

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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An Ever-Abiding Principle of Christian Living

The Pastor's Letter (March 1972)

My Dear Friends,

The past month, in common with many others, has seen yet another catalogue of violence, crime and tragedy let loose upon the world and those who live in it. The presence of evil and lawlessness has almost the ability to be felt in our midst in these days in which we live, and even the believing people of God are often hard-pressed to know how to react in the thick blackness that almost seems to threaten the very existence of life itself.

This short note is not to set forth any universal course of procedure that will bring instant tranquility and peace to the sincere believer “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,” but simply to remind us that the very blackness itself may well be used by us as a “shelter in a time of storm” and, in fact, turned to our advantage to the praise of God’s Name. You get the principle set out in the apostle Paul’s epistle to the church at Colosse – in the thirteenth verse of the first chapter. Paul is relating to the Colossian Christians the gist of a prayer that he has been offering up on their behalf, and one of the things that he has been praying might be their portion, is a spirit of thankfulness; that they might learn to give “thanks unto the Father.” He then enumerates some of the causes for thanksgiving (not least among them, of course, the fact of God being their “Father”) and one of these is contained in the remembrance that it is the heavenly Father, says Paul, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

The picture that the great apostle draws for the Colossians, and all the believing people of God, is a very vivid one. He sees our heavenly Father as entering into that domain of darkness that was the land of our birth by nature, conquering the old prince of that domain, the devil, liberating that multitude that no man can number that he held in bondage, and leading them out and “planting” them afresh in a

new and glorious kingdom, even “the kingdom of his dear Son.” It’s like Israel being “delivered” from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and being “transplanted” in the land of Canaan, in the place of promise. That deliverance and translating, you remember, was ever the subject of the prophets’ preaching to call a thankless people of Israel back to that needed steadfast love towards Jehovah; and it is the same motive that lies behind Paul’s gracious prayer for the church at Colosse. Not that that church was thankless, but in order to make them all the more thankful Paul will hold forth the facts of their great release and deliverance from the “power of darkness” and their translation into “the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”

Now, of course, that is an ever-abiding principle of our Christian living: “He that is forgiven much, the same loveth much.” That is, the more we come to realise our “deliverance” and “translation” the more we will be “Giving thanks unto the Father ... who hath delivered us from the power of darkness” etc. But, here is the application of that principle, surely, especially for us who have been called to live and to witness in these days of such darkness and blackness: the more the darkness is manifest, the more our thanksgiving should be manifest. In other words, as the “power of darkness” begins to more and more display that darkness, then the thanksgiving and thankfulness of the believer delivered from that darkness – **now so manifest** - should abound more and more where it seldom ever abounded before.

What generation of Christians ever had a better opportunity to see sin as so “exceeding sinful”? To see the power of darkness as so almost near all-powerful? Even so, then; the more obvious it is to see what we have been delivered from the more thankful we should be for our deliverance. There was a time when it was said that there was “A face of Godliness upon this land” of ours. Now, at such a time, the believing church of Christ may have been excused a little for a spirit of matter-of-fact acceptance of the salvation that was held in common by so many people. This wasn’t the case, of course, and those old believers of those days knew the darkness of their own hearts and minds that they had been delivered from. But, we today, you see, have both counts to assist us: the inner knowledge of our own black

natures from which we have been delivered, **and** the gross darkness – manifesting the power of darkness – out of which God has called us, into His marvellous light.

We are often exhorted: look around you and see the many benefits that God has bestowed upon you; should this not make you thankful? And, indeed, it should. But, we may also turn even the present evil days that we live in to a source of thanksgiving, as well, for, look around you, believer, - at all the sin, all the evil, all the wrath, all the iniquity, all the blackness, all the darkness – and surely that look will cause you to be found – “Giving thanks unto the Father ... who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

So be it!
W. J. Seaton.



Gleanings In the Psalms (Psalm 39)

Verse 1 “**I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue ...**” Socrates reports of one Pambo, an honest, well meaning man, who came to his friend, desiring him to teach him one of David’s psalms; he read to him this verse. He answered: this one verse is enough if I learn it well. Nineteen years after, he said that he, in all that time, had hardly learnt the lesson.

Samuel Page

Verse 2 “**I was dumb with silence, I held my peace ...**” If thou hold thy peace, God speaks for thee; and if God speaks for us, it is better than we can speak for ourselves.

Christopher Sutton

Verse 3 “**My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.**” “Musing” is a commendable practice when it is done in the right spirit, and we could do with musing and less amusing in our Christianity today. The people of Judea who went out to the wilderness to listen to John the Baptist “mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not,” and good John Bunyan, too, followed the practice as he “sat by the fire” in his house, “musing on my great wretchedness,” as he says. But there is a musing that is not wholesome, and David indulges in that harmful musing here. In his own time of affliction, he looks around him and sees that the wicked are prospering while he is cast down. And as Spurgeon puts it, “While his heart was musing it was fusing, for the subject was confusing.” “Why do the wicked prosper?” is a question that very often afflicts the minds of the Lord’s own people and unless their musing on such a question is directed towards the Lord and His providences, then, “the fire” will “burn,” as in David’s case. **But**, “then spake I with my tongue,” he says, “Lord make me to know mine end ...” And once his musing takes on this eternal flavour, the fire dies and he rests in the Lord, and His providential dealings with him.

Verse 5 “**... mine age is as nothing before thee ...**” David might truly have said, Mine age is short in respect of Methuselah’s age – said to be nine hundred and sixty-nine years, or Mine age is very short in comparison to the age of the world, or Mine age in this world is exceeding little compared to the duration of the other world to come, or Mine age is scarcely anything before the angels, whose duration began with this world. But all these are far short of his comparison which he here maketh of his age **with God** who is eternal, both **from** everlasting **to** everlasting.

Nathaniel Hardy

Verse 6 “Surely every man waketh in a vain show ...”

Every carnal man walks in a vain show, and yet how vain he is of his show of vanity! He labours all his life for the profit of riches, and yet in death his riches will not profit him. He that views an ox grazing in a fat pasture, concluded that he is but preparing for the day of slaughter.

William Secker

Verse 8 “Make me not the reproach of the foolish ...” Doubt not this; that of all the bitter agony that will be the portion of the lost soul, not the least will be the bitter reproaches and derision of those evil companions who have seduced him to his ruin ... “For that morsel of meat to have sold thy birthright! For that fleshly pleasure of a few days to have bartered thine eternal jewel! For a few grains of yellow earth to have missed the city with streets of gold! O fool, beyond all folly! O madman, beyond all insanity! Truly we have need to pray with all earnestness, “Make me not the reproach of the foolish.”

Origen

Verse 9 “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst’t it.” I know not a better illustration of what the feelings of a saint should be, in the hour of bitterness, than the case of Richard Cameron’s father. The aged saint was in prison “for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The bleeding head of his martyred son was brought to him by his unfeeling persecutors, and he was asked derisively if he knew it. “I know it, I know it,” said the father, as he kissed the mangled forehead of his fair-haired son, “it is my son’s, my own dear son’s! It is the Lord! Good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but who hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days.”

H. Bonar

Verse 12 “I am a stranger ... and a sojourner ...”A stranger is one that has his abode in a foreign country, but a sojourner is one who intends not to settle, but only passes through a place. So is the child of God with regards to this world.

Thomas Manton



Men of the Awakening

William Romaine

In his sketch of William Romaine in “Five Christian Leaders”, J. C. Ryle uses the simile of an army to illustrate the Lord’s workings in the days of the great evangelical awakening of the 18th century.

Whitefield and Wesley he likens to “spiritual cavalry, who scoured the country and were found everywhere.” William Grimshaw is fancied as “an infantry soldier, who had his head-quarters at Haworth, and never went far from home.” While William Romaine, he tells us, “was a commander of heavy artillery, who held a citadel in the heart of a metropolis, and seldom stirred beyond its walls.” The latter picture is a graphic one and echoes the mighty thunderclaps of many of Romaine’s sermons which shook the city of London during the forty-nine years of his ministry there.

Unlike Daniel Rowlands, or John Berridge, both of whom we have mentioned in previous magazines, William Romaine appears to have begun the Christian ministry as a convinced evangelical; so that, by the time he came to London, in the year 1746, he was well equipped for the work which the Lord had for his hand in that great city.

Although he was to occupy a number of pulpits before his final settlement at St. Anne’s in Blackfriars, it is especially with his lectures at St. Dunstan’s in Fleet Street that his name is most readily associated. These lectures were begun in the year 1749 amidst great opposition, and continued until a few weeks before his death when he had begun his eighty-first year. It was said at that time, that those who came to London came “to see Garrick act and hear Romaine preach.” But popularity and conflict very often go hand in hand, and the

catalogue of oppositions which Romaine encountered at St. Dunstan's might have made other men at other times turn their backs and shake the dust from their shoes.

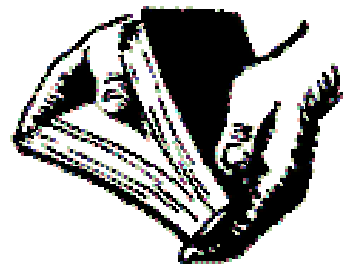
He was only permitted to use the building from seven o'clock in the evening, and up until the clock struck that hour the church-wardens kept the doors firmly bolted. It was their hope that, by keeping the congregation standing in the cold and driving rain of winter, they could discourage the people from hearing "the fanatic," as the Rector called him. When this failed, they next refused to heat the church; and when that met with no success they then left the place in darkness, so that Romaine was forced to preach from the light of one small candle in the midst of the blackness. They underpaid him - £18 a year – they took him to court, they accused him before the Bishop, but as one biographer puts it, "Though for years his stipend was only eighteen pound he wore homespun cloth, and lived so plainly that they could not **starve** him out. And although they repeatedly dragged him to the courts of law they could not **force** him out. And though they sought occasion against him in regard to his canons, they could not get the bishop to **turn** him out." And so he remained as we have said, until three days before the seven weeks illness which ended his life, at the full age of eighty-one.

Two short pages such as this can never hope to record the value of this "commander of the heavy artillery" during those days of the awakening. In fact, the whole series is intended simply as an introductory handshake to a few of these mighty men of valour who preached in the eighteenth century. We recommend Bishop Ryle's "Five Christian Leaders," and from its pages we close with a short assessment of William Romaine's character and work.

"He stood in a most prominent position in London for forty-nine years, testifying the gospel of the grace of God, and never flinching for a day. He stood alone, with almost no backers, supporters, or fellow-labourers. He stood in the same place, constantly preaching to the same hearers, and not able, like Whitefield, Wesley, Grimshaw, and other itinerant brethren, to preach old sermons. He stood there

witnessing to truths which were most unpopular, and brought down on him opposition, persecution, and scorn. He stood in the most public post, continually watched, observed, and noticed by unfriendly eyes, ready to detect faults in a moment if he committed them. Yet during all those forty-nine years, he maintained a blameless character, firmly upheld his first principles to the last, and died at length, like a good soldier at his post, full of days and honour. It is place and position that specially prove what we are. In England at this time there were not four spiritual champions greater and more honourable than William Romaine.”

The Bible Tells Me So



Thomas Watson:

The Bible is a rock of diamonds, a chain of pearls, the sword of the Spirit; it is the chart by which the Christian sails to eternity, the map by which he daily walks, the sundial by which he sets his life, the balance in which he weighs his actions.

R. B. Nichol:

Sin is Satan’s ladder; it has its top on earth and its foot in hell. God’s ladder is the Bible, and, as its foot is on the earth and its top in heaven, it is impossible for a man or a woman to sincerely take to that ladder and either remain worldly minded or finish up in hell. It must of necessity land them in heaven.

G. Gilfillan:

In relation to other books the Bible occupies a peculiar and unique position. It is **independent** of all others. It imitates no other book; it copies none; it hardly alludes to any other, whether in praise or blame. John never speaks of Plato, nor Paul of Demosthenes, nor Jesus of any writer, save Moses and the prophets. There is a certain grand **unconsciousness** about it, as in the Himalayan Hills, which cast the

same look of still sovereignty over an India unpeopled after the deluge, as over an India, the hive of sweltering nations.

[Thomas Halyburton:](#)

Come! See a book that told me all that ever I did! Is not this the Book of God?

[Dr J. Cumming:](#)

The fact that this book is now in my hand is one of the most stupendous miracles that has ever occurred, for it has been more persecuted and trodden upon than all the books of ancient and modern times put together. Were there to come into our midst a man who had outlived eighteen centuries – who had been cast into the sea, and not drowned – thrown to the wild beasts, and not devoured – made to drink deadly poison, and not killed – shot at and stabbed, and not injured – would you not believe that the broad shield of Omnipotence must have been over him, and that he lived and moved and had his being in the midst of a perpetual miracle? This Bible is such a man as that ... the Book of God which has been enshrined in perpetual miracle.

[H. W. Beecher:](#)

What a pin is when the diamond has dropped from its setting, that is the Bible when its emotive truths have been taken away. What a babe's clothes are when the baby has slipped out of them into death, and the mother's arms clasp only raiment, that's what the Bible would be if the Babe of Bethlehem and the deep truths that clothed His life should slip out of its pages.

[J. A. Macduff:](#)

Science! Thou hast tracked the lightning, traced the path of the tornado, uncurtained the distant planet, foretold the coming of the comet, and the return of the eclipse. But thou has never been able to gauge the depth of man's soul, or to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

[Anonymous:](#)

There is one thing that mars all the pleasures of my life. I am afraid the Bible is true. If I could know for sure that death is an eternal sleep, I should be happy: My joy would be complete. But here is the thorn that stings me: Here is the sword that pierces my very soul – If the Bible is true, I am lost for ever.

[Arrowsmith:](#)

We are generally desirous of having fair and well-printed Bibles; but the fairest and finest impression of the Bible is to have it well printed on the reader's heart.

[John Newton:](#)

I have many books which I cannot sit down to read. They are indeed good and sound, but, like half-pennies, there goes a great quantity to a small amount. There are silver books and a very few golden books. But I have one Book worth them all called the Bible.

[Dean Close:](#)

This book is the minister's "brief," and he must not travel out of the record, because it alone contains the sum and substance of all he has to say.

[Garbett:](#)

There is a Bible because there is a God; and there is only one Bible because there is only one God.

[R. M. M'Cheyne:](#)

One gem from this ocean is worth all the pebbles from earthly streams.

[Anonymous:](#)

This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.



BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Many years ago there lived in the town of Derby a girl called Joan Waste. She was blind, and very poor as well. In order to make some money to buy food and clothes she knitted strong woolen socks which she sold on the Market Days. Joan's mother was dead, and she lived with her father who was a rope-maker. Although she could not see, she still managed to help her daddy with his work but when he died, also, she then went to live with her brother.

Joan began to go to church and there she heard the Bible, God's own Word, being read. How thrilled she was with all she heard and she began to look forward all week to Sunday when she would once more hear about the most wonderful person who had now come into her life, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As Joan sat hour after hour knitting her never-ending pile of socks the needles seemed to be "click-clicking" even faster than usual, for she had begun to think of a very exciting plan. "Why should I not buy a copy of the Good News Book myself?" she thought; "I can't read it for myself, but surely I could find someone who could read it for me, and as they read it, they too will come to know about the Lord Jesus." And so, each week, more and more pairs of socks were taken to the Market and sold, and each week, some of the money was taken and was put aside in a little box.

At last, the day came when Joan had enough to buy her very own Bible. How happy she was as she carried her precious book under her arm; but what next? She had her Bible, but who was going to read it for her? "The best man of all to read it to me," thought Joan, "would be Master John Pemerton, the parish clerk, but poor Mr. Pemerton is in jail for not paying his debts." However, she was not discouraged, because her brother told her that even people in jail could still have visitors to come and see them, and so, on two days of every week, two strange visitors would visit Master Pemerton in Jail. One

of the visitors was the poor blind girl, Joan Waste, and the other was some other girl or boy who could be persuaded to lead her along the dark narrow streets to the jail.

As Joan sat in that cold, damp prison listening to the Bible being read, she would pay very great heed to all that was said. Little by little she came to know whole chapters of the gospel by heart and she would say them over and over to herself as she sat knitting away at her socks. How happy she was to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ and to carry his Word – the Bible – wherever she went; but all that was soon going to change. You see, boys and girls, in the days when Joan bought her Bible there was a very godly young King ruling on the Throne of England; his name was Edward. But this young King died and a new ruler came to the throne whose name was Mary. Queen Mary refused to allow ordinary people like Joan to have a Bible of their own and one day Joan was arrested and put into the prison. She was told that she must give up the Bible and all that she had learnt from it, but she said, “I believe all that I have learnt in God’s own Book, the Holy Scriptures, and I will not give up my Bible, or my love for Christ; I would rather give up my life.”

Queen Mary was a cruel Queen, boys and girls, who hated the true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and Joan Waste was taken and had to give up her life for Christ. She was burnt to death. She wanted to remain faithful to Jesus, no matter what it cost her, even her life.

I trust that each one of you boys and girls will think as highly of God’s Word as Joan did, even though you may never be asked to do what Joan did, and suffer in that way for it. But, I trust that you will learn to love all the wonderful truths found in the Bible, and especially, that you will learn to love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

Love,
Mrs. Seaton

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