

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 49 issued July 2004

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The Problem of Youth in our Evangelical Churches (By W.J. Seaton 1968)

In this edition I would like to bring before you "The Problem of Youth in our Evangelical Churches". A great hue and cry has been sounding across the country in recent weeks on account of the apparent failure of Youth Fellowships and similar meetings, and a general decline in young people's work. This failure has been usually traced to some cause or other such lack of organisation, or failure to be sufficiently "with it".

May I be so "harsh" as to suggest that perhaps we are beginning to reap the harvest of a defective evangelistic and youth programme that for years has been geared to amuse and entertain young "converts" instead of feed them on "the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby"? A few of the dangers that we are inclined to run into and face with young people I want to set before you now for your consideration. But, I would ask you to consider what I say in a *GENERAL* sense, and not in relation to some *PARTICULAR* "proof case" that you may be able to cite as contradicting these words. Much of the trouble that we have to face in our churches today is caused by this very thing - a readiness to build a whole system of belief and practice on some *PARTICULAR* incident or working of God, thereby neglecting the wider biblical pattern that should always be the one true guide in our Church work. "I know a man, or a woman, " we are inclined to say, "who was saved by such and such a means, THEREFORE..." And we are inclined to think that that means should become standard practice in all that we do. I am not concerned, therefore, with the particular, but with the general.

These following dangers in our attitude towards young people that I want to mention are *GENERAL* dangers; but general dangers that, by this time, we should be able to recognise honestly, and avoid diligently; for by being honest and diligent we may be enabled to turn many young folk from wrong paths and save them from hell, which is the Church's duty. "If I were to quiet a crying infant," said old Joseph Alleine in an article "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". And hell is just as eternal, my friends, for the youth of our day as for the aged. In our desire to accommodate young people in our day, God forbid that we should be building snares for their feet.

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In general terms, then, could we say that we must be honestly alert to the dangers which can spring from the "Personality" evangelism of our day? A great deal of the evangelism in our day is conducted on a personality basis. It can be an individual, or it can be a group of young people who descent on a Church full of vim and vigour.

Now, be sure some one is going to be impressed, or attracted to such groups. Many young girls, in particular, make professions under this kind of meeting and atmosphere. A great percentage, of course, "fall away". But some remain. Now, this is where the difficulty arises; do they remain as true converts, or as those who have found a new interest in life? Also in this category, we must place Missionary Meetings. How many are attracted to the glamour of the missionary life? This is evidenced by the large amount of "second" conversions! that takes place at such meetings. Let us be alert, then, to the danger of a young person simply taking on a new sphere of interest. New interests don't constitute a new nature. General activity around the church does not substitute for spiritual activity in the soul.

Let us be alert to the danger of "belonging". This has a special ring of warning, I believe, in Baptist churches. We may note the general rule that "groups" of young people are inclined to "come forward" for baptism. Remember, there is a "gang" instinct in all of us; we love to feel ourselves among the "initiated", and when strong personality, with deep convictions, makes a move, young people especially are inclined to follow.

Let us be alert, to the danger of "Encouragement". By this I mean that old idea that goes something like this: "Young so-and-so seems to have grown a bit cold since they made their profession; I think we should give them a Sunday School class to encourage them, etc." What utter folly! Perhaps young so-and-so has not grown cold at all! Perhaps young so-and-so is still dead in trespasses and in sins! Who worse to put in charge of a group of children whose young minds are being formed in the things of Christ than a person - old or young - who is still an enemy to Christ? This I extend to every branch of our Church life. Would you call a minister to your pulpit if that minister had "grown cold", just to encourage him? Many an unregenerate mind has exercised its influence in the running of an evangelical Church, because that mind has been admitted to the Deacon's Court as a form of encouragement.

Perhaps you may think these harsh words. I can only say this: Many a person has died because a doctor failed to carry out a thorough examination. Many a person has

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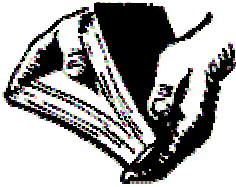
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died because they failed to reveal their symptoms. The Word of God makes two things clear with regard to others and ourselves: "By their fruits ye shall know them;" "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure". This is all this article asks of us.



GLEANINGS IN THE PSALMS (Psalm 14)

There is a peculiar mark put upon this psalm, in that it is twice in the Book of Psalms. The 14th psalm and the 53rd psalm are the same, with the alteration of one or two expressions at most. It contains a description of a most deplorable state of things in the world - ay, in Israel; a most deplorable state, by reason of the general corruption that had befallen all sorts of men, in their principles and their practices, and in their opinions. It was a time when there was a mighty prevalent *PRINCIPLE* of atheism got into the world, got among the great men of the world. It is true they did not actually profess it, (i.e. their atheism), but it was the principle whereby all their actions were regulated, and which they conformed into. Whatsoever else they were divided about, they were all agreed in this - "there is no God". "They are all a company of atheists," saith the psalmist, "practical atheists".

John Owen

Verse 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God". It is remarkable that the assertion "there is no God" is here said to be made in the *HEART* of the fool; that is, to flow from his wishes and not from his understanding.

John Howe

Verse 1. "The fool hath said..." This folly is bound up in every heart. It is bound, but it is not tongue-tied; it speaks blasphemous things against God; it says, "there is no God". There is a difference indeed in the language: gross sins speak this louder; but though lesser sins speak it not so loud, they wiser it. But the Lord can hear the whisperings of the heart as plainly as we hear one another in our ordinary discourse.

David Clarkson

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Verse 2. "The Lord looketh down from heaven upon the children of men". As from the watchtower, or other elevated place of observation, the Lord is represented as gazing intently upon men. What condescending interest and impartial justice are here imagined! The case of Sodom, visited before it was overthrown, illustrates the careful manner in which divine justice beholds the sin before it avenges it, and searches out the righteous that they perish not with the guilty.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 3. "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy". Thus the Roman satirist describes his own age...

"Nothing is left, nothing, for future times
To add to the full catalogue of crimes;
The baffled sons must feel the same desires,
And act the same mad follies as their sires,
Vice has attained its zenith".

Juvenal

We feel constrained to comment that in these first three verses of this psalm we have what must surely appear a vivid description of our own day. "Crime" has indeed "attained its zenith" as lawlessness more and more pervades the whole of our society. Men are rising up against men; "nation against nation; kingdom against kingdom", as our Lord Jesus revealed as a pointer to the end times. But, the crimes against humanity must stand in a secondary position to the crimes against Divinity. This is an age when even the professed leaders of the visible Church are saying - and not in their hearts, like the men of David's day, but - in all boldness with their tongues... "There is no God:" No God of the Bible; no God of our fathers in the faith; no God of the Reformation. A god of their own folly, yes; but, no God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we sum up the whole situation in the light of God's Word, we must seriously give consideration to the possibility that the "end" is drawing near.

Is there any comfort, then, for the believer in these times? Read the remainder of the psalm and you'll see that we have all comfort in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(1) In these evil times, as in all times, god's people are *A POSSESSED PEOPLE*.

Verse 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up *MY* people as they eat up bread..." In God's sight they are *MY* people - possessed by Him.

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- (2) They are *A PEACEFUL PEOPLE*. Verse 5. "There were they in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous". When the world will tremble at the end, the righteous will be at peace through dwelling in God, and He in them.
- (3) They are *A PROTECTED PEOPLE*. Verse 6. "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is *HIS REFUGE*."
- (4) They are *A PRIVILEGED PEOPLE*. Verse 7. "...the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people..."

"In Christ redeemed,
In Christ restored."

WHO WERE THEY?

(1.) The Proselytes

Part of the congregation that the apostle Peter preached to on the day of Pentecost is referred to as "Proselytes". "Parthians and Medes ... dwellers in Mesopotamia... strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes". Act 2:9f. These proselytes were men and women who had turned from heathenism to the Jewish religion and were divided into two groups - Proselytes of the Gate, and Proselytes of Righteousness. The first group renounced their heathen practices and observed, what the Rabbis called, "The Seven Precepts of Moses". They were not circumcised and did not eat the passover. These proselytes of the gate are also referred to as "those that fear God" or "God fearers", and it would appear that Cornelius and the Ethiopian belonged to this class of men. Many of them turned to Christianity under the preaching of the apostles. The Proselytes of Righteousness were those people who had embraced much more fully the Jewish faith. They were obliged to observe the whole law of Moses and were carefully examined before being admitted into the circles of Judaism. Upon acceptance they were circumcised and then baptized by total immersion. No boys under 12 years, or girls under 13 years were admitted as proselytes without the consent of both parents.

(2) The Mixed Multitude.

When the children of Israel came up out of Egypt, Exodus 12:38, we are told that "a mixed multitude went up also". The English equivalent to this would be "a motley crowd" or "some riff-raff". It appears that when Pharaoh gave orders to let the children of Israel go, many malcontents - probably slaves and "jail-birds" - decided to join in with the crowd and seek their freedom. It is

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significant that this phrase is inserted in the account of the exodus because, later on, in Numbers 11:4, we read that "the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting..." They cried out after the "leeks and the garlic" of Egypt and contaminated the children of Israel on their wilderness wanderings. A great lesson, surely, in endeavouring to keep the Church free from any admixture.

(3) Jannes and Jambres.

2nd Timothy 3 speaks of Jannes and Jambres who "withstood Moses to the face". This refers to the two Egyptian magicians who "imitated" Moses' miracles; and they are held up as an example of those of whom Paul is writing in 2nd Timothy, who present what is only an imitation and parody of the Gospel.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

I thought I would give you a "Bible Search" in this edition of the Wicket Gate. Get your mums and dads to put their thinking caps on and they can help you.

The first letter of each word will make up the name that you want for the answer.

(Clue - They sold Joseph to Potiphar.)

- (1.) Two make a farthing.
- (2.) Micaiah's father.
- (3.) Jairus's little lay "at the point of death".
- (4.) David asked God to blot out all his.
- (5.) A lame man at the Gate Beautiful asked this of Peter.
- (6.) Tubal-Cain's sister.
- (7.) Vessels of this are listed in the merchandise of Babylon.
- (8.) Lot's grandfather.

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- (9.) A chamberlain.
 (10.) What city was said to be "perplexed"?

Mr Seaton tells me boys and girls, that in the Pilgrim's Progress, Christiana and her children were given a dish of nuts by a man called Gaius, who also gave them this rhyme: -

"Hard texts are nuts (I will not call them cheaters),
 Whose shells do keep their kernels from the eaters;
 Ope then the shells, and you shall find the meat;
 They here are brought for you to crack and eat".

Hope you can "crack and eat" some of these "hard texts" in our Bible Search.



Hast thou no scar?
 No hidden scar on foot or side or hand?
 I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;
 I hear them hail thee Bright Ascending Star.
 Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?
 Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent;
 Leaned Me against a tree to die, and rent
 By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.
 Hast thou no wound?

No wound; no scar?
 Yet as the Master shall the servant be.
 And pierced are the feet that follow Me.
 But thine are whole! Can he have followed far,
 Who hath no wound, no scar? —

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The Scars of Discipleship

"Oh my friends, how far are you prepared to obey the Lord Jesus Christ? How absolute is His lordship over you? My dear unscarred friends, you who have managed to avoid the cross and evade the clear pathway of obedience; you who are tucked away somewhere in a cushy job, while the will of God is that you should spend and be spent elsewhere. I want to tell you that there is a day coming when, beneath the lustre of the eternal throne of God and the glare of His all-seeing eye, you will give anything for a scar".

Glyn Owen.

I have been beaten times without number.
I have faced death again and again.
I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes.
I have been beaten with rods thrice.
I have been stoned once.
I have been shipwrecked three times.
I have been twenty-four hours in the open sea.

Paul to the Corinthians — J.B. Philips

The 5 Points of Calvinism

There is scarcely another word that arouses more suspicion, mistrust, and even animosity among professing Christians than the word "Calvinism". And yet, much of the zeal which is levelled against this system and those who hold and preach it is most certainly a "zeal which is not according to knowledge". These great truths bound together and called "Calvinistic" were the backbone of our "fathers in the faith", and the strength of the Church in a more glorious era than our own, be clearly seen.

We must take our starting point in Holland in the year 1610. James Arminius, a Dutch professor, had just died and his teaching had just been formulated into five

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main points of doctrine by his followers - know as "Arminians". Up to this point, the churches of Holland had subscribed to the "Belgic" and "Heidelberg" confessions of faith which were both set squarely on the teaching of the Reformation. The Arminians wanted to change this position, however, and they presented their Five Points in the form of a Remonstrance - or protest - to the Dutch Parliament.

The Five Points of Arminianism were, broadly speaking, as follows: -

- (1) ***Free Will or Human Ability.*** This taught that man, although affected by the fall, was not totally incapable of choosing spiritual good, and was able to exercise faith in God to receive the Gospel and thus bring himself into possession of salvation. Faith is man's "contribution" in salvation.
- (2) ***Conditional Election.*** This taught that God laid His hand upon those individuals whom He KNEW - or "Foresaw" would respond to the Gospel. God "elected" those that He saw would "want" to be saved of their own free will and in their natural fallen state - which was, of course, according to the first point of Arminianism - not completely fallen.
- (3) ***Universal Redemption or General Atonement.*** This taught that Christ died to "save all men"; but, only in a potential fashion. Christ's death enabled God to pardon sinners, but only on condition that they believed.
- (4) ***The Rejection of the Holy Spirit.*** This taught that the Holy Spirit, as He began to work in a life, bringing that person to Christ, could be resisted and His purposes frustrated. He could not impart life unless the sinner was willing to have this life imparted.
- (5) ***Falling from Grace.*** This taught that man could fall from the position of his salvation. It is, of course, the logical and natural outcome of the system. If man must take the initiative in his salvation, he must retain the same.

The Five Points of Arminianism were presented to the State and a National Synod of the Church was called to meet in Dort in 1618 to examine the teaching of Arminius in the light of the Scriptures. The Synod of Dort sat for 154 sessions over a period of 7 months, but at the end could find no ground on which to reconcile the Arminian viewpoint with that expounded in the word of God. Re-affirming the position, so unmistakably put forth at the Reformation, and formulated by the great French Theologian, John Calvin, the Synod of Dort issued its Five Points of Calvinism to answer the Arminian system. These are sometimes set forth in an acrostic on the word ***TULIP***, as follows: -

- T — Total Depravity, or Total Inability.
- U — Unconditional Election.
- L — Limited Atonement, or Particular Redemption.
- I — Irresistable Grace, or the Efficacious call of the Spirit.
- P — Perseverance of the Saints.

As can be readily seen, these set themselves in complete opposition to the Five Points of Arminianism. Man is totally unable to save himself on account of the fall in the Garden of Eden being a total fall.

If unable to save himself, then God must save.

If God must save, then God must be free to save whom He will.

If God has decreed to save whom He will, then it is for those that Christ died.

If Christ died for them, then the Holy Spirit will effectually draw them into salvation.

If salvation from the beginning then is of God, to the end it will also be of God and the saints will persevere.

These truths stand firm on the Word of God, and upon them the Church of Christ has stood most firm in any age of her existence. Charles Haddon Spurgeon thundered forth ... "It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines that are called by nickname CALVINISM, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus". May we all see it in this light.

This article appeared in the Wicket Gate in the January 1968 edition. The article was later developed into a booklet entitled "The Five Points of Calvinism" and published by the Banner of Truth. The booklet is still in print. I have also been informed that it is available in some 14 different languages.

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