

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.

Separation – A Forgotten Truth

Pastor's Letter (June/July 1981)

Many Christians today find themselves confronted within their denominations and issues so blatant that it throws into focus the whole question of just where an evangelical Christian should stand in relation to their denomination or grouping with which they associate especially when that denomination or grouping has become "modernist" and totally "mixed" in their loyalty to the Word of God.

We realise the difficulties, of course, that can confront some people in certain areas and localities; but still, every professed evangelical Christian ought to be very clear in heart and mind, that he or she, is acting right in the eyes of God in being part of such bodies and there are however some practical and ethical questions that Ministers, and members of the "mixed" denominations need to ask themselves and answer in the light of the Scriptures.

For example, we find quite a number of people, both Ministers and members, who adopt the position of being "*in*" their denomination, but not "*of*" it. This position is usually presented in the expectation that some measure of praise is due to the Minister or member who takes it. But should this be the case? There are numerous calls in the Word of God for professed believers in Christ to display such virtues as honesty, fidelity, loyalty, and so forth. Does such behaviour not gravely threaten the exercise of such virtues?

At the very lowest level, it is the denomination as such, that affords those Ministers their "living" and their sphere of labour in which they work: their Manse, their Church building, their Parish system, their congregation. It is, surely, not becoming for any Christian Minister to bite the hand that feeds him. If a Christian is part of anything, that Christian ought to endeavour to be a loyal part.

On the same question of fidelity, and so forth, another disturbing feature that is found in the mixed denominations is the "split" attitude of

mind and practice brought about by a membership arrangement that includes both believers and non-believers on a totally equal basis.

There can, surely, be no question in any honest believer's heart that the vast majority of their "fellow-members" in the mixed denomination churches are unregenerate souls who are still in the gall of bitterness and condemnation. The usual reply to that criticism, of course, is that the Minister has a great opportunity to "evangelise" these people: but you don't "evangelise" the "members" of the Body of Christ! It is one thing to endeavour to apply the evangel to those who come into the Church's worship and who are still to all intents and purposes, unbelieving souls; but to think in terms of having to preach the gospel in terms of its very first rudiments to those who compose Christ's Church – surely, this is incongruous in the extreme. And, of course, the professed evangelicals in such situations, of necessity, adopt a split attitude of mind.

But is it not an unbecoming sight to witness an evangelical Minister within a Church, with his numerous unbelieving members, on the other, comprising some kind of a "Church within a Church?" – A flock within the flock? Those who hold themselves above the normal run-of-the-mill "worldly" goings-on in their Church; a kind of spiritual elite, quite apart from their other "fellow-members".

The questions come pouring in: -

Just what kind of *fellow-membership* of the Body of Christ, the Church does this entail anyway? Is that really "one body," under "one Spirit," pressing on to "one hope" of their "calling?" Can an evangelical Christian really turn, and with open face before God and man, say, we are "members in particular," and "members one of another?" It won't do to say that no Church is perfect; any one in his right senses, and in the light of God's Word, knows that. But that is a different matter to the blatant accepted linking of believers and unbelievers within the one "Body" of the Lord.

What kind of blinkering of conscience is involved in an evangelical Minister "dispensing" the elements of the Lord's Supper to a

membership, the bulk of which he knows, has neither part nor lot in that blessed ordinance? How does an evangelical Christian "commune" under such circumstances? Can he, or she, look around on professed fellow-sinners saved by the grace of God in the gospel, and say, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread," 1st Corinthians 10 verse 16 forward.

What is to be thought of the spectacle of the Lord's people giving forth their tithes and offerings, a big percentage of which ends up in the central funds of those denominations that include Divinity Lecturers and Professors – not to mention rank and file Ministers – who hold and declare views totally destructive of the gospel of God's redeeming grace to sinners? Can you picture a farmer feeding the foxes that would rip his sheep to shreds? Would you give to a door-to-door collection for a fund to poison the town's water supply? Yet the Lord's money can be given by the Lord's people to help to support those who would destroy the Lord's gospel. Next time you sing – "Take my silver and my gold," ask yourself, take it for what? Oh yes, part of it helps support those evangelical men within the denomination; what of the other part – the greater part?

We would hope that these questions would not be lightly dismissed by any who read them; and there are a dozen-and-one others just like them, involving many practical and ethical issues for a true believer in Christ to consider. When we have employed all our theological niceties and arguments from expediency etc., we are still confronted with the principles of conduct involved in those old rugged scriptures about "light and darkness" having no fellowship, and the sons of God and the sons of Belial making unseemly companions.

In spiritual things there is only one point of reference for the Christian and the non-Christian, and that is the evangeliser and the evangelised. In that God-given task the Christian may stand on much common "human" ground with the non-Christian: *but* there is no ground whatsoever on which the two may stand as "fellow-members" in the

body of Jesus Christ. To settle that one fact alone would be to settle the whole question of where believers should be in relation to ecumenical, modernist, and mixed denominationalist Churches.

For a good many years now we have been in the midst of much talk concerning reformation. It is time that we realised that we are not even getting near the question of reformation until we have settled in our heart and minds the question of separation from that which is not fully Christian, yet gives the appearance of being so by taking the name of Christian to itself.

God grant us grace to simply stand in our day – in the world, indeed, and as the Church of Christ in the world; but not of the world, and not giving the world that impression that it is part of us by birth, or nationality or anything else, apart from faith in Christ by which any man or woman or young person is added to Him and to one another.

Yours Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton.

Flowers from a Puritan's Garden.



Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells us that "While commenting upon the One Hundred-and Nineteenth Psalm," he was "brought into most intimate communion with Thomas Manton." This is not surprising, for the great Puritan preached no less than one hundred and ninety sermons on the one hundred and seventy six verses of that psalm, and these sermons occupy three-and-a-half volumes in the 22 volumes of his Complete Works. Spurgeon tells us that while he worked his way through Manton's sermons he was struck with his selective use of similes, or illustrations, and he hit on a

plan for a small book; it would consist of a collection of these similes and metaphors, etc., with additional comments by Spurgeon himself.

He tells us that in doing this it is not his intention to "rob" the great Puritan of what is rightly his; "I am simply clearing his house of all his pictures," he says, "and hanging them up in new frames of my own." We thought we might give a few of Manton's pictures in Spurgeon's new frames. The title of the small book that ensued was – Illustrations and Meditations, or, Flowers from a Puritan's Garden. Distilled and Dispensed by C.H. Spurgeon.

First, we have Manton's illustrations, or simile, and then, Spurgeon's comment.

Manton:

There is a close union between Christ and us: we are "in him," and because of this union we are eternally preserved. Look! As it is impossible to sever the leaven and the dough when they are once mingled and kneaded together, so Christ and a believer; when they are united together,, there is no parting them anymore, and while one lasts the other must endure.

Spurgeon:

This is indeed the sure ground of the final preservation of the saints. Their union with their Lord is of an indissoluble nature, so that that apostle enquires, "Who shall separate us?" It is like the union of the body with the head, which cannot be sundered without death to both. "Because I live ye shall live also" is our guarantee of life eternal. What more do we require? "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit:" what closer and more abiding union can be imagines?

Manton:

The needle of the compass that has been touched by the loadstone (the magnet) may be shaken and agitated, but it never rests until it turns towards the Pole.

Spurgeon:

Thus our heart's affections when once "magnetized" by the love of Christ find no rest except they turn to him. The cares and labours of the day may carry the thoughts to other subjects, even as a finger may turn the needle of the compass to east or west; but no sooner is the pressure removed than the thoughts fly to the Well-beloved just as the needle moves to its place. We are unable to rest anywhere but in Jesus. The new birth has disqualified us for contentment with the world, and hence we have no choice but to find our all in Christ. Blessed necessity!

Driven to Jesus by an unrest which finds no remedy elsewhere! *Drawn* to Jesus by an impulse which we have no desire to resist! We are subject to many deflections and disturbances, but thou knowest, O Lord, that our inmost soul seeks after thyself.

Manton:

The nurse lets the child get a knock sometimes, in order to make it more cautious.

Spurgeon:

Thus does the Lord in providence allow his children to suffer by their sins, that they might be more thoughtful in future. He has no hand in their sin; but since the sin is in them, he allows circumstances to occur by which the evil is made manifest in open acts, which cause them sorrow. When a physician sees a person suffering from an inward complaint, he may think it wise so to deal with his patient that the disease is brought to the surface; and thus also, God may permit the sins of his people to come to an open sore, that they may be aware of them, and seek for healing. The nurse does not make the child careless or cause it to stumble, but she withdraws her interposing care for the best of reasons – namely, that the little one may learn to avoid danger by a measure of suffering on account of it. It would be blasphemous to attribute sin to God; but it is a matter of fact that, by smarting for one's fault, gracious men learn to avoid others.

(To be continued)



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 92

Title. – A Psalm or song for the Sabbath-Day. This admirable composition is both a Psalm and a Song, full of equal measures of solemnity and joy; and it was intended to be sung upon the day of rest. The subject is the praise of God; praise is Sabbatic work, the joyful occupation of resting hearts. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is wise to meditate upon him on the Sabbath-day. The style is worthy of the theme and of the day, it's inspiration is from the "fount of every blessing;" David spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. In the church of Christ at this hour, no Psalm is more frequently sung upon the Lord's Day than the present. The delightful version of Dr Watts is familiar to us all –

"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise they name, give thanks, and sing;
To show thy love by morning light,
And talk of all thy truth at night."

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High."

Singing is the music of nature. The scriptures tell us, the mountains sing (Isaiah 44:23); the valleys sing (Psalm 65:13); the trees of the wood sing (1st Chronicles 16:33). Nay, the air is the birds' music-room, where they chant their musical notes.

Singing is the music of ordinances. Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses, that at this first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing Psalm 91, he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbis tell us that the Jews, after the Feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang Psalm 113 and the five following; and our Saviour and His apostles "sang a hymn" immediately after the blessed supper. (Matthew 26:30).

Singing is the music of saints. They have performed this duty –

- (1) In their greatest numbers, (Psalm 149:1).
- (2) In their greatest straits, (Isaiah 26:19).
- (3) In their greatest flights, (Isaiah 42:10-11).
- (4) In their greatest deliverances, (Isaiah 65:14).
- (5) In their greatest plenties.

In all these changes singing has been their stated duty and delight. And, indeed, it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty for every attribute of Him can set both their song and their tune.

Singing is the music of angels. Job tells us, "The morning stars sang together, (Job 37:7). Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in this raised way of duty, (Luke 2:13). Nay, in heaven, there is the angels' joyous music, there they sing Hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne, (Revelation 5:11-12).

Singing is the music of heaven. The glorious saints and angels both assent their praise in this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride chamber, (Revelation 15:3). The saints who were tuning their psalms here below are now singing hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction. Here they laboured with drowsy hearts and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebrations.

John Wells, in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 1. "It is a good thing to give thanks" Giving thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition; because in petition it is often our own good that is eyed and regarded, but in the giving of thanks, only God's honour. The Lord Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, an end-product of petition is to "receive" some good from God; but the sole end of thanks is to "give" glory unto God.

William Ames

Verse 2. "To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." Every new day that dawns for us expresses the "lovingkindness" of the Lord in permitting us to see it, and every night that ends expresses the "faithfulness" of the Lord in keeping us through that night. Therefore, both ends of the day give us fuel for praise.

Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls.



Dear Boys and Girls,

In this edition of the magazine I have decided to tell you a story from the Bible. I expect some of you think the Bible is a bit "dry",

and not as exciting as some of your other story books. Perhaps this is because you haven't really tried to like it. The Bible is God's word, boys and girls, and we should really try to read it as often as we can, for its pages tell us many things. Most important of all, in the Bible, God tells us about Jesus Christ His Son, and how we can know Him as our Saviour.

This Bible story is about a young King, and what he thought of God's Word. The king's name was Josiah, and he was King of Judah. Because he was only eight years old and too young to rule the land himself, the High Priest, who was named Hilkiah, governed until Josiah had reached the age of sixteen.

During this time, the King began to seek to know more about God. He sought the Lord, and he did what was right. He discovered that God's "House" – the Temple of the Lord – was being misused. One king had even set up an altar to his idol, Baal. Josiah declared that the Temple must be repaired and cleaned out. So the heathen idols were taken out and burned, and the Temple put in order so that the people could worship God there.

While all this was going on, the High Priest cleaned the rooms of the Temple. There, hidden away – perhaps in a cupboard or in a drawer – he found a strange "scroll." (A scroll, boys and girls, is an old fashioned kind of book that was used years ago – like the one at the top of the page.) It did not take Hilkiah long to recognise this scroll as the Book of the Law of God – the commandments that God had given to Moses – and which the people were to observe in order to please God. It was their Bible.

How excited Hilkiah was. He called to Shaphan the Scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law of God in the house of the Lord." The High Priest then gave the precious Book to Shaphan, who took it to Josiah the King. Josiah, too, became excited. He of course, had never read from the Book. "Read to me from the Book," he told Shaphan. Shaphan read about God's promises to bless the people if they served Him faithfully; and then, he read about God's promises to *punish* the

people if they disobeyed Him and worshipped idols.

How worried Josiah became. His people had disobeyed God. The King tore his clothes and wept sorely. Josiah told Hilkiah the High Priest – "Go and ask the Lord about the words in the book, for I am sure our punishment will be great, because our fathers have not kept the Word of the Lord." Hilkiah went to Huldah the prophetess, who said, "God will indeed punish those who break his laws, but because Josiah has humbled his heart, and wept before God for the sins of his people, God will not let the people be punished while Josiah lives."

Josiah did not forget the words of God's Law. Soon, messengers were sent throughout the whole land, calling the people to come to Jerusalem. There, Josiah read to them from the wonderful Book that had been found in the Temple. That day, the King promised to keep the Law of God and to serve Him with all his heart. He commanded the people to make the same promise, and they obeyed him, and prayed to God for forgiveness.

Wasn't Josiah a good King, boys and girls? And remember, he was just young – the same age as some of you – when he first began to trust God, and learn more about Him and His truth.

You will find this story in 2nd chronicles chapter 34. I trust you will read it again from the Bible, and find courage and strength from God to promise, just as Josiah did, to serve the Lord with all your heart.

Love,
Mrs Seaton.



Practical Pointers From Martin Luther

Godly Contentment:

Like yon little bird upon the tree, he hath fed himself tonight, but he knoweth not where his breakfast will come from tomorrow. He sitteth there while the wind rocks the tree; he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing, and sleeps. Then when he awakes in the morning, he sings:

"Mortals cease from toil and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow."

Abraham:

When Abraham shall rise again at the last day, then he will chide us for our unbelief, and will say – "I had not the hundredth part of the promises that ye have, and yet I believed. That example of Abraham's that we have exceeds all natural and human reason, who, overcoming the paternal love he bore towards his only son Isaac, was all obedient to God and, against the law of nature, would have sacrificed that son. What, for the space of those three days, he felt in his heart: - what hesitations and trials he had – cannot be expressed.

Ministerial Ambition:

Ambition is the rankest poison to the Church when it possesses preachers. It is a consuming fire. The Holy Scriptures are given to mortify the desires of the flesh, therefore, how can we seek honour for the flesh therein? I much marvel for what cause we can be proud and haughty, for we are born in sin, and in every moment in danger of death.

Are we proud of our scabs, we who are altogether an unclean thing?

Charity:

There is in Austria a monastery, which in former days, was very rich and remained rich so long as it was charitable to the poor. When it ceased to give, then it became destitute, and so it remains to this day. Not long ago, a poor man went to the door of that place and asked for alms; but this was denied him. He demanded to know why they should not give to the needy who asked in the Name of the Lord, and was told by the Porter at the gate – "We are become destitute and poor ourselves." The beggar then expounded the cause of their poverty: "The cause of your poverty is this, "he told them, "Ye had in former days in this place two brethren; the one was named, *give*, and other was named, *it shall be given you*. The first one ye threw out, and the other has left by himself."

Justification:

Because the people were so prone to forget the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, I was obliged to almost knock my Bible against their heads to send it into their hearts.

Witness:

Believest thou?

Then thou wilt speak boldly.

Speakest thou boldly?

Then thou wilt suffer.

Sufferest thou?

Then thou shalt be comforted.

Temptations:

He that will dispute with the devil out of the *Law* will be beaten and taken captive by him; but he that disputes with him out of the gospel, by the grace of God, conquers him.

God's Appointed Time:

Christ, our blessed Saviour, forbore to preach and teach until the

thirtieth year of his age; neither would he openly be heard although the world were full of heresies, idolatries, blasphemies against God His Father, and many impieties. It was a wonderful thing that He could abstain, and with patience endure them, until the time came when He was to appear in His office and work.

Temptation:

When tempted by the devil on one occasion that my sins were too black and numerous to be forgiven, I asked him to show me the scroll on which he had recorded them. "Are these all?" I asked him; and he brought another. "But are there not yet more?" I enquired; and he brought another. "And more?" said I, and again he brought another list. "Now," said I, "Take your pen, and write across the bottom of them all – 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses me from *all* sin.'!"

Truth:

A Christian must be well-armed, grounded, and furnished with portions of God's Word, so that he might stand and defend the gospel and himself against the devil in case he should be asked to embrace another doctrine.

Persecution:

Be assured of it – Cain will be on murdering Able so long as the Church of Christ is on this earth.