

THE CALL

a Quarterly Journal for Friends in Christ
"Primitive Christianity Revived"

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Quarterly Journal of Friends in Christ.
[Plain Quakers]

The aims of this publication being to help bring people to the feet of Jesus Christ, to publish the cause of primitive Christianity, to promote Christian Love and Fellowship, Unity and Gospel Order in the Church, Harmony amongst all people, and to help build the Redeemer's Kingdom here on earth.

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All the Truths of Christianity

"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." (Mark 2:27)

The following actually happened. A Friend once entered into correspondence with a priest of the Anglican Church, whom he had heard speaking on the radio about "the true meaning of Christmas." The Friend chided the priest, gently but firmly, that the Gospel power of Jesus Christ was not to be measured out by a calendar, and that nowhere in Scripture had he laid down that we should celebrate his birthday. The priest's curt reply in defence of the ecclesiastical calendar was "Do you really think it's possible to receive all the truths of Christianity at once?"

Into the Friend's mind came this passage:

"And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears

of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

(Mark 2:22-28)

He then replied in words to the following effect to the priest:

"We are asked to pray 'Give us this day our daily bread'. This is more than a simple request for food on our plate, it is a recognition of our need for, and an expression of our willingness to receive, spiritual bread from heaven – our daily portion of Truth, given by the Hand of him who asked us to pray in that manner, of him who is himself the Truth. He says 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger', and thus we have his assurance that we shall receive the Truth daily in the measure that he, not we, decide; and if it is his will that we receive all the truths of Christianity, then we shall."

"Friend, I admonish thee in love. Thou art in error to say 'Today we shall think about Christ's birth, because it is the 25th of Twelfth Month' or 'Today we shall think about Christ's resurrection because it is Easter'. If Christ should send the Holy Spirit to us with messages of his crucifixion, and it happens to be the 25th of Twelfth Month, we would be disobedient to dismiss the leading, to shrug it off because it is Christmas."

The priest could make no reply, but the Friend prayed ceaselessly for his conviction.

Prophets: The True and the False

As it was in former times, so it is now; some are called to be prophets for God, and some are not. All are called to salvation in Christ and to live “prophetic lives,” in as much as all Christians are called to live in the light that sheds the truth of God into the world around them. But few are called to stand in the place of the prophets.

Before I go on, let me clarify what I mean by prophet in the modern context. In the Christian context the prophet is one who is empowered by God to speak with authority, and by that word of authority to pronounce the counsel of God to the world. Modern examples might include some of the great evangelical leaders of the 19th and 20th centuries, whose preaching moved millions to make a decision for Jesus Christ. These were Christian leaders of spiritual and moral integrity, leaders who would never have given the current political chaos in America, and elsewhere, a passing grade. But even on a more modest scale, one with a prophetic ministry might include lesser celebrated preachers and teachers of the Word, who when they preach or teach, do so with what might be called a charismatic power, and in doing so change the lives of those who hear their message. In both the Old Testament and the New prophets carried the authority of God when they spoke. And their words carried the warning of God’s judgment and justice, as well as His mercy to all within earshot of their voices. And how do we tell the false from the true? By the results. True prophecy bears the fruits of righteousness, while the false bears no substantive results. In the modern context of the 20th century the apologist Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) might characterize an example of a true prophet, as demonstrated in his *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1970), in which warnings he gives to the Christian church, and the resultant evidences which he predicted would occur, and which have occurred, fulfill the Biblical requirement of the true prophet – accuracy (Deuteronomy 18:22).

It is not my intention to dwell on the morbid state of contemporary politics, but a brief foray into the collision between church and state in North

America is helpful, if only to illuminate what it is I am trying to convey to my readers. I’m speaking of the conundrum of North American evangelical Christians and Christian leaders supporting a man and an administration that behave in a totally antithetical way to genuine Christian values. “How is this possible?” is the question many other Christians are asking at the moment. North America is not an isolated case, as we might call to our remembrance what happened in Germany in the 1930s when German Christians supported a fascist dictator and brought him to power in the name of God. Indeed, the Old Testament had its own problems with religious idolatry in the form of “leader” or “idol” worship. This imposing problem brings us to the nub of the issue, that many in our day, as in earlier periods of the faith, are being led astray by “false” or “lying” spirits. As harsh as this sounds, it must be said and identified for what it is.

Perhaps the harshest prophetic utterances in the Bible are found in the Book of Jeremiah, who prophesied during the reign of King Josiah of Judah (626 BC). To read the account of his prophecies is to appreciate why he was called the “weeping prophet.” His ministry forced him to taste the bitter roots of God’s wrath on a disloyal and disobedient people. As in the case of many of the prophets of the Old Testament, Jeremiah reveals how God allowed the people to be seduced by false priests and prophets, professional pandering religionists who were in the employ of king or the temple for remuneration. One striking example of this is found in Jeremiah 14:14, where God speaks these words through the prophet: *Yahweh said to me: It’s falsehood that the prophets have prophesied in my name; I haven’t sent them, not commanded them, not spoken to them. A false vision, divination and emptiness, their spirit’s deceit, is what those people are prophesying to you* (John Goldingay’s translation from the Hebrew, *Jeremiah for Everyone*, 2015). I believe we are facing a parallel situation in our own day with respect to false prophets shoring up leaders and systems that have embraced what the Epistle to the Ephesians recognize as “principalities and powers and wickedness in high places.” The New Testament reports Jesus warning his disciples: *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in*

sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15; *New American Standard Bible*, 1971).

Professional religionists have been a problem throughout the Biblical narratives. On many occasions God has been compelled to call forth men and women who are not paid professionals to speak His unvarnished truths. A few examples from the Bible are the prophets Elijah and Amos, who seem to appear from out of nowhere to speak God’s word to a rebellious and truculent people. Both are repudiated as trouble-makers, speaking up out of their rightful place. They come with both a warning and blessing intermingled. And they are almost always rebuffed by the very people who claim to be God’s called ones. Such prophets must swim against the tide of the professional religionists and the state. And even more challenging, they must stand against the false prophets of their time, prophets who are bearing a false witness of a “lying” or “false” spirit. The New Testament identifies these false prophets with the Greek word *pseudo*. How appropriate in our modern context, where we are assailed by so many “miracle-a-minute preachers” dispensing their miraculous wares and saying, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. Even worse, we are witnessing long established Christian leaders who seem to have become deaf, dumb, and blind to the callous wickedness of the political leaders and the manipulative systems they support.

It was ever thus. And to put into the context of the Religious Society of Friends, we readily remember the ministry of George Fox, who like so many prophets of an earlier time, faced severe and cruel opposition to his message of God’s free grace (free from religious forms and rituals). Here is a portion of his account when he visited a steeple house and listened to the preacher deliver a message that was errant: *Now the Lord’s power was so mighty upon me and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say, ‘Oh no, it is not the Scriptures.’ But I told them what it was, namely, the Holy Spirit, by which holy men of God gave forth the Scripture, whereby opinions, religions, and judgements were to be tried; for it led into all Truth, and so gave the knowledge of all Truth* (*The Journals of George Fox* (J.M. Dent &

Sons, 1924). And what did Fox receive for his witness to the truth? He received the hostility and persecution of the established religionists and judiciary of his day. As Fox faithfully records, the professional prophets of his day were as unreliable as those of the Old Testament and those of our time.

Let us, like George Fox, not be deceived by religious poseurs who would lead us away from the Lamb's War and into the confusion and darkness being conjured up by the principalities and powers of this Dark Age. We have been given a sure testimony to proclaim and defend in honesty and truth. This is what it means to live the "prophetic life" in Christ. And to those who have been called as special witnesses for God (ie, to be prophets), let them go forward in deep humility, fear and trembling, and cry out with all the prophets of the past, "Oh Lord, I have unclean lips, and am unclean - make me whole through Thy mercy!"

Brian McGregor-Foxcroft

Women and the Church George Fox, 1676

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And do ye think that these honourable women did not meet often together, and took counsel together, to stand together, and adventure their own lives and estates to preserve the lives of those male children? Would you not say, if this were in your days, that these were bold women to answer the king after such a manner, and to disobey the king's commands thus? as in Exod. i. And after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and saw the destruction of Pharaoh and his host; after Moses made an end of his song and praising of the Lord, then Miriam the prophetess, the sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances, (mark, all the women,) and Miriam answered them, and said, Sing ye unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider bath lie overthrown in the sea,' &c.

Now, here you may see what an assembly there was of the women, that praised the Lord, who were instructed by Miriam the prophetess;

and Moses and Aaron were not offended at them; for they were sensible of their joy, and were partakers of the deliverance and salvation, the women as well as the men; as you may see in Exod. xv.

And Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel, and sent to Baruch and exhorted and encouraged him; and she prophesied to him that he should not have the glory of the battle; but that the Lord should sell Sisera into the hands of a woman; as you may see in Judges iv. v. chap.

Then sung Deborah and praised the Lord; and there you may see her large declaration, in praising and magnifying the name of the Lord, the whole chapter throughout; and how she said, 'Blessed be Jael above all women, the wife of Heber; blessed shall she be in the tent,' &c. And we do not read that the elders did reprove her, or bid her hold her prating; for she was filled with the power of the Lord to praise his name. Judges v. And you may see how the apostle set forth the honourable women, and their faithfulness and constancy, who by faith received the dead, raised to life again, Heb. xi. 35.

And Hannah, who prayed in the temple before Ely, as aforesaid, who was ignorant of her condition, he reprov'd her, and thought she had been drunk; but she convinced him; so that at last he encouraged her, and desired the Lord to grant her petition: and when the Lord had granted it to her, you may see how this honourable woman exalts the Lord, 1 Sam. ii. 1 to the 10th

And Ruth and Naomi, you may see what virtuous women they were, and how the women blessed the Lord on their behalf, and how they declared of the goodness of the Lord to them.

And Huldah the prophetess, who dwelt in Jerusalem, in the college, where the king sent out the priest Hilkiah, and his scribe, and others, to inquire of her. Now the Jews here did not despise communication with a woman. And she instructed the priest and the king's scribe, who came to her. So neither king nor priest did despise this prophetess's teaching and instruction, but obeyed it, as you may see what a large sermon she

preached to them, in 2 Kings, xxii. from 14 to the end.

And you may see Abigail, that honourable woman's wisdom, how she saved her family and her house from destruction. Yet she did not go to ask her husband (old churlish Nabal) at home, but she, who was innocent and wise, took it upon herself; and you may see what a brave sermon she preached to David, who heard her patiently; and she told David, how that 'he was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord God.' And David blessed the Lord God that she came to him, and said, 'the Lord God of Israel had sent her that day to meet him;' and said, 'Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from shedding blood;' as you may read in 1 Sam. xxv. And was not this a noble and honourable act of this woman, which prevented so much evil and bloodshed, which her husband had like to have brought upon them? So David did not despise the counsel of this honourable woman, who was wiser than her husband Nabal.

And now, must not the virgins, in the time of the gospel, trim their lamps, and get oil into their own lamps, by labouring in the grace, light, and power of Christ, and keep their lamps trimmed and always burning. In the time of the law it was Aaron the priest's office; but in the time of the gospel all the virgin minds must trim their lamps, that their lamps may burn the clearer; and to see that they have oil in their lamps from the heavenly olive tree, Christ Jesus.

And therefore, they that would not have the virgins and women to be diligent, serving the Lord in his heavenly business and service, their lamps are going out, and they are become fools, and would have others like themselves.

And the Lord sent Elijah in the time of the famine, and said unto him, 'Behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee;' and he arose, and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, the widow woman was gathering sticks to make a fire, to bake her a cake, who had but one handful of meal and a little oil in a cruise, and yet in faith she made the man of God a cake, though she had no more than this, that she and her son might eat and

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then die; but her meal wasted not, nor her cruise of oil, according to the word of the Lord; and so the Lord blessed this woman, as you may see in 1 Kings xvii.

And in the 2d of Kings and the 4th, there you may see the faith of the widow woman, and how largely she spoke unto the prophet Elisha, and how the Lord increased her stock of oil through her belief and faithfulness. [*to be continued*]

Announcements and Friends Chronicle

This section of *The Call* is intended for any news that readers may have, such as births, deaths, removals, and so on, or very brief reports of the love and power of Christ in your life events. Please send any such items to the editor.

Elizabeth J. Crook. Our dear friend and long-time recipient of *The Call*, Elizabeth J. Cook was taken from us to her reward on 2nd of 12th Month. I am sure Friends will wish to give thanks for the grace of God in her life.

Meetings in the Name of Jesus Christ

Christian Friends Mission is the name of a firmly Christian Quaker Mission based in Athens, Greece. They are affiliated with Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and uphold the Early faith of Friends. Meetings are held in Athens. Their website is <http://christianquaker.net>.

Please contact **Themistoklis J. Papaioannou** for further details. Address: 76 Patriarchou Grigoriou E', Vyronas 16233, Athens, Greece. Email: thepap1976@gmail.com.

Friends in Christ, Saffron Walden. A new meeting in Christ's name, under the discipline of Friends in Christ, has been planted in Saffron Walden, Essex. For now, please contact the editor for details.

Articles etc. wanted

Are any Friends led to share something with the rest of us? Long articles, short articles, brief thoughts, prayers, simple recipes, hints and tips for living more simply, poetry... all such would be gratefully received by the editor at Goshen.meeting@gmail.com.

Ruth Pitman suggested the following poem by **William Bacon Evans**.

That which doth manifest the way is Light,
And God is Light, and Christ the chosen Way,
Who guides from darkness to eternal day,
From doubtful gropings to pure sense and sight.
The Light is Christ, who stripped Himself of might,
Forsook priority of place and sway,
Of erring mortals took the mould of clay,
Though clothed in righteousness of stainless white,
For our offences hung upon the tree,
Bore all the infamy and bitter loss,
Endured the taunts and cruel reproaches hurled:
Stole from the tomb, and shining secretly,
Illumines paths converging at the cross,
Enlightens every man in all the world.

The editor has a selection of material in his files without any contributor's name. One item was published unattributed in the last issue, and **David Holdsworth** got in touch to say that it was his. I wonder if the following is another such?

What is in a name? - God of Wonders

Names in the bible are significant. e.g. David means, beloved by God and man. And so king David was. Jesus asks who do you say I am? A question to his disciples, but also all of us? He says the father's name is to be hallowed (see the Lord's prayer) and that he and the Father are one. So we should meditate on the holiness of his names. There are hundreds of names for God. They each provide a rich blessing of description.

One such name is: God of Wonders

The hymn says "God of wonders, beyond our galaxy, You are holy." It is worth thinking on any wonder, no matter how seemingly small, that we are blessed with in life. God operates in both the magnificent out of the ordinary (e.g. Acts 2:19) and in the everyday. This God of resurrection wonder (Eph 1:20) not only raised Christ, but daily raises up those in need. His blessings are new every morning. He not only is a creative life giver at the beginning (Is 44:24), but continues to be now. He promises that all things can be made new (Is 42:9) and all creation is groaning like a woman in birth pains for it. He and His kingdom are coming little by little, wonder, by wonder for he is the God of wonders and is truly wonderful.

Nature notes

It has been a chilly autumn in Scotland, and the bird population in our garden has been decimated. I can tell this from the rate at which the food I put out is consumed. In summer and early autumn it would be gone by mid morning. Now I only have to see to it every other day – sometimes every third day. There's a Scots word, 'hoachin', which conveys full and busy; it's a word we used day after day during the summer, to describe the state of the apple tree outside our kitchen window, when the birds are hopping from branch to branch, vying for a place on the seed-feeder, and complaining loudly to each other. Suddenly it all stopped.

We miss, most of all, the woodpeckers. They were the second generation to visit us, and we were always pleased to see one of them attacking our seed- and fat-filled coconut shell or our peanut-feeder. The most likely cause of their disappearance is the fact that there has been a tree surgeon working in our area, and several large, tall trees have received his attention. Woodpeckers are fairly shy birds, and may well have been disturbed enough to leave their nest. It may even have been the case that the tree surgeon was working on the very tree in which they nested. It's difficult to say. We had the privilege and blessing of their presence while it lasted.

What blessings of nature have you had? Readers of *The Call* would love to hear from you.

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