

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 45 issued November 2003

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The Pastor's Letter

(W.J. Seaton March 1968)

Dear Friends,

We might well reverse the words of the Apostle Paul this month, and say: "ye see how SMALL a letter I have written you..." Sometimes, when we want to impress some vital lesson upon our own hearts, or the hearts of our readers or hearers, it is best done in few words. This procedure I want to follow this month, and ask a few simple questions on a most vital subject.

This will apply, first and foremost to our own members, but will not prove unprofitable to all who name the Lord.

1. When did you last pray for the work of the Church?
 - (a) At home?
 - (b) Together with the Church?
2. When did you last pray for the minister of the Church?
3. When did you last pray for the MINISTRY of the Church?
4. When did you last pray for your understanding of the Word?
5. When did you last pray for your performance of that Word?
6. When did you last pray for the salvation of souls?

"Oh! Take care, take care, Church of Christ, that thou dost not cease thy prayers! Let the world say 'Down with him'; I will stand against them all, if you will pray for me; but if you cease your prayers it is all up with me and all over for you. Men can stand against anything but prayer. We would pray the very gates of hell off their hinges, if we could pray as some men have done. Do not, I beseech you, I entreat you, do not cease to pray; cease what you please, but do not give up that; down on your knees; wrestle with God, and verily the Lord our God will bless us, and 'all the ends of the earth shall fear him'".

C.H. Spurgeon.

Sincerely Yours,

W.J. Seaton (1968)

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PREACHING FROM THE PAST

(JOB 1 VERSE 5)

"And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job send and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually".

What the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so, but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. There is a way of joy as pure and sanctifying as though one bathed in the rivers of Eden: holy gratitude should be quite as purifying an element as grief. Alas! For our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting. Come, believer, in what have you sinned today? Have you been forgetful of your high calling? Have you been even as others in idle words and loose speeches? Then confess the sin, and fly to the sacrifice. The sacrifice sanctifies. The precious blood of the Lamb slain removes the guilt, and purges away the defilement of our sins of ignorance and carelessness. This is the best ending of a Christmas day - to wash anew in the cleansing fountain.

Believer, come to this sacrifice continually; if it be so good tonight, it is good every night. To live at the alter is the privilege of the royal priesthood; to them sin, great as it is, is nevertheless no cause for despair, since they draw

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near yet again to the sin-atoning victim, and their conscience is purged from dead works.

"Gladly I close this festive day,
Grasping the altar's hallow'd horn;
My slips and faults are washed away,
The Lamb has all my trespass borne".



As this is the last of the present series, I thought that as it was approaching Christmas I would offer you a Christmas bonus by recalling with you TWO events that occurred in the life of the Church "This Month Long Ago".

The reason I have taken the two events together is on account of them having both occurred on Christmas Day — the 25th December. On Christmas Day, 1384, John Wycliff, the great Bible translator and forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, died in his vicarage in Lutterworth, in England. And on Christmas Day 1621, the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock having crossed the Atlantic in their little ship, the "Mayflower", in search of religious liberty.

Let us look at the Protestant Reformation in two ways. If we view the whole scene in the light of the old Olympic Games of ancient Greece, which were officially commenced when a runner, bearing a lighted torch entered the arena and lit the fire that was to burn throughout all the events, then, we have a picture of Martin Luther and John Calvin. They blazed into the religious world of their day with the light of the Gospel truth that was to burn like a beacon throughout the world. But, as the torch of the old Olympic runners was lit by some lone

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runner away back in the hills of Greece, so, there had to fall on some man's shoulders the task of lighting the Reformation torch and travelling the first hazardous miles of the Reformation road. The man who lit the torch and passed it on to others was John Wycliff.

Again, picture the full, glorious sky of Reformation daylight, when the Sun of God's Truth was shining brightly from the Luthers and the Calivns. But, again, look away to the dark night when popish superstition shrouded the religious world in darkness, and you will realise that the world doesn't move from midnight to midday without the morning first coming. For this reason, John Wycliff has been named - and well named - "The Morning Star of the Reformation".

Wycliff lived at a time when England was completely dominated by the Roman religion of his day: but, as few people knew nothing of the Bible or the religion of the Bible, there was little dissention and Rome ruled supreme. Wycliff was no different from many others, and, on reaching the age for deciding on a career, chose the Church and began his studies. He studied at Oxford University, and was simply one of the care-free bunch of students with little burden as far as true heart-religion goes. However, there occurred in England an event that was to scar the land. The "Black Death" plague began to stalk the land, killing off thousands as it went, and Wycliff began to think on eternal issues. He was driven to his Latin Bible and soon the whole Romish system was revealed to him as altogether corrupt in the light of God's Word.

At first, Wycliff set out to right the abuses that Rome was laying on his beloved country. Soon, however, he was driven to set his eyes on ever greater reforms, and God gave him the insight to see the two greatest weapons that Rome and the Devil feared, and fear most - the Bible in the language of the people, and devoted preachers to spread the good news of the gospel.

Rome hated these moves, and although Christmas Day 1384, was the day of Wycliff's death, his body was not permitted to remain at rest. On decree from the Council of Constance, Wycliff's body was disinterred, burned, and the remains thrown into a river.

It has been said that "a great deal of the religious trouble of England can be laid at the door of that headstrong woman, Elizabeth 1." Most "non-conformists"

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would agree with this, as it was Elizabeth's intention that the Church of the Reformation was to abide under her jurisdiction. However, just as the Lord had used persecution to spread His work and Word in the past, so He was to do in the days following the Reformation. "The Church of England was never really reformed" is a common saying; but, whether we agree with this or not, we must agree that the facts tell us that it was apparently not reformed ENOUGH for some of the brethren in its ranks. Within the Church of England, following the Reformation, there were the Puritans, whose intention it was to re-form the Church and make her pure - hence Puritan. Many, however, were of a different opinion, and these separated themselves, becoming known as Separatists. In those days no man set up a religious society without knowing the full brunt of the authorities, and the Separatists suffered so much under Elizabeth that many of the decided to sail for other fields. This resulted in the voyage of the "Mayflower", which was to be used of God for the establishment of a solid religion in the homes and churches of New England. On Christmas Day 1621 - almost a year after setting sail - the Pilgrim Fathers arrived at their destination.

My cage confines me round;
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.

Madame Guyon
1648 -1717

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Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 10)

There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness and light, as this Psalm. So that, if in any respect there has not been enough said heretofore, or if there shall be anything wanting in the Psalms that shall follow, we may here find a perfect image and representation of iniquity. This Psalm, therefore, is a type, form and description of that man, who, though he may be in the sight of himself and of men more excellent than Peter himself, is detestable in the eyes of God.

Martin Luther

Verse 1. "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? WHY HIDEST THOU THYSELF IN TIMES OF TROUBLE?" The answer to this is not far to seek, for if the Lord did not hide Himself it would not be a time of trouble at all. As well ask why the sun does not shine at night, when for certain there could be no night if it did. It is essential to our thorough chastisement that the Father should withdraw His smile: there is a need not only for manifold temptations but that we be in heaviness through them. The design of the rod is only answered by making us smart. If there be no pain, there will be no profit. If there be no hiding of God, there will be no bitterness, and consequently no purging efficacy in His chastisements.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 2. "The wicked IN HIS PRIDE doth persecute the poor...." PRIDE is a vice that cleaveth so fast unto the hearts of men that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off.

Richard Hooker

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Verse 3. "...the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth". Christ knew what He spake when He said: "No man can serve two masters", meaning God and the world, because each would have all. As the angel and the devil strove for the body of Moses (Jude 9), not who should have a part, but who should have the whole, so they strive still for our souls, who shall have all. Therefore, the apostle saith: "The love of this world is enmity against God", signifying such emulation between these two, that God cannot abide the world should have a part, and the world cannot abide that God should have a part. Therefore, the love of the world must needs be enmity to God, and, therefore, the lovers of the world must needs be enemies to God, and so no covetous man is God's servant, but God's enemy. For this cause covetousness is called idolatry (Ephesians 5 verse 5), which is the most contrary sin to God, because as treason sets up another king in the king's place, so idolatry sets up another god in God's place.

Henry Smith

Verse 4. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts". The words are diversely read ... Some read it: "No God in all his (the wicked person's) crafty presumptuous purposes:" others: "All his thoughts are, there is no God". The meaning whereof is not only among the swarm and crowd of thoughts that fill his mind, the thought of God is seldom to be found, and comes not in among the rest, which yet is enough for the purpose in hand; but further, that in all his projects and plots, and consultations of his heart, whereby he contrives and lays the plot, form, and draught of all his actions, he never takes God or His will into consideration or consultation ... As you used to say, when a combination of men leave out someone they should advise with, that such a one is not of their counsel, is not in the plot; so, nor is God in their purposes and advisings, they do all without Him.

Thomas Goodwin

Verse 10. "He croucheth and humbleth himself". There is nothing too mean or servile for them, in the attempt to achieve their sinister ends. You shall see his holiness the Pope washing the pilgrims' feet, if such a stratagem be necessary to act on the minds of the deluded multitude; or you shall see him sitting on a throne of purple, if he wishes to awe and control the kings of the earth.

John Morrison

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Verse 11. "He hath said in his heart: 'God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it'". The heart hath a tongue in it as well as the head, and these two tongues seldom speak the same language. While the head-tongue saith "We cannot hide ourselves from the sight of God", the heart-tongue of the wicked men saith "God will hide Himself from us, He will not see".

Joseph Caryl

Verse 11. "God hath forgotten, etc." This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked, which he mentions 9/10. There is no sin but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of Providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience, and all other bitter gourds grow in a night.

Stephen Charnock

(To be concluded in the next edition)



A letter from the Wicket Gate

**Dated December 1967
Or "The Adventures of the Wicket Gate"**

No doubt, most of you will remember those compositions that we were made to write in school, called "The Adventures of a Penny" or something similar. Remember how we were to imagine the copper coin standing upright on the desk before us telling us how it had come into being, and of its many travels throughout the world?

Now, as most of you know, "The Wicket Gate" has just completed its first year as our Church Magazine, and I wonder, if Pilgrim and Evangelist - our two friends on the front page of our magazine - could step out of the cover and begin to write "The Adventures of the Wicket Gate", what would they would written on behalf of our magazine!

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"I was born about three years ago", The Wicket Gate would, no doubt begin its story through Pilgrim and Evangelist, "but, although I had a name at that time, I still didn't have an address. However, in July 1966, I moved to Inverness, and I knew that I was to be called - The Wicket Gate.

At that time I was still very young and didn't look anything like I look now; but about October 1966, I began to take on something of my present appearance, and I was shown to the Deacons' Court of the Church. The deacons all agreed that I was quite a healthy looking fellow and thought that I would develop as the months went on, and that the congregation should meet me and get to know me. They decided that the best time to meet would be at the New Year (when everybody - especially in Scotland - is in an amiable mood!) And so, on Sunday, 1st January 1967, the Church and I came together.

Lots of the Church members have remarked to me how helpful I have been to them over the past year, and I have received letter from many parts of the world saying how they looked forward to reading my pages. This pleases me, because, you see, what I really am is a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I want to be as faithful a servant to Him as possible.

Of course, the people always see me at my best when I am all neatly pressed and stapled together; but, before this happens, I am kept "on the go" for days on end. You see, I don't like to be late in meeting the congregation on the first Sunday of every month, and sometimes, it's a bit of a rush to meet the deadline.

The past year has been a busy time for me, for, although my home is here in Inverness, I have had to travel to a great many places each month. I travel all over Scotland and England, and even across the sea to Ireland. I have to have an International Passport because I go to Switzerland, Denmark, America, Australia, Canada, Brazil and India. I find myself in many different places; in ministers' manses, in missionaries' homes, in Bible Colleges, and, of course, in homes where Christ is not yet the head and where the Name of Jesus is not yet precious. It's my prayer that Christ might become precious to these homes through reading the message that I take there.

I also find myself in some strange places for a person like me to be found. There is a man who lives down in England, and this man loves the Lord Jesus

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Christ very much and longs to see others brought to the knowledge of salvation through Christ. Every week, this man delivers groceries to a Roman Catholic Convent in the town where he lives, and, after he has red me through he folds me up very neatly and he tucks me in among the groceries that go to this Convent. I trust that the nuns in that place read what I have to say every month, and again, it's my prayer that one day God will use me to show these women that Christ has died so that we might be saved by Grace and not by works.

As I am sent on my journeys each month, I am wrapped up in brown paper "overcoat", but, from what I have heard recently, I am to have a new "overcoat" for the next year, and this will have a verse of the Bible written on it, so that the postmen who convey me on my travels will be able to see that I have a message from our Lord for the salvation of souls. I will be a wee bit older, of course, next year, and some of my features will have changed a little; but, for all that, I pray that we all - you and I - might serve our Lord and Saviour faithfully in all that we try to say and do.

Your sincere friend,
"THE WICKET GATE"

PS Remember to pray for my ministry. Remember, in God's providence, Caxton invented the printing press just in time for the spread of the Reformation truths; and Luther once said: "The devil hates quills". No matter how feeble the effort, if God's truth is being written and distributed, the devil will be busy; so, remember to pray for my work.

W.G.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Girls and Boys,

Many years ago, long before there was such a thing as electric light, people had to do their work by the light of a candle. There is a story about a little girl who was seen to be working very hard as her candle burned down

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almost to the bottom. As the candle burned out, she was heard saying to herself "I must be very industrious, for this is the only candle I have, and it is almost gone".

Do you think, boys and girls, there are any lessons in that little girl's words?

Let me give you just a few. They teach us: -

- (1) That our life is like a candle and will one day come to an end. This is why the Bible says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth". While you are still young you must come to Jesus.
- (2) They also teach us that, if Jesus is our Saviour, then we should do all that we can in this life to tell other boys and girls and other grown-ups about Jesus, so that they might know Him as their Saviour too.
- (3) Another lesson is that we should "shine brightly for Jesus" by helping others every day. You know what the hymn says: -

Jesus bids us shine, with a clear, pure light;
Like a little candle burning in the night.

- (4) And lastly, but very important, they teach us that our duty in this life is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in ALL that we do. The little girl in this story was working hard at sewing, and she wanted to sew as many stitches as she could before her candle burned out. Dorcas, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ very much, used to sew clothes for the other poor Christians; this is how she glorified Christ. Whatever you do in this life, boys and girls, do it to God's glory: and work very hard, remembering that our life is like a candle and will soon burn away.

Love
Mrs Seaton

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