

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2005. (A Work in Progress)

Black Bartholomew's Day

(The Pastor's Letter – August 1977)

Dear Friends,

If you care to look in your diary for 24th August, you will find that it is listed as “St Bartholomew's Day”. In the diary of the Church of Christ, however, we find 24th August, **1662**, listed as “***Black Bartholomew's Day***”. * On that day, almost 2000 sermons were preached by almost 2000 ministers of the Church of England, and the nature of those sermons and the men who preached them is well summarised in the words of one of them ...

“I preach as never sure to preach again
And as a dying man to dying men”.

The 24th August, 1662, is the date of what church History has called “The Great Ejection”. It was on that day that almost 2000 ministers of the Church of England were ejected from their churches, and pulpits, and homes, because “for conscience sake”, as they put it, they could not bring themselves to submit to “An Act of Uniformity” drawn up by Charles II and his bishops. Like everything else in the history of the Church, however the 24th August, 1662, was merely the climax of a state of affairs that reached back in this case almost 100 years, to the years just following the Reformation in the Church of England, when Henry VIII was on the throne of England.

Under Henry, the Church in England had been “reformed”, but it wasn't long until many were beginning to question whether or not the reform had gone far enough. These people became known as “Puritans”. It was the Puritans' desire to move the Reformation right to the point where everything that had been added to the Church during the middle ages by the Popes of Rome would be cast out, and not only the doctrine of the Church, but the practice and discipline of the Church be “purified”; so they were called the Puritans.

The main body of opinion in the church at this time was that “things indifferent, which are neither contrary to Scripture, nor forbidden by it, may be imposed by the Church or some lawful power!” The “things indifferent” referred to were things such as candles, crosses, vestments, and altars. The Puritans held that nothing that was not entirely consistent with the teaching of the Bible should be maintained; “for, if they be kept in the Church as things indifferent”, said John Hooper, who has been called “the father of Puritanism”, “they will at length be maintained as things necessary”. These were the two parties that first drew their swords right back in the reign of Henry VIII.

During the reign of Queen Mary - “Bloody Mary” - the martyr fires of Smithfield began to burn. Many of the leading Reformers were put to death; but many more managed to escape to the continent of Europe where they came more and more under the influence of the Swiss Reformers, Calvin and Bullinger. When Elizabeth ascended the throne of England at the death of her sister, Mary, Protestantism was re-established in the realm, and the Puritans who had fled to Europe began to make their way back to England. But, what were Elizabeth's intentions? Let me quote Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones here. “there is no question”, he says, “but that this whole trouble and dispute which lasted for the 100 years ending in 1662 is mainly to be attributed to that headstrong woman, Queen Elizabeth I. She caused an Act of Uniformity to be passed in the year of her accession to the throne, 1558, and in that, assent to the Prayer Book and its teaching was made obligatory. But – and this is an important point – at first this was not rigidly enforced, so the Puritans felt that they could honestly and conscientiously still stay in the Church of England. They felt that they had to but bide their time, and that the inevitable logic of their teaching would eventually become evident to all. So there was no thought in their minds of leaving the church; they remained within, determined to develop their teaching and influence others. It cannot be emphasised too frequently that the main body of the Puritans persisted in that attitude right down to 1662”.

This was the position then, that the Puritans returned to; Elizabeth's church, in theory, said that all had to conform to the Prayer

Book; in practice, however, this was not the case, and so the Puritans remained within its ranks in the hope that reformation would soon be complete through their efforts.

During Elizabeth's reign, however, some of the Puritans began to see that this state of affairs held out little hope, and there sprang up a strong Presbyterian group under a man called Thomas Cartwright, and a third group – the Separatists – under Robert Browne. The watchword of this latter party was “reformation without tarrying for any”, and they were sorely persecuted by Elizabeth. In the reign of James I (VI of Scotland), things at first appeared to be favourable towards those of Puritan sympathies, but by 1620 the famous voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers in the Mayflower was a direct outcome of the opposition still held out towards the Reformers. James's right hand man was Archbishop Laud, and between them, they tried to impose the rule of Bishops, not only in England, but in Scotland as well. This led to the drawing up and signing of “The Solemn League and Covenant”, and the emergence of “The Covenanters” - the Scottish Puritans.

Civil war followed and the “monarchy” was abolished in the kingdom. Under Cromwell, who ruled the nation during its 'Commonwealth' period, religious liberty was granted to all Protestants, but, at the death of Cromwell, no equal successor was forthcoming, and the “royalists” in Parliament recalled Charles II to occupy the throne of England. He returned in May 1660, with the promise that he would grant “a liberty to tender consciences ... in matters of religion”. The Puritans asked the king to recognise their position; the king “replied” when his chosen Parliament met in May, 1661, and publicly burned a copy of The Solemn League and Covenant. Puritans were expelled from lecturing posts in the universities etc., and the Episcopal form of church government was fully restored. A year later the Act of Uniformity became law. “The principal terms required by the Act were a Declaration of 'unfeigned assent and consent' to everything contained in the Book of common Prayer, re-ordination for those not episcopally ordained, and a renunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant”. It laid down “that

all ministers in the church of England must conform to the demands of this Act by St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662”.

The death knell had sounded for the Puritans; they had lived for a long time side-by-side with what they discerned to be the marks of an unreformed church in the hope that they could reform it. But now the cry was 'conform'; this they could never do! And so, on 'Black Bartholomew's Day, 2,000 of them left all that they had “for conscience sake”. There was to follow the “Conventicle Act”, forbidding them to meet together for worship; then the “Five Mile Act”, forbidding them to live within 5 miles of their old congregation. They were imprisoned and abused; Bunyan spent 12 years in jail for his non-conformity. “Those great preachers whose name we remember”, says C. H. Spurgeon, “were men who counted nothing their own; they were driven out for their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all that they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place, they wandered here and there to preach the Gospel to a few Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road, fair or foul, and they did walk it, knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it had it been knee deep in blood too”.

They were forbidden to preach, and yet they preached more than they might have done had they not been ejected, for when they were silenced, they wrote, and their words are speaking yet.

Your sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

**The term is also used with reference to the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris in 1572*

“Who need fear men who is in league with God?”
John Trapp

Looking unto Jesus ***by*** ***Adolphe Monod.***

“When in September 1855, Adolphe Monod was overtaken by a fatal illness it seemed that the earthly ministry of the foremost preacher in France had come to an end. His voice would no more rouse the thronged congregation in the Oratoire, Paris, as it had done for nine years past, and soon his life would no more be the “lighthouse,” as a contemporary described him, “to whom everyone looked as the sailor in the storm.” Thus suddenly reduced to the pain of a sick-bed at the age of fifty-three, Monod had but one concern: “O my God,” he prayed, is my work finished? Thou only knowest ... ***I should so much have wished to leave behind me some lasting monument for Thy glory.***”

His prayer was answered, yet not in the way that he might have imagined. God did not restore him to his former work but brought him to exercise a new ministry – the ministry of suffering and patience which occasioned the contents of this book, (Adolphe Monod's Farewell.) As long as evangelical literature is read, Adolphe Monod's Farewell will be remembered as the most enduring monument that he left to the glory of God.”

NOTE – The above article is taken from the introduction to the Banner of Truth edition of “Adolphe Monod's Farewell.”

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

At this time of year many of you will be setting off on holiday or, perhaps will just have returned from holiday. If you were travelling by car or bus from Scotland to England you may have noticed a sign outside a hotel as soon as you got across the border. The sign would read, “The First Hotel in England.” If you happened to look out the back window of the car or bus, however, you would have seen that the other side of the sign read, “The Last Hotel in England”. That may

seem a strange thing, boys and girls; but, of course, it isn't, and it all depends from which direction you are approaching that hotel. Coming *from* England, it is, indeed, the *last* hotel in England, but going to England, it is the *first* hotel that you come across when you go over the border.

Now, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is something like that hotel and its sign. The Bible tells us that we are saved from our sins by “believing” that our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to save people from their sins. This “believing” is also called “faith,” and it is also referred to as “looking” to the cross and to Jesus Christ who died there. We “look”, of course, by faith – by believing; and when we today look to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we look *back* to that cross. Jesus has come to this world and has died to save people from their sins, and we look – look back – by faith, believing that that is true.

But the Bible also tells us about people who lived many years before Jesus came to this world to die on the cross, and who also believed and had faith. Here is what our Lord Jesus Christ says of one of them – Abraham – who lived many, many years before the birth, and death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.”

You see, boys and girls, God had always promised to send a Saviour into this world to die for people's sins. And before Jesus came, people had faith in what God had promised, and they *looked forward* to the One who would come and die on the cross.

They looked towards the cross, and we *look back* to the cross, but it is the same way of salvation. For we are told to “believe” that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Do you believe?

God bless you,
Mrs Seaton.

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 78 (Continued)



Verses 14-15. “In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths.” The allegory and parable between the physical Israel in the wilderness and the spiritual Israel on her journey to heaven still shines forth. The two incidents that David here relates as he opens his mouth “in parables”, are the self-same incidents that Paul uses to call the Corinthian church to steadfastness; “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud ... and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

(1 Corinthians chapter 10 verses 1 to 12)

Verses 15-16. “... the rocks ...” They are typical of Christ 1Corinthians 10 verse 4; who is frequently referred to as a Rock for height strength, and duration: shade, shelter, and protection. He is called the “Rock of Israel;” the “Rock of offence to both the houses of Israel;” the Rock of salvation;” the “Rock of Refuge;” the “Rock of strength;” the “Rock that is higher than” any of the saints, and on which the Church is built. He is the “shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

John Gill

Verse 17. “And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.” He does not say that they only sinned, but that they sinned against God. Against what God? Against that God who had delivered them by great and unheard of wonders out

of Egypt; who had led them as free men across the Red Sea with dry feet; who had continued to lead them and protect them with pillars of cloud and fire by day and night; and had given them to drink abundantly of water drawn from the arid rock. Against this God they had added sin to sin. Simply to sin is human, and happens to the saints even after they have received grace; but to sin against God argues an untold degree of ingratitude. All sins indeed, of whatever class they may be, are done against God because they are opposed to His will. But those that are committed *peculiarly* against God, are certainly greater than others. Those sins wrought against His name, goodness, providence, power, truth and worship.

Musculus

Verse 18. “And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.” They tempted God; that is, they tried His patience over and over again; they made, as it were, another experiment upon it. And from the expression of “tempting him in their heart,” it would seem as if they had made it a thing of mental calculation how far they could go, and whether or not He would still bear with them.

Thomas Chalmers

Verse 18. “And they tempted God in their heart by *asking meat for their lust.*”

“The Israelites had meat, but must
Have added meat to meet their lust;
The Lord supplies our every need,
But we desire to feast our greed.”

Verse 23. “Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven.” God, who has the key of the clouds, opened “the doors” of heaven. That is more than opening “the windows,” and that is a great blessing.

Matthew Henry

Verse 25. “Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.” The delicacies of kings were outdone, for the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble man. It was not for the priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the

nation – for every man, woman, and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all, for “He sent them meat to the full.” God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angels' food, for

“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

Spurgeon

The Book of Psalms

The book of Psalms is a collection of Hebrew poetry, the production of various authors throughout the whole of their national life from Moses to the time of Nehemiah; but chiefly from the time of David.

It is accepted as being divided into five parts, made up of five separate collections from the time of David onwards, the end of each of which is indicated by a doxology. This division is believed to have originated with David himself, who, as Jewish tradition asserts, gathered together the first part for use in the service of the Tabernacle when he organised the choir of singers from the Levites – 1 Chronicles 25. The final completion of the remainder being made when the Book was arranged in its present form, possibly by Ezra.

Of the 150 psalms which it contains, 73 have been assigned to David, one to Moses, 2 to Solomon, 25 to the chief singers; the remainder being anonymous, but written most probably in the later years of the monarchy, during the captivity in Babylon, and after the return. Those in the *first part*, ending with the 41st psalm, are all assigned to David, with the exception of four, which are also believed to be by him. The *Second part*, ending with the 72nd psalm, contains 21 by David, the remainder being written by the “singers”, the last being Solomon's.

In the *third part*, ending with the 89th psalm, there is only one by David, the rest being Levitic. In the *fourth part*, ending with the 106th, two are by David, one by Moses (the 90th), the remainder being anonymous. In the *fifth part*, ending with the last psalm, there are 15 by David, one by Solomon, the rest anonymous – but many of them evidently belonging to the captivity and return. Psalms 120 to 134 are styled “Song of Degrees,” or “Songs of Upgoings” - being sung by the people as they ascended the hill of Zion to the feasts.

The chief characteristics of the Book of Psalms, in addition to their intense national expression, are their deep spiritual feeling, keen sense of individual sinfulness in the sight of God, a recognition of His greatness, and a conviction of His pardoning mercies. There is also a distinct apprehension of the promise and coming of Messiah, and many prophetic declarations of His mission, sufferings, and death. And whilst these features are visible in nearly all of them, they are most clear in those which are ascribed to and acknowledged to be by David. Hence the Book has been adopted as a most precious possession of the Christian Church, and its language has ever been the vehicle of its prayers and praises. In the various experiences of a Christian's life, he can at all times turn to this Book and draw from its sacred outpourings materials of hope and comfort and consolations, coupled with touching lessons of submission to the Divine will.

No portion of the Sacred Scriptures is so frequently referred to and quoted from in the New Testament. No other portion is so readily used with direct reference to the Messiah. Nearly one half of all the quotations referring to the Christ as displayed in the Old Testament are taken from the Psalter – our Lord Himself, in His dying agony upon the Cross, adopting and repeating as His own the first verse of the 22nd psalm, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

“To render thanks unto the Lord
it is a comely thing,
And to thy name, O thou most High,
due praise aloud to sing.”

