

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 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.

In The New Testament Scripture of God, Why Were They Baptised?

Apart from the obvious New Testament fact that baptism served as a “badge of initiation” into the fellowship, work, and worship of a local Church of Christ, there are two other reasons that spiritually compelled the New Testament believers to observe the ordinance. In the first place, they were responding to an injunction (or a command) of the Word of God; in the second, they were rejoicing in an identification with the Saviour who had loved them and given Himself for them.

Injunction (or command).

A fact that ought to be self-evident from any reading of the Scriptures is the fact that the call to baptism is an injunction; it is a command of the Word of God.

It is a command that is given, in the first place, to the individual professing faith in Christ, and it is a command that is also given to the Church of Christ as the baptising agency under God. These two commandments, however, or these two aspects of the baptism commandment, are not to be confused. In the first, the individual exercising faith in Christ is called to be baptised; in the second, the Church is called to baptise. Both injunctions are distinct, and each must be complied with in accordance with its distinctiveness.

With regards to the first, then, it must be clearly seen, that as baptism involves a command given to each and every individual within the gospel call, that command can only be obeyed and complied with on the part of the individual in question. No one else at all can fulfil a command of God’s Word given to me, except me. I alone am responsible for the obeying of God’s explicit

commands to my soul. No one else may obey for me, or undertake to obey for me, in those commands.

Now, this is fundamental to the whole question of Christian baptism. “Believe and be baptised” is the very essence of the gospel call. And as no other person can fulfil the command to “believe” for me, so no other person can fulfil the command to “be baptised” for me.

This principle of fact runs right through the pages of the Word of God. When the Word of God exhorts me to take up my cross daily and follow Christ, no one else can fulfil that exhortation for me. When the Word of God tells me to hold fast the profession of my faith without wavering, I alone am responsible for the observing of that precept – not someone else. The command of God’s Word concerning baptism is for me, the individual in question, to be baptised, and no one else may fulfil that commandment, in any way for me but me.

Although the commandment relating to baptism involves the agency of the Church of Christ to baptise, that commandment, in the first place, is a commandment that involves the activity of the believing individual to be baptised. As the command to “believe” is laid personally at the feet of all those who hear the gospel, so the command to “be baptised” is laid personally at the feet of all those who receive the gospel. All commands of God’s Word directed at the individual may only be complied with and obeyed by the individual in question. This is fundamental, and is not to be quietly ignored when it comes to the great commandment to “believe and be baptised.”

It ought to be clearly noted and observed that there are no other commands, or no other aspects of the baptism commandment, apart

from these two alone. The first, concerning the individual who is commanded on the exercise of faith in Christ to be baptised; the second, concerning the Church of Christ go baptise all who exercise such faith in Christ. There is no other commandment concerning baptism, and there is certainly no commandment given to any parent to have baptism performed on their unconscious infant children.

This lack of any such commandment, or any such notion within the baptism commandment, is a source of great embarrassment and perplexity to many good and able paedo-baptist advocates. But whereas this absence of any such commandment is admitted, the clear conclusions fail to be arrived at. For Example:-

“There is no express command to baptise infants in the New Testament, and no express record of the baptism of infants.”

B.B. Warfield

We are compelled to ask why those two facts alone should not prove conclusive in the whole issue of infant baptism. Surely, the clear reason why there is “no express command,” and “no express record,” is because the New Testament Church of Christ never had any such ordinance as infant baptism within its apostolic doctrine and practice.

“It is only too apparent that if we had an express command or even a proven case with apostolic sanction, then the controversy (over infant baptism) would not have arisen.”

John Murray

Indeed, it would “not have arisen!” And how, in the name of all scripture and reason, did it ever arise – seeing that there is “no express command,” and “not one proven case with apostolic

sanction” in the whole of the Bible?

That is a question that paedo-baptists must answer.

There are, then, one or two practical matters that ought to be faced in the light of the foregoing.

First of all, can infant sprinkling really be conceived of as Christian baptism in any sense? The short, Biblically conclusive answer to that is no. Not only is an unconscious infant not the proper subject for Christian baptism, and not only is sprinkling not the proper mode of Christian baptism, but there is also missing and absent this tremendous element of true Christian baptism as being a response in obedient faith to a command of God given. “Believe, and be baptised.”

Secondly, since the command to be baptised is, indeed, a command of the Word of God to be actively complied with on the part of a believing individual, there are several portions of God’s Word that unbaptised Christians need to consider. (That is – Christians only sprinkled in infancy at the instigation of someone else.) For example, when our Lord Jesus Christ says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” (John 14:15.) Or again when He says, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,” (John 15:14.) Or again, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ...” (John 14:21.)

The issue to be faced is clear: is the commandment to be baptised a commandment of the Word of God or not? And if a commandment of the Word of God, then, it must be complied with in obedient faith, and received in obedient faith on the part of the person to whom the commandment is given.

It should be noted that it is fundamental to the whole historic understanding of Protestant theology, as opposed to Roman Catholic theology, that an ordinance is only an effective means of grace when it is received by faith on the part of the recipient of it. This is held to be the case in the other ordinance of the Church, the Lord's Supper; why not in this ordinance of baptism? In the majestic words of the apostle Peter, baptism is "the answer of a good conscience towards God," and that is through obedience in faith to those things commanded by God in His Word. As Paul puts it, in relation to his whole Christian life-style and belief, in the light of God's Word, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

Baptism is the believer's conscious response in faith to what God has said in His Word, when He has commanded us to "Believe, and be baptised."

The above article is taken from our Church booklet "An Introduction to Christian Baptism" W. J. Seaton (1982).

Seeking and Finding

In the latter half of the first chapter of John's Gospel, we have an account of the original calling of no less than five of the Lord's first disciples. It is not only such an account, but also a lovely illustration of that most effective form of evangelism, where one simply tells another about Christ the Saviour.

It all begins in verse 35, where John the Baptist points out Christ, to Andrew and John the evangelist, as "the Lamb of God" that taketh away the sin of the world. Andrew and John, then follow Christ, and at His invitation, come to the place where He was then

dwelling, and stay with Him all that night. *The next day*, Andrew then goes off to find his brother, Simon Peter, and he tells him, “We have found the Messiah” and he “brought him to Jesus.” *The day after that again*, we're told, the Lord went forth into the town of Bethsaida and there, He found Philip, and told him to follow Him. We are simply told that Philip was “of Bethsaida the town of Andrew and Peter;” and the implication seems clear enough, that we are to understand that Philip had already been told about this Messiah by Andrew, or by Peter, or by both.

Philip next finds Nathaniel, and he says to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” Nathaniel is sceptical; - but in that great word of gospel evangelism, Philip lays Nathaniel's obligation before him - “Come and see”. Nathaniel comes, and sees, and professes the Christ also to Whom he has been directed, as “the Son of God,” as “the King of Israel.” John the Baptist to John and Andrew; Andrew to Peter; Andrew and Peter to Philip; Philip to Nathaniel. The true “apostolic succession,” indeed.

*Mrs Seaton's Letter
to the
Boys and Girls*



A lot of years ago, there lived a young girl whose name was Jenny Lind. She came from Sweden, and at the age of seventeen she was a well-known and lovely singer. Even the Queen at that time went to hear her sing. She became very successful and famous, but all her success did not make her proud, as can so easily happen. She often used to say, “I hope that God, the Giver of this gift, and not me the creature, will be acknowledged”. Yet, after

only a few short years in the English Opera, at the height of her success, she suddenly decided to give it all up, and she went away to live in a quiet village.

One day, a gentleman who admired her beautiful voice, passed by, and seeing Jenny, he went over and spoke to her. He asked, "How is it, Miss Lind, that you have given up the stage at the very height of your success?" Jenny Lind picked up her Bible which she had close by, and gave this reason: "When every day my success made me think less of this, what else could I do?"

Wasn't that a wonderful reason, boys and girls? You know what Jenny had found in the Bible? She had found a Saviour's love for sinners. She had found, of course, that she herself was a sinner before God; but she found Christ to be a Saviour who showed His love to sinners who trusted in Him. She was determined, then, that nothing would come between her and Jesus her Saviour. It was this knowledge that led her to give up some of those things that the world counts of such value - like riches, and honour, and popularity - rather than let her talent and her career come between her and Jesus.

You know, boys and girls, that it does not have to be some great thing that does this. Some very little thing can come between us and the Lord Jesus Christ if we count that thing more important than He is. This must not be. It is better to give up anything than risk losing the love and peace that we can have in really knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

You remember Jenny Lind's words, "What else could I do?" Remember also what the Bible says; "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me."

Mrs Seaton.



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 100

Title - A Psalm of Praise; or rather, of Thanksgiving. This is the only Psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favourite with the people of God ever since it was written. “Let us sing the Old Hundredth” is one of the every-day expressions of the Christian church and will be so while men exist whose hearts are loyal to the great King. Nothing can be more sublime this side of heaven than the singing of this noble psalm by a vast congregation. Watts’ paraphrase, beginning, “Before Jehovah’s awful throne,” and the Scotch, “All people that on earth do dwell,” are both noble versions, and even Tate and Brady rise beyond themselves when they sing –

“With one consent let all the earth,
To God their cheerful voices raise.”

In this divine lyric, we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord; even as in the preceding, with trembling, we adore his holiness.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Verse 2. “**Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.**” He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our *gracious* Lord, and therefore he is to be served with joy. The invitation here given to worship is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to marriage feast. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a

congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful. It is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 3. “Know yet that the Lord he is God ...” From this exhortation, learn that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed that “the Lord is God” – of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things.

David Dickson

Verses 3-5. “Know ye that the Lord he is God.” Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience. Blind sacrifices will never please an all-seeing God. “**Know**” it; that is, consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant in the worship of him. Let us know, then, these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

(1) “***That the Lord he is God,***” the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being.

(2) He is our ***Creator***: “It is he that made us, and not we ourselves.” We do not, we could not make ourselves. It is God’s prerogative; our being is derived and depending.

(3) Therefore, ***he is our rightful owner***. Because God made us, and not we ourselves; therefore, we are not our own but his.

(4) He is ***our Sovereign Ruler***. We are his people, or subjects, and he is our prince and governor. He gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do.

(5) He is *our bountiful Benefactor*. We are not only his sheep that he is entitled to, but the sheep “of his pasture” whom he takes care of.

(6) He is *a God of infinite mercy and good*. “The Lord is good,” verse 5, and therefore doeth good; “his mercy is everlasting.”

(7) He is *a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness*. “His truth endureth to all generations,” and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked.

Matthew Henry

It was on the morning of 11th November 1620 that the Pilgrim Fathers landed in the bay of Cape Cod and formed that part of the United States of America that was to become known as “New England.” It had been a long hard voyage in the famous little Mayflower, and the numbers of those original pilgrims were small. However, as they gathered together to give thanks for God’s hand upon them, it was the words of the “Old Hundredth” that was announced and sung by the new settlers, and which filled the November air of that day so long ago: -

“All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with mirth, His praise forthtell:
Come ye before him and rejoice.”

It was a good beginning, and the Lord was to smile favourably on many of the labours of these saints that followed.

Holy Bible, Book Divine!



Holy Bible, Book Divine!
Precious treasure, thou art mine!
Mine, to tell me whence I came;
Mine, to teach me what I am.

Mine, to chide me when I rove;
Mine, to show a Saviour's love;
Mine art thou, to guide my feet;
Mine, to judge, condemn, acquit.

Mine, to comfort in distress;
Mine, with promise sweet to bless;
Mine, to show by living faith;
Man can triumph over death.

Mine, to tell of joys to come;
Mine, to show the sinner's doom;
Holy Bible, Book Divine!
Precious treasure, thou art mine!

J. Burton.

"This book will keep me from sin;
Sin will keep me from this book."

(Anon.)

More Flowers from a Puritan's Garden

Thomas Manton and Charles Spurgeon

In editions 157 and 158 of our small magazine, we included some portions from Spurgeon's little book, "Flowers from a Puritan's Garden." Spurgeon tells us that the book came about through his reading of Thomas Manton on the 119th Psalm.



In the book, Spurgeon quotes a line or two from Manton, and then goes on to make his own comment on Manton's comment! Some of these "Flowers ... Distilled and Dispensed by C. H. Spurgeon," we reproduced then with profit, and thought that another "bunch" of the same would not now go amiss.

Manton:

A good hunting dog hunts by sight as long as he can see his game; but when that is lost, he hunts by scent.

Spurgeon:

We must hunt a spiritual scent when sight fails us. The odour of the promise must direct us on our way when the mercy is numbered with the "things not seen as yet." O for a quick nostril, that we may follow after those heavenly things which the eye seeth not and the ear heareth not. These will repay the chase.

Manton:

The prescriptions of a doctor must not be altered, either by the pharmacist or the patient; so we, the preachers, must not alter God's prescriptions, neither must you, the hearers. We must not shun to declare, nor you to receive, "the whole counsel of God."

Spurgeon:

It is as much as a man's soul is worth to alter a word of God's own writing: to take away from the Book, or to add to it, is forbidden, and threatened with the heaviest penalties. It is not ours to *improve* the gospel, but to *repeat* it when we preach it, and *obey* it when we hear it. The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel must be our religion, or we are lost men. Imagine a dispenser altering the ingredients of the medicine to suit his own notions! We should soon have him on trial; and surely, he would deserve to be tried on a still higher charge should a patient die through his folly. The gospel prescription is such that an omission or an addition may soon make that which was ordained to life be unto death. Lord, in my teaching I have ever kept to what thou has said. Never may I aspire to practice a new pharmacy, but may I faithfully dispense thine own unvarying prescription of salvation by grace through faith.

Manton:

If we lived in a house of our own, and the walls became decayed, and the roof ready to drop down upon our heads, we would desire to remove and depart for a while, but we should not therefore give up the ground and the materials of the house. No, we would have it built up in a better manner.

Spurgeon:

Even thus the soul desires to leave the poor frail tenement of the body, but not that the body may be utterly destroyed: it quits it with the hope of having the house of clay rebuilt in more glorious form. "Not that we would be unclothed," says the apostle, "but clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." Not that we would be turned out of house and home, but that we would enter upon our better and permanent abode, which the Lord will surely provide for us. O my Lord, thou hast made me to know that this body will one day cease to be a body for me, therefore, I will not *pamper* it. But

thou hast promised it a resurrection, therefore, I will not *defile* it.
Teach me how, whether in the body or out of the body, to dwell in
thee, and honour thy holy name.

(to be continued in next edition)