

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 62 issued September 2006

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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible With the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham

Internet Edition 62 of The Wicket Gate Magazine - A Continuing Witness

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An Age of Noise!

Dear friends,

Just outside of the town of Dunoon on the Firth of Clyde is a little spot that we often visit when on holiday there. Its one of those places where, after a short walk along a well-kept path, you suddenly find yourself in a hollow surrounded by purple hills, and the words of the psalmist immediately leap into your mouth: "As the hills are about Jerusalem, so is the arms of the Lord about them that fear him."

It can be very quiet there, and it never fails to impress the heart with the truth of the necessity of "quietness" in the life of the believer.

We live in an age of noise. The world never seems to be happy unless every waking moment is filled with the din of TV. or radio or the general chatter and clatter of idle communication. The Church, too, has somewhat relegated the place of quietness to a dim and distant past generation and there appears to be little exhortation or desire to "meditate", or "muse", or even "think" very deeply on the things of our God.

We live in an age or "racket" evangelism where religious beat-groups grind out their worldly music pounding the senses until the extraction of a "decision" becomes a simple matter of technique. Gone are the days when the unbeliever was left in quietness with his **religious impressions** gained through the ministry of God's Word in the gospel; left with his impressions of things eternal so that they might, under God's Holy Spirit, mature in his heart and mind into the seeking and finding of life eternal in Christ. The plan now seems to pummel, and then, rush the "conditioned" listener into a profession of vague acceptance of a vague salvation formula.

What a word it is that we have with regards to Mary when the news was brought to her that she was going to be a mother of the coming Messiah: "And Mary pondered these things in her heart," we are told. Joseph, too, set aside time to meditate on the whole scope of what lay before him; "And as he thought on these things," we read, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him ..." There is surely a sanctity in silence where we may come very near to the mind of the Lord for our lives.

How often are we told to "wait", to "consider", to "be still"? But, like so much else, the spirit of the world is with us here. Perhaps the old highlander had a good word for us: "Sometimes I sit and think," he said, "and other times I think and sit."

Sincerely
W.J. Seaton (August 1970)



Joseph Hart

Right in the centre of the city of London, between City Road and Bunhill Row, there lies a patch of green which houses the mortal remains of over 120,000 souls.

The old graveyard rejoices in the name of Bunhill Fields, and it was here that the very cream of England's "Non-conformity" were laid to rest when their mortal toils were ended. Some of them died violently, suffering the martyr's lot rather than deny the One who had redeemed them through His own death on the cross. Others came down to their grave as "a shock of corn fully ripe." Old and young are buried there; famous and not so famous; but all with this in common, that they would not "conform" to the strictures of religion that they deemed contrary to God's revealed truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord. There lie the remains of John Bunyan, and Thomas Manton, and Isaac Watts; of Oliver Cromwell, and Daniel De Foe, and Thomas Goodwin; the great John Owen lies buried there, as does Lady Ann Erskine, and the mother of the Wesleys, and hundred of others. Among those "hundreds of others" there stands a stone –

"In memory of the Rev. Joseph Hart,
Late Minister of the gospel in Jewin

Street, who died May 24th, 1768, aged 56 years."

Bunhill Fields now lies almost unnoticed and unknown in the heart of busy London – for the world has no time for such things as these. But, sad to say, many of those who lie buried there are unknown and their past labours for the cause of Christ have gone unnoticed by the mass of professing Christians today. Perhaps it is an indication of this state of affairs that the Baptist churches of this land can publish and accept a hymn book which includes "universalism", and "heresy", and "popery", and yet which doesn't list one hymn from the pen of one of non-conformity's greatest sons: this same Joseph Hart.

Joseph Hart was born in the year 1712 "within the sound of Bow bells," which made him a true Londoner. When we say that he records his "peace with God" as being realised in the year 1757 – 45 years later, and only eleven years before his death – we must surely appreciate that The Day of his Salvation was one of those days when the sun doesn't seem to break through until it is almost time for it to set again. And yet, how many lessons there are for us to draw from this long day of God's dealing with one of his choicest servants, when the light would break through for a few hours, as it were, only to hide itself again behind many dark and ominous clouds.

"About the twenty-first year of my age," Joseph Hart tells us in his "Experience", "I began to be under great anxiety concerning my soul." The Law of God had been preached in the young man's hearing and he had seen of a truth that this Law condemned him. However, instead of turning to the One who had borne the whole brunt of that Law for sinful men, he took himself off to what old John Bunyan would have called "The Town of Morality", and "I strove to subdue my flesh by fasting and other rigorous act of penance and mortification," he tells us, hoping that they "would pass as current coin with heaven."

They didn't pass, of course, and then Joseph Hart launched into a kind of "easy believism"; an "insipid kind of religion", as he himself calls it. He had got the gist of what it meant to be saved into his head and he was resting on this. "But, alas," he tells us, "all this while my heart was whole; the fountains of the great deeps of my sinful nature were not broken up!" And this too passed over and into another period of this day which was now fast drawing to a close. "I fell into deep despondency of mind," he tells us; the burden of his sin was now beginning to weigh more heavily upon his soul than he had ever known before, and "I felt," he tells us, that there wasn't "a friend in the world to whom I could communicate the burden of my soul." The blackest hour of that Day of his salvation was now upon him, but it was to be a true darkness before sunrise. He

now considered himself "a gospel sinner"; - one who had sinned away every opportunity of heaven and Christ for their portion – "I looked on myself as ... one who had trampled under foot the blood of Jesus..." But, now the Day had fully dawned and the "Sun of Righteousness arose with healing on his wings" upon the soul of Joseph Hart.

It was "Whitsunday, 1757," he tells us, "when I happened to go in the afternoon to the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane." "I listened with much attention," he goes on, and "I was hardly got home when I felt myself melting away into a strange softness of affection which made me fling myself on my knees before God. ... I cried out, 'What me, Lord?' His Spirit answered in me, 'Yes, thee.' I objected; 'But I have been so unspeakably vile and wicked.' The answer was; 'I pardon thee fully and freely.'" The Day of Salvation had now truly dawned for Joseph Hart, and now his heart, and his tongue, and his pen would be loosed to the glory of the One who had dispelled all the clouds of darkness and brought salvation down. How richer the church of Christ for such manifestations of God's sovereign dealings in the salvation of souls; how we impoverish ourselves by shutting such dealings away – as Bunhill Fields itself is a "fountain sealed" to so many in our day. Joseph Hart has left us a wealth of experience in song of how the God of all grace deals with some to their eternal bliss. Well does he exhort the sinners in one of his grandest hymns: –

"Come ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Week and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity joined with power;
He is able, He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more."



Sermon in Candles

By
C.H. Spurgeon



(Part 6)

I have here put seven candles together to set forth the "Seven ages of Man". This first candle, long and slender, is the child, which, if spared has quite a length of light and life before it. When newly lighted the flame is easily blown out, but there are large possibilities of continuance. So also at twenty (the

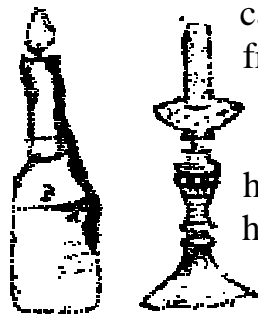


second candle) we anticipate long years of life, and yet it may end in one short hour. The other candles show us thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years of age. Our figure goes no further, "for if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow". Look at this shining emblem, and let each one of us judge his own position as to what remains of his life. Mark how little is left to

some of you! Pray God that you may use all that remains to the praise of God. I enquired about a sick friend the other day, and the answer I received was a shake of the head, and the remark, "I am sorry to say, he cannot last much longer. It is only a matter of time: his life hangs on a thread." I answered, "And that is exactly the case with me." Is it not true of everyone of us that we are mortal? And that our departure is only a matter of time? Our life is ended as easily as a candle is blown out. Here is a facsimile of Quarles' quaint woodcut whereby he tried to set forth the eagerness of Death to quench the light of life, and the way in which Time, **for a season**, holds back the hand of the last enemy. Study it well.

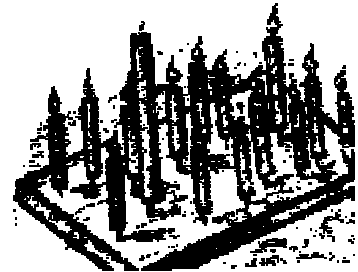


When you go to do a bit of woodworking in the shed and need a light, you are sometimes on the lookout for the means of setting up your bit of candle in a handy way. Here is the great invention in which your researches usually end. You see I have stuck a the light which comes plated candlestick. If ginger-beer bottle does And how often our Lord note at all! How useful despised. **And yet**, at to make my choice as to up, I should not object to have it in a more presentable stand. Who would object to be rid of the guttering and the hot dripping tallow, and to handle a concern that would not dirty his hands? A thing of beauty and of brightness is a joy for ever. And grace shines none the less because the person and his speech are graceful. As there is no sin, that I know of, in grammatical language and good taste, I hope we shall never set a fictitious value upon coarseness, nor go out of our way to marry godliness with slang. Our Lord and His cause should be served with our best. Even our best is not of itself worthy of His glory; but at least let us not give to Him the offal and the refuse of human speech. Young



man, blaze away; but you need not be coarse. Bring us a light, but use a decent candlestick if you can.

Some excellent persons have very little talent indeed. It is not merely that there is a want of education, but there is a want of capacity. Now, when that happens to be the case, my next illustration may be a serviceable hint. On this board we have fixed a number of very small candles; and as they are all well alight, the result is by no means unsatisfactory. As a company of illuminators they make a pleasant and notable shining. So, let us observe how a number of good little people, well lighted by grace, can by combination, really give out a great deal more illumination than far greater persons who shine alone. But you must each one of you shine your quota, and no one must try to save his candle and take things easy. All at it, and always at it, and you will not labour in vain.



What a glory there will be in the one church when all her members shine, and all are one! May such a day come quickly.

(This is the end of this series).

AMEN

Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs (Part 6)

Chapter 2 verses 8 to 13. In these verses the young Bride of the Song of Solomon seems to be remembering three things with regards to her Beloved: -

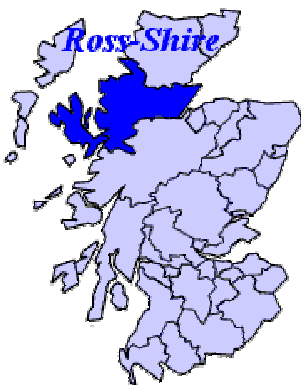
- (1) An Awakening by him;
- (2) A Consideration of him;
- (3) An Invitation from him.

The setting of the verses seems to be the "winter house" of the Bride to which the Beloved seems to have once gone and roused-up the young Bride, calling her out of her winter house, because, as he says in verse 11, "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

Again, the notes that the song rings out are sweet to the believer's ear. Everyone of us by nature was born into the winter house of sin, and unbelief, and rebellion

against our God in heaven. But well may we remember the time when we heard "the voice of our beloved", and when there was – **an awakening by him.** "Behold he cometh," says the young Bride in verse 8, "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." And it was "the mountains of **Bether**" – the mountains of **separation** – that lay between the Beloved and the young Bride whom he had then set his heart upon. But not even those mountains of separation would keep him from her, and he overcame every obstacle that lay in his path. Dwell long on that truth, believer! Between the Saviour and His Church, of which you are a member by grace, there lay a whole range of separating mountains; and towering high above all others stood that peak of Divine Justice that must fall upon every one of us and grind us to powder. But, "Who art thou, O great mountain: before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." And that mountain of Divine Justice was laid low by our heavenly Zerubbabel as He overcame it, so that we might hear His voice awakening us to all His wondrous works.

And there was – **a consideration of him.** As the Beloved drew near, first on the mountains, and then on the hills in verse 8; then at the wall, and looking through the windows, and showing himself at the lattice in verse 9, the young Bride had full opportunity to consider him who had come to call her to himself. And how good a thing it is for awakened sinners to well-consider the One who has awakened them. How ready they will then be to hear – **the invitation from him;** "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."



The Men of Ross-Shire

In his "Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire", the great John Kennedy – one time minister of the gospel at Dingwall, and a close and devoted friend of Charles Haddon Spurgeon – spends a whole chapter of his book telling about "The Men of Ross-shire". "The men' were so named" he tells us, "not because they were not women, but because they were not ministers." It was the place of "The Men" in those days to lead in prayer and to expound the scriptures at the "Fellowship Meetings" which accompanied the Communion seasons; and

the Christian standing and character of the majority of those on whom this office fell explains very clearly why the county of Ross-shire in those days was as "the garden of the Lord".

Alister Og of Edderton is a good example of the Christian piety that came to be an accepted feature of those who would stand for the Lord and for His truth, and this man's council was often sought by those in need of spiritual guidance. John Kennedy tells of a certain man who had come to seek out Alister and to ascertain his mind on the text "Pray without ceasing". "On his arrival," we are told, "he found Alister busy digging his croft. 'You are well employed, Alister,' he said on coming up to him. 'If delving and praying, praying and delving be good employment, I am,' was the answer which met the enquirer's difficulty before he stated it."

Perhaps it was because Alister Og of Edderton "prayed without ceasing" that he had little difficulty in resigning himself to the good providence of his God in heaven. The story is told of the stranger who came begging lodgings of Alister and his wife on a cold winter's night. The request was kindly granted, but the kindness unkindly repaid, for on rising the next morning Alister Og and his wife found the stranger had departed and had taken with the web of cloth that the pair had just completed. The wife was indignant, but the good man of the house was persuaded that he had exercised the Lord's will in admitting the stranger the night before and was now persuaded that God would yet vindicate His name. "If there is no other way of defending His cause," the man told his wife, "the Lord will send the man who stole the web back with it again." That evening, a thick hill-fog began to descend on the hills of Ross-shire, and Alister Og and his wife were seated by the fireside when a knocking was heard on their croft door and a request for shelter for the night was made. On opening the door, Alister Og discovered the stranger of the night before with the missing web of cloth on his back. Having lost his way in the fog, he had wandered in a complete circle, back to the house of the Edderton weaver, just as the Edderton weaver had said would happen.

Hugh Ross or Hugh Buie, as he was commonly called, was listed as the foremost of "The Men" of his day in Ross-shire. He was unable to read or write, but had the Word of God deeply implanted in his heart and mind, and when his heart was lifted to God in prayer it was the very gate of heaven itself. On one occasion, while staying overnight with a farmer in Clascarnich, he was asked to lead in prayer at the family worship, but declined the invitation in favour of the "head" of that home. Such was the jumbled nature of that prayer that Hugh Buie was deeply penitent for his refusal to "seek the Lord's face," and arriving at a

friend's home the following evening, he was no sooner asked to pray than he was on his feet and pouring out his requests before the Lord. This was so unusual for the quiet, retiring Hugh, that his friend spread the story around, so that, when Hugh was ever again hesitant in rising to his feet in his own fellowship at Ferintosh, his minister – the famous Dr. Macdonald – would say to him, "I find we must send you again to Clascarnich."

"Removing in his last days to Resolis, "Mr. Kennedy tells us, "he sat under the ministry of Mr Sage. Seated in his usual place on his last Sabbath, which proved to be his last day on earth, he seemed unusually happy ... after sermon he accompanied the minister to the manse. Having sat at the dinner table, he asked a blessing in his own clear, unctuous way, and having taken up his spoon, he quietly laid it down again, leant back in his chair, and, without a moan or a struggle, fell 'asleep in Jesus' in the ninety-ninth year of his age."

John Clark of Cromarty "may be claimed as one of the 'men' of Ross-shire," we are told, "for it was there he usually heard the gospel." He seems to be best remembered for his "down-to-earth" illustrations when called upon to preach. He once caused no small commotion at Cromarty by declaring very emphatically at a fellowship meeting that not a builder or tailor in Cromarty could be saved. All the masons and needlemen were vastly indignant, not understanding that John referred to 'the builders' who rejected the 'chief stone of the corner', and to all who were patching with rags the righteousness for themselves." "When his tall figure became erect as he rose up to speak," it is said of him, "and when with both hands he threw back his white flowing locks, exposing his expressive face, he looked a man that might have graced a senate."

Hugh Ross of Kilmuir serves as an admirable example of the source of the men of Ross-shire's deeply held convictions. Theirs was the exercise of heart and mind that makes "sin appear exceedingly sinful," that "flees from the wrath to come," and which gladly "takes up the cross and follows Christ," however heavy that cross might appear. Hugh Ross was a proud man in the days of his unregeneracy, and, on once occasion, having bought himself an elaborate highland outfit went to the Saturday preparatory service for the communion at Fearn. One of the Lord's sharp arrows, however, pierced the proud regalia of Hugh Ross's old nature and he was laid very low under the conviction of sin. "Easy believism" had not found its way into the church of the men of Ross-shire, and for months Hugh Ross of Kilmuir walked, as Dr. Kennedy says, "under the shadow of death". He began attending on the ministry of God's Word from Sabbath to Sabbath, but such was his conviction of heart and mind that he wouldn't even venture across the threshold of the building, but stood huddled

against the doorway of the church as the drops from the eaves fell down upon him and formed themselves into icicles on his hair during the long winter months of conviction. On one especially bitter morning, an old elder of the church at Fearn, seeing the pathetic sight that Hugh Ross afforded, crept up behind him and pushed the young penitent across the doorway and into the house of the Lord. "The day of his deliverance had fully come", and as Hugh Ross had sunk to the depths of spiritual despondency, so he now rose to the heights of spiritual joy and usefulness: "Those whom the Son sets free, they shall be free indeed." Three of the children of the old elder were brought to Christ under the ministry of the man whom their father had almost literally "pressed into the kingdom", and many more in Ross-shire were to rise up and call him blessed.

Such were The Men of Ross-shire. And surely their lives and times in that country made of it – **in Scotland** – what Mr. Spurgeon said the Puritans' lives made Essex in the south: "The Galilee of England".

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Mrs Seaton

Dear boys and girls,

Aren't the trees looking lovely and fresh just now? Have you ever stood and looked at a tree and its leaves? In the Spring there are the tiny buds on the tree, then as the days get warmer they pop open and become lovely leaves. All during the Spring and Summer they stay fresh and green to give us shade from the sun, then in Autumn, before they fall, they change colour. Such lovely colours: yellow, green, brown, and red.

You know, boys and girls, we must never forget to thank God for His goodness to us in giving us so many wonderful gifts, even the leaves of the trees. Remember the story of Noah and the great flood which covered the whole earth? When at last it was time for Noah to test if it was safe to come out of the Ark, he opened a window and sent out a raven. A few days later, he sent out a dove, but the dove returned to Noah because she could not find anywhere to

build her nest. A week later, Noah sent the dove out again and this time the dove returned to Noah with a leaf in her beak which she had plucked off a tree. Noah knew now that the trees were no longer covered by the waters of the flood.

Soon God spoke to Noah and said, "Come out of the Ark with your wife and your sons and their wives, and every living creature that is in the Ark." Noah was thankful to be alive, and as soon as he came out of the Ark he built an altar and made a sacrifice to God, thanking Him for all His goodness.

God promised that He would never again send another flood to destroy the whole earth. God said, "As long as the earth remains there will be summer and winter, cold and heat, springtime and autumn, day and night." So you see, boys and girls, even the leaves of a tree can remind us of God's goodness to us.

"He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well."

All my love,
Mrs Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 25 concluded)

Verse 10. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth ..." "Paths" signifies the tracks or ruts made by the wheels of wagons by often passing over the same ground. Mercy and truth are the paths in which God constantly walks in reference to the children of men: and so frequently does He show them mercy, and so frequently does He fulfil His truth, that His paths are easily discerned.

Adam Clark

Verse 11. "For thy *name's sake*, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity ..." When God forgives sin, He does it for *His Name's sake*, that is for His honour and glory. Among all divine works, there is none which more sets forth His glory than that of remission of sin. Sin, by the committing of it, brings God a great deal of *dis*-honour, and yet, by forgiving it, God brings to Himself a great deal

of honour. The attributes of God's grace, mercy, goodness, clemency, shine forth in nothing so much as in the pardoning of sins.

Nathaniel Hardy

Verse 11. "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great." David pleads the *greatness* of his sin, and not the smallness of it, because the greater his iniquity was, the more *need* he had of pardon. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than the extremity of his case? And God allows such a plea as this: for He is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us, but the miserableness of our case. He doth not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they *need* his pity.

Jonathan Edwards

Verse 12. "What man is he that feareth the Lord?" Present fear begets eternal security: fear God, Who is above all, and there is no need to fear man at all.

Augustine

Verse 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ..." He gives us the key that will let us into His very heart, and acquaint us with what His thoughts are – yea with what they were towards us before a stone was laid in the world's foundations. And this "key" is none other than His Holy Spirit, for he was at the Council-Table in heaven when all was transacted. This, His Spirit, He employed

- (1) To put forth and publish in the Scriptures the substance of those counsels of love which had passed between the Trinity of Persons for our salvation.
- (2) That nothing might be wanting for our satisfaction, He hath appointed the same Holy Spirit to abide in His saints, that as Christ in heaven presents our desires to Him, so the Spirit may interpret His mind out of His word for us; and this word reveals the heart of God, as face reveals face in the glass.

William Gurnall

Verse 18. "Look upon mine affliction and my pain ..." In sickness of body trust to Jesus ... Let us not do like Asa (2nd Chron. 16:12) and trust only in the physician, or in the subordinate means. But let us remember that all physic is but dead means without Him. Therefore, with the means, run to Christ that He might work with them, and remember that all virtue and strength comes from Him to bless or curse all sorts of means.

Richard Sibbes

Verse 19. "Consider mine enemies, for they are many ..." We may say of original sin, strengthened and heightened by customary transgression, its name is legion, for it is many. Hydra-like, it is a body with many heads; and when we cut off one head, there presently sprouts up another of like monstrous nature. From the womb of original sin, as from the Trojan horse, there does issue forth a whole army of unclean lusts to surround the soul in all its faculties.

Robert Mossom

Verse 20. "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee."

THEME – "Soul Preservation.

DIVISION

1. The Two fold Character of Soul Preservation – "keep", and "deliver."
2. The Dreadful Alternative to Soul Preservation – "Let me not be ashamed."
3. The Effectual Guarantee for Soul Preservation – "I put my trust in thee."

Hints to the Village Preacher

Verse 22. "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

"And at our Father's loved abode,
Our souls arrive in peace."

Amen.