

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 164 issued November 2023

Index

1. A Noble Name Misinterpreted - W. J. Seaton (1982)
2. Books, Books and More Books – C. H. Spurgeon
- 3 The Widow, Oil, Meal and Elijah– Mrs Seaton’s Letter to Boys and Girls
4. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 97
5. Every Word of God is Pure – Charles Bridges
6. “Because Thou Sayest, I am Rich ...”



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 N. Needham, W. J. Seaton and Pastor G. S. Marley
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002.

A Noble Title Misinterpreted

Dear Friends,

When the disciples were “first called Christians at Antioch,” I very much doubt if any of them could have foreseen how that noble title was going to prove a weapon in the hands of the devil, to bring disrepute on the name of the Lord, and confusion in the cause of the gospel.

Where the devil cannot destroy what is true, he normally sets out to counterfeit it. After the martyr fires of the early centuries of the Church had failed to destroy the Christian testimony of those days, the devil then used his other weapon. In the introduction of the idea of “National” Christianity – especially under the Emperor Constantine, and such like – the devil struck with great cunning and craftiness – bringing into being something that bore the name of Christian, but which, in fact, was devoid of the substance or the reality of that name.

Sad to say, even the mighty men of the Protestant Reformation failed to right this situation when it came to their day. They were majoring, of course, in retrieving the lost truth of Justification by faith alone; and future generations must feel for ever indebted to them for their labours. But as far as the true nature of the Christian Church was concerned, and, therefore, the true nature of the term Christian, they simply renovated rather than reformed those old concepts that had come down to them from the Church of Rome. Indeed, what was really required in that area of thinking was a revolution of thought, and this did not take place among the leading figures of the Reformation.

Alongside the idea of a *Roman Catholic* “Christian” country and State, the Reformers set up the idea of a *Protestant* “Christian” country and State;” and by so doing, they simply compounded the confused use of the term Christian even further. There were those who refused to accept this concept of Christ’s Church, of course – just as there had been in the days of Constantine and following. – but for them there was

much persecution and often martyrdom. This was the case in Protestant, as well as in Roman Catholic dominated States and countries, depending on where the “dissenters” found themselves. To even suggest that being born into such a “Christian” State did not constitute one a “Christian,” was tantamount to denying the whole fabric of Christianity. This was the case, of course, within the whole framework of that line of thinking; but it wasn’t the fabric of New Testament Christianity that was being denied by those dissenters, but only the fabric of the devil’s counterfeit that made people “Christians” through birth and not rebirth.

To accommodate this idea of “Christian” state and country, the rite of infant baptism was necessarily retained in the thinking of the Reformers. Just as the new-born Israelite child in the Old Testament (if a male) received the rite of circumcision, so the child now born into the “Christian” nation was to receive the rite of “baptism.” This was the thinking that lay behind the creation of the child baptism ordinance at the first, and far from being abandoned by the Reformers, it was necessary that they should continue it, in a modified form, when States and countries changed from being Roman Catholic “Christian” States and countries to Protestant “Christian” States and countries.

The act of infant baptism was a rite of initiation; indeed, it was an act of confirming that the child was not “pagan,” but “Christian” in this new-found use of the word. The child had been born into a “Christian” State, therefore, it had the right of reception into the Christian Church of that State. The name and title of Christian was to be no longer the prerogative of the “disciples” of Christ; those who had been born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” and who were endeavouring to walk in the light of His Word. From those Constantinian days onward the term Christian was to be robbed of its real meaning and plundered of its true nature.

Now, none of the foregoing should be looked on as simply historical. We today are still reaping the fruits of that confusion in the cause of the gospel and disrepute on the name of Christ that the counterfeiting of the term Christian started. Whenever believers take in

hand to confront men and women with the gospel in such “Christian” lands, the great barrier that they are immediately faced with is the claim by a big majority of those men and women that they are “Christians” already. Haven’t they been born in a Christian country? Haven’t they been baptized into the Christian Church? Hasn’t it been done at the hands of a Christian minister before a Christian congregation? What other conclusion might such men and women come to, but that they are, indeed, “Christians” already!

With regards to the disrepute that this deceptive use of the noble name has brought to the Name of the Saviour, who can but hang down their heads with sorrow in the light of some of the events of history that have been attributed to “Christians,” and which are with us even to this Day?

“Oh, yes,” we may say, as evangelical, professing Christians, “We all know what that is; that is nominal Christianity – Christianity in name only.” So the explanation usually runs; and runs true. But we must ever be careful not to be lulled into thinking that when we have stated the explanation of a thing, that there is no *application* of that explanation for us in our lives. And as far as this whole business of “nominal Christianity” is concerned, it is high time for those who are really Christians to cease giving credence to it through their part in it, and to show it for what it is by standing apart from it. To be part of a Church, denomination, or structure, whose very being, and essence consists in the acceptance of those who are merely “Christian” in name only, is to really deny the Christian name, and to give support to its mis-usage and abuse in our day. To be “in membership” along with those who are simply nominal “Christians,” or to sit at the Lord’s table in fellowship with such, is simply to validate the counterfeit usage of the Christian name.

There is but one type of person recognised as a Christian in the Word of God, and they are such who have been born of the Spirit of God, have confessed their sins meaningfully before God, and exercised faith in Jesus Christ His Son. They are the descendants of those who were “first called Christians at Antioch.” If the devil has duped some

into believing that they are Christians when they are not, God forbid that those who really are Christians should encourage that counterfeit in any way.

Your sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (September 1982)

Books, Books, And More Books.

By C. H. Spurgeon

At this season of the year quite a few books will be given and received as presents. The following few pages from Spurgeon may prove timely.

If a man can purchase but very few books, my first advice to him would be, ***let him purchase the very best.*** If he cannot spend much, let him spend well. The best will always be the cheapest. This age is full of word-spinners – professional book-makers, who hammer a grain of matter so thin that it will cover a five-acre sheet of paper. These men have their uses as gold-beaters have, but they are no use to you. Farmers on our coast used to cart wagon-loads of sea-weed, and put them upon their land; the heaviest part was the water. Now they dry the weed, and save a world of labour and expense. Don't buy thin soul; purchase the essence of meat. Get much in little. Prefer books which abound in what James Hamilton used to call "Bibline," which is the very essence of books.

In preparing his admirable comment on the Bible, Dr Chalmers used only the "Concordance," the "Pictorial Bible," "Poole's Synopsis," "Matthew Henry's Commentary," and "Robinson's Researches in Palestine." "These are the books I use," said he to a friend; "all that is Biblical is there; I have to do with nothing besides in my Biblical studies." This is clear evidence that some most eminent preachers have found that they could do better with few books than with many when

studying the Scriptures, and this I take it is our business. Matthew Henry's Commentary having been mentioned, I venture to say that no better investment can be made, by any minister, than that peerless exposition. Get it if you sell your coat to buy it.

The next rule I shall lay down is, *master those books you have*. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you. Read and re-read them; masticate them, and digest them. Let them go into your very self. Peruse a book several times, and make notes and analyses of it. A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books which he has merely skimmed. Little learning and much pride come of hasty reading. Books may be piled on the brain till it cannot work. Books *on* the brain cause disease; get the book *into* the brain, and you will grow. As one has said, "Why do you buy so many books? You have no hair, and you purchase a comb!" A very well deserved rebuke to those who think that the possession of books will secure them learning. A measure of that temptation, of course, happens to us all. For do we do not feel wiser after we have spent an hour or two in a bookseller's shop! Think as well as read, and keep the thinking always proportionate to the reading, and your small library will not be great misfortune.

But if you feel you must have more books, *I recommend to you a little judicious borrowing*. You will most likely have some friends who have books, and who will be kind enough to let you use them for a time; and I specially advise you – in order to borrow again – to return whatsoever is lent, promptly, and in good condition. You know the rhyme that has been written in many a man's books –

“If thou art borrowed by a friend,
Right welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend,
But to return to me.

Not that imparted knowledge doth
Diminish learning's store,
But books I find when once they're lent,
Return to me no more.”

Sir Walter Scott used to say that his friends might be very indifferent accountants, but he was sure they were good “book-keepers.” Some have even had to go the length of the scholar who, when asked to lend a book, sent word by the servant that he would not let the book out of his chamber, but that the gentleman who sought the loan might come and sit there, and read as long as he liked. The rejoinder was unexpected but complete, when, his fire being slow to burn, he sent to the same person to borrow a pair of bellows, and receive for an answer that the owner would not lend the bellows out of his own chamber, but that the gentleman might come and *blow there* as long as he liked! Judicious borrowing may furnish you with much reading, but remember the man’s axe-head in the scriptures, and be careful of what you borrow.

In case the famine of books should be sore in the land, *there is one book which you all have, and that is your Bible*; and a minister without his Bible is like David with his sling and stone, full equipped for the fray. To understand the Bible should be our ambition. We should be familiar with it; as familiar as the housewife with her needle, the merchant with his ledger, the mariner with his ship. We ought to know its general run, the contents of each book, the details of its histories; its doctrines, precepts, and everything about it. I have heard of an old minister in Lancashire, that he was “a walking concordance,” and could either give you chapter and verse for any passage quoted, or could correctly give the words when the place was mentioned. That may have been a feat of *memory*, but the study needful to produce it must have been highly profitable. I do not say that you must aspire to that; but if you could, it would be well worth the gaining. A man who has learned, not merely the letter of the Bible, but its inner spirit, will be no mean man. A man who has his Bible at his finger-tips and in his heart core is a champion in our Israel. You cannot compete with him; you may have an armoury of weapons, but his scriptural knowledge will overcome you. We will never be short of holy matter if we are continually studying the inspired volume. Nay, it is not only matter we shall find there, but illustration, too; for the Bible is its own best illustrator. If you want anecdote, simile, allegory or parable, turn to the sacred page. Scriptural truth never looks more lovely than when she is adorned with jewels from her own treasury.

I think it was Ambrose who used to say, “I adore the infinity of Scripture.” I hear the same voice that sounded in the ears of Augustine, concerning the Book of God – “Take, read.”

Make the Bible the man of your right hand, the companion of every hour, and you will have little reason to lament your slender equipment in inferior things.

From, Lectures to my Students.

Mrs Seaton's

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

Some time ago I told you about the Italian boy who did what he could with what he had to make his friend happy? I said that in the Bible we read of many people who did what they could not just for their friends but for the glory of God. One such person was a humble widow woman; we read about her in 1st Kings chapter 17.

During a drought and famine in the land of Israel, Elijah, God’s prophet, was told by God to go to the city of Zarephath and there he would find a widow woman who would look after him.

Off went Elijah, and when he reached Zarephath, sure enough, just at the entrance of the city, there was a widow woman gathering sticks. Elijah went up to her and said, “Fetch me a little water that I may drink, and a bit of bread too, please! The widow woman said, “all I have is a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse. I was just gathering these sticks to light a fire to cook the meal for my little boy and

myself, and we would die, for we have nothing else. Elijah said to her, “Fear not to go and do as you have said, but make me a little cake *first*, then one for your son and yourself.”

Elijah, then said an amazing thing, he said that God would not allow the meal nor the oil to finish until He would send rain back on the earth. And just think, boys and girls, the widow woman didn’t question God’s words for one minute, but she did what she could. She made cakes for them, every day until the famine was over in the land of Israel. None of the meal nor the oil ran done for all those days just as God had said.

Wasn’t that a wonderful miracle boys and girls? But you see how the poor widow woman took God at His word and proved that God is faithful to His word. She didn’t have much, but what she had she gave to God to use in that miracle.

Here’s how the great hymn-writer John Newton puts it: -

“By the poor widow’s oil and meal
Elijah was sustained;
Though small the stock, it lasted well,
For God the store maintained.”

I hope you will learn to believe God’s Word and trust in Him and believe His promises, for they will all come to pass in God’s time.

Sincerely,
Mrs Seaton.

If you wish to read about the little Italian boy you will find it here:
https://www.wicketgate.co.uk/issue114/e114_5.html



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 97

Subject. – As the last psalm sung the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Ghost in subduing the colossal systems of error, and casting down the idol gods. Across the sea to maritime regions a voice cries for rejoicing at the reign of Jesus (verse 1,) the sacred fire descends (verse, 3) like lightning the gospel flames forth (verse 4,) difficulties vanish (verse 5,) and all the nations see the glory of God (verse 6.) The idols are confounded (verse 7,) the Church rejoices (verse 8,) the Lord is exalted (verse 9.) The psalm closes with an exhortation to holy stead-fastness under the persecutions that would follow, and bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright, and their reward glorious and certain.

C. H. S.

Verse 1 “**The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice ...**” When Bulstrode Whitelock was embarked as Cromwell’s envoy to Sweden, in 1653, he was much disturbed in mind as he rested at Harwich the preceding night, which was very stormy, and as he thought upon the distracted state of the nation. It happened that a confidential servant slept in an adjacent bed, who, finding that his master could not sleep, at length said: -

“Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?”

“Certainly.”

Pray, sir, do you think God governed the world very well before you came into it?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“And pray sir, do you think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?”

“Certainly.”

“Then pray, sir, excuse me, but do you not think you may trust Him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?”

To this question Whitelock had no reply, and soon fell asleep.

Verse 4. “His lightnings enlightened the world: and earth saw, and trembled.” In times of tempest the whole of nature is lighted up with a lurid glare; even the light of the sun itself seems dim compared with the blaze of lightening. If such are the common lights of nature, what must be the glories of the Godhead itself? When God draws aside the curtain for a moment how astonished are the nations; the light compels them to cover their eyes and bow their heads in solemn awe. Jesus in the gospel lights up the earth with such a blaze of truth and grace as was never seen or imagined before. In apostolic times the word flashed from one end of the heavens to the other, and no part of the civilised globe was left untouched.

Spurgeon

Verse 8. “Zion heard and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord.” When the final judgments of God come upon the world the final blessings of God come upon the church; “Zion heard and was glad ... because of thy judgements, O Lord.” This may be embraced and remembered as a fact of that coming final day without the exercise of one wrong thought such as our carnal natures might produce at the downfall of others. When the church’s day of rejoicing appears, the world’s day of repenting will come with it. When Christ comes in flaming fire” to execute judgment on all them that believe not God. He comes to be “admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.” (2nd Thessalonians 1 verses 7-10)

Verse 10. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil ...” Richard Sibbes, the Puritan, has some very searching things to say about hating evil.

First:

A man may know his hatred of evil to be true, if it be *universal*; he that hates sin truly hates *all* sin.

Second:

True hatred is *fixed*; there is no appeasing it but by abolishing the thing hated.

Third:

Hatred is a more *rooted* affection than anger; anger may be appeased, but hatred remains and sets itself against the whole kind.

Fourth:

If our hatred be true, we hate all evil – in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, would hate it most in his own bosom.

Many, like Judah, (Genesis 38 verse 24) are severe in censuring others, but partial to themselves.

Fifth:

Our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin.

Those that swell in rage against reproof for sin do not appear to rightly hate sin. “He that love the Lord, “hate evil.” Hate sin out of love for the Lord.

***Every Word of
God is Pure
(Proverbs 30:5-6)***

... Add Thou Not unto His Words ...

Nothing is learned solidly by abstract speculation. Go to the Book. Here is all light and purity. Everything is intended to influence the heart and conduct. *Every word of God is pure*. Of what other book in the world can this be said? Where else is the gold found without the alloy.

But if every *word of God is pure*, take care that no word is slighted. How few people range over the whole Revelation of God. To take a whole view of the universe, we should embrace not only the fruitful gardens, but its barren deserts, as coming equally from the hand of God, and none of them made for nought. To take a similar comprehensive view of the sacred “field,” we must study the apparently barren, as well

as the more manifestly fruitful, portions. Meat will be gathered from the detailed codes of law, from the historical annals of the kings, and from the wars and fightings – those prolific results of the lusts of men. The *whole* scripture is scripture, and “all scripture is profitable.”

Favouritism, however, is a besetting snare in the sacred study. A part is too often taken instead of the whole, or, as if it were the whole. One person is absorbed in the doctrinal, a second in the practical, a third in the prophetic, a fourth in the experimental scriptures. Each seems to forget that *every word of God is pure*. The doctrinalist becomes loose in practice; the practical professor self-righteous in principle. The prophetic disciple, absorbed in his imaginative atmosphere, neglects present obligations. The experimental religionist mistakes a religion of feeling, excitement, or fancy, for the sobriety and substantial fruitfulness of the gospel. All remind us of our Lord’s rebuke, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.”

The great exercise, therefore, is to bring out the whole mass of solid truth in all its bearings and glory. So wisely has God linked together the several parts of his system, that we can receive no portion soundly, except in connection with the whole. The accuracy of any view is more than suspicious that puts a forced construction upon scripture so as to dislocate its connection, or to throw important truths into the shade. Apparently contradictory statements of scripture are, in fact, only balancing truths; each correcting its opposite, and, like antagonical muscles, contributing to the strength and completeness of the frame. Every heresy probably stands upon some insulated text, or some exaggerated truth, pressed beyond the “proportion of faith.” But none of these can stand upon the combined view and testimony of scripture. Nor is it enough that our system of things includes no positive error; if some great truths be lacking. Let it be carefully grounded upon the acknowledgement – *Every word of God is pure*.

But the word of God is not only pure and cannot deceive. It is also sufficient; and therefore, like tried gold, it needs no addition for its perfection. Hence to *add to his words*, stamped as they are with his divine authority, will expose us to his tremendous reproof, and cover us

with shame. The Jews virtually *added* their oral law and written traditions. And the attempt in our own day to bring tradition to a near, if not to an equal, level with the sacred testimony, is a fearful approach to his sinful presumption. A new rule of Faith is thus introduced; an *addition* to the divine rule.

The needlessness of this addition is obvious. For if “the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation,” what more do we want? And if this were spoken by Paul to Timothy concerning only the Old Testament scriptures, the sufficiency of the part confirms the larger sufficiency of the whole Word of God. What clearer demonstration can be given of the absolute completeness of the scripture than the fact that it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness” that the man of God may be perfected and thoroughly furnished by it? To detract therefore from the integrity of this divine rule of faith, and to shake confidence in its sole authority, is to bring in a false principle, which is the source of every evil and corruption of the faith.

The Lord has most carefully guarded his pure word from all human admixture. May he preserve us from “teaching for doctrine the commandments of men,” saying, “the Lord hath said it, when he hath not spoken!”

Charles Bridges.

"Because Thou Sayest, I am Rich" (Revelation 3 verse 17)

What makes mistaken men afraid
Of sovereign grace to preach?
The reason is (if truth be said)
Because they are so rich.

Why so offensive in their eyes
Doth God's election seem?
Because they think themselves so wise,
That they have chosen him.

Of perseverance why so loth
Are some to speak or hear?
Because, as masters over sloth,
They vow to persevere.

Whence is imputed righteousness
A point so little known?
Because men think they all possess
Some righteousness their own.

Not so the needy, helpless soul
Prefers his humble prayer;
He looks to Him that works the whole,
And seeks his treasure there.

His language is 'Let me, my God,
On sovereign grace rely;
And own 'tis free, because bestow'd,
On one so vile as I.

Election! 'tis a word divine;
For, Lord, I plainly see,
Had not thy choice prevented mine,
I ne'er had chosen thee.

Fore perseverance strength I've none,
But would on this depend;
That Jesus, having lov'd his own,
He loves them to the end.

Joseph Hart.