

The Faith Of Rahab The Harlot Defended

James Wells

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Here James Wells defends his sermon, "The Faith Of Rahab The Harlot". The preface provides Wells' own account of the incident and circumstances surrounding the original controversy.

PREFACE

How far this defence 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 defence 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 favour 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 labours 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 his disciples two and two, I felt I should like a fellow helper; and after I had made up my mind to make my defence, I had arranged and decided upon the course I would take in that defence, 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 defence. 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 defence. 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 man-liness, 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.

"Whosoever shall be with thee in the house his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him."

Joshua ii. 19.

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 maga-zines 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 which hath moved them is open and patent to all. One friendly minister writing to me saith, "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 millions of 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 millions of 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 pre-sently 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 never-theless 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 disap-proved 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 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 seen 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 defence 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 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 libellously: 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 after 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 rancour, 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 re-vealing 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 saith 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) saith, 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 favour, 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 endeavour 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 vi. 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? Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour, but this commandment they do not merely suspend, but trample it under their feet; and while they falsely charge me with advocating lies, they them-selves are wilfully and maliciously practising 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 shewn 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 defence. 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 defence, I will just name that circum-stance 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 "Philoso-phical Nuts." 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 quarrelled 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 dis-putes 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, un-alterable. I never dreamt of such a foolish notion as that. My oppo-nents 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 cer-tain circumstances, lawful evasions — for that is the term I shall apply this morning; — I will observe that there are evasions which may be law-fully 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 un-guarded 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 hypocrisies 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 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. 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 law-ful 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 law-ful 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 wilfully 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. 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 sodoing 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 honour of being truthful: I say, that gives him the honour of being truthful.

He swore but once, the deed was done;

Settled by the great Three—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 favours 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? Also 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 circum-stances 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 hath 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 them-selves. The young man consequently kept to the house of God, escaped a repetition of the same fault, and stands to this day an honourable 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 favours; and if not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward, nor shall these favours. But let me come to the Scripture; what saith the Scripture? "Thou hast covered all our sins." "Love covereth a multitude of sins." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, and he that hath showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy, and mercy rejoiceth 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 saith, —

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 savours 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 Saviour said, "If ye knew what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye 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 subserviency 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 Saviour and in his people, in and by that which he hath constituted them. I hold that the Lord doth 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, consanguineous 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-sanguineous 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 anysin 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 mono-gamic 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," say something else, but they can't do it. Others have said, Well, it was a kind 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 hath 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 hath committed, he hath 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 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 gospel. I give no opinion here of my own, one way 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 neighbours; 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 pro-faned 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 deli-berate 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 God. 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 honoured it as he did. I can never believe that God honours 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 ren-dering 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.

Nor have I made this defence for the sake of these my persecutors; but for the people at large, who happily are much better capable of judg-ing 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 honoured, 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 favour: 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 favour. 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? How? 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; some-body 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 Saviour, 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 have not done yet — done! 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 sapient 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 hiding 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 dwelleth 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 saith, "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 dwelleth 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 honour upon that lying woman? Oh, ye divines, 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 you 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 neighbours? 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 honoured 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, glori-fying 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

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.

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 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 him-self, 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, "Seest 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 lieth 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, hath 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 sove-reignty 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 opprobry 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 con-clude 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 becomes us to meet the question before us with unequivocal firm-ness; 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 de-struction, 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 invest 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 ex-actly 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 behaviour; and this prevarication (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. Methinks I 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, and a variety of soundings, before they could safely commit themselves to her fidelity; 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, ye 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 searcheth the heart knoweth 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 effected 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 approbation of my former observations on Rahab's motives and actions, which I feared were too coarse and clumsy for your miscellany, 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 lay down what I have in view with such simplicity and perspicuity, that the most simple and un-learned of your readers may not mistake my meaning, or impute motives to me dishonourable to moral integrity, and repugnant to the gospel of Christ.

The second query, or rather bundle 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 things of the last importance 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 veracity, and solemn asservation declares, "that all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth 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 wilful and criminal falsehood;" which definition undoubtedly implies that there may be certain falsehoods which are not criminal, 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 the credulity of mankind; 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 supersede the simple confidence in Jesus Christ and him crucified. Alas! there is no necessity to introduce systematical refuges of lies, while the heart itself is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; ever prone to put away the truth, and embrace its own destruction in every rising subterfuge, which it is never at a loss to coin 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.

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 Revelations, who shall have no part in the heavenly Jerusalem, being "lovers of, and makers of lies." O my soul, come not thou 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 burneth with fire and brimstone."

Secondly, Insinuating liars. These of all others are the most dangerous, inasmuch as a lurking foe is more formidable than an open adversary; these

in general clothe the fraud in reason's garb, 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 disallowance 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 pernicious 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 hath 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. These are clouds without rain; wells without water; wandering stars, to whom is reserved blackness and darkness forever; however they may 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 burneth with fire and brimstone.

Thirdly, Calumniating 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 reprehension 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 burneth 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 shew-bread and the priest of the God of Israel; and this transaction, however it may appear, is justified and com-mended: the sword of Goliath was also obtained under the same pretence. As I would not wish to multiply words, I refer the reader to the original account (1 Sam. xxi). 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 harbour 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 was 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 friend-less.

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 manoeuvre, 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, thou detested wretch? he shall no more return with a prey of divers colours, and each man a damsel 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 blasted his designs, 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 goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years."

To these cases I might subjoin many others from the Scriptures, but my words multiply so fast I fear they will overrun the measure; I will, therefore, pass on to observe upon these cases; that notwithstanding our boasted 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 in

solid judgment, and had clearer views of moral good and evil than we imagine, 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 honour? How comes it then to pass that our modern Solomons have discovered them to be evil, or at least doubtful? But above all, how comes it to pass that modern divines have not attentively considered these things, and developed the passages from the darkness and obloquy which has been thrown 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 know-ledge 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 fright 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 odium 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 traveller 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 Saviour's death: that precious blood that cleanseth 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 behoves 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 endeavoured 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 commendation.

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 suppose 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 behaviour 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 favourable circumstances to suit the occasion, and depress and diminish those that were adverse, and, in fine, endeavour to make them have a better 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 cometh when he pleaseth, and searcheth the reins; he hath 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 methinks 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 endeavoured 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 labour amply compensated.

Yours to command, in truth and sincerity,

K.

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