

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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The Men of the Blue Banner

(The Scottish Covenanters)

In this edition of the Wicket Gate I would like to acquaint you with the Covenanters. If you are able to obtain a copy, an excellent introduction to this "noble army of Covenanters" is to be found in the volume "Fair Sunshine"; the author is Jock Purves.

"Fair Sunshine" is a collection of sketches of the Covenanters issued earlier in two separate volumes, but now brought together within one binding. (The Banner of Truth Trust in 1968). The style of writing may take some getting used to, but this will prove to be a labour of love in getting better acquainted with the men and women of the "Killing Times" - that dark, but glorious page in the history book of the Church of Christ in Scotland.

The book may in places disturb some of us in these days of "easy believism", but surely the dear testimony of the people of the Covenants is the all-sufficiency of the grace of God to keep us "!against every stormy wind that blows". Almost any of the thirteen sketches in the book bears ample witness to this fact; and whoever Mr Purves is dealing with, whether it be old John Brown, or the youthful Hugh Mackail, we get a thorough-going picture of those of "the line of valorous grace".

The book begins with an account of the "short little man who could not bow" - as the great Oliver Cromwell called the "Zaccheus-like" James Guthrie. How heart-warming it is to read of this soldier of the Cross. Like the Apostle Paul, "short of stature", but like the Apostle Paul, "mighty in deed and in truth". Mr Guthrie, we are told in the book, was once approached by a friend and given what he considered to be a piece of worldly advice regarding his stand for Christ. "We have an old Scot's proverb", this friend told Guthrie - "Jouk (duck) that the wave may gang oure ye!" "There is nae jouking in the cause of Christ", said Guthrie, "there is nae jouking in the cause of Christ".

Like the rest of that noble army of Covenanters to which he belonged, of course, James Guthrie discovered the cost of refusing to "jouk" in this cause of Christ in Scotland; he discovered that those who would not receive the Bishop's

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mitre would receive his rope, and receive it he did. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God?" With these words of the prophet Habakkuk falling from his lips James Guthrie was put to the rope, and his severed head placed on a spike high above the Netherbow Port in the city of Edinburgh. It was placed there for all to see - even those that had come from Guthrie's own loins. "I've seen my faither's heid", was the cry often upon the lips of a bewildered little boy,

"I've seen my faither's heid".

"They have set his head on the Netherbow,
To scorch in the summer air".

In many ways, once we have read the sketch of James Guthrie, we have read the book, for his is the story of all the covenanters; a story of unyielding loyalty to the things of the Lord which resulted in hardship, and suffering, and some of the most cruel deaths ever endured by the Lord's people.



Those who read this book will never lose the awful scenes that we are presented with in the sufferings and death of the gentle David Hackson. But, although the James Guthrie sketch, in many ways, tells the story of the "men of the blue banner", still withal, each picture presented is individual and vital to our understanding of the Lord's abounding grace towards His people which enables them to endure in perilous times.

Who could find a greater lesson in leaving this vain world than by reading again and again the gallows' speech of young Mackail? "Now, I leave off to speak any more to creatures, and turn my speech to Thee, O Lord. Now I begin my intercourse with God which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations! Farewell, world and all delights! Farewell, meat and drink! Farewell, sun, moon and stars! Welcome, God the Father! Welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, Mediator of the new covenant! Welcome, blessed Spirit of Grace, God of all consolation! Welcome, glory! Welcome, eternal life! Welcome, death!"

It is in this sketch that Mr Purves also gives us one of the most concise and yet precise statements of the Covenanters' power to "endure all things".

"They were of the school," he tells us, "who know the permitted power of the devil, and in adversity rebel not against God..."

Time nor space don't permit a detailed review of any one of the thirteen sketches in this book, not to mention the book itself. How many vivid scenes are brought before us from the pen of Mr Purves. Who can forget that dungeon incident when the head and hands of young Ritchie Cameron are thrown out of a sack before the sorrowing eyes of this ageing old father. "Do you know whose these are?" he is asked. "I know them", he answers; "I know them. They are my son's, my own dear son's. It is the Lord. God is the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days". And what of the sufferings of "the two Margarets" - "the matron and the maid" as the hymn writer would call them. One 70 years of age, the other 20; but as the cold waters of the Solway rise above both their heads they enter the land of eternal day where there is neither age nor suffering.

What shall I say in this great day of the Lord, wherein in the midst of a cloud, I have found A FAIR SUNSHINE.

WHO WERE THEY?

(1) The Rulers of the Synagogue.

We read in several places in the New Testament of those men who are referred to as "the rulers of the synagogue". These were apparently "laymen" and came next in rank to the Scribes - the exponents of the Law. We see at least two of their offices from the pages of the New Testament; (1) to keep order within the synagogue precincts. This is evidenced by "the ruler of the synagogue" who "rebuked" Jesus for healing a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. (Luke chapter 13 verses 12 to 14). (2) To arrange the order of service and to appoint the speakers and readers for the day's worship. This is seen in Acts chapter 13 verse 15, where the Apostle Paul speaks at the request of "the rulers of the synagogue".

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(2) The "Naughty" Figs.

In chapter 24 of his prophecy, the prophet Jeremiah sets a parable before us concerning "two baskets of figs". One basket contained "very good figs", but the second was a basket of "very **naughty** figs". In our own day, the adjective "naughty" is usually associated with a misbehaving child, etc., but in the 17th century, when our Authorised Version of the Bible was translated, it had a much different usage. At that time the word was reserved for those people who were considered to be "good for **naught**" i.e. good for nothing. And it's in this way that we are to understand Jeremiah's parable. The Lord was going to lead many of His people into "captivity" in the land of Babylon. But, contrary to a lot of common opinion, these captives would, in fact, be the "good figs", for God would work with this captive band and out of it bring His "remnant according to the election of grace". It was those who were being left "safely" at home in Israel that were really the "good for naught" figs - the "naughty figs" which God had given over to their own ways.

(3) The Nicolaitans.

The Church at Ephesus, in Revelation chapter 2 verse 6, was said to hate "the deeds of the Nicolaitans", and for this, that Church was commended. The Nicolaitans are thought to have originated through the influence of Nicolas of Antioch (Acts chapter 6 verse 5), from whom they took their name. The Nicolaitans endeavoured to work out a form of compromise between the Church and the pagan society in which the Church was situated so that the believers wouldn't feel "over-embarrassed". There may also be a reference to the deeds of Balaam who corrupted Israel in the O.T. (Numbers chapter 22).

(This is the end of this present series).

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Home! How much that one word used to convey! It is still one of the most precious in the English Language unto some of us. Is not our favourite concept of heaven embodied in that blessed expression "My Father's House"?

A.W. Pink

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Boys & Girls Page

Regina: Prisoner of the Indians

(By Mrs Seaton)

Dear Boys and Girls,

About the year 1754 when war was raging between the French and the English in Canada, and when the Indians took the part of the French, it happened one day that a party of Indians surrounded the house of a poor family from Germany, at a time when the mother and one of the sons were absent. The father, however, was at home, also the eldest son and two little girls named Barbara and Regina.

The Indians burst into the house, killed the man, and carried off the little girls. What became of Barbara was never known, but Regina was given to an old widow, who was very harsh and cruel to the little captive. Here she remained till she was about 19 years old. But she did not forget her early home training. She said her prayers night and morning, often repeated the verses from the Bible, and sang little hymns, which she had learned at home. Especially would she often sing —

"Alone, yet not alone am I,
Though in this solitude so drear".

It was her one hope and constant prayer that our dear Lord would in His own time restore her to her friends.

In the year 1764 the hope was at last realised. An English Colonel discovered the Indian encampment, attacked and took it by storm. It was published in the newspapers that all parents who had had children carried off by the Indians might come and reclaim them. Amongst others, there came poor Regina's sorrowing mother. She searched up and down the ranks of the recovered

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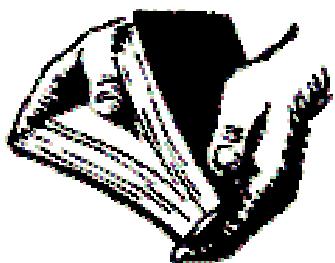
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captives, but nowhere could she discover her daughters. So great was her disappointment that she burst into tears. The Colonel asked her "Do you remember nothing by which your children might be discovered?" She answered that she only remembered a hymn which she used to sing to them when babies. The Colonel told her to sing this hymn —

"Alone, yet not alone am I -
Though in this solitude so drear;
I feel my Saviour always nigh -
He comes the weary hours to cheer".

Scarcely had she began to sing when Regina rushed from the crowd and threw herself into her mother's arms.

How good it was, boys and girls that she had kept in her mind all those things her mother had taught her.



Gleanings in the Psalms (Psalm 15)

Verse 1. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" A sense of the glory of the Lord and of the holiness which becomes His house, His service, and His attendants, excites the humble mind to ask the solemn question before us. Where angels bow with veiled faces, how shall man be able to worship at all? The unthinking may imagine it to be a very easy matter to approach the Most High, and when professedly engaged in His worship they have no questionings of heart as to their fitness for it; but truly humbled souls often shrink under a sense of utter unworthiness, and would not dare to approach the throne of the God of holiness if it were not for Him, our

Lord, our Advocate, who can abide in the heavenly temple, because His Righteousness abideth for ever.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 2. "He that walketh uprightly..." There is no ascertaining the quality of a tree but by its fruits. When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession.

William Secker

Verse 2. "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness..." But here observe, David saith, "that **worketh** righteousness;" not that talks about, thinks about, or hears of righteousness; because "not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law shall be justified".

Martin Luther

Verse 2. "... and worketh righteousness..." A righteous man may make a righteous work, but no work of unrighteous man can make him righteous. Now, we become righteous only by faith, through the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us; "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" — Romans 5 verse 1. **Therefore**, let men work as they will, if they be not true believers in Christ, they are not workers of righteousness; and consequently, will not be dwellers in heaven. Ye must then close with Christ in the first place and receive the gift of **imputed** righteousness.

Thomas Boston

Verse 2. "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart". I would resolve to do nothing that would need a lie. If Gehazi's covetousness had not shamed him, he had not wanted a lie to excuse him.

Benjamin Bennet

Verse 3. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour..." This plague is not only among the Egyptians but Israelites too. It is very doleful to consider how Christians sharpen their tongues like swords against Christians; and one good man censures and reproaches another, and one

minister traduceth another; and who can say "I am clean from this sin?" Pity your brethren; let it suffice that godly ministers and Christians are loaded with reproaches by wicked men — there is no need that you should combine with them in this diabolical work. You should support and strengthen their hands against the reproaches of the **UN**godly world, and not add affliction to the afflicted.

Matthew Poole

Verse 3. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue..." In Leviticus 19 and verse 16 a **talebearer** is compared to a "pedlar". "Thou shalt not walk about with tales and slanders, as it were a pedlar among thy people". As the pedlar having bought his wares from some one or more, goeth about from house to house that he may sell the same to others, so **backbiters** and **talebearers**, gathering together tales and rumours as it were wares, go from one to another, that such wares as either themselves have invented, or have gathered by report, they may utter in the absence of their neighbour to his disgrace.

George Downame

Verse 4. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned..." When wicked Jehoram, king of Israel, came to Eliseus, the prophet, to ask counsel of the Lord and to entreat for waters, having in company Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, being virtuous; the prophet showeth his contempt to the one, being wicked, and his reverence to the other, being godly: — "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor see thee". 2nd Kings 3 verse 14.

Richard Turnball

Verse 4. "... but he honoureth them that fear the Lord..." Calvin's resolution concerning Luther was very admirable in this respect. They differed much about the presence of Christ in the Sacrament; and Luther, being of a vehement spirit, wrote bitterly against those that held differently than himself did in that point. But Calvin often used to say that, although Luther should call him devil, yet he would do him that honour, to acknowledge him a choice servant of God.

Christopher Cartwright

SNIPPETS FROM "FAIR SUNSHINE"

(By Jock Purves)

A COVENANTER'S ORDINATION.

"After Brown, and Koelman, a Dutch minister, had lifted their hands, the great MacWard kept his upon Richard Cameron's light brown locks, saying 'here is the head of a faithful minister and servant of Jesus Christ who shall lose the same for his Master's interest, and it shall be set up before sun and moon in the public view of the world'"

A COVENANTER'S REUNION.

"Before the hangman set head and hands on the blood-stained Netherbow Port...a hero saint lying in prison was shown them. He was Alan Cameron, Covenanter. The cruel question was asked him 'Do you know them?' ...He kissed them, saying 'I know them. I know them. They are my son's, my own dear son's. It is the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days'".

A COVENANTER'S WEDDING.

"John Brown was the very close friend of both Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant, and of Alexander Peden, the Prophet of the Covenant. Peden had married Brown to Isabel Weir in 1682, and after this simple Puritan ceremony had said to Isabel: 'Ye have a good man to be your husband, but ye will not enjoy him long; prize his company and keep linen by you to be his winding sheet, for ye will need it when ye are not looking for it, and it will be a bloody one.'"

A COVENANTER'S LEGACY.

"But the killer of many (Claverhouse) unbelted his pistol, and hastily walking up to John Brown, placed it to his head, and blew his brains out, scattering them over the ground. Looking at his ghastly work with a sardonic smile, he turned to Isabel saying: 'What do you think of your fine husband now?' And through her sad tears she bravely answered: 'I ever thought much good of

him, and more than ever now...' Isabel Brown set her child upon the ground, gathered up her husband's brains, tied up his head, straightened his body, and, covering it with a plaid, sat down and wept."

"She bound the corpse's shattered head,
And shrouded the martyr in his plaid;
And where the dead and living slept,
Sat in the wilderness and wept".

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My Substitute

When I was a boy at school I saw a sight I never can forget - a man tied to a cart dragged before the people's eyes through the streets of my native town, his back torn and bleeding from the lash.

It was a shameful punishment. For MANY offences? No, for one offence. Did any of the townsmen offer to divide the lashes with him? No, he who committed the offence bore the penalty all alone. It was the penalty of a changing human law, for it was the last instance of its infliction.

When I was a student at the university I saw another sight I never can forget - a man brought out to die. His arms were pinioned, his face was already as pale as death, thousands of eager eyes were on him as he came up from the jail in sight.

Did any man ask to die in his room? Did any friend come and loose the ropes and say: "Put it around my neck, I die instead?" No, he underwent the sentence of the law. For MANY offences? No, for one offence. He had stolen a money parcel from a stage-coach. He broke the law at one point, and died for it. It was the penalty of a changing human law in this

case also. It was the last instance of capital punishment being inflicted for that offence.

I saw another sight, it matters not when - myself a sinner standing on the brink of ruin, deserving nought but Hell. For ONE sin? No, for many, many sins committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again, I looked and saw Jesus, my Substitute, scourged in my stead, and dying on the Cross for me. I looked, and wept, and was forgiven. And it seemed to me to be my duty to tell you of that Saviour, to see if you will not also "look and live".

And how simple it all becomes when God opens the eye. A friend who lately came from Paris told me of an English groom there, a very careless old man, who had during a severe illness been made to feel that he was a sinner. He dared not die as he was. The clergyman whom he sent for got tired of visiting him, having told him all he then knew of the way of salvation. But one Sunday afternoon the groom's daughter waited in the vestry after Church, saying "You must come once more, sir; I cannot see my father again without you". "I can tell him nothing new", said the preacher; "but I may take the sermon I have been preaching and read it to him".

The dying man lay as before in anguish, thinking of his sins, and whither they must carry him. "My friend, I have come to read to you the sermon I have just preached. First, I shall tell you of the text: 'He was wounded for our transgressions'. Now I shall read". "Hold!" said the dying man; I have it! Read no more. He was wounded for MY transgressions". Soon after he died rejoicing in Christ.

Poor philosopher, you have only found out a new principle in science!
Happy groom you have found in Jesus Christ a Saviour for your precious soul!

(By the late Sir James Y. Simpson)