

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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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

Catechising in Days Gone Bye



One of the best-known traditions of the Scottish Church of a bye-gone day was that “diet of examination” known as Catechising. This was the time when the Minister of the church set off around his parish to call on his members and examine them as to their spiritual growth from the words of the Westminster

Catechism and from the Word of God itself.

Needless to say, this was an exercise that was of great spiritual worth to many, but, man, being what he is, it was also a time that produced much humourous and homely. Many of the “examining brethren,” such as the great Dr. Chambers, were kindly disposed towards their “pupils” and were always ready to take the blame for not receiving the right answer by saying that they had asked the question rather badly.

The people learnt to play on such kindness. “Master Wilson,” asked the visiting minister, “What is the chief end of man?” “Deed, sir,” came the reply, “it’s not for me to presume to answer such a question as that, I fain would hear it from yourself.” Taken aback by such “humility” the minister was forced to pass on to the next member of the household who happened to be the ploughman. “Tell me,” the minister asked, “What kind of a man was Adam?” “Oh,” said the ploughman, “just like other folk.” This time the minister refused to be sidetracked by such generality, and he pressed for an “exposition” of the reply. “Well, sir,” ventured the ploughman, “Adam was gey like Joe Sim the bookmaker.” “Oh,” said the minister, his interest aroused, “in what respect, James?” “In this way, sir: nobody got anything from him, and many lost.” That was right sound theology even though “James failed to couch it in theological terms, but “experimental” theology is of the cream of the milk.

“Old William” found it so, as well. “William,” asked the minister of the old worthy who was reckoned to be an exponent of the Book of Job, “do

you mean to tell me that you find the Book of Job simple?” “Well,” said the old man, “here and there are few dark places, but it’s simple enough.” “Oh,” said the visitor, “then show me one of these simple places.” William’s reply was of the most “experimental” nature. “Well,” he said, “when Job asks, ‘Is there any taste in the white of an egg?’ A body soon knows the answer to that if there’s nae salt on the table.”

Turning the tables on the minister was one of the favourite occupations of some of those examined, and for this they had gained a reputation. It was the chief weapon of an old woman of Loudon to get the Minister to “gang owre the fundamentals” before he would begin, so that she be sure that he himself was “sound.” By the time this was done, of course, there was little time for anything else. Others had their own methods and some of the greatest of Divines fell foul of their ingenuity.

So it happened with the famous Ralph Erskine. Having been requested by his brother Ebenezer to catechise in his parish of Abernethy, he was also warned by the latter not to tangle with one, Walter Simpson, the local blacksmith. “You’ll find all my folk easy to examine except one,” said Ebenezer, “and him I reckon you had better not meddle with. He has an old-fashioned way of answering a question by asking another, and maybe he’ll affront you.” The learned doctor of divinity was indignant: “Do you think he can foil me with my own natural tools?” he asked. “I’m giving you fair warning,” said the anxious brother, “you’d better not call him up in your catechising.” That evening, in the crowded church hall, the great man decided that he would lay his Goliath low with the very first stone of the night. “Tell me,” he thundered out, directing his question to the swarthy blacksmith, “how long did Adam remain in a state of innocence?” “Just till he got a wife, sir,” came Walter’s answer; “But, can you tell me, minister,” he added in characteristic style, “**how long did he stand after that?**” The noted Divine had no answer, and Walter was respectfully asked to resume his seat.

A similar fate befell the minister of the fishing village of St. Vigeans. Having failed to get any kind of an answer to his “deep” theological query, he began to upbraid his flock. Setting the question to them – as if in a final effort that would exhaust his patience for ever – he drew this comment from an aged fisherman: “You see, minister,” he said, “we canna exactly say what the answer to your question is, but can you tell us, minister, how many hooks it taks to bait a fiftenscore haddie line?” Our source of

information fails to supply the minister's answer, and suggests that there is none on record.

However, the "pupils" didn't have it all their own way, not even when it came to physical tuition that a few of our Highland ministers sometimes thought their flock stood in need of. On one occasion, the minister called on a house whose tenant was both a strong man and a strong sinner before the Lord. "I come to discharge my duties to God, to your conscience, and my own," stated the minister. "I care not for any three," resorted the man, and set about the minister. It was a fatal mistake that he made, for he ended-up on the floor of his own house bound hand and foot receiving the words of instruction.

Article by W.J. Seaton 1970

Leather's Table Talk

Discipleship. He who will have Christ for his King, will have the devil for his enemy.

Truth. A Christian must be well armed, grounded, and furnished with portions out of God's Word, so that he might stand and defend the gospel and himself against the devil, in case he should be asked to embrace another doctrine.

Abraham. When Abraham shall rise again at the last day, then he will chide us for our unbelief, and will say: I had not the hundredth part of the promises that ye have, and yet I believed. That example of Abraham's exceeds all natural human reason, who, overcoming the paternal love he bore towards his only son Isaac, was all obedient to God, and, against the law of nature, would have sacrificed that son. What, for the space of those three days, he felt in his heart, what hesitations and trials he had, cannot be expressed.

Ministerial Ambition. Ambition is the rankest poison to the church, when it possesses preachers. It is a consuming fire. The Holy Scriptures are given to destroy the desires of the flesh; therefore, how can we seek honour for the flesh therein? I much marvel for what cause people are proud and haughty; we are born in sin, and every moment in danger of

death. Are we proud of our scabs? we, who are altogether an unclean thing.

Elijah. The history of Elijah is awful and almost incredible. It must have been a fierce anger indeed, that made so holy a man pray that it might not rain. But he saw that the true teachers were slain, and that the Lord's people were hunted down and persecuted. Therefore, he *prayed* against those men against whom he could not prevail with words and preaching.

Witness. *Believest thou?* Then thou wilt speak boldly. *Speakest thou boldly?* Then thou must suffer. *Sufferest thou?* Then thou shalt be comforted.

Charity. There is in Austria a monastery, which, in former days, was very rich, and which remained rich so long as it was charitable to the poor. But, when it ceased to give, then it became destitute, and so it remains to this day. Not long ago, a poor man went to the door of that place and asked for alms; but this was denied him. He demanded to know why they would not give to the needy who asked in the Name of the Lord, and was told by the porter at the gate: we are become destitute and poor ourselves. The beggar then expounded the cause of their poverty: "The cause of your poverty is this," he told them; "ye had in former days in this place two brethren; the one was named *give* and the other was named *it shall be given you*. The first one ye threw out, and the other then went away by himself.

Awareness of Sin. The devil does not need to tell me that I am not good or upright, nor, indeed, would I wish to be so – that is, to be without feeling for my sins, or to think that I need not remission of them. For, if that were the case, then all the treasure of Christ would be lost on me, seeing it is He Himself who says: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Salvation – by Faith Alone. Wickliffe and Huss assailed the immoral conduct of the papists; but I chiefly oppose and resist their doctrine. *I affirm roundly and plainly, that they preach not the truth.* To this I am called. I take the goose by the neck, and set the knife to its throat. The pope has taken away the pure word and doctrine, and brought in another gospel, which he has hung upon the church. I shook all Popedom with this one point – "Salvation by grace alone." This will I teach diligently, and mix up nothing else along with it.

Temptations. He that will dispute with the devil out of the *Law*, will be beaten and taken captive by him; but he that disputes with him out of the gospel, conquers him.

Victory. Adam lived; and death devoured life. Christ died, and death was swallowed up and devoured. Therefore, God be praised, that Christ died, and has got the victory. “O death! where is *thy* sting? O grave! where is *thy* victory?” God be praised, I say, that Christ died, and has got the victory.

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 30)

Divisions – In verses 1-3 David extols the Lord for delivering him. Verses 4 & 5 he invites the saints to unite with him in celebrating divine compassion. In verses 6 & 7 he confesses the fault for which he was chastened; 8-10 repeats the supplication which he offered, and concludes with commemorating his deliverance and avowing eternal praise.

C.H.S.

Verse 1. “**I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up.**” He had a reason to give for the praise that was in his heart. He had been drawn up like a prisoner from the dungeon, like Joseph out of the pit, therefore he loved his deliverer. Grace has uplifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears: have we no song to offer for all this?

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 4. “**Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.**” If it were to be a song regarding something else, I should require the whole choir of God’s creatures to join in the singing. But seeing that it is to be a song of God’s “holiness”, what should profane voices do in the concert? None but “saints” are fit to sing of holiness, and especially of His holiness”.

R. Baker

Verse 5. “**For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life ...**” It is not the gift of eternal life that is our happiness in heaven, but as

David says, “*In his favour is life.*” It is not the dark and horrid house of woe that makes a soul miserable in hell, but God’s displeasure. If an elect soul should be cast to hell, and retain the favour of God, hell would be an heaven to him, and his joy could not all the devils of hell take from him; his night be turned into day.

Edward Marbury

Verse 5. “... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”. In the second half of this verse “weeping” is personified, and represented by the figure of a wanderer, who in the morning leaves the lodging that he had entered into on the previous evening. After him comes another guest, namely, “joy”.

E. W. Hengstenberg

Verses 6-12. David’s prosperity had lulled him into a state of undue security: God sent him this affliction to rouse him from it. The successive frames of his mind are here clearly marked; and must successively be considered as they are here presented to our view.

1. *His Carnal Security.* Verse 6: “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.”
2. *His Spiritual Dereliction.* Verse 7: “... thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.”
3. *His Fervent Prayers.* Verse 8f: “I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication.”
4. *His Speedy Recovery.* Verse 11: “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing ...”
5. *His Grateful Acknowledgements.* Verse 12: “O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.”

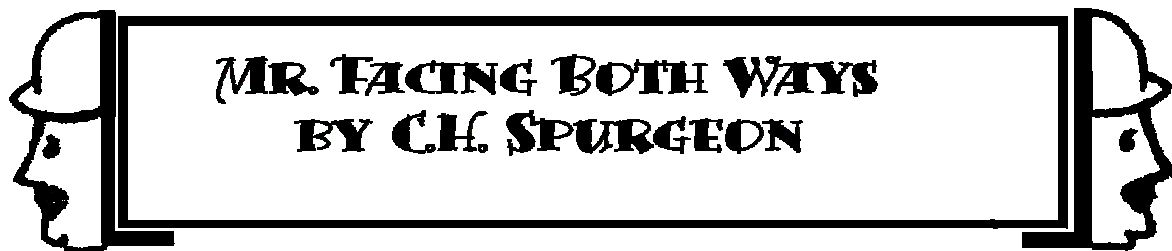
Charles Simeon

Verse 7. “... thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” Is spiritual desertion and the hiding of God’s face a matter of affliction to believers? Yes, yes; it quails their hearts so that nothing can comfort them. “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” Outward afflictions do but break the skin, this touches the quick. Outward afflictions fall like rain upon the slates, this soaks into the house. But Christ brings to believers substantial cause for consolation against these troubles of desertion, for He himself was deserted of God for a time, that they might not be deserted for ever.

John Flavel

Verse 11. “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.” This might be true of David delivered from his calamity; it was true of Christ, arising from the tomb to die no more; it is true of the penitent, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation; and it will be verified in all the redeemed, at the last day, when we shall put off the dishonours of the grave, to shine in glory everlasting.

George Horne



Even **bad** men praise consistency. When you know where to find a man, he has one good point at any rate; but a fellow who howls with the wolves and bleats with the sheep, gets nobody’s praise, unless it be the devils. To carry two faces under one hat is, however, very common. Many roost with the poultry and go shares with Reynard the Fox. I read the other day an advertisement about reversible coats; the tailor who sells them must be making a fortune. Holding with the hares and hunting with the hounds is still in fashion.

You may trust some men as far as you can *see* them, but no further, for new company makes them new men. Like water, they boil or freeze according to the temperature. Some do this because they have no principles; they are of the weathercock persuasion, and turn with the wind. Their mill grinds any grist that you bring to it if the ready money is forthcoming. And they go with every wind – north, south, east, west, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, nor’-nor’ east, south-west-by-south, or any other in all the world. Like frogs they live on land or water, and are not at all particular which it is. They believe in the winning horse; and are to be bought by the dozen, like mackerel, but he who gives a penny for them wastes his money.

Others are shifty because they are so desperately fond of “good fellowship.” “Hail fellow, well met,” is their cry, be it traveller or

highwayman. They are so good-natured that they must needs agree with everybody. They are cousins of Mr Anything. Their brains are in other people's heads. If they were at Rome they would kiss the pope's toe, but when they are at home they make themselves hoarse with shouting "No Popery." They admire the vicar of Bray, whose principle was to be the Vicar of Bray whether the Church was Protestant or Popish. They are mere timeservers, hoping that the times may serve them. They have no backbones; you may bend them like willow wands, backwards or forwards, whichever way you please. They try to be Jack-o'-bothsides, but deserve to be kicked like a football by both parties.

Beware of those who come from the town of Deceit - Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Fair-speech and Mr. Two-tongues are neighbours who are best at a distance. Though they look one way, as boatmen do, they are pulling the other. They are false as the devil's promises, and as cruel as death and the grave.

Hypocrites of all sorts are abominable, and he who deals with them will rue it. He who tries to cheat the Lord will be quite ready to cheat his fellow men. Great cry generally means little wool.

Surely when the devil sees hypocrites at their little game, it must be as good as a play to him. He tempts genuine Christians, but he lets hypocrites alone, because he is sure of them. He need not shoot at lame ducks; his dog can pick them up any day.

Depend upon it friends, if a straight line will not pay, a crooked one won't. What is got by *shuffling* is very dangerous gain. It may give a moment's peace to wear a mask, but deception will come home to you and bring sorrow with it. Honesty is the best policy. If the lion's skin will not do, don't try the fox's. Let your face and hands, like the church clock, always tell how your inner works are going. Better be laughed at as Tom Tell-truth than be praised as Crafty Charlie. Plain dealing may bring us into trouble, but it is better than shuffling. At the least, the upright will have their reward, but for the double-minded to get to heaven is as impossible as for a man to swim the Atlantic with a mill-stone under each arm.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By
Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

Do you all know what a parable is? If not, perhaps this well-known explanation might help you: A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Jesus taught many lessons in parables, so that the people would clearly understand what He was trying to tell them. Here now is one of those parables that Jesus told when He lived on this earth.

A certain man had two sons, Jesus told the people. One day the man went to his older son and said, "Son, go and work in my vineyard today." The boy was disobedient and said, "I will not go." Afterwards he was very sorry that he had answered his father like that and he changed his mind and went and did what his father had asked.

The father also went to the second son and said the same thing: "Son, go and work in my vineyard today." He immediately replied, "I go sir." But this second son did not keep his promise and he did not go and work in his father's vineyard.

"Now," asked Jesus, when He had told that story to the people, "Which of those two sons obeyed his father?" "The first one," said the people. And then Jesus explained the heavenly meaning of that earthly story. "I tell you," He said, "that sinners who are sorry for their sins will enter heaven before those of you who pretend to be righteous."

Now, boys and girls, I wonder what your answer would have been if Jesus had asked you that question? Would it have been the same as the people? I hope so, because it was the right answer. You see, Jesus wants us to understand that God does not want us to promise to obey Him and then, not carry out our promises. We cannot "pretend" with God, the way the

second son pretended with his Father, for God knows all that we think and all that we do.

There is a big word used in the Bible for being truly sorry for our sins; it is called “**repentance**.” We must believe with all our heart that we do sin and that we are sinners – that we have done wrong, just like the first son, and then, like him, **repent**. Be sorry for our sins and ask Christ to be our Saviour and forgive us. He will, if we truly mean it.

Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs (Part 11)

Chapter 3 verses 9:10. The verses in the last edition told us something of Solomon’s Bride being conveyed across the wilderness under the constant watch of Solomon’s “threescore valiant men.” Our verses this time tell us something of the “chariot” that Solomon had constructed for that safe conduct; “King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon,” it says in verse 9. And just as Solomon provided himself a fit conveyance to bring his young Bride to himself, so our Lord Jesus Christ has provided Himself a vehicle of His own design and making to bear His people safely through this world until they take their place at that great Bridal Feast above. “God rides forth conquering in the chariot of this gospel,” said old Thomas Watson; and brethren, the gospel that told us to rise up and begin our journey out of the wilderness of our unbelief and rebellion against our God is the same gospel – the same chariot – that will bear us “all our journeys through.” Don’t we remember this: the gospel not only **saves** our souls at one particular point in our lives, the gospel **keeps** us and bears us along every step of our pilgrim path.

“Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made mine eye o’erflow;
‘Tis grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”

Our Lord is bearing us along each day on the “chariot of his gospel,” for when the Covenant of Grace was drawn-up in the eternal counsels of the Trinity it was decreed to make a fit vehicle, not only to **save** the Elect, but to carry them through each perplexing path of life. “King Solomon made

himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.” But, “A greater than Solomon is here,” and He has made Himself a greater chariot than Solomon’s; of richer materials than Solomon’s; to bring a far more glorious Bride than Solomon’s; to bring a far more glorious Bride than Solomon’s to His side.

(i) He conceived the plan of building it in the first place:


“O the love that drew salvation’s plan.”

(ii) He not only built it, but, like Solomon, took it to the place where His young Bride was and placed her in it:

“O the grace that brought it down to man.”

(iii) And on the Cross He met every farthing of the cost of providing it for His beloved Bride:

“O the mighty gulf that love did span – At Calvary.”



Sincere ...
Without Wax

At one point, the glass makers of Italy found a problem because of unscrupulous dealers. The process of making delicate dishes consisted of subjecting the substance to a severe

heat. Often a piece of china came out of the oven with cracks and could not be sold as perfect. But, many of the dealers used an invisible wax to coat over the cracked surface. At a casual glance the buyer was not able to distinguish between the good and the bad product. Only by holding the plate up to the sun could the crack be seen. So the honest dealers banded themselves together and devised the use of a stamp to be used on all good pieces. This stamp bore the marks – “sin cera,” or “without wax,” from which we get our word *sincere*.

Often, when the patched-up dishes were exposed to the heat the wax would melt and the flaw revealed. The fiery trials very often reveal the wax of insincerity.

New Life.