

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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# The Pastor's Letter (January 1972)

## “The Doctrine of Plum-ism”

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My Dear Friends,

Many and varied are the customs and dishes that have now come to be associated with that time of the year just past, which has come to be known as Christmas. One of the traditional dishes, of course, is the plum pudding, and that got us to thinking about what we have come to refer to as “The Doctrine of Plum-ism;” let me explain.

Reflecting on the havoc that good John Wyclif had caused among the forces of error in his day, one Church historian remarks that “a plum in the right place might have shut his mouth for ever.” In other words, a bit of promotion, or position – “A Plum” – might have succeeded in keeping him from being so outspoken about the things of the gospel. How we should rejoice that the old Reformer had no palate for such dubious fruit, preferring rather the wholesome diet of the bread, and milk, and meat of the Word of God. In circles large and small today, however, there seems to be little of Wyclif's aversion to “A plum in the right place,” for how many mouths have apparently been shut by a “Ministerial career?” A more lucrative “call”? A “Influential” Deacon? A denominational acceptability? A Council or Committee Appointment? A veiled hint at ecclesiastical promotion? A Chairmanship? A Committee Convenership? A Presidency of Moderatorship? And a “pension scheme” to round it all off at the end of the day, apparently more eagerly to be sought than that “crown of righteousness that fadeth not away.”

Perhaps, of course, we are judging wrongly. But, surely, in these days of such error and blasphemous behaviour in the churches there must be some explanation for the fact of there being so many of what Isaiah called “dumb dogs that cannot bark.” (Isaiah 56:10). Come to think of it, we've never yet heard a dog bark with a “bone” in its mouth! Perhaps “growl” a little; but even then, only if it thought

someone was going to take its bone away from it! Perhaps that's what Isaiah was getting at; a bone in a dog's mouth would have something of the same effect as a "plum" in a man's mouth!

Dear friend, if your mouth has been stopped in such an effective way would you not be well-advised at the beginning of this New Year to do what the wee boy in the rhyme did and "put in your thumb, and pull out the plum?" Better to empty your mouth of it now before you break your teeth on the stone at the end. You'll not come off the loser by it: "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," saith the Lord. That's surely the recipe for "A Happy New Year" for any of us, for "Happy are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled".

Yours  
W. J. Seaton

**BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE**

## **Karen's Lovely Stones**

A little girl called Karen was having a wander down by the seashore. As she paddled in the pools among the rocks she suddenly stopped and gasped, "Oh, what lovely stones." How excited she was as she put her hand into the water and grasped a handful of these pebbles, and without waiting to put on her sandals again she ran off up to her house.

"Mummy, mummy," Karen called; "Come and see my lovely stones." Her mummy, who was in the kitchen at the time, came out into the hall and said, "Well, Karen, what's this you have today?" (You see, Karen was always bringing her exciting "finds" into the house.) So Karen opened her hand; but what a shock she got, boys

and girls, for all that she saw there was a handful of dull, dry stones, just like those on the gravel path outside the house.

What a disappointment for Karen! However, her mother took her by the hand back down to the seashore again, and as they looked into one of the pools, there, glinting up at them were dozens of lovely bright, coloured pebbles – reds and blues, greens and mixtures of colours, as well. Karen dived her hand into the pool and closed it around a lovely red one. When she had drawn her hand out of the water, her mother said, “Now, show me your red pebble.” But, when Karen opened her hand her stone was no longer glinting, but grey and dull. “Put it back into the water,” said her mummy, and as she did, the stone began to sparkle and shine again.

Karen’s mummy then said, “Sit down Karen, and I’ll tell you a little lesson you can learn from the pebbles.” As they both sat by the seashore Karen’s mummy said to her, “You know, Karen, without God, we are like those pebbles when you took them out of the water. The Bible says that we are to ‘abide in Him’ – that means, we are to live God’s way from day to day. And when we do that, then we are like those pebbles while they are in the water and our lives are different, because we love the Lord and we know that He loves us.”

Is this not true, boys and girls?

Love,  
Mrs Seaton

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*The Eternal  
Son of God*

An old believer in Germany had involved himself in an argument with a Unitarian (those who believe that Christ is not God and was only a man like other men.) He was not making much headway in the argument, but as they both waited for an incoming train, a third man approached and joined himself in the debate. “Oh,” said the

stranger, when he heard the question under review, “there is one verse of scripture among many that settles that viewpoint for me.” “What is that?” asked the others. “Second Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9,” said he: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

“Well,” said the Unitarian, “I don’t see that that has anything to do with the question of Christ simply being a man like other men.” “But, *when* was He rich?” asked the third man. “Was he rich when He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger? Was he rich when He had to say, ‘The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.’”

The old believer’s face lit up: “I know when He was rich!” he exclaimed; “I know when He was rich!” The Unitarian quickly tried to change the subject, and as the third man’s train moved out of the station he could see, through the window, the old believer still challenging his opponent: “Tell me, then; *when* was He rich? *When* was He rich?” Only in His pre-incarnate glory was He rich; when He enjoyed that glory which He had with the Father from before the worlds were made.



## Gleanings In the Psalms (Psalm 42)

The Psalm was penned by David at a time when, either by the persecutions of Saul, or the rebellion of Absalom, he was driven from the Sanctuary and cut off from the privileges of waiting upon God in public ordinances. Thus he is like the “hart” that he sees in his mountain hideaway; “heated in the chase” and panting after the water-brooks, David, too, feels such a longing after the Lord’s house and

after the God of his salvation. “As the hart ... so my soul ...” “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

**Verse 2 “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ...”** If you attempt to put a little child off with toys and fine things, it will not be pleased for long, but will soon cry for its mother’s breast. So, let a man come into the pulpit with pretty sentences and fine stories, and these will not content a thirsty soul. He must have the sincere milk of the Word to feed upon.

*Oliver Heywood*

**Verse 2 “... when shall I come and appear before God?”** An unbeliever can never say in good earnest, “When shall I appear before God?” Because he shall come before Him too soon and before he would like to. As the devils said to Christ: “Art thou come to torment us before our time?” Ask a thief or a murderer whether he would willingly appear before the judge. I warrant you he would not; he would rather there were no judge to appear before. And so it is with the worldly man in regard to God, for he would rather be hidden from Him.

*T. Horton*

**Verse 3 “... They continually say unto me, Where is thy God?”** Just because he was absent from the Ark – the token of God’s presence – David’s enemies concluded that he had lost his God. Those people are mistaken who think that when they have robbed us of our Bibles, and our ministers, and our assemblies, they have robbed us of our God. Although God has tied us to these means of grace when they can be had, He has not tied Himself to them. We know where our God is and where to find Him, when we know not where His Ark is, nor where to find that.

*Mathew Henry*

**Verse 5 “Why art thou cast down, O my soul ...”** Wicked men oppressed David and the devil tempted him, yet he chides his own heart and nothing else. David did not chide at Saul, nor chide at

Absalom,, but he chides and checks his own heart. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” And though the devil and wicked men – the one to tempt and the other to oppress as the instruments for punishment for sin, yet we, with David are to chide our own hearts.

*Christopher Love*

**Verse 5 “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? *Hope thou in God ...*”** Art thou discomposed with impatience, and haunted with a discontented spirit under any affliction? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarrelling with God, but don’t stop until thou canst bring thy heart to rely on God. Holy David drove his heart thus far. He did not only chide his heart for being disquieted, but charges it to trust in God – “Hope thou in God ...”

*William Gurnall*

**Verse 7 “Deep calleth unto deep ...”** What’s that? Why, it is expressed in the verse before: “O God,” says he, “my soul is cast down within me.” “*Down.*” That is, deep into the depths of distrust and fear. And Lord, my soul in this *depth* of sorrow calls for help to thy *depth* of mercy. For though I am sinking and going down, yet not so low but that thy mercy is not underneath me.

*John Bunyan*

**Verse 8 “Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness ...”** David’s expression is remarkable; he does not simply say that the Lord will *bestow*, but “*command* his lovingkindness.” As the gift bestowed is grace – free favour to the unworthy, so the *manner* of bestowing it is sovereign. It is given by decree; it is a royal presentation. And if *He* commands the blessing, who shall hinder its reception?

*Henry March*

**Verse 11 “Why art thou cast down, O my soul ...”** This is the burden of David’s psalm and we would commend the reader – and especially any who are finding the road difficult at this particular time – to the thirteen sermons preached by the Puritan William Bridge in

the year 1648 and titled “A Lifting Up for the Downcast.” William Bridge gives solid instruction in seeking out our spiritual diseases that lay us low, and also, lays before us the only true remedy for our souls and how to apply it. (This book is still in print and published by The Banner of Truth)

## **From Grief to Gladness**

It was the thought of “Religious Liberty” that drove the Pilgrim Fathers and their successors from the shores of England to the shores of America in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is strange, however that very often, they who seek one thing for themselves will deny it to another. Such was the case concerning the Congregationalists, and when they drew up their “Standing Order” in New England, demanding the payment of a tax to support their Ministers, many believers suffered great hardships at their hands, having their properties sold over their heads to meet the debt. As so often happens, however, out of the grief of such hardship, great gladness was reaped by those who suffered. The following are some lines taken from a letter from Elizabeth Bacus, a Baptist, to her son Isaac, who was one of the leading Baptist pastors in the State at that time.

“My Dear Son,

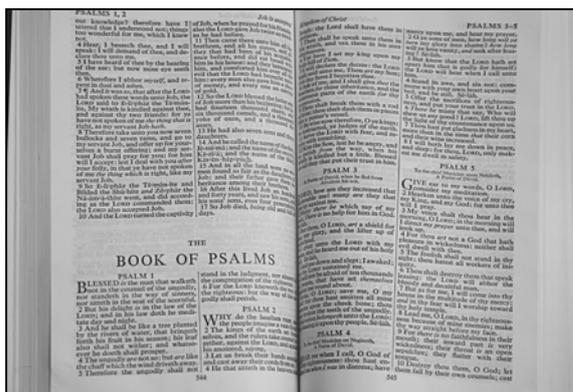
I have heard something of the trials amongst you of late, and I was grieved, till I had strength to give up the case to God, and leave my burden there. And now I would tell you something of our trials.

Your brother Samuel lay in prison twenty days. October 15<sup>th</sup>, the collectors came to our house, and took me away to prison, about nine o’clock, in a dark, rainy night. Brothers Hill and Sabins were brought there the next night. We lay in prison thirteen days, and were then set at liberty, by what means I know not. O the innumerable snares and temptations that beset me! More than I ever thought of before. But Oh, the condescension of Heaven! Though I was bound when I was cast into this furnace, yet I was loosed and found Jesus in

the midst of the furnace with me. Oh, then I could give up my name, estate, family, life and breath, freely to God. Now the prison looked like a palace to me. I could bless God for all the laughs and scoffs made at me. Oh, the love that flowed out to all mankind! Then I could forgive, as I would desire to be forgiven, and love my neighbour as myself. Deacon Girsword was put in prison the 8<sup>th</sup> October; and yesterday old brother Grover; and they are in pursuit of others, all which calls for humiliation.

I do remember my love to you and your wife, and the dear children of God with you, begging your prayers for us in such a day of trial. We are all in tolerable health, expecting to see you. These from your loving mother,

Elizabeth Backus.”



# The Tree Of Life

The Scripture is a spiritual paradise. The Book of Psalms is placed as the tree of life in the midst of this paradise. The psalms are not only for delight, but usefulness; enriched with variety, and suited to every Christian's estate and condition. They are a spiritual panoply and storehouse for the Believer. If he finds his heart dead, here he may fetch fire; if he be weak in grace, here he may fetch armour; if he be ready to faint, here are medicines lying by. There is no condition you can name, but there is a psalm suited to that condition.

1) **In case of sickness** – “Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Psalm 41 verse 3); and surely that bed must be soft which God will

make. And there is a parallel psalm to this – “My flesh fails,” that is, my health is declining, “but the Lord is the strength of my heart.”

2) **In case of reproach** – “I was a reproach among my enemies.”

(Psalm 31 verse 11) “But I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my God.” (Verse 14) And here was some sunshine breaking forth out of those place clouds.

3) **In case of unkind treatment from friends** – “For it was not an enemy; for then I could have borne it.” (Psalm 55 verse 12) Here was the disease. But, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord” (verse 22); here was the cure.

4) **In case we are surrounded by enemies** – there is a psalm suited to this condition: “Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.” (Psalm 3 verse 1) But, “I laid me down and slept.” (Verse 5) David, when beset with enemies, could lie down and sleep upon the soft pillow of a good conscience, for “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.” “He shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.”

5) **In case of poverty** – If a Christian’s state be brought so low, like the widow, he has nothing but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruise, still there is a psalm of consolation: “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” (Psalm 40 verse 17) Here is the dew of a blessing distilled: “Thou art my portion, O Lord.”

6) **If sin, though the power of temptation, prevails against a child of God** – There is a psalm of consolation: “Iniquities prevail against me,” **But**, “as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.” (Psalm 65 verse 3) In the Hebrew it is, “Thou shalt hide them.” It alludes to the Mercy-Seat in the Tabernacle which was covered with the wings of the cherubim. So are the sins of the Godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favour.

7) **In case of a delay in answer to prayer** – “I am weary of my crying, my eyes fail while I wait for my God.” (Psalm 69 verse 3) But in the very same psalm, he yet obtains his comfort: “The Lord heareth the poor and despiseth not his prisoners.” (Verse 33) Would you have fruit before it is ripe? When the mercy is ripe, we shall have it; there is nothing lost by waiting. We send out the golden fleet of prayer to

heaven, the longer this fleet stays out, the greater return it will bring with it.

8) **In case desertion** – This is the poisoned arrow that wounds to the heart; but still there is a psalm to run to: “The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (Psalm 94 verse 14) This is like a star on a dark night, or like the plank and broken pieces of the ship on which Paul and the rest came safe to shore. God may *conceal* His love from His children, but not take it away.

9) **In case of death** – There is a psalm that revives: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”. (Psalm 23 verse 4) The sting and poison of this serpent is taken away, for, “Thou art with me” says the psalmist. With thy power to support, with thy grace to sanctify, with thy love to sweeten. “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”. I have the staff of thy promise in the hand of my faith, and with this I can walk through the dark valley of death

Thus in every condition, David’s psalms, like David’s harp, may serve to drive away the evil spirit of sadness and uncheerfulness from a Christian

(From “An Ancient Author”)

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“There is nothing necessary for man to know which the psalms are not able to teach. Exquisite justice, grace, moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, patience unwearied, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of the world which is to come. All good necessary to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth.”

(Richard Hooker)

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## What is Your Hope?

Reader, what is your hope about your soul? Have you any, or have you none? Can you tell me in what way you expect to be accounted righteousness before God?

Depend upon it, these are very serious questions. You and I are dying men. After death comes the judgment. What is your hope of acquittal in that awful day? What are we going to plead on our behalf before God?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbour? Shall we bring forward our prayers, our regularity, our morality, our church going, our amendments? Shall we ask to be accepted by God for any of these things?

Which of these things will stand God's eye? Which of them will actually justify you and me? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

***Absolutely none!*** Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God. Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict. We are all guilty – all deserve hell, all ought to die. How then can we come before God?

We must come in the Name of Jesus, standing on no other ground, pleading no other plea than this – “Christ died on the cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him.”

Oh, believe me, Christ must be all the hope of everyone who would be justified and saved. You must be content to go to heaven as a beggar – saved by free Grace, - simply as a believer in Jesus – ***or you will never be saved at all.*** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, least any man should boast.”

(Bishop J. C. Ryle)