

# 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)

# ***The Glory of The Sun.***

***Jack Seaton (April 1981)***

Dear Friends,

The apostle Paul reminds us in that great chapter 15 of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians that the objects of God's creating have each their own particular "glory" – "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" etc. Human nature, being what it is, very often tends to neglect the glory of one particular thing, because it happens to be "outshone" by the more-accepted glory of some other. How very true this is of the hymns that we sing in the course of our public or private worship, and the glory of one particular piece that has fallen from some of our hymn writers' pens has paled into insignificance "another glory" that has every bit as much lustre about it, and could bless us just as much with its own particular glow and radiance.

Probably one of the most outstanding examples of this is Henry Lyte's "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide." Who would deny the glory of such a hymn as that? And yet, the pen of Henry Lyte was that of a ready writer, and there are other hymns, glorious in their own sphere, which also fell from his heart. "Praise, my soul, the King of heaven," and so forth.

We reproduce below what we feel to be one of Lyte's greatest hymns. "There is a safe and secret place." For some reason or other, the hymn is excluded from the majority of our hymn-books – outshone, perhaps! But we feel that its sentiments should be better-known.

It is Common Metre and particular well suited to the tune "Evan".

“There is a safe and secret place  
Beneath the wings Divine,  
Reserved for all the heirs of grace,  
Oh, be that refuge mine.

The least and feeblest there may ‘bide,  
Uninjured and unawed;  
While thousands fall on every side,  
He rests secure in God.

The angels watch him on his way,  
And aid with friendly arm;  
And Satan, roaring for his prey,  
May hate, but cannot harm.

He feeds in pastures large and fair  
Of love and truth Divine;  
O child of God, O glory’s heir,  
How rich a lot is thine!”

A hand almighty to defend,  
An ear for every call,  
An honoured life, a peaceful end,  
And heaven to crown it all.

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## ***Spurgeon and His Saviour.***

### ***Christ – The believer’s Vision.***

In the final vision, it is Christ that the glorified saints shall see; and further; it is his *face* that they behold. They shall not see the skirts of his robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not touch the hem of his garment, or sit down at his feet so they can only see his sandals, but they “shall see his face.” By this I understand two things; first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually, their

mental faculties shall be so enlarged that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand him in his work, his love, his all-in-all, as they never understood him before. They shall literally, I say, see his face, for Christ is no phantom; and in heaven, though divine and therefore spiritual, he is still a Man, and therefore material like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven; the hand that was pierced with the nail, now at this moment grasps the sceptre of all worlds; that very head which was bowed down with anguish is now crowned with a royal diadem; and the face that was so marred is the very face which beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven. Into that self-same countenance we shall be permitted to gaze.

### *Christ – the Preacher’s Theme for Sinners.*

I will preach my Lord upon the throne and delight therein, but the great remedy for ruined manhood is not Christ in glory, but Christ in shame and death. We know some who “select” Christ’s second advent as their one great theme, and we would not silence them ; yet they do err. The second coming is a glorious hope for saints, but there is no cure in it for sinners; to them the coming of the Lord is darkness and not light; but Christ smitten for our sins, there is the star which breaks the sinners midnight. I know that if I preached Christ on the throne continually, many proud hearts would have him; but oh, sirs, ye must have Christ on the cross before you can know him on the throne. You must bow before the crucified; you must trust a dying Saviour; for if you pretend to honour him by the glories that are to come, you do but belie him, and you know him not. To the cross, to the cross; write that upon the signposts of the road to the city of refuge! Fly there, you guilty ones, as to the only sanctuary for the sinful, for “With his stripes we are healed.”

### *Christ – the Father’s Joy.*

You have in your home, no doubt, some trifle which, notwithstanding its little value, you would not sell for a thousand times its weight in gold, because it belonged to a son or daughter now, perhaps, departed this life. That little memento is connected with some small deed of daring or act of generosity on the part of your beloved child, and therefore, though in itself nothing, you count it very precious. Now, to the Father in heaven,

you, fellow-believer, are a memorial of the Saviour's condescension in taking upon himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of human flesh. You are a memorial of his being found in fashion as a man, and becoming subject to death, even the death of the cross. As God looks at each of you, he sees what his Son has done, beholds in you the griefs of Calvary, hears anew the sighs of Olivet and the groans of Golgotha. You are to God, therefore, most precious, as the token and memorial of the death of his Well-beloved.

### ***Christ – the Believer's Reality.***

The Christ of some professors of religion is only fit to occupy a niche on the church wall, as a dead, inactive, yet revered person of the past. Jesus is not a real Christ to many; he is not a Christ who can really befriend them in the hour of grief; not a brother born for adversity; not a condescending companion. But the Christ of a well taught Christian is one that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore.

Let not Jesus be a shadow to you, or your religion will be unsubstantial. Let him not be simply a name to you, or your religion will be nominal. Let him not be a myth of history, or your religion will be mere fancy. Let him not be alone a teacher, or you will lack a Saviour. Let him not be alone an example, or you will fail to appreciate the merit of his blood. But let him be the beginning and the ending, the first and last, the all-in-all of your spirits.



## ***Mrs Seaton's Letter To The Boys and Girls***

Dear Boys and Girls,

I have two stories for you today about birds called doves.

One day, a dove was flying about, trying to find food for her young ones in the nest. A boy who was passing by threw a stone and hit it on the wing. This bad action damaged the poor bird, which fell to the ground. The dove lay there, fluttering and trying to get back to its nest; but it was no use.

Soon, some other doves gathered around, cooing and chattering among themselves. They seemed to be trying to help. A few tried to lift the helpless bird by taking hold of its wings with their beaks. But it was no use; they couldn't lift the hurt dove.

Then an amazing thing happened: two of the birds that had flown away came back, bringing with them a thick twig. They laid it down and got the crippled dove to take hold of it with her beak and claws. Then the two larger birds each took a hold of the stick and, flying upwards, carried the wounded one up to its nest.

The other story is about two doves, who built their nests in a large dove-cote. Their young ones were soon hatched out. But then a great snowstorm arose, and was very severe. The poor little birds would have been frozen to death, but for the faithful father bird. This is what he did. He stood in the doorway of his little home with his back towards the wind: He spread out his tail and covered up the door, and kept fluttering his wings to shelter his poor little ones from the storm.



He stood there for hours and hours, with his tail and back covered with snow, but faithfully bearing it all, to keep his young ones safe and warm.

These two stories give us quite a lot to think about, don't they? The first story shows us the lovingkindness of the birds who helped the crippled one back to the nest; and the other story shows us the great faithfulness of the father bird in protecting his young ones.

Imagine God’s creatures doing good like that, and we, who have been given such minds and understanding, so often do so little good. Remember the boy who threw the stone!

Let us remember that God has shown us, in so many ways, how to live – most important by sending Jesus into the world, first of all, to be our Saviour, but also, to be our example. “Jesus went about doing good.”

Let us all, boys and girls, learn to follow Jesus, and so please God.

“O dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him, too;  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.”

Love,  
Mrs Seaton

*Note: The above stories are true incidents related by the owner of a Dove-cote in New Hampshire in 1876.*

## ***Four Unique Thoughts to Ponder On.***

**The Eye of Faith:** “An idol worshipper once pointed a Christian to his idols and images, and said, ‘Here are my gods, where are yours? Show me them.’ The Christian replied, ‘I cannot show you, my God; not because I have no God to show ... but because you have no eyes with which to see Him.’”

(Anon.)

**A Parting Shot:** “Professor (‘Rabbi’) Duncan of New college, Edinburgh, addressing the departing students, is reported to have said; ‘What you need, gentlemen, are the three Gs – Greek, Grace, and Gumption. If you haven’t Greek, you can learn it. If you haven’t



Grace, you can pray for it. If you haven't Gumption, the Lord help you!"

(A. M. Hunter.)

**Not of Flesh:** "Lord, I find the genealogy of my Saviour strangely chequered with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations:

'Reboam begat Abia;'	that is, a bad father begat a bad son.
'Abia begat Asa;'	a bad father begat a good son.
'Asa begat Josaphat;'	a good father begat a good son.
'Josaphat begat Joram;'	a good father begat a bad son.

I see, Lord, from that, that my father's piety cannot be transferred; and that is bad news for me. *But* I also see that *actual* impiety is not always hereditary; and that is good news for my son."

(Andrew Fuller.)

**Eternal Vigilance:** The devil held a great anniversary, at which his emissaries were convened to report the results of their various missions in the world.

I let loose the wild beasts of the desert on a caravan of Christians", said one, "and their bones are now bleaching on the sands."

"What of that?" said the devil; "their souls were all saved."

"I drove the east wind," said another, "against a ship laden with Christians, and they are all drowned at the bottom of the sea."

"What of that?" said the devil; "their souls were all saved."

"For ten years I tried to lull a single Christian asleep", said a third, "and at last I succeeded and left him so."

Then the devil shouted, and all the night stars of hell sang for joy.

(Martin Luther).





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

### ***Psalm 90*** ***(Concluded)***

**Verse 10. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten.”** It may at first, seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as “threescore years and ten.” But when it is remembered that in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the desert before the completion of forty years the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate. It also serves as a penitential confession of the sins which had brought such a melancholy state of affairs on Israel, and as a solemn funeral dirge upon those whose death had been pre-announced by the awful voice of God.

*Christopher Wordsworth*

**Verse 11. “Who knoweth the power of thine anger?”**

Wicked men will *hereafter* feel the full weight of God’s wrath. In this world they have the wrath of God *abiding* on them, but then, it will be *executed* upon them. Now they are the *objects* of it, but then they will be the *subjects* of it. Now, it *hangs over* them, but then it shall *fall upon* them.

*Jonathan Edwards*

**Verse 12. “So, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”** Even he that is best in arithmetic and can most precisely and accurately understand and investigate millions of millions, is nevertheless to seek to count fourscore years in his own life. Surely it is a monstrous thing that men should measure all distances outwith themselves – know how many feet the moon is distant from the centre of the earth, how much space is between planet and planet, and finally to comprehend all the dimensions both of heaven and earth, and yet cannot number threescore and ten years in their own case.

*John Calvin*

Of all the rules of arithmetic this is the hardest – to number our days. Men can number their herds, and droves of oxen and sheep; they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms; they can, without very much effort, number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable, and therefore, do never begin to number them. Do men not often say, when they see another man, Surely that man looks as though he is not long for this world; or, Yonder woman is old, she cannot have many days left. Thus, we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own. Therefore, this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.

*Thomas Tymme*

**Verse 12. "... that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."** Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, that it was a great pity that men didn't realise the purpose for which they had been born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.

*Charles Bradbury*

"Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last,  
For all Time is no time, when the Time is past."

**Verse 14. "O satisfy us early with thy mercy ..."** We pass now to the particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many – as many as the words in it: satisfy, satisfy us, do that early, do it with that which is thine, and let that which is thine be thy mercy. So the first word is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction – "satisfy." And then it is a prayer, not only for ourselves, but to be extended to others – all thy servants in all thy church – "Satisfy us." Then it is a prayer whose answer might come by express – "Satisfy us early." The thing that is prayed for is mercy, but such mercy as can be readily seen to be "thy" mercy – "O satisfy us early with thy mercy."

*From John Donne*

Verses 16-17. “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea the work of our hands establish thou it.” It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labour of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. It was of them that God said, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth etc.” It was them that Balaam could not curse. Let us labour and look.

*Andrew Fuller*

***The Church at Philippi: - Its Membership of Saints.***  
***By***  
***R. H. Carson, (1861)***

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”  
(Philippians 1:1)

From the words of the apostle Paul here prefixed, three things are apparent in relation to the church at Philippi: first, ***It was a company of Saints***: secondly, ***it was ruled by Elders***: thirdly ***it was served by Deacons***.

In dealing with the first of these in the present paper, it must be said that, beyond a doubt, the question of the ***membership*** of a church is its first and great concern. Indeed, unless things are right at this point, nothing else can be right. We may have succeeded in building up a system for the most part correct and scriptural – may have a Gospel ministry and an apostolic worship and a pure ritual – we may even have arrived at the point where, as regards the observance of religion, nothing more is to be desired; but, if we have failed to attend to the question of our church constituency, we have laboured in vain. I am not one who would lightly esteem, or teach others to lightly esteem, the least of the

institutions of Christ; but of what profit are those institutions, if not found with those to whom they were first entrusted – the saints? In the hands of the unconverted, far from being sanctified, they are profaned.

With such sentiments as these, we may well appreciate the grand distinction given to the church at Philippi. That church might well enjoy the Christian ordinances, being itself the temple of Christ. Very emphatic are the words of the apostle. He does not address himself in general terms to *professors of religion* at Philippi, but to the “saints in Christ Jesus.” He chooses language at once descriptive of a great moral renovation. Those to whom he wrote were more than mere nominal professors; they were, as far as they could be distinguished, true disciples of the Saviour. The evidence of their change no one could fairly question; it was such as satisfied Paul himself. In the estimation, even of the apostle, they were “saints”, and they were so, “in Christ Jesus”.

Now, let us for a moment look at this: *The members of the church at Philippi were saints*. They had not, indeed, obtained the distinction of the “canonized” of Rome, as no such order of being then existed. Far less had they attained to a state of sinless perfection, no such state being at all attainable this side of eternity. But in the true and proper, and scriptural sense of the word, they were *holy persons* – persons who had undergone a great and blessed change; who had ceased to be actuated by the spirit of evil, and had become temples of the Holy Ghost. In very deed they were “new creatures”, with new affections, new judgements, new principles, new associations, new pursuits. Transformed into the image of Christ, “old things had passed away, and all things had become new”.

1. Their *hearts* were changed. Once at enmity with God, and in love with sin, they were so no longer. God had given them, in accordance with the tenor of his own covenant, a “new heart”, and had renewed within them a “right spirit”.

2. Their *language* was altered. The faculty of speech – that “glory” of man – they had hitherto employed on the side of sin and Satan. Like other darkened Gentiles – aye, and like enlightened Jews, too – they had

not only lost the language of Zion, but had acquired a language unknown to holiness and God.

3. Their *lives* were renewed. The work began but did not terminate with a change of heart; it proceeded but did not stop with a reformation of the tongue; the life, the whole life became subject to the sanctifying influence. They had come over to the side of Christ, and their Master they would follow. In them, indeed, you did not see the perfection of Christ, but you did see men in earnest to follow their God.

But whence this marvellous transformation in those who had become the members of the church at Philippi. How did they thus come to be “saints”? Certainly not as the result of human wisdom, or of human power. It was a great moral change: a change of character resulting from a change of heart; the transformation of the outer man as the immediate and necessary fruit of the transformation of the inner man. *In their union with their Saviour lay the secret of their new and holy character.* They were, in the words of the apostle, “*saints in Christ Jesus*”. By faith they had passed into Christ, and in him they were “created unto good works.” Indeed, “in Christ” they could not but be saints. “In Christ” they were “new creatures”. Thus were their *hearts* renewed; thus was their *language* altered; thus were their *lives* reformed.

Such is the grand distinction of the church at Philippi. It was a community of saints – of people made holy by union with Christ. Its members, renouncing self, had embraced Jesus as Saviour, and “in Christ” were “new creatures”. Not that they were free from sin, nor were removed from the possibility of falling. Nothing of the kind. Though renewed, they were not sinless. But sin had no longer the control. If the Canaanite still dwelt in the land, it was the Canaanite not ruling but ruled.

*And now*, let us ask the question: *How much agreement is there between this grand old model of apostolic times, and modern practice?*

With regards to the great majority of the professing churches of Christ, we fear there is no such agreement at all. Omitting altogether to speak

of the Church of Rome, which the scriptures describe as “the mother of harlots”, and so forth, we dare not affirm that even among the churches of the Reformation a membership like that at Philippi will generally be found. Indeed, in the nature of things, in most instances, it could not be. Renouncing the simple *congregational* principle, and becoming in their character *associative* and *national*, many of the so-called churches of the present day are of necessity *mixed* in their communion, or *rather*, have scarcely anything of the true material with which a church of Christ is made. In the Anglican Establishment, for example, the church is the nation; which would mean that we have a nation of saints! Nor is it very different with the Church of Scotland, nor indeed with any Presbyterian community with which we are acquainted. Like the English Establishment, those communities act on the principle of *comprehensiveness*, not on that of *selection*. Losing sight altogether of the true and scriptural notion of a church – an assembly called out (ecclesia) – and adopting the theory that the church should embrace the entire baptised population, their membership is, of course, anything but a membership of “saints”. And yet we are told that the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and such-like churches, are scriptural and apostolic. How, may one ask, can that be apostolic which, in its very essence, is not conformed to the pattern of the apostles?

Even Presbyterian writers scoff at the idea of a church composed of believing people. Knox himself assures us that “the true Kirk of Christ” is where “his word ruleth, and his sacraments are truly ministered, *notwithstanding that in the same darnel or cockle appear to surmount the wheat and the good seed.*”

We admit the difficulty of their position. The system produces what exists. Never will they – never can they – look to the ideal of the scriptural pattern at all, until they have renounced that practice of initiation by that infant rite that fills the church with the surrounding world. We cannot conceive of that church being a Scriptural church in which “the darnel and the cockle appear to surmount the wheat and the good seed”. Far be it from us to become censors of our brethren; but we dare not conceal the deep conviction of our hearts concerning the nature of the church in her constituents. From the world of the ungodly would

we separate the “church of the living God”. We baptise no one that does not appear first to be baptised by the Holy Ghost; neither do we receive to fellowship any that are not, as far as it can be distinguished, previously united to the Body mystical of our Lord and King. We know of no Christians who are not saints. To us, every man is a “heathen” till, in his profession and conduct, we can read his conversion to Christ. We may be, and sometimes are, deceived. Unworthy persons, under a profession of godliness, do sometimes gain entrance among us. But, as soon as the thing is known, our principles require instant exclusion. Acting consistently with those principles of God’s scriptures, we may neither receive nor retain any that are not, so far as can be known. – “Saints in Christ Jesus”.