

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://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 2002. (A Work in Progress)

## *James Montgomery's Muse* *(The Pastor's Letter March 1978)*

Dear Friends,

In the year 1832, James Montgomery the hymn-writer was travelling between Gloucester and Tewkesbury with a friend. He noticed several rows of women and young girls working in a field. They were piercing holes in the ground, and into each hole were dropping one or two seeds. Montgomery had never seen this method of sowing before, and when he asked his friend about it, he was told it was called "dibbling" by the local farmers and workers.

A friendly debate then arose between the two men as to the merits and demerits of the system. "Give me broadcast sowing," said Montgomery, "scattering the seed to the right hand. and to the left, in liberal handfuls." But the other man held firmly to the individual method they had just witnessed.



As they went on their journey, Montgomery tells us that he "fell immediately into a musing fit." The subject of his musing was this business of sowing seed. The more he mused, the more he realised that each of the ways of sowing was "excellent in its own way, and best in its own place." The important things were: that the seed is good, the ground be prepared, and the seed diligently sown in the ground.

It's not hard to appreciate the spiritual turn that James Montgomery's mind was beginning to take. From the things of natural husbandry to those of spiritual; it is only a short step. "By degrees," he tells us, "my thoughts subsided into verse, and I found them running in lines, like furrows, along the field of my imagination." By the time the two men reached the next village on their route, James Montgomery was able to sit down with pen in hand and commit to paper his well-loved hymn: -

"Sow in the morn thy seed,  
At eve hold not thine hand;  
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,  
Broadcast it o'er the land.

Thou know'st not which may thrive,  
The late or early sown;  
Grace keeps the chosen germ alive,  
When and wherever strown."

It's a good sentiment for any of us, in any day of the Church's existence. The Psalmist himself expressed it for his day: -

"That man who, bearing precious seed,  
In going forth doth mourn;  
He doubtless, bringing back his sheaves,  
Rejoicing shall return."

James Montgomery himself sowed many "seeds" of praise and worship in the hymns that he left to the Church, and they have been reaped a million times over in the congregations of the Lord's people: "Stand up and Bless the

Lord," "Angels from the realms of glory," "Prayer is the Soul's sincere desire," "O Spirit of the Living God," "Forever with the Lord;" and many more. John Wesley saw a time of great "refreshing from the hand of the Lord" in the town of Epworth, where his father had preached for the best part of his life; and he was not slow to make the spiritual connection. "O let none think his labour of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear! Near forty years did my father labour here; but he saw little fruit of his labour ... but the seed sown, now has sprung up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins."

The Lord has built into the very fabric of this creation that He has made the principle of "seedtime and harvest," and we rob ourselves of the will to work in the gospel by forgetting it. "While the earth remaineth," the Lord told Noah in the covenant promise, "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." That blessed illustration is ever before us and all around us, and it will most assuredly hold good in its spiritual outworking until all the purposes of God in the covenant of redemption have been fully and gloriously realised. As Montgomery expresses it in his last verse:

"Then when the glorious end,  
The day of God, is come,  
The angel-reapers shall descend,  
And heaven cry, Harvest-home!"

May we all be diligent labourers in the field.

Yours sincerely,  
W. J. Seaton

## ***Gleanings in the Psalms***

### ***Psalm 80***



**DIVISION**: - The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times - "Turn us again, O God," etc.

Verses 1 to 3 is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel. From verses 4 to 7 we have a lamentation over the national woe: and from verses from 8 to 19 the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beautiful allegory as a vine.

It is a mournful psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.

*C. H. S.*

**Verse 1. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth."** The prophet does not *nakedly* begin his prayer, but mingles with it certain titles by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O thou who sustainest and governest all things etc., but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, Thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ, our Shepherd and propitiation.

*Musculus*

**Verse 3. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."** Convert our rebellious wills

to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee. Show them once; show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When *thou* dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved.

Savonarola

**Verse 4. "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?"** How strange and mysterious is the question of our prayers to God. When should I pray for a thing and when should I cease from praying? When should I realise that God's apparent failure to answer my request is, in fact, the best possible answer that I could ever be given? When should I acknowledge that God, in permitting my circumstances to remain unchanged, is not being "angry" against my prayers but in changing those circumstances He would be?

The story is told of an old woman who was setting off to take her produce to market one day; as she climbed into her cart, a storm blew into her face, and she prayed the Lord that it would stop, or, at least, be turned into her back. She prayed for the first mile of her ten-mile journey, but with no apparent success, for the wind still beat in her face. She prayed the second mile, and the third, and the fourth, and so on, until she was only one mile from the marketplace she was heading for. Suddenly the wind changed, and began to blow in her back, increasing her speed and greatly delighting her heart that she had "prevailed" in her request. She transacted her business, climbed back into her cart, and turned around to make her

journey home again. To her great consternation, of course, the storm was now in her face again for the ten-mile journey back to her cottage. Thus, whereas she might have had ten miles of wind in her face and ten in her back, she concluded that day with only one mile of wind to help her on her way out of that whole twenty-mile ride to and fro. Surely, the greatest prayer of all, and the prayer that should cover all our praying, is "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

**Verse 7. "Turn us again, O God of hosts ..."** Ejaculations are short prayers darted up to God in emergency occasions. They are the artillery of devotion, and their principal use is against the fiery darts of the devil. When we are time-bound, place-bound, or person-bound, so that we cannot compose ourselves to make a large solemn prayer, this is the right instant for ejaculations, whether orally uttered or only poured forth inwardly in the heart.

*Fuller*

**Verse 14. "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,"** Still it has roots, still some branches are living. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit. Visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod and with thy staff, for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning must come. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her support, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine.

*Savonarola*

# BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear boys and girls,

Mr and Mrs Matthews' oldest son was in the army. Every day they looked for him to come home. "I'll be home on leave in just a few days" his telegram had said. Every day Mr and Mrs Matthews left a light in the window. Even in the middle of the night, when everything else was very dark, this lamp continued to shine.



Finally, their boy came home. As he walked up the street, he saw the light in the window. Mr and Mrs Matthews had been waiting for their son. They expected him and looked for him every day. They were prepared for his coming.

The Lord Jesus tells us in his word that He is coming. He said, "I will come again". Christian people are ready for Christ's return. They are looking for Him, just as Mr and Mrs Matthews looked for their son. But some people do not seem to care about the Lord's coming. When Jesus comes, they will be left behind, for they will not be ready for Him. Unless people are saved when Jesus comes they will be left behind.

Jesus warned us to be ready, for He is coming at a time when the world will not expect Him. If Jesus should come today, would you be ready to go with Him? The only way to



be ready is to have him as your Saviour.

Just think to yourself; "If Jesus were to come before this year is finished will I be ready to go with Him?" What an important question that is, and what would your answer be? I trust that all of you as you think of this question will earnestly consider where you stand with regard to Jesus and His free gift of Salvation for those who ask for it.

Here is a verse from the Bible for you to memorise and I trust take as a promise from Jesus: -

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also." (John chapter 14 verse 3)

Love,  
Mrs Seaton.

## *More About the Greater Prophets*



In the last edition of the Wicket Gate (edition 132) we learned about Isaiah. We now consider Ezekiel and Daniel.

Ezekiel: -

The third in the order of the greater prophets, was a contemporary of the later years of Jeremiah. Himself a priest, the son of a priest named Buzi, he was taken captive during the reign of Jehoiachin eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem and carried to Babylon where he exercised his prophetic office amongst his captive brethren.

His functions as a prophet commenced, as narrated by himself, in the fifth year of his captivity and continued to at least the twenty-seventh year - probably later. He is supposed to have been murdered at Babylon by one of the Jewish captives. Unlike Jeremiah, he seems to have been a man peculiarly fitted in his personality to be a prophet of God to such a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

The threatenings and judgments which he was called upon to deliver lost nothing of their force when proceeding from his lips. His stern and unbending nature; his hearty abhorrence of the sins of which the people were guilty, and which he so forcibly exposed, make him an unsparing instrument. His ministry, until the fall of Jerusalem, consisted of appeals to repent whilst yet there was time, with the assurance that God was ready to pardon. Afterwards, he administered the consolations of the promised return, and a peaceful enjoyment of their own land when they had through punishment been purified from their sins.

He was also, like his predecessors, the messenger of judgments to the surrounding heathen nations, predicting their destruction at the hand of the Assyrian king. Although resident in Babylon, his prophecies are directed to the people at Jerusalem, and accord with those written by Jeremiah at the same period. The time-span of Ezekiel's prophetic work was around 595-573 B.C.

Daniel: -

The fourth in the order of the greater prophets is considered by the Jews the greatest of them all, and simply refer to him as

"The Prophet." He is supposed to have been of the Royal house of David and was carried to Babylon while still a youth, in the third year of the reign of the King Jehoiakim. He was brought up in the palace of the King of Babylon, and carefully instructed in all the learning of the Chaldeans. At an early age, he gave remarkable evidence of prophetic inspiration, and of a wisdom superior to all his contemporaries. He rapidly rose to a position of great eminence under the Chaldean monarchy, being made the ruler of a whole province, and chief of the wise men.

Under the Persian conqueror, he enjoyed a position of similar greatness, being made third president of the Empire, and held in high esteem by the King, as shown by his concern for the prophet's safety when cast into the lions' den. Jewish tradition states that he visited Judea after the return from captivity, but this is unsupported by any historic evidence and is very improbable seeing that he must have been at least about 90 years of age at that time.

Daniel's prophecies are distinct from the utterances of all the other prophets - wider in their range and clearer in their indications of the Messiah's coming. He took up the spirit of his forerunners' prophecies and carried it forward into the new times that were then coming into view. What *they* had pointed forward to but vaguely, Daniel clearly indicates, so that the period of Christ's coming and the events preceding it are accurately foretold.

The prophecies of Daniel are repeatedly referred to in the New Testament by the Lord Himself, and also by the Apostles.

## *John Bunyan's Mountain and Wall.*

### **How I get through a wall.**

"About this wall I bethought myself, to go, again and again, still prying as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage, by which I might enter therein; but none could I find for some time. At last, I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass. Now the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many offers to get in, but all in vain, even until I was well-nigh beat out by striving to get in. At last, with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by sideling striving, my shoulders, and my whole body. Then I was exceeding glad, went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the heat and light of their sun.

### **I get the vision explained.**

Now this mountain, and wall, etc., was thus made out to me: The mountain signified the church of the living God: the sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of His merciful face on them that were therein; the wall I thought was the Word, that did make separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap which was in the wall, I thought was Jesus Christ, Who is the way to God the Father. (John 14:6.)

But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it showed me that none can enter into life, but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left the wicked world behind them. For here was only room for body

and soul, but not for body and soul and sin."

And so, the mind of "The Immortal Dreamer" was already in the making. The "mountain" of his vision becomes the church of the living God; the sun that shone there, the shining of Jehovah's face on all His people, and so forth. Here are the first seeds of what will blossom into such thoughts as the Slough of Despond, The House Beautiful, The Interpreter, Vanity Fair, Mr Standfast, Madame Bubble, Mr Ready-to-halt, the Enchanted Ground, and a million-and-one more vivid figures, and similes, and allegories, and pictures. From the very beginning, he was cast in the role of "The Immortal Dreamer."

## *Why Then?*

It has been well pointed out that if men and women applied the same attitudes towards their eternal life as they do toward their temporal and present life, then how many changes there would be in many a life. For example: -

1. is it not an accepted rule of life that people have a certain amount of fear of whatever is liable to hurt them and do them damage? This is, surely, a fairly accepted attitude in people's thinking. *Why then* are people not afraid of sin, seeing that there is nothing that will hurt a person more than sin - both in this life and in that life which is to come.

2. Is it not also an accepted practice never to trust a known deceiver? "Once bitten twice shy," we sometimes say; and if someone has proved to be deceitful, we are normally very wary about trusting what they say or do again. *Why then* do

people trust Satan - that old serpent the devil, and the arch-deceiver of this world.

3. Do most people not accept the wisdom of laying up something towards their old age? "Against a rainy day," is the usual expression. *Why then* do people not think of making provision against the day of God's judgment and reckoning with men. If it is felt that some "assurance" is needed for a future day - which may never come to us anyway - why do people not accept the assurance of being safe in the eternal day by entrusting their lives now into the hands of God, through faith in Jesus Christ His Son.

4. Is it not still a general thought that we should "give to them that give to us?" "It's only fair," we say, "If so-and-so has been good to me, then I will look out for a way to return that good to them." *Why then* do we not "give thanks unto the Lord," as the Bible says, "for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." The apostle Paul says that God gives to all - "Life, and breath, and all things;" he says that in Him "we live, and move, and have our being." *Why then* - if God has given so much - why won't men follow their own general rule, and give back to God something of their lives that they have from Him.

5. Finally, is it still not a feature of human nature to feel some relief and even gladness when some good news is brought with regards to a serious situation? Surely, that is so; "Well at least," we say, "it could have been worse." *Why then* won't people, in general, refuse to react as they ought to do with regards to the good news of God's way of salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ His Son. The gospel - which simply means, "Good News," - comes into the most serious situation that

could possibly be. Mankind has sinned against God, and God has declared that He will punish for that sin. But, the good news of the gospel says - "Believe, and you shall not come into God's judgment." *Why then* don't people receive that good news gladly, when it is a practice to receive good news in that way. *Why then* don't they follow any of those normal attitudes that they apply to their present life when it comes to their eternal life.

A question worth answering.



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