanding (or at least keeps our hearts by it), even as He Himself is above all the circumstances that can disquiet us, and above the poor human heart that is troubled by them. Oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this marvellous peace, if we know how to bring them to God, and true He is. May we learn indeed how to maintain this intercourse with God and its reality, in order that we may converse with Him and understand His ways with believers!

Moreover, the Christian, although walking (as we have seen) in the midst of evil and of trial, is to occupy himself with all that is good, and is able to do it when thus at peace, to live in this atmosphere, so that it shall pervade his heart, that he be habitually where God is to be found. This is an all-important command. We

may be occupied with evil in order to condemn it; we may be right, but this is not communion with God in that which is good. But if occupied through His grace with that which is good, with that which comes from Himself, the God of peace is with us. In trouble we shall have the peace of God; in our ordinary life, if it be of this nature, we shall have the God of peace. Paul was the practical example of this; with regard to their walk, by following him in that which they had learnt and heard from him and seen in him, they should find that God was with them.

J.N. Darby: Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Volume 4.

FOOLISH TALKING AND JESTING

THE believer is brought to God through Christ. Through the work of the Holy Ghost he is in Christ. Christ is about to come, and he will very shortly be with and like Christ in glory. Meanwhile he is called *to live Christ* (Phil. 1:21).

Christ's life on earth was *perfect throughout*. He was a holy Man and did no sin. There was nothing in His whole pathway but that in which God could find delight. His thoughts, His words, His ways, His works were all perfect. He was ever free from all lightness, folly, sin. He was the perfect meat-offering. All was fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense. The memorial of this was burnt by the priest upon the altar. It was a sweet savour unto the Lord (Lev. 2:1-3.). It was a perfect man, who died – the Son of God.

Now Christ in glory is our object, and His life our model here below. We are called, as we gaze upon Him by faith and in the Spirit's power, to purify ourselves even as He is pure, and to follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). The desire of the heart of God for us is that Christ should be formed in us, reflected by us, and shine out from us in all our ways.

Now this involves exercise that we may be subject to *all* the exhortations of His word. Among them is one of much moment in relation to the subject at the head of this paper. We will cite the whole passage:

“Be ye therefore followers (or imitators) of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, *nor foolish talking, nor jesting*, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks” (Eph. 5:1-4 – emphasis added).

The Spirit of God couples foolish talking and jesting with other sins which we all look upon as gross. This surely should lead us to ponder our ways. We should all condemn it in an assembly of God’s people, or in public preaching – are we to be less careful in our homes or in our private life? And who can wholly claim exemption from it? In *many* things we *all* offend (Jas. 3:2). Foolish talking and jesting emanate from the flesh. And “in me (that is, in my flesh),” says the apostle, “dwelleth no good thing.” (Rom. 7:18). It expresses itself in this respect through the tongue. And the tongue, though a little member, is an unruly one and a fire. Hear what the apostle James says of it. We do well to take it to heart. “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter (or wood) a little fire kindleth! And the *tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity*: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and *it is set on fire of hell* ... the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, *full of deadly poison*,” etc. (James 3:2-12). With such a member in our bodies, and so intimately connected with our hearts, which God knoweth and trieth, how watchful each one of us needs to be! Foolish talking, repartee, jesting, punning, fleshly wit are out in a moment. And we little

know often what damage we do. Our words are, so to speak, only our own so long as we keep them within our lips. “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these *cometh of evil*,” said our Lord. (Matt. 5:37). “Dead flies,” said the wise man, “cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth* a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour” (Eccles. 10:1).

The Lord’s servant, upon whom the eyes of many rest, and who is called to minister Christ to precious souls, needs especially to be on his guard lest his unruly tongue in everyday life should undo all the good of his ministry in public. Nothing commends our teaching more than when it manifestly controls our own life and conversation. Paul could say, “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life.” “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). “A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life” (Prov. 15:4). “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23).

“Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth” (Jas. 3:3, 4). And, “If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man [this is what Christ was], *and* able also to bridle the whole body” (verse 2).

Fire, iniquity, hell, misrule, deadly poison form the terrible category of things mentioned by the apostle as giving rein to or proceeding from the tongue, and foolish talking and jesting are among the bitter fruits! Surely all this is very foreign to Christ. May we then, all of us, if in any way given to indulge the flesh in this un-Christ-like way, be exercised that, in the power of the Spirit, we may adorn the doctrine of Christ in our conversation as in all else, walking in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time; and our speech *always* with grace, seasoned

with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man (Col. 4:5-6). Foolish talking and jesting are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks. And let us not forget our Lord's solemn word, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

E.H.Chater (1845-1915)

Extracted from "The Believer's Friend," Vol. II [1910].

LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-22

EVERYTHING which God has entrusted to man in responsibility has utterly failed. Adam in paradise, Noah in the new earth, Israel under law, the priesthood, prophets, and kings – all alike failed in their several positions. The Church, alas! is no exception to the general rule; for in Laodicea we behold its final condition as estimated by Him whose eyes, as He walked in the midst of the seven candlesticks, were as a flame of fire. And, again, it should be remembered that the root of the state of this assembly is found in Ephesus – in the loss of her "first love." It was there the decline commenced, and, whatever the gracious interventions of God to recover His people, this decline continued, expressing itself, as we have seen, in various and widely different forms, until at length the limits of divine forbearance are reached, and the Lord declares His unalterable purpose of "spuing" the church, as the vessel of testimony, out of His mouth. He finally rejects, as His witness, that which bears His name on the earth.

It is this hopeless and now irremediable condition of Laodicea which accounts for the special characters the Lord assumes in His presentation: "*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans* write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*" (v. 14). All these characters express what the Church should have

* As a great deal has been made of the use of this word, it may be mentioned that the correct reading is *Laodicea*, not *Laodiceans* as in KJV.

been or God in the world; but, having falsified everyone of them, and thus become a false witness, the Lord presents Himself as the One in whom they have all been verified and secured. God will have His glory maintained. He will permit His people to have the privilege of making it good; but on their failure, He will Himself vindicate His own name.

(1) First, then, Christ is the “Amen.” The key to the meaning of this word may be found in 2 Cor. 1, where we read, “For all the promises of God in Him” (the Son of God, Jesus Christ) “*are* yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (v.20). That is, in Him is the affirmation, and in Him is the confirmation, of the truth of all that God has spoken. So here the Lord, as the Amen, presents Himself as “the fulfilment and the verifier of all the promises of God.” The Church, we repeat, should have been this, but, having forgotten her heavenly calling, and the source of her power and blessing, she has found a home in a scene where the Lord Himself was rejected, and has, in this way, become the denial of, instead of being the Amen to, the promises of God.

(2) Connected with being the Amen, Christ is also the faithful and true witness; and He was that both concerning God and man. Here it is probably in the former aspect He is seen, as God's faithful and true witness. This, as before noticed in these papers, is, from the very figure of the golden candlestick used in the first chapter, what the Church was intended to be in this world. The apostle Paul therefore, writing to the Corinthian assembly, says, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ” (2 Cor. 3:3.). But how could an assembly that, in its own estimation, was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, be the faithful and true witness of Him who, when down here, had not where to lay His head?

(3) He was, moreover, “the beginning of the creation of God.” Adam, the responsible man, was the beginning of the first creation; but in the cross of Christ the first man came to his end before God, he was for ever judged and set aside, and has been once and for all superseded by the Second Man, the

Lord from heaven. As soon as Christ came into the world He was the Second Man; but He did not take the place until He was risen from the dead, the Head now of a new race, as well as the Head of His body the Church. It is Christ, therefore, as risen and glorified, who is the beginning of the creation of God, and it is to Him in this condition that the Church, the Church which is His body, is united by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and hence it is that the Church “ought to have displayed the power of the new creation by the Holy Ghost; as if any man is in Christ it is a new creation, where all things are of God.” Instead of that, as Laodicea testifies, she has become the expression of her own importance, covetousness, and earthly mindedness. What an immense consolation then it is, in such a state of things, to look upward and to find that, while everything has slipped from our grasp, to our own shame and confusion of face, God finds the perfect answer to all His own thoughts of grace, and has secured all for His own beloved people, in Christ.

The condition and judgment of Laodicea are now given – *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth”* (vv. 15, 16). Though bearing the name of Christ, and presenting itself in the world as the church, such was its moral condition; the principal feature of which was indifference, springing from the want of heart for Christ, and expressing itself in that spurious charity which regards all “religious” beliefs as alike good, provided there be sincerity. There is consequently lukewarmness, no zeal for Christ, and no hatred of sin; but a mild self-complacent toleration of all, and of all things; and connected therewith the substitution of humanity for Christ, and, as a consequence, philanthropy for religion. As was written long ago, “It would not renounce Christ, would keep up profession, would sacrifice nothing for Him, it would keep the Church’s place and credit, yea, claim it largely on many grounds as a body; but spiritual power, in individual association of heart with Christ or trouble for Him, was gone.”

Such was the condition of Laodicea as discerned, and

infallibly discerned, by Christ; and it was nauseous to Him; He abhorred it, and therefore declares irrevocably that He will spue it out of His mouth. He does not say when He will do so; but the decree has gone forth from His lips, and will never be recalled. Its meaning is, that He will totally, and for ever, reject the assembly as His public witness, His responsible light-bearer in the world. This is its primary application; but surely every individual may learn, both for instruction and warning, that nothing, no state or condition, is so displeasing to Christ as lukewarmness or indifference.

The Lord, in the next place, exposes the cause of the condition He condemns, and, though He has pronounced judgment, He indicates the remedy: *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve,* that thou mayest see”* (vv. 17, 18). As may be gathered from Deut. 8, and other scriptures, the danger in the wilderness for God's people is that of murmuring and unbelief; the danger in the land, when surrounded with blessings, is that of self-sufficiency and self-exaltation. It is into this latter danger that Laodicea has fallen. Possessing all the light of the word of God, and familiar with the spiritual blessings which are the Church's acknowledged portion, she forgets the source of her wealth, and ascribes all to herself. It is *she* who is rich, and increased with goods, and has need of nothing.

In other words, she makes everything of man, and nothing of Christ – save to use His name for her own exaltation. “In Laodicea, all that they professed to have, all that man could estimate the value of, was false and human. I do not mean mere outward riches, but all that could give a larger pretension to wisdom and knowledge and learning,

*This should read rather, “And eye-salve to anoint thine eyes.” The eye-salve must be “bought” of Christ, equally with the gold and white raiment.

perhaps a pretended fuller view of Christianity itself.”

And what, beloved reader, exists to-day as the counterpart of this description? Nay, what is the Laodicea of to-day? It is, in one word, “*rationalism*” – that rationalism which is current under the name of Broad Church theology, and which, daily on the increase, occupies a large place in the Anglican Establishment, and has almost completely flooded whole fields of Dissent. For the teachers of this school bend all their efforts to eradicate the distinctive truths of Christianity; to rehabilitate the first man, notwithstanding he has for ever been judicially set aside in the cross of Christ; and they are never weary of proclaiming that the light of reason, of their own minds, is all-sufficient to guide them, both in deciding what is the word of God, and also in their journey through the mazes of this world. It is their perpetual boast that they are enriched with all the accumulated treasures of the science, philosophy, and civilization of the nineteenth century. Yea, truly, according to their own estimate, they have need of nothing!

But what is the estimate of Christ? He says, “Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” and, more than this, He says that Laodicea does not know that she is in this miserable plight. What a difference between the thoughts of Christ and those of this assembly! She claims superior knowledge; He says she is utterly ignorant. She revels in her fancied wealth and possessions; He says that she does not possess one single thing. Which estimate then are we to accept? Remember, dear reader, in answering this question, that the Lord had surveyed this assembly with eyes that were as a flame of fire, testing and penetrating into the real character of everything that met His gaze. Remember, too, that it is He into whose hands all judgment has been committed. Can you doubt then which is the true verdict? When will souls learn that man as man is wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked? And this assembly, by her vain self-sufficiency, her self-importance fed with pretended light from human sources, had got “off the ground of Christianity, and on to that of the world or natural man;”

and hence her sad and lamentable condition.

Nothing could show out more fully the Lord's tender grace and long-suffering than the counsel He gives to Laodicea under these circumstances. She has turned wholly away from Christ, except in profession; and yet He would fain draw her attention to Himself as her only source of recovery. Let us then look at what He so graciously proffers. There are three things – “Gold tried in the fire” – a well-known symbol of divine righteousness, which in Christ, as has been remarked by another, is never separated from life; “white raiment,” which, as may be seen from chapter 19, sets forth the righteousness of saints, the fruit of the power of the Spirit following upon the possession of, and becoming God's righteousness in Christ; and the “eye-salve,” or unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20), which is the only source of spiritual perception and intelligence. The exhortation “to buy” these things of Christ will be readily understood in the light of other scriptures. (See Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 25:9, 10.) It is simply a figure of grace, buying “without money and without price.”

Concerning the significance of this counsel of the Lord, we cannot forbear from transcribing the following words: “They are the divine gifts and power of Christianity *in contrast* with what man possesses as man, with that of which he can say, ‘Gain *to me*’ – man's conscious possession of that which gives importance and value to man in his own mind What was wholly wanting was what was divine and new in man. ... They are specifically divine things connected with man's rejection and acceptance in Christ alone, to be had only in Christ and from Christ, and nowhere else; not an improvement of man, but what was divine, found in, and obtained from, Christ.”*

Down to the end of verse 18 the Lord addresses the angel of Laodicea. In verse 19, in view of the possibility of individual believers being found in this corrupt assembly, He

*Quoted from J.N. Darby: “Thoughts on The Revelation” – Collected Writings, Vol. 30 (Expository No. 2).

announces a general principle of His dealing with His people, and then, as standing outside, appeals for admittance to anyone who should hear His voice. The principle then is, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent*” (v. 19). That this principle is applicable to those in relationship with Christ (compare Job 5:17,18; Proverbs 3: 11, 12; Amos 3:2; Hebrews 12:5-8, &c.) will scarcely be questioned. It lies indeed at the foundation of God’s governmental ways with His people in this world; and hence the exhortation, “Be zealous therefore, and repent.” The Lord thus warns any of His people, as well as those who were only professors, that His rod was already lifted up, and that, unless there were repentance, He must let it fall for chastening and rebuke. Precisely the same thing is seen in the discipline He exercises at His table. “If,” says the apostle, “we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged;” and again, “When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:31,32). It is therefore out of the tenderness, out of the love of His own heart, that this warning proceeds. He never afflicts willingly; but if His people continued deaf to His entreaties and appeals, He loves them too well to allow them to pass on unrebuked and without chastening.

In the next verse we have, first, the position which the state of Laodicea has compelled Him to assume: “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*” (v. 20). The Church on earth is God’s habitation through the Spirit, and yet we find in this scripture that Christ is constrained by the condition in which it has fallen to be outside. Judgment is not yet executed; He has not yet spued it out of His mouth; but He has taken His place outside. So also we read in the Gospel of Matthew that, immediately on His passing judgment upon the temple and Judaism, in the words, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,” He “went out, and departed from the temple” (Matt. 23:38; 24:1). It is the same with Laodicea; it has become man’s house, not God’s – a testimony therefore, not to Christ, but to man’s own importance and self-sufficiency. In sorrow, and, as we know from the analogous case of the departure of the glory

from the temple (Ezekiel 10, 11), reluctantly, the Lord, unable to bear longer, consistently with what He is, with the moral corruption and perversion of the truth, which had become associated on earth with His Holy name, went forth, and for ever took His place outside of the professing church. And let it not be overlooked that, even though Laodicea may not, so far, be fully developed, the Lord may act in this manner, even now, in respect of individual assemblies. If one of these falls morally into correspondence with Laodicea the Lord could not sanction it by His presence in the midst, for in such a case the saints could no longer be said to be gathered unto His name.

If, however, the Lord has definitively taken His place outside of Laodicea, He has not abandoned any of His own who, failing to discern that the Lord has departed, may still be inside. Hence He says, “Behold. I stand at the door, *and knock.*” Full of long-suffering and grace, He waits upon any who may have been carried away by the seductions around them, lulled to sleep by the atmosphere in which they have been living, and with urgent appeals seeks to arouse them out of their lethargy.

He thus stands at the door, the door closed upon Himself, and knocks, if perchance any true-hearted but slothful saint, like the bride in the Canticles (chap. 5), may respond. Should there be even one such as may hear His voice and open the door, He says, “*I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*” (v.20). The order of the possible response is to be observed. There is first hearing His voice, and then opening the door. Now, the bride heard His voice, but lacked the energy to open the door until it was too late. It is not enough therefore to hear His voice; many believers, found, alas! in evil associations, do this, but remain where they are; and so it might be with saints in Laodicea, unless indeed in His mercy the Lord lays hold of them, as the angels did Lot in Sodom, and compels them to open the door.

The door being opened (“*if any man ... open the door*”), how rich the blessing realized. First, “I will come in to him” – not into Laodicea; its doom is sealed; but in to him, to him

who, by grace, had opened the door. And coming in He will manifest all His grace. "I will sup with him;" that is, 'I will come down to where he is, and have fellowship with him in his things.' How wondrous His condescension! But if He first will sup with him who has opened the door, it is that He may lead him up into the higher blessedness of supping with Himself, of having fellowship with Him in His things, communion with Himself, the most exalted privilege, though intended for every saint, and the most blissful enjoyment that any can possess whether in time or in eternity; for it is the realization of our perfect association and fellowship with Christ.

The promise to the overcomer is of a very different character from that in Philadelphia. It is, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*" (v. 21). Overcoming here would be hearing the voice of Christ, and opening the door to Him; for this involves a judgment of the Laodicean condition, and separation from it morally. Everyone then, thus overcoming, should sit with Christ in His throne. He Himself had overcome (see John 12: 31; 16:33, though this be not all that He overcame), and was set down with His Father in His throne; and, in like manner, the overcomer in Laodicea should sit with Him in His throne. It is promised association with Himself in the public display of glory in the kingdom. Infinite grace surely, and yet a very different character of blessedness from the intimate and heavenly association with Himself, promised to the Philadelphian overcomer. Both alike are the gifts of His grace, but the gifts are manifestly in relation to the path and testimony of each while upon the earth, in the scene of the Lord's rejection.

Finally, as in the three previous communications, the proclamation to him that "*hath an ear*" closes the letter. And this proclamation is still sounded out, with increased energy, among the people of God. Oh that it might both find and create many an opened ear, that, the hearers rousing themselves from their supineness and indifference, may listen to "*what the Spirit saith unto the churches;*" and that, through

grace, they may receive strength to test all they are connected with by the unerring standard of the living Word; so that, taking their place apart from the evil, they may have girded loins and burning lights while awaiting the Lord's return.

From "The Seven Churches," by Edward Dennett (1831-1914). 100 years after E.D. was called home to be with the Lord, we might well ask, 'how much further has the Laodicean state developed?' – Editor.

GODLY SIMPLICITY

IT has been said that "if our hearts were as simple as the word of God, our perception of its truths would be as simple and as easy." It is not so much the question of *our sins* which prevents this simplicity of heart, for the conscience is more readily satisfied as to the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, than it is as to our *sinful state*. When the conscience is brought into the light of God, so much is seen that will not do for His presence; but when we see that there is One there who died and rose again (the One who not only bore our sins, but who brought to an end in the judgment of the cross that evil and hateful state that attached to us as children of Adam), and that this One is our righteousness and life, then our hearts can be simple as to the word of God, for that word enables us to understand how God has made Himself known in, and has wrought through, Jesus in the sphere of man's ruin and misery, and thus our faith and hope are in the blessed God Himself.

The leper's faith apprehended that the Lord's *power* could relieve his misery, and in response to his cry he learned that it was the *will* of God (expressed through the lips of Jesus) to do it. The full light of this has now been witnessed in the cross. No one could doubt that Jesus expressed the *mind and heart of God* when He said to the thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," and equally was it expressed when He said to the leper: "I will, be thou clean." The malefactor's sinful state was brought to an end, not on

his own cross, but on the cross of Jesus, and not a shadow of a doubt could rest on his soul as to the words of the Saviour. In the simplicity of faith he could read in that Saviour and in His words his title to paradise and to the company of Jesus there. How simple this is when our souls are simple. They become simple in the light of what God is, and is for us; for there we see ourselves in the nakedness of our lost condition before Him, only to know that through His grace the best robe (Christ Himself) is our covering.

But if I now pass, so to speak, from the beginning of our wilderness course *to its close*, we may be equally simple. We have seen how simply the faith of the malefactor rested on Jesus in his dying moments. But with most of us there is a longer or a shorter distance traversed between our first look and our last look of faith at Jesus before all ends in sight. But the last look of faith should be as simple as the first, if our hearts are kept in simplicity. The great point for Israel when they came to the Jordan was to have *their eyes fixed on the ark*, as it was borne by the priests to the brink of the overflowing river, or as the priests' feet stood firm on the dry ground in the midst of Jordan. "*When ye see*," said Joshua, "the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, *and go after it*." We see in 2 Corinthians that Paul had really followed the ark into Jordan; his confidence was that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. In Philippians also we see his eye fixed on Christ, not on the overflowing river, so to speak, for a martyr's death lay before him. "To me," said he, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The stones set up by Joshua in Jordan were the memorial that the ark (Christ) had been there in the place of death, and had broken all its power (Josh. 4: 9). It has been said again, as to a saint who died: "Well, it is a simple thing to go to heaven;" and so it is in itself, when the eye is fixed on Jesus, and not on the dark waters of death. We do not look down; we know the stones of memorial have been placed by our Joshua in the river, though we do not see them; but we look up and see Jesus, who has been there,

in the same heaven as that into which the dying martyr Stephen looked.

Now what lies between our first and last look of faith in Jesus while we are here on earth? It might be said, the wilderness journey; that is true in one sense; it is a journey through “a land of drought,” as it is called, “and of the shadow of death,” and as with regard to Israel Jehovah said, “Thou wentest after me” in it, so for us there is the way of the wilderness, but we have what Israel had not, the love of One who gave Himself for us.

“Love that on death’s dark vale
Its sweetest odour spread.”

This love was witnessed to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, when the shadow of death was before the soul of Jesus, and by a simple act of eating bread which *He* broke, and drinking of the cup which *He* put into their hands, the fellowship of His death became to them the constant memorial, when He was absent from them in heaven, of how He had died for them and had left with them, not only the peace which He had made by His death, but the fragrance of an unending love. The fact that He gave them this pledge of love as a memorial of Himself, rather than of His death, showed that though His life was about to be laid down for them, yet that they were to know Him as living in another sphere.

Paul’s words, that as oft as we eat the bread, and drink of the cup, we announce the Lord’s death *until He come*, show us what it is that we have between our first and our last look of faith at Jesus while we are here on earth – it is the constant and ever-recurring memorial of how He has loved us; it is the fellowship of His death, the remembrance of Himself until He come. What a happy simplicity of affection there is in eating the bread and drinking of the cup – the fellowship of His death – and in the enjoyment of His love! May the Lord enable us to be simple-hearted and single-eyed in order that it may be so with us.

T. H. Reynolds

Extracted from “The Believers’s Friend,” Vol. I [1909].

Caught up into Paradise

Luke 23: 39-43; 2 Corinthians 12: 2-4

As you have already heard, our dear brother Bob read these verses from Luke 23 the last time he met with us at The Vale Gospel Hall to remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread. We had sung the hymn:

“Lord, we are Thine, bought by Thy blood,
Once the poor guilty slaves of sin;
But Thou redeemedst us to God,
And mad’st Thy Spirit dwell within.”

I think Bob’s mind went to the repentant thief as an example of a poor, guilty slave of sin who was redeemed to God by the work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross and the shedding of His precious blood. He spoke of the grace of the Lord Jesus, who could stoop so low to rescue such a man at the eleventh hour of his life and say, “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Just within a week Bob himself was in paradise with His Saviour and Lord. He had put his faith in the Lord Jesus when he was a lad but, whether we have borne the heat and burden of the day or come at the eleventh hour, it is true that “whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

The verses in Luke 23 describe a grim scene, in which the Son of God, rejected by the world, was transfixed to a cross between two criminals.

“Three crosses standing side by side,
Of broken law the sign;
For their transgressions two men died,
The Other died for mine.”

Yet the transgressions of one of the two men were transferred to the Lord Jesus, as Isaiah had prophesied, “The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Repentance and faith are needed for us to come into the benefit of this, for the

prophet goes on to say “And He bore the sin of many” – not of all. But light from God flooded into the soul of this man; he repented of his sins – “we indeed justly” – and he turned in faith to Jesus – “Remember me, Lord ...” – and could say:

“In peace let me resign my breath
And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserved eternal death
But Jesus died for me.”

The repentant thief looked on to the coming of the Lord Jesus – and He *will* soon emerge from heaven in power and glory with His saints – but the Lord spoke to him of *today* : “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” We believe that Bob is *already* in paradise, in the presence of his Lord. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone shall keep My word, he shall never see death” (John 8:51). The Lord Jesus has tasted death for us all (Hebrews 2:9) – He tasted it in all its awfulness and bitterness – and has taken its sting away for all who believe in Him, so that the believer does not see death but it becomes a doorway into the presence of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus also said, “He that believes on Me, though he have died, shall live” (John 11:25) – a reference to the “dead in Christ” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) – and “everyone who lives and believes on Me shall never die;” this refers to us who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. At the assembling shout, archangel’s voice and trump of God we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and be ever with and like Him.

Paul also speaks of paradise. He is no doubt referring to his own experience when he writes of a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven, into paradise, and heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed man to utter. People speak of an afterlife as some sort of appendix and of heaven as if it were like a paddock where old horses are turned out to graze, but being with Christ is *the main thing*; the present time is simply a matter of

education, of preparation for the real thing that is ahead for the believer. In His presence is fulness of joy.

And note that Paul does not say, “I know an apostle,” or “I know a famous preacher,” or “I know a great Bible teacher,” but “I know a man in Christ.” This means that the prospect of being in paradise and witnessing wonderful things as being with Christ belongs to every believer, for God sees all who believe in the Lord Jesus as being “in Christ.”

May these things comfort those who mourn and encourage all of us in the hope we have in Christ.

Reconstruction of a word given at the graveside on the burial of Robert Bacon, 30th July, 2014.

THE FIVE SOLAS

“Thou shalt do homage to [the] Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

“For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God’s gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

In Europe, some centuries ago, the most important proclamations were drawn up in Latin. The teaching of the Bible was thus summarised in five points called “the five solae” (the plural of the Latin word meaning ‘alone, only’):

Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone): the Bible, otherwise called “the Scriptures,” is the only authority by which we may ascertain God’s truth. It is the word of God (Colossians 1:25), to be clearly distinguished from the particular traditions of churches, which do not have the same authority as the Holy Scriptures.

Sola Christo (by Christ alone): Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is the only One to have lived a life without sin and He sacrificed Himself that men might be justified before God. Salvation is in Him alone.

Sola gratia (by grace alone): salvation is not the result of our efforts or of our merits, but is obtained through grace alone (Ephesians 2:8). This grace leads the believer to a holy life, a life which honours the Lord.

Sola fide (by faith alone): the grace of God is received by the fact of being accepted. Salvation is granted by means of faith, not through works or by the third-party intermediaries (Acts 16:31).

Sola Deo Gloria (to God alone be the glory): God alone is entitled to our adoration. In no way can it be rendered to a human being, dead or living, neither to an object, nor to a symbol, even a sacred one. God is the only One to whom worship and prayer should be addressed (Revelation 22:9).

Translated from “La Bonne Semence.”

It seems that these ‘solae’ appeared at first individually in Protestant writings of the 16th century and were later assembled as a set. It is a great shame that the significance of the Reformation, and the importance of the Scriptural truths which were then re-asserted, have lately been diluted. Editor.

Fragment

BEHIND everything is the perfect way of our God. The starting-point of that way is the bosom of infinite and eternal love. The end of it is the blissful accomplishment in vessels of mercy of every thought conceived in that bosom. It is a way that leads to holiness and glory – in a word, to conformity to Christ. God intends every trial and sorrow to be a road for us to Christ, so that we may reach **Him** and learn **Him** in some character of His love and power that otherwise our souls had not known.

C.A. Coates (1862-1945)

POETIC PAGES

He's Coming

1. He's coming! He's coming! It may be today
That Jesus will come and call us away
To have part with Him in the glory above
Forever to know the warmth of His love.
2. He's coming! He's coming; e'en those that are sleeping
Shall rise from their graves for that glorious meeting
And risen and living together shall rise
With bodies of glory meet Him in the skies.
3. He's coming! He's coming! His own to receive,
All who in faith do in Jesus believe;
All pain, sorrow, weakness, along with their fears,
Will for ever be gone when Jesus appears!
4. He's coming! He's coming! To rapture His bride,
The pearl He has purchased to be at His side,
Adorned by the Spirit as His counterpart
In adoring affection to fill His own heart.
5. Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, we are waiting for Thee,
Our Saviour who suffered on Calvary's Tree;
Thy rights, once denied Thee, we gladly now own
For Thou, Lord, art worthy to sit on the throne.
6. How precious the love of the One on the throne!
Most blessed Lord Jesus, Thy greatness we own.
Unique are Thy glories which fill heaven's sphere;
We worship Thee now as those brought so near.

Grahame Smith
Spring 2009

Confidence

IN Thee I trust, on Thee I rest,
O Saviour dear, Redeemer blest!
No earthly friend, no brother knows
My weariness, my wants, my woes.
 On Thee I call,
 Who knowest all.
O Saviour dear, Redeemer blest,
In Thee I trust, on Thee I rest.

Thy power, Thy love, Thy faithfulness,
With lip and life I long to bless.
Thy faithfulness shall be my tower,
My sun Thy love, my shield Thy power.
 In darkest night,
 In fiercest fight.
With lip and life I long to bless
Thy power, Thy love, Thy faithfulness.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Errata

Regrettably, there were several mistakes in issue 91 of this magazine; in all cases they resulted from errors in the optical recognition of scanned documents not being spotted.

Page 7: in the 12th line of text “shah” should read “shalt.”

Page 8: “Stonn” in line 8 should be “storm.”

Page 9: “troth” in line 2 should be “truth.”

Page 27: for “Jernbbaal” in the 1st line substitute “Jerubbaal.”

I apologise for these mistakes, which have been corrected in the on-line version.

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.