

Editor's Note: This sermon and the first one on Rahab by Wells (“The Faith of Rahab the Harlot”) are historically important. They had a profound and lasting effect on Wells personally and professionally. There is also a theological importance. God in His grace blessed James Wells with great insight, allowing him to enter into the real meat of the Gospel. Others, like John Foreman (and all the rest of those who should have supported him) had a mixed diet. In physical practice Wells ate little or no meat but in doctrinal truth he was as a lion feasting on the meat of the word of God. As a servant devoted to his Lords people, he used every opportunity to feed the sheep. Thirdly they are profoundly practical. God is Sovereign! This is the message of the Bible from beginning to end. Wells strength came from practical day to day worship to, trust in and obedience to God as a Sovereign God.

It is a sad fact the virtually all of Wells ministerial brothers, (apart from his own congregation), those closest to him in belief and practice, attacked him as a bitter enemy over these sermons. It's no surprise that those who openly or in secret deny the sovereignty of God should do so. It is however shameful in the extreme that the others did. It is my firm belief that they did this for at least three reasons: one, the time they lived in (Victorian England), two, selfish jealousy (personal ambition) and thirdly partial unbelief in the Sovereignty of God. In case the reader gets the wrong impression, the purpose here is not to find fault with those who turned against James Wells in this matter. We all have feet of clay, we all (James Wells and myself included) stumble and partially fall. (The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble he will not fall for the Lord upholds him with his hand Psalm 37:23, 24 NIV). The purpose is to benefit from these sermons historically, practically and doctrinally. In order to accomplish this some of the facts need to be shared so that modern reader has some context.

In regard to this second sermon (the defense) I have presented four things in this document. First James Wells defense. Second, what a godly righteous man who disagreed with Wells said. Thirdly what two of his closest opponents said. Fourthly, some additional information that I feel is helpful for our instruction. I would ask the reader to answer three distinct questions. First did James Wells error in what he said with regard to Rahab being sinless in her actions? That is one question. Suppose that, in spite of all the evidence presented here, the reader says “Yes I believe he was wrong in what he said”. If this is the case then, the second thing I would ask is: Were those who opposed Wells justified with regard to the manner in which they opposed him? I mean in the language they used and things they said. Lastly: Did those who opposed him demonstrate from the scriptures conclusively that their position is the correct one? In fact, what scriptural support is there for saying that Rahab sinned? In order to help the reader with these questions I have appended additional material to this document in appendixes 2 and 3.

As is my common practice I have changed the text to edit as much of the old English words as possible. In addition, for these sermons, I have added emphasis and notes to help the reader gain as much as possible from this sermon. Ideally, both sermons should be read together or as near to as is possible
- Richard Schadle

Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit

THE FAITH OF RAHAB DEFENDED

THE DEFENSE

Delivered On

Lord's Day Morning November 12th 1865,

By Mister JAMES WELLS

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSELY STREET

WALWORTH ROAD

LONDON

G. J. Stevenson, 54 Paternoster Row

Price Two pence

Volume 7 Numbers 364 and 365

**With Additional Appendix's Containing Documentation from the
Period with notes etc.**

By

Richard C. Schadle revised edition 10/2019

Contents

PREFACE	3
THE FAITH OF RAHAB DEFENDED	4
APPENDIX 1	21
REAHAB'S MOTIVES AND ACTIONS CONSIDEEED	22
ON LYING.....	26
APPENDIX 2	34
MISTER JAMES WELLS AND THE PRESENT POSITION OF OUR STRICT BAPTIST CHURCHES.	34
More on the breach over the Rahab sermons by Charles Walter Banks.....	37
LETTER FROM MR. FOREMAN TO MR. WELLS	39
A Review of "The Faith of Rahab the Harlot" by J. C. Philpot M.A. of Stamford Lincolnshire.....	45
The Defense, delivered on Lord's day Morning, November 12, 1865". Reviewed by J. C. Philpot	75
APPENDIX 3	80
Additional material related to the Rahab sermons	80
Another contemporary source on lying.....	80
James Wells stance four months after the defense was published.	80
Some thoughts on the fifth of the Ten commandments and how this relates to the Rahab controversy.....	84

PREFACE

How far this defense may satisfy the minds of impartial judges, I know not; nor have I the least hope of ever conciliating, nor do I seek to conciliate determined persecutors; they will no doubt manufacture out of this defense materials for more reviling and reproach, but be it so; as I expect it I am prepared for it: but of some I hope better things, believing that like the men that followed Absalom against David, that they have done it in their simplicity, urged on by the hue and cry of others. These, now that I have made my meaning somewhat clear, will at least see that it is a question which we may without ill-will agree to differ upon. Many have been very angry with those who have written, not so much in favor of my sentiment, as to contend simply for justice between man and man. The editor of the Earthen Vessel and Gospel Guide has suffered much for

so doing; and yet I believe, I give it as my opinion, that he has been these last twenty years, by his labors made of great use. His works are read by sea and land, in England, and in many parts of the civilized world. May he long be spared to be a blessing to others.

I will here just state, I was not until Wednesday, November 1st, 1865, aware that any one had ever written a word upon the faith of Rahab at all in accordance with my own view; yet, as the Lord sent his disciples two and two, I felt I should like a fellow helper; and after I had made up my mind to make my defense, I had arranged and decided upon the course I would take in that defense, and should have delivered it on the first Sunday in November, but that being our ordinance day, I postponed it until the second Sunday in November. When I returned from chapel on Wednesday evening I found, to my almost unbounded delight, sent me from an unknown person, the two articles appended to this defense. The sentiments upon *liars* and lying, and his views of Rahab's faith greatly charmed me. These articles I never saw nor heard of before; they are taken from the *Gospel Magazine* of 1801. That magazine was patronized, if not commenced, by the great Toplady. I feel deeply indebted to my unknown friend, and who has since kindly made me a present of six Volumes of the *Gospel Magazine*, but I find no answer in them to the well-written articles upon Rahab. These articles relieved me from much that I should have brought into my defense. I am thankful I did not see these pieces before, I am thankful they did not come later, I am thankful I saw them at all.

I cannot close this short preface without acknowledging the manliness, the independence, and Christian feeling of those ministers (the *sincere*, I mean) who were with us at the opening services of the New Surrey Tabernacle. Thanks to the Lord, who sent Mr. Drawbridge (of Wellingborough), and Mr. Corbitt (of Norwich), so well to supply the pulpit on the occasion.

The people of the Surrey Tabernacle well knew I meant well, and so have not been moved by the treatment to which their minister has been subjected. Deacons, Church, and people, though all held up to public ridicule and contempt, and that by professed Christian ministers, yet have stood unmoved. The conduct of these ministers has been reprobated by many of their own hearers, who shrewdly guess the chief moving cause. But I hope those of their hearers will forget it all, and that the Lord may overrule it all for good. So, prays

JAMES WELLS.

November 14, 1865.

THE FAITH OF RAHAB DEFENDED

“Whosoever shall be with thee in the house his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.” Joshua 2, 10

ON Lord's day morning, June the 18th, I was led to preach a sermon on those words in the 11th of the Hebrews, “By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that believed not.” That sermon, as all my Sunday morning sermons are, was published; and in it there were some expressions at which very great offence has been taken in certain quarters, and most tremendous charges, founded upon those expressions, are brought against me as a minister; and not only so, but those who were

first in misunderstanding my words and sentiments have engaged magazines and periodicals of all grades and shades to bear down upon me, and, if possible, make the public think that I am such a pestilent sort of fellow that I ought to be hanged out of the way. Hence, we have high doctrine, low doctrine, no doctrine, any doctrine magazines, all uniting to proclaim and denounce the supposed errors contained in that sermon. And there are, which I may just name, some reasons why I have resolved to come forward this morning to explain these all-important matters; not with the slightest idea of conciliating my persecutors, for I believe their minds are made up, and the chief *animus*¹ which has moved them is open and patent to all. One friendly minister writing to me said, "These are the waters of jealousy that have been accumulating for years." Another minister writes to me, and says, "How is it that these men that profess to be forgiven ten thousand talents, supposing you have committed an error, not in heart, but in judgment, a doctrinal error, how is it that these men that profess to be forgiven ten thousand talents, cannot forgive you one hundred pence?" Dr. Kitto gives a note upon that parable, and he says that the ten thousand talents are nearly two million pounds, and that the one hundred pence are little more than three pounds. Well, then, for the sake of round numbers we will say, here is a man professing to have received forgiveness for two million pounds, and his fellow-servant owes him one hundred (Roman) pence; that is three pounds; and this man, who is thus so generously forgiven, this wicked servant, takes his fellow-servant by the throat, casts him into prison, and does him all the mischief he can. And this minister wants to know how such can reconcile such conduct with their profession. Now with regard to this sermon there are three or four things (for my introduction must necessarily be rather long, in order to clear my way), there are three or four things I wish to impress upon your minds as my reasons for thus referring to it this morning. First, because I used expressions in that sermon, as you will presently see, which are undoubtedly capable of a meaning which I never intended; that is one reason why I have come forward to explain the same. The second is, that there are many friends, thousands, I may say, about the country that hardly know what I mean; they cannot gather what I do mean from those expressions; and, therefore, for their sakes also, I thus come forward to give an explanation Thirdly, there is a class of people about the country, and it is very likely there are some here this morning that may, after all I have said, differ from me, yet desire nevertheless to judge righteous judgment as in the sight of God. These, then, are the reasons, not forgetting, of course, that the cause of God, the good of that cause, is one of the main reasons why I have thus come forward to explain myself this morning.

Now there are here three or four things that I wish to impress upon your minds. The first is that when I preached that sermon I had not the slightest idea that anything contained in it would be disputed or disapproved of by ministers professing to preach the same doctrines that I do. I expected that that sermon, like most of my sermons, would meet with opposition from those that differed from me; but I had not the slightest idea when I preached that sermon that any exception would be taken to it by any of my ministerial brethren. Had I had the slightest idea that such would be the case, certainly I should have been more guarded in my expressions. And the next thing that I wish to impress upon your minds is, that at that time I was very busy, what with committee meetings, deacons' meetings, weddings, funerals, preaching, one thing and the other, so busy that I scarcely had any time to revise that sermon. I went through it, or rather I just looked over it in a cursory sort of way, and did not then give it a thought that there was anything in it that would

¹ According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary "*animus*" is a noun meaning a usually prejudiced and often spiteful or malevolent ill will and a basic attitude or governing spirit. He could not have chosen a better word in this instance.

subject me to what I have been subjected to, a few specimens of which I will presently give you. And our reporter, of whom I cannot speak too highly, is so accurate that he by his accuracy has got me into that sort of careless plan. he reports my sermons so accurately, that I hardly ever have any trouble; and our printer is so good a printer; and it sometimes happens, when I am prevented by being absent in the country from attending to it myself, that one of our deacons kindly revises the sermon for me. I think the *Gospel Guide* states that I did not revise this sermon; but that is not the fact; I did just run through some of the pages; and it so happened that there were two words left out in one part of the sermon, which my opponents have not failed to take very great advantage of. Therefore, I hope and trust you do desire, whether you differ from me or not; to judge righteous judgment, knowing that you yourselves, and all of us, must one day be judged by that righteous Judge who will judge righteously and with authority. If I have said a word unguardedly, I will, like a man and a Christian, confess it; if I have done wrong, I will repent and confess it. I have no principles to renounce this morning; I have no deviation to make from the sentiments I have held; I have simply to explain my meaning, the meaning I intended to convey by the words I used. Why, the words flew off from my tongue like sparks from the flame. I was that morning happy, and at home, and so were the people, and I had not the slightest idea of having done any mischief. And as to our own people, I may just drop one word in relation to them. My own congregation has been from the press and from the pulpit insulted, and some have hardly escaped personal insult. Now I will ask this assembly, for I am charged with preaching lies, teaching lies; and I may here just give you one sample. Last lord's day evening one of our friends went to hear a minister, without expecting to hear anything but the gospel; and that minister, I will just give here one sample of what he said, not all that he said, but a sample; the words were taken down. This minister mentioned my name in public, and he mentioned the name of the author of this libel, for a libel it is. This minister has since been in private, and did not conceal that the name he mentioned in public was the author of this libel. Now before I read two or three words as a sample, I would just appeal to you as reasonable men. If I were to stand in this pulpit, and tell the people that they could tell lies as much as they like; that they could swear, and cheat, and do just what they like, it would be all well at the last; is it reasonable to suppose that the one thousand five hundred people to whom that sermon was first preached, or that the two thousand people that attend this place would sit and hear such awful blasphemy, that they would sit and hear such demoniacal sentiments as that? My conscience tells me, my practice tells me, my feelings tell me, my congregation know it, that there is not a man under the canopy of heaven that stands farther from such ungodly doctrines than James Wells, which I hope to prove before I get to the end of my defense this morning. Last Lord's day evening, then, a gentleman from his pulpit, said, "There is a Baptist minister preaching a new doctrine, Mr. Wells, who says that we may blaspheme and swear, if it is in our interest, and it will be all well at the last." He gave the author of this libel; I will not now mention the minister's name, nor the author of this libel; suffice it to say that there is another man who has written libelously; a personal attack against me is also a libel. But if it be any gratification to the gentlemen who have issued these libels, I will say that I shall not appeal unto Caesar if they will in future speak as they ought to speak. Differ from me where they may, denounce my doctrines as much as they may; but they must, if they please, let me alone, or else I shall be under the obligation of making them do so. But I will pass by all that is past, I will forgive them all that is past, and trust to them for the future; so that if they will in the future only behave themselves as they ought to behave, then I will give them all the liberty to differ from me that I claim to differ from them.

Now you observe, then, that I anticipated no opposition from my brethren to that sermon; secondly, that I did not, strictly speaking, revise it, but merely ran through it as I have mentioned. Then the third thing I wish to impress upon your minds is, that I heard not a word about this sermon in a way of complaint, either by word or by letter, until nine weeks and five days alter the sermon was preached. When I came home on Friday evening, the 25th of August, from my week night lecture at Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn, only then for the first time I took up a letter, and heard that I had committed these awful crimes. This was nine weeks and five days afterwards. How was it that Rahab was allowed to have such a long sleep? There she slumbered quietly, undisturbed for nine weeks and five days. That I wish you to take notice of. And the fourth thing I wish you to take notice of is, that not one soul, from high doctrine to low doctrine, has ever once either written or come to me privately to know what I meant by that sermon. I should have thought that if I had erred my seniors would have come to me privately and have asked what I meant. I will tell you how I think I should have treated a brother. I think if a brother of any standing were publishing his sermons every Sunday or every week, and had committed errors like that, that is, if I thought he had, I think I should have gone to him and said, "Here are some expressions that I do not understand; will you in your next Sunday morning sermon kindly explain what you mean? because, as it now stands it makes a bad impression, and I am afraid if I continue my public association with you I shall be looked upon as sanctioning doctrines that are ungodly." I think I should have done so; and if the minister the next Sunday morning had given a satisfactory explanation, I think there the matter might have ended. But I have not been so treated. No, such a course as this would have stopped their proceedings; and would have disappointed them of their prey. Now bearing in mind, then, that I did not anticipate any opposition; that I revised that sermon in a great hurry; that I heard nothing of it for nine weeks and five days, and eleven weeks have rolled over since that, and that my opponents never came to me privately to give me the least opportunity whatever of explaining it; you must therefore, be sure that I feel this morning, as the apostle Paul felt before Agrippa, exceedingly happy that I have an opportunity of speaking to an impartial assembly. I have no doubt some of you differ from me; yet I think, before I get to the end of my discourse, you will feel convinced that it is a difference that ought to be allowed, without rancor, malice, or hatred.

And yet these circumstances have in them their little episodes. There are, as you are aware, a number of ministers, sixteen at first, some few since, that have drawn up and signed a protest against James Wells' doctrine, and of course against him; but, happily, I do not hold the doctrines that they set to my account. These ministers are called "London Pastors." Now I have four curiosities. And one curiosity is, that one of these "London Pastors" has not a church to preach to, or congregation, either in London or in the country; he has not a soul to speak to as a minister; and yet his name is circulated in all the high and low magazines as a "London Pastor." That's a curiosity. The second curiosity is, that a very loving opponent assures me that he loves me; and he prints a letter, publishes a tract against me, and assures me in the first page of this tract that he would not allow either friend or foe to see that sermon upon the faith of Rahab, so awful is it. Now this man says that he has "secreted the sermon from friend and foe." Walker says, or else the other dictionary I referred to, I hardly know which now, says, that a thing secreted is a thing studiously concealed. So, our friend, he has studiously concealed this sermon from friend and foe, yet publishes a tract upon it to all the world, price one penny! So that whether our friend has ever lived in Ireland, or whether he is a native of the Emerald Isle, I know not; but this mode of concealing things by universally revealing them we must pass off, I suppose, as a kind of western idiosyncrasy, and leave that little bit of curiosity as to this man and his tract. The third curiosity is, that one of

the protestors, who cordially agreed with all the denunciations levelled at me at a certain meeting, and signed the document against me, writes a private letter to me, tells me how he loves me, and hopes I will not make light of these gentlemen; and he hopes I shall read all their writings that they have published against me; so that we will let that pass off as another curiosity. Another curiosity is, that there is one of the protestors that just before our chapel was opened, a bill was up at his chapel door announcing it, and he ordered it to be taken down, to show that he was on no one's side. Secondly, that same protestor came here, and spent the whole day with us at the opening of this chapel, to show that he was on our side. Thirdly, he had a good dinner and tea for nothing, to show he was on *his own side*. And fourthly, he went and signed the document, to show that he was on their side. Well now, who can find fault with a four-sided character? Why, the new Jerusalem has only four sides; and this man, that is first on no one's side; then on our side; then, by a good dinner and tea, on his own side; then, by a protest, on their side: why, this four sided man is a very cherubim with four faces, "the brightest of the train, and strengthens all the rest."

Now the next thing I have to notice (for I have not come to my subject yet, you must stretch your patience out this morning) is, that a certain magazine accuses me of misquoting the editor of that magazine. And my quotation was this; I said, "There is a man who holds that the damnation of a sinner is the will of God's nature; but that the salvation of a sinner is the nature of God's will." I spoke from memory, I admit, and I am charged with misquoting and misrepresenting this man; and he asks this question, "Can Mr. Wells give us chapter and verse?" Yes, I can; for on the 8th page of his tract, "On the Sovereignty of God," he shows that God's sovereignty discloses the *nature of his will*. And that, in the same tract, he shows that salvation flows from the nature of God's will. And then on the 15th page, where he charges the godly Rutherford with destroying the foundation of all *good morals*, on this same page he said that, having *naturally* willed to punish, he cannot deny himself; and the ultimate punishment of sin is damnation, naturally willed. What is this but the will of his nature? And thus, this antithetical, see-saw, Dr. Johnsonian style of a writer teaches us, that the damnation of a soul is the will of God's nature, but that salvation is the nature of his will. So that, if I understand this divine aright, God cannot help damning the soul; he is bound by the will of his nature to damn to endless woe the soul.

Now I have for eleven weeks endured, from pulpits in the country, from pulpits in London, from the press, from magazines, all sorts of abuse; one minister (see Herald, November 1865, page 160) said, *they may use their low lived slang as they will*. Well, I am not aware that any low lived, or high lived, or long lived, or short lived slang has been used at all; and if it refer to any who have written in our favor, and anything has been said by such that might be turned into a reflection upon the personal and moral character of any one, I should be sorry for it; but I cannot think anything of the kind has been intended. Let us endeavor to judge righteous judgment.

Many coarse and vulgar sayings have been attributed to me; sayings which I have never uttered or thought of uttering. What said a respected matron lady some time ago, a lady who had heard me nearly thirty years. This mother in Israel said, "Mr. Wells has often offended my pride, but never my delicacy." And this testimony my own hearers know to be true. I have never brought a blush upon the cheek of modesty. **Vulgarity, with all my heart I despise, knowing that to be vulgar is neither brave, polite, or wise. I serve the Lord earnestly and cheerfully, and people attribute sayings to me which they would like me to use, "that they may have matter**

wherewith to reproach me,” Nehemiah 6, 13. And I would ask, is it any credit to an editor to admit into his magazine the following: *“Vulgarity, the sheer Billingsgate style, he could be a Boanerges without aping the blackguard”*? Is this Christian? is this just? You shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, but this commandment they do not merely suspend, but trample it under their feet; and while they falsely charge me with advocating lies, they themselves are willfully and maliciously practicing lies. First, then, I have shown that this sermon was preached without the least thought of opposition; second, I have shown that I slightly revised it; third, I have shown that I heard nothing of it for nine weeks; fourth, that my opponents gave me no opportunity of explanation.

And I will mention now three more things they have not done. I have watched their writings since I made up my mind to give this defense. **They have not told me what the moral law is;** and therefore, their precise idea, or what they mean by the moral law, they have not told me. Secondly, **they have not told me whether they distinguish between the law and the lawgiver, between the moral law of God and the moral perfections of God.** Thirdly, they have not told me what precise meaning they attach to the word “suspend,” which I have used, and shall use. If they had defined what they meant by these terms, it would have made my task this morning much easier. You have all heard, as I am about to enter upon the essentials of my defense, I will just name that circumstance to put you on your guard, I mean in relation to the meaning, you have all heard or read the story given in a work called “Philosophical Nuts².” This writer creates a kind of fable to illustrate the danger of misunderstanding each other. He represents an old Roman, a modern Italian, and an Englishman meeting. Their conversation turned upon virtue, and the old Roman said there was very little virtue in the world now; the Italian thought “there' never was so much; the Englishman thought he must go between the two; but they came to such high words that they quarreled and parted. When these three met again, the old subject came up, and one said to the others, “Gentlemen, before we go further with this dispute, had we not better understand what we mean by the word virtue?” “Mean?” said the old Roman, “I mean bravery in war.” “Oh,” said the Italian, “I meant perfection in the fine arts.” “Nonsense,” said the Englishman, “I meant moral rectitude.” “Oh well then, if that’s it, we will quarrel no more.” And so how many disputes arise from a want of understanding the definite meaning of words.

Well now, in the first place, before I enter upon these parts I may just observe that my opponents seem to hold this idea; and the Lord is witness **I will not if I know it misrepresent one;** I am independent; I stand upon the Lord’s mercy to me, I have no other standing, justice at their hands I do not expect, only there may be some exceptions among them; mercy I do not need; my conscience I will not give up for any man. And I am sure you, as Englishmen and as Christians, deem your liberty of conscience one of the sweetest privileges of your existence. Why, bind the conscience! you bind the soul, you bind the man, and the man ceases to be a man as soon as ever he lays his conscience at the feet of any man or class of men. They charge me with representing God as suspending his holiness, and his justice, and his moral perfections; why, I must be an idiot, a madman, and a fool, all combined in one, to suppose the great God could suspend his holiness, or his justice, or his integrity, or any of his moral perfections. He is immutable, unchangeable, unalterable. I never dreamt of such a foolish notion as that. My opponents have looked pretty sharply after me, and they have found out six faults in my sermon, and I have found out one more,

² Philosophical Nuts by Edward Johnson Esq. Various editions.

that's seven, so that you see how kind I have been to them; they strangely overlooked one, which I saw. I will now name the faults, and give my answer to them.

First, that I hold that a good lie is better than a bad truth. Now I did not explain in that sermon what I meant; I meant that under certain circumstances, lawful evasions, for that is the term I shall apply this morning; I will observe that there are evasions which may be lawfully used; and that I would rather use lawful evasions to save a friend, than I would ignorantly, like the fool, utter all my mind and betray my friend. But unhappily I put this, my meaning, into unguarded language. I there said, that telling a truth that would injure the people of God, would be worse than telling a lie that would not injure them. If I had said what I should have said, and I suppose you will allow me to repent, you will allow me the privilege of repenting, I repent that I used the unguarded language. I did not know we should be so looked after; I did not know that I was of so much importance; I did not know that half a dozen sentences from an unpretending individual like myself would open the mouth of a volcano, whose elements had been for some time restlessly seeking an outlet. I did not know that a few sparks from my tongue, would set so many *hypers* on fire; I was not aware they were such dry trees as to be so easily set on fire; some of them are dry enough in all conscience, but they now turn out to be more dry than I thought they were; and therefore, in future, I will be careful how I play with fire, lest I set them on fire again, and burn them to death. Now it was held a maxim in the heathen world that "a good lie is better than a bad truth;" but I do in the sight of the great God this morning declare to you that I stand infinitely removed from any such sentiment. I do not believe in a good lie. **A lie means that which is a wicked contrivance, something that has in it all the elements of wickedness, that makes it criminal; and therefore, a good lie, a sinless lie, is an utter impossibility in the very nature of it.** So, then I do not hold that a good lie is better than a bad truth; God forbid I should; **that is, not in the sense** that many impute it to me; and in future I shall use not that language to express that part of my meaning. Let this suffice then.

Second, if I were placed in analogous circumstances to Rahab, and had the same divine authority, I would tell ten thousand such falsehoods as she told. Mind, I at the same time maintain that those falsehoods were literally untrue, but morally true. But I will use another word. **My object this morning is for you to get at my meaning.** I now put it in this form. Well now, some of you that do not see with me, put yourselves into my place just for a minute. I believe that Rahab's words were lawful evasions. Now mind that, keep that in view, that is what I meant then, I regret I did not express it more clearly that her words were lawful evasions, that God sanctioned those evasions, and I shall presently give you my reasons for believing that he inspired those evasions. With, that impression, mind, with that impression, that those evasions were right, that those evasions were sinless, that those evasions had divine sanction, mind that, with that impression, I said that if I were placed in analogous circumstances, and had the same divine authority, I would use, for the sake of saving the lives of the spies, (and I shall presently show what good she did to the king's messengers by those evasions, as well as the spies that were placed in that position), I would, rather than betray my trust use ten thousand such evasions. Now that is my meaning. Now do you think, if that were your meaning, if that were your view and meaning, do you think it would be right for persons to stand up in a crowded place and publicly proclaim, and for persons to write books, and from the press to say that that Wells stood up and said that he would commit ten thousand sins, for that's what ten thousand lies would be: I say, would you feel you were judged righteously when your conscience told you that you meant nothing of the kind? Therefore, when I

said I would tell ten thousand, **my meaning was, and my meaning is, holding her words to be not lies at all in the criminal sense, but only evasions; that I would, if I were so placed, and had the same divine authority, use ten thousand evasions rather than betray my trust.** I ask this assembly is there anything wicked in that? is there anything sinful in that? is there anything unscriptural in that? Now as a matter of fairness I will put myself in the position of my opponents. You believe that her words were positive and criminal lies; you believe that her words arose from the fear of man, and that they were, in the proper and criminal sense of the word, lies; you believe that. Now, sir, if I believed that, I could no more stand up and say that I would tell one lie than I could fly in mid heaven. I stand in my pulpit and believe that Rahab's words were actual, criminal lies, and for me to stand here and say that I would tell ten thousand lies! I should expect the sword of divine judgment to cut me down there and then. I should think it the sign of a seared conscience; I should think it the sign of a godless creature; I should think it the sign of a graceless man. Now, then, judge righteous judgment; put yourself into my place, take my view, and you arrive at my conclusion. If I put myself into your place, and believe that they were criminal lies, then I dare not follow them, I dare not imitate them; but if I believe that they were not only lawful evasions, but exceedingly useful ones, as we shall presently show, there cannot be any harm in following what is good. And if I have erred, I have erred not in heart, but only in judgment; and we ought, in these things, to make great allowance. *Veritas in puteo.* "Truth lies deep," and we are short-sighted creatures; do not let us be judging each other for mere difference of opinion, and willfully misunderstand each other. I wonder, having to do with such infinite mysteries as the mysteries of the Bible are, that we do not err more than we do. Therefore, if one does in our estimation err, let us go to work; we will kindly use scripture weapons, and see if we can bring him right. So that we must, therefore, be charitable in this matter; we must make, I say, great allowance. **I do not hold, then, that a good lie is better than a bad truth; but I do hold that a lawful evasion is better than betraying a man's life, and that I would, if I had divine authority, as I in my conscience believe Rahab had, I would use ten thousand lawful evasions rather than betray my trust.**

Also, God cannot lie. (they say) That I imply that God can lie. Well, I do not think there is a man under the heavens that stands farther from such a sentiment than myself. But I do not believe that the impossibility of God's lying, of God telling a lie, I do not believe that the impossibility of his so doing lies exclusively in the perfection of his nature, as if he had no will in the matter. For instance, suppose there were a man so constituted that he could not lie if he were to try; you would not give him much credit for not doing that which he could not do if he would. Now the reasons why our God cannot lie, to my mind, are these. First, because of the perfection of his nature; second, because of the purity of his mind; third, because of the integrity of his will; fourth, because of the infinity of his knowledge. I take the Lord altogether, and I believe that the great God would cease to exist as soon as he could lie. But you will not deny him a will in the matter; if it be said he cannot lie, it is also said he will not lie. "Once have I sworn that I will not lie unto David." So that I do not hold the doctrine that attributes the impossibility merely to the perfection of God's nature, and denies him that integrity of his will that gives him the honor of being truthful: I say, that gives him the honor of being truthful.

"He swore but once, the deed was done;
Settled by the great Three in One,"

We may trust him at all times and in all places; not from the mere necessity of his nature, but in connection with that, from the integrity of his will. I hurl back in the teeth of my opponents the accusations thus brought against me of charging a holy God with sin and with folly.

Another saying to which they object is, "You hypocrites, get your piety ready, I am going to shock it." This is what they object to. Well now, either my opponents are hypocrites or they are not. If they are, then the sooner their piety is shocked, and they throw the mask off and appear in their real character the better; if they are not, what do they object to? I said hypocrites; I did not say those that differed from me. Therefore, I will leave that; if any of their consciences are uneasy upon that score, I must leave it.

The next objection is the favors I have done the Lord's people, and would again. That is, say they, he has told lies for them, and would again, to screen them. Very well, I will make this matter as clear as possible. My meaning is this, there are some cases of church discipline that we cannot deal with privately, but of necessity they must be brought before the church, and dealt with by the voice of the church; but there are some cases that can be dealt with privately. I have done so in some cases, and would do so again; and I will now name two or three cases, and then glance at the word of God, and see whether I am right or wrong. I do not mean that I told lies. A case occurred some years ago in a certain church, I shall not say where the case occurred, and I was going into the country to preach with a certain minister, my senior. Between the services we walked over the common together, and I thought within myself, I wonder what his views are of this case. I stated the case to him; I said, "How do you think we ought to deal with it?" "Well," he said, "you and the deacons visit the parties, and if you find that there is that regret and repentance the word of God calls for, by all means keep it entirely to yourselves, and if after a time anyone should say, 'Did you know so and so?' you and the deacons will be prepared to say, 'Yes, we knew it, and dealt with it accordingly.'" "Now," he said, "the parties are married, the wrong was before the marriage; the parties are married, hardly anybody knows it, very few; they are very happy together; by bringing a case like that into public it may blast the happiness of these two young people for life." That being the case, I thought the wiser way was, and this minister confirmed me in, or rather advised me to it, was to see them in private, which we did. The deacons were satisfied, and so was I, and the names have not transpired to this day, nor shall they while I have breath in my body. Now I ask whether that is wrong? I ask whether there is anything in that degrading? And I draw a line of distinction between reproofing a man and reproaching a man; we should seek to reprove, but never seek to revile or reproach. I will now mention another supposed case. I knew a case in a church where the deacons felt in their consciences they could not do otherwise than recommend that that man should be separated from the church; but as a knowledge, in his occupation in the world, of what the wrong was would have injured him and his family, and as there were circumstances extenuating; as a knowledge of what the wrong was in his occupation in the world would have been of injury, the deacons of that said church hoped that the church would not require any definition of what the wrong was; if they would kindly take his name from the book so as not to injure the man in the world. That is the way we dealt with that case; the consequence was the man kept his occupation, and that is now a great many, many years ago; the man has walked in God's ways ever since. Do you think that is wrong? I think not. I will take another case. Here is a young man, a Christian, a working young man; he is overtaken with drink, the snare, unhappily, of thousands upon thousands. This young man, he was not what we should call conspicuously intoxicated, but he had certainly appeared as he ought not to appear. The deacons of the said church

visited him. He had always been a sober young man, a steady young man, and we found that by his companions he was at Christmas time drawn in; took more than he ought to take. The young man was broken hearted, distressed, and grieved about it. Now if those deacons had brought the case before the church, that young man would have been thrust back again among his old companions, for everybody knowing him, he would have been ashamed to appear in the house of God. Seeing that the young man was a sober young man, that it was an isolated case, those deacons and that minister kept the matter to themselves. The young man consequently kept to the house of God, escaped a repetition of the same fault, and stands to this day an honorable member. I ask this assembly whether there is anything wicked, sinful, or unscriptural in that? That is what I mean by having done the people of God favors; and if not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward, nor shall these favors. But let me come to the Scripture; what says the Scripture? "Thou hast covered all our sins." "Love covers a multitude of sins." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, and he that has showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy, and mercy rejoices against judgment." And is there no truth in the saying of the poet, is there no propriety in the language of one of our poets, when he says,

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
And hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me? "

Then the next is, that my doctrines are detrimental to the morals of the country. Certainly, they would be, if they were what my enemies say they are; I grant it most readily; but let us see first what my doctrines are. This pretension to improve morality, this pretension to a concern for the morality of the country, would have, under other circumstances, some little weight with me; but as it is now, it savors so powerfully of the 65th of Isaiah, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." "The temple of the Lord are we; the temple of the Lord are we." I must not tell you what the Lord says of such. I go to the New Testament, and I find the Pharisees of that day raising the same cry, charging the disciples with breaking the sabbath; and the Savior said, "If ye knew what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not condemn the guiltless." My conscience is clear as a sunbeam; and if men will not take the trouble to understand me, that's not my fault. Why, there are some that have been the loudest in condemning me confess that they have not read my sermon, only some extracts! When my sermon was read by my opponents, what did they do? Did they try to get the best meaning from it that could be got? **Did they go all through the sermon, and look at the general drift of the sermon, and let the general drift of the sermon throw a light upon, and be a corrective to, any ambiguous expressions?** No. How does the infidel read the Bible? Why, a part here, a part there, gets up some contradictions, as he thinks, instead of taking the whole drift; hence he concludes the Bible is a book of lies, and he despises it. And so, my opponents, they have treated my sermon just as the infidel treats the Bible.

Now we come to the last point upon this part, and that is the suspension of the moral law. I shall define presently what I mean by the subservience or suspension of the moral law. I do not mean in reality the setting aside one part or tittle thereof, every part and tittle is fulfilled by the life and death of the Savior and in his people, in and by that which he has constituted them. I hold (believe) that the Lord does sometimes suspend one law to make way for another law, and that that law

which he puts into the place of the suspended law would be sinful without divine sanction; and that divine sanction makes that right which, without his sanction, would be wrong. Now let me prove it. I will take, in the first place, consanguineous³ marriages. In the first family there must necessarily be marriage between brother and sister. God could have created two Adams and two Eves, and have avoided that, but he did not avoid it. Now then, while this law of consanguineous marriages was reigning, was not the law of ex-sanguineous⁴ marriages suspended for the time? When people multiplied upon the earth, distant relations came into being; then this law of consanguineous marriage very properly died out, and the law of ex-sanguineous marriage took its place. Is there any sin in saying this? It is true a minister told me, in the country, he believed that those brothers and sisters in the first family were sinful in what they did. Well, you are welcome to your opinion. Now I say, did not that law of consanguineous marriages reign by the ordination and arrangement of the great God? Presently that law ceases, and very properly the law of ex-sanguineous marriages came into operation. Secondly; though my strongest case is the Israelites borrowing jewels of the Egyptians, to which I will refer presently; I come to polygamy. Polygamy was permitted by the Lord, and while this polygamic law was reigning, was not the monogamic law of marriage suspended? I cannot understand it otherwise. Solomon must have been a most tremendous sinner, if polygamy had not in some shape or form the sanction of the Most High. So that during the reign of this polygamic law, that is, the law of many wives, the law of monogamic marriages, that is, the marriage of one woman, was suspended; but happily, that polygamic law has died out; and, for the good of society, the monogamic law reigns, and will reign down to the end of time. That is what I mean by suspending one law and bringing another law into its place. Then again, for Abraham to have offered up Isaac without divine sanction would have been murder; but having God's authority he did right. For Jael to slay Sisera would have been one of the most treacherous murders upon record; but having divine sanction, divine authority, she did right; and is spoken of and praised as being blessed above women. I know your answer here; your answer will be, Yes; but all men have forfeited their lives to God. True; I will come to that presently; but if you have forfeited your life to God, that does not authorize me to take it. If I have, as we all have, forfeited my life to God, that does not authorize you to come and take it; no, I have not forfeited my life to you, nor you to me; therefore, you have no right to take my life, nor I to take yours. But if God sent this woman to minister his judgment, here is the usual law between man and man suspended, and she has divine authority and power, and is required to slay this man. This is how I mean the suspending of one law while another reigns. Passing by a great many things that I could mention, but will not, I come to the Israelites borrowing jewels of the Egyptians. Now I want you to watch me here. Though I know people draw a line of distinction between the ceremonial law and what they call the moral law, I hold that all the laws of God are moral; I hold that he never gave any but moral laws yet, and never will. Now then, the Israelites borrowed jewels of the Egyptians. How do you get over that? Learned men have tried to make the Hebrew word, translated "borrow"⁵, say something else, but they can't do it. Others have said, Well, it was a kind

³ The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "consanguineous" as "of the same blood or origin specifically: descended from the same ancestor" One could say 'blood relatives'

⁴ The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "sanguineous" as "Blooded" Ex-sanguineous is therefore in this context then is marriages other than between blood relatives

⁵ 5337 נָצַל [natsal /naw-tsal/] v. A primitive root; TWOT 1404; GK 5911; 213 occurrences; AV translates as "deliver" 179 times, "recover" five times, "rid" three times, "escape" twice, "rescue" twice, "spoil" twice, "at all" twice, "take out" twice, and translated miscellaneous 16 times. 1 to snatch away, deliver, rescue, save, strip, **plunder**. 1A (Niphal). 1A1 to tear oneself away, deliver oneself. 1A2 to be torn out or away, be delivered. 1B (Piel). 1B1 to strip off, spoil. 1B2 to deliver. 1C (Hiphil). 1C1 to take away, snatch away. 1C2 to rescue, recover. 1C3 to deliver

of remuneration for their services. But stop, stop; the Israelites were not servants to the people of Egypt; they were servants to the government of Egypt, and therefore had no right, on that ground, to borrow jewels of the Egyptians. Now I am going to show that the usual law of honesty, or dealing between man and man, was on that occasion suspended, to the good of the Israelite, and to the good of the Egyptians. What, say you, are you going to tell us that the Egyptian, parting with his jewels, profited by it? Yes, and I will prove it in a way that you shall not be able to dispute, after I have just observed that those Egyptians, like all of us, what they possessed was not their own; all they possessed was lent to them by Providence; God lent those jewels to them for a time. Second, that those Egyptians, as well as the Israelites had forfeited their lives to God. Now if God chose, therefore, to hand over what he had lent to them to some others, he could do so justly. Let me make it plain. I will suppose a nobleman that has two servants, A and B; that to A this nobleman has lent jewels of silver and of gold. In process of time A thinks that, as he has had these jewels so long, they are his own. Presently this nobleman authorizes B, his other servant, to go and borrow those jewels of A. A supposes that B is going out for three days' holiday, and that he, A, at the end of those three days, will have his jewels back again. The jewels are not brought back again. A goes to the nobleman, and says, "My lord, B has not brought the jewels back." What would the nobleman say? "Remember, they are not your jewels; they are mine, and it is lawful for me to do what I will with mine own. B cannot bring them back again." "Why not, my lord?" "Why, because I ordered him to borrow them, and to keep them, and not to part with them until I tell him; I have put them into his keeping; so that he has got them by my authority; he can bring them back again only by my authority." Now is there any injustice here? No, say you, none at all. Very well; just so with the Lord. We have not done yet; nevertheless, I will show you how this nobleman benefited both parties; and that the Lord by that transaction was not only not unrighteous, but was righteous and benevolent, and benefited both parties. Presently the nobleman saith to this A, "You know what crime you have committed, that you have forfeited your life; you know what crime B has committed, he has forfeited his life; you have both forfeited your lives; now, I could put you both to death justly, but I have spared you; I will not put A to death, nor will I put B to death; and further, I will not only spare you, but I will do something else." A despotic government is overthrown, Pharaoh and his host drowned in the Red Sea; the despotic government is gone. Now this nobleman saith to A, to the Egyptian, "You lent these jewels readily you have forfeited your life, which I have spared; now I will tell you what I will do with you; I will put you into another part of my premises and service, where you shall have more liberty than you ever had, and where you shall soon recover double the worth of the jewels." Now what would A say after a time? He would say, "How glad I am that I lent my jewels so readily; for it so pleased my lord that he has spared my life, put me into a better position, and I have more liberty than ever." And I believe that those Egyptians that lent their jewels had, after Pharaoh and his host were drowned, more liberty; and that they were better circumstanced, and recovered the worth of the jewels, and more too. I gather this from the analogy of Scripture, that not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. Thus the Egyptian was benefited; no wrong was done to A, because the jewels belonged to the lord; no wrong was done to B, because he had no claim upon the jewels; their lives were spared; B, the Israelite, was out of his slavery; and A, the Egyptian, had increase of liberty; and both were benefited by the transaction. Now what do you think of that? Well, say you, there is beyond all

(from enemies or troubles or death). 1C4 to deliver from sin and guilt. 1D (Hophal) to be plucked out. 1E (Hithpael) to strip oneself.

dispute there a suspension of the usual law of dealing between man and man, and another law put into the place thereof; namely, the prerogative of the nobleman that could thus order his servants and the things belonging to him. Now how do you get over that? James Wells is the man that charges God with being unjust, is he? James Wells is the man that charges God with mixing himself up with sin and lying? Never, never did a conclave of divines, and many have, as we see in their history, made great mistakes, make a greater mistake than this.

How much, by my opponents, has been made of the one expression, *a moral law suspended!* What, then, do I mean? I mean nothing more than what they themselves, only in other words, contend for; namely, that there may be, and are, *lawful* deviations from the letter of the law, but no infringement of the spirit of that law. Some, for instance, have contended for the lawfulness of ministers travelling on Sunday to preach the gospel⁶. I give no opinion here of my own, one way

⁶ I am certain, to my own satisfaction, that Wells had in mind the following example to illustrate his point. "On Sunday Travelling" by John Foreman Earthen Vessel Sep 1st 1864 page 247

"The moment I read your letter, the words struck on my mind with great power, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days?" Mark 3:4, Luke 5:9. Our Lord's meaning in those words is, that it is lawful, in opposition to the notions of the Scribes and Pharisees. Now preaching the Gospel of the grace of God is doing good, and therefore it is lawful to use the necessary means to get to the places where doors are opened for the preaching of the Gospel. However wicked Sunday traffic with the motive of getting money thereby, your availing your-self of those means with the motive of preaching the Gospel, is lawful; your motive does not justify them, nor does their motive condemn you.

If Sunday travelling to preach the Gospel was sinfully disallowable, and for that reason to be abandoned, there are very many places that would not have the Gospel at all, and many would have to stand silent, who now, through travelling by such means as they can obtain, preach the word of life with much godly profit to many little twos and threes of God's ransomed family. And be it remembered that the Lord we serve in the Gospel is Lord even of the Sabbath day.

The above will suffice to show you my opinion, and perhaps to relieve your mind.

And as I am in great haste to get about other work, my hands being full, I must beg you to excuse me from saying more.

Dear friend, yours in the grace of Christ Jesus, J. Foreman.
Paddington green, N., July 25, 1864."

We have additional information on this from the Earthen Vessel Oct 2, 1865 page 313 This is an excerpt From the account of the opening of the New Surrey Tabernacle:

Mr. James Wells said they were happy in seeing such a number of ministers there. He was glad he had not been asked to speak that evening as the meeting had been almost too much for him: had he not witnessed what he then saw he could never have believed that by the simple in-strumentality of honestly and decidedly preaching the Gospel, they could have arrived at what they had. Respecting the " Rahab" sermon, he began to think at one time, they should not have many at the communion service on the following evening from other churches; but happily he found great numbers clearly understood his meaning, and that meaning was right; and until they could convince him from the Bible that he was wrong, he would not give up one sentence in that sermon. James, the Lord's brother, says, that "Rahab sent the messengers out another way;" but if she had said they were there, they certainly would have been slain. She saved their lives by thus concealing them, and used lawful evasion, not criminal falsehood; and the Holy Ghost declares that she was justified. **He would just mention that one minister who stands strongly against him, some time since gave an opinion on Sunday travelling; that note was in The**

or the other, upon Sunday travelling; but supposing it lawful thus to travel by railway on Sunday, then is here not a suspension of the letter of the law? while, in the estimation of some here is no infringement of the spirit of the law, like the priests profaning the sabbath, and thus deviate from or suspend, in that case, the letter of the law. And so there are forms of speech which deviate from the letter, but not from the spirit of truth. Now the spirit of the law is holy, just, good, truthful, and demands love to God and our neighbors; and I know of no circumstance under which these can be, with divine sanction, suspended. I must, as I have said, be an idiot to dream of such a thing. Hence the priests in the temple profaned the sabbath; yet what they did was in the spirit of holiness, justice, goodness, truthfulness, and love to God and man, and so did not infringe the spirit of the law, and were therefore, blameless. **And so, it is my deliberate and conscientious conviction that Rahab did not, while she deviated from the letter of truth, deviate either from the spirit of the law, or from the spirit of the gospel.** God saved the spies, and prevented crime by that very part of her conduct which **arrogant men** undertake to condemn, and thus make themselves wiser, holier, and better than God⁷. What Rahab did was holy, just, good, and in spirit truthful, and in love to God and to his people; or the righteous God would not have honored it as he did. I can never believe that God honors evil: he permits and overrules it; but **not one word is found against Rahab's evasions, except among uninspired men who, like their fathers of old, were very much holier than Jesus Christ**, who is the image of God. But he was not holy enough for moral-law men, so they got rid of him, making sure they were in so doing rendering to God a great service.

Now, then, distinctly understand that I do not mean that holiness, or goodness, or justice, or truth in the spirit thereof can be suspended; but I do hold that the letter of the law has been suspended, or deviated from, or whatever term you prefer using; and if I were called upon to make ten thousand such deviations as God sanctions, I should sin in not doing it, as Rahab would have done if she had betrayed the spies.

My opponents (immaculate infallibles) seem blest, or rather curst with the leprous and maddening mantle of old John Calvin, who burnt a man alive because he did not see as he did. So much for the spirit of hyperism; they are quite welcome to such Calvinism for me.

Earthen Vessel. and it justified Sunday travelling if the motive was good. Now he wanted to know where the difference lay? Is not the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, a moral commandment? And there is no Scripture that justifies Sunday travelling; but James Wells has a scripture to tell him that Rahab was justified.

⁷ One example of a man taking the stand of condemning Rahab in this way is Spurgeon. His stance is shown in a sermon he preached on July 21st, 1872. The sermon is titled "Rahab" and it is number 1061. He has much to say to commend her as he must! How could he not in light of what the New Testament teaches. However, all that is negated when we come to the third heading on his sermon. This is titled "RAHAB'S FAITH WAS MARRED WITH **GROSS WEAKNESS**" He opens this section in these words: "She lied to the men who came to the door to seize the spies. She said that two strangers had come to her, but she did not know from where they came, which was a lie; and she did not know where they were gone, and they had departed some time ago, and they had better be pursued, this was another lie, and **is altogether inexcusable**. But at the same time, **please remember that she did not know it was wrong to lie.**" In spite of all his efforts to exonerate her he goes on to say: "**I do not need to say a word of apology for the falsehood, far from it; it is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong; altogether wrong!**" (my emphasis) Compare this to Wells remarks above: "What Rahab did was holy, just, good, and in spirit truthful, and in love to God and to his people"

Nor have I made this defense for the sake of these my persecutors; but for the people at large, who happily are much better capable of judging for themselves than the self-styled London pastors are of judging for them.

I now come to Rahab, and I hold that Rahab uttered those words in what I call irony (“*Irony*” says Walker’s ‘Dictionary,’ is a mode of speech wherein the meaning is contrary to the words”); and that she used lawful evasions. I am going to show, sir, at least in my opinion, that she did not utter the words out of the fear of man, but in defiance of man. What man had she to fear? Oh, you say, if the king had known the spies were there. Well, what of that? He made no threatening to her. And one of the first oracles of my opponents says that he thinks the house of Rahab was a place of refreshment; and there could not be any harm if she were to have said, “There are a couple of men here, my customers.” Others say that it was a lodging-house. “Well, we have a couple of lodgers.” Now, she would say to herself, “If I say these men are here, the king will be very pleased; I shall be honored, and get great reward for giving up these men into the hands of the king. If, on the other hand, I say they are not here, use an irony, “Oh, I do not know where they are; they are gone off,” meaning they have not, though. Do my opponents mean to say, with all their pretension to be so shocked, do they even mean to say that they never during their life; when the lion’s skin is not long enough, tie the fox’s tail on? I think they do; not that Rahab did here. What did Rahab do by these evasions. Some say, “Oh, she betrayed her country.” I deny that in toto; the country betrayed itself by its infinite and infamous wickedness, sir. Read the 20th chapter of Leviticus, and see the revolting crimes there recorded; and we have God’s authority for it, that the nation committed those revolting crimes; a chapter never intended to be read in public. Therefore, I hold that Rahab did not betray the country; that the country was already betrayed by its infamous and infinite wickedness. Bring me a scripture if you can that for a moment sanctions the idea of Rahab betraying her country. It is sin that betrays us all, it is the greatest betrayer in existence, and it betrayed that nation, brought it into the ruin that is recorded.

One who has written a tract against me does not seem very well, seems to be uncomfortable. You say, “What is the matter?” “Oh,” he says, “Rahab deceived the king’s messengers.” What a crime! He seems quite to whine and pine over the fact that Rahab deceived the king’s messengers. And a great mercy for them that she did deceive them; I will prove it, sir; I will prove it beyond dispute. If those messengers, the king of Jericho’s messengers, could have got at the spies, and murdered those spies, those two men, sir, as murderers of two of God’s people, would, in addition to all their other sins, have had that murder to answer for at the judgment seat of God, and would have had a greater damnation by slaying the spies than they will now have. I therefore, hold that Rahab did the king’s messengers a favor: she prevented them from committing murder, and being damned with a greater damnation; and however much some of you may denounce my sister Rahab, why, even those very messengers that were prevented from committing murder will to all eternity have reason to be thankful that they were delivered; seeing they were by that act prevented from committing a murder which would have amounted in magnitude to all their other crimes put together. **I, therefore, in the presence of this assembly, in the presence of all England, in the presence of the civilized world, give it as my opinion that Rahab did not utter the words from the fear of man; but I hold that she uttered those words in the same spirit shown by Moses when he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.** So, she said, “I will hide the spies; if I am caught the Lord can protect me, but betray them I will not.” Secondly, I hold that what she said she said by faith, believing in God she felt she should say it. Now we are told that “whatsoever

is not of faith is sin," and, of course, whatsoever is of faith is not sin; and it was by faith that she said what she did, and consequently there was no sin. She was converted before the men came; she knew God was with them. Thus, then, she did it by faith; and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin; whatsoever is of faith is not sin." Thirdly, I hold that she used the words in love to God, and in love to the spies; yes, she would not betray them. This brings to my mind a thought I ought to have expressed just now about doing the Lord's people a favor. Ministers, true ministers, are called "fathers." Where is there a father that would needlessly expose every little fault in his family to the whole world? The father that would do so is not worthy of the name. And the minister that would go about and find out the supposed faults of the people to expose them, that man ought to be denounced, he has no paternity in him. Rahab, then, out of love to God, love to the spies, love to the truth, said what she did; she felt that love that she could not do otherwise.

But now we come closer to the point; she did it to perfect her faith, she used these evasions to perfect her faith. Now, then, just understand and realize the scene for a moment, if you can. She did not hide the spies until the king's messengers came. You read this 2nd chapter of Joshua; you will find that she brought the spies up to the roof, a flat roof, where there were some stalks of flax, and hid them there; and while the king's messengers were at the door, she got the spies up there. I suppose you would think that they would creep under like mice and lay down. They did not lie down; they were not lying down when she went up, and you would not have lain down either, if you had been there. What do you think the spies did? What I should do. Here are the king's messengers; is Rahab's faith real? Is her fidelity firm? Is she a sterling character? Will the Holy Spirit of God inspire her with those evasions that shall save our lives? Oh, how delighted the spies were when, listening over the parapet, everything seemed still. She is faithful; she has done them; she has deluded them, she has sent them off, and a woman is just the one for it, better than a man, sent them off. See, the fools, how they are running see how they are running, going off in pursuit. Depend upon it, Rahab had a good hearty laugh at the last. What did the spies do, sir? Did the spies reprove her? I ask this assembly, Did not the spies readily enter into a solemn covenant with Rahab? And that covenant stood good; she was faithful to the last, and was saved. People with all the gravity imaginable, even the learned editor of the Standard, assures me, with, all the seriousness, with all the gravity, and I have had letters to assure me of it, that the Lord could have saved the spies without Rahab using those evasions. What a piece of information! Most astonishing, sir.! You must look for the minister of the Surrey Tabernacle now to be very clever in future. What a piece of information! what child five years old does not see that, that God had a thousand ways by which he could save the spies without Rahab? Sir, that is a mere shuffle, that is an evasion if you like. We have not to do with what God can do, we have to do with what he does do. Now I contend that God could not save the spies in any other way? Why? Because if God had made up his mind they should be saved in that way, then he could not save them in any other way without changing his mind, and that he never does. I ask this assembly, where would be the propriety of that woman sending the spies on to the roof of the house for concealment, and then go to the door and betray them to their enemies? Why, it would have been a piece of foolery. Rahab was not a fool; no, she was taught of God in this matter. Well, now, as the spies are hid, I must continue to conceal them; for me to hide them thus by sending them up to the roof, and now betray them, why, it is a piece of foolery. I come into your house, and you say, "I will hide you; you go up into that room." I go, listen at the door; somebody comes; "Is So-and-so here?" "Yes, he is." Why, you might as well have saved me the trouble of going up stairs, then, a piece of foolery. Now, sir, I take my stand upon this ground, deny it who may; I ask, Were the spies saved by her

evasions, or were they not? Were the king's messengers prevented by her evasions from committing murder, or were they not? They were. Now I ask my opponents what they will do? As the spies were saved by Rahab's evasions, and God himself was their Savior, if my opponents still stick to it that Rahab was a liar, then it is my opponents, and not James Wells, that make the great God accessory to lies, that make the great God one with lies, that make the great God one with falsehood. There stands the fact, they were saved by her evasions, and if you hold that they are lies, then the great God himself sanctioned the lies by saving the spies by those lies; the great God approved the lies, and the great God has not, from Joshua down to the end of the Revelation, said one word against her. I hold therefore, they were lawful evasions. I shudder, I tremble, I should sink, I could not endure the thought of associating a holy God with anything unholy, a truthful God with anything untruthful. You must, therefore, as the spies were saved by Rahab's evasions, you must either admit they were lawful evasions, and so clear God from being accessory to lies, or else you must make the great God to consociate with lies, choose ye which you will do.

I am not done yet done! I have hardly begun. Sir, there is another consideration that strengthens very much this my position. Now just mark me; there are four scriptures that show their entire approval of this part of her conduct, which I have said, do say, and will say, till I am convinced to the contrary, was the best part of her conduct. That is her words which sapient⁸ divines condemn her for, but by which working words her faith was made perfect; her words, as it were, shut the door of the ark, sprinkled the blood on the posts and lintel. She broke the earthen pitcher of the mere letter, but her true meaning brilliantly shone out, and put the messengers of the alien to flight. There are four scriptures that lay great emphasis upon her evasions in bidding the spies. 6th chapter of Joshua, and 17th verse, "She shall live, she, and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that were sent." That is one instalment of the reward; no reproach, you see. Now go to the 25th verse of the same chapter; "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and," mark the words, "she dwells in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." She was not, then, turned out as a liar: first, she has her life; secondly, she has a dwelling in Israel, because she hid the spies. And the apostle Paul said, "She received them in peace;" but what peace would there be if she betrayed them? James says, "She sent them out another way;" but she could not have sent them out at all if she had betrayed them. Now, then, you editors and divines, when you write again, meet me as I meet you, with fair argument, and with the word of God. You are calling me a blackguard, and an abominable character, and a liar, and a fool, and a teacher of blasphemy. **None of these words prove anything except the wickedness of your hearts.** Lay all guile, malice, and evil speaking aside, and meet me with holy words, free from wrath, for "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

I will mention two more things, and then, as your time is so far gone, the remaining part of the charge that is brought against me, about the atonement, I can answer in the course of my ministry, a sermon another time, because Rahab is the great question. We are come this morning to see Rahab; we are come this morning to hear about Rahab; we are come this morning to do as the Lord did, justify Rahab. Now what does my text say? Let us read it. First, she has her life as a reward for her evasion; secondly, she dwelt in Israel as a reward for her evasion; now, one more; latter part of the 19th verse of the second chapter of Joshua; "Whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him." What, did the Lord put all that honor

⁸ Similar word area: discerning, insightful, perceptive, prudent, sagacious, sage and wise

upon that lying woman? Oh, you ministers, why do you let men grope on in the dark? Why have you not explained all these mysteries to us long ago? then the minister of the Surrey Tabernacle would not have made these terrible mistakes which say he has made. Yes, “whosoever shall be with thee in the house.” What, Lord, if I get my father here, and my mother here, and my sisters here, and my brothers here, and my neighbors? Going to get as many as I can Lord. Yes, “Whosoever shall be with thee in the house,” get them in if you can; save, as the minister does instrumentally; get as many to Christ as he can. “Whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.” This is Rahab.

Before I advance my last point, and I have not advanced one half this morning of what I could; lest I should forget it I make this remark, that it appears to me that our ministers have set a very pretty example to their flocks; for if their hearers should become as sharp upon them for some of their odd expressions as they have upon me, and if their hearers should misrepresent them in some of their out of the way expressions as they have served me, then the hearer may turn round upon the minister and say, “You set us the example; you cut a minister up root and branch for a few sayings, and who should we follow but our minister?” Therefore, these hearers may plead the example of their ministers, and they must take the consequences. Let us come to Rahab again. Now do not forget that her evasions were essential to the concealment of the spies, and God cannot sanction wicked evasions. Yet he honored these evasions; how then could they be sinful? Rahab told these spies which way to go for safety, the mountain to which they were to go, and how long they were to stop in order to escape. I ask in all solemnity, as a dying man, how was Rahab to know that? Who but the spirit of the eternal God led her? **It was given her in that same hour what evasions to use, and what directions to give.** What did the men do? They went the way she told them; they went to the said mountain; they stopped the three days; the pursuers were defeated, Satan was overcome, the men escaped, came safe to the camp of Israel. And what was the ultimate end? Rahab comes off finally victorious. Here are nearly three weeks from the time the spies have left the house to the time the city is taken. You know not what she had to encounter during that three weeks, but she was faithful to the last. Thus, then, I hold that Rahab is ranked among the real people of God; and there is everything to prove that her evasions were lawful, useful to man, glorifying to God.

I received a long letter last night, of course opposed to my views; and yet the gentleman very quietly and innocently says, “I can’t conceive how Rahab could act in any other way.”

APPENDIX 1⁹

NOTE. The following Two Articles from the “GOSPEL MAGAZINE” of 1801, which I never saw before November the 1st, speak the very feelings and sentiments of my heart, and to me they appear worthy to be written in letters of gold. J. W.

⁹ This appendix is part of the original Defense.

RAHAB'S MOTIVES AND ACTIONS CONSIDERED

To the Editor of the Gospel Magazine. March, 1801.

Sir, Having seen in your repository two queries proposed, under the signature of H., I beg permission to offer a few words concerning them, as I have always considered Rahab the harlot, a peculiar monument of divine mercy and grace; and have always conceived her works to be holy, just, and good.

Far be it from me to attempt the vindication of the least appearance of evil, either in a spiritual, or moral point of view. I hope the Lord will always give me grace to rule my tongue, that it may be a wholesome one, and a tree of life; and that I may be an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

All I shall attempt in reference to these queries, is to make a distinction between appearances and truth, to distinguish between a real lie, and that which may appear to unthinking persons to be one in form: for our Lord exhorts us not to judge according to the appearance, but to judge righteous judgment.

It is a mistaken notion some persons have entertained, that whatever words are contrary to matter of fact must of necessity be a lie; if this is the case, what must become of the various forms of speech that constitute, and are to be ranked among, the principal ornaments of elegant literature? metaphors, figures, and similes, together with irony, and hyperbole, &c, with which the Scriptures so much abound, must all be immolated (*i.e. to kill as a sacrificial victim*) at the shrine of ignorance, because the words in their appearance and form, are for the most part contrary to matter of fact.

That the Scriptures abound with these you need not be informed, as perhaps, the keenest irony that ever was used was in the mouth of the prophet Elijah, while he was confounding the priests and votaries of Baal. "Cry aloud for he is a god;" which words were not a lie, though the form of them was contrary to matter of fact, for he was no god; likewise, the book of Job, and other places, furnish us with many descriptions of creatures, heightened by way of hyperbole beyond the truth; yet what person has ever presumed to charge them with falsehood? Our Lord also himself, in instituting the sacramental supper, declares concerning the bread, "this is my body," whereas it was not his body, but a figure by which he chose to represent the same.

I mention these things, to show, that words, in their appearance and form, are not sufficient of themselves alone to constitute a lie.

I may also observe, that, as in many instances, there may be words, which in their appearance and form wear an aspect of falsehood and yet are the truth, and the truth as it is in Jesus; so, on the other hand, there may be words which appear to be true, and which also will stand the test of grammatical criticism in this respect, and yet after all, contain an infamous falsehood: such was the conduct of Abraham in denying his wife, who said she was his sister; which, critically investigated, was the truth; yet by it he deceived the king, and brought great distress upon his own

mind, as well as great affliction upon the people, among whom he had taken his temporary residence.

This distinction, between truth and appearance, is not merely confined to words, but is also applicable to ideas; and it is incumbent on us to consider this distinction, in order that we may not confound or blend together in one mass those lies which are so decidedly reprobated in the Scriptures, and those innocent deceptions and prevarications which are perfectly consistent with the faith and practice of God's elect; for there are, in many instances, ideas communicated which no person can deny to be the truth, and yet proceed from wicked, lying, and hypocritical motives; and on the other hand, there may be deceptions and prevarications that appear to be lies, and yet proceed from honest, upright, and blessed intentions, both in the estimation of God and man.

I observe farther, that neither words, nor actions, in themselves abstractedly considered, have any sinfulness in them. This proposition, I presume, it is unnecessary for me to substantiate, as it does not originate with me; it is a truism well digested and approved by the learned, and by the learned of God's people; as I find it seasonably adduced to support the truth of God by the learned and judicious Toplady, in vindicating the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, against the enemies of truth.

It appears, therefore, that it is the intention that constitutes the guilt of any words or actions. It is so in reason, it is so in the Scriptures, and it is also so defined in the laws of our country. As, when a prisoner is tried for an offence, if it can be made out that there was no evil intention, the prosecution falls to the ground: and on the other hand, truth itself may be a libel, when it is uttered merely from wicked, malicious, and scandalizing motives, and not to answer any good end or purpose.

Having laid down these few preliminary observations, I will now proceed to direct a few words to the queries themselves.

The first of these, "**What were those works of Rahab the harlot, which the apostle James so much admires?**" requires little ingenuity to answer. The apostle himself expresses them generally, and refers us to the original account for the particulars, as he evidently does in the case of Abraham, "See thou how faith wrought with his works?" as if he had said, Peruse the whole story, and mark how his faith and his works wrought together. As the account of Rahab is too long to be repeated here, her works may be comprised in the following particulars: Her receiving the messengers, and hiding them, eluding the inquiries concerning them; and sending them away with suitable instructions to secure their safety. These were her works, and they were good works; for a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; for a tree is known by its fruit. And as her faith was of the operation of the spirit of God, so her works also were the immediate fruit of divine grace; and instead of being imputed for iniquity, are counted for righteousness in the Scriptures; not to justify her person before the majesty of heaven, but to justify her faith among his people, and to testify that her works were wrought in God.

Concerning her faith, it was impressed upon her heart by the Holy Spirit, that the God of Israel was the only living and true God, Almighty to save, as well as to destroy. That this blessed Jehovah had a people whom he had formed for his praise; and for whom, he had inestimable blessings to

communicate, both in this world, and that which is to come; consequently, her heart was detached from the world that lies in wickedness, and attached and riveted to God and his people. Such was certainly not of the world; but being chosen out of the world, the Lord and his people were her only choice and delight; and O that I was one of them! was the fervent desire and prayer of her heart. Also, the state and condition she was in, was deeply impressed upon her heart. The land of the Ammorites was devoted to destruction, and she herself exposed to the same divine vengeance. Anticipating these things, no doubt her heart was lifted up in prayer, that she might find grace in the sight of God and his people. And this represents the case of every poor convinced sinner, and every chosen vessel of mercy. They are all by nature children of wrath even as others; but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved them, even when they were dead in sin, has quickened them (as he did this poor woman) to a sense of their danger, and a strong desire to escape the wrath which is to come.

And here we may pause, and admire the inconceivable riches and sovereignty of divine mercy. What! Shall but one in Jericho be divinely impressed, and shall it be Rahab the harlot? shall it be a notorious sinner, the offence of whose guilt should be riveted to her name? Rahab the harlot! Shall she be made a monument of discriminating mercy and grace? O the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.

Concerning her works. I know the common gloss of theologians and commentators, who stumble at the grace of God in this instance, and conclude by observing “that it is no rule for us.” Thus, they leave the matter where they found it, or rather worse; having by their injudicious observations made divine revelation vulnerable to the attack of infidels, a stumbling-block to sceptics, and a riddle of confusion to the people of God. Indeed, it would have been much better if our commentators had passed over in silence many other passages of Scripture, rather than injure the cause they meant to defend; surely if it was no rule for us, why did it ever appear among those things which the apostle declares were written for our learning?

But it is important for us to answer the question before us with unequivocal firmness; and to second that vindication of her works, which the apostle so much admires. **And I observe, that those works which were approved of God, and which were produced by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, could not be sinful, in any way whatever; let them be measured by any rule or standard, that ever God has given, or revealed to man, Therefore it is an irreverent speech (to make the best of it) to call it an infamous lie; for it appears in what she did, she was no liar, nor wicked prevaricator in God’s account, nor in the judgment of his holy apostles.**

In the first place, here were two men of God received, and hid, whose secrecy did no person any harm; if the delivering them up would have saved the city, or done it any good in its embarrassed situation, the case would have been somewhat different; but the city was devoted to destruction, and its ruin was inevitable. But it was not by means of these messengers that it was taken; it was not by their report which part was most vulnerable, or which would be the best method to surround and storm it. No, it was the Lord, and his mighty power alone by which it was taken; and its overthrow was inevitable; and this Rahab the harlot knew, as is evident from the covenant made with these men, that her life should be spared, upon condition that she uttered not their business; from which it appears, that if she had uttered it, the place would have suffered exactly the same, only she would have had no more hope for herself, and her family, than for the rest of the city.

Taking this critical view of the case, I am persuaded her work was good, because it saved her own life, as well as the lives of these two men of God, while no person in the world sustained the least injury by it; but on the contrary, if she had uttered their business, what would have been the consequence? these two men would have lost their lives; she herself would have had no hope; and seven-fold vengeance from God and his people, would have aggravated their calamity, and heightened the scene of their destruction.

Secondly, eluding the inquiries concerning them. After what has been stated, it might appear unnecessary to say anything on this point. It was proper she should defeat the inquiries, and keep the men deceived that made them, especially as so much good depended on it. And this part of her conduct was perfectly on a piece with the rest, for it would have been of no use for her to have concealed them with her hands unless also she had concealed them with her words and her behavior; and this prevarication (*i.e. lie*) (if it must be so called) was perfectly consistent with the heavenly principles of truth and grace: but more of this hereafter. **With respect to these two men of God, also, there must have been much deception and prevarication in their conduct.** I think I can see them as soon as they were appointed to this dangerous undertaking, seeking the Lord by prayer, and committing themselves to his divine protection and care; and when they entered the city of Jericho they could not show themselves as they were, nor when they entered the house of Rahab (which perhaps might be a house for refreshment) could they tell their business at the first. There must have been some prevarication (*i.e. lies*), and a variety of investigation, before they could safely commit themselves to her truthfulness; but having found her heart attached to God and his people, they could then safely commit themselves to her care and follow her advice.

I mention these things to prove that some deceptions and prevarications are perfectly consistent with the way of righteousness; which I shall amply show in many instances.

Thirdly, her sending them away with suitable instructions to secure their safety. It seems it was not sufficient to satisfy her mind to send them safely out of the town, but she must also be concerned for their safe arrival among their own people. How strong and powerful is divine love! and how sure an evidence in every age of the church of being interested in divine blessings. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It is a query whether the giving up these men would have saved the city, whether she would have done it, as the lives of these two men of God were of more value in her appreciation than the lives of ten thousand of the ungodly. How superior also is divine love to carnal affection and amorous attachments. All her old lovers with whom she had taken so much carnal delight might all perish in Jericho, without so much as one intercession in their behalf; while these two men of God whom she had never seen before she would risk her own life to accelerate their deliverance. The people of God in our day can account for this in their own experience, when they have accidentally come into company with a child of God (whom they have never seen before) and have felt an attachment commence that cannot be described, and far superior to the carnal ties of love and friendship.

And now remained two things for the exercise of faith and hope. She had a promise to depend upon that she should escape, but till the danger was past there was work enough for her faith in the use of those means to which she was directed; in bringing her family into the house, her aged father and mother, who perhaps had many a sorrowful hour on account of the wickedness of their

daughter, whose fears were about to be turned into joy. Oh, you parents who have many a groan on account of the wickedness of your children, yet give them not up for lost. Who can tell but the Lord has yet a blessing for them, and also a blessing for you in them, as was the case in this instance. She had also to bind the scarlet cord in the window as a token that the sword of the Lord was to pass this house, as in Egypt. But why should this cord be scarlet? was it a chance, or was it to represent some sacred thing? was it a type of the cord that bound the Prince of Life, or to represent the scourge that ploughed his sacred side? Whether it was to represent this or not, certain it is that by his stripes she was healed, and these messengers of grace also escaped the fury of those that sought their lives by the blood of the Lamb.

She had also an object for hope, when the danger was past of being joined to the people of God; where she was to learn more of his blessed ways than she could possibly conceive; which actually came to pass in her experience; for the Scripture concludes her story with these words, "And she dwelleth in Israel unto this day," and she is now before the throne, singing the praises of redeeming grace and dying love, and shall be so for evermore.

I conclude this part by observing, that so far from this affair being tinged with sin and depravity, that it appears that the Holy Spirit was the first moving cause and the last end of the whole transaction. It was his blessed influence that moved Joshua to send these men to Jericho; and though Joshua knew not at that time for what purpose, yet he that searches the heart know what is the mind of the Spirit; for they were sent for this gracious purpose, and this only; for I cannot find that anything else was affected by it. And here I feel myself disposed to spiritualize these messengers into ministers of the Gospel, but I must forbear.

I would now proceed to make some observations on the second query, but as I fear I have already exceeded the limits of your magazine, I must postpone them a few days. Meanwhile, if you think these observations worthy a place in your repository, I will engage to supply the remaining part, to be inserted in your next.

I remain yours to command, in truth and sincerity,

K.

ON LYING

To the Editor of the Gospel magazine. April, 1801.

SIR, having had the satisfaction of your approval of my former observations on Rahab's motives and actions, which I feared were too coarse and clumsy for your magazine, I will now, without

any preliminary, proceed according to my engagement, to make a few observations in reference to the second query proposed.

In doing this I need a considerable degree of caution, and I hope the Lord will guide my heart and hand that I may explain what I have in mind with such simplicity and perspicuity¹⁰, that the simplest and unlearned of your readers may not mistake my meaning, or impute motives to me dishonorable to moral integrity, and repugnant to the gospel of Christ.

The second query, or rather group of queries, bound together in one, is introduced by an observation “that the Scriptures are decidedly against telling lies,” which is a solemn truth, as clearly delineated in the sacred pages as anything that relates to the fallen condition of man, and is one of the most important things to be considered by him with reverence, attention, and awe; while the majesty of heaven presents his holiness to view in all its adorable grandeur, and with divine truthfulness, and solemn preservation declares, “that all liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.”

And here it is necessary to lay down a clear, simple, and unequivocal definition of what is a lie; in doing which I would avoid giving one of my own, as I do not wish to be the author of both text and comment, but to introduce one from another quarter, which on that account may be entitled to a superior degree of credit; but while I turned my thoughts in different directions to obtain my wish, I happened to lay my hand on Dyches Common Dictionary, and, turning to the alphabetical arrangement, found a lie defined in these simple words: “A willful and criminal falsehood;” which definition undoubtedly implies that there may be certain falsehoods which are not criminal¹¹ (*i.e. unlawful*), and which do not deserve the appellation of lies.

But as the Scriptures contain so many awful denunciations against lies and liars, it may not be improper to consider some of those which are so decidedly condemned; I therefore solicit the reader’s candid attention while I briefly touch the following particulars:

In the first place, Doctrinal liars; and here we have to lament the abounding impositions which have been from time to time imposed on mankind willingness to believe; the time would fail even to enumerate the infernal refuges of lies which have been invented by artful hypocrites to lull the conscience to rest in carnal security, and to displace the simple confidence in Jesus Christ and him crucified. Alas! there is no necessity to introduce systems of lies as a refuge, while the heart itself is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; ever prone to reject the truth, and embrace its own destruction in every possible subterfuge, which it is never at a loss to invent for itself. Alas, poor man! how is the citadel of thy heart completely invested with

“Dangerous doctrines from without,
Lies and errors round about,
From within a treacherous heart,

¹⁰ The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “perspicuity” in this way: ‘plain to the understanding especially because of clarity and precision of presentation’

¹¹ The Merriam-Webster dictionary has the following synonyms for adjective “criminal” felonious, illegal, illegitimate, illicit, lawless, unlawful, wrongful. Bearing in mind that our writer used an over 200 year old definition I believe his meaning was unlawful.

Prone to take the tempter's part."

How dreadful is the case of those who having made a profession of the gospel, and have turned aside from the path of truth; yet it is a lamentable fact that most of the abounding errors have originated with these, "having stumbled at the word, being disobedient whereunto they were also appointed." We see the Scripture is as much fulfilled in the apostacy of the hypocrite, as in the everlasting salvation of the true believer, "they went out from us, but they were not of us," for if they had been of us no doubt they would have continued with us, but being tired of a profession of truths which were always condemning their souls, and of which they knew nothing by sweet experience, or humble hope, have either invented some new delusion to impose upon others, or have given their wandering fancy to the first fascinating dream that presented itself, and laid themselves down to sleep in everlasting ruin; such as these are described in the book of Revelation, who shall have no part in the heavenly Jerusalem, being "lovers of, and makers of lies." O my soul, come not you into their council, but let me ever sing with the pious Watts!

Should all the forms that man devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.

How dreadful will their case appear in that dreadful day when the trump of God shall wake their slumbering souls to dreadful truths, and dreadful scenes; and the dreadful experience that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone."

Secondly, Insinuating (*i.e. ingenious, devious*) liars. These of all others are the most dangerous, inasmuch as a lurking foe is more formidable than an open adversary; these for the most part cover their fraud with what sounds like reason, and the outward appearance of the words, if well contrived, will defy the test of grammatical criticism to charge them with falsehood. These insinuated falsehoods, though not expressed in words, are as strongly implied as if they were; it is something like the consecution of improper chords in music, which though not expressed in notes amount to the same declaration of untruth as if they were, and that not merely in imagination, but in their real and evident effect upon the natural ear, which they always disgust and cause it to hate. This abominable species of lying cannot be too strongly reprobated; and **I am sorry to observe that the most wicked practice of it is found among too many of our modern ministers, who pretend to preach something like the gospel; but in reality convey a meaning as opposite to it as the east to the west; for though they profess to believe the important doctrines, they never appear to love them, as they never bring them forward without contaminating them, and clip and file the promises of their freeness and force; and the whole scope of their sermons evidently tends to exalt the creature, and to put faith, and duties, and perseverance, in his own power and strength.** These detestable hypocrites who walk in craftiness, and handle the word of God deceitfully, and like Ananias and Sapphira keep back part of the price of a redeemer's blood, and lie not only unto men but unto God, for Satan has filled their hearts to lie unto the Holy Ghost, whose blessed influence they are entire strangers to, **for that blessed spirit always directs a poor sinner to a free and finished salvation in Jesus, and in his own due time enables him to believe himself complete in him.** Those are clouds without rain; wells without water; wandering stars, to whom is reserved blackness and darkness forever; in spite of the fact

that they have the blasphemous impudence to call themselves evangelical ministers, and however they and other hypocrites may appreciate each other, they shall at the last have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Thirdly, Calumniating (*i.e. belittling, slandering smearing*) liars. Of these there are various descriptions, both in the public and private walks of life, who please themselves with defaming the characters of others, which, perhaps, if properly investigated would be found far more virtuous than their own; **but that particular species which merits our peculiar condemnation in this place, are those calumniators of the people of God, who are ever ready to enlarge on their failings with peculiar virulence, and that for the purpose of defaming the gospel.** There is nothing novel in these characters; they are described of old, seizing their circumstances with the strongest avidity, "Report, report, say they, and we will report it;" and they are as good as their word, for the people of God in every age have felt the force of their venomous tongues; but though their calumniating malice is a gross and scandalous libel on the Church of Christ, which the people of God, with all their sins and infirmities in the darkest times have never deserved; yet what they mean to *insinuate* by their aspersions is the most diabolical; for though their reports be ever so true in themselves, yet what they mean to convey by them is nearly as follows: "Ah! you see what they are, they are all alike, a mere set of hypocrites with all their pretensions; ergo, there is no reality in religion; we need not trouble ourselves about a good conscience and the fear of God; we shall certainly do as well as them at last with all their pretensions." This is the drift and end of their calumny; but how will their souls be surprised when this paradox shall be sweetly developed; when the people of God, with all their *faults* and infirmities, with all their *spots* and blemishes, "shall be presented *faultless* before the throne with exceeding great joy, *without spot* or wrinkle, or any such thing; while these accusers of the brethren, together with the devil, their father and head, shall be cast down by the arm of almighty vengeance into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

To these might be added an infinite variety of liars prompted by pride and vanity, fraud and hypocrisy, weakness of mind and baseness of heart: but as the time would fail to enumerate them, much more to develop their evil, we will take our hearty leave of them for the present, and proceed to the discussion of the subject more immediately in view.

I have already observed, that there are some cases that appear to be lies (but that are not so in reality), which proceed from honest, upright, and blessed intentions, both in the estimation of God and man; to some of these we will briefly attend, and bring them into contact with the different branches of the query proposed, in order to show that innocent deceptions have run in parallel lines with its different clauses.

The first is the case of David escaping for his life from *the oppression of the wicked* and having recourse to deception and falsehood to obtain a supply of bread to sustain his own life and the lives of them that were with him; nor was it common bread he obtained, nor a common person he deceived, but it was the show-bread and the priest of the God of Israel; and this transaction, **however it may appear,** is justified and commended: the sword of Goliath was also obtained under the same pretense. As I would not wish to multiply words, I refer the reader to the original account (1 Samuel 21). I might here, if it was necessary, enter into a particular criticism and vindication of the patriarch in this instance, **as in the case of Rahab the harlot;** but after what has been said by our Lord himself upon the circumstance, I deem it superfluous; and I would only

make one remark, by way of an appealing question to every rational mind, that if this affair had been an assemblage of lies and wicked prevarication, whether our Lord would have quoted the circumstance as a vindication of his poor disciples against the calumniating malice of the Scribes and Pharisees; whereas if it had been such they might have replied, "We object to the impious and profane conduct of your disciples, and you have brought forward a case more wicked than theirs to keep them in countenance." But the Pharisees, with all their blindness, knew too well the purity of this transaction to harbor such a thought; I feel myself therefore justified in drawing the same conclusion from this case as **in that of Rahab**, that David in what he did as no liar nor wicked prevaricator in God's account, nor in the judgment of Christ himself, the immaculate and spotless Lamb of God.

Secondly. **The case of the Egyptian midwives** comes under our notice. This was a piece of prevarication to serve a friend, and to serve the friendless. The dear infants of Israel found grace in their sight, though Pharaoh had given them in charge to destroy the males; and, when questioned by the tyrant for their humanity, replied, "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian, for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in to them," which in many instances could not be true (if in any). These blessed women, these godly persons, and their works from first to last cannot be too strongly commended; I feel myself inadequate to the task, and will therefore introduce the appreciation of the Almighty God, for it is added in direct connection, "Therefore the Lord dealt well with the midwives and blessed them, and made them houses;" and they have this testimony from the Holy Ghost, that they feared God. Whatever light (or rather darkness) this transaction may appear in to others, I will freely confess that, if the Bible had represented any part of it as a violation of piety or morality, **I should have been tempted to doubt its authenticity; but what they did was in the fear of God and in love to his people, under the immediate influence of divine grace, for God will never own or commend anything but the fruits of his Holy Spirit; and in the great day, when Jesus shall set them on his right hand, he will commend their works ; saying, " Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me; come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Blessed be God for the purity of the Bible.**

Thirdly. **The works of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite**, come next in view. This was a deceptive maneuver, for the glory of God and the good of his people. When the cursed Sisera, like the devil, his father, went about like a ravening wolf seeking what he might destroy and what he might defile, was trapped at last by this blessed woman; while his abandoned mother, the abominable abettor of his rapacity, cruelty, and lust, in debauching her sex, wondered why his chariot was so long in coming. Why wonder, you detested wretch? he shall no more return with a prey of different colors, and each man a woman or two; he shall no more worry the sheep of Christ, and drag away the virgins from their parents, and give them up to his abandoned troops. The curse of the Almighty has destroyed his intentions, and laid him low in everlasting ruin, "Blessed shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be above women in the tent; he asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish; she put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer, and with the hammer she smote Sisera; she smote off his head when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead! So, let all the enemies of the Lord perish; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years."

To these cases I might add many others from the Scriptures, but my words multiply so fast I fear they will overrun the time and space I have; I will, therefore, pass on to observe upon these examples; that notwithstanding our professed superiority of understanding in these *enlightened days*, and notwithstanding also the people of God glory in having more light than the ancient believers in Jesus, yet in many important points they exceeded us in solid judgment, and had clearer views of moral good and evil than we believe they had, or than we ourselves seem to possess. What ancient servant of God ever imagined these cases to be an assemblage of immoralities? **Did Rahab ever conceive her works to be sinful?** Or did the other servants of Christ ever repent in dust and ashes for those very works which are recorded to their honor? Why is it now that our modern Solomon's have discovered them to be evil, or at least doubtful?

Note: The brief section below is part of the main paragraph in the original. I think this gets to the heart of the matter and I have placed in in this format to highlight this fact. Truth does not change with time. God's truth in 1800 is the same truth as in 1860. It will still be Gods truth to all of eternity. Those who opposed Wells were not primarily interested in truth as such. They used these two sermons to heap all the scorn they could upon his character. Wells was that careful physician that our writer goes on to describe. His purpose was to heal and bind up not to hurt and break down.

But above all, how is it that modern divines have not attentively considered, these things. Why have they not expounded these passages, shedding light and truth upon them and removing the darkness and criticism which has been put upon them? But, alas! our divines pay very little attention to the subject of moral good and evil, perhaps there never was more sin in the world, and never less knowledge of the evil; but it becomes ministers of the gospel to enter into the subject, and to describe wherein consists the sinfulness of sin, or its principal venom, in all the shapes and appearances in which it is visible in the world. In that case there would not be such confused ideas about it in the churches, for **it appears to me that clear and solid conviction was never at a lower ebb among Christians than at present**; for it does not consist in that temporary right of the passions that some have imagined, but in that clear knowledge of the evil of sin entering the understanding by divine illumination and fixing on the heart; but, **alas! general declamation and dreadful expressions seem to be all that is attempted: but loose declamation is the feeblest of all means to fix an revulsion on anything.**

How contrary this to what would be the conduct of physicians and naturalists if we lived in a country infested with serpents; they would not be long in ascertaining the quality of the poison, and in what part of the beast it principally lay. And it would be of importance to lay down this with precision and certainty, as a mistake of this sort might be attended with very serious consequences; for while the wary traveler might be guarding against the head of the creature, supposing it to be there, he might receive a mortal wound from the tail, and deplore in his dying agonies his fatal mistake. How different the conduct of the physicians of the gospel; how many ministers will take up half their time in declaiming (in many instances) with unmanly rudeness against a lady's dress, while the crying evils of the day, infidelity and blasphemy, tyranny and oppression, monopoly and covetousness, fraud and hypocrisy, are overlooked, and some of these, in too many instances,

defended and maintained. **To strain at a gnat and swallow a camel has been the mark of the hypocrite in every age;** and God knows it is too much the case with the sincere, and this is for want of, clear and thorough conviction. But if ministers will neglect this important work, it becomes Christians to set themselves down and study the real malignity of every sin that concerns them to know, as it might be of great use in guarding them from evil; nor would it be a dismal employ, as it might form a profitable antithesis to the gospel of Christ, and heighten their appreciation of the infinite value of a Savior's death: that precious blood that cleanses from all sin, and makes the foulest sinner cleaner than the heavens; for it is said, "the heavens are not clean in his sight," but to a poor sinner washed in that precious fountain "there is no spot in thee." **It behooves us to consider attentively every subject that concerns us to know, for without making distinctions and entering into particulars we can never come to a satisfying knowledge of anything. How has the sin of unbelief been confounded for want of making distinction between the opposite of faith and the privation of it. It is the opposite of faith which the Scriptures condemn, consisting in repelling God's word and the light he has sent into the world; but the privation of faith is a different thing, for it cannot be a man's duty to give himself that which God has reserved as the sovereign prerogative of his grace; I might as well tell a man it was his duty to be a legatee in a nobleman's will, as tell him it is his duty to believe with the special faith of God's elect. But to return to our subject.**

As I have endeavored to show that there is an evident distinction between guilty and innocent falsehoods, I will now crave permission to lay down a few supposed cases wherein I conceive deception might be used with innocence and commendation¹².

First, I will suppose a dreadful persecution against the disciples of Christ, and the particular vein of it directed against the ministers of the gospel. Suppose one or two of them were to come to my house (if I had one) as a refuge from the fury of them that sought their lives (**this is the nearest case I can think of that is similar to that of Rahab**), Would it be my duty to give them up on the first inquiry that was made? Surely not. If any person came for this bloody and diabolical purpose, most likely my looks and behavior to them would be a spontaneous deception in the first instance, as soon as I knew their errand; and if my looks were not sufficient, words might be added (**for it makes no difference, if a deception be wicked, if there is not a word spoken it is still a lie**). I might perhaps say, gentlemen, if you think they are here, you are welcome to search my house; though they would not be welcome, and I would take as good care as I could that they should not come upon them if the search was attempted. In such a case I am sure the grace of God would teach me something like this; for God forbid that it should ever be said of the household of faith that the brother shall deliver up the brother to death.

Again, suppose a remarkable case in providence gave me an opportunity to make peace in a family, suppose between a man and his wife, whose union was threatened to be dissolved by a dreadful difference; might I not be allowed to heighten favorable circumstances to suit the occasion, and depress and diminish those that were adverse, and, in fine, endeavor to make them have a better

¹² There are innumerable examples today. One example, that my wife brought to my attention is that of Betsie ten Boom. Both my wife and I had the honor of briefly knowing Corrie ten Boon, Betsie's sister. Based upon her belief in God and his Holy word Betsie resisted the Nazi regime. Among other acts she saved the lives of many who suffered under that devilish oppression. I wonder what the critics among Wells piers would say of the life of deception she chose in order to obey God rather than man.

opinion of each other than I had of either of them myself, especially if I conceived their future happiness depended on it, as well as the welfare of five or six dear children? Let any man with a grain of religion or morality answer the question.

It was my intention to lay down a variety of cases of this sort, but my time and your limits admonish me to draw toward a close; and **I observe that deception simply considered in itself appears to be a discretionary power lodged in the breast of every human being, the evil use of which, only we are accountable for.** If this were not the case, a conscientious man would be of all men the most miserable and contemptible. If he was obliged, under pain of divine displeasure, to answer every question that ignorance or impudence has to propound, the secrets of his own heart would be no longer his own, but would become, like the almanack or the newspaper, to be read by every fool.

But God, when he made man, made him entire in himself, one and indivisible; in this sense his heart is his castle, and no created being whatever has any right to pass the threshold without permission or invitation. It is God alone that comes when he pleases, and searches the reins; he has laid it open to himself, and himself alone, and it is our mercy that this is the case.

Again, if no kind of deception could be consistently used, it would be impossible to pledge our fidelity to a friend on any occasion, for we could not be sure but some question might be asked relative to the thing we had engaged to conceal, nor will a positive refusal, saying, What is that to thee? in some cases answer the purpose; for such a reply on some occasions will answer the question in the affirmative. However, if it be our duty to keep the thing committed to our charge, it cannot be wrong to preserve it.

Upon the whole, I am clearly of opinion that falsehoods are divided into two classes, innocent and guilty; nor do I imagine it to be difficult to distinguish them. However, if it were, confounding them together is not the way to divide them; but I think a child may see that the works of the Egyptian midwives and the works of Ananias and Sapphira were as different as darkness and light, and form as complete an antithesis as sin and holiness, heaven and hell, or God and the devil.

But to come to the point in reference to the question. I answer, that as deceptions are of two classes, criminal and innocent, the former of these cannot be justified on any ground, at any season, or in any circumstances whatever; but that deceptions springing from pure motives, and directed to a good end, cannot be sinful, for if the root of a tree be good, and the fruit good, the branches cannot be bad, however unsightly, warped, or crooked they may appear.

Thus have I endeavored to give a simple answer to these intricate and important questions; and whatever opinion may be formed of these remarks, I am so satisfied of their general propriety that I lament that something like them has not been written centuries ago; as in that case it might have devolved to some abler pen, and those passages of Scripture which have been the sport of infidels, might not only have been fortified, but a battery mounted upon them, that might have bid defiance to every unhallowed approach. And though these observations are not primarily directed to infidels, yet they have not been wholly out of my view; and if anything, that I have said may tend to cast any light on the passages of Scripture introduced, my principal end will be answered, and my time and labor amply compensated.

Yours to command, in truth and sincerity, K.

APPENDIX 2

MISTER JAMES WELLS AND THE PRESENT POSITION OF OUR STRICT BAPTIST CHURCHES.

December 1, 18

The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record page 375ff
by Charles Walter Banks

We ask for a careful perusal of the following letter:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EARTHEN VESSEL.

“Dear Sir,

The present position of the Strict Communion Baptists is deplorable; they appear more at variance than ever. Our enemies are looking on with evident pleasure and contempt. Can nothing be done to remove this state of things¹³? It appears to me that we are divided into three parties, namely,

¹³ This is taken from the Oct 2, 1865. Earthen Vessel page 315. It is an example of the willingness on James Wells part to make peace.

“After some further remarks, Mr. Wells referred to the breach of friendship between himself and Mr. John Foreman. He deeply regretted that unhappy circumstance; and his hand and his heart were ready at any time to welcome his brother, and the sooner the breach was made up, the better he should like it. A minister had been to him that day, and asked if he should write to Mr. Foreman, desiring him to come to the meeting. Mr. Wells said, he should be glad if this good brother would; for nothing could give him greater pleasure than to see his brother

The Gospel Standard party, represented by Mr. Philpot, Kershaw, and others; The Gospel Herald party, represented by Mr. Foreman, Bloomfield, Collins, and others; The Earthen Vessel party, represented by Mr. Wells, Stringer, Banks, and others. I beg to submit that the above ministers acknowledge each other privately as servants of God. Why, then, cannot they meet upon some common platform (say the platform of the New Surrey Tabernacle), and there form a union of the entire strict communion Baptists? Experience proves that a mere party union will give way. Several party associations have been formed, but they have languished. From observation and from repeated enquiry I rejoice to find that the disunion rests merely with the ministers. If Messrs. Wells, Philpot, Foreman, and Kershaw, cannot meet and hold friendly and Christian intercourse, their members can, and frequently do. The practical disunion is in the pulpit, and not in the pew. Should the ministers still stand aloof from each other, I would suggest that for the credit of our denomination, members of churches should meet in order to show that while Strict Communion Baptist ministers are at variance, the churches can and do hold fellowship with each other. "May I beg the insertion of this in the next month's Vessel?"

"I am, Dear Sir, yours truly, JOSEPH THRIFT"
"Bethel Chapel, Larima Grove, King's Cross, 22nd Nov., 1865."

We most heartily thank Mr. Joseph Thrift for his common sense, Christian, and exceedingly necessary suggestion. If all the ministers were of the same mind as Mr. Thrift, we should soon see a strong and happy union of the churches, and thousands in the country would rejoice; but the darkest feature in our denomination is the fostering of divisions; and the secret and open enmity of one class of ministers against another class. And after such an awful state of things as has recently come to pass, we fear there is little hope of any spiritual, evangelical, and practical union among the ministers.

We stand entirely alone. All the editors and ministers, with few exceptions, have come forth in battle array against us, simply because we have tried to defend Mr. James Wells's **character, position, ministry, and aim.** As to his "Rahab" sermon, we have never justified some of its expressions; but we have (from the real love we bear toward him, and from the confidence we have in him as a devoted minister of Christ) done our utmost to strengthen his hands, and to encourage his heart, when we found **the oldest ministers in the denomination forsaking him; and Protests and Protestors proclaiming to all the world his heresy and his error, as they consider it.** And because we have warmly espoused his cause, we are treated with contempt, held up to ridicule; and sarcastically referred to by a professing Christian World. Have we ever written, or spoken of Mister Philpot, as he has done of us, in his long sixteen-page review? Never. Nor are we at all disturbed at the course he has taken. We are ready, at any time, with meekness and fear, and in the Divine strength, to tell the Editor of the Gospel Standard (and all his ministers, yea, and all the churches in Christendom, if needful), how the Almighty God chastened us for many years,

Foreman at the public meeting in the new place on the Wednesday. What the result would be, he must leave; but in the days when Anninianism, Pnseyism, and Popery were making such rapid strides, he was more than ever anxious to see all the ministers of truth banded together in the bonds of the Gospel, so that a bold front, might be shown to the enemy. He earnestly prayed that such a state of things might be seen before long."

under the law; how He revealed His dear Son in our hearts, how He carried us into the ministry; how, amid temptations sharp and long, He has, in great mercy delivered us from death, wiped away our tears, and kept us from finally falling. And having obtained help of the Lord, we continue until this day. God forbid that we should uphold any man in error; but, most solemnly we declare while we could not speak at all times as Mr. Wells speaks, yet, **we cannot for one moment believe he ever intended to express anything essentially or injuriously wrong.**

And we as solemnly declare we could not join the armies of those who are against him; and who by their writings and speeches have done all they could do to cast him down. If by the charitable course we have taken we have sinned against heaven, we deeply implore the forgiveness of our gracious Lord. If we have sinned against the Editor of the Gospel Standard in any shape or manner, we ask his forgiveness too; and in this spirit we shall leave him to write of us as seems him good. God Almighty keeping us, we will neither write nor speak of him in an un-Christian manner for his work's sake, and we will try to love him as much as we do Mr. Wells, or any other truly exercised servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. **And if because we have cleaved to our brother in the day when the archers shot at him; if, because we could not believe that either Mr. James Wells, or any of his people would sanction falsehood; if, because we could not be turned against a brother who for nearly forty years now has been a consistent, bold, and valiant champion of Gospel truth, many declare they will destroy our usefulness, and take away all our opportunities for doing good, we will only say, "the will of the Lord be done."** We have His promise on our side, and we have so many years proved the exceeding greatness of His mercy towards us, that with David we venture sometimes to exclaim, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" A weekly paper in its efforts to chasten and crush us, has descended to the lowest language and figure of speech possible; if by so doing it can relieve itself of a little of its enmity and increase its exchequer, we shall not be angry; nor will we return railing for railing. Why should we? Here is one sample of the good it is doing to us. We were invited to preach for a little church in the far-off northern boundary of this kingdom. The deacon, minister, and friends of the church, who invited us, thinking their own place of meeting would not be large enough, tried to obtain the use of some of the other chapels. But with a cold complimentary negative, they as much as said, "No Rahab here!" What was the consequence? Our friends hired the theatre for Sunday evening, and the Temperance Hall for two-week evenings; and we believe we had in our congregation's double and treble what we should have had in any of their chapels; and good success attended all our labors. If by the united efforts of those Critical Censors they can drive us out of all the chapels in the different denominations, they may do much good; because, shut up in little chapels as we have been for many years, we could not get at the people we desire to be useful to (we mean, the yet unconverted Elect of God); but if the Suffolk Association decrees we shall not preach in any of their chapels, nor circulate in any of their districts; if the Gospel Standard instrumentally keeps us out of the chapels in the north; and if the Herculean penny weekly poisons the minds of all those genteel and kind creatures who read in their pulpits their essays so clear, why, then, if our blessed Lord Jesus Christ will give us strength enough, and grace enough, and life long enough, we will go into all the highways and hedges in the kingdom, and publicly proclaim the free grace of Jesus our Savior to tens of thousands of the fallen and the feeble among the sons of men. If the Lord desires not our service any longer, then grateful for the long day's work He has given us, may we, in peace, lie down and die. In conclusion, **we would pray that the heavy storm lately raised by Satan may not unduly frighten any of the Lord's people.** It will soon pass over. The enemy has

been coming in like a flood. The Lord will rebuke him. **The Lord will lift up a standard against the great adversary; and good will come out of it.** This storm has troubled brother Wells; but his best friends say he never preached so well before as now. His Church is increasing, and testimonies of his usefulness are many and unmistakable. Let every man beware how he helps on this hot fire of persecution. As regards ourselves, in closing this twenty-first volume, we will raise our Ebenezer, and on it humbly write,

“His love in time past forbids us to think
He’ll leave us at last in trouble sink.”

[More on the breach over the Rahab sermons by Charles Walter Banks](#)

LITERARY NOTICES - November 1st 1865 Earthen Vessel page 343ff .

Last Sermon preached in the Old Surrey Tabernacle, by Mr. James Wells, from Psalm 71:16 (one penny). We had this sermon taken down in order to give the churches and friends of truth, universally, an opportunity of possessing a copy of the last discourse delivered in that honored sanctuary. Since the days of William Huntington, no minister, we believe, has more faithfully, experimentally, and constantly, proclaimed the whole counsel of God, than has Mister James Wells.

We recently entered the chapel in Gray's Inn lane, once called “Providence Chapel”, once the scene of the labors of that spiritual giant, “The Coal-heaver.” We solemnly reviewed the sacred edifice, and thought of the “Sinner Saved”, of his study behind the pulpit, where on Saturdays and Sundays (between the services), he looked and labored, wept and prayed, studied and preached, and was indeed as “God’s mouth to many thousands.” We confess we entertain a strong feeling of attachment to the memory of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ; his words and his works have been very precious to our souls ever since the Son of God was revealed in us, and by the Holy Ghost, formed in our hearts as the hope of glory; and in times of heavy affliction, having been encouraged and edified by the ministry of Mister James Wells, we entertain kindred feelings of strong attachment toward him; and honestly rejoice in all the prosperity God has given to him. The present onslaught made upon his ministerial reputation, we have viewed with the deepest grief and sorrow; and in the very humble efforts we have put forth to defend his position, **we have acted most sincerely; and out of pure evangelical love to one who has more of the mind and spirit of Christ than we can discover in those who so fiercely, so publicly, so wantonly, and, we think, so jealously, pursue him.**

We are not capable of fully justifying all the words Mr. Wells may have used in the “Rahab” sermon. We know his motive and his meaning were consistent with the whole course of his ministry. We know that ministry to have had its origin in heaven; and its one grand object ever has been to glorify God in the exaltation of Christ, in the ingathering of ransomed sinners, in the establishment of true believers, in the restoration of fallen saints, in the recognition of many hundreds of ministers, in rendering assistance to churches in all parts of the country, and in helping poor pilgrims on their way homeward to their Father's house above; and while we are persuaded that for nearly forty years the whole tenor of that ministry has been most stringently Biblical, powerfully, experimental, and almost universally acceptable; while we confidently believe that heaven contains no small multitude of justified spirits, who, on this earth, were fed and nourished under the ministry of Mister Wells; and so long as we know beyond the shadow of a doubt, that on the face of this globe, there are still thousands who revere the man for the good our God has made of him to their souls: furthermore, seeing his life, labor, mental, and physical powers, have all been sanctified and preserved by God, consecrated to the noblest of all causes, and honored by the Three Glorious Persons in the Eternal Godhead; while all these premises are plain before us, we would sooner cease to be, we would rather ourselves and our works be burned in Smithfield, than that we should be guilty of signing a protest, the object of which is to hold up before an ungodly world, and a Romanising and truth condemning army of professors, a long-standing servant of Jesus Christ, as a pro-pounder and preacher of the most awful heresies; and that protest, above all things, signed by men who have for years been proclaiming to the public that Mister James Wells has been their spiritual father, their “beloved pastor,” and their “dear brother.” If the times we live in are not fearfully alarming, we have no judgment at all. The Fenians, the Romanists, the Jesuits, and the Apostates, make up a motley and many-millioned multitude, all in deadly opposition to God’s most holy and ever-blessed truth. We have no doubt whatever but that thousands upon thousands of Gospel professors will join the ranks of the common foe in some shape or other; and those who hold fast by the faith once delivered unto the saints, must be resigned to their fate, let it be what it may.

As regards ourselves, God is our witness, we have silently mourned over every kind of evil for many years; and in labors most earnest have we sought to render some service to the great Redeemer's cause; but the present dark cloud of contention is the heaviest trial the true Churches of Christ have been visited with during the whole course of our existence in a profession of the Gospel; and if there is not some consistent vindication of the Christian character and Gospel course of our friend and brother, Mister Wells, at once put forth, the adversaries will influence thousands to believe that some most awful deed has been done; **whereas, in their consciences, they know that in reality not one foundation principle of the Gospel has, in this case, been touched;** and if they thought there was danger in Mister Wells’s “Rahab” sermon, why, in the name of all that is holy and good between God and man, and between brother and brother, why did they not visit him, and petition him, ere to all the world they proclaim the heresy so fatal for thereby they would have had God’s word on their side; and thereby Christian charity would have been exemplified; but, instead of this, war is proclaimed, eternal separation threatened, and many godly Christians are made sad.¹⁴

¹⁴ Banks was a very special person, in many ways very unlike most Christian ministers at that time. He was at heart a peace maker and our Lords teaching in Matthew 5 sums up his character as closely as anything I can think of. “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed

In closing this brief notice, we again express our deepest conviction that Mister James Wells is still highly favored by heaven. He is gathering multitudes under the sound of the Gospel; he is, instrumentally, lengthening Zion's cords; and early in November, we understand he will deliver his defense; after which, we may more fully review this, to us, painful event.

LETTER FROM MR. FOREMAN TO MR. WELLS¹⁵

From "The Gospel Herald or Poor Christians Magazine. Volume 35, Volume 3 new series 1866¹⁶. November 26th Page 33ff. The same letter also appeared in "The Voice of Truth or Baptist Record" of February 1866 page 27ff.

Sir, I have waited till the storm is a little abated, and now I think it is my turn to speak. When I wrote to you on August 25th, I told you my reasons for writing as I did, and for the conclusion I had come to. No man could speak more plainly, more truthfully, or more honestly than I did, as in the sight of God. But you have denied me this little bit of credit; and ascribed my conduct in writing to you as I did, to anything imagination could suggest, but the truth and honesty with which I wrote, calling it a "*purity dodge*." By this **I suppose you mean**¹⁷ a piece of self-righteous, underhand, shuffling, dishonest craft, with other parties fraudulently concerned beside myself in

are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (NIV version). The treatment he received from those who opposed James Wells is reprehensible in the extreme. There is simply no excuse for it.

¹⁵ I was hesitant to insert this letter because I only have one half of the story: John Foreman's side. I felt that it is still worthwhile as it bears so directly upon this controversy. I think James Wells made his remarks on Sunday August 27th perhaps in the evening sermon. If it were a normal morning sermon it would be number 351 which it is not. There is a 351 but it is not this sermon. It appears to not be a published sermon, at least not that I can find. If I am able to obtain this sermon, I will edit this document with any relevant information from that source.

¹⁶ In the same periodical Foreman attacks "The Defense" in the vilest manner possible. Here are two brief excerpts. Foreman says: "In our January number we entered at some length into the controversy growing out of the sermon of which the present is a lame defense. We sustained against Mr. Wells the charges which his best friends have made:—that it was excessively vulgar, justified lying, made accessory to crime, and was the essence of Jesuitism." In other words, the essence of the Jesuit order of Catholic priests. Shortly after this he goes on to state: "Is Mr. Wells really sane? Or are we discussing the ebullitions of a disordered mind? If so, we deplore his condition, and pity him; but supposing him sane, we earnestly beseech him to look the horrid monster of his own creation in the face.

¹⁷ "purity dodge", from what I have been able to discover is an old English term from around 1800. It was used in reference to elections and had to do with bribes being taken for votes. It's a technical term and Wells used it specifically instead of a more common term. Foreman, himself is comes to his own conclusions of what Wells meant when he says "By this I suppose you mean ..." To what extent he was justified in this is hard to say.

the matter. This is altogether *false*, and my witness to it is in heaven. When have you ever known me to do so, in word or deed, or showed the least disposition to do so, for the thirty-five years you have known me; that you should so basely judge me, and publish that judgment to the world? However, this tells me that your friendship to me has been but skin-deep, not safe to trust, and better dispensed with. Not long after I gave you what is called the “pastoral charge,” I broke off from you, for the awful extravagance you rushed into; and had I known your disposition as I do now, I would not have given you my right hand, as I did when that breach was closed up; no, on no account whatever¹⁸. It seems you have made quite a handle of its being “nine weeks and five days” after your *sinless-lies* sermon was preached before you had my letter. Well, that does not look like hurry, and yet I am charged by you with having “rushed to hasty conclusions;” and one calls my conduct “Mr. Foreman’s sudden determination.”

If I give you a plain statement of facts, perhaps you will not believe me, but the eternal God shall be judge between you and me, as to the truth of my statements. In the months of June, July, and part of August, I was laboring hard in thirteen different counties, and scarcely knew what was going on in London, any more than as though I had been out of the country; and the 8th of August, when at Hayes, was the first time I ever saw or heard your sermon on *sinless falsehoods, bad truth, and good lies*. **I was painfully struck and grieved with it, that such things should ever be preached from the pulpit, and sent abroad through the press.** And although it worked so painfully in my mind, I told no one my feelings and thoughts, further than I said, “It is one of Mr. Wells’ extravagancies, I wish he had not said it.” On the 16th of August I preached at Brighton, and staying over a day at Brighton, on the 17th of August the sermon was brought before me, and I again heard the doctrine of good lies and bad truth, and saw it, and I again put it off, as I had done at Hayes, by merely showing that I did not receive it; but my feelings I entirely kept to myself.

But the awful doctrine worked in my mind like leaven, and Mrs. Foreman is witness how I walked my room in heart-felt distress. *First*, **That any connection of mine** should ever have advanced such things. *Secondly*, **On the demoralizing tendency it would have on the unbelieving world;** they, not distinguishing one falsehood from another, if there were any differences, would say, “If these religious people preach that falsehoods are good, there cannot, according to them, be much harm in using them when most convenient.” *Thirdly*, The reproach such a doctrine will occasion **the world to cast** upon religion, as they frequently say, “These people meeting will not swear, but they will lie like the devil;” **and this sermon will confirm them** in their vulgar reproach. *Fourthly*, The reproach it will bring **from general professors** against that part of the Baptist denomination who hold the **already scandalized doctrines** of distinguishing grace, and the New Testament order of the church of Christ. Thus, my soul was troubled that such a doctrine should have issued from the pulpit; but not with one particle of angry animosity against your person¹⁹.

¹⁸ This whole affair, on both sides, is very sad. This should not have happened. John Foreman is does exactly what he accuses James Wells of doing. He skips over most of Wells life and ministry to go back to an event many years before. All of this is in direct contradiction to our Lord Jesus teaching and example.

¹⁹ I have set these words in a paragraph of their own as this is a very instructive section. It appears that his primary concern is not for the truth as such (what the Bible actually teaches). His first concern is how this reflects upon himself. His second concern is how this affects unbelievers. His third concern is how this affects possible Christians in other dominations and the fact that it may turn them away from his own group. This reminds me of how the early Christians suffered because of Christs teaching about his body and blood. The rumor was spread that they eat real flesh and drank real blood. Truth is truth and as such must be upheld no matter what the fallout is. Certainly,

And one day in particular, considering the position in which **I** stood, **I was distressed to my very heart's core**, walking about **my** room, with **oh dear, oh dear! dear me! dear me!** O that those things about *good falsehoods* had never been said! What shall **I** do, or what course shall **I** adopt? And **I** reasoned with **myself** thus: "**I** am engaged to go to open a chapel for this awful doctrine of good lies, shall **I** go, and before taking **my** text **declare my decided opposition to, and condemnation of, the doctrine of sinless lies, as a doctrine of the father of lies?** Well, **I** thought if **I** do this, it will make strife, and perhaps do a vast deal of mischief, and **I** cannot bear the thought of that. Then **I** thought if **I** did not go, some would reproach **me** for that; but that while **I** hold **my** engagements sacred, **I** never did sell nor mortgage **my** conscience by any engagements to be obliged to go, when there intervened conscientious reasons for not doing so. And as **I** could not with good conscience before God allow **my** name to stand as an abettor of **that abominable doctrine** of good lies, and as a man is considered accountable for the doctrine **he** publicly opens a chapel for, there appeared no other way **I** could act with good conscience but to determine not to preach at the New Surrey Tabernacle, and to write and say so, as **I** did. Not a soul under the heavens knew **my** mind and feelings but Mrs. Foreman. And not a second male in God's creation knew of **my** writing to you till you received and opened **my** letter; and not a third male on earth knew by **me** that **I** had written to you till after **I** had received your answer. And it is, therefore, an awful thing that such lying imaginations should be put into words, and printed for the public to receive as charges **against me**; but the all-seeing Judge knows all about it²⁰.

In that **fulsome thing falsely called** "The Gospel Guide²¹," a person says, "I fear at the Friday-night meetings the clouds have gathered thick about the dear brethren's heads, and our good friend has been over-persuaded in this case," signed "Anti-Jealousy." Foul and false imaginations, giving the lie to the expressed feelings of my letter! Who does the writer mean by "the brethren?" Does he mean the Conference brethren? Because if that be his meaning, my answer is that, "As the Lord lives," I never was at one of their meetings in my life, and I may have heard, but really do not know when their meetings are held, whether weekly, by the fortnight, or monthly. I do not belong to the Conference, and they have never consulted me, nor I them on any subject; and, therefore, these insinuations are as silly as they are false, and as cruel as they are wicked. "Anti-Jealousy", I suppose this is to charge me before the public with acting with a spirit of jealousy, **as though I was as childish as my accusers. I have too much to be thankful for to leave room for jealousy.** For in providence the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me. And as to friends, **I have about the country as many as most ministers.** And **I** have a peaceful and an affectionate church, and **I** really do not know the man in the kingdom that **I** could wish to change situations with; **and I am sure I would not change with you, for more reasons than one.** Besides, I am a predestinarian, and believe the bounds of my habitation are determined by *sovereign will*, and that my life was mapped out upon the eternal throne before dust was fashioned into a man. And my principles are not merely sentimental, but operative, and I live under their influence. Whereas, to be jealous of any man's lot, or to fly off to lying in time of personal or relative danger, or to repair to a fortune-

we must do all we can to follow our Lord's example and to be a peace with all men as much as possible but the truth must have pre-eminence.

²⁰ As I said in the previous note Foreman's concern was about himself and how this affected him personally.

²¹ As show elsewhere in this document "The Gospel Guide" was published by Charles Walter Banks. "fulsome", according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary means: "exceeding the bounds of good taste" "excessively complimentary or flattering" Foreman's remarks are derogatory in the extreme. They are not justified by the facts.

teller in time of difficulty, would be to deny my principles, and render myself worthless of Christian confidence in anything for honesty, as I distrusted in God.

Some have said, I ought to have waited upon you instead of writing; but what should I wait upon you for? It was no private matter, nor individual quarrel with me, but a public matter, that was gone abroad into the world, before professor and profane, and could not have been made good and right by any private arrangement. And as the case stood before the public, I could not in good conscience before God, allow **my name** to stand before the public as an abettor of the **awful doctrine** that was gone abroad, nor as a public man in my little way, to allow the appearance of *indifference* to such an **awful doctrine**. And, therefore, from a conscientious necessity, I acted as I did. If you had had any amendments to make to the public, you could have written them to me, and they might have been what I could have acted upon. But it seems you had no amendments to make, and were quite satisfied with your sermon, so much so as to be angry with those who could not receive it. And it seems you had not discovered then that your words, and so many of them too, and so much labor and suspending of divine laws to substantiate their very literal meaning, meant one thing, and your mind another. This appears to have been of later discovery. But we have a right to take *words* for *meaning*, according to our Lord's saying, "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." (Matthew, 22:37.) What a mercy it is for us, that the word of our God does not mean one thing, and his mind something quite the contrary.

The question is asked in that thing called the *Gospel Guide*, page 59, "Is Mister Foreman justified in the course he has taken?" I say "No," if he had acted from causes the writer suggests in page 60. But is the writer justified with others in giving the lie to the plain sense of my letter, in ascribing causes for the course I have taken, that I know nothing of, and they have no grounds for, as though the sermon on sinless lies had given them a patent for lying insinuation? I have stated above the cause of the course I adopted, and I should not be surprised if by insinuation they lie me out of that statement also. I acted for my own conscience, and alone for myself, as much so as though I had not a Christian friend within a thousand miles. Even "his free-will deacons" knew nothing more of my mind, feelings, intention, or writing, than a child to be born seven years hence; but they must be persecuted too it seems.

Some have spoken of "poor Rahab" as though she were injured, while nothing can be more false than that; but that, she was not justified in a way different from all other saints by the suspension of the law of God with his national creation, but by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as all other saints are. I have been charged with making a man an offender for a word, when you yourself call it "a doctrine." If I had been disposed to make a man an offender for a word, that would have been done a long while ago, when you have said, "A good lie is better than a bad truth any day."

As to your "defense," I think it worse than lame, and that you have thereby en-tangled your own integrity in a maze; but that is no personal business of mine. In the close of your sermon of Nov. 5th, page 372, you speak with an air of contempt upon those whom you call your opponents, saying, "They that murmured because poor Rahab was justified." Now you know they never murmured because she was justified by the grace of God, but that she never was by making lies morally true that were literally false. **And as to opponents, they at first only opposed your**

sermon about sinless lies, and which you have since, in a clumsy way, almost half-recalled, by some excuse, a little repentance, and a good deal of not the wisest bravado. Why, then, so angry with those who oppose a sermon that you yourself now feel obliged to limp at? And beyond the opposing of the said sermon, or that good lie doctrine in the sermon, who but yourself turned the matter into a party quarrel? Did you not attribute causes to my writing that never existed? calling it a “Purity Dodge,” and so at once gave the lie to the stated reason for my writing. And did you not go into your pulpit, and after preaching, read the two letters that had passed between myself and yourself, and labor to inflame the minds of your congregation with the bitterest animosity against me and my people, and recommended your people to send back the £16 you had collected at our place? **If this was not contemptibly mean, vicious, and persecuting, I do not know what name to call it by;** when my people knew no more of my writing to you than your people had to do in preaching your sermon. Well, the £16 was sent back, and we suppose that to be a sign of separation, and I we accept it as such. And God Almighty. in this matter, be judge²².

²² This last paragraph strongly implicates James Wells. My intention is, as much as is possible at this late date, to present facts. We all sin to a greater or less extent in all that we do and James Wells in no exception. Whether its to the extent that John Foreman implies is difficult to tell to any degree of accuracy. In defense I would note that I have not found any spirit of animosity to the brethren in the sermons I have been able to publish to date. With the readers forbearance I’m inserting here part of James Wells remarks to Walter Banks about Charles Spurgeon. Even here, in a matter he felt was of the upmost importance, his language is not unduly harsh.

“In the Personalities, where they must of necessity be causes of disputation, ought to be avoided. Why is Dr. Cumming paraded before us?—a man of whom, perhaps, we cannot, as a gentleman, a scholar, a philanthropist, and an advocate of Protestantism, speak too highly! But who, taught of God, ever once thought his ministry to be that of life and freedom, in the gospel and new covenant sense of the word?

But this I should have passed by—hoping the matter would drop; but, to my unbounded astonishment, we have thrust upon us by your own hand in your December number, another very questionable personage—namely, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. To hold my peace any longer would be criminal and traitorous to that cause dearer to me than mortal life.

You begin your review of his ministry with great caution and seeming honesty; you then rise into raptures; you tell us you are made to “jump for joy.” But anon, you sink down again into disappointment, and loudly call for something, with which Mr. Spurgeon does not furnish you; and your call for fire, or rain, or whatever you are calling for, sounds very like, “O Baal, hear us!” But Baal could bring neither fire, nor rain; nor can a false gospel—or, which is the same thing, the true gospel, perverted—bring either true judgment into the conscience, or true mercy into the soul.

But then, after this lamentable cry, you fall into a very kind, caressing sort of mood; and then it is — “Ah, dear brother, the Christian has another side to his experience.” Yes, that he has: in this thou said truly.

I would not wish my hand to be more heavy upon you than is needful; nor will I impute to you the motives which, I can assure you, many do impute to you in this matter. I judge that you have erred (for I most solemnly believe you have erred) in this matter, by oversight; you have not sufficiently weighed the matter; and **also by that great amount of benevolent and good feeling so natural to you; a feeling much to your credit; but, like other feelings, it needs control.**

I believe, also, that canting professors have had some weight with you. Hence, the real object of your correspondent John, in writing to you, is not, to exalt Mr. Spurgeon, but to level an arrow at those men of God who, because they insist upon fruits that spring from, and accord with the true root, are spoken of as though they did not insist upon fruits at all.

If the Earthen Vessel intend to change Masters, let it do so at once, and the living in Jerusalem will have done with it. If the candle of a true experience, that searches all the inward parts, be taken away, I, for one, should care but little for the candlestick; as the mere candlestick would be but a poor means to light me along in that path which the vulture's eye, keen as it may be, hath not seen. If the Vessel hold fast, to a certain extent, the letter of truth—yet, if there be not the life of truth, the Vessel must be blotted out of the book of life; and if it grow lukewarm, and is neither hot nor cold, we must cast it out of our mouths, nor must we take up its name into our lips.

Now, dear Editor, I write not this to shame you, but from the Christian love I have to you as a man of God, the good wishes I have for the true prosperity of the Vessel; and above all, the concern I feel for the truth as it is in Jesus.

I have no personal antipathy to Mr. Spurgeon; nor should I have written concerning him, but for your review of his ministry: his ministry is a public matter, and therefore open to public opinion, and as you assure us that the sermon on 1 Cor. 1. 6,—The Testimony of Christ Confirmed in You—by Mr. Spurgeon— is by far the best, I will, by your permission, lay before you my opinion of the same. But I will first make a few remarks concerning Mr. Spurgeon, to which remarks I think he is entitled.

It is, then, in the first place, clear that he has been, from his childhood, a very industrious and ardent reader of books—especially those of a theological kind; and that he has united with his theological researches books of classic, and of scientific caste; and has thus possessed himself of every kind of information which, by the law of association, he can deal out at pleasure; and these acquirements, by reading, are united, in Mr. Spurgeon, with good speaking gifts. The laws of oratory have been well studied, and he suits the action to his words. This mode of public speaking was, in the theatres of ancient Greece, carried to such an extent, that one person had to speak the words, and another had to perform the gestures, and suit, with every variety of face and form, the movement to the subject in hand. Mr. Spurgeon has caught the idea, only with this difference, that he (Mr. S.) performs both parts himself.

Mr. Spurgeon is too well acquainted with Elisha Coles, not to see in the Bible the sovereignty of God; and too well acquainted with the writings of Toplady and Tucker, not to see in the Bible the doctrine of predestination, and an overruling providence; and too well versed in the subtleties of the late Dr. Chalmers, not to philosophize upon rolling planets, and methodically moving particles of earth and water, each particle having its ordained sphere.

But in addition to these, he appears to be a well-disposed person—kind, benevolent, courteous, full of good will to his fellow creatures, endearing in his manners, social; a kind of person whom it would seem almost a cruelty to dislike. The same may be with equal truth said, both of Dr. Pusey and of Cardinal Wiseman.

But then, it becomes us to be aware, not only of the rough garment of a mock and "arrogant humility," but also of Amalakite-measured, and delicate steps; and also of the soft raiment of refined and studied courtesy, (Matt. xi. 8), and fascinating smile, with, surely, "the bitterness of

Sir, yours faithfully,

John Foreman.

8, Paddington Green, Dec. 22nd, 1865.

A Review of "The Faith of Rahab the Harlot" by J. C. Philpot M.A. of Stamford
Lincolnshire.

Taken from Volume 2 of his Reviews. Reprinted From the "Gospel Standard"²³ London 1901

Note: I have left the text of this review unedited except for some very small corrections. My desire is to give the reader the accurate possible picture of the word Philpot used and manner in which he used them. I have added footnotes for this purpose as well. Richard Schadle

The Faith of Rahab the Harlot. A Sermon Preached on Sunday Morning, June 18th, by Mr. James Wells, at the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road. (November 1865.)*

* We think it right to mention that as our Review, though sent to the office, could not be inserted in the September No., we have rewritten nearly the whole, especially the first part.

Moving on in our own quiet track, and simply seeking, so far as the Lord gives us grace and wisdom, the spiritual edification of our readers, we rarely take any public notice of the various events and movements which are passing in what is called the religious world. Several reasons combine to induce us to observe this course, and to close our pages against the introduction into them of religious news. First, we have long seen the evil of that spirit of gossip and news-mongering everywhere so prevalent, and are therefore determined, with God's help, not to do anything to foster it. Secondly, we are well convinced that if we once opened our pages to these subjects, as we could not always secure truthful and faithful accounts, being necessarily dependent for them upon the communications of correspondents, we should soon be overwhelmed with a flood of replies, explanations, contradictions, &c., which we could not well reject without unfairness, or insert without these weeds stifling our crop.

death is past." 1 Sam. Xv. 32. But Samuel had too much honesty about him to be thus deceived. We must, then, beware of words that are softer than butter, and smoother than oil. (Psa. It. 21). Not one of the reformers appears to have been of this amiable caste; but these creature refinements pass with thousands for religion; and tens of thousands are deluded thereby. It was by great, very great politeness, that the serpent beguiled Eve; and, unhappily, her posterity love to have it so: so true it is, that Satan is not only a Prince of darkness, but transformed also as an "angel of light" and shall deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect."

I will append additional information as it becomes available to me.

²³ This was first published in the "Gospel Standard" November 1865

But, thirdly, we have found in our experience that in all this "news of the churches," as it is called, there is little else, spiritually viewed, but barrenness and death²⁴. It may, indeed, for the moment amuse our carnal mind, and gratify that love of news which is so deeply imbedded in us all, to read what is going on in the churches; and could we believe the truth of the glowing accounts thus presented to our view, and that the Spirit of God was really at work in the various chapel-openings, anniversaries, tea-meetings, &c., recorded, it would be matter of rejoicing to our inmost soul. But when we know, not only by our own observation, but the general confession of all possessed of spiritual discernment, at what a low ebb vital godliness everywhere is, and see how shallow and superficial, to say the least, the religion contended for in these "newsy" periodicals is, what barrenness and death then appear stamped upon the whole! We do not impute willful deception to the writers and collectors of this religious news, nor doubt the truth of their statements, as recording certain events and facts. But what we doubt is whether the power, the presence, and the manifest blessing of the Spirit of God rest upon these chapel-openings, &c., as they represent and would make us believe. Truth is all of a piece, consistent with itself and with the word of God. It is the simple who believeth every word. (Prov. 14:15.) We are bidden to prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good; (1 Thess. 5:21;) not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. (1 John 4:1.) We are bound, therefore, to try and examine the accounts thus presented to us, and hold them up to the searching light of truth. When, then, we read the lavish flatteries bestowed upon minister after minister, a point that we shall have presently to speak more upon, the glowing coloring, to say the least, thrown over almost every recorded event, the suppression of everything unfavorable,* and the strong party spirit pervading the whole, we may well ask the question, Is this scriptural? Does the word of truth sanction this giving flattering titles to men? (Job 32:22.) Paul could say, "Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness;† God is witness; nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others." (1 Thess. 2:5, 6.) Can these time-serving publications, for so we must call them, filled as they are with the grossest flattery, say the same? Are the Acts of the ancient Apostles written on the same plan as the acts of the modern apostles? Does the Holy Ghost ever lavish praises upon the gigantic abilities of Paul, the pathetic eloquence of Peter, the sweet consolation which distilled from the lips of Barnabas? We know that these men of God were thus endowed, for they made it manifest in every place by the sweet savour they carried with them of the knowledge of Christ. But our modern apostles, what should we know of their gifts or their graces, their gigantic abilities, their pathetic eloquence, their sermons so full of consolation, and the blessings which fall in such copious showers with every sermon unless we were told so in the pages of some religious periodical?

²⁴ There is extreme negativity evidenced here. We have two well defined groups: Philpot's and all the rest. I think it is fair to subdivide "all the rest" and to single out the hyper-Calvinistic groups that differ from Philpot's. As he self-defines, he is thinking of Charles Walter Banks and the Earthen Vessel / Gospel Guide. In other words, any group that is favorable to James Wells in any degree. His side is holy the other side is profane. With this overwhelming bias what hope is there for a truthful review. As the reader can see this bias grows as he continues his discourse.

* As a striking instance of this, a religious weekly periodical, called the "Gospel Guide"²⁵, to which we shall soon more fully refer, has suppressed the speeches and proceedings at Mr. Foreman's Jubilee Meeting, simply because they were unfavorable to Mr. Wells. How much more honest is the public press, which gives both sides of every question with admirable impartiality.

† What a light do the flatteries, on which we shall presently more fully enter, throw upon this expression! We never saw its meaning so clearly before, or understood the connection between "flattering words" and "a cloak of covetousness."

We shall, doubtless, be considered by many very severe thus to speak of these religious newspapers, for they are really nothing else; and very bigoted and narrow-minded, because we cannot receive with implicit faith the glad tidings which they bring of the power and presence of the Lord being in their midst.

To justify, therefore, ourselves in thus speaking of the religious intelligence presented for our acceptance, we will give some extracts from a periodical calling itself the "Gospel Guide"²⁶; and let us see into what paths of truth and blessedness it would lead us were we to follow its guidance.

Mr. Wells has lately removed, with his church and congregation, to a new chapel, and great doings, according to our "Gospel Guide," occurred in connection with this event. The glory, indeed, of these great doings was sadly marred by the withdrawal of two leading ministers in the connection, who had undertaken to preach at the opening of the "New Surrey Tabernacle," in consequence of the sermon at the head of the present article; but, there was present a considerable array of ministers both from town and country; and amongst them sat one named S. Cozens,* who thus records in the "Gospel Guide" his impression and opinion of Mr. Wells: * This Mr. Cozens published some years ago, a work called "The Teacher's Thought Book," in which he strongly advocates the eternal Sonship of Christ; but, during the late controversy, wrote a most violent pamphlet, in which he as strongly denies it. What are we to think of such a man's testimony either for or against a doctrine, or a minister?

"Mr. Editor, As I sat in the New Surrey Tabernacle on Wednesday afternoon, I thought of David. I thought there had been great men in every age of the world, but the ages have rarely, if any age has ever, produced so great a man as David. And I could not help putting David and Mr. Wells together in my thoughts. David was a

²⁵ "The Gospel Guide" Here is a brief note on this publication from the May 1st 1867 Earthen Vessel. C. W. Banks says: 'One hundred and fifty numbers of the Gospel Guide have now been successively issued. This weekly penny paper is calculated to publish a consecutive history of the progress of the Gospel in connection with those churches and ministers who hold fast the great principles of the New Covenant salvation of the Church of Christ. No such weekly issue is to be found upon the face of the earth, except the Gospel Guide; and to aid its usefulness, corresponding agencies should be appointed in all our lead-ing districts.' Charles Walter Banks was the editor and it is he is Philpot is speaking of when he refers to this periodical. It was published from sometime in 1864 to at least 1867.

²⁶ I was pleased and yet saddened with I came across the following brief notice from the July 1st 1865 Earthen Vessel. It is from the pen of Charles Walter Banks. He says: "Mr. Philpot has been preaching at Zoar, and continues to labour there during July. A faithful sketch of his first appearance after his illness appeared in The Gospel Guide, to which we refer our readers." It would appear that just before the Rahab sermon they were on much better terms, at least as far as Banks was concerned.

great shepherd, who, in defense of his father's flock, slew a lion and a bear. And is not Mr. Wells a great shepherd of his Father's sheep? Does he not magisterially slay the lion and the bear, and rescue the lambs of Christ's fold? He was a great soldier; he was brave in battle. And is not Mr. Wells a good soldier? Many giant sinners have been laid low in the dust of death by the pebble of conviction from the sling of truth. He was a great saint; his devotion to his God was without a parallel in the history of the church. And is not Mr. Wells a great saint? If in the bowels of mercy, he suspends the moral government of God to cover the supposed fault of another, is he thereby the minister of sin? God forbid. Mr. Wells's life does not suspend the moral law. Where is there a more consistent man in the world? I said his charity covered a supposed fault, and I use the word 'supposed' because there was no more sin in the act of her faith than there was in the act of Abraham's faith. If God loves mercy rather than sacrifice, then he loved the mercy of Rahab, rather than the sacrifice of the spies. David was a great philosopher, who, like the Psalmist, made all the works of God to praise him? And is not Mr. Wells rapidly increasing in the knowledge of the philosophy of nature? Probably he can sing the 8th Psalm with as much astronomical pathos as did the sweet singer of Israel. He was a great preacher, he preached the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow as few men enter into those solemn and sublime subjects. And surely Mr. Wells preaches the atonement and its glorious results in a way that few, if any, can equal."

This comparison of David and Mr. Wells is pretty strong, and the absurd remarks upon Mr. Wells's "great philosophy," and his "astronomical pathos"* are supremely ridiculous. But now read, ye who fear God, and desire to walk in all honesty and faithfulness before man, the following extract, as a specimen of the way in which one minister can flatter another; and then ask yourselves, Is this gospel guidance? Does the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth, ever guide tongue or pen into the use of such fulsome flattery of any man, whatever be his grace, whatever be his gifts? * What ridiculous, bombastic language! How lowering to David and to the holy inspiration under which he wrote Psalm 8, to call it "his astronomical pathos!" and how irreverent to compare Mr. Wells's flimsy smattering of astronomy with the deep views which David had of the humiliation and exaltation of the Son of God in Psalm 8, as interpreted by the apostle, Heb. 2.

A few more words upon this.

We cannot measure the extent of Mr. Wells's "astronomical pathos," but we can gauge pretty well from the following extracts from his sermon preached at the opening of his new chapel his astronomical bathos (depth). He thus dazzles with his astronomical learning the eyes of his admiring audience:

"'And the posterity of Abraham shall shine forth,' saith the Savior, yea, even 'as the sun in the kingdom of their father,' 'So shall thy seed be as the stars.'

Now don't say one word against high-doctrine people; after all, would not you like to be one of these stars? How you would laugh at the man that threatens to pull one down; how you would laugh at the man that throws stones at the stars; how you would laugh

at the man that would attempt to stop a star in its course! So these heavenly stars, they all move in their destined orbits; but to use a few astronomical terms, they are sometimes in their detriment, and sometimes in their fall very low; sometimes in their peregrinations very wandering, sometimes stationary, can go neither backwards nor forwards; sometimes in fortification, and sometimes in exaltation; sometimes in combustion—burnt with fiery trials, [trials?] and at other times rushing forward in their glorious orbits, shining with all the splendors of eternity; when mortality by-and-by shall be stripped from the soul, then shall they shine forth as the stars for ever and ever; rise at the last great day, when mortality shall put on immortality, corruption put on incorruption, weakness put on strength, the natural put on the spiritual, then shall they rise to shine and to set no more."

Let us examine all this display of astronomical knowledge; this, as Mr. Cozens calls it, "vast and classical intelligence."

How full it is of wild confusion, not to say the grossest ignorance when fairly examined. The stars which God bade Abraham tell were the fixed stars as seen in the midnight sky, and it was the innumerable multitude of these which he was to look at and measure his seed by. But Mr. Wells destroys all the simplicity and beauty of this interpretation by his absurd comment. The heavenly stars which Abraham was bidden to count have no "destined orbits;" and that is the reason why they are called "fixed," in opposition to the planets which have elliptical orbits, that is, move round the sun in a peculiar circle, called an ellipse, and to the comets, whose orbits are "eccentric," that is, ellipses exceedingly prolonged. How absurd, then, to talk of the "destined orbits of the heavenly stars." But his astronomical terms are still more ridiculous, and are either misprints or the most curious mistakes that a man could well make, indeed could not make had he read with the least attention the simplest work on the subject. They are "sometimes in their detriment." There is no such word used in astronomy, nor have we the least idea what he means by it. There is "declination," but that does not suit the sense, and the word "decrement," or decrease, is not an astronomical but a mathematical term. The word "peregrinations" is not an astronomical word, but may be used of the motions of the planets. "Stationary" they never really are, though they appear to us sometimes to be so. What in the world is meant by their being "in fortification" we cannot tell, nor do we believe the preacher himself knows, or what he means by their "exaltation," as opposed to it.

What, too, is their "combustion," unless he means the tail of a comet, which we have no reason to believe arises from the comet being, as it were, on fire, blazing away like a burning haystack; nor how "they rush forward in their glorious orbits, shining with all the splendors of eternity," when the eccentric orbit of a comet takes it every night more and more out of sight. We think he must have dipped into some old astrological book—a companion, perhaps, to Moore's Almanac, and its curious hieroglyphics, and jumbled it up with a little smattering of astronomy; enough, however, to astonish the people,—and draw from the Editor of the "Gospel Guide" the expression "How spiritually grand!"

There are plenty of cheap and excellent treatises on astronomy. If Mr. Wells thinks he may profitably study such subjects, let him buy one of these, and read it carefully, before he dazzles his

audience again with his scientific attainments. Sham knowledge is as contemptible naturally as sham religion is spiritually. If we speak strongly, or even severely, on these points, it is because we are thoroughly disgusted with the late flatteries so profusely heaped upon him, and feel called upon to show their deceptiveness and falsehood; for if we do hate anything, it is "shams."

"In conclusion, I would say, for one, I am proud of Mr. Wells, for in him we see the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion to the altar of divine service, the prophet's communing's with the spirit-world, the apostle's self-abnegation in seeking the good of others; indeed, in him is concentrated the zeal of Wyclif, the daring of Luther, the sagacity of Calvin, the imagery of Bunyan, the discrimination of Toplady, and the spirit of the Master."

If, your stomach can bear it, do, good reader, read this extract again.—"In him we see"—Who are the "we"? Was there ever a man or a minister, who lived and breathed the breath of life, that combined in himself the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion, the prophet's communings with the spirit-world,* and the apostle's self-denial? Wherever was there one man in whom were concentrated the best qualities of Wicklif, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Toplady, and all crowned with the spirit of Christ? Does Mr. Cozens really believe what he writes? Is it his calm, deliberate judgment that Mr.

James Wells is that unheard-of paragon of all natural and spiritual excellence, that phoenix who combines in himself the greatest gifts and graces of the greatest saints and divines who ever lived? If he believe this, if this be his serious and deliberate opinion, what amazing ignorance of everything naturally or spiritually great, to think that any one man, and, above all, Mr.

James Wells, can combine in himself such a constellation of heavenly gifts—gifts and graces not to be reckoned up by simple addition, but to be calculated by the multiplication-table, for if the shining qualities of ten men meet together in one man, he is not only ten times as great as any one of them, but a hundred times, from the strength and force of their combination and concentration. If he do not believe it, and writes all this bombast merely to please Mr. Wells—who, by-the-bye, if he have but the common feelings of an honest man, would, we should think, kick such a flattering article out of his house with both feet—what servile adulation, what fulsome flattery, what mean, wretched toadying of a great man in the connection by one of the humbler satellites! Have our readers had enough of it, or shall we trespass too much on their patience, by furnishing another extract from the same pen on the same occasion? * If we did not know better, we should almost think that Mr. Cozens was tainted with that abomination of our day called "spiritualism;" for the expression, "communings with the spirit-world," is the very language of those modern impostors or necromancers who pretend to converse with the spirits of the dead. What does he mean by the prophets "communings with the spirit-world?" They communed with God; the Spirit of Christ was in them. (1 Pet.1:11.) But what communings had they with the spirits of the departed? Is this doctrine gospel truth, or gospel guidance?

"I heartily wish every man of God in London had as beautiful a chapel, as large a church, and as liberal a congregation, as our highly-favoured brother, Mr. J. Wells. That man must indeed be a narrow-souled, lean-hearted, and ill-conditioned being

who refuses to join with the Surrey Tabernacle worshippers in singing the 'Hallelujah Chorus.'"

"The preacher is almost as fresh and as unctuous as the dewy morn; his physical powers seem unimpaired; his mind is as richly stored with divine treasures as the coffers of Croesus were with gold; his thoughts flow like the rapids of a river; his utterances dance about the green pasture like young roes upon the mountain; his eyes flash with intellectual fire, and his arms appear to wield the sword of his mouth with marvellous effect. Dr. Hugh Allen said to me after the evening service, 'His enunciation is extraordinary.' Indeed, it is, doctor. His declarations are bold and manly; his attestations are clear and convincing; his intelligence is vast and classical; his information is wide and scholastic. He is a prodigy of indomitable perseverance, and of great acquirements. Our young ministers would do well to emulate his assiduousness."

"The deacons are like a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot. The Aminadab in the pulpit holds the reins, and the horses without kicking or prancing move on stately and grandly carrying in the chariot of ordinances a great number of precious souls from the things that are seen to the things that are not seen. God bless them for the active part they have taken in building the temple."

"The church is like a flock of sheep on the high mountains of Israel. That they live and feed in a fat pasture is patent to all spiritual observers. Pharaoh's lean kine could not live among the fatted sheep of the Surrey Tabernacle. Brother Wells's 'bill of fare' is a 'feast of fat things and of wines well refined,' and therefore it is that his people are fat and flourishing in the courts of our God."

What wretched daubing is this? We do not like to make promises or protestations; but we think we can say, in all honesty, that, sooner than daub any man or men with such untempered mortar, we would never touch pen again. Besides which, what in the world can Mr. Cozens know of the deacons and church of Mr. Wells to warrant such fulsome praise? And when we consider all the circumstances under which such lavish flattery is bestowed upon minister and people, when it was matter of public notoriety that Mr. Wells has advanced and still maintains views of sinless falsehood which have shaken the confidence in him of many of his warmest friends, it makes such conduct more suspicious and more censurable.

Are we wrong, then, in saying that in all such religious news, that is, when dressed out according to the specimen just given, and this is but a sample of the usual spirit given us to drink, though it must be acknowledged that the articles supplied by Mr. Cozens are rather "above proof" in every sense of the term, there is nothing but barrenness and death? What fruitfulness to God or man can there be in flattery? What life in deception? It is well known that Mr. Wells has lately published a sermon which, as we shall by and by show, strikes at the very foundations of truth and honesty, if not common morality. Just at this very juncture, when he stands in such a perilous spot, when he has drawn upon himself the animadversions of the public press, when his most intimate and long-tried friend, Mr. Foreman,* felt himself compelled to decline his engagement to open his new

chapel—just at this very crisis, this turning-point, it may be, of Mr. Wells's ministerial career, instead of remonstrating with him on his errors, and thus, perhaps, instrumentally turning him from them, ministers and editors who call themselves men of truth come forward to back him up, and thus confirm and harden him in his views.

* Mr. Foreman has been condemned, and, what is worse, accused of jealousy as a reason that he would not fulfil his engagement. But we may be sure that, after so long and intimate a friendship of 35 years, he must have been exceedingly pained so publicly to withdraw himself from Mr. Wells; and in our opinion he has acted most properly and creditably to himself in bearing this open, unmistakable testimony against Mr. Wells's grievous errors.

But in our desire to show the evils of the present system of religious intelligence, and the reasons why we so set our face against it, we have rather overrun our mark, which was to review Mr. Wells's sermon on the faith of Rahab²⁷. It is indeed no pleasurable task for us to enter upon what will probably prove a very sea of strife; but silence on our part, when the very foundations of truth are assailed, if not absolutely criminal, would at least be interpreted into timidity or acquiescence; either that we were afraid of attacking Mr. Wells, and with him that strong party of ministers and others who stand by him, or that we secretly approved of his views and sentiments.

We feel, then, bound to declare our opinion without fear and without flattery.

To come, then, without further preface to this now celebrated sermon.

On Lord's Day morning, June 18, 1865, Mr. Wells preached a sermon at the Surrey Tabernacle, which was duly published in the "Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit," and therefore, doubtless, not only had his sanction, but passed under his eye for revision for the press. We may fairly, therefore, accept this sermon as a public statement of his deliberate views, and as such it is open to us, as to every other reader, to examine these sentiments by the light of scripture; and, as editors of a religious periodical, to lay before our readers our opinion upon them, if, as becomes our profession, we do so with fairness and impartiality. The subject of the sermon, as will be seen from the title, is "the Faith of Rahab, the Harlot." The introduction to the sermon contains sound truth well and vigorously expressed. Take, for instance, the following extract:

"But perhaps this does not come exactly to the point; it is God's way of saving the soul that man objects to. God loving a man simply because he would love him, and choosing him simply because he would, and imputing the man's sins to Christ simply because he would, and imputing the work of Christ to him savingly because he

²⁷ Well might he say: "we have rather overrun our mark" We have here his express purpose for this lengthy preamble: "our desire to show the evils of the present system of religious intelligence, and the reasons why we so set our face against it" **In essence it's this:** Anyone who supports James Wells is a liar and not to be trusted in any degree. As any good secular general in a war would do, he seeks first to undermine the moral and fighting ability of those he opposes. What of Romans 13:13 "**Let us behave decently**, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, **not in dissension and jealousy.** (NIV Version).

would, and preserving that man while in a state of nature simply because he would, and calling him at the appointed moment simply because he would, and dealing with him after he hath called him just as seemeth good in his sight, not as seemeth good in the man's sight, not as seemeth good in the sight of others, but as seemeth good in his own sight, and keeping him to the end with infallible certainty, and presenting him ultimately on the vantage-ground of victory before the throne; this is that which the spirit of the world hath always hated and still hates. This is the salvation that the world and Pharisees grudge a poor sinner."

Mr. Wells then ably shows how different the case is when God really takes the soul in hand by his grace:

"But let God take a Saul of Tarsus or any other man in hand, and let the Lord break up the foundations of the great deep within that man's heart; let that man's soul be tried with the ten thousand infidelities and unnamable abominations of his heart; let him see and feel himself spiritually as the word of God declares, full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, no part sound; let a sinner be thus convinced, he will feel that he has not a stone to throw at any one. He will look at what he is, and say, 'What have I to do with other people's sins? I have nothing but sin to call my own.' 'This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' I am the greatest wonder here. I am aware it has been declared that Saul of Tarsus alone can adopt that language, 'I am the chief of sinners;' but it is the language that every real Christian adopts, because every real Christian sees more sin in himself than he can see in all others put together. And where there is this spirit, then it is that spirit the apostle exhorts to when he says, 'Esteeming each other better than himself.' And the Christian, when he comes to his right mind, is glad to see the grace of God anywhere, let it be wherever it may. He is glad to see the grace of God in Manasseh, in Magdalene, the thief, or anywhere. Yea, so far from the Christian, that knows his own heart and his own state, grudging another his salvation, he rather blesses God for those wondrous instances given in his word of his grace reaching down to the lowest, taking up the most depraved, the most monstrous, and turning them into kings and priests to God, consecrating them to himself forever."

Had Mr. Wells confined himself to this simple strain of divine truth, and not launched into views and speculations which he must have known were dubious, not to say dangerous, how much better would it have been for himself and his congregation. But then that would not be Mr. Wells. Unless he can bring forward something new, striking, startling, and, to use a modern term, sensational, it would seem to be poor, tame work to himself and the people. It is also but doing Mr. Wells common justice to give another extract in which he disclaims a doctrine as horrid and loathsome, which we fear we shall have occasion to fasten, upon him. But let us thus far give him the benefit of his own disclaimer:

"I shall not this morning occupy your time in dwelling (for I shall leave you entirely to your own reflections, lest I should be misunderstood) upon some points that I

could have entered into. I will leave you to your own reflections upon the wonderful counsel of God pertaining to this woman, his deep counsel in suffering her so to degrade herself, his deep counsel in placing her in a house that should be just convenient for the spies to come to, his deep counsel in overruling the worst of things to the best purposes. I will leave you to your own reflections upon this, lest any should go away with an impression that I hold the horrid and loathsome doctrine of doing evil that good may come. I hold no such doctrine, and no child of God ever did, or ever will, or ever can sin from such a motive. I shall, therefore, pass by all the circumstances of original character, and shall simply notice what our text presents, namely, her faith. 'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.'

"I shall notice first, *what she believed*; secondly, *her integrity*; thirdly, *her prayer*; fourthly, *her manifold success*."

The first head we shall pass by. Mr. Covens would probably see in it all the gifts and graces of all the patriarchs, the priests, the prophets, and the apostles, and Wickliffe, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, and Toplady all concentrated in one. But our dim sight sees nothing extraordinary in it; nothing that, either as regards ideas or language, is much above the general average of the leading preachers in his connection. Nay, if we were disposed to be critical, we should seriously object to such a crude, naked statement as the following, which in our judgment does not display the ripe, matured wisdom of the patriarch, the devotion of the priest, the sublime communing of the prophet, and the grace of the apostles, let alone Calvin's sagacity, and Toplady's discrimination:

"Why, if I were the greatest sinner practically that ever walked God Almighty's earth, and if I had been carrying on sin with gigantic force for a thousand years, or even ten thousand years, if I am blessed with a grain of faith in Immanuel, my sins are swallowed up, the devil defeated, my soul saved, grace prevailing, the truth made good, the Saviour triumphant, God glorified, and that forever."

Now, we do not say that a man who has been "carrying on sin with gigantic force for a thousand years" would be saved by a grain of faith in Immanuel. His precious blood; God's name be forever praised, "cleanseth from all sin." But what is there said in this extract about repentance, confession, and forsaking of sin? What of broken bones and a guilty conscience, of the floods that such a saved sinner must have to wade through before salvation was sealed on his breast? As it now stands, the impression left by it would be simply this, that a man might live in all manner of sin all his life, and then a grain of faith would be all he would want to save him at the last without repentance, confession, or a broken heart.²⁸

²⁸ This is clearly unfair and untruthful. What of the thief on the cross? We read the following words in scripture: 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (NIV version). No one can be saved without repentance, faith and a

We do not say that Mr. Wells holds any such doctrine; nay, we fully believe that he does not²⁹; but this we must say, that Calvin, Luther, Bunyan, and Toplady never advanced such naked, unguarded doctrine, or thus left out all mention of repentance; nor was it Paul's preaching, (Acts 20:20, 21) or Peter's either. (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31.) But we will now furnish an extract from that part of the sermon which has caused so much excitement; and, though rather long, we give it in full, 1, that our readers may judge of the whole matter for themselves; and, 2, that we may not be suspected or accused of garbling his statements:

"Second, I notice her integrity. Now where there is this faith that I have noticed, good works will follow. First, integrity,—she took care of the spies. Ah! say you, she told two untruths. She did, and jeopardized her life in so doing. The king sent and said, 'There are men come unto thee, bring them forth.' 'Well,' she said, 'men came, but I do not know whence they came.' That was not true. No, it was not. 'And about the time it got dark, and the gate was about to be shut, they went out, but I do not know where they have gone to; you had better pursue after them.' Now here are two falsehoods. Now, then, some of you hypocrites, get your piety ready, for I am going to shock it a little. Was Rahab justified in those falsehoods? Certainly she was. Say you, would you have told them? Yes, sir, I would tell ten thousand if I were placed in the same circumstances, and had the same divine authority for it that she had. She must either utter those falsehoods or else betray the spies, and their lives would have been lost. Then she could not have saved Jericho; it would have been destroyed all the same, and she would have been destroyed, and her father and mother, her brothers and sisters, would have been destroyed, and all would have been destroyed. Some say, Well, I have sometimes thought that she told those falsehoods by virtue of the law of hospitality; that in the East, when they receive a person as their guest, they feel bound to venture any and every thing for him. Well, oriental customs are all very well in their place, but we must not lay too much stress upon that; I choose to keep close to the blessed God. Well, but say you, there are the falsehoods, and so how do you get over them? I will ask you a question or two. First, the shewbread was lawful for none but the priests; David did not even belong to the priestly tribe, yet ate the shewbread. Then how do you get over it? Oh, say you, won't you tell us? I don't think I ought. What saith the law? 'Thou shalt do no manner of work on the Sabbath day.' 'The priests profane the Sabbath,' mark that, 'and are blameless.' The Pharisees were confounded at that. Did not the Saviour say so, that they profaned the Sabbath, and were blameless? Rahab from two principles uttered these falsehoods. First, she was placed apparently between two evils; she must either inflict injury upon the cause of God, by destroying—which she would have done by admitting the spies were there—the lives of these two godly men; she must either do that, or else speak as she did; therefore, between the two evils she chose the least. But were not the untruths she told sinful? No, I believe not; I'll

broken heart but this all can be the work of a few moments as we near death. Again, God is Sovereign, he can save at any time he chooses.

²⁹ Why then did he bring this up in the first place but to do all the harm possible to James Wells.

have a word upon that presently. But, mind, we must be placed in analogous circumstances to tell an untruth with divine sanction. I will not here give you a lecture upon the vice of lying, which is a dreadful vice, as you all know. But it is the peculiarity of the circumstances in times past; and even now I could easily show you we may be placed in circumstances where such untruths, which untruths would do no one harm, would be commanded. Did she injure any one? If by exposing the spies she could have saved her country, there might have been some plausibility about it; but it would not; Jericho would have been destroyed all the same, and she too, and, as I have said, her house as well. Now then, to be careful here for a moment, I will tell you a doctrine I hold, and I may as well bring it to light; a little open air will do it no harm. I hold this doctrine; that in the physical, in the moral, and in the spiritual world the great God can suspend for a time any law he chooses. When the sun stood still, some physical laws we do not understand were suspended; when the sea was divided, physical laws we do not understand were suspended; so when Jordan was divided. In all the Saviour's miracles there were physical laws suspended, and other laws put into their place we cannot understand. The literal law of things was for the loaves and fishes to remain as they were; but to suspend that law, and by some other law we do not understand multiplied those loaves and fishes into what you read of. And just so in the moral world; God here suspended the law of falsehood, and by suspending that law did hereby take away the criminality of Rahab's falsehoods; that though she told two falsehoods, there was no sin in them, no crime in them; necessity demanded it; God suspended the usual law of truth, and made that morally true which was literally false; that is, Rahab did not choose to know whence the spies came, or whither they went, and in the exercise of this right she was justified; hereby suspended one law to make way for another. What cannot the great God do? 'Do to others as you would they should do to you' is a law existing among creatures of equality; but God has not his equal; he has no other to do to him as he is done to. Why, say some, you seem to rejoice in it. Of course, I do. I would rather lose the last drop of my blood any day than give up one iota of Jehovah's right—absolute, original, and moral right—as the great original, inconceivable God, to do just what he pleases. There are some laws he will not suspend; the law of his love—never alter that; the law of salvation; not because he cannot—be careful how you attribute cannots to the great God. God cannot lie because he will not."

This is plain enough. There is no obscurity of thought or language here. Mr. Wells does certainly possess the faculty of clearly and forcibly expressing his meaning, and in this much of his ability as a preacher consists. As before we have done with him, we shall have to give him some hard blows, let us do him justice as far as we can. But let us now examine the sentiments and views thus plainly expressed. **Mr. Wells here allows that Rahab told two falsehoods, but sets himself vigorously to justify them, and we must say on such grounds that, if they could be carried**

out and fully established, would overturn every distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil³⁰.

He has a suspicion, indeed, that his views, so novel and so startling, will meet with disapproval. But, mark the way in which he encounters the anticipated opposition, as if he would beat it down beforehand, and stamp upon it if it should dare to raise its head against him: "Now, then, some of you hypocrites, get your piety ready, for I am going to shock it a little." Is it not daring in the extreme, language most repulsive to every right feeling, thus to brand all as pious hypocrites who will not and cannot receive his doctrine, and feel shocked at such God-dishonoring sentiments? What an attempt to beat down the timid and tender-hearted, and hold them up to his congregation as hypocrites, if they would not at once, and without examination, receive the doctrine which he was about to advance. And what an invitation, what an encouragement to the daring part of his congregation, to all who would shun as a plague the imputation of pious hypocrisy, to receive at once, whatever he might propound, lest the very suspicion of mock-holiness should be cast upon them. For what is the doctrine thus introduced with a kind of popish anathema against all who would not at once receive it, or immediate subjection to all the pains and penalties due to hypocrites here and hereafter if they would not without consideration or examination, fall down and worship the image, we cannot call it golden, which Mr. James Wells has set up³¹? It is this, that under certain circumstances a lie is not a lie; that occasions of great urgency may arise when they are perfectly justifiable, and that he himself would tell ten thousand if he were placed in the same position, and had the same divine authority for it. **Now, we admit that Rahab was placed in very trying circumstances, and that the lives of the spies, humanly speaking, depended on her lips. But no circumstances whatever can make a lie not to be a lie, and no power in heaven or in earth can alter the nature of falsehood and cause it not to be a sin; nor did God give her authority to tell a lie to save the spies.**³² It is, we must say, awful* tampering with God's word, and a profanation of his holy name, to declare that he has ever commanded any man or woman, under any circumstances, to tell lies, and given falsehood his sanction. **It is awful doctrine, hold it who may, be he Calvinist, or Arminian, Baptist, Independent, or Churchman.** We assert that Rahab sinned in telling falsehoods to save the lives of the spies, and that it is nothing but sophistry, vile sophistry, to say that they were not sinful; in fact, it is a worse doctrine than that which Mr. Wells denounces, as we have seen in this very sermon, as "horrid and loathsome," viz., of doing evil that good may come; for to say that evil is not evil, and may, under certain circumstances, be good, is worse than doing evil as evil that good may come, for it more breaks up the distinction between good and evil. A man who says, "I am doing what is evil, but I do it that good may come from it," acknowledges that he is doing evil; but a man who says, "The lie I have told in this particular case and under this peculiar circumstance is not evil but good, and has

³⁰ This sweeping generalization gives us a second insight into Philpot's mindset. There is only absolute black and white, pure law with little or no gospel in it. This is his decided option.

³¹ Again, the language here is extreme, reading far more into Wells expression than he ever intended. Wells knew of course that some would object to his teaching but, as has been demonstrated elsewhere he had no concept whatsoever of the storm it would raise. Philpot is looking at this with hindsight, reading into Wells words what he himself never even imagined.

³² This is now the third example I am focusing on to show Philpot's determined bias. There are of course many more but this is I believe sufficient for our purposes.

the sanction and approbation of the Almighty," actually denies that evil is evil, and pronounces evil to be good.

* It is painful to see how Mr. Wells meets this expression "awful," which he must have heard frequently used in reference to his views upon the nature of truth and falsehood, and God's suspending his moral law. In his morning sermon, preached at the opening of the New Surrey Tabernacle, we find him thus speaking:

"Now-a-days, if a minister says something that others cannot understand, they lift up their hands and say, 'How awful!' But that does not convince anyone that he is wrong. You should bring the prophets and apostles, and show what they say, and not let your words be, 'How awful!' not lift up your hands and eyes and say, 'How awful!' Any old woman could say that. A minister ought to say what anyone could not say. They should bring in the testimonies of the prophets and apostles, and bring them in quietly, and see them side by side with what they think to be wrong, and thus they would cleanse the visual ray, and on what they suppose to be the sightless eyeball they would pour the day. But instead of this they put themselves and others too into a storm, and make the fog thicker still."

This is the very language which Milton put into the mouth of Satan, us the ultimatum of all wickedness:

"Evil, be thou my good."

But Mr. Wells urges, "You should bring the prophets and apostles, and show what they say." Why has he not done this himself to prove, or at least support, his doctrine? He attempts, indeed, to bring in the authority of James, and actually says that he makes Rahab's lies to be the best part of her conduct. But as we shall have occasion to enter on this point, we shall for the present pass it by. Let, then, Mr. Wells show us where and when God bade Rahab tell lies to save the lives of the spies, or even declared that her falsehoods were not sinful. Mr. Wells argues as if Rahab's lies were so indispensable to the safety of the spies that in no other way could they have been preserved from immediate destruction. But is not this denying the power of God? Could not he have struck their pursuers with blindness, as the angels smote the men of Sodom, (Gen. 19:11,) or consumed them with fire from heaven, as he burnt up the two captains and their companies that came to take Elijah? (2 Kings 1:9-12.)³³ It almost seems as if Mr. Wells would so doubt the power of God to

³³ It is instructive here to look to our Lord and Master: Jesus Christ. We read the following account in Matthew 4:1 – 11: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'[b]" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'[c]" 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: '**Do not put the Lord your God to the test.**'[d]" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away

have the lives of the spies in any other way than by Rahab's lies,† that he actually sacrificed to that overwhelming necessity his own truth and holiness, or, to use Mr. Wells's expression, suspended his moral law. But it seems to us little better than sheer infidelity to think that the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth was so at a loss for means to save the lives of two men except by sin, that for that special occasion he turned sin into holiness, evil into good, and truth into falsehood. For do look at the words:

† There are some very good remarks on this point by Keil, a German commentator on Joshua, as will be seen by the following extract:

"Though Rahab's subsequent conversation with the spies (5:9) proves that she was both convinced of the omnipotence of Jehovah, and of the reality of the miracles he had performed for his people, and also that she firmly believed that this God was about to give them the land of Canaan, and that therefore all opposition to Israel would be futile, being, in fact, resistance to the Almighty God himself; yet this is no justification of her falsehood, which still remains nothing but a sinful expedient, by which she thought it necessary to contribute her part towards the accomplishment of the decrees of God and the safety of herself and family. The lie which Rahab told is a sin, notwithstanding that the feelings which dictated it had their root in faith in the true God; (Heb. 11:31;) and the help she rendered from these motives to the spies, and therefore to the cause of the Lord, was accounted to her for righteousness, (James 2:25,) and her sin was forgiven her as a sin of weakness."

This is sounder doctrine than Mr. Wells's.

"But were not the untruths she told sinful? No, I believe not. But mind, we must be placed in analogous circumstances to tell an untruth with divine sanction."

What can be plainer than this declaration of Mr. Wells's faith that the untruths which Rahab told were not sinful, nay had the divine sanction? Mark those last words. Is not that an awful expression, "to tell an untruth with divine sanction," as if the God of truth, the Holy One of Israel, the God who cannot lie, may and does sometimes sanction a lie? And observe, also, the practical inference drawn from the doctrine that Rahab's lies were not sinful. That we may be placed in circumstances

from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'[e]" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Footnotes:

Matthew 4:1 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested.

Matthew 4:4 Deut. 8:3

Matthew 4:6 Psalm 91:11,12

Matthew 4:7 Deut. 6:16

Matthew 4:10 Deut. 6:13

It is a simple fact that God works ordinarily by common means. If God has so chosen, of course he could have intervened with a miracle. He is always faithful to himself, doing that which give himself the most glory. In this case he acted as we read in the passages from Josiah. The New Testament fully backs up Wells teaching.

analogous to hers when we may tell lies which shall not be sinful, and even have the divine sanction, as, for instance, screening a fellow member of a church from disgrace by telling falsehoods, as Rahab screened the spies from death. As, however, we shall by and by more fully enter upon this point, we shall just now wave it. But suppose further that Rahab had confirmed her words by an oath. According to Mr. Wells's view, that would not have been perjury, for an oath is merely a stronger asseveration than a word; and if a lie under certain circumstances be no lie, then, under the same similar circumstances, perjury would be no perjury. One of the vilest doctrines of the Jesuits was, that under certain circumstances lying was not a sin, and that for the good of the church, or even under other circumstances, theft, perjury, and murder ceased to be crimes, and indeed became virtues.*

* Bellarmine, **the greatest champion of Popery**, has these words: "If the Pope should err in commending vice or forbidding virtue, the Church is bound to believe vice to be good and virtue to be bad."—Bellarmine de Pontifice, Book 4. chap. 5. Extremes, they say, meet, and it would almost seem as if the minister of the new Surrey Tabernacle and the priests of the new Roman Catholic Cathedral might, after the example of Dr. Hugh Allen, meet and shake hands at the Elephant and Castle.

How does that doctrine differ from Mr. Wells's, that we may be placed under circumstances where untruths would be commanded; in other words, where God would bid us tell a lie³⁴. It will be observed that Mr. Wells brings forward some show of argument to support his views, and as he bids those who say, "How awful!" and we are among them, to bring in the testimony of the prophets and apostles, and to bring them in quietly, we shall attempt to do so, and quietly begin with showing the fallacy of his arguments to defend the falsehoods of Rahab. We have called it a show, for it is nothing more than a show, and has in it neither truth nor substance. He brings forward the Lord's argument about David's eating the shewbread, and the priests in the temple profaning the Sabbath, and yet being blameless. But what a vast difference there is between an institution such as the Sabbath, or a mere ceremonial prohibition such as that none but the priests and their families might eat the shewbread, and the grand, immutable distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil. **The cases are not parallel, and have nothing in common with each other; and that being the case, all comparison between them is worthless, and every inference drawn from such a comparison is fallacious.**³⁵ The Sabbath was made for man,—not man for the Sabbath. Had no Sabbath ever been instituted, had no distinction been made by God between the six days of labour and the seventh day of rest, there would have been no violation of the eternal laws of

³⁴ To, in any way, insinuate that James Wells was, in any, way affiliated with Popery is absolutely ridiculous! It would be pointless if it were not for the fact that it was a deliberate attack which was meant to cause as much hurt and harm as possible. As we saw before Foreman also accused Wells of Popery.

³⁵ Where we to follow Philpot's logic here there would be no parallels in the scriptures at all! To counter we have, first of all the clear teaching of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament on Rahab and David. Secondly, in context, both Rahab and David lived and died under the Old Testament institutions. Of course, by faith they both looked forward to the coming of Christ and the New Testament. Theirs lives and actions however were firmly grounded on God's revelation of his truth in the Old Testament. Philpot falsely uses the New Testament perspective to score points in his debate with Wells. The two cases are in fact parallel, if anything David's actions are more in question than Rahab's.

truth and holiness. Whether man rests or labours, it does not touch the eternal, unalterable distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. God might or might not institute the Sabbath, or he might, if he so pleased, abrogate it when instituted, without its in the least affecting his righteous attributes; but he cannot, with all the might of omnipotence, make wrong to be right, evil to be good, or falsehood to be truth. As a perpetual memorial of his own resting from the six days' work, for the good of man and beast, and for the preservation of his worship upon earth, God instituted the Sabbath day. This was again repeated as the fourth commandment of the decalogue, and was thus made binding on the children of Israel by positive law. But the ceremonial law, which came from the same Lawgiver, commanded that two lambs of the first year, without spot, should be offered on the Sabbath day, (Num. 28:9,) which, of course, involved the necessity of killing and flaying them, cutting them into pieces, putting fire on the altar, and laying the wood in order, (Lev. 1:6-9,) all which, unless so commanded, and done for holy uses and the worship of God, might be called "servile work," and a profanation of the Sabbath. But it is mere trifling with the question to adduce as an argument that God can occasionally sanction lies, make them to be truths, and suspend his moral law, because the priests in the temple offered sacrifices on the Sabbath. Mr. Wells speaks of "clearing the visual ray;" but where was his visual ray when he could see no distinction between the immutable laws of truth and holiness and a mere institution? His must have been a "sightless eye-ball" not to perceive so plain a distinction, and we almost fear, if we are to judge by the way in which he defends his views in his late sermons and addresses, even now so sightless that we shall not be able "to pour the day upon it!" But who, with purged eyesight, does not see that Sabbaths are for earth, for a time state, and cease with earth? There are no seventh-day Sabbaths in heaven, as there are no six days' work, but one eternal Sabbath of rest and peace. (Heb. 4:9, margin.) But though there are no seventh-day Sabbaths in heaven, the throne of God is in heaven, (Ps. 11:4,) and as justice and judgment are its habitation and establishment, (Ps. 89:14, margin,) so to all eternity will truth be truth, and holiness be holiness, and God must cease to be before he can cease to be the Holy One of Israel. The other argument about David's eating the shewbread, and drawing from that circumstance the inference that God sometimes sanctions falsehood, and suspends his moral law against it, is equally weak and fallacious. It was but a ceremonial institution that none but the priest and his family might eat the loaves of shewbread which were removed weekly from the table. It was, therefore, analogous to the prohibition of eating unclean meats, fat, or blood, and was but a breach of the ceremonial law. David's eating the shewbread was not a sin as telling a lie is a sin. The one was the infringement of a ceremonial institution, the other is a breach of the moral law. There was no curse attached to a man of the tribe of Judah eating, in a case of necessity, the shewbread, but there is a curse attached to the breach of the moral law. It is, therefore, mere childish, not to say sophistical, trifling with the question to compare the two things together.

A higher law might overrule a ceremonial law when there would be no positive sin involved in it, as Elijah offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel, which none but a priest could do, under the penalty of death; (Num. 18:7;) and yet this act God himself openly sanctioned by sending fire down from heaven to consume the offering. Similarly, the Lord ordered Gideon, who was of the tribe of Manasseh to offer a burnt sacrifice, which, but for the Lord's special command, would have been in Gideon a capital crime. (Judges 6:15, 25, 26.) But, who that possesses any degree of spiritual sight does not see the difference between God's sanctioning, nay, ordering a breach of the

ceremonial law and his ordering or sanctioning a breach of the moral law? The one touches a mere national, typical, and now abrogated ceremonial, and the other the eternal, immutable foundations of right and wrong, holiness and sin, good and evil, truth and falsehood. But as we are not "an old woman,"³⁶ though we believe many a gracious old woman might lift up her eyes and say, "How awful!" through the inward shrinking of her righteous soul from a God-dishonouring doctrine, who might not be able to argue the question with Mr. Wells, but as we are not an old woman, and yet may say with a good conscience, "How awful!" **we shall answer his challenge to bring in the testimonies of the prophets and apostles, and quietly set them side by side with his views on God's sanctioning lies.**

We will begin with Moses when "the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exod. 34:5-6.) "And will by no means clear the guilty." The Lord can and does "forgive iniquity and transgression and sin," and thus he graciously forgave Rahab her lies; as he forgave her all the past acts of her base life. But he will by no means clear the guilty, nor turn guilt into good, sin into holiness, or falsehood into truth. To forgive sin is one thing, to sanction it is another. Thus God pardons sin, but never sanctions it; mercifully forgives it through the blood of his dear Son, but never approves of it, never alters its nature, never changes its character, never does, never can do, anything but hate it with perfect hatred.

Our next testimony shall be Samuel's: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent." (1 Sam. 15:29.) If God "will not lie," he cannot approve of lies; if he do not "repent," that is, change his mind, he cannot one day condemn lies and another day sanction them.

Our next witness shall be that of Isaiah, when he saw the glory of the Lord in the Temple. Here he heard the voice of the seraphim: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isa. 6:3.) If the Lord of hosts is holy, holy,

³⁶ Philpot in his quote of "Any old woman" is referring to a remark James Wells made in a sermon on Sunday September 19th 1865. The sermon is "The Kingdom that is, and is to come." Number 355. I think it is worth while to give the context of what Wells said: "Nowadays, if a minister says something that others cannot understand, they lift up their hands and say, "How awful!" But that does not convince anyone that he is wrong; you should bring the prophets and apostles, and bring them in quietly, and show what they say and not let your words be "How awful" not lift up your hands and eyes and say, "How awful!" any old woman could say that. A minister ought to say what anyone could not say. They should bring in the testimony of the prophets and apostles, and bring them in quietly, and set them side by side with what they think to be wrong, and thus they would cleanse the visual ray, and on what they supposed to be the sightless eyeball they would pour the day. But instead of this they put themselves and others too into a storm and make the fog thicker still. Now, then, to raise against the enemy those seven shepherds and eight principal men means to bring in the testimonies of prophets and apostles for our good, for our defense; and where they do not defend us, let us not be defended; let us have them on our side, then if we have these inspired testimonies on our side, such will never forsake the testimonies of the prophets, such will never forsake the testimonies of the apostles. This is a kingdom of peace, and that peace is to be maintained by the testimony of God's word, the power of his Spirit, the perfection of the Savior, and the immutability of the blessed God."

holy, how can he sanction unholiness and approve of falsehood? He must deny himself, abnegate his glorious perfections, cease to be the Holy One of Israel, if he can under any circumstances approve of what is inherently, intrinsically, unalterably sinful.

Our next testimony shall be that of Habakkuk: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." (Hab. 1:13.) But, according to Mr. Wells, circumstances may arise when God ceases to be of purer eyes than to behold evil, that is, as evil, and can look on iniquity not as the prophet means, with abhorrence, but, even with approbation in the eyes of infinite purity evil must always be evil, and sin always sin. What dim views must any man have of the infinite and spotless holiness of the great and glorious I AM to think he can ever approve of what is so abhorrent to his own eternal perfections.

The last authority we shall quote is that of James: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) If he is the Father of lights he cannot sanction darkness; and what is falsehood in any shape or under any circumstances but one of the works of darkness with which we are to have no fellowship, but rather reprove (not approve) them? (Eph. 5:11.) And if with him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," how can he so vary from his infinite perfections of truth and holiness as to sanction sin, or turn from his eternal and immutable hatred of evil to countenance and approve of it?

Our limits do not allow us to work out at any length the testimonies we have brought forward of prophets and apostles, and set side by side with Mr. Wells's views and sentiments. We shall leave them, therefore, to the consideration of our readers, and must defer to our following number the further examination of views so novel, so startling, so unscriptural, and so pernicious³⁷.

(Concluded, December, 1865.)

When a preacher or writer openly advances and firmly maintains doctrines which, by confounding good and evil, truth and falsehood, may be said to strike at the very foundations of morality, every man of common integrity is bound to protest, as occasion serves, against tenets not only so destructive of the ties which bind society itself together, but which shock the natural conscience of all honest and honourable men; for he not only thereby relieves his own mind, but lends his aid to check the progress of views so immoral and so pernicious. On such broad grounds, had we no other, we might well take our stand in publicly protesting against the doctrine lately broached by Mr. Wells, that to tell lies under certain circumstances is not only justifiable, but has divine authority and sanction; in other words, has the positive approbation of God. But we have other grounds of a more peculiar and, if possible, stronger character on which to rest our public protest, and, therefore, we trust, amply sufficient to relieve us from any charge of personal hostility,

³⁷ Philpot has done the reader a good service with the preceding passages. They present a part of the truth; the problem is that it is only one side. It reminds me very much of the use the New Testament makes of the Old Testament scriptures. We have the truth in the Old Testament, the pure holy word of God. It is however, only when we come to the New Testament that that truth is fully explained and realized. The whole point of both Rahab sermons was to bring out the light of the New Testament upon these Old Testament passages. Much the same can be said of the rest of the arguments brought forth in the following pages. A lot of what Philpot states is true, in and of its self. Its from a lack of balance, he seeing only what he wants to see in the scriptures that he words fall apart.

unworthy motives, or unnecessary interference. Mr. Wells holds the doctrines of grace. So do we. Mr. Wells maintains and practises the ordinance of believers' baptism. So do we. Mr. Wells occupies a foremost place as a leader of a religious party. As far as a periodical can occupy a similar position, so do we. Are we not then not only individually, but as representing a large body of Christian men and women, and as speaking also in the name of many ministers and churches of similar views with ourselves, loudly called upon to protest against sentiments which have cast a reproach and a dishonour upon the whole body of the Particular Baptist churches throughout the land? Does the world generally, does the religious world in particular, know any difference or distinction between the Particular Baptist churches? Does it not class them all together as forming one religious sect or party? And do not the enemies of truth set them all down in a lump as maintaining exaggerated Calvinistic, if not positively Antinomian, sentiments? Are we not bound, therefore, to purge ourselves and the ministers and churches who cannot well speak for themselves, but may be considered to speak through us, of the dishonour and reproach cast upon the whole body by the views and sentiments advanced by Mr. Wells? For let it be specially observed, that it is not now a mere matter of private speculation on his part, or a hasty, unguarded expression dropped in the heat of the moment, but on due consideration, seen to be an error, repented of, acknowledged, and forsaken. Mr. Wells still firmly maintains it; his church and congregation may be said to maintain it too, for they have made no public protest against it; and several, if not many ministers in the same connection have also given in their open adherence to his views.

In resuming, then, the subject, to keep our pen within due bounds, for it is so wide a field, we shall aim chiefly at three points: First, to state as plainly and fairly as we can, Mr. Wells's views; secondly, to review, and as far as we are favoured with divine wisdom and grace, to refute them; thirdly, to show their practical fruit and tendency.

Following out this plan, let us first state, in Mr. Wells's own words, his views concerning the falsehoods told by Rahab. We will, to save our readers the trouble of reference to our last Number, once more give his own words:

"Now here are two falsehoods. Now, then, some of you hypocrites, get your piety ready, for I am going to shock it a little. Was Rahab justified in those falsehoods? Certainly she was. Say you, would you have told them? Yes, Sir, I would tell ten thousand if I were placed in the same circumstances, and had the same divine authority for it that she had. She must either utter those falsehoods or else betray the spies, and their lives would have been lost."

Observe in this extract four leading points: 1. The admission that Rahab told two falsehoods. 2. That she was justified in telling them. 3. That he himself would tell ten thousand if he were placed in the same circumstances. And 4. That she had divine authority for telling them.

Of course, no preacher or writer would venture upon making such extraordinary assertions unless he had some show of proof to substantiate them. Mr. Wells, therefore, felt himself compelled to bring forward some arguments to prove his points. As far as we can understand them, for they are rather confused, he rests his defence of Rahab on three main grounds: 1. The necessity of the case, "She must either utter those falsehoods or else betray the spies, and their lives would have been

lost." 2. On the permitted violation of the ceremonial law by David in eating the shewbread and by the priests in profaning the Sabbath in the temple. 3. On the power of God to suspend his moral law in particular cases, and thus "make that morally true which was literally false."

As we have already examined the first two of these arguments, and shown that the first is really founded on a disbelief of the power of God, and makes him, so to speak, obliged to give way to necessity; and that the second confounds together things so distinct as the transitory law of ceremony and the eternal law of truth and falsehood, we need not go over that ground again. We shall, therefore, address ourselves to the third point—the almighty power of God, and his consequent ability to suspend any law whether in the physical, moral, or spiritual world. This is the only argument which has a show of validity, and therefore we shall give it some lengthened consideration. Let us give the extract again:

"Now then, to be careful here for a moment, I will tell you a doctrine I hold, and I may as well bring it to light; a little open air will do it no harm. I hold this doctrine; that in the physical, in the moral, and in the spiritual world the great God can suspend for a time any law he chooses. When the sun stood still, some physical laws we do not understand were suspended; when the sea was divided, physical laws we do not understand were suspended; so when Jordan was divided. In all the Saviour's miracles there were physical laws suspended, and other laws put into their place we cannot understand. The literal law of things was for the loaves and fishes to remain as they were; but to suspend that law, and by some other law we do not understand multiplied those loaves and fishes into what you read of. And just so in the moral world; God here suspended the law of falsehood, and by suspending that law did hereby take away the criminality of Rahab's falsehoods; that though she told two falsehoods, there was no sin in them, no crime in them; necessity demanded it; God suspended the usual law of truth, and made that morally true which was literally false; that is, Rahab did not choose to know whence the spies came, or whither they went, and in the exercise of this right she was justified; hereby suspended one law to make way for another. What cannot the great God do? 'Do to others as you would they should do to you' is a law existing among creatures of equality; but God has not his equal; he has no other to do to him as he is done to. Why, say some, you seem to rejoice in it. Of course I do. I would rather lose the last drop of my blood any day than give up one iota of Jehovah's right—absolute, original, and moral right—as the great, original, inconceivable God, to do just what he pleases. There are some laws he will not suspend; the law of his love—never alter that; the law of salvation; not because he cannot—be careful how you attribute cannots to the great God. God cannot lie because he will not."

There is something very deliberate here. It is no hasty, unconsidered sentiment, which dropped from him in a moment of excitement. Look at the words:

"Now then, to be careful here for a moment, I will tell you a doctrine I hold, and I may as well bring it to light; a little open air will do it no harm."

He, has, then, it appears, long held the doctrine, only covered up, hidden in the dark room, without light or air. "But it shall be hidden," says he "no longer. It will be stifled there. Let me bring it out and give it a little air." But who can tell what other similar views and sentiments may also be hidden in the same dark room, and when the fitting season comes may be brought out into the air? No very encouraging prospect, one would think, for his hearers to wait every Lord's Day with anxious expectation what new doctrine, what fresh error, is about to come forth to be aired for the first time in the new chapel.³⁸

But let us examine this argument drawn from the omnipotence of God. The doctrine is this, that as the power of God is infinite, if you deny that he can suspend the moral law, or change the character of truth and falsehood, you are setting bounds to his omnipotence. Observe the language: "What cannot the great God do?" "Be careful how you attribute cannots to the great God.

God cannot lie because he will not." This argument has a show of strength, as we both naturally and spiritually shrink from setting bounds to the almighty power of God. And yet the omnipotence of God is a point on which mistakes are easily made,* from not taking into consideration other circumstances; and we shall therefore show that there is a limit even to omnipotence. The Scripture plainly and positively declares that "it was impossible for God to lie," (Heb. 6:18,) and that he cannot lie, (Tit. 1:2,) and thus set bounds to the omnipotence of God.

* Charnock justly observes: "The want of understanding the doctrine of the divine power hath caused many to run into mighty absurdities."

What are these bounds?

1. Some things are possible from their very nature, as, for instance, that a fact which has taken place should not have taken place. Peter, for instance, denied his Master; this is a fact which once took place. Now, all the omnipotence of God cannot make that act not to have been done which was done. God mercifully pardoned it, overruled it for good, and brought a blessing out of it. But it having once occurred, omnipotence itself cannot make it not to have occurred.

2. Some things are impossible to the nature and being of God. Thus God cannot die, nor can he grow old or decay; he cannot change, lose, or part with any of his perfections or, being a Spirit, perform bodily actions. These things are weakness, not power; whereas the perfection of his power is to abide for ever unchanged and unchangeable in his own eternal being. He cannot but be what he eternally is. Could he be otherwise, it would not be omnipotence, but impotence; not the perfection of power, but the presence of weakness.

3. Some things—and here we come to our present point—are impossible to the glorious perfections of God. All the perfections of God harmonize with each other. It is true that he can do whatsoever he can will; but he cannot will anything unrighteous. The power of God is not something distinct

³⁸ I can't help but to bring to the reader's attention again the sordid, the ignoble way Philpot choses to speak. Constantly going beyond all bounds to make the case as bad as possible.

from his will, as if God by virtue of his omnipotence might act contrary to his will, for his will is infinitely pure; and thus it is impossible for God to lie, because it is impossible for him to will evil. He cannot do anything unbecoming his holiness, or contrary to the perfections of his nature. And all these perfections are not only infinite, but what is termed co-ordinate, that is, each maintains its equal place with the rest. As, then, all the perfections of God are infinite and co-ordinate, the infinity of one perfection cannot clash with, or be overpowered by the infinity of another. Mr. Wells says that "God cannot lie because he will not." That is to a certain extent true, because his will is as perfect as his power. But as Mr. Wells puts it, it almost sounds as if his idea was that God could lie if he would. Now the Scripture expressly declares that "it is impossible for him to lie;" therefore he not only will not, but he cannot. As he cannot die, because he is the life itself; as he cannot err, because he is wisdom itself, so he cannot deceive, because he is goodness itself, so he cannot lie, because he is truth itself. As God is infinitely powerful, so he is infinitely holy. Holiness is the essential glory of his nature, as necessary as his very being, as his omniscience, as his omnipresence. God is omnipotent because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent if he could; for evil is weakness, not strength—a deficiency of righteousness, and therefore of power as well as goodness. It is, therefore, an utter misconception of the omnipotence of God to view it as distinct from his other glorious and infinite perfections, and to think that because all things are said to be possible with God, therefore it is possible for him to lie or do any evil.

And as his infinite purity and holiness make it impossible for God himself to lie, so they make it impossible for him to sanction or approve of lies in others. As essentially, infinitely holy, he cannot but look upon sin with intense abhorrence. He hates the very sight of it (Zech. 8:17;) the first conception of it in the imagination; it is the abominable thing which he hates, and all the workers of it he hates too. (Ps. 5:5.) He therefore cannot possibly approve of, authorize, or sanction it in any point, in any degree, in any person. To approve of sin in others is to partake of it, nay, as the Apostle argues, is in some respects worse than doing it ourselves, as showing that reprobate mind which loves evil for its own sake. (Rom. 1:32.) If God authorized or sanctioned Rahab's lies, he approved of them; and if he approved of them, he (how dreadful the thought!) would have been a partaker of Rahab's sin. It is, then, no common error that Mr. Wells has advanced, but a most awful insult to the majesty and holiness of the Lord God of heaven and earth. And all who hold him up in it, all the ministers who have willfully and knowingly approved of it, have made themselves partakers of his sin. His friends are crying out as if it were some personal matter, as if there were some conspiracy to injure him.

Such friends are, like his flatterers, his worst enemies; for they stand in the way of his seeing and acknowledging his fault. He might have seen the false step which he has made, and the dangerous path into which it was leading him, and returned; but, by siding with him and making it a party matter, his friends have almost blocked his return; for to acknowledge his error would involve them all in one common mortification.

But having, we hope, cleared up thus far the omnipotence of God, and shown that it is and ever must be in perfect harmony with all his other glorious perfections, let us examine Mr. Wells's views about God's suspending, in particular cases, his laws in what he calls "the physical, the moral, and the spiritual world." We have no wish to enter upon any scientific discussion, but as

Mr. Wells has based his argument of God's suspending his moral law upon his suspending occasionally his physical or natural laws, and as he seems to misconceive the nature of a miracle, we will venture a few remarks upon the point.

Now, we have no reason to believe that God ever suspends any law in the physical, and certainly not in the moral and spiritual world. A miracle is not, as Mr. Wells seems to think, the suspension of a physical law, but the putting forth of a power which acts differently from it, or in defiance of it. When Peter walked upon the water, the Saviour did not suspend for him the law of gravity, but put forth a power which held him up in spite of gravity. Gravity was in full continuance all the time; for directly the Saviour ceased to hold him up, he began to sink. It was not, therefore, suspended, but overpowered. When the Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, it was no suspension of the ordinary way in which bread and fish are made, but a making of them in a supernatural way. Mr. Wells does not seem fully to understand the meaning of the word "law," or rather confounds its two meanings. The word law, in the expression "physical law," has two distinct meanings: 1. The rule of a positive agency; 2. The rule of a negative result. Thus, that a stone should fall to the ground is a law of positive agency, but that a stone should continue a stone is a mere negative result. The suspension of the law of gravitation would prevent the stone from falling, the suspension of the law that it should continue a stone would effect nothing, unless there came in another law, a positive law, that it should become, say, a bird, or some other living organism. Thus, the law which causes flour and water, when baked, to become bread is a positive law, but that bread should continue bread is not a law at all, but a result. If there be a law, it is that the bread should become moldy and perish. The multiplication, therefore, of the loaves was not from a suspension of any physical law, but from a special miraculous power. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, it was not a suspension of the law that a dead body should continue a dead body, for that is not a law, strictly speaking, but a mere negative result, but a putting forth of a supernatural power in the communication of life to the dead. So with healing disease. When the Lord healed the sick, it was not by suspending a physical law, as for instance, that a paralyzed man should always continue paralyzed, but a putting forth of a miraculous power to heal the paralysis. When the Lord turned water into wine, what physical law was suspended? It is a physical law that oxygen and hydrogen, chemically combined in certain proportions, should form water. Was this law suspended? If so, could the suspension of that law have turned water into wine? Or say that the law was suspended that water at a certain temperature should continue to be water. Could the suspension of that law have changed the water into wine? Thus, we see that a miracle is not, as Mr. Wells supposes, a suspension of a physical law, but an act of divine power which operates in spite of it. We are sorry to have to dwell upon this point, but as the assumed suspension of a physical law is made the groundwork of a similar suspension of a moral law, it seemed needful to show the fallacy of the analogy.³⁹

³⁹ For my part I do not see the usefulness of the proceeding discourse on laws and miracles. As he continues with these words "Assuming, then, as we consider erroneously, that God does sometimes suspend a physical or natural law..." and then says "This is a much more important point than the preceding, for the one merely touches a matter of science" it seems he does not see much point in it either. It is part and parcel of his plan of attack, casting up as much dirt and grime as possible so that at least some of it sticks.

Assuming, then, as we consider erroneously, that God does sometimes suspend a physical or natural law, Mr. Wells argues from that analogy that he sometimes also suspends his moral law. **This is a much more important point than the preceding**, for the one merely touches a matter of science, but the other the very grounds of truth and morality. Let us once more look at his own words, that we may clearly gather up his meaning:

"And just so in the moral world; God here suspended the law of falsehood, and by suspending that law did hereby take away the criminality of Rahab's falsehoods; that though she told two falsehoods, there was no sin in them, no crime in them; necessity demanded it; God suspended the usual law of truth, and made that morally true which was literally false; that is, Rahab did not choose to know whence the spies came, or whither they went, and in the exercise of this right she was justified; hereby suspended one law to make way for another."

By suspending "the law of falsehood" he means, we suppose, the law against falsehood. But what is meant by suspending a moral law? Does it mean disannulling it for the time, or altogether changing its character? For the two things are distinct. For instance, sometimes in seasons of great political commotion the Habeas Corpus Act is suspended. This law provides that a man put into prison may demand that the cause of his commitment should be examined and determined by the Court of Queen's Bench. Its suspension, therefore, leaves the man in prison without any legal remedy. But this suspension does not change the character of the law, and turn it into an enactment to feed him, and clothe him, and take good care of him. So when the law says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," when interpreted and enlarged as the Lord interpreted the law against adultery and murder, it is a prohibition of all falsehood. Now, if this law be said, under certain circumstances, to be suspended, does it mean that it is disannulled for those circumstances, so that we may, as placed under them, bear false witness and tell lies without sin? Or does it mean that it turns falsehood into truth? Mr. Wells seems to include both meanings, for he says that though Rahab told two falsehoods "there was no sin in them;" in other words, that God disannulled for the time his holy, strict, and righteous law, necessity demanding it; and not only so, but changed its very character, turning thereby truth into falsehood and "made that morally true which was literally false." Now is there any one scripture which warrants this daring assertion? The very express nature of the law is to be "holy, just, and good." (Rom. 7:12.) As such it bears upon it the impress of the holiness and justice of God. It can, therefore, no more be suspended, disannulled, or changed than the holiness and justice of God can be suspended, disannulled, or changed. Its character and nature are as unalterable and unchangeable as the character and nature of God himself. It is as strict as his essential justice, as holy as his eternal holiness, and as inflexible as his unchangeable perfections. It was given on Mount Sinai with every accompaniment of terrible Majesty, and went forth from God's hand as a fiery law. (Exod. 19:16-25; Heb. 12:18-21; Deut. 33:2.) How then can it be suspended or altered? The Lord himself declares: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18.) "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17.) Now if "one jot or tittle," that is, the smallest part,* can in no wise pass from the law, how is it possible that any one moral law can be suspended, that is, as we have shown, be for the time

disannulled and its whole character changed? How unchangeable must that law be, which must stand in all its original firmness and smallest minutiae, even were earth and heaven to pass away and be no more!⁴⁰

* The word "jot" is the Hebrew vowel i, which is the smallest of all the characters, and the word "tittle," or little horn, signifies a small turn of the character which, if removed, would change the letter n into g, and the letter th into hh, &c.

But there is still another view of the matter which is of the deepest importance. If God can suspend, that is, for the time remove out of the way and disannul one law, why should he not all? If he can suspend for a time, he can disannul forever; for the omnipotent power whereby he can do one can as easily do the other.⁴¹ It is so in earthly matters. Parliament, for instance, which can suspend the Habeas Corpus Act could disannul it, and make that permanent, which has been, as yet, but temporary. What need was there, then, that the Son of God should come to fulfil the law when by a simple act of almighty power God could have disannulled it in the case of all the elect,* and not only so, but have turned their disobedience of it into obedience, and given them heaven as their reward?

* One of Mr. Wells's followers has publicly declared his opinion that God suspends the moral law for all the elect.

Does not Mr. Wells say that, "God made in Rahab's case that morally true which was literally false," in other words, turned her lies into truths? Now the same power which could turn a literal falsehood into a moral truth can turn an act of literal disobedience into an act of moral obedience, and convert sin into holiness, evil into good, and that which God hates into that which God loves. Where then was the need of Christ's active and passive obedience, of his dolorous sufferings in the garden and on the cross, of the agonies of his holy soul when he bare the curse of the law and all the wrath of God due to the election of grace, if the law could be suspended? The suspension of the law would suspend the curse of the law; and if necessity demanded in the case of Rahab that the law should be suspended in her favour, how much more would necessity demand that it should be suspended in favour of the Son of God? For bear in mind these two things, that the same power which could suspend a part could suspend the whole; and that the same power which could suspend could abrogate and disannul. Observe, further, that suspending a law and disannulling it merely differ in point of time; for as a temporary suspension is for the time a disannulling, so a permanent suspension is a virtual abrogation. If Parliament were to suspend the Income Tax for a year, it would for that time be disannulled; if the suspension were made permanent, it would be virtually abrogated. Why then need Christ have fulfilled the law, or borne its curse? So bitter was the cup

⁴⁰ Philpot quotes both Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17. As it typical with him, he deals with only the part of the truth; that which suites his current purpose. Let's take Matthew 5:22 for instance where we find the Lord Jesus saying "But I tell you"; or again in 5:28 etc. Yes, without question "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." But that is not the whole story. God is sovereign, his ways are not our ways. We cannot and dare not put him into a box, the size of which we define. Praise God for men like James Wells who gloried in the Sovereign God.

⁴¹ More meaningless talk. God is God and he can only act according to all his attributes.

that the blessed Lord cried out, O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. (Matt. 26:42.) But it was not possible. The law could not be suspended, disannulled, or changed. He came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, and to fulfil it so completely that not one jot or tittle should pass away before he fulfilled every one. He was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, (Gal. 4:4, 5,) and he redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. (Gal. 3:13.) We see, therefore, that it is a thorough misconception of the nature of the law to think that it can be suspended, changed, or altered; and that such a doctrine, if it do not altogether set aside the atonement, virtually renders it useless and needless. We read that "God spared not his own Son;" (Rom. 8:32:) but he might have spared him all his sufferings if the law could have been disannulled by a simple act of divine omnipotence. Why need he then, have come to fulfil the law by his active obedience, and endure its penalty by his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death, if by an act of simple volition, or of omnipotent power, all the sins of God's people in transgressing the law could have been passed by, or, according to Mr. Wells's view of Rahab's lies, been the best part of their conduct? "What?" our readers will ask, "does Mr. Wells say that? He is of age ask him; let him speak for himself.

"I am going further yet. The apostle James makes that part of her conduct the best part of her conduct. I told you to get your piety ready, you hypocrites, for I was going to shock it. The apostle James makes that the best part of her conduct. I look back with pleasure upon some of the favours I have done some of the people of God, and would again, and will to-morrow, too, if I am so placed. James says, 'Was not Rahab justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?' How did she do that? Why, by saying they were not there, and by saying they were gone. The apostle makes that the best part of her conduct. Here, then, were two falsehoods, with no sin in them, as I have said; they did no one any harm. To tell a truth that would injure the people of God is infinitely worse than telling a lie that would not injure them; no question about that."

Is not this daring language? Some think that we have been hard upon Mr. Wells and his **flatterers**; but does he not deserve it, and they too, for holding him up when he is so manifestly wrong⁴²?* Read again the words, "I told you to get your piety ready, you hypocrites, for I was going to shock it." We would appeal to any right-minded man, whether he see with us in other points or not, if it is not taking a most unbounded pulpit licence thus before a large congregation to stamp upon every rising opposition to his views, and try to crush it as it arose, as an act of hypocrisy, almost as a man would crush a snail in his garden.

* To show the influence of example, one of the ministers at the public meeting on Wednesday evening, September 20th, at the New Surrey Tabernacle, actually said, "Now we do feel that we

⁴² Just a few words here. The Merriam-Webster dictionaries first definition of "Flatter" summarizes Philpot's opinion on Wells and his flock. It is defined as "to praise excessively especially from motives of self-interest" He clearly feels that he has one the battle declaring that Wells is "manifestly wrong" Notice how "one of the ministers" carefully qualified his statement: "if God would save them by his victorious grace" Whose side is Mister Philpot on? Would he rather that they all rot in hell? God must have freedom to give glory to himself in what way he chooses.

would take all the world and all the devils in hell to heaven, **if God would save them by his victorious grace.**"

What are we to think about grace, reaching and saving devils?

But let us examine whether James does make Rahab's lies "the best part of her conduct," as that is really worse than the sentence we have quoted, for to tamper with the word of God is much worse than to tamper with the feelings of man. James Wells and James the Apostle may bear the same names, but they are very different persons. James Wells speaks his own words, and by them will have to stand or fall; James the Apostle speaks the words of God. His words are:

"Likewise was not Rahab justified by works when she had received the messengers, and sent them out another way." James speaks of two good works of Rahab: 1. She received the spies. There was no lie there; 2. She sent them out another way. There was no lie there. We deny that she sent them out of the way by telling two lies, by saying they were not there, and by saying they were gone. The Holy Ghost by James does not once touch upon her conversation with the king's messengers. All the intermediate part between her receiving the spies and her sending them away is not alluded to by the inspired Apostle. If Joshua 2 be carefully read, it will be seen that the sending away of the spies was quite a distinct action from the lies which she told about them: "And as he said, according unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed; and she bound the scarlet line in the window." (Joshua 2:21.) The series of events narrated is this: 1. The spies come to her house. 2. She receives and lodges them; 3. The king sends the messengers; 4. Rahab hides the spies; 5. She deceives by falsehood the king's messengers; 6. Before the men were laid down she comes to them, and the conversation takes place, recorded verses 9-20; 7. She sends the spies away."

Now James mentions merely the first act and the last: 1. That "she received the spies;" 2. "sent them out another way." Her sending them away was quite distinct from her lies about them. We deny, therefore, that she sent away the spies by saying they were not there, and by saying they were gone, for she sent them away after she had deceived the king's messengers; nor does it appear that she even told the spies how she had preserved their lives by her deception.

We thus see that there is not the least shadow of a foundation for the awful assertion—for it is an awful assertion, that "James makes Rahab's lies the best part of her conduct." James does no such thing. James Wells may do so, but not James the Apostle. Read for yourselves, if you have any doubt on the point, Joshua 2, in connection with James 2:25, and then judge whether our interpretation be correct or not.

Having thus shown on what a baseless foundation Mr. Wells rests his views of sinless lies, let us now see what practical conclusions flow from his doctrine; for this, after all, is the grand test; for "if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings; perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that

gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself." (1 Tim. 6:3-5.) If a doctrine, then, is not "according to godliness," it is not of God, but is to be rejected as a "perverse disputing."

What fruit, then, grows upon Mr. Wells's new tree? Is it good or evil? He lays down this broad principle: "To tell a truth that would injure the people of God is infinitely worse than telling a lie that would not injure them; no question about that." We are not so sure that there is no question about that; for it seems to us a very questionable doctrine, whether it regards religion or morality. But let us assume a case to exemplify the fruit of this doctrine. One of Mr. Wells's members, or say, a deacon, is seen some evening coming out of a low pot-house intoxicated, or is picked up in the streets by the police drunk and incapable.*

* This is, of course, a mere supposition; **for we do not know one of his deacons even by name,** nor have we the slightest intention to make more than assumption of a possible case⁴³.

Such things have occurred even to ministers, and may occur again. A fellow-member passing by sees the whole transaction. The matter gets wind, is brought before the church, and it becomes known that this fellow-member can bear decisive evidence one way or the other. He is placed in a trying position; but the doctrine of his pastor comes strongly to his mind. "To tell a truth that would injure the people of God is infinitely worse than telling a lie that would not injure them," rings in his ear, and decides the question. If he tell the truth, he will injure a child of God, as he believes his fellow-member, in spite of his fall, to be, and the church as well as him. He therefore tells a lie, and declares that the man was perfectly sober, or that it is a case of mistaken identity, and that he was not the person picked up by the police, or that he and the accused member were spending a quiet evening together at his own house, or any other falsehood which will best screen the accused. But you will cry out, "This is monstrous! Why, no man could or would tell such barefaced lies." If he did, he would have Mr. Wells's authority for it. Does he not expressly say that "he would tell ten thousand" if he were placed in the same circumstances as Rahab? And is not a lie a lie, whether a little one or a big one? Must we have a kind of sliding scale of lies, as we once had for the importation of corn? or a tariff of circumstances when, as analogous, lies are admissible, and when, as not analogous, they are contraband? Mr. Wells, indeed, clearly denounces common lying as "a dreadful vice." It is only uncommon lying that he approves of,—lying as Rahab lied; that is, lies in which there is "no sin, no crime;" lies which are "morally true, though literally false." We must mind, then, that if we do tell lies it must be only when we are placed in analogous circumstances with Rahab. But who is to be the judge of these analogous circumstances? You cry out, and that justly, against the instance that we have given of sinless lies as "monstrous;" but are not the circumstances analogous to Rahab's? The man might argue thus: "Rahab, by two falsehoods, saved the life of the spies. I shall, by my falsehoods, save the character of the deacon and the credit of the church. He is a good man, though he was this time overtaken with drink. If I tell the truth, I shall ruin him for life; if I tell a lie, I shall save him. I will tell the lie. My pastor preaches that there is no sin in lies of this kind, and that "to tell a truth that would injure a child of God is infinitely

⁴³ He admits that he does not even know the name of a single deacon in Wells church. That does not stop him from going to the wildest flights of fancy to blacken a righteous man without due cause. Of all the things in this, so called, review I think this is the worst by far. This part of the review does not merit any comment it is too despicable for words.

worse than telling a lie that would not injure him, there being on that point no question." But my lie, so far from not injuring him, will benefit him; and as Mr. Wells is my pastor and teacher, whose lips keep knowledge, and at whose mouth I should seek the law, (Mal. 2:7), I will act according to his doctrine." But you will say: "Where is common honesty, decent morality, gone if this be the principle and practice advocated in the pulpit and acted on in the pew?" Gone! To the winds; there is no question of that.

It is this consideration which has so startled all but those who, blinded by the spirit of party, uphold Mr. Wells, even where he is so manifestly wrong. Were not Mr. Foreman and Mr. Collins fully justified in refusing to open the new chapel after such doctrine as this, when we consider its fruits and consequences?

But look at the question in another point of view. Mr. Wells must have in his congregation men of business, commercial travelers, drapers' assistants, and others of a similar class, who every day are tempted to tell lies.*

* A good man, a draper, used to say that, with all his attempts to restrain them, he could not keep his assistants from telling lies to the customers.

Now how careful should a minister be not to break down in any way what we may call the sacredness of truth. Truthfulness in man is like modesty in woman. In neither is the least breach permissible; for as the least deviation from modesty is in a woman the first step to disgrace and ruin and the casting away of her best, her surest safeguard, so the least deviation from truth robs a man both of his honour and of his shield. Many a woman has preferred death to dishonour; many a man, many a martyr, has died rather than save life by a lie. As, then, it is criminally base to sap the foundations of modesty, so it is morally culpable to sap the foundations of truthfulness. These men of business, these young men, surrounded by every temptation and the example of their fellows to tell falsehoods behind the counter or the desk, hear that, under certain circumstances, lies are allowable and sinless. Will they attend to Mr. Wells's caution about being placed in analogous circumstances with Rahab? or will they not rather stretch the licence far beyond his meaning and intention? If they may lie to benefit others, why may they not lie to benefit themselves? If lies are permissible in religion, why should they not be permissible in business? Mr. Wells would doubtless shrink from such conclusions, and lift up his voice loudly against them. But letting out a false doctrine is like letting out of water. Where will it stop? What course will it take? How much will burst out when once the dam is broken down? For the human heart, like the Holmfirth or Sheffield reservoir, can, if a breach be made, pour forth a flood that shall sweep away all before it. Our children, too! should we not, do we not, impress upon them the sacredness of truth? They have to go into a wicked, lying world and if we cannot give them much of this world's goods, we can at least, with our prayers for them, give them the earnest admonition and the beneficial example of undeviating truthfulness.

But how can we do this, except by insisting upon the necessity of truth at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances? * A good man, a draper, used to say that, with all his attempts to restrain them, he could not keep his assistants from telling lies to the customers.

The fact is simply this. Mr. Wells has made a sad mistake, and advanced a doctrine radically unsound. He has two courses before him, either to acknowledge his error, which would at once put an end to the whole dispute, or persevere in maintaining a doctrine which is so opposed to Scripture, to the experience of all the family of God, and to the feeling of every right-minded man, that nothing can await him but failure in his attempt to defend it. But whatever course he may take, may grace be given to us and to our readers ever to stand by the sacred cause of undeviating truthfulness both in word and work, doctrine, experience, and practice. And as the Lord "has given a banner to them that fear him, that it may be displayed because of the truth," may our STANDARD ever be from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, "LET GOD BE TRUE, BUT EVERY MAN A LIAR⁴⁴."

[The Defense, delivered on Lord's day Morning, November 12, 1865". Reviewed by J. C. Philpot](#)

The Defense, delivered on Lord's day Morning, November 12, 1865 By Mr. James Wells, at the New Surrey Tabernacle, Wansey Street, Walworth Road, Stevenson, 54, Paternoster Row.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD. FEBRUARY 1, 1866. Page 61ff

We have felt, and still feel, a difficulty in dealing any further with the now celebrated Rahab controversy. Whatever motives be imputed to us, one thing was clear, that we were called upon by our position to take some notice of a subject which has caused so much excitement in the churches, and to express our opinion of views so destructive of even moral truth. Having thus far discharged our duty and our conscience, we wished to let the matter rest. But Mr. Wells has preached and published his Defense, in which he has explained some of his expressions and partly retracted others; though he still adheres to his former views, that Rahab was fully justified in deceiving the king's messengers, and that her lies were not, properly speaking, falsehoods, but "lawful evasions." Whether he has much mended the matter by this last explanation we must leave to the discernment of spiritual minds, which may not see much real difference between a lie and an evasion. But our difficulty is this: Wholly to pass by his defense would seem to be unfair, as the commonest principles of law and justice demand that every person accused of an offence should be allowed to defend himself from what may be a false charge. But on the other hand, for us to go through a long sermon, point by point, as we should have to do were we to take the subject fully up, would not only occupy more room than we could give, and necessarily keep out much more profitable matter, but would be a wearisome, and, what is worse, a useless task both for our readers and ourselves. We shall, therefore, make this compromise. We shall do Mr. Wells the simple act of justice of allowing him to give his explanation, by furnishing an extract from the sermon, and, after making a few remarks upon it, shall close the controversy:

“Well now, in the first place, before I enter upon these parts I may just observe that my opponents seem to hold this idea; and the Lord is witness I will not if I know it misrepresent

⁴⁴ Philpot and every other person who ever lived will stand or fall by their own words on Judgment Day – myself included.

one; I am independent; I stand upon the Lord's mercy to me, I have no other standing, justice at their hands I do not expect, only there maybe some exceptions among them; mercy I do not need; my conscience I will not give up for any man. And I am sure you, as Englishmen and as Christians, deem your liberty of conscience one of the sweetest privileges of your existence. Why, bind the conscience! you bind the soul, you bind the man, and the man ceases to be a man as soon as ever he lays his conscience at the feet of any man or class of men. They charge me with representing God as suspending his holiness, and his justice, and his moral perfections; why, I must be an idiot, a madman, and a fool, all combined in one, to suppose the great God could suspend his holiness, or his justice, or his integrity, or any of his moral perfections. He is immutable, unchangeable, unalterable. I never dreamt of such a foolish notion as that My opponents have looked pretty sharply after me, and they have found out six faults in my sermon, and I have found out one more. that's seven, so that you see how kind I have been to them; they strangely overlooked one, which I saw. I will now name the faults, and give my answer to them. "First, that I hold that a good lie is better than a bad truth. Now I did not explain in that sermon what I meant; I meant that under certain circumstances, lawful evasions, for that is the term I shall apply this morning; I will observe that there are evasions which may be lawfully used; and that I would rather use lawful evasions to save a friend, than I would ignorantly, like the fool, utter all my mind and betray my friend. But unhappily I put this, my meaning, into unguarded language. I there said, that telling a truth that would injure the people of God, would be worse than telling a lie that would not injure them. If I had said what I should have said, and I suppose you will allow me to repent, you will allow me the privilege of repenting, I repent that I used the unguarded language. I did not know we should be so looked after; I did not know that I was of so much importance; I did not know that half-a-dozen sentences from an unpretending individual like myself would open the mouth of a volcano, whose elements had been for some time restlessly seeking an outlet. I did not know that a few sparks from my tongue, would set so many hypers on fire; I was not aware they were such dry trees as to be so easily set on fire; some of them are dry enough in all conscience, but they now turn out to be more dry than I thought they were; and therefore, in future, I will be careful how I play with fire, lest I set them on fire again, and burn them to death. Now it was held a maxim in the heathen world that* a good lie is better than a bad truth;* but I do in the sight of the great God this morning declare to you that I stand infinitely removed from any such sentiment. I do not believe in a good lie. A lie means that which is a wicked contrivance, something that hath in it all the elements of wickedness, that makes it criminal; and therefore, a good lie, a sinless lie, is an utter impossibility in the very nature of it. So, then I do not hold that a good lie is better than a bad truth; God forbid I should; that is, not in the sense that many impute it to me; and in future I shall not use that language to express that part of my meaning. Let this suffice then.

Second, if I were placed in analogous circumstances to Rahab, and had the same divine authority, I would tell ten thousand such falsehoods as she told. Mind, I at the same time maintain that those falsehoods were literally untrue, but morally true. But I will use another word. My object this morning is for you to get at my meaning. Now put it in this form. Well now, some of you that do not see with me, put yourselves into my place just for a minute. I believe that Rabab's words were lawful evasions. Now mind that, keep that in view, that is what I meant then. I regret I did not express it more clearly than her words

were lawful evasions) that God sanctioned those evasions, and I shall presently give you my reasons for believing that he inspired those evasions. With that impression, mind, with that impression, that those evasions were right, that those evasions were sinless, that those evasions had divine sanction, mind that, with that impression—I said that if I were placed in analogous circumstances, and had the same divine authority, I would use, for the sake of saving the lives of the spies, (and I shall presently show what good she did to the king's messengers by those evasions, as well as the spies that were placed in that position), I would, rather than betray my trust use ten thousand such evasions. Now that is my *meaning?

* The printer of the “Gospel Standard” begs to say he is not responsible for either the grammar or punctuation of the above extract, his compositor having “followed the printed copy” of the sermon literally.

We cannot say that we much like the spirit manifested in the above extract. If a public man advance sentiments which shock even our moral feelings, he should not attribute the opposition shown to them to such unworthy motives as jealousy. Mr. Wells is evidently deeply stung by the fact that many of his own party have denounced his views of the lies told by Rahab. But why should he claim to himself so strongly the right of private judgment, and deny it to them? It makes the whole matter a mere question of party, not of truth, if a minister may advance any opinions that he pleases, and if they are opposed then to call out that there is no better ground of opposition to his views than paltry jealousy. Such language resolves all dispute and discussion into this: “Who is on my side, right or wrong? If any oppose my views, it is because they are jealous of my gifts, or of my popularity, or of my influence? But surely a man may oppose Mr. Wells's views without being jealous of Mr. Wells's position. As long as controversy is carried on in a spirit of fairness, and without wrath and bitterness, it is often absolutely necessary to the defense of truth and to the exposing of error; and it is unworthy of a man who has a cause to maintain, be it good or bad, to impute base motives to those who conscientiously differ from him, and can give their reasons for doing so.

But now a few words upon the point to which Mr. Wells has reduced the whole controversy. It is this, that Rahab's lies were not lies in the ordinary sense of the word, that is positive criminal falsehoods, but “lawful evasions inspired of God, and having his sanction and authority.”

Now we have always understood, both on moral and religious grounds, that an evasion, if not an actual downright lie, so partakes of the nature of one that none but a Jesuit or a father confessor can distinguish between them. Of this there cannot be a better proof than the testimony of one's own conscience. **Most of us probably have been guilty, some time or other, of an evasion, or of something very like one**⁴⁵. Now, did not conscience give us a sharp twinge for this, and inwardly testify that we had been guilty of some deception, of something which, if not a lie, was so like it that no excuse that we might try to make could justify it even to ourselves? For what is an evasion?

⁴⁵ This sentence is very instructive. It is a window into Philpot's mindset on this subject. It seems some may be entirely free from this fault, while the rest of us must hunt and search for an example in our lives. In the case of stealing this could be true, but emphatically not in this case. So why does he express himself in this way? I think the purpose is to make a “evasion” or a “lie” to be as evil and wicked as it can possibly be. Something so bad we may possibly have never done such a thing in our lives.

It is not merely, as the word literally means, an escaping or a slipping out of a difficulty, but doing so by a positive act of deception, making the person to whom the evasive answer is given believe what we know is not the truth. But if we examine Rahab's answers to the king's messengers, we shall find that they were not evasions, that is, evasive answers to their inquiries, but plain, positive, direct falsehoods⁴⁶. Her words to the messengers were: "There came men unto me, but I wist not (that is, I knew not) whence they were." Now she knew perfectly well whence the men were, and that they had just come from the camp of Israel. But this was not the only lie that she told: "And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out. Whither the men went I wot (or knew) not. Pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them." There was no evasion here; but a positive direct lie, and to make it appear more true, she mentioned circumstances, such as the time of their departure, and urged the messengers to pursue them quickly. Now, how can these positive lies be called "evasions," that is, in the sense of evasive answers? Let us not juggle with words. An evasion is an indirect answer, a shifting of the ground, a dash of* truth with a large amount of falsehood, so as to give the whole matter a false coloring, and thus deceive the inquiring party. Johnson, therefore, defines it: "Excuse sub-terfuge; sophistry; artifice;" and Webster adds, "Equivocation; artifice to elude; shift." But Rahab did not give evasive answers. **She told positive lies**⁴⁷. How much better, then, and simpler it would be to admit at once that they were lies, but that God mercifully pardoned them, and overruled them for good. Whatever we do, let us not tamper with so sacred a thing as truth; and rather acknowledge that we are wrong a thousand times over, knowing how the wisest of men may err, than involve the holiness of God.

We speak thus because we feel constrained to add that, in our judgment, Mr. Wells has used some very reprehensible language in saying that God inspired them, that they had not only his sanction and authority, but his positive inspiration. Now this seems to us really worse than the first error. To ascribe to God so pure, so holy, the inspiration of a lie, in other words, that he breathed a lie into Rahab's soul, and by his Holy Spirit suggested to her direct and positive falsehood, is to our mind something very shocking. Take Mr. Wells even on his own ground. He surely will not deny that an evasion, if not a lie, must partake of the nature of one, that it is more or less a deviation from strict truth. Now, that God should inspire into a man's soul the least deviation from truth is, to say the least, a most dangerous position, and without the shadow of authority from the Scriptures⁴⁸. If he had said that God permitted Rahab to deceive the messengers, brought good out of it, and mercifully forgave it, it would have satisfied all the exigencies of the case. None doubt Rahab's salvation; none doubt that her receiving the spies and sending them away were acts of faith. Why, then, attempt to justify her where she was wrong, especially on such dangerous grounds as to ascribe her sin to the express inspiration of God?

Mr. Wells, then, need not be surprised if his defense should not allay the waters of strife. He had a fair opportunity to recall views against which there was such a general outcry; for he should have seen that the concurrence of so many voices was not a conspiracy against his popularity, but the result of Christian feeling in a number of persons who, however they may differ in other points, feel warmly where moral or spiritual truth is at stake. He has, however, taken a firm stand, and in

⁴⁶ He is correct in this.

⁴⁷ Again, it is true Rahab lied. The point in question is whether they were criminal or holy (see the next paragraph). I agree with Wells: They needed no forgiveness because they were sanctioned by God himself.

⁴⁸ As has been shown in the two sermons there is an abundance of Scripture proof, Philpot choose to ignore or explain it away.

a sermon preached Nov. 5th, proclaimed “war to the knife⁴⁹” * they are his own words, and fearful words they are for a gospel minister to use, against all opponents. We should truly rejoice to see him throw away both his errors and his knife, for neither of them will prosper in his hand; and we sincerely hope he may repent with godly sorrow that ever the warmth of his mind should have led him to use such language as that with which we close our present article. But he may live to prove, and may it be in mercy, not in judgment, which is stronger, James Wells and the knife, or the word of God and the sword of truth.

* This expression requires, perhaps, a little explanation. At the siege of Saragossa, in Spain, in 1808, the French had forced their way into the town by the gate of Santa Engracia, and were thus masters of nearly half of Saragossa. The French general summoned Palafox, the Spanish commander, to surrender in the following laconic sentence: “Head-quarters, Santa Engracia. Capitulation.” Palafox’s answer was equally laconic: “Head-quarters, Saragossa. War to the knife;” meaning thereby that if the worst came to the worst, each surviving Spaniard had a knife to plunge into a Frenchman’s bosom.

“Now if I am spared till next Sunday morning, I have to give what I think I may call my defense, but it will not be such a one as some of you might think. I have been in a conciliatory mood, desiring so to explain things as to conciliate my opponents, and bring matters to a peaceful issue. But that day is gone, sir; these last twenty-four hours have brought about an irreversible revolution in my mind⁵⁰. I will hear no terms of peace; I will accede to nothing that shall in any way bring my conscience into bondage. I am got beyond all remonstrance, all reasoning. Much as I love our deacons, and happy as I am with them, not a soul shall I listen to contrary to the position I have taken to defend myself sternly and decisively against my opponents upon the faith of Rahab. Much as I love you, the members of the church, and care for you, yet not a sentence shall move me; much as I love the congregation at large, and friends about the country, yet I have passed the Rubicon, the matter is done, my sword is drawn, my shield is anointed, my credentials clear, my watchword given, ‘Conquer or die.’ ‘War to the knife,’ sir, shall be my motto now as long as I breathe. I will be tyrannized over by none.”

⁴⁹ Philpot quotes Wells at the end of his review.

⁵⁰ It is known exactly why James Wells made this decision. He was attacked in the public press, by Christina friends and foes alike; attacked from all sides. The force of the attack was almost overwhelming. The studious reader of Wells sermons will know that he refers to “his fiend Rahab” many times in subsequent years. Following the Word of God correctly he never altered his views and stood his ground to the end.

APPENDIX 3

Additional material related to the Rahab sermons

Another contemporary source on lying.

This is taken from the Gospel Herald or Poor Christian's Magazine 1861 "The Bible and the Mass-book; A Dialogue." Page 81 Editor Samuel Collins. This is a magazine for mostly Strict Baptists from Norfolk and Suffolk England.

M = Mass-Book. B – The Bible

M.—I assert that it is lawful to lie for the good of the church. Our councils declare so.

B.—Such a system is pregnant with danger.

M.—Not to the church.

B.—Yes, to the church. If it be lawful to lie for the good of the church how can you prove that your own traditions do not lie? The authors of them may have had some falsely pious motives for deceiving succeeding generations. But what is of infinitely greater moment, if such a system be laudable, how can we know that even holy Peter and the rest of the apostles did not tell lies for the same purpose? Such a principle, pursued through all its possibilities, may bring us, at last, to doubt the very truths of inspiration.

M.—But did not Rahab the harlot tell a lie for the good of the church? There is nearly a whole chapter about it in the book of Joshua.

B.—**She told a lie, undoubtedly; as is evinced by the history of her; but she did so in order to save two men from being murdered. If your church justified lying only in such cases as that, then good men would shrink from condemnation, and leave judgment unto the Lord. The cases are different.**

Signed "Frater In Fide" with a note about the French book he quoted from Most probably the editor Samuel Collins.

Clearly Samuel Collins would have agreed with James Wells.

James Wells stance four months after the defense was published.

The information provided here comes from sermon number 381- "Good to Come and Another Word fore Rahab". This was preached on March 11th 1866.

Now then come to Rahab. I have a word more to say about Rahab. If you give your sympathies to the king of Jericho, and turn yourself into a Canaanite, and view Rahab's conduct as a Canaanite would view it, as the king of Jericho would view

it, then her conduct from first to last was one scene of deception; that is what I pronounce it as a Canaanite. Yes, Joshua begins the deception, he sent secretly to Jericho. The Canaanite would say, What business had he sending in that secret way? why had he not openly told us what he was going to do, and not carry on deception like that? Then Rahab, she received the spies quietly and secretly. Now a Canaanite would look at that as an act of deception. Oh dear, here is deception again, deceiving, the Canaanites. She said they were not there, or as good as said they were not there, deception again. She sent them out another way secretly, deception again. She put the scarlet line in the window, and did not tell anyone the meaning, deception again. And she entered, to make it worse than all, into a secret compact not to utter the business of the spies: "If you utter not this our business," and therefore, she kept it back, deception again. She received her father and mother, and sisters and brothers into the house without explaining the reason to the people of Jericho, deception again. Therefore, I as a Canaanite pronounce her conduct from first to last one scene of deception.

Now my opponents, to be consistent, ought to view her conduct in this way; if one part was bad it was all bad, and as a Canaanite that is the light in which I should view it, that it was deception from first to last. Now from being a Canaanite I will transform myself into an Israelite, and then into a Christian, and see how it stands then. Now I come to the Israelite, and I say to myself, Here are two men, good men, whose lives are in the hands of Rahab; it was with her to save their lives or to betray them. It is a great trust for her, how will she act? There are ten thousand ways in which the Lord can preserve the lives of the spies, but we must see how they are preserved, and that will teach us what the will of God is. Very well she knows the Lord, she is at peace with God's truth, and as my sermon on it shows, she holds fast his yea and amen truth. I presently hear she has received them. Well, I am glad of that, it shows her love to the God of Israel, and her love to the people of God; why, no evil shall come to her. Secondly, I learn that she hides them, pleased again, faithful again; for by exposing or betraying them she would, not save Jericho; Jericho is doomed. Presently I find she uses an irony, speaks ironically; that is, she uses a form of speech wherein the words are contrary to the meaning, the meaning contrary to the words. That was the turning-point, she had hid the spies, now comes the turning-point. Here are the messengers at the door, and she uses evasions, speaks ironically; she says that which is literally false but morally true; she stated that which was false in words, but which is justifiable in meaning. That is the great turning-point. She stands fast. The Holy Spirit, I believe, as a dying man, I believe with all the solemnity of a Christian and of a minister, I believe that the holy and eternal Spirit put those words into her mouth. Here comes then, I say, the turning-point. I as an Israelite, "O woman," I should have said, "great is your faith." Look at her love in receiving them, look at her prudence in hiding them; look at her faithfulness in using those evasions. Presently she sends the spies out another way; she does not utter the business; she keeps faithful to God's truth, faithful to God, and faithful to his way. Why, I do not, positively, I do not wonder at a prince in Israel falling in love with her; I do not wonder at a prince in Israel marrying her; I do not wonder at that honor put upon her. Why, the image of Christ appears so

conspicuous upon her soul and in her conduct, her integrity and her faithfulness, which the spies could safely trust, or else they would not have entered into a compact with her, when I look at this, then, why, it appears to me to be all admirable from first to last. Take a Canaanite's view of it, sympathize with the king of Jericho, it is deception from first to last; but come over and view the circumstance from an Israelite's standing, and everything is admirable. And what am I to understand by the apostle when he said, after setting Abraham before us in what he has done, "Likewise," "likewise," why, "likewise" means "after the same manner," doesn't it? I think something like that; and did Abraham do right in offering his son as far as he went? Yes? "Likewise also, after the same sinless, obedient, faithful, justifiable manner, "was not Rahab justified by works?" Thus the apostle sees entire analogy between the faithful works of Abraham in offering his son and the faithful works of Rahab in saving the spies; the apostle evidently never thought for one moment of making any exception to any part of the conduct of Rahab in concealing the spies, he saw she was justifiable in all she did, and that it was the divinely appointed and heaven-taught way of their preservation, and therefore there could be no sin in what she did or said, for God has no fellowship with sin, nor can he be the author or approver thereof; every part and especially that part of her conduct that uninspired men object to, was essential to the preservation of the messengers of God, and to make the faith of Rahab practically perfect. So, I most solemnly believe, and so I speak. And it is a small, a very small thing for me to be judged by man, seeing it is the Lord himself is my judge, and he judges righteously, and with his judgment I am happy and content, and he to the works and words of Rahab makes no exception, nor will I. Now mark, "when she had received the messengers, and when she had, not before, when she had sent them out another way." I believe Rahab was conscious of no sin in what she said. I believe the spies were conscious of no sin in it, I believe Joshua was conscious of no sin in it, and I believe the apostle James was taught by the Holy Ghost to show that there was no sin in it. Well, then, where is my great crime? I would use ten thousand evasions, I would use ten thousand times ten thousand such evasions if I were placed in the same circumstances, and there were the lives of two children of God in my hands. I would say, O God, give me wisdom justifiably to combine the serpent with the dove, and the dove with the serpent; let me not be a traitor; teach me what to say; give me a mouth and wisdom that the adversary shall not gainsay, nor resist; for this is your way of delivering the spies; you, could have delivered them some other way. I dare not betray them. Give me grace, give me wisdom, that I may be faithful unto death, then I shall receive a crown of life. God did give her wisdom; and if ever I should be placed in analogous circumstances, I pray that I may have grace to combine the serpent with the dove with as much innocence, as much integrity, as much propriety, to the good of men and the glory of God, as she did. Men run about and represent that I say that I would tell ten thousand lies; but they are very careful not to bring in the other part, namely, that I would use ten thousand evasions on the solemn conviction that those evasions were justifiable. Therefore, I am not at all moved, just where I was. And last night I read my sermon once more, and I was so taken with it that I got about halfway through it and then forgot the object for which I read it. I thought, What in the world is there in this sermon to make all this noise

about? It is nothing. There are one or two expressions that might have been expressed in a clearer way; but then, suppose there be two or three expressions in that sermon, what is the practice of Scripture? The practice of Scripture is to pass by the evil in a man for the sake, of the good that is in him.

There was no good thing in Judas, therefore the evil was not passed by; but there was some good thing in Peter, and for the sake of the good that was in Peter the evil was passed by. So, in my sermon, if there be a few remarks, if you please, not quite clear, then let mercy reign. I only say this, I do not believe during the thirty-eight years that I have been in my humble way preaching the gospel that I ever preached a sermon during all that time with holier feeling, with holier purpose, with more justifiable objects in view; and I had no more idea while my soul was filled that morning with eternal things, and my soul as happy, I had no more idea that any of my brethren would put such constructions upon that sermon, and attribute to me such motives and such doctrines. I had not the most remote idea of anything of the kind. I can come back to my conscience and feel that I am perfectly justified in the end at which I aimed. I will not now name them, but I may perhaps gather together, though I will not pledge myself to do so, the striking instances we have had of that sermon in several cases being most conspicuously and most wonderfully blessed. I do think that the open and broad seal of heaven upon that sermon ought to quiet my mind, and to make me go on happy and comfortable. And if my brethren like still to stand aloof from me, and keep up an agitation in the churches, that would like to have our united labors to help them, if my brethren choose to stand aloof and keep this up, then the sin lies not at my door, but at their door. I have no unkind feeling whatever; I am quite willing everything should be passed by on honorable principles, for I have nothing whatever to confess. I stand to my own Master; like Paul, to him I appeal. Therefore, I say the sin lies with them, and not with me. And besides, where is our Christian character if we cannot allow each other liberty to give our opinions? I therefore, still believe that Rahab was justified from the first to the last. The misrepresentations I have undergone I must expect; all public men of course, more or less, are misrepresented; but as to us hypers, us high Calvinist ministers, why, there is not a popular man among us; none of us are popular enough to be very useful, and we are making ourselves, by our littleness of mind and empty quibbles, more unpopular than ever. I could wish that some of the protesters and some of their company or ministers were here this morning in this pulpit with me. I would say, Now, brethren, look upon this assembly of little (if any) less than two thousand persons, and ask yourselves the question whether, if they were not satisfied that my motive was pure, my object scriptural, they would not, such an assembly as this, long ere this have entered their protest against what they believed to be wrong? Again, I would say, Brethren, look at such an assembly as this, listen to the solemn and glorious realities of eternity, and ask yourselves what you are fighting against. Well, then, if they stand aloof, I will regret it, and pray the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge. My prayer shall be that the Lord in mercy will stand by me, that the preaching by me in my humble sphere and contracted usefulness may at any rate be fully known. I have never boasted over any one, I have never assumed superiority over any one. Whether a minister has half a dozen

or a dozen, twenty, a hundred, five hundred, or a thousand people to preach to, I have made myself at home with them all; perhaps I have made myself too cheap. God is my witness I have nothing to boast of but his mercy, his grace, and his salvation. And as to the success with which we have been favored, surely, surely all our brethren would have the same if they could; I think so. So, then, I only say, whatever faults there may be in my sermon, if I have erred, I have erred innocently, and remain as yet perfectly unconvinced, because the misrepresentations given have no tendency to convince me that I am wrong. Thus, then, I still hold the truth that there are evasions which are lawful. And as to the Judge of all not suspending when he pleases one moral, or any other law, to make way for another moral or other kind of law, is simply to deny the truth of the Bible; but mind this, that for God to suspend for one moment his moral supremacy would be to give up the rectitude of his nature, which every mere novice in Christianity knows to be an impossibility, or to suspend his sovereign authority would be to give up the freedom of his will. Who in the world, or in the church either, ever dreamed of the possibility of God suspending his moral perfections? I have never dreamed or hinted at such a piece of infinite ignorance. And did Rahab say what she did in the fear of man? Just the reverse. And did she say what she did from mistrust in God? Just the reverse, just the reverse. She said what she did, believing God would sanction the message. I felt this morning I must just say a word or two about it; to say that my opponents ought either to hold her conduct to be one scene of deception from first to last, or else to come over to me, and to my namesake James, that justifies the whole; and that which God justifies let no man condemn. Now, then, be at peace with God's truth, and let men do what they may, good shall come unto you.

Some thoughts on the fifth of the Ten commandments and how this relates to the Rahab controversy.

The fifth Commandments reads as follows: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you."⁵¹ My purpose here is very straight forward. It is to use this commandment to highlight the fact that God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8,9). Great care must be taken, lest we bring God down to our level or that which is equally bad, use his name in vain by willfully sinning against the truth. Men and women strive to either fashion God in their own image or find any excuse possible to sin without recompence. Many examples, aside from this one given here, exist, like murder and killing during a time of war. I give this one example in order to help underscore the truth of what James Wells preached in regard to Rahab.

⁵¹ New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). (Ex 20:12). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Now to any true believer, one who has been saved and sanctified by the blood of the covenant in Christ Jesus our Lord, there is one and only one perfect human example. Only one who we can pattern our life after; that is of course the Lord Jesus Christ. This is shown for example in 1 Peter 2:21 and 22: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;”⁵²

With this in mind I quote the following passage at length:

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:41-52)⁵³

The key sections, for our purpose here are: “they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way?” ... “and He continued in subjection to them”. To reiterate: there was no sin in any way, shape or form in what our Lord did, as the young Son of God. He was God’s Son and at the same time the son of Mary and Joseph. However, just as the Jewish leaders found fault in all the Jesus did, they would have found fault with the way Jesus treated his earthly parents.

Luke has, as it were, gives us a very “bare bones” account of this incident, the very first recorded words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is much that we are not told, though as the quotation at the end of this section shows we can fill in at least some of the blanks. This much is obvious, Mary (and by direct inference Joseph) did not feel the honor that they expected from their son. For their good and the good of all the Christians to follow, our Lord, as it were, put them in their proper place at this time. Afterward, he resumed his normal role as a dutiful earthly son. How do we reconcile this with the fifth commandment? To me, at least, there is no difficulty in this. Jesus gave them all the honor that was due to them, yet at the same time gave God the honor that was His due. Reverence to God, what is called ‘the fear of God’, is the highest law. “The fear of the LORD is

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”⁵⁴ Lesser laws, even the fifth commandment under the Jewish old covenant must give way at times to the higher law of God and his sovereignty. In a sense, similar to what James Wells sought to express, the lower law was suspended or lessened for God’s purpose to be accomplished and this is handed down for our instruction in the Bible. There was no sin involved though some would find the appearance of such. Rahab did not sin, though the majority during the controversy said she did.

I give the following quotation to, as I said, fill in some of the blanks in Luke’s account. It is part of what M. S. Mills says. I would recommend the full account to the reader as it is very informative.

We have already been told that Jesus was wise (wise transcends clever), and this section forcefully repeats the point (v. 40). We therefore must somehow understand Jesus’ separation from His earthly parents within that wisdom, for He would have been acting rather thoughtlessly (i.e., unwisely) had He simply been carried away by the excitement of the moment and ignored His parents’ emotions. The Greek ‘tarry’ of v. 43 (see exegesis) leads us to conclude that Jesus purposefully chose to remain behind in order to emphasize His God-appointed role to His parents. Clearly, Jesus, in His wisdom, had a point to make and that point is found in v. 49, for He stated that He must be engaged in His heavenly Father’s affairs (things). As ‘Father’ stands in contrast with Mary’s rebuke about His earthly father, there is a hint that His parents hoped He would become involved in the family’s affairs. Jesus made it clear that He was born to please His heavenly Father, not His earthly father.

Jesus’ wisdom was exceptional, for Scripture stresses this three times (Luke 2:40, 47, 52). This was to become a particular feature of His ministry; indeed, He later claimed to be wiser than Solomon (Luke 11:31). Scripture does not leave the matter as a flat statement but provides an instance of the impact of His wisdom on specialists in wisdom! Our appreciation of what happened between Jesus and the teachers of Israel in the temple is helped by understanding the higher educational system of that day. A man was not considered a doctor (literally ‘teacher’) of the Law until he had completed ten years of regular school and then attended a rabbinical academy where he received the equivalent of twelve years of university level education, all in theology! Teachers of the Law were thus very well educated indeed, and the standards were such that only the highly intelligent could complete the course. Their didactic method was to ask their student questions which were answered by quoting the appropriate traditions of the fathers.

Jesus is ‘the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). Passover provided a perfect opportunity for that Lamb to ask the teachers of Israel questions about its significance, and about Israel’s understanding of that significance. From subsequent developments we know that Jesus was more concerned with the purpose and spirit of the law than with pedantic adherence to the letter of the law. His originality bewildered the Jewish mind which customarily sought refuge behind the opinions of respected teachers. So when questions were asked in the normal teaching manner Jesus both listened and then probed the

⁵⁴ Ibid Proverbs 2:9,10

traditional understanding by asking further questions. He understood more than the ‘what,’ and could supply the ‘why’ as well! This is what amazed teachers who were accustomed only to hearing the rabbinical authorities quoted in answer to their questions.

The road that descended from Jerusalem led to Jericho and was notorious for robbers from time immemorial. Mary and Joseph returned seeking Jesus (the search did not start in Jerusalem), possibly wondering whether by dallying behind He has fallen into trouble, or whether, like a boy, He had gone to investigate something that interested Him off the road and met with an accident in the rugged terrain. Joseph and Mary would have been spared none of the many thoughts which flood the fertile imaginations of distraught parents to this day! The three days Jesus was missing are probably the first day of the outward journey; the day spent returning to Jerusalem, climbing the steep ascent from Jericho; and a day searching in Jerusalem, which culminated in finding Jesus. If so, Jesus spent three days with the doctors of the law. Notably, Jesus’ first act on being recognized as having reached the age of responsibility was immediately to give notice that He must be about His Father’s business (v. 50).

There is the practical question of where Jesus spent those three nights. One answer is that during Passover week the residents of Jerusalem were particularly hospitable (this, too, suggests a homeward journey before the full week had passed). Another possible answer is that He spent the nights in prayer, as He did later in His ministry.

Remarkably, Mary, not Joseph, addressed Jesus, especially as she invoked Joseph in her rebuke (v. 48). It may be that her emotional relief at finding the Son who had been lost for three days caused her to vent a mixture of relief and reproach. Jesus’ answer, ‘Did you not know that it behooves Me to be in the things (matters) of My Father?’ is significant, for these are His first recorded words! Remarkably, at the age of twelve, Jesus knew who He is and what was required of Him. Clearly, the Bible denies the liberal theologian’s theory of ‘a growing messianic consciousness’ in Jesus: it was mature at twelve! Scripture gives no indication of just when in His boyhood Jesus realized that He was special, but it does tell us that He grew like a normal boy and that His wisdom increased; so it seems that when He was a baby He knew only as much as any other baby, and sometime in His early human life He became conscious of Who He is. It may have been as late as this event in the temple, it may have been earlier; Scripture is silent on this point and it would be unwise to speculate in so deep an area, especially as God has shrouded it in a veil of secrecy.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Mills, M. S. (1999). *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record (Lk 2:41–52)*. Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries.