

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 41 issued March 2003

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## *The Pastor's Letter*

My Dear Brethren,

With all the high-powered evangelism that we have seen over the past years, we find that the country in general, and the Church in particular have both been - when all is said and done - little affected. This is not to decry the work of this type of high-powered evangelism, even where one feels that it leaves a lot to be desired, but simply to state that what the Church needs is more than one or two gigantic spectacles in order to get men and women and young people signing decision cards.

What the Church needs is a breath of what has been termed in the history of the Church as "Revival". Now, this is never to be confused with "Evangelistic Effort". Evangelism is organised by men; revival is given by God through His Holy Spirit enveloping the Church, and even the community in which the "visited" Church witnesses.

There is plenty of evangelism today, but little revival. Why is this? Well, let me speak here purely and simply from the human side, and say that the reason that we see so much Evangelistic effort in our day and so little in the way of revival is because of the apparent worldliness of the average believer. To get "involved" in the whirl of an evangelistic effort undeniably caters for the "cult of busy-ness" that undermines much of the work of the Church today; while the steady seeking of God's face in self-abasing prayer, and often in the quiet of your own heart and home, which leads - on the human side - to revival, doesn't appear half so attractive. You see, it's one thing to get caught up in the excitement of a special effort and get carried along on some kind of a bubble of enthusiasm for a couple of weeks, and quite another to "prevail with God" in prayer, determined not to let Him go until He has blessed thee. But, let me assure you, my brethren, that it's this latter spirit that is going to have the long-term effect on the work of Christ in Scotland, and anywhere else. With regard to the gimmicks that come and go in our Church life, we may well sing:

"Change and decay in all around I see"

And at the end of the day we are driven to cry...

"O Thou, who changest not, abide with me".

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Every Revival of the true heart-religion begins and ends in the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", and it is almost impossible to trace the human source which God chooses to use in such a manifestation of His power. Nevertheless, we are usually able to see some of the links of this golden chain which binds Satan for a short season and ushers many of the Redeemed into their inheritance in Christ. And make no mistake, the human agent is always one embedded in determined, unwavering prayer.

Evan Roberts, who was so mightily used in the Welsh Revival at the beginning of last century, tells us how he was led to pray, AND KEEP ON PRAYING FOR REVIVAL. "... ..This is the way I was led to pray", he tells us. "William Davies, the deacon, said one night in the Society: 'Remember to be faithful. What if the Spirit descended and you were absent? Remember Thomas! What a loss he had.' '...And through every kind of weather, and in spite of all the difficulties', Evan Roberts tells us, 'I went to the meetings. Many times, on seeing other boys with the boats on the tide, I was tempted to turn back and join them. But, no. I said to myself: "Remember your resolve", and on I went. I went faithfully to the meetings for prayer throughout the TEN OR ELEVEN YEARS (capitals ours) I prayed for a Revival".

And then came that memorable evening in one of those meetings when Roberts slumped over the pew under the weight of the power of God's Spirit, and his cry echoed through that little Welsh Chapel. "O Lord, bend me! Bend me!"

"Ten or eleven years" is a long time to pray; and perhaps it's a spirit of worldliness that would make us to dissatisfied to wait long, especially when we can take on the appearance of doing the Lord's Will. But, remember, God revives His people "in the midst of the years", in His appointed time. Until that time of refreshing comes, His word to us is plain." "...I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them".

Yes we may get involved as much as we like, but remember, the churches are emptier than ever, the effect of the Church is less felt than ever, the believers know less about their faith than they ever knew, and they are more caught up in the world than they have ever been. Yes, we may get involved, but surely our God is saying: "And yet, I show you a more excellent way". "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; THEN will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land".

Yours sincerely

W.J. Seaton (July 1967)

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This month we go to the town of St. Andrews, and to the words of a dying man. This is not a young man, neither is he suffering a death such as Patrick Hamilton suffered. But for all that, in every respect this is a martyr's death, even through the head of the dying man rests on a clean white pillow.

The date is March 30<sup>th</sup>, in the year 1661, and the man is Samuel Rutherford. Just a few short weeks before, Samuel Rutherford had occupied the Professor of Theology's Chair in the University of St. Andrews, but now he is a dying man who has been denied even the right to DIE within the walls of his old College, let alone live there.

What had brought about such a tragic change of circumstances? Samuel Rutherford lived in a day when the affairs of the Church of Christ in Scotland were irregular and uncertain. The Presbyterian form of worship had been established by an act of Parliament in 1592, and James VI of Scotland had promised to adhere to the Church as "the sincerest Kirk in the world". When he became James 1<sup>st</sup> of England, however, he leaned hard towards the Episcopal form of worship and government, and before his death, saw the Scottish Church ruled by Bishops. The jurisdiction of these bishops was far from universally acknowledged, however, and Samuel Rutherford was inducted to the flock at Anwoth, on the Solway Firth, as it says... "Without any engagement to the Bishop."

This was all that Rutherford desired. God had called him to a people and to that people he would minister the Word of God for as long as the law of the land permitted him. His zeal and industry among the folk at Anwoth are almost incredible. He was accustomed to rise at 3 a.m. every morning for devotion and study, and then give the whole afternoon and evening over to "being among his people". It was said of him: "He is ALWAYS praying, ALWAYS preaching, ALWAYS visiting the sick, ALWAYS catechising, ALWAYS writing and studying". Nor was this labour carried out under a cloudless sky; far from it; for during his time at Anwoth, Rutherford nursed his sick bride of five years for thirteen months before her untimely death, and saw his little ones taken from him. But in all his trials, Rutherford had the comfort of his call to serve Christ. "Dear brethren", he exhorted

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his fellow ministers, "do all for Christ; pray for Christ; preach for Christ; feed the flock committed to your charge for Christ". This was Rutherford's whole purpose.

"I came to Irvine", said an English merchant on business in Scotland, "and heard a well favoured proper old man (David Dickson), with a long beard, and that man showed me all my heart. Then I went to St. Andrews, where I heard a sweet majestic-looking man (R. Blair), and he showed me the majesty of God. After him I heard a little, fair man (Rutherford), and he showed me the loveliness of Christ".

After nine years, however, the labours of Rutherford at Anwoth were brought to a halt. Charles 1<sup>st</sup> now sat on the throne of England, and under the instigation of Archbishop Laud, the rule of bishop was now beginning to come into its own in Scotland. Soon Rutherford was summoned before the Court to answer a charge of Nonconformity. The charge was easily established and Samuel Rutherford was deprived of his ministerial office and sentenced to be "confined during the King's pleasure, within the town of Aberdeen". Rutherford was heartbroken, and longed for his beloved Anwoth,

"Fair Anwoth by the Solway,  
To me thou still art dear;  
E'en from the verge of heaven  
I drop for thee a tear;  
Oh, if one soul from Anwoth  
Meet me at God's right hand;  
My heaven will be two heavens  
In Immanuel's land".

In Aberdeen he was forbidden to enter a pulpit... "My dumb Sabbaths", he wrote, "are like a stone tied to a bird's foot". But preach he would for all that; not only by word of mouth wherever he could find ready ears, but by pen as well. His letters flowed from his hand all over Scotland. "Joshua Redivivus" was the title given to his letters when they were published three years after his death. And this was without a doubt the way he say himself. Just as Joshua of old had given a true report of the state of the land, so he was "Joshua Redivivus", Joshua restored to life and giving a true picture of the cause of Christ in Scotland.

For eighteen moths Rutherford was confined to Aberdeen, but soon a wind of change began to blow, and by 1639, he found himself appointed Professor of Theology at St. Andrews. He was among the Westminster Divines who drew up the Confession of Faith

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in 1646, and as he returned to St. Andrews, his reputation as a scholar and preacher reached its greatest height. But dark days were looming for all non-conformists as Charles 11 was restored to the throne of England. Soon the heather was going to be red with the blood of the covenanters, and Rutherford would gladly have reddened any hillside with his own, had not the Lord something else in store for him. He was summoned to appear before Parliament, but God was already summoning him to a far, far better rest than he had ever known. It was voted that he "should not die in the University", but Lord Burleigh reminded all those who had made the vote... "Ye cannot vote him out of heaven".

Of this glorious fact Rutherford himself was assured... "This night", he told those who had gathered around his bed; "this night will close the door and fasten my anchor within the veil, and I shall go away in a sleep by five o'clock in the morning". And so it was. At that very hour he entered into his rest with his dying words falling from his lips...

"Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's Land".

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It was Mrs A. R. Cousin who took Rutherford's dying words and around wove the words of his letters into one of the Church's loveliest hymns:-

"The sands of time are sinking,  
The dawn of heaven breaks;  
The summer morn I've sighed for,  
The fair, sweet morn awakes;  
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,  
But dayspring is at hand,  
AND GLORY, GLORY DWELLETH  
IN IMMANUEL'S LAND".

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# Boys & Girls Page

Hello Girls and Boys,

Have you noticed recently how all the trees and hedges have begun to sprout little green leaves on their branches, and how the birds are busy chitter-chattering in their own chirpy way as they gather twigs and other things to build their nests? Soon there will be lots of little lambs and other baby animals skipping around the woods and fields. Yes, spring has arrived!

There was once a little girl called Lena who lived in the country. Every morning as she made her way to school, she took a short-cut through a field which was fenced by a hedge of thorns. At some places she had to walk close to the thorns.

One day Lena gripped just when she was close to the hedge and she fell with her hands into the thorns. "You nasty, ugly hedge!" she said, "of what use can you be? I wish you could be burned down at once".

The next day Lena passed the same way. Just before her went a flock of sheep, with a shepherd behind them. The sheep kept close by the hedge, and as they moved on they left little tufts of their wool sticking on the thorns. No sooner had they done this than some birds came and picked up the wool, then flew away as quickly as they could to make nests for their little baby birds.

When Lena saw this she said to herself: "How thankful I am that my wish has not been fulfilled and the hedge burned down. I now see that there is a good use for even the thorns and thistles".

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small;  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

Love,  
Mrs Seaton

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# Gleanings In the Psalms

  

## Psalm 6

This Psalm is commonly known as the first of

The PENITENTIAL PSALMS, and certainly its language well becomes the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once: -

The sorrow (Verses 3, 6, 7),  
The humiliation (Verses 2,4),  
The hatred of sin (Verse 8),

These are the unfailing marks of a contrite spirit when it turns to God.

### DIVISION

You will observe that the psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist's plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse.

Then, you have from the eighth to the end quite a different theme. The psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key and betakes himself to sublimer strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God hath heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.

**C. H. Spurgeon**

**Verse 1.** "O Lord, Rebuke me not in thine anger, NEITHER CHASTEN ME IN THY HOT DISPLEASURE".

O keep up life and peace within,  
If I must feel thy chastening rod!  
Yet kill not me, but kill my sin,  
And let me know Thou art my God.

**Richard Baxter**

**Verse 4.** "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; Oh save me for thy mercies' sake."

This is "The Prayer of the Deserted Saint". (1) HIS STATE: his soul is evidently in bondage and danger... "Return, O Lord, DELIVER MY SOUL". (2) HIS HOPE: it is in

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the Lord's return to him... "Return, O Lord". (3) HIS PLEA: it is mercy only... "Oh same me FOR THY MERCIES'S SAKE".

### **Hints for the Village Preacher**

**Verse 5.** "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

The only time to spread the praise of God, by making mention of Him before them that know Him not, is the time of this life: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee". The Christian's love of life should proceed from the love of honouring God in this life, and should be preferred to our own contentment for a time in heaven, so long as God pleases to take service of us for a time here. For this is the force of the prophet's reasoning: "in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

**David Dickson**

**Verses 6-7.** "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies."

But alas, where can we find penitents that weep as David did? Whose couch is watered with their tears; whose eyes are consumed because of grief, and whose grief, as far as it is caused by their enemies, arises from the thought that they are enemies of God? Must we not here apply to our own times the words of Paul to the Philippians: "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's". We cannot, as the apostle would have us, surrender all private feelings, and make them subservient to the love of our Saviour. We cannot, as David teaches us, for surely we may thus interpret his words against his enemies, displace from our hearts all personal enmity, and hate only that which is at enmity with God.

**Charles Girdlestone**

**Verse 6.** "I am weary with my groanings..."

It may seem a marvellous change in David, being a man of such magnitude of mind, to be thus dejected and cast down. Prevailed he not against Goliath, against the lion and the bear...? But now he is sobbing, sighing, weeping as a child! The answer is easy; the different persons with whom he contested occasioned the same. When men and beasts are his opposites, then he is more than a conqueror; but when he hath to do with God against whom he sinned, then he is less than nothing.

**Archibald Symson**

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**Verse 7.** "... because of mine enemies".

The pirates seeing an empty bark, pass by it; but if she be loaded with precious wares, then they will assault her. So, if a man hath no grace within him, Satan passeth by him, as not a convenient prey; but being loaded with graces, such as the love of God, His fear, and such other spiritual virtues, let that man be persuaded that, according as he knows what stuff is in him, so the devil will not fail to rob him of them if he can.

**Archibald Symson**

**Verse 8.** "Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping".

A penitent tear is an undeniable ambassador, and never returns from the throne of grace unsatisfied.

**Spencer's "Things New and Old"**

**Verses 9.** "The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer".

On one occasion, Martin Luther, having spent many hours in prayer, came bounding out of his study, crying: "We have conquered, we have prevailed with God". The Lord HAS heard our prayers in the past; HE WILL hear our prayers in the future.

**PREACHING FROM THE PAST**  
**Robert Murray McCheyne**

**"Lord it is good for us to be here"**  
**(Mark 9 verse 5)**

My friend, you are no believer if Jesus hath never manifested Himself to your soul in your secret devotions in the house of prayer, or in the breaking of bread in so sweet and overpowering a manner that you have cried out: "Lord it is good for us to be here". But though it be good and very pleasant, like sunlight to the eyes, yet the Lord sees that it is not wisest and best always to be there.

Peter must come down again from the mount of glory, and fight the good fight of faith amidst the shame and contumely of a cold and scornful world; and so must every child of God. We are not yet in heaven, the place of open vision and unbroken enjoyment. This is

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earth, the place of faith and patience, and heavenward-pointing hope. One great reason why close and intimate enjoyments of the Saviour may not be constantly realised in the believer's breast is to give room for hope. Even the most enlightened believers are walking here in a darksome night - or twilight at most - and the visits of Jesus to the soul do but serve to make the surrounding darkness more visible.

But the night is far spent, the day is at hand. The day of eternity is breaking in the east. The Sun of Righteousness is hasting to rise upon our world, and the shadows are preparing to flee away. Till then the heart of every true believer that knows the preciousness of a close communion with the Saviour breathes the earnest prayer that Jesus would often come again, thus sweetly and suddenly to lighten him in his dark pilgrimage.

Ah! Yes, my friends, let every one who loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity join in the blessed prayer of the Bride: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether".

**Robert Murray McCheyne**

## **Conversion of an Artist and His Wife**

The Holy Spirit is sovereign and the wind "bloweth where it listeth". He uses unusual and mysterious ways to convict and save unusual people.

Of this young man, one of our leading painters has said that he is one of the foremost British painters of his generation. Winner of the Prix de Rome Scholarship he is now senior lecturer of a well known Art College.

Like so many he was brought up in the Church of England, confirmed at the age of 15, and became a Sunday School teacher although ignorant of the biblical and saving truth. He left off attending Church at 18 with National Service.

While he was attending an Art College his mother and sister came under an evangelical ministry, were converted, and began praying for him. This seemed to make no impression on him. But soon the Spirit of God in a way he cannot account for was causing him deep disturbance of soul. His vicar was unable to give him any definite guidance or help.

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He was impressed by some Jehovah's Witnesses who seemed to speak with authority on religious matters. This provoked serious domestic discord, for his young wife a conscientious though unconverted churchgoer. For 6 or 7 months he very earnestly studied the Bible, becoming increasingly convicted by what he read. He even felt that his only means of salvation was to serve God by joining Jehovah's Witnesses and thereby earning Eternal Life. At the same time he had an uneasy feeling that he was following a false path and it was a terribly miserable time for this young couple.

One thing haunted him and restrained him from taking a false step — a remembered text from childhood — "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

His wife now sought the help of a married couple who loaned one of their only two books of Reformation doctrine - Haldane's "Commentary on Romans". After 3 months of struggling to find a way of salvation, the justifying work of Christ and salvation by Grace through faith became clear to the husband. Conviction and conversion came to his wife also.

These two couples then drew others to join them in the study of the Scriptures and Reformation truth. This created quite a stir. An evangelical Christian amongst members of the Art fraternity with their existential outlook was indeed a wonder. Even an R.C. priest came to enquire and books of reformed doctrine found they way into the libraries of unlikely readers of such works.

Is it not significant that a great work on Romans which 150 years ago was instrumental in a revival at Geneva should, along with other Reformation and Puritan books, be so used of God today?

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