

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

Kennedy of Dingwall

The Pastor's Letter (May 1971)

There is something about human nature that tends to disown the voice of the prophet and perhaps, that is why “Kennedy of Dingwall” has been left to drift on the sea of Christian forgetfulness. Yet, no man of his time saw half so clearly the issues that were soon to confront the church of Christ and the whole new system of things that was soon to hold the pre-eminence and become the accepted practice of the church in the work of evangelism.

The battlefield on which the issues were fought out, and on which Kennedy of Dingwall stood almost alone against the other evangelicals of his day, was the evangelistic campaigns then being conducted under the leadership of Mr. D. L. Moody.

Kennedy wasn't so much taken up with the “excesses” of this new type of evangelism, although he spoke quite clearly about these excesses; nor was he primarily concerned with what the American evangelist was saying, for much of what he said had a true enough ring about it; what Kennedy was concerned about was **not** being said and what was not being told. Moody evangelism, he declared, was deficient in some of the great fundamentals of evangelistic preaching, such as the inability of the sinner dead in trespasses and sins to work any good work unto his own salvation, and the absolute necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God to beget faith in the stoney heart so that it might close with the offer of Christ in the gospel.

These things Kennedy expounds in a booklet entitled, “Hyper-Evangelism,” an extract from which appears in article three in this edition of the Wicket Gate and which clearly displays the seeds of that type of gospel preaching which were being sown in Kennedy's day and which have now become full grown in our own day with such devastating results. “No pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge,” in this new kind of

evangelism, Kennedy assesses, “and no indication is given of a desire to bring souls in self-condemnation to accept the punishment of their iniquity.” Is this not one of the notable lacks in our modern method of preaching to the unconverted where it is simply “Open up your heart and let the Saviour in?” No reference, you see, to the purpose and the glory of God in the salvation of the sinner, but simply a gospel made for man’s convenience and under man’s manipulation.

Kennedy’s views, of course, are not popular today, even though his hundred year old warning should be staring at us out of every vacant pew and a million-and-one meaningless decision cards. But if John Kennedy’s views would be unpopular now, even in the light of one hundred years of gospel decline, how much more so, we might well imagine, in those days when they were first uttered in the midst of what the whole evangelical church was hailing as a new visitation of the Spirit of the Lord in revival.

Even his closest friend, the very man who preached at the opening of that church at Dingwall, and the man we would esteem above all others among the sons of men, failed to see the immediate issues as clearly as John Kennedy of Dingwall. This was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whose large heart at that particular time believed that there would soon be a great return to the old-fashioned Calvinistic gospel preaching of the Puritans and the Reformers, and whose love for Moody’s person seems to have dulled his perception with regard to the deficiencies of his gospel. Ten years later on, however, those views had been modified, and, “When Dale, in 1881 repeated his belief that ‘Mr Spurgeon stands alone among the modern Leaders of Evangelical Nonconformity in his fidelity to the older Calvinistic creed,’ Spurgeon did not attempt to refute it.” (Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.)

Even in the early days of the fray, however, Spurgeon still stood firmly behind “the Spurgeon of the North,” as John Kennedy was very often called, and he continuously defended him as truth’s defender in his day. “We are sorry to read every now and then,” he wrote in the *Sword and Trowel*, “the most bitter reflections of Dr. Kennedy, as

though he were an enemy of the gospel. He is fearful lest the doctrines of grace should be forgotten, and he is jealous for divine sovereignty. He is also fearful that the work owes more to music than to the force of truth, and is more the work of fleshly excitement than of the Holy Spirit. Is it altogether an unpardonable sin to feel such a sacred anxiety?"

Herein lay the root of the trouble, however, for few shared with Kennedy this "sacred anxiety." "It was the day of ebb-tide," says Professor John MacLeod in his *Scottish Theology*, "and the definite out and out Calvinism of another day was going out of fashion and yielding place to a presentation of the gospel which, without being pronouncedly Arminian, avoided the emphasis which the older Evangelicals laid on the New Birth as a Divine Intervention." Moodyism could well-accommodate the new liberalism that was abroad in Scotland, even in the ranks of Kennedy's own Free Church denomination, and Moody had no hesitation in lauding the modernist Henry Drummond – one of his greatest supporters – even though his book on the *Greatest Gift in the World* just about whittled away every fundamental and basic tenet of the evangelical faith.

The whole picture of a popular evangelist who sweeps almost all but a few off their feet – even though he proves to be the ally of almost every shade and shape of theological opinion – is one that should not be difficult for us to appreciate today. The personality of such men is seldom under review, but the message that is preached must always be held up to the closest scrutiny, especially where many are going to be influenced in a future day. This is simply what John Kennedy of Dingwall did. He sounded a warning note of impending desolation that went largely unheard in his day.

May we today hear that same trumpet's certain sound – for certain sound it is – and hear it as a "return to arms" – the arms of the old gospel of the glory of God in the works of redemption.

Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton



The Christian In Complete Armour

(6) The Christian's Sword

“... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” And why is the Word of God compared to a “sword?” For this inquiry let this suffice.

The sword being of both general and consistent use among soldiers, and also being that weapon with which they not only defend themselves, but do the greatest execution upon their enemies, it most fitly sets for the necessity and excellent use of the Word of God, by which the Christian both defends himself, and offends, yea cuts down before him all his enemies. **And further**, why is this sword attributed to “the Spirit?”

First: He is the **author** of it. A weapon it is which He alone formed and fashioned by His hand; it came not out of any creature's forge, but “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2nd Peter 1 verse 21)

Second: The Spirit is the only true **Interpreter** of the Word. Hence that known passage of Bernard: The scriptures must be read, and can be understood, by that Spirit alone by whom they were made. He that made the lock can alone help us to a key that will fit its wards and open its fence. “No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation.” (2nd Peter chapter 1 verse 20) And why not? It follows – because it came not from any private spirit at first. “For the prophecy came not

in old time by the will of man,” etc. (2nd Peter 1 verse 21) and who knows the mind of the Spirit so well as Himself?

Third: It is only the Spirit of God that can give the Word its **Efficacy And Power in the Soul**. It is His office to seal the soul with the impress of things believed. Except He lays His weight on the truths we read and hear, and as it were cut their very image in our minds and hearts, they leave no more impression than a seal set upon a rock or a stone would do. It was not the disciples’ rowing, but Christ’s coming that could still the storm or bring them safely to shore. And not all our study can fix the mind or pacify the heart in the belief of the Word, till the Spirit of God comes. “Do you now believe?” saith Christ to His disciples. How oft, alas! Had the same things sounded in their ears, and knocked at their doors for entertainment, but never could be received, till now that the Spirit put in His finger to lift up the latch.

The words thus opened present us with this important doctrinal conclusion – “Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

(Wm Gurnall)

Hyper-Evangelism

By John Kennedy of Dingwall

My objection to the teaching to which I refer is, that it ignores the supreme end of the gospel which is the manifestation of the Divine glory; and misrepresents it as merely unfolding a scheme of salvation adapted to man’s convenience. This objection has grown and has been confirmed in my mind, by considering: -



[1] **That no pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, and no indication given of a desire to**

bring souls in self-condemnation, to accept the punishment of their iniquity.

The law of God has its place in the book, and its use in the work of God. “By the law is the knowledge of sin;” and the Spirit, who convicts of sin, uses it in that department of His work. A due regard to the glory of God demands that it be so used. Sinners are not saved on a misunderstanding as to what they are and what they merit. They must know Him against whom they have sinned. They must know what is justly due to Him from them as His creatures. They must be made acquainted with their iniquity as well as guilt, as sinners. And through the coming of the commandment sin must “revive” in their consciousness, so that they know that they are desperately wicked, as surely as that their persons are condemned to die. **Without this they can have no conception of Gospel Grace.**

Any hope attained to without this, can only be based on a misunderstanding, and must involve dishonour to God. God is not to be conceived of as One who has to study man’s convenience only, instead of supremely consulting His own glory. It should be an aim of preaching, therefore, to bring sinners to plead guilty before God; to feel themselves in excuseless guilt, shut up to the Sovereign mercy of Him against whom they have sinned. The attainment of this may be the result of a moment’s working of the power of God, or it may be reached only after a protracted process; but to this all must come who are reconciled to God.

[II] **It ignores the sovereignty and power of God in the dispensation of His grace.** This omission is usually justified on the ground that reference to these (doctrines) are apt to be abused or to give needless offence. If men are to be told that salvation is entirely at the disposal of God’s sovereign will, and that sinners are so utterly lost that only the working of God’s power can move them, either to will or to do, what is required by the claims of the law and the call of the gospel, then the result will be that some will be offended and go away, others fold their hands and sleep, and others sink down into despair.

Am I to be silenced by fear of the result of telling that it is His right to regulate, by His own sovereign will, His own work of grace? There is of course frequent reference to the Spirit, and an acknowledgement of the necessity of His work, but there is, after all, very little allowed to Him to do; and bustling men feel and act as if somehow His power was under their control. In the prominent teaching there is no exposure of the total depravity and the utter spiritual impotence of souls "dead in trespasses and sins." To face this reality in the light of God's word, would be to discover the necessity of the Almighty agency of the Holy Ghost. This cannot be endured. This must not be preached to sinners, it is said, lest they fold their hands and sleep. They are intelligent and responsible beings, and must be differently dealt with.

And how do you propose to treat them? **Are you to hide from them what they must know, ere they can ever act as intelligent beings in dealing with their souls' condition?** Yes, you are men of faith, but yours is faith in men. The man who can cry in faith for life with a valley of dry bones before him, is the man who has faith in God.

[111] **No care is taken to show, in the light of the doctrine of the cross, how God is glorified in the salvation of a sinner.** The gospel seems convenient for man, and that suffices. How salvation is to the praise of God's glory the preacher is not careful to show, and the hearer is not anxious to know. To any unprejudiced observer, this must have appeared a marked feature of revival teaching. Souls who have a vague sense of danger, excited by the sensational, instead of an intelligent conviction of sin produced by the light and power of applied truth, are quite ready to be satisfied with such teaching as this. It is no more than the quiet of a dead soul from whom has been removed an unintelligent sense of danger. A true sense of peace with God there cannot be unless a sinner, assured that God was glorified by Him who died on the cross, can, ... approach Him in the right of the crucified and exalted Jesus, having hope of acceptance in His sight. Where there is no wounding there can be no healing of conscience.

[IV] No precaution is offered against a tendency to antinomianism (i.e. that the moral law is not binding) in those who profess to have believed) He (the new convert) is taught that now he has nothing to do with confession of sin, because his sins were long ago disposed of, and that he should not now remember them. In his leader's prayers he never hears any confession of sin, and he is apt to think that if he follows him he must be right. True, he is urged to work; and there is no service, however high, which during his noviciate, he is not directed to attempt. The work which he is disposed to choose, and the work which he is instructed to engage in, is to preach to others what he himself has found. Meetings are multiplied that he may attend them, and crowds are gathered that he may address them. The excitement of his first impressions is thus to be kept up by the bustle of evangelistic service ... breathing freely only in the heated air of meetings, craving to be pampered with vapid sentiment ... requiring relief in frequent bursts of hymn-singing, in spouting addresses as void of scripture truth as of common sense, and in belching flippant questions in the face of all he meets.

A religion without reverence and without contrition, can alone be fostered under such teaching as this. But now as surely as of old, "Thus saith the Lord," "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." No as of old, the heirs of the kingdom which cannot be moved, serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear. And only in that measure can they taste "the peace of God," and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By
Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

Many years ago, a young man who was an American, came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and the joy that this

brought him made him very anxious that others should know of the Saviour too. David Brainerd, for that was his name became determined to take the gospel to the Red Indians of North America.

Those red-skins of that time were very fierce and had many strange customs. Above all else, they were very suspicious of the “pale-faces”, as they called the white skinned people. It would be very dangerous for this young man to go into their country. However, so great was David Brainerd’s love for the Lord Jesus that he prayed earnestly that he would be given strength and courage for the task.

You know, boys and girls, God never leaves us to our own strength when we seek to do His work in telling the gospel to others, and David Brainerd found this out in a very special way.

On his first journey to the forks of the Delaware River a strange thing happened. He had been told of a very ferocious tribe of Indians who lived in the forests of New Jersey, and he made up his mind to take the gospel to them. So, off he went, and as he approached their settlement he saw the smoke of their camp fires. It was evening, so he decided to wait until morning before going into the settlement. Before going off to sleep, David got down on his knees as usual to ask God’s blessing and help for all that was before him the following day. As he kneeled in prayer, a rattlesnake crept to his side, lifted its horrible head as if to strike, flicked its forked tongue almost in his face, and then, without any noticeable reason, glided swiftly away into the brushwood.

Now as David Brainerd was on his knees, thinking that he was alone with his God there were others present – Redskins! They were silently watching all that took place and were amazed at the rattlesnake’s behaviour. “The great spirit is with the paleface,” they said; and they gave him a prophet’s welcome, and listened to all he had to tell them about God and His Son Jesus Christ the Saviour.

Surely God answered his prayers in a wonderful way.

Love, Mrs Seaton

Great Hymns



and their Writers

“There is a land
of Pure Delight”

by

Isaac Watts.

When a man is the author of over six-hundred hymns, and when these hymns include such as “O God our help in ages past,” “When I survey the Wond’rous Cross,” “Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,” “Come we that love the

Lord,” “Join all the glorious names,” and “I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,” then a person might be excused for finding difficulty in deciding which of those hymns he should chose to entitle “great.” Such is the case when our minds turn to “The father of English hymn-writing,” Isaac Watts, and we have chosen our hymn for this edition, not because it is necessarily the greatest of Watts’ hymns, but simply because it represents the depth of our author’s faith and hope, and also, because it is a theme that should be much on the believer’s heart and mind.

“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign,” the hymn begins.

And it is, perhaps, not surprising that we often find “The Serephic Doctor,” as old Isaac Watts was called, dwelling on that place where “everlasting spring abides,” for it is there that the saints of God gather around the Throne of the Lamb and sing eternal praises to His Name.

You see, it was this business of the Church’s “song” that first set the young Isaac Watts on the career that was soon to make his name a household word. In the days when young Isaac was taken along to the house of God the people of God were accustomed to sing only “The Psalms of David in Metre.” This greatly disturbed the young believer, for, he wanted to know, “seeing the Scriptures themselves command

us to sing and give thanks in the Name of Christ, why in such singing (as psalm singing) should we be forbidden even to mention that Name?" "Why?" he further asked, "when it is permissible to pray and preach in Christ's Name should we be required to exclude it from our praise?"

The gauntlet that young Isaac had thrown down was taken up by his father, a non-conformist who had suffered imprisonment for conscience sake and he challenged his young son to provide the church with an example of "Christian" song. At their very next meeting the non-conformist congregation at Southampton were introduced to what is now known as the 65th Paraphrase – "Behold the Glories of the Lamb" – and the singing of hymns, once again, had become part of Christian praise.

Watts wrote on almost every subject that touches the believer's hope and trust in Christ, and he dwelt on "The Glories of the Lamb," not only "amidst His Father's Throne," but on that "wondrous Cross" where he invites us to –

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down."

He also disclaims any selfish motive in writing these hymns: "I made no pretences," he said, "to the name of a poet or a polite writer ... it was not my design to exalt myself to the rank and glory of poets, but I was ambitious to be a servant to the churches and a helper to the joy of the meanest Christian." He well remembered, as he says, "the dull indifference that sat upon the faces of the whole congregation while the psalm was on their lips," and it was for that reason that he "became ambitious to be ... a helper to the joy of the meanest Christian."

Needles to say, he went right to the source and spring of that joy, for where does the believer find his chiefest joy but in the Person and Work of his glorious Redeemer Jesus Christ in all that He has purchased for the saint in that "land of pure delight." No wonder

Watts was called “The Poet of the Atonement” as well as “The Serephic Doctor,” for the theme of Redemption as well as the theme of Glory sounds to the very depths of almost everything he wrote. And why not? If there is a place of “everlasting spring,” and “never-withering flowers,” then it is entered by the child of God through the blood of Christ that has reconciled him to his Father in heaven. But, in this particular hymn it is that entering into the inheritance that Watts is concerned to speak about, for although heaven is “the purchased possession” for the believer in Christ, still withall –

“Death like a narrow sea divides,
That heavenly land from ours.”

The simile that Watts uses is a familiar one and is lifted straight out of the history of the earthly people of God in the Old Testament.

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling floods,
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.”

The Israelites of old had been promised the earthly Canaan, but between them and it there rolled the swelling floods of the river of the Jordan valley. But how much greater a flood do “the floods of death” sometimes present to the trembling saint who, although a saint of God is still a “timorous mortal” for all that ...

“But timorous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea;
And linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.”

How human our author was – and realistic, too. He had been no stranger, either to suffering or sorrow, and as a small crippled boy he had often stood and gazed upon the prison walls that held his Godly father in the utmost misery.

As a young man, rather than forsake the “faith of his father” he refused an offer to study for the Church of England, choosing rather to cast in his lot with the persecuted non-conformists. After a Pastorate of only ten years (in the chapel of the great John Owen) his health completely broke and for the rest of his life he lived, not only a cripple, but an invalid, as well. Indeed, there was little to tie this dear Isaac Watts to the world, but with what honesty does he relate that “earth-clinging” facet of our old nature that would bind us still and make us “fear to launch away.” All he can do is lift his eyes to that very heaven that he longs to enter but fears to approach and pray for such a glimpse of eternity that the gloom of the passage across the river will be dispelled.

“O! could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love,
With unclouded eyes.”

How dependent we are upon the Lord of grace! Not only must he **give us** salvation, and the **inheritance of** salvation in heaven, but He must also **set us** upon that summit of hope where we can see that inheritance and gain strength to lay hold upon it.

“Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er,
Not Jordan’s stream, nor death’s cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore.”

Indeed, indeed, it is “all of grace.” Not only must we be “brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand,” but we must be led into Canaan by the one and the same omnipotence. “And whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified” From Egypt to Canaan it is “the Lord’s doings, and wondrous in our eyes.” Through grace, the condemned sinner is set for that “land of pure delight where saints immortal reign.” This is salvation and this is the gospel.



Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 35)

This is one of David's "Psalms of Imprecation", the other three being, the seventh, the sixty-ninth and the one-hundred-and-ninth.

David's strong cries for justice have caused many to recoil from these psalms and slip into that soul-destroying sin of casting doubt upon God's Holy Word. And yet, not only are these words of David set forth for our learning here but, as Andrew Bonar so rightly sees in them – "The awful utterance of the Holy One regarding those that hate Him without a cause." It is our dis-similarity to Christ that makes us adopt a wrong view about justice, but, again as Bonar points out, that shall be remedied in that day when we shall see Christ as He is, and shall be like him

There is nothing in this Psalm wherein God's people may not fully join, especially on that day when their views of justice shall be far clearer and fuller than now. On that day we shall be able to understand how Samuel could hew Agag in pieces, and the Godly hosts of Israel utterly slay in Canaan man and woman and child, at God's command. We shall be able, not only to fully agree in the doom – "Let them be confounded," etc., but even to sing, "Amen, Hallelujah," over the smoke of torment; (Revelations 19 verses 1-2.

Andrew Bonar

Verse 1. "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me" Doth a Nimrod oppress thee? A Laban defraud thee? Yet, take not the matter into thine own hands by attempting unlawful courses. Presume not to be judge in thine own cause, but often remember what the apostle taught his Thessalonians: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you."

From Isaac Traven's Sermon at Paul's Cross (1630)

Verse 3. “Draw out also the spear, and stop the way ...” The spear in the days of Saul and David was a favourite weapon. A valiant man bravely defending a narrow pass might singly with his lance keep back a pursuing host, and give time for his friends to escape. David would have his God become his heroic defender, making his enemies to pause.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verse 3. “... say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” If God speak comfort, let hell roar horror. God may speak (i) With His own Voice; and thus he gave assurance to Abraham. (ii) He may speak by His Works; for, actual mercies to us demonstrate that we are in his favour, and shall not be condemned. (iii) He may speak by His Son; “Come unto me, all yet that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (iv) He may speak by His Scripture; this is God’s epistle to us, and his letter patent, wherein are granted to us all the privileges of salvation. (v) He may speak by His ministers; for, to them he hath given “the ministry of reconciliation.” (vi) He doth speak this by His Spirit; he “sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” By all theses voices, God says to His Elect, “I am thy salvation.”

Thomas Adams

Verse 8. “Let destruction come upon him at unawares ...” This tremendous imprecation is frequently fulfilled. God’s judgments are often sudden and unexpected. Death enters the persecutors’ houses without pausing to knock at their doors. The thunderbolt of justice leaps from its hiding-place, and in one crash the wicked are broken for ever.

“... and let his net that he hath hid catch himself.” Men set a trap and catch their own fingers. They throw up stones and they fall upon their own heads. How often Satan outwits himself and burns himself with his own coals! This will doubtless be one of the aggravations of hell, that men will torment themselves with what were once the fond devices of their rebellious minds. They curse, and are cursed. They kick the pricks, and tear themselves. They pour forth floods of fire, and it burns them within and without.

C. H. S.

Verse 12. “They rewarded me evil for good ...” Fulfilled in David, but perfectly fulfilled in “Great David’s Greater Son,” and still experienced to some degree in the lives of “all those who would live righteously in Christ.”

Verse 13. “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth ...” In their adversity in the past David had been a friend in need and a fellow-sufferer in their sufferings ...

Verse 15. “But in mine adversity they rejoiced ...” And such as rejoiced in the sufferings of others are sick of the devil’s disease. O sires, do not make others’ mourning your music; do not make others’ tears your wine.

Thomas Brooks

