

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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- 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
- Studies in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel

# Speaking with Prophetic Voices

(The Pastor's Letter – April 1971)

Numerous are the qualities that once characterised the Church of Christ in this land that have now fallen into disrepair or complete mis-use. Among the most notable qualities of the past no longer very evident amongst us, was that ability (or, perhaps it was courage) to speak with prophetic voice regarding the churches, or even an individual's future in relation to the path that that church or that individual was taking.

Lachlan MacKenzie – “Mr. Lachlan” to all and sundry - minister of the parish church at Lochcarron, well illustrates the point, and time and time again he proved himself to be in the van of the men of prophetic foresight in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Speaking about the man who would succeed him to the work of the ministry at Lochcarron, he said that he would be “a dumb dog that would not bark.” And in order to substantiate his utterance, and vindicate the Gospel that he preached there as being the whole counsel of God, he declared that two trees would grow, one on each side of his pulpit, that their branches would intertwine above the pulpit causing them to choke one another, and that they would then fall to the ground before the pulpit. When the old church was vacated for a newer building following Lachlan's death, two trees did begin to grow in the ruins just where the old pulpit had stood; they soon locked their branches, fell to the ground, and up until a few years ago, the decayed remains of the two witnesses to God's truth lay in their place appointed bearing silent testimony to the validity of the old man's gospel.

Such incidents are legion; like the spiritual perception of James Matheson of Dornoch. A young woman by the name of Ann Mackenzie had set out from Ullapool to walk to Dornoch at the time of the Communion. She was greatly burdened with a sense of her sinfulness before the Lord and having read John chapter 13 on her journey she covenanted with the Lord that if this was the very first passage of scripture that she heard read over the communion season she would take it as a

token that God was going to deal mercifully with her. On reaching the pre-communion prayer meeting – over which James Matheson was presiding - the young woman took her seat, but was saddened to hear the visiting preacher announce that he was going to read from the prophecy of Isaiah. Just at that moment, however, James Matheson interrupted the preacher: “You may read that chapter on another occasion,” he told him, “but for the present, read the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of John for there is someone here to whom that passage is speaking.

On another occasion, this same James Matheson endeavoured to speak to his housekeeper about her soul’s salvation. It was late at night and the woman pretended to be asleep rather than face the rigours of interrogation regarding her eternal welfare. “Betsy, are you awake?” asked the man. But the only reply was a feigned attempt at being asleep. “Betsy,” he asked again, “are you awake?” Still no reply. And a third time he asked, but without success. “Oh, poor Betsy,” said James Matheson in his final word, “I saw Satan and yourself concocting this plan, and for each time you refused to answer, you shall have a year when sleep shall depart from your eyelids.” When the old housekeeper was finally brought under conviction of sin it was of the most severe nature, and for three whole years, she confessed, she never slept a full night through, and for most of that time, never closed her eyes at all.

Such was the ministry of many of the men of the past, and we might well ask what has become of such ministry, of such foresight of such discernment, of such spiritual courage today? How few are the voices that we hear raised in the denunciation of sins national, personal, and ecclesiastical? To hear some evangelicals tell it, one would almost believe in days when evil runs rampant and “the salt” has almost entirely lost its savour. We are persistently being told that “God is doing wonderful things in these days.” What an absolutely empty, meaningless use of words. Murders, riots, rapes, drug addiction, drunkenness, adultery, sodomy, uncleanness, strikes, vandalism, violence and vice. The whole catalogue of evil which advertises the state of our nation in these days in which we live is an open invitation to look and see what **terrible** things **the devil** is doing today.

The Lord is Sovereign; of course he is, and the evil one doesn't take one step that is out of control of Him who sitteth upon the Throne. But the state of things in the nation today is an account of the state of things in the churches today; and the state of things in churches today is on account of God having turned His face away from a people bent on having their own wills satisfied. Years of banner-waving evangelism and "factory farming" methods in conversion have neither stemmed the tide of corruption nor increased the flow of Godliness by one iota.

How much we could do with the spirit of Bunyan's "Old Mr. Honest." To see what the present trend of things is and to have courage to denounce the course fearlessly, proclaiming what a continued following of that course will result in, for ourselves, for our churches, for our demonstrations, for the whole church in this land, for the land itself. We will be no better off for simply calling barrenness blessing: neither will we be any worse off for seeing and confessing that the "pleasant places" have become desolate. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Do we really believe that great things are happening today? "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord hosts; consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." (Haggai chapter 1 verse 5-7)

One ounce of spiritual perception, my friends, will show that this is our state today. One ounce of spiritual foresight will undoubtedly show us the consequences of remaining in that state in blissful unawareness.

Yours sincerely  
W.J Seaton (1971)



## GLEANINGS IN THE PSALMS

### Psalm 34

This Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of verse 10, when the psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are a **hymn**, and the last twelve a **Sermon**

*C.H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 1. “I will bless the Lord at all times ...”** Mr Bradford, martyr, speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, said, “If the Queen be pleased to release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her.” So says the believing soul: Let God do with me what He will, I will be thankful.

*S Clarke*

**Verse 2 “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord...”** Can any boasting be greater than to say, “I can do all things”? Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, “In Him that strengtheneth me.” For though God likes not boasting, yet He likes **that** boasting which ascribes nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to Him.

*Sir Richard Baker*

**Verse 3 “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.”** Venema remarks that after the affair with Achish, we are told in 1 Samuel chapter 22 verse 1. “David’s brethren, and all his fathers house went down to the cave Adullam unto him,” and these, together with those who were in debt, and discontented with Saul’s government, formed a band of four hundred men. To these his friends and comrades, David relates the story of his escape, and bids them with united hearts and voices to extol the Lord – “O magnify the Lord with me etc.”

*C. H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 4. “I sought the Lord, and he heard me ...”** God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from him.”

Gurnall

**Verse 4 “... and delivered me from all my fears.”** To have delivered me from all my troubles would have been a great favour, but a far greater is it to be delivered from all my fears.

Baker

**Verse 6 “This poor man cries...”** The reasons for crying are:

- (i) Want cannot blush. The pinching necessity of the saints is not tied to the law of modesty. Hunger cannot be ashamed.
- (ii) Fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer. Although God only hears our prayers because of Christ and not because of our fervour, yet fervour is a heavenly ingredient. An arrow drawn with full strength that a speedier issue; therefore, the prayers of the saints are expressed by “crying” in the scriptures.
- (iii) The Lord hears our cries. “This poor man cried, **and the Lord heard him...**” The “cry” adds wings to the prayer, as a speedy post sent to the court on an issue of life and death. “The righteous cry and the Lord heareth,” verse 17.

Rutherford

**Verse 7. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him...**” The believer may be assured of this, that when the angel’s help is required by him they are encamped about him. In spite of doors, and locks, and bars, he may have their help in an moment’s warning. There is no impediment with them, for, when it comes to power, they are spirits, and when it comes to willingness, it is their duty to care for the believer. Do they not rejoice at his salvation? Yes, they do, for “there is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner saved.” If this be the case, then, they will always be disposed to do anything for him as they camp about him.

Adapted from Zachary Bogan

**Verse 8. “O taste as see that the Lord is good...”** Don’t allow the good gifts of God to be swallowed down without tasting them, or wickedly forgotten. Use your spiritual palate. Taste them, and remember them.

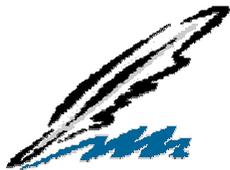
D.H. Mollerus

**Verse 10. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”** Take a survey of heaven and earth and all the things that are in them, and if there is anything that you are persuaded would do you eternally good, then, ask it confidently of Christ, and His love will not deny it to you. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them.

David Clarkson.

(Concluded in next issue.)

# *Great Hymns*



## *and their Writers*

**“Who Would  
True Valour See”  
By  
John Bunyan**

The clash of the metal of warfare is never very far away from the lines of this three-hundred year old hymn, as, indeed, the author himself was no stranger to that battlefield that the Lord often calls His children to enter in the defence of His truth,

John Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford jail for his non-conformity, but it was during that time, in the mysterious Providence of God, that he wrote his famous Pilgrim’s Progress in which this battle-hymn of non-conformity appears. The lines of the hymn are placed on the lips of one of the great characters of the book - Mr Valiant-for-the-truth; and we would make so bold as to assert that it is only those who have “shed some blood” in the defence of the gospel of redeeming grace that have any right to join

their voices with Bunyan's steadfast warrior in echoing the sentiments that are here fall from his lips.

Valiant-for-truth, of course, can be Bunyan himself, as can Hopeful and Mr Ready-to-halt and Trust and Old Honest. It is the **Pilgrim's** Progress, and Bunyan himself is a pilgrim on his way to the heavenly City. Not only are the characters of the book characters that the Pilgrim meets on his journey to that blessed place, but they are **characteristics** that the heaven-bound pilgrim faces in his own heart as he enters the strait gate walks the narrow way. Valiant-for-truth, then, is Bunyan himself, thrust into the heavenly conflict, yet worthy to sin the praises of the great captain of his Salvation whom he has seen fly to his side and teach his hands to war as He upholds him in the heat of the day in that Bedfordian prison-house.

It is Mr Greatheart who invites these words of resolute refusal to compromise from Bunyan's Christian soldier. Greatheart has just come to the foot of Dark Lane and, as he arrives there, we are told, he finds a man standing "...with his sword drawn, and his face all blood." "Who art thou?" Greatheart asks the man. "I am one of whose name is Valiant-for-truth," comes the reply, "I am a pilgrim, and going to the Celestial City." He begins to tell Greatheart how he had been attacked by three men who had tried to turn him away from his pilgrimage, but he had fought with them, as he says, "for the space of above three hours. They have left their mark upon me, as you can see," he tells Greatheart, "some of the marks of their valour, and have also carried with them some of mine; but they are now fled.

"But here was great odds," says Greatheart, "three against one," "Tis true," says Valiant-for-truth, "but little or more are nothing to him that the truth on his side ... I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand, and then they were joined together, as if a sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage... .."

"Who would true valour see,  
Let him come hither;  
One here will constants be,  
Come wind, come weather;  
There's no discouragement

Shall make him one relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a pilgrim.”

And should we ask the reason why Mr Valiant-for-truth fought “for the space of above three hours,” and used his sword until the blood ran through his fingers and the weapon cleaved to his hand, then, the answer is contained in this, that he was fighting for the gospel that had saved his soul. “I am of Dark Land,” he tells his new-found friend, “for there was I born and there my father and mother are yet.” But he had been called out of Dark Land, he goes on to say, by one Mr Tell-truth. It was the truth, don’t you see, that had called him out of nature’s darkness and had set his feet on the pilgrim path to glory and so, he would stand against “great odds” – aye, against All odds, to fight for that truth.

The hymn belongs to the spiritual soldier, my brethren. To that man, or that woman, or that young person who has not only said “Set down my name, sir,” as they have enlisted in the army of the Lord, but are prepared to take up arms against every sea of trouble that would threaten the well-being of the truth of their redemption’s story. Would to God we would see a generation of believers who could hurl forth such an invitation as this with a clear conscience before all men –

“Who would true valour see,  
Let him come hither.”

Now, of course, John Bunyan, like all his Puritan bred, was absolutely practical in every application of redeeming truth to our hearts. The heat of the battle can be a comparatively easy position when set along side those thought of desolation that arise in our hearts when it appears to the “natural” eye that the enemy has won the day and that the voice of defeat is already ringing in our ears. But Bunyan seems to offer one strange antidote for this aspect of battle, and it is this –

“...a right  
To be a Pilgrim.”

“Whoso beset him round  
With dismal stories,  
Do but themselves confound;  
His strength the more is.  
No lion can him fright,  
He’ll with a giant fight,  
**But he will have a right**  
To be a pilgrim.”

Bunyan was no mere theoretical soldier; he had been faced with many a “dismal story” and had been afflicted by those “dismal” aspects of our Christianity that don’t seem to have much currency in our present-day evangelical gospel. But, where do we find a more desolate and pathetic scene than that time when our author is being separated from wife and children to be led away “the prisoner of Jesus

Christ” at Bedford jail? He didn’t want to go from them, because, as he says in his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, “... I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all besides.” That little one, who had never seen her father in the flesh and now, would also be



deprived of his tender presence in her life. That was a “dismal story.” And the Castle called “Doubting” was not unfamiliar to Bunyan, neither was its great hulking occupant, Giant Despair. And yet, from these very things he’ll draw his power to fight, both with “lions” and with “giants”, for this is part of “his right to be a pilgrim.” In scriptural terms the doctrine reads like this: “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction,” “Yea and all who shall live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” It’s the very birth-right of the child of God to suffer, and he will know this birth-right the most keenly when he stands for that truth that has brought him to life in Christ.

Garrisoned again, then by this thought, Mr Valiant-for truth hurls out his challenge once again:

“Hobgoblin nor foul fiend  
Can daunt his spirit;  
He knows he at the end  
Shall life inherit.  
Then fancies fly away,  
He’ll care not what men say;  
He’ll labour night and day  
To be a pilgrim.”

Here is the great secret of running the Christian race, or fighting the Christian fight; we run, or fight, with the light of everlasting life in our eye, because everlasting life means life with Christ. Let a believer once get the light of heaven’s glory into his heart and not all the powers of hell will turn him from the Christian conflict. For, he knows – although the battle may be sore at times –

“He knows he at the end  
Shall life inherit.”

Let all men rise up against him, He’ll care not what men say,” for in that great day when all the books are open, if he has stood in the defence of the glorious gospel of grace, he knows that he will receive the commendation that Valiant-for-truth received – “Thou has worthily behaved thy-self.” What a “blessed indifference” that is to be indifferent to what men have to say once we have heard what God has had to say and he has said that he has called us to be “set for the defence of the gospel.” “This was your victory, even your faith,” said Greatheart again, “it was so, “said Valiant-for truth, “I believed, the therefore came out, got into the way, fought all that set themselves against me, and, my believing, am come to this place.

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier.” (2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 3)



# The Christian In Complete Armour

## (4) The Christian's Spiritual Shield

“Above all, taking the shield of faith....” What doth this “above all” point to? There is variety among interpreters about it. Jerome reads it, **in all things** taking the shield of faith; i.e. in all duties, enterprises, temptations or afflictions – in whatever you are called to do or suffer, take faith.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. And how can the Christian ever please himself in that wherein he doth not please his God?”

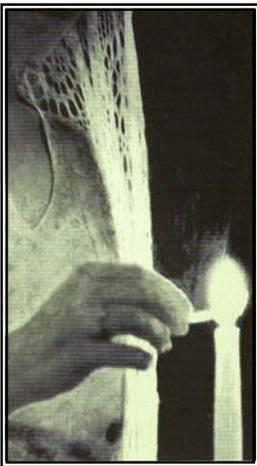
Others read it, “**Over all**, take the shield of faith;” i.e. take it over all your graces, as that which will cover them. All other graces have their safety from faith; they lie secure under the shadow of faith, as an army lies safe under the protection and command of a strong castle, planted round with cannons.

But, we shall follow our translation, as being most comprehensive – “Above all, take,” etc.; that is, among all the pieces of armour which you are to provide and wear for your defence, let this have the pre-eminence of your care to get, and having got, to keep.

Now, that the apostle meant to give a pre-eminency to faith above the other graces is seen – **First** – By the piece of armour that he compares it to – the shield. This, of old, was prized above all other pieces by soldiers. They counted it greater shame to lose their shield, than to lose the field, and therefore when under the very foot of their enemy, they would not part with it, but esteemed it an honour to die with their shield in their hand. It was the charge that one laid upon her son, going into war, when she gave

him a shield, that he should either bring his shield home with him, or be brought home upon his shield. **Second** – By the noble effect that is here ascribed to faith – “by which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” The other pieces are nakedly commended, “take the girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness,” and so on... yet, when Paul speaks of faith, he ascribes the whole victory to it. This quenched “all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Every piece hath its necessary use in the Christian’s warfare, but their efficacy and our benefit from them is in their conjunction with faith. “Above all, taking the shield of faith.”

William Gurnall,



## WAITING FOR THE SABBATH

*The following extract is from a Jewish booklet on the Sabbath, but should serve to remind believers of the blessedness of the Lord’s Day for them.*

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When the day was about to set, the Jewish child became aware of a sense of family consecration. It was then that the scattered members of the family gathered to welcome the Sabbath. The first to be honoured with the privilege was the mother. It was she who had laboured most to bring the Sabbath spirit into the home and it was only proper that she should be first to welcome the “Queen.” Immediately before lighting the candles, she would drop some coins into the “charity-box,” associating the spirit of charity with light and Sabbath rest. The child reverently watched as the mother kindled the lights. She covered her eyes with the palms of her hands, recited the traditional blessing, and prayed for the wellbeing of her family. Then she kissed every child, and this kiss, too, the child felt, was unlike any other he received during the week. It had a rare sweetness and loveliness reflecting the Sabbath spirit.

Equally impressive was the father's role. Returning from the evening services at the Synagogue, he would bestow the benediction of Jacob upon his child. The father placed his hands on each child's bowed head and pronounced the traditional blessing – for boys: “May God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh,” and for girls: “May God make you as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.”

The ceremony of welcoming the Sabbath “Bride” reached its climax at the Friday evening meal. The child joined in chanting the hymn, Sholom Alaychem, welcoming the “Angels of Peace” which figuratively visited every Jewish home on the Sabbath. The hymn was followed by the father's recital of the last chapter of Proverbs wherein the “woman of worth” (his own wife) is praised in glowing terms, and is declared to be “more precious than rubies.”

Gone was the plainness of the weekday meals. Gone were the hurry and worry of the mid-week family gatherings. At the Friday evening meal, there was complete relaxation as we waited for the Sabbath:

“He should rejoice at the coming of the Sabbath, and make the house ready as one does for the coming of a distinguished guest.”

(The Sabbath – Rabbi Millgram)

## **BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE**

**By Mrs Seaton**

Dear Boys and Girls,

About a hundred-and-fifty years ago a little girl was born into a family by the name of Crosby who lived in the city of New York in the United States of America. The little girl was named Frances, but it soon became obvious that Frances was unable to see like other children. She soon became totally blind and had to attend a special school for blind children.

Once she learnt how to read and write with special books and “pens” she began to compose little poems. As she grew older these poems

became more serious and then, once she had become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ her poems became hymns that told about what He had done when He died on the Cross and what He meant to her. “Praise Him, Praise Him, Jesus our blessed Redeemer,” is one of her hymns, and there are many, many more.

Another famous lady hymn writer of that time heard about Frances Crosby, and her name was Frances Ridley Havergal. When she heard that Frances Crosby was blind she began to wonder how she could compose such lovely hymns. She soon found the answer and wrote it in a little poem about Frances Crosby.

“Must not the world be a desolate place,  
For eyes that are sealed with the seal of years?  
Eyes that are open only for tears?  
How can she sing in the dark like this?  
What is her fountain of light and bliss?”

(And here was the answer, boys and girls)

“Her **heart** can see, her **heart** can see!  
Well may she sing so joyously!  
For the King Himself in His tender Grace,  
Has shown her the brightness of His Face ...  
Bright cloud indeed must that darkness be,  
Where “Jesus only” the **heart** can see.”

You see, boys and girls, we can't “see” Jesus today with our “physical” eyesight, but we see Him by having faith in our hearts. That's what Frances Crosby had; and that's what Frances Ridley Havergal meant when she said, “Her heart can see, her heart can see.”

Listen to what the Bible says: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” They shall see Him now by faith, and then in heaven for evermore.

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