

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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Index

1. Speaking with Prophetic Voices. W. J. Seaton (1971)
2. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 99
3. Mrs Seaton's Letter. Samuel and Eli's Two Sons
4. Evangelical Religion by J. C. Ryle
5. A Sinner Humbled and a Saviour Exalted by Lachlan MacKenzie
6. Big Kate's Conversion.



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
- Archive of Audio Sermons.

Speaking with Prophetic Voices
(by W. J. Seaton)

Dear Friends,

Numerous are the qualities that once characterised the Church of Christ in this land that have now fallen into disrepair or complete misuse. Among the most notable qualities of the past no longer very evident amongst us, was that ability (or, perhaps it was courage) to speak with prophetic voice regarding the church's, or even an individual's future in relation to the path that that church or that individual was taking.

Lachlan MacKenzie, "Mr. Lachlan" to all and sundry, minister of the parish church at Lochcarron, well illustrates the point, and time and time again he proved himself to be in the van of the men of prophetic foresight in the 17th century.

Speaking about the man who would succeed him to the work of the ministry at Lochcarron, he said that he would be "a dumb dog that would not bark." And in order to substantiate his utterance, and vindicate the gospel that he preached there as being the whole counsel of God, he declared that two trees would grow, one on either side of his pulpit, that their branches would intertwine above the pulpit causing them to choke one another, and that they would then fall to the ground before the pulpit. When the old church was vacated for a newer building following Lachlan's death, two trees did begin to grow in the ruins just where the old pulpit had stood; they soon locked their branches, fell to the ground, and up until a few years ago, the decayed remains of the two witnesses to God's truth lay in their place appointed, to bear silent testimony to the validity of the old man's gospel.

Such incidents are legion; like the spiritual perception of James Matheson of Dornoch. A young woman by the name of Ann Mackenzie had set out from Ullapool to walk to Dornoch at the time of the Communion. She was greatly burdened with a sense of her sinfulness before the Lord, and having read John chapter 13 on her journey, she

covenanted with the Lord that if this were the very first passage of scripture that she heard read over the communion season she would take it as a token that God was going to deal mercifully with her. On reaching the pre-communion prayer meeting, over which James Matheson was presiding, the young woman took her seat but was saddened to hear the visiting preacher announce that he was going to read from the prophecy of Isaiah. Just at that moment, however, James Matheson interrupted the preacher: “You may read that chapter on another occasion,” he told him, “but for the present, read the 13th chapter of John, for there is someone here to whom that passage is speaking.”

On another occasion, this same James Matheson endeavoured to speak to his housekeeper about her soul’s salvation. It was late at night and the woman pretended to be asleep rather than face the rigours of interrogation regarding her eternal welfare. “Betsy, are you awake?” asked the man. But the only reply was a feigned attempt at being asleep. “Betsy,” he asked again, “are you awake?” Still no reply. And a third time he asked, but without success. “Oh, poor Betsy,” said James Matheson in his final word, “I saw Satan and yourself concocting this plan, and for each time you refused to answer, you shall have a year when sleep shall depart from your eyelids.” When the old housekeeper was finally brought under conviction of sin it was of the most severe nature, and for three whole years, she confessed, she never slept a full night through, and for most of that time, never closed her eyes at all.

Such was the ministry of many of the men of the past, and we might well ask what has become of such ministry, of such foresight, of such discernment, of such spiritual courage today? How few are the voices that we hear raised in the denunciation of sins national, personal, and ecclesiastical? To hear some evangelicals tell it, one would almost believe that we were living in days of religious revival instead of in days when evil runs rampant and “the salt” has almost entirely lost its savour. We are persistently being told that “God is doing wonderful things in these days.” What an absolutely empty, meaningless use of words. Murders, riots, rapes, drug addiction, drunkenness, adultery, sodomy, uncleanness, strikes, vandalism, violence and vice. The whole

catalogue of evil which advertises the state of our nation in these days in which we live is an open invitation to look and see what *terrible* things *the devil* is doing today.

The Lord is Sovereign; of course He is, and the evil one doesn't take one step that is out of the control of Him who sitteth upon the Throne. But the state of things in the nation today is on account of the state of things in the churches today; and the state of things in the churches today is on account of God having turned His face away from a people bent on having their own wills satisfied. Years of banner-waving evangelism and "factory farming" methods in conversion have neither stemmed the tide of corruption nor increased the flow of godliness by one iota.

How much we could do with the spirit of Bunyan's "Old Mr. Honest." To see what the present trend of things is and to have courage to denounce the course fearlessly, proclaiming what a continued following of that course will result in, for ourselves, for our churches, for our denominations, for the whole church in this land, for the land itself. We will be no better off for simply calling barrenness, blessing; neither will we be any worse off for seeing and confessing that the "pleasant places" have become desolate. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Do we really believe that great things are happening today? "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." (Haggai chapter 1 verse 5-7)

One ounce of spiritual perception, my friends, will show that this is our state today. One ounce of spiritual foresight will undoubtedly show us the consequences of remaining in that state of blissful unawareness.

Yours sincerely
W. J. Seaton (1971)



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 99

This may be called *The Sanctus*, or *The Holy, Holy, Holy Psalm*, for the word “holy” is the conclusion and refrain of its three main divisions: verses 1-3; 4-5; 6-9.

It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in verse 1; it is a psalm most fitted for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city; and it is especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the Law-giver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with the Lord.

Treasury

Verse 2. “The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.” Of old the Temple’s sacred hill was the centre of the worship of the great King, and the place where his grandeur was most clearly beheld. His Church is now his favoured palace, where his greatness is displayed, acknowledged, and adored. He there unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage. The ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him; but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison. He is great in the esteem of the saints, great in his acts of mercy, and fully great in himself – great in mercy, power, wisdom, justice, and glory.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verse 5. “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for it is holy.”

(1) Why should you exalt the Lord your God?

[i] For what he is to you;

[ii] For what he has done for you;

[iii] For what he has told you in his Word.

(2) How should you exalt the Lord your God?

- [i] In your affection;
- [ii] In your meditation;
- [iii] In your supplication;
- [iv] In your conversation;
- [v] In your profession;
- [vi] In your consecration;
- [vii] In your expectation.

Hints to the Village Preacher

Verse 6. “Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name ...” Though not ordained to the typical priesthood, Moses was a true priest, even as Melchizedek was before him. God has ever had a priesthood beside and above that of the Law. The three holy men here mentioned all stood in God’s courts and saw his holiness, each one after his own order. Moses saw the Lord in flaming fire revealing his perfect Law; Aaron full often watched the sacred fire devour the sin-offering; and Samuel witnessed the judgment of the Lord on Eli’s house, because of the error of his way. These each stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted. And acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob. Let these men, or such as these, lead us in our worship, and let us approach the Lord at the mercy-seat as they did, for he is as accessible to us as to them. They made it their life’s business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others. Does not the Lord call us also to come up into the mount with Moses, and to enter the most holy place with Aaron? Do we not hear him call us by our name as he did Samuel? And do we not answer, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth”?

Spurgeon

Verse 8. “Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God ... though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.” It is not a light punishment, but a “vengeance” he “takes on their inventions.” It is to manifest that

God hates sin *as sin*, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps had a profane man touched the Ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him. But when Uzzah, a man zealous for god, would step out of his place to support the tottering Ark, God strikes him down for his disobedient action beside the Ark. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees as he did Peter when Peter gave that carnal advice about the Lord not going “up to Jerusalem” to be crucified. Christ calls him “Satan”, a title much sharper than the title of the “devil’s children” which he gave to the Pharisees.

Stephen Charnock

While the regenerate can never become *un*regenerate, they can, alas! Become *de*generate, and herein lies one of the greatest perils of the Christian life.

G. Thomas

Verse 9.

“Do ye exalt the Lord our God,
And at his holy hill
Do ye him worship for the Lord
Our God is holy still.”

Metrical Version

Mrs Seaton’s Letter To the Boys and Girls.

Samuel and Eli’s Two Sons.



We are going to have a story about Samuel. I am sure you know about how God spoke to Samuel when he was young, and how Samuel didn’t know that it was God who was speaking to him.

You remember how Eli told him that the next time he heard the voice, he was to say, “Speak, Lord, your servant hears”? I’m sure you all know that story. But, you know, boys and girls, sometimes that is where we stop in that story about Samuel, and we don’t go on. What came next? What words did God say to Samuel?

Well, God said that He was angry with Eli’s two sons. Because they had done bad things they were not to take Eli’s place as priests in the Temple when he died. God also said that He was angry with Eli for not trying to stop them from doing wrong. Samuel was very sad when he heard this, and he didn’t know how he could tell Eli this bad news. In the morning, however, he did tell Eli.

How sad Eli was; but he said, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him.” Eli knew that God is a righteous God who must punish sin, you see; and that is very sad news, boys and girls; indeed, that is very *bad news*.

Remember this though, boys and girls, the Bible also gives us very *good news*. That good news is that God can forgive our sins. He can forgive our sins, because Jesus came to suffer for the sins of men and women, and boys and girls. When we know that with all our heart, then we know that our sins are forgiven through Christ the Lord.

Let us remember the story of Samuel and the two wicked sons, and be determined to have God’s “good news” in our lives.

“Oh, give me Samuel’s ear,
The open ear, O Lord!
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word:
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all.”

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

Evangelical Religion

By
J. C. Ryle

Evangelical religion may be best described by dwelling upon its chief characteristics. These I consider to be five in number.

1. The first leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the absolute supremacy it assigns to Holy Scripture, as the alone rule of faith and practice, the alone test of truth, and alone judge of controversy.

Its theory is that man is required to believe nothing, as necessary to salvation, which is not read in God's Word written or can be proved thereby. It totally denies that there is any other guide for man's soul, so-equal or co-ordinate with the Bible. It refuses to listen to such arguments as, "the Church says so" – "the Fathers say so" – "primitive antiquity says so" – "the Councils say so" – "the Prayer-book says so", unless it can be shown that what is said is in harmony with God's Word.

The supreme authority of the Bible, in one word, is one of the corner-stones of our system. If the thing is not in the Bible, deducible from the Bible, or in manifest harmony with the Bible, we must have none of it. Like the forbidden fruit, we dare not touch it lest we die. Our faith can find no resting place except in the Bible, or in Bible arguments. Here is rock; all else is sand.

2. The second leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the very great prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption.

Its theory is that in consequence of Adam's fall, all men are as far as possible gone from original righteousness, and are of their own natures inclined to evil. They are not only in a miserable and bankrupt condition, but in a state of guilt, imminent danger, and condemnation before God. They are not only at enmity with their Maker, and have no title to heaven, but they have no will to serve their Maker, no love for their Maker, and no meetness for heaven.

We hold that a mighty spiritual disease like this requires a mighty spiritual medicine for its cure. We dread giving the slightest countenance to any gospel of dealing with man's soul that even *seems* to encourage the notion that his deadly wound can be easily healed. We dread fostering man's favourite notion that a little church-going, a little patching and mending, white-washing and gilding, polishing and varnishing the outside, is all that the case requires. We maintain that all such religion is founded upon an inadequate view of man's spiritual need. It requires far more than this to save, satisfy, or sanctify a soul. It requires nothing less than the blood of God the Son applied to the conscience, and the grace of God the Holy Spirit entirely renewing the heart. Man is radically diseased, and man needs a radical cure.

3. The third leading feature of Evangelical Religion is the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the nature of the salvation which He has wrought out for man.

Its theory is that the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, has by His life, death, and resurrection – as our Representative and Substitute – obtained a complete salvation for sinners, and a redemption from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin; and that all who believe in Him are (even while they live) completely forgiven and justified from all things – are reckoned completely righteous before God – have an interest in Christ and all His benefits.

We hold that nothing whatever is needed between the soul of man the sinner and Christ the Saviour, but simple, childlike faith. We hold that an experimental knowledge of Christ crucified, risen, and interceding, is the very essence of Christianity, and that in teaching men the Christian religion we can never dwell too much on Christ Himself, and never speak too strongly of the fulness, freeness, and simplicity of the salvation there is in Him for every one that believes.

We say that life eternal is to know Christ, believe in Christ, abide in Christ, have daily communion with Christ, by simple personal faith in Him.

4. The fourth leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the high place which it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

Its theory is that the root and foundation of all vital Christianity in any one, is a work of grace in the heart, and that until there is real experimental business within a man, his religion is a mere husk, and shell, and name, and form, and can neither comfort nor save. We maintain that the things which need most to be pressed on men's attention are those mighty works of the Holy Spirit – inward repentance, inward faith, inward hope, inward hatred of sin, and inward love of God's law. And we say that to tell people to take comfort in their baptism or Church-membership, when these all-important graces are unknown, is not merely a mistake, but positive cruelty.

We maintain that there can be no real conversion to God, no new creation in Christ, no new birth of the Spirit, where there is nothing felt and experienced within. We hold that the witness of the Spirit, however much it may be abused, is a real true thing. We deem it a solemn duty to be no less jealous about the work of the Holy Ghost, in His place and degree, than we are about the work of Christ. And we insist that where there is nothing felt within the heart of a man, there is nothing really possessed.

5. The fifth and last leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man.

Its theory is that the true grace of God is a thing that will always make itself manifest in the conduct, behaviour, tastes, choices, and habits of those who have it. It is not a dormant thing that can be within a man and not show itself in the outward behaviour. Where the Spirit is, He will always make His presence known.

We hold that it is wrong to tell people that they are children of God, and members of Christ, and heirs of heaven, unless they really overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. We maintain that to tell a

man he is “born of God,” while he is living in carelessness or sin, is a dangerous mistake, and calculated to do infinite mischief to his soul. We affirm confidently that “fruit” is the only certain evidence of a man’s spiritual condition; and if we would know whose he is and whom he serves, we must look first at his life. Where there is the grace of the Spirit there will be always more or less fruit of the Spirit.

Grace that cannot be seen is no grace at all. Where there is nothing seen, there is nothing possessed. Such are the leading features of Evangelical Religion.

The Sinner Humbled – The Saviour Exalted

The Sinner Humbled. Two great truths are necessary to be pressed upon the sinner in order to humble him and bring him to the foot of the cross, and these are the deep corruption of human nature and the sins he has been guilty of, either privately in the sight of God, or publicly in the sight of the world. The depravity and deceitfulness of the heart are to be laid open, and all the dark and lurking holes where sin lies hid – the false reasonings, apologies and excuses by which he deceives himself are to be examined and tried by the light of Scripture. So that, when the abominations of his heart and the guilt of his life are proven against him, this will be the means, by the influences of the blessed Spirit, of bringing down his proud heart. And when the Spirit of God says, “Thou art the man,” the sinner will fall down and yield to the Great Conqueror in the day of His power.

The Saviour Exalted. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us *to Christ*. He is the end of the Law. The law shows us our sin, and when searching doctrines and truths that are terrifying to sinners are preached, the carnal heart will rise in enmity against them. Upon this, the devil strikes in and denies the truth; or, if the doctrine brings conviction, he tells the sinner there is no salvation for such a wretch. It is now the Minister’s business to exalt the Saviour by telling the truth about Him, and nothing but the truth. He is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His Person. He is that glorious Person in

whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and therefore able to save to the very uttermost. He is able and willing to save, and this is clear from His eternal existence, the glory of His works, and the extent of His power. By showing Christ to the sinner, the sinner knows His Name and will, therefore, trust in Him. The apostles and apostolic men preached Christ, and if we preach anything else we lose our time, for He is the Head Corner-stone.

Mr Lachlan
(Lachlan MacKenzie)

Big Kate's Conversion.

Position of Lochcarron



Muckle Kate. Not a very ordinary name! But then, Muckle Kate, or Big Kate, or Ceit-Mhor, or Kate of Lochcarron was not a very ordinary woman! The actual day of her salvation is difficult to trace to its sunrising, but being such a glorious day as it was, we simply wish to relate something of what shone forth in the redeemed life of that “ill-looking woman without any beauty in the sight of God or man.”

Muckle Kate was born and lived in Lochcarron in the county of Ross-shire. By the time she had lived her life to its eighty-fifth year she had well-earned the reputation of having committed every known sin against the Law of God with the exception murder. Speaking after the manner of men, if it took “Grace Abounding” to save a hardened sinner like John Bunyan, it was going to take “Grace Much More Abounding” to save Muckle Kate. However, Grace is Sovereign and cannot be thwarted when God sends it on the errand of salvation, and even the method used in bringing Muckle Kate into the day of full salvation only serves to magnify that wonder-working power.

Lachlan MacKenzie, Minister at Lochcarron, had laboured long and hard to bring the old sinful Kate under the sound of God’s Word, but to

no avail, for Kate flatly refused to so much as set her foot within the four walls of the Minister's Kirk.

Knowing, however, that it was Kate's custom to attend the local "ceilidhs", Mr. Lachlan – as the godly old minister was affectionately known – decided to take a rather more unorthodox road to show the old sinner her perilous state. Sitting down at his desk one day he wrote a song, listing all of Kate's known sins and heaven's judgments against them. This composition was then given to one of the "singers" of the "ceilidhs" who, in turn, sang the song in the hearing of Kate of Lochcarron.

The result was shattering to the conscience of Muckle Kate and from the very first line of the song, it would seem, she fell into the deepest conviction of soul and began to pour out her heart before the Lord. The hills around Lochcarron began to shake and to echo with her weeping and in course of time poor Kate wept away her eyesight and became physically, as well as spiritually, blind. That physical eyesight was never to be restored again in this life, but spiritual eyesight was to be given to her to "look" unto Him and be saved, and to taste and to "see" that the Lord is good.

The Day of her Salvation was perhaps the closing day of one of the Communion seasons at Lochcarron. Kate had no intention of going near the "blessed Ordinance" and she had made this plain to her Minister; she had been sorrowing now for three whole years, but had still found no assurance that Christ had given her His peace. "I go forward to that Holy Table!" she had said, "I who have had my arms up to the shoulders in a Saviour's blood!" And as the sermons for the day were preached and the bread and the wine served to the communicants Muckle Kate sat through it all still under the burden of the wrath of God upon her soul.

At last, it was all over, and the benediction pronounced. Kate, believing that she was once more alone in the hillside where the communion had been held, returned to her sorrows and crying, and her piercing cry once more rent the air. The congregation homeward bound, were arrested in

their steps and their interests. The congregation, however, was not alone in viewing the burdened old sinner crying for mercy before the heavens of God that appeared as brass unto her, for Mr. Lachlan was watching too. Going forward to the aged sinner, he took her by the hand and led her to where the communion tables still stood. Placing the bread and the wine of Christ's Atonement before her, he exhorted her to eat and to drink, and there, unconscious of the thousands of eyes upon her, Muckle Kate ate "His flesh and drank His blood", and until the day of her death, when she was almost ninety, showed forth the praises of Him who had called her by His grace in such an unusual way.

"Tell them that the worst of sinners," she used to say thereafter, "Tell them that the worst of sinners – the drunkard, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, the scoffer, the infidel – *tell them that I, a living embodiment of every sin, even I, have found a Saviour's Person, even I have known a Saviour's love.*"



Ceit Mhor's Grave with Lachlan MacKenzie's Church behind.