

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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"Feeding the Mind" — The Pastor's Letter

My Dear Friends,

We hear a great deal of talk about "Feeding the Mind", and whereas we would agree wholeheartedly with the principle involved in such a project, we would, nevertheless, desire to see a more discerning spirit in the choice of the material on which the minds are going to be fed.

Be that as it may, however I want to turn your attention to this very basic fact of the Christian life, that, if we fail to read, we fail to feed our minds on the things of Christ. This is not a "push" to try to get Christians to read their Bibles - the necessity of that should go without saying; but it is an effort to try and point you to the great benefits which lie before us in our day, and which are greatly neglected. Never before have there been so many of the great books of the faith obtainable at such a reasonable cost, and we forfeit a great treasury of comfort and inspiration when we fail to avail ourselves of the experiences of the saints of the past.

In a day like this, with so much turmoil around us in the world, what a comfort it is to read in a book like "The Mystery of Providence" by John Flavel of how God has dealt with His people in the past. There, we see, of a truth, that we are "hidden in the hollow of His hand", and that He has been "our dwelling place in all generations". On the back cover of one of the editions of that book the question is asked: "Do we believe that everything in the world and in our own lives down to the minutest detail is ordered by the Providence of God?" When we read the pages inside the covers we are brought to a greater appreciation of this truth.

Who would not think it worthwhile if they got but one taste, to buy a volume of Spurgeon's sermons and digest one a week, even? We hear a lot of Spurgeon in our day, but what we do hear seems to show that the people who quote his humour know little of the real man, and especially nothing of the truth that he preached. Read him for yourself and you will not begrudge either the money or the time spent.

Most Christians, I am sure, would love to see revival coming to the Church again, but there is more in the preparation for revival (humanly speaking) than churning out some kind of an automatic prayer: "Lord, revive us again". Read the accounts then of God's working in reviving blessing in the past, and see the general features which preceded, and

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the great and remarkable times of refreshing which followed, and I believe that we will be both more intelligent in our approach to the subject, and more zealous in our desire to see the Lord making bare His arm.

Then again, there is the "Evangelism through Books", if we could use this phrase. How many men and women have been converted and brought to Christ through reading the likes of Joseph Alleine's "Alarm to the Unconverted"? One of that author's other books, "Covenant Comforts", was once stolen from a book barrow in Yorkshire, and afterwards brought back to the owner with the remarkable confession that it had been the means of the thief's conversion. And just listen to the formidable list of the effectiveness of the written page quoted by Geoffrey William's of the Evangelical Library.

" ... A priceless book written by the Puritan, Richard Sibbes, was on a certain day read by Richard Baxter, who was greatly blessed by it. Baxter wrote his "Call to the Unconverted"; this profoundly influenced Philip Doddridge, who, in turn, wrote "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul", which brought Wilberforce to serious thoughts of eternity. Wilberforce wrote his "Practical View of Christianity", which fired the zeal of Legh Richmond, who wrote "The Dairyman's Daughter", a book that brought thousands to the Lord. Among them was Thomas Chalmers. God opened his eyes through the reading of this little book. Surely, that list in itself should make us enthusiastic to "study to show ourselves approved".

Let me give you a list of suitable and worthwhile books to read; some of them are of a bygone age, and may give a little difficulty to begin with, but after a few pages you will find the language will come quite naturally.

John Bunyan:	Pilgrim's Progress; The Holy War; Grace Abounding.
David Dickson:	Psalms.
John Newton:	Out of the depths
John Foxe:	Foxe's Book of Martyrs.
Samuel Rutherford:	Life and Letters.
George Whitefield:	Life and Sermons.
Robert Murray McCheyne:	Life and Remains.
C.H. Spurgeon:	The Early Years; Sermons (New Park Street Pulpit)
A. W. Pink:	The Sovereignty of God.

Any of these will repay you a hundredfold. Burn a little midnight oil, and the light will grow!

W.J. Seaton

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"About three in the morning (January 2nd), as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried with exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground"

So writes John Wesley concerning a gathering of believers in a house in Fetter Lane, London, in the year 1739.

It was a very significant gathering, not only with regards to the experience, but also with regards to the spiritual equipment, which it provided for those assembled. This was the year that the great Methodists, Wesley and Whitefield were to launch out on their careers of open-air preaching, or "field preaching" as it was then called. Banned from almost every pulpit in England, they had little alternative but to turn to the open fields and to those who would receive their message.

Here is George Whitefield, and he has just been told in the town of Kingswood that he may only preach if he undertakes not to preach on the "new birth". He, therefore, turns to the open fields, to the coal miners just coming off duty. What a sight it must have been!

"I preached", he says, "on the Saviour's words to Nicodemus: 'Ye must be born again', and the people heard me gladly. Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were delighted to hear of One who came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The first discovery of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by the tears which streamed plentifully down their black cheeks as they came fresh from the coal pit. Hundreds and hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which happily ended in sound and thorough conversions. The change was visible to all".

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This was something unheard of. Here were ordained ministers of the Church of England, cultured and eloquent, and yet, but with a single message for rich and poor alike,

"Ye must be born again"

Their fame spread, and with it, revival of true heart-religion. The whole country felt the impact, and it is a fact of history that England was saved from revolution such as smote France primarily through the religious revival which swept the country in the wake of the ringing affirmations of the Wesleys and Whitefield, and others. One writer of the Methodist movement has well called their work "a herculean work", and he sees the preparation for it on that January morning long ago... "It was a glorious preparation", he says of it, "for the herculean work on which Whitefield and the Wesleys were about to enter. No wonder that the year thus begun should be the most remarkable in Methodistic history".

"Marvel not that I said unto thee: Ye must be born again".

GLEANINGS IN THE PSALMS

(Psalm 5)

Verses 1 - 2 "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God; for unto thee will I pray". — LEARN

- (1) When the Lord Giveth us a mouth to speak to him, thee is ground of hope He will grant an ear to us; so reasoneth David ... GIVE EARTO MY WORDS, O LORD.
- (2) In time of trouble, the heart hath more to say to God than words can utter; and what a man cannot express, the Lord will take knowledge of it, no less than of his words; this the prophet hopeth for, saying ... CONSIDER MY MEDITATION.
- (3) When extremity of danger forceth a way to the Lord, the believer's necessity hath a voice, louder than his expressed words, and whereunto the Lord will give ear ... HEARKEN TO THE VOICE OF MY CRY.

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- (4) It is a point of spiritual wisdom for the help of our faith, to take hold of those relations we have with God, whereby we may expect what we pray for, as David doth here, when we would have protection and delivery, saying MY KING AND MY GOD.
- (5) Faith knoweth no other to pray unto for help, save God alone, nor any other way to be helped, save by perseverance in prayer ... FOR UNTO THEE WILL I PRAY, saith he.

David Dickson.

Verse 3. "My voice shall thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up". The prophet in these words, makes use of two military terms.

First - he would not only pray, but marshal up his prayers; he would put them in battle array.

Second - When he hath done this, then he would be as a SPY upon his watch-tower, to see whether he prevailed, whether he got the day or not.

When David had set his prayers, his petitions, in rank and file, in good array, then he was resolved that he would look abroad, he would look around him to see at what door God would send in answer to prayer. He is either a fool, or a madman that prays and prays but never looks after his prayers; that shoots many an arrow to heaven, but never minds where his arrows alight.

Thomas Brooks

Verse 3. For want of looking up many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe why do you pray? And if you believe why do you not expect? Mordecai, no doubt, had put up many prayers for Esther, and, therefore, he waits at the king's gate ... Do thou likewise.

William Gurnall

Verse 5. "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity". What an astonishing thing is sin, which maketh the God of love and the Father of mercies an enemy of his creatures, and which could only be purged by the blood of the Son of God!

Thomas Adams

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Verse 6. "Thou shall destroy them that speak leasing (lies)". In the same field wherin Absalom raised battle against his father stood the oak that was his gibbet. The mule whereon he rode was his hangman, for the mule carried him tot he tree, and the hair wherein he gloried served for a rope to hang him. Little know the wicked how everything which they have now shall be a snare to trap them when God begins to punish them.

William Cowper

Verse 10. "Destroy thou them, O God". Lord, when in my daily service I read David's psalms, give me to alter the accent of my soul according to their several subjects. In such psalms wherein he confesseth his sins, or requesteth they pardon, or praiseth for former, or prayeth for future favours; in all these give me to raise my soul to as high a pitch as may be. But when I come to such psalms wherein he curseth his enemies, O there, let me bring my soul down to a lower note. For those words were made only to fit David's mouth. I have the like breath, but not the same spirit to pronounce them. Nor let me flatter myself, that it is lawful for me, with David, to curse thine enemies, lest my deceitful heart entitle MINE enemies to be THINE: and so, what was religion in David, prove malice in me, whilst I act revenge under the pretence of piety.

Thomas Fuller

Verse 12. "... With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield". The shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are; helmet fitted for the head; breastplate designed for the breast; and so others, they have their several parts which they are fastened to; but the shield is a piece that is intended for the whole body. The shield doth not only defend the body, but it is a defence for the soldier's armour also; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as from the head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith! It is an armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces.

William Gurnall

(HAVE YOU READ THE PSALM? These "gleanings" are intended as a HELP to reading, not a SUBSTITUTE)

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BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

(Naaman - A great Captain in the Kings Army)

Hello Boys and Girls,

In my last letter I told you about a little girl who came all the way from the Isle of Skye to this city of Inverness in search of God. She found God, remember, and because she found God herself, she began to pray that others would find Him as well.

This month, I want to tell you about another little girl who knew God as the one true God, and, although we are not told that she prayed for others, we are told that she spoke to others about her God.

This little girl had lived with her parents in the land of Israel, but one day the armies of the king of Syria attacked her homeland, and with many others this little girl was taken and made a slave in the land of Syria. She was made to work in the home of a man called Naaman and his wife. Naaman was the captain of all the king's soldiers, and the Bible says that he was "a mighty man in valour", and that he was "a great man". But, the Bible also shows us this, boys and girls, that this little slave girl was sorry for her master, Naaman.

What! You might say, but fancy a little slave girl being sorry for a great captain in the king's army. Ah, but, boys and girls, here's why she was sorry for him; the Bible also tells us that Naaman was "a leper" - he suffered from that awful disease of leprosy. Already there were great white spots on his body, and soon his hands and his feet would begin to wither and fall off. Any wonder the little girl was sorry for him? Now, here's what she did. She told her mistress, Naaman's wife, that there was a prophet of God called Elisha in her own country. She said that if only her master, Naaman, would go to this prophet of God, he would cure him. Perhaps she thought that the great captain would not heed her, but he did; and the very next day he set off in search of the great prophet, Elisha.

Elisha told him what he must do to have his leprosy taken away - he was to wash in the river Jordan seven times - and at first Naaman didn't want to do this; he even set off home again in an awful temper.

However, one of his servants spoke to him, and Naaman did as the prophet had said.

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The Jordan River

Down into the water he went; he dipped himself under the water, and when he came up for the seventh time his leprosy had vanished. How glad he was that someone had told him about God's prophet, and how glad the little girl would be, because her master now began to worship the one true God, our Father in Heaven.

Have you ever told anyone how God can help them in all their troubles? You tell someone about God today.

Mrs Seaton.

THE CHURCH AND DISCIPLINE

(Article by the late K.F.T. Matrunola)

The Reformers were set the task of answering the riddle: "When is a Church not a Church?" From scripture they discovered the marks of the true Church to involve right doctrine, right ordinances, and right discipline. Now, these are abiding characteristics, and all who claim to stand in the reformed tradition must satisfactorily display them. Yet the sad fact is that most are indifferent to right doctrine, and often ignorant of the need for Church discipline.

The Puritans held that only right discipline could prevent disorders and preserve from declension. Robert McCheyne could write: "Two keys are committed to us by Christ; the one the key of doctrine ... the other the key of discipline. Both are Christ's gift, and neither is to be resigned without sin. And I am deeply persuaded that that Church will flourish best that is ruled best". Some there are who are still persuaded of these truths.

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What then of the objects and occasions of ecclesiastical discipline? Why is this so necessary? The grand object, of course, must be the glory of God. The Almighty must be honoured and His Word obeyed.

In more practical terms, the objectives are purity and restoration. There is abundant scriptural evidence for Christians to seek consistency of life, and "to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". Any person or activity that would disgrace the Name of the Lord and brings a congregation into disrepute must be firmly resisted. Where there is real love and caring, there will be responsible pastoral oversight.

According to our Church order, this rule is vested in the pastor and other elders along with the deacons, with final authority in serious disorders resting in the Church meeting itself. For those in office, the task is demanding, and by nature there is a reluctance to exercise discipline when required. God's appointment, however, cannot be ignored! Disorder must be corrected and offenders brought to repentance if at all possible.

As to what constituted proper occasions for discipline, some are obvious. False teaching, commandment breaking, loose and irresponsible behaviour all give rise to the practice of discipline. Neglect of the public means of grace, either by absence from worship, or, more particularly disregard for the Lord's Supper, necessitate reproof.

Even contentiousness, insubordination, harsh treatment of fellow believers and the unequal yoke of marriage are grounds for pastoral intervention, and may others also.

The method of Church discipline is not concealed in the Bible. Two important principles are plain - prevention and cure. Prevention of disorders often stems from proper care in the admission of members. Profession of faith without signs of regeneration in repentance is to be treated with caution. Corrective discipline is described in Matthew 18 verses 15 to 18, and the sanctions for those refusing private and public warnings may involve "lesser excommunications" - that is deprivation of communion until there has been repentance, or "greater excommunication" - which is exclusion from fellowship, again until repentance. This latter is a solemn step never to be entered upon lightly. Notice that the correction aims at cure: the desire and hope of all must be for restoration.

John Owen reminds those passing such sentence that "the nature and end of this judgement must be corrective, not vindictive: for healing, not destruction". Wherever there are godly sorrow for sin, and complete break with that sin, restoration is appropriate. The

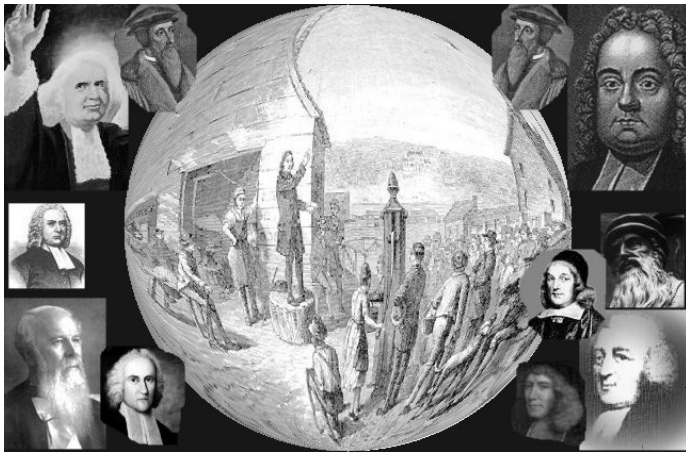
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destruction of the sinner is never the aim of discipline, but always it seeks the remedy for the disease.

These are not the observations of one harsh and legalistic. It is an attempt to set this important mark of a gospel Church before all who are concerned for the truth. Love prompts every word. Love to the Saviour and love to His people demands obedience to the Biblical standards. Let the position of Calvin be that of our churches: "Discipline was not wantonly contrived or invented by men: it is rather a rule which our Lord Jesus established among His followers, to be inviolable, and whoever attempts to repress it shows that he is an enemy of the Christian faith".

If Church discipline be refused, then the aim is nothing less than "the complete devastation of the Church.". God grant that we remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.



Preaching From the Past (George Whitefield)

**"My sheep hear my voice".
"Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep".
(John Chapter 10)**

One would have imagined that, as He came clothed with divine efficiency, as He came with divine credentials, as He spake as never man spake, no one should have been able to have resisted the wisdom with which He spake; on would imagine they should have been so struck with the demonstration of the Spirit, that with one consent they all should own that He was "that prophet that was to be raised up like unto Moses". But, you seldom find our Lord preaching a sermon, but something or other that He said has cavilled at; nay, their enmity frequently broke through all good manners. They often, therefore, interrupted

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Him whilst He was preaching, which shows the enmity of their hearts long before God permitted it to be in their power to shed His innocent blood.

If we look no further than this chapter where He presents Himself as the Good Shepherd, one that laid down His life for His sheep, we see the best return he had was to be looked upon as possessed or distracted; for we are told that "there was a division, therefore, again among them for these sayings, and many of the said: 'He has a devil, why hear ye Him?'"

And in the 24th verse we are told: "Then came the Jews round about Him and said unto Him: 'How long dost thou make us doubt?'" They came round about Him when they saw Him walking in Solomon's porch. "Now", they say, "we will have Him; we will attack Him; we will get Him in the middle of us and see what sort of man He is; we will see if we cannot conquer Him". And they came to Him ... "How long dost thou make us to doubt? I wish you would speak a little plainer, sir, and let us not have any more of your parables. Pray, let us know who you are, let us have it from your own mouth; if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly".

Says He: "I appeal to my works and doctrine, and if you will not infer from them that I am the Messiah, I have no further argument. BUT; He adds, "ye believe not BECAUSE YE ARE NOT OF MY SHEEP. MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE AND THEY FOLLOW ME".

It is very remarkable, there are but two sorts of people mentioned in scripture; it does not say the Baptists and the Independents, or the Methodists and Presbyterians; NO, Jesus divides the whole world into but two classes, sheep and goats. The Lord gives us to see which of these classes we belong.



WHITEFIELD AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-FOUR.

George Whitefield

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