

LETTER FROM MR. WELLS

Editor's Note: The first section here is from The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record the October 1, 1866 issue), pages 316 – 317. The reference "It will not be long" is from Walter Banks "Cheering Words" magazine September. 1866 page 142. The emphasis is mine. Note the remarkable statement by James Wells. Unlike so many at that time and like most today he could see good and acknowledge good where he found it. Would to God that more were of such a spirit today!

LETTER FROM MR. WELLS

Dear Me. Editor, — I have just gone, with much pleasure, and I hope some profit, through little Cheering Words for this month (**Editor – see below**); likewise, through the excellent letter to Australia, you kindly sent me, as your letter of this morning reached me, containing a curiosity from a certain correspondent of yours. The curiosity is this: that he would not like to circulate Cheering Words of this month because you quote from one of James Wells's sermons, wherein Mr. Wells says believers won't die, for which sentiment Mr. Wells has no Scripture, whereas he (Wells) and many more may never die, they may be alive when the Lord comes; so speaketh your correspondent, and who can be angry with him for such good news as this? I fear this news is too good to be true, so that for want of faith I lose the consolation. I know that spiritually the Christian shall never die, and all who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord certainly will not die, but be changed in a moment "in the twinkling of an eye." I hope if your correspondent should be disappointed, and should have to die like other men (for it is appointed unto men once to die) that he may have the bright shining of a better light, and that will reconcile him to his disappointment. What opposite extremes we meet with among men! Your correspondent will hardly let us die at all, and some will hardly let us live at all. I recollect hearing some years ago, a Standard's Obsequent, he in the first part of his sermon, cut and slashed, mowed us down by wholesale, and almost questioned whether there was a real Christian on earth, at least very, very few; and he even frankly told us, he doubted whether he himself was one, and which I was glad to hear, because I thought if he doubted everyone else, he ought to doubt of himself also, which he said he did; but on he went, cursing and slaying, not the ungodly but against the hapless dead letter men, but did not withal signify the crimes laid against us, which was, I thought, rather unreasonable, at least it seemed so to my poor dead letter carnal reason. Well, thought I, here we are with, perhaps, not one real Christian on the earth, and not many in heaven, so that for the voices of the heavenly hosts to be as the sound of many waters and as mighty thundering's was of course quite out of the question. Well, thought I, the few are so very few, that they will want but a corner in heaven. Well, let us, thought I, take comfort even from this, for the wise man hath said, "it is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than in a wide house with a brawling woman," so that the few that will be there, will at least have it to themselves, and will not be troubled with any of those plaguy dead letter men. Well, but stop, the good Standardite began to relent, at least a little, and said to us rather sharply, why, you will say this is all pulling down and not building up. Well, I thought, mercy be praised for that admission; who knoweth what the next ten minutes may bring forth? So he did slacken the rope a little, and we could breathe, and that was all, and so we got off with our lives scarcely saved. The chief excellency of the sermon was, that it certainly did not violate the second commandment; for the sermon was neither law, nor gospel, nor had it any similitude whatever; it was "not the likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth," and if any of us did bow down

and worship it, I hope our worship was as blameless as Rahab's lawful evasions; that while this Standard obsequient would let hardly any one live, your correspondent will let hardly any one die. But where is your correspondent's Scripture for his doctrine, that death, natural death, will not come to the believer? I for one think that the doctrine of your correspondent is a very unsafe doctrine to take comfort from. Is it not better to take courage and comfort from the express declarations of Holy Writ: "that to die is gain," that when with David, "I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou [the shepherd of Israel] art with me," that "blessed [and only blessed] are the dead that die in the Lord;" that "absent from the body, present with the Lord," that "as we have through grace received him now, he will receive us then, and so shall we ever be with the Lord " 1 I think this to be the more excellent way to look forward to the Jordan.

Also, Mr. Editor, I desire to thank you for your kindly feeling. You have just read my sermon on the "Signs of the Times," (**Editor – this sermon is posted on <http://surreytabernaclepulpit.com/>**) and you see I am not a millenarian, and this sermon has made you feel that you wish you could convert me, or I convert you, or God convert us both. Well, you cannot have a better Christian feeling than this; but, of course, with my present views, I believe you millenarians are all wrong together; but I do not rank this doctrine of millenarianism among the essentials of the gospel, and I hold it to be utterly unchristian, to be unfriendly, or unbrotherly, on this or any other non-essential difference. What we most solemnly believe to be the truth, ought to be spoken, but let it be spoken in love. I hold it to be one of the excellencies of the Vessel that it does not tie itself to any party. Many millenarians I very much respect, because I see in them the reigning grace of God a life and work of devotion to God, a decision for all the truths of the new and everlasting Covenant, and with some great industry in the things of God; nor do I wish to be brought into any controversy with them, though I sometimes half fear it may be so; but controversy—at least in religion— is hardly ever conducted in a Christian spirit, and often does more harm than good. We need all of us to pray, to daily pray with the Psalmist; "Create in me, a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me." I admire the decision of the Standard party; but I cannot approve the spirit in which that decision is maintained. A spirit which has made and is making sad havoc in the churches, setting brother against brother, and despising every minister who does not choose to sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag, holding as it seems to me, that they are the only preachers in Christendom that have any true conviction of their state as sinners, or that have real and true gospel experience, trusting that they themselves only are vitally right, and despising all others. But this spirit is of the flesh and not of God. That many among them are the excellent of the earth, no one who knows the truth in the vital and saving power thereof, can doubt; but this bigotry among ministers and churches eats up everything. When will Joseph's brethren cease to fail out by the way, error be checked, ungodliness rolled back, the chariot of salvation go majestically on; little opinions and little differences be treated as such, and zeal for the saving and practical truths of the gospel eat ministers and Christians up? Not in this generation, I fear. **Differ as I do from Mr. Spurgeon, yet he has shown an independence of judgment, a magnanimity of soul, a nobleness of mind, and a range of benevolent feeling, enough to shame the hypens to a man.** —I am, dear Mr. Editor yours in the bonds of the gospel, Sept. 8, 1866. 'J. Wells.

"IT WILL NOT BE LONG."

That Mr. James Wells is a singular interpreter of Scripture as ever I read in my life. In his No. 404, he heads his sermon — "Satan's Seven Kings," (Rev. xvii. 10), and he makes them all speak comfort to God's people. No one can well blame him for that. The following paragraph may form a nice little pillow for weary tempted saints: —

WHAT will shortly take place with you? Death. The king of terrors, and often, as we say, a terror to kings, is not come to you yet, but he will come, and that will complete the work. So that the child of God will not leave the world with a very good impression concerning Satan. He will say, Ah, Satan has thus brought me down ; but the blessed Jesus hath redeemed me from this last enemy, this last king. Death is not the completion of Satan's work with the sinner—alas ! no; but it is all he can do with the saints. He can kill the body, but after that there is no more that he can do. Thus, then, I understand the king that is yet to come; and when he comes in that shape and form he must continue a short space. In a future world the lost are always dying, and can never die; there they seek death, and the more they seek death the farther it is from them; there Satan's tyranny is a tyranny without end. But when the Christian comes to die, he says, Ah, the last king has come ; this is Satan's last display of his power; his work will soon be done. And how many a child of God, when he is dying, and Satan has come in upon him on his death-bed like a flood, and tried to hurt him to the last degree, the Lord begins to show a little light, and the believer has said, It will soon be over; a few hours more, and after that there will be no more enemies. Satan cannot touch us after death. As he could not touch the Savior, after the Savior died and rose from the dead, so he cannot touch the believer after the believer leaves the body. So, then, when death shall set in it will not be long; the enemy will not be suffered to touch thee very long.