

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 2002. (A Work in Progress)

Word of God or Word of Man?

(The Pastor's Letter Aug/Sept 1978)

Dear Friends,

When the apostle Paul invited a "curse" upon his head if he ever preached another gospel, he was, surely, setting an eternal pattern for the believer's attitude towards the Word of God and the words of men. "But if we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed." The apostle Paul was, of course, fully persuaded that what he was preaching was the Word of God; but what he is pressing home to his readers is the absolute necessity of *their* being fully persuaded, as well. If they fail in this, then they are in every danger of being carried away from the truth of God to the mere opinions of men simply on account of the accepted "standing" of those men via their reputations, etc. Paul is really saying, "When you hear us preach and teach, you are not to ask yourself, '*who* is this that is preaching?' but you are to ask yourself, '*what* is this that is being preached?' And if we are found preaching anything other than the sincere word of God as God has graciously revealed it to us, then, lay your anathemas at our feet - let us be accursed."

Now the importance of that principle for our day when the cult of "personality" is so dominant cannot be stressed enough. How many denominations, and churches, and individuals are led in completely unscriptural paths because some minister or leader proclaims that it is a safe path to travel? The deciding factor is much that has been entered into by various church bodies has not been the word of God but the words of men. And so often, the reason that these words have been accepted and acted upon has been on account of the mere personality, position, or reputation of those who uttered them. Implicit trust has so often been placed in the guidance of men without one reference to the word of God. And sadder still, very often the implicit trust is based upon what those men may have believed or said at an earlier and more vital time in their Christian profession, - a position, perhaps, long-since abandoned. "See how the mighty are

fallen," is a sad word that can eventually serve as a spiritual epitaph for some who have done valiantly in an earlier day of the Christian war, but who have now virtually surrendered their swords to the trumpet call of popular opinion or ecclesiastical acclaim. May God keep us all faithful to His word.

Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

Orkney's First Dissenters (Part 2)

Quite a number saw the scripturalness of the Baptist view and embraced it, while many of the careless, while they ridiculed the position taken, rejoiced over the address as helpful in injuring the Church as they hoped. This was the first address, from the Baptist standpoint given in Orkney. It was freely discussed in the families and in the thorough-fares of the island, and it finally came to be feared that it would cause a division in the Church. It was alleged that the majority had now departed so far from the constitutional views of the Church, that a separation of the two parties was inevitable. Yet on both sides they deprecated the idea of separation. Though they differed in their views of an Ordinance of Christ, they were agreed in their love for His Person and their desire for the progress of His work and the good of their fellow-men, and they loved one another. Nothing which had transpired had shaken their confidence in each others piety, and the thought of a division was painful to both parties. It was apparent, however, after a time of painful suspense, that some decision would have to be reached. their harmony was suffering, so the members agreed to a conference on the situation after one of the Sabbath services.

It was agreeably, though reluctantly decided that they should all meet together in the tabernacle on the following Lord's Day, after which the friends who had embraced the doctrine of believer's baptism would leave, and those who held by the Church, as originally constituted,

would remain in possession of the property as the legal owners of it. Though at the time this seemed the only feasible course, the friends who were to remain saw the great loss they were sustaining in the departure of the others. Robert Seater had been a pillar in the temple of the Lord. When necessary, he had ministered the Word to them with acceptance, and with his fine musical talent he had led them in praise ever since they were a Church. How could they do without him? There was no one to take his place. And then the thought of separating from those with whom they had taken sweet counsel together and gone to the house of God in company. It was sad, sad! The Baptists too had similar feelings, but what could they do? They dared not belie their conscientious convictions. However painful, they would accept the inevitable and be true to themselves and to their Lord. He who had suffered so much for them deserved that they should suffer for Him even greater privation than the loss of fellowship with some of His followers, and the use of the Tabernacle as a place of worship.

While they were musing and reflecting with downcast spirits Providence was preparing to open up their way. A little delay, brought on in a way not expected, brought developments which surprised and gratified all.

The Sabbath for their last meeting together came, and every member who could possibly come was present. Soon after the service commenced a violent wind storm arose which shook the Tabernacle to its foundations, and almost caused a panic among the congregation. It was impossible to proceed with the service; all was confusion. Heads of families were eager to get their children safely to their homes. The storm was such as had never before been experienced in the island. During the week the pastor had occasion to sprinkle the child of one of the members. On his return he took occasion to call upon two of the members whose home was on his way. The lady who responded to the knock of the door noticed that the good man was trembling from head to feet. Fearing that he was unwell she asked him the cause of his trembling, to which he replied: "I have done something today which I will never do again." Feeling surprised she asked him what he

had done. He replied: "You know that I have earnestly contended that the sprinkling of unconscious infants is baptism and I have sprinkled one today; but I have just become very deeply convinced that it is a thing for which I have no Divine authority." the substance of this conversation rapidly spread through the island, and caused much comment. It was a cause of rejoicing to the friends who had embraced the New Testament idea of Baptism, and of consternation to those who held to infant sprinkling. All of them knew that Mr Tulloch was a man of conviction, and would not trifle with serious impressions. Hence the surmisings that were indulged in during the week of the bearing his change of views might have on the decision of the coming Sabbath.

The storm had prevented the actual division on the previous Sabbath, and it was now generally known that a large majority of the members had become Baptist in their views. The Lord's Day morning saw a crowded Tabernacle. Mr Tulloch conducted the whole service in the usual way, and to the surprise of some without reference to the expected division. At the close he called the membership together, and after the general congregation was dismissed he arose in his place and said: - "Brethren, I have a humble confession to make and a great favour to ask. My confession is that I have been slow and long in discovering the important truth which so many of my brethren and sisters discovered so clearly some months since. At this I really feel mortified. And now, I ask if you will forgive me for the opposition I have manifested to the doctrine I have now with you received as the truth of God. I trust you will believe me when I assure you that my opposition was in ignorance; and now, if you will forgive me will you show it by rising in your seats."

All but three stood up. When all had been seated one of the three stood up and explained that it was no ill-feeling toward pastor or people that prevented him from rising, but that he did not feel at liberty to do so seeing they had in the matter of baptism departed from their former faith. He further explained that those who continued in the faith of the Church as constituted at first could legally hold the property, but did not intend to do so. He believed they had acted

conscientiously, and that they were all one in spirit, and he and those that held with him would be willing to continue as members of the Church provided the Church was willing that they should.

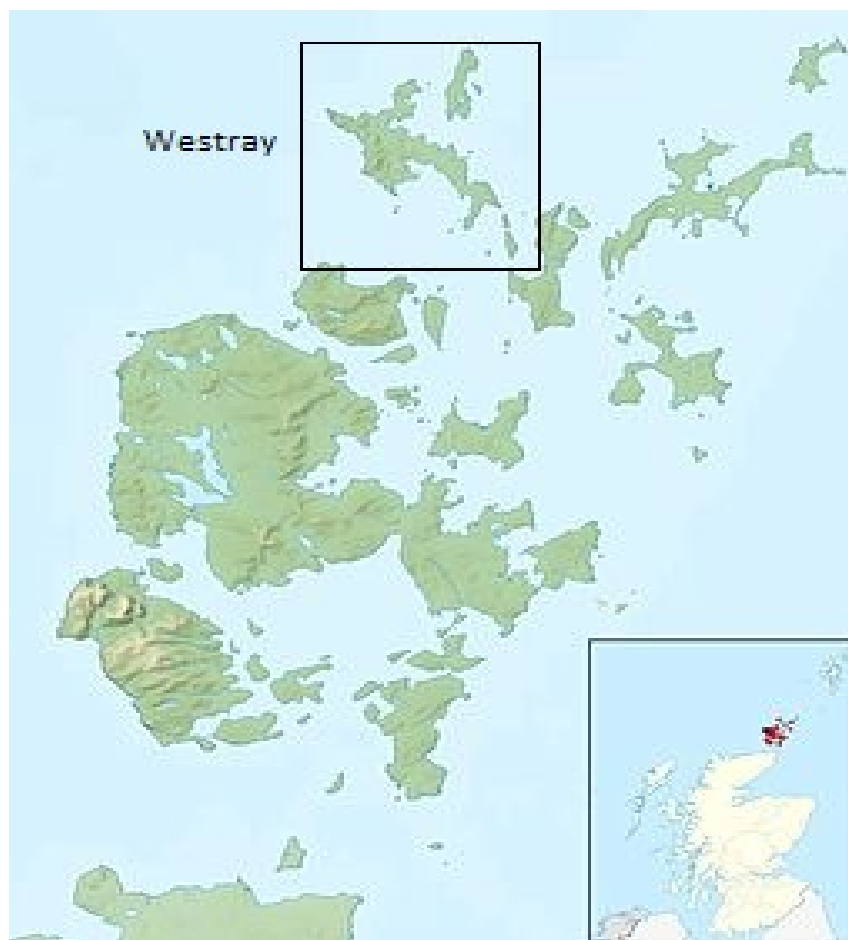
Mr Tulloch responded to this brother's statement by the right words and in the right spirit. He was delighted to find that while they had differed in opinion they had maintained the unity of the spirit; and that their friends who undoubtedly had the right legally to hold the property and to oust the great majority out of the church home were not only ready to forego that right but to continue in their fellowship. He expressed the conviction that all would gladly accede to their wish to be retained as members, and requested all who were of that mind to show it by standing up. The whole assembly rose in a moment. For a time they joyfully lingered in prayer and thanksgiving to God for His loving kindness in preserving them from division, and so far leading them to see alike and to preserve the unity even when there was not absolute uniformity. In the spirit of gratitude they departed to their homes.

On the following Friday evening at their fellowship meeting they consulted together as to the means to be adopted for their attending to the ordinance of baptism. At the suggestion of their pastor they finally concluded to invite his fellow-student, Rev. Edward Mackay of Thurso, to visit them for that purpose. In due time Mr Mackay came to Westray. He preached in the Tabernacle on the Lord's Day evening and the baptism was announced for the following Tuesday at the Lake of Burness.

On Tuesday forenoon a large congregation assembled at the lake. At the appointed hour Rev. Mr MacKay took his place near the candidates for Baptism and commenced a simple but impressive service. After praise and prayer the preacher, Bible in hand, proceeded to give his hearers the New Testament view of Baptism, proving each proposition with appropriate texts. He showed very clearly that the only fit subjects of Christian baptism were believers; the only mode or act to be performed was immersion, and that it was a figure of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in it the

believer professed his faith in Christ and his union with Him. Another season of prayer and praise, and then the administration of the Ordinance, with solemnity on the part of the administrator and decorum on the part of the candidates and congregation. So solemn and decorous was the Ordinance that the greatest enemies of the truth could find no cause for complaint.

The first to attend to it was the pastor of the church. Mr Mackay led Rev. William Tulloch out into the water and baptised him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nine others followed, and there a scene was witnessed in Westray which was entirely new. Nor was it witnessed in vain. A shrub was planted that day in the summer of 1810 which grew to be a tree of considerable size. For seven years the brethren and sisters had worshipped together as a Congregational Church, but ever after they were known as the Baptist Church of Westray.



BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

A man once asked the great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon if any one had been "saved" at a meeting he had once preached at. "Yes, there was," replied Mr Spurgeon, "there were two-and-a-half people saved." The man was puzzled for a moment, but then he said, "Oh yes, I see; you mean there were *two* adults and *one* child saved?" "Oh no," said Mr Spurgeon, "I mean there were *two children* and one adult saved.

You see, boys and girls, the adult - the grown-up person - who was saved at that meeting, had only half of his life to live for Jesus; he had already lived half of his life - that's what Mr Spurgeon meant. But the children who were saved had their whole lives before them and could live their whole lives for Christ. So Mr Spurgeon was right, was he not when he said that the two-and-a-half people that were saved at his meeting were not two adults and one child, but two children and one adult.

Love,
Mrs Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 83 (concluded)



Verses 4-10 "They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation ... for they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: .. Edom ... the Ishmaelites ... Moab ... the Hagarenes ... Gebal, and Ammon" etc. etc. The conspiracy has for its aim nothing short of blotting out the national existence and the very name of Israel. It is therefore high-handed opposition to God's counsel, and the confederacy is against Him. The true antagonists are, not Israel and the world, but God and the world. Calmness courage and confidence spring in the heart with such thoughts. They who can feel that they are hid in God may look out, as from a safe islet on the wildest seas and fear nothing. And all who will may hide in him.

The enumeration of the confederates in verses 6-8 groups together peoples who probably were never really united for any common end. Hatred is a very potent cement and the most discordant elements may be fused together in the fire of a common animosity. What a motley assemblage is here! What could bring together in one company Ishmaelites and Tyrians, Moab and Asshur? The first seven names in the list of allies had their seats in the east and south-east of Palestine. Edom, Moab, Ammon, etc. etc. Then the psalmist turns to the west, to Philistia, Tyre etc.

The confederacy is formidable, but the psalmist does not enumerate its members merely in order to emphasise Israel's danger. He is contrasting this miscellaneous conglomeration of many people with the Almighty One, against whom they are vainly banded. Faith can look without a tremor on serried battalions of enemies, knowing that one poor man, with God at his back outnumbers them all. Let them

come from east and west, south and north and close round Israel; God alone is mightier than they.

So, after a pause marked by "Selah" (in verse 8) in which there is time to let the thought of the multitudinous enemies sink into the soul, the psalm passes into prayer, which throbs with confident assurance and anticipatory triumph. The singer recalls ancient victories, and prays for their repetition. To him, as to every devout man, today's necessities are as sure of Divine help as any of yesterday's were, and what God has already done is pledge a specimen of what He is doing and will do.

Alexander Maclaren.

Verse 5. "For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee." Though there may fall out a private grudge between such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints. If two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will soon leave the bone and follow the hare.

Thomas Watson.

Verse 6. "The tabernacles of Edom, and Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes ..." etc. The prophet, having put in his complaint in a general way, now comes to the particulars, and tells God, as it were, who has done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are ... and he names some ten nations that joined together against one poor Israel. It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in *general* complaints, but he will know who they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great General. When there is a mutiny, the general asks what officer, or what corporal, or what serjeant, or who, began the mutiny. And it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saints shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. Therefore, I remember a blessed woman that is reported of in the Book of Martyrs, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more than

this - I will go home and tell my Father about it." Give over, or else I will bring your names before my God, for I know that a man may better bear a *pound* of dirt on his feet, than a *grain* of dirt in his eye, and the saints are "the apple of God's eye."

From Walter Cradock

Verse 12. "Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession." Viewing the Temple, and also the house of the Tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs; but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say "Let us take" if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse. "Will a man rob God?" Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Verse 18. "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." The knowledge of the glory of the Lord is the end and completion of all things.

***Character Not Determined by Individual Isolated Acts.
From Andrew Fuller's Journal.***

Question:- Was David not a regenerate man when he slew Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon; and if so, how can we reconcile his conduct with the apostle's assertion, that "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?" (1st John 3 verse 15).

Answer:- the difficulty here suggested would vanish, if it were considered that, while the *quality of actions* is determined by their relationship to God's law, the estimate we form of a person's character must be regulated by the *habitual course* of the life and conduct in question. Thus, if we were to form our opinions of men from particular events in their lives, we should pronounce Noah a drunkard, Aaron and idolater, Jacob a liar, David a murderer, and Peter an apostate - and each of these characters is excluded from the kingdom

of God. But such a judgment would evidently be harsh and erroneous, because these things were not of a piece with their general character, but most entirely opposed thereto. The apostle, in the words referred to, is describing those who "*go in the way of Cain*," and whose character and spirit resemble his. Such a man, he affirms, "hath not eternal life abiding in him."

But *in this sense David* was not a murderer. His sin, in the matter of Uriah, was not the result of those principles on which his character was formed, but a melancholy proof of the force of temptation even in the case of an eminently good man.

LESSON FROM A LAST MINUTE REPRIEVE.

Old Robert Flockhart, the old Edinburgh street-preacher, never failed to use a situation for applying some telling truth of the Word of God.

For some time he had visited a young man in prison who was awaiting the death sentence to be carried out on him. Although the young man never came to a point of professing Christ as his saviour, his heart was greatly warmed to the old saint who had spoken so tenderly to him, and he declared that he had made out the "will" of all his possessions in favour of Flockhart.

On the morning of the hanging, Robert Flockhart was in attendance with a friend. Just before the sentence was to be carried out, the young man gained a last-minute reprieve. Flockhart was overjoyed, but turning to his friend, he said, "isn't it a good thing that the One who placed us in His will really died; for," he said, referring to Hebrews, "unless there is the death of the testator, the will is of non-effect.

Flockhart thought for a minute, and then he turned to his friend again; "However," he said, "my wife once was left an estate, and the testator in that case really did die; but by the time the whole thing had been pulled this way and that way, she never so much as got a penny from

it. Isn't it a good thing," he said, "that our Testator not only really died, but ever lives to be the Executor of His will for us?"

Hebrews - Chapter 9

(Verse 15) And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

(Verse 16) For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

(Verse 17) For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.