

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 47 issued March 2004

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The Pastor's Letter *(A Warning to the Churches)*

My Dear Friends,

This month I would like to bring before you and recommend for your reading a book published by the Banner of Truth Trust. The book is entitled "Warnings to the Churches", and the author is the great evangelical Anglican of last century, Bishop J. C. Ryle. The book is produced as a paperback at £3.95 and contains eight addresses which unmistakably "blow the trumpet in Zion" in our day as clearly as in the day of Bishop Ryle.

The question arises, are we any more willing or prepared to listen to such a note as that trumpet is again sounded through the pages of this splendid work? Perhaps Mr Ryle answers that question for us in one of the addresses when he tells us "There is a widespread 'gullibility' among professing Christians; every heretic who tells his story plausibly is sure to be believed, and everybody who doubts him is called a persecutor and a narrow-minded man".

The warning against these veneers of spurious charity that settle over the churches surely need to be heard and heeded today when almost anything within Christendom is accepted as Christian.

Perhaps, again, Mr Ryle supplies the great touchstone of orthodoxy when he reminds us that the cardinal heresy of any day is the denial of the inspiration of God's Holy Word; this is the source of every spiritual ill; "this is not merely corrupting the cup, but the whole fountain. This is not merely corrupting the bucket of living water, which we profess to present to our people, but poisoning the whole well".

Although some of the messages of this book are addressed to ministers, Bishop Ryle, nevertheless, lays the responsibility of the Churches' work and witness and purity at the feet of every believing man and woman and young person. "An ignorant laity will always be the bane of a Church. A Bible reading laity may save a Church from ruin ... let us receive nothing, believe nothing, follow nothing which is not in the Bible, nor can be proved from the Bible". He exhorts every believer to do all within his power to "prevent ... false doctrine",

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and "promote true doctrine". "True Gospel in the pulpit, true Gospel in every religious society we support; true Gospel in every book we read; true Gospel in the friends we keep company with ...".

And what a word there is to office-bearers in our churches today with regard to the oversight of the flock of God. How many, I wonder, would subscribe to this statement, which is a point in one of the sermons - "The second (lesson) is this, that to keep the truth of Christ in His Church is even more important than to keep peace". Hard words, you say, but few "warnings" are easy!

But, it is perhaps when we read these "Warnings to the Churches" in the light of the present Ecumenical programme that we find Bishop Ryle most prophetic and most profound in a most commonsense way. "Our noble Reformers" he reminds us, "bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let us take heed that we do not basely sell it for a mess of pottage, under the specious names of unity and peace". Rather than be re-united with the idolatrous Church of Rome", he testifies on another page, "I would willingly see my own beloved Church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become popish once more, she had better die!"

Would that some of our present pro-ecumenicals would see the commonsense in such a statement but the following: - "Unity in the abstract is no doubt an excellent thing: BUT UNITY WITHOUT TRUTH IS USELESS". Some would tell us that Rome today has changed! Perhaps she has changed her TACTICS! But, even these are, at least, as old as Ryle's day. "I believe the most powerful champion of the Pharisees is not the man who bids you openly and honestly come out and join the Church of Rome: he is the man who says that he agrees on all points with you in DOCTRINE. He would not take anything away from those evangelical views that you hold; - he would not have you make any change at all; all he asks you to do is to ADD a little more to your belief, in order to make your Christianity perfect. 'Believe me,' he says, 'we don't want you to give up anything. We only want you to hold a few more clear views about the Church and the Sacraments...'"

But, if Rome's tactics HAVE changed, LITTLE else has; and surely we ever need to be warned of this; - "... when Rome has formally renounced image-worship, Mary-worship, and trans-substantiation, then, and not till then, it will be time to talk of reunion with her". Oh yes, Rome no longer uses her "black

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smoke" and her "white smoke" in the election of a new Pope; she now permits her people to eat meat on a Friday so she HAS changed, and would ask Evangelical Protestantism to do the same. But, for a few puffs of "holy smoke" and sausage and chips on a Friday, she would want us to surrender Justification by Faith alone!

Let me ask of you one thing before you lay this aside. Please don't say to yourself "Unity with Rome could never happen". IT IS HAPPENING! It's happening in almost every Minister's Fraternal as priests of Rome sit down with so-called "Reformed" ministers of the Gospel. It is happening; and the principles and practices are exactly the same as those exposed by the late Bishop of Liverpool.

For this reason alone, I would recommend this book to every member.

Yours in Christ,
W.J. Seaton (1968)

WHO WERE THEY?

(1) **The Sons of Belial.**

This phrase occurs often in the Old Testament; and we also read of the "children of Belial", the "men of Belial", and the "daughter of Belial." There is no such personage in the Bible, however, as Belial, and the term is a general one that is used to brand someone as "worthless", or "wicked", or "base". In 2 Corinthians 6:15 the Apostle Paul uses the phrase as a synonym for Satan; "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?", he asks. Thus, in the Old Testament the term is used to denote a low person in one degree or another; while in the New it has developed into a title for Satan or Antichrist.

(2) **The Money Changers.**

One of the first things that our Lord did when He "went up to Jerusalem" in John 2:13-16 was to drive the "changers of money" out of the Temple. Under Jewish law (Exodus 30:13), a "half shekel" was payable as a "temple tax" once a year. As the normal Roman coinage had heathen

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embellishments, the tax could only be paid in Jewish silver money. Those worshippers who had to come from a distance, therefore, to pay their tax, or to purchase an animal for sacrifice were forced to resort to these "money changers" in order to have their "foreign" currency exchanged for Jewish coins. This state of affairs had led to many malpractices, and the rate of exchange had become exorbitant. The "money changers" had set up their stalls in the "outer court" of the Temple, and it was this whole scene of vicious competition and exploitation that enraged the Saviour and caused him to drive them out, because they had made His Father's House a "den of robbers".

(3) **Augustus' Band.**

In Acts 27:1 we read of the apostle Paul being given into the hands of one "Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band". The army of Imperial Rome was divided into "bands" or "cohorts" which consisted of one thousand men; and these cohorts were, in turn, divided into ten "centuries" of one hundred men. The commanders of these centuries were known as "Centurions", so that Julius mentioned was the Commander of one tenth of the Augustan Cohort - "a centurion of Augustus's band". It seems to have been customary to give epithets to these cohorts, e.g. the "Italian band" of which Cornelius was Centurion. This "Augustus' band" seems to have been a "crack" division named after the Emperor, Augustus.

(4) **The Barbarous People of Melita.**

In Acts chapter 28, we read of Paul and his companions being shipwrecked on the island of "Melita", where, Luke informs us, "the barbarous people showed us no little kindness". Melita is our modern Malta, and the term "barbarous people" is a technical term of Luke's day. The people of Melita were "barbarous" only in so far as they did not speak the Greek language; so, we are not to imagine Paul and his companions marooned among cannibals, or any such thing. The people of Melita were, of course, pagan in that they did not worship the one True God, and verse 4 of the chapter may be a reference to one of the gods that they did worship - a god of the sea, perhaps. When the "venomous beast" fastened itself upon Paul's arm, "they said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet VENGEANCE suffereth not to live". The Greek word for "vengeance" is DIKE and may refer to their god.

An Alarm to the Unconverted

(By Joseph Alleine)

There is no entering into heaven but by the strait passage of the second birth; without holiness you shall never see God. Therefore, give yourselves unto the Lord now. Set yourselves to seek Him now. Set up the Lord Jesus in your hearts, and set Him up in your houses. Kiss the Son and embrace the tenders of mercy; touch His sceptre and live; for why will ye die?

I beseech you to permit a friendly plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concern. I am not playing the orator to make a learned speech to you, nor dressing the dish with eloquence in order to please you. These lines are upon a weighty errand indeed - to convince and convert and save you. I am not baiting my hook with rhetoric, nor fishing for your applause, but for your souls. My work is not to please you, but to save you; nor is my business with your fancies, but with your hearts. If I have not your hearts, I have nothing. If I were to please your ears, I would sing another song. If I were to preach myself, I would steer another course. I could then tell you a smoother tale; I would make pillows for you and speak peace.

But how much better are the wounds of a friend than the fair speeches of the harlot, who flatters with her lips till the dart strike through the liver? I were to quiet a crying infant, I might sing him into a happier mood or rock him asleep; but when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course; he will not try to still him with a song or trifle. I know, If we succeed not with you, you are lost; if we cannot get your consent to arise and come away, you will perish forever. No conversion - no salvation! I must get your good-will or leave you miserable.

And now, beloved, let me know your mind. What do you intend to do? Will you go on and die or will you turn and lay hold on eternal life? How long will you linger in Sodom? How long will you halt between two opinions? Have you not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether this vain and wretched world, or the paradise of God be the better choice?

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From Covenant Times

Awake, my harp! Ring out thy notes, ring out thy richest strain,
O'r those who boldly dared for love of God's cause to be slain;
Tell thou each Christian of today, who by the wayside faints,
Of times when Scotland's plaid was dyed with life-blood of the saints;
When everywhere by hill and glen, within the stricken land,
Who held the Bible, also held their life within their hand;
When righteous men were hunted down like wild beasts of the field -
Brave men, who in the cause of truth would rather die than yield.

Lo! deep from wild sequestered glen, amidst the Sabbath calm,
Arises through the early mists to Heav'n the morning Psalm;
Then on the sward, when knees are pressed and every heart aware,
Their hearts rise with the speaker's voice, up to the throne in prayer.
The aged pastor reads the word from God's own sacred page -
Perhaps, where David sought the Lord to quell the heathen's rage;
Again a Psalm they sweetly chant, then kneeling down to pray;
"Oh! help us, Lord, to do they will - protect us through this day".

With Bible placed upon a rock, he then expounds the word:
But, hark! like wind among the trees, a murmuring is heard,
As when far out the sailor hears across his trackless path
The tempest breathe o'er ocean vast a telegram of wrath.
An awful stillness intervenes, then borne along they hear,
Much louder now, like troubled winds, the murmur coming near,
Each heart stands still, the cheeks are blanched, the speaker's voice is dumb;
Their sentry calls from off the height, "The king's dragoons - they come!"

Be calm, be calm, my children dear, and on the Lord rely;
He ever ready is to save the needy when they cry;
Mysterious unto us His ways, but, blessed be His Name,
We yet may wear a robe of light - our foes a crown of shame.
"Adown the glen now while ye may, seek safety all in flight,
But draw your blades, ye trusty few, who yet may have to fight;

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The aged and the feeble first; haste! for they hurry near;
The women and the children next; ye strong men, guard the rear".

The holy man, when left alone, sank down behind a rock.
"Heed, heed not me, O Lord!" he cried, "But spare, oh spare Thy flock!
Thy hand lies heavy on the land, Oh lift Thy chastening rod,
If 'tis Thy holy will to hear my humble prayer, O God!
And bless wherever met this day, in cave or lonely glen,
Thy chosen few, and teach them, Lord, to bear themselves like men;
And help thy humble servant now, and hear his earnest cry;
If in his en'my's hand he fall, Oh give him strength to die!"

The captain came, "Now hoary scamp, to flames thy Bible fling,
And on your knees go down and swear allegiance to the King."
"To heaven's high King alone; but not to false King James or thou,
While life-blood warms this aged frame, these knees will ever bow."
"Form round, and ready then, my lads, his blood be on his head,
King James or death?" "Heavens King alone! I have already said".
Flash! went the guns, down sank the saint, thrust by the tyrant's rod,
With horrid oath into his ears, before Thy throne, O God!

Hugh C. Wilson

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Hello Boys and Girls,

This month we will have a little story, which I hope will interest even our tiniest

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

readers. It is about a little boy called Freddie, who was a bright friendly little boy, and who always went to Sunday School. When he arrived home one day his mummy said: "Well, Freddie, what did you learn in Sunday School today?" "Oh", said Freddie, "some silly song about Jesus wanting me for a sunbeam". "What's silly about that?" said his mummy.

"Because I want to be a bus driver!"

I'm sure some of you boys want to be bus drivers too, like Freddie, or perhaps postmen, or doctors, or sailors, but certainly not "sunbeam!" that's not what Jesus means though. Lets think of Jesus' words: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven". That doesn't sound silly, does it? That's what Freddie's teacher was trying to explain. What Freddie didn't understand was that, of course, when he grows up he can be a bus driver, and also a shining light for Jesus. Freddie doesn't even have to wait until he is a bus driver, he can, as a schoolboy, be a shining light too.

Let's hope that Freddie becomes a man with the Light shining through, whether or not he ever becomes a bus driver.

We can all be shining lights for Jesus, even now, if we trust in Jesus to be our Saviour and ask Him to live in us and shine through us.

"Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for Him each day;
In every way try to please Him,
At home, at school, at play".

Every blessing,
Mrs Seaton

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Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 12)

Verse 1. "Help, Lord: for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men". Consider our markets, our fairs, our private contracts and bargains, our shops, our cellars, our weights, our measures, our promises, our protestations, our political tricks and villainous Machiavelism, our enhancing of the prices of all commodities, and tell whether the twelfth psalm may not as fitly be applied to our times as to the days of the man of God; in which the feigning, and lying, and guile, and subtlety of men provoked the psalmist to cry out: "help, Lord: for there is not a godly man left; for the faithful fail from among the children of men".

R. Wolcombe (1612)

Verse 1. "... for THE FAITHFUL fail from among the children of men". Look close. View thyself in the glass of "The Word". Does thy neighbour or thy friend find thee FAITHFUL to him? What does our daily intercourse witness? Is not the attempt to speak what is agreeable often made at the expense of truth? In common life, where gross violations are restrained, a thousand petty offences are allowed, that break down the wall between sin and duty, and, judged by the Divine standard, are indeed guilty steps upon forbidden ground.

Charles Bridges

Verse 2. "With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak".

There is no such stuff to make a cloak of as religion; nothing so fashionable, nothing so profitable; it is a livery wherein a man may serve two masters, God and the world, and make a gainful service by either.

I SERVE BOTH

Before men none serves his God with more severe devotion; in private, I serve the world; not with so strict devotion, but with more delight. The house of prayer who more frequents than I? In all christian duties who more forward then I? I fast with those that fast, that I may eat with those that eat. No hand more open to the cause than mine, and in their families none prays longer and with more zeal. If I am covetous, it is interpreted providence; if miserable, it is

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counted temperance; if melancholy, it is construed godly sorrow; if merry, it is voted spiritual joy; if poor, it is supposed the fruit of conscientious dealing; if rich, it is thought the blessing of a godly life; if I be well spoken of, it is the merit of holy living; if ill spoken of, it is the malice of malignants. Thus I sail in every wind. This cloak in summer keeps me cool, in the winter warm, and hides the nasty bag of all my secret lusts. Under this cloak I walk in public fairly with applause, and in private sin securely without offence. At a fast I cry Geneva, and at a feast Rome. What I openly reprove abroad, for my own profit, that I secretly act at home, for my own pleasure.

BUT STAY,

I see a handwriting in my heart which dampens my soul. It is charactered in these sad words: "Woe be to you, hypocrites".

From Francis Quarles' "Hypocrite's Soliloquy"

Verses 3 & 4. "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips ... our lips are our own..." It need not now seem strange to tell you that the Lord is the owner of our bodies ... they are more His than ours. Therefore, they spoke proud things, and presumptuously usurped the propriety of God, who said: "Our lips are our own". This provoked God to show what right He had to dispose of such lips and tongues by "cutting them off".

David Clarkson

Verse 5. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord..." At that very nick of time when all seems lost, and when the poor, afflicted people of God can do nothing but sigh and weep, then the Lord will arise and ease them of their oppressions. (See Matthew 22 verses 6-7).

Thomas Brooks.

Verse 6. "The words of the Lord are PURE WORDS..." They that purify silver put it in the fire again and again, that it may be thoroughly tried. So is the truth of God; there is scarce any truth but hath been tried over and over again, and still if any dross mingle with it God calls it in question again. The doctrine of God's Free Grace has been tried over and over and over again. Pelagius begins, and he mingles his dross with it; he saith that grace is nothing but nature in man. Well, his doctrine was purified and a great deal of dross purged out. Then came the semi-pelagians, and they part stakes; they make nature to concur with grace, and to have an influence as well as grace; and the dross of that was

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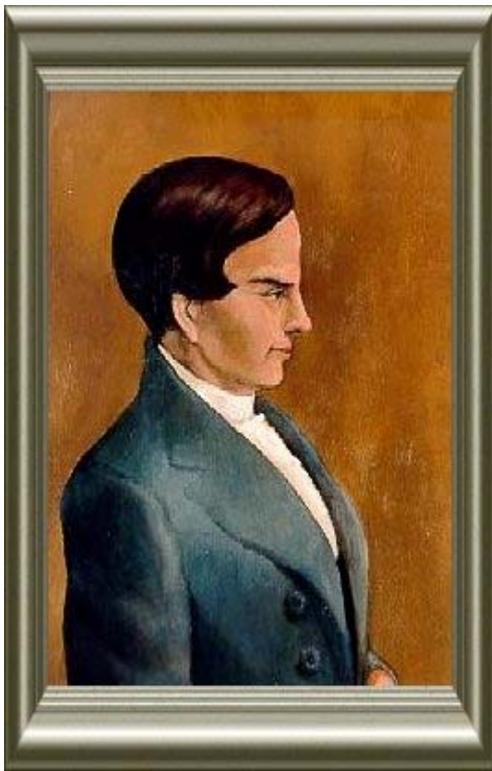
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burnt up. The Papists, they take up the same quarrel. The Arminians, they come, and they refine popery in that point anew; still they mingle dross. God will have this truth tried seven times in the fire until He hath brought it forth as pure as pure can be. And I say it is because that truth is thus precious.

Thomas Goodwin.



Robert Murray McCheyne

Robert Murray McCheyne wrote the following to a little boy of his acquaintance.

"Peace be to thee, little boy,
Many years of life and joy;
Love your Bible more than play,
Grow in wisdom every day;
Like the dove that found no rest,
'Till it flew from to Noah's breast,
Rest not in this world of sin,
'Till the Saviour take thee in"

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