

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 101 issued March 2013

Index

1. The Amazing “Therefore” – The Pastor’s Letter (March 1974)
2. The Old Violin – Poem by “Woodbine Willie” First World War Padre
3. Boys and Girls Page – “Try”
4. Sermons in Candles by C. H. Spurgeon
5. The Trial of Anne Askew
6. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 60



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



Podcast Service available at www.wicketgate.co.uk

The Amazing “Therefore”

The Pastor’s Letter (March 1974)

Dear Friends,

It was an excellent piece of advice that a preacher once gave to his congregation with regards to their reading and study of the Word of God; “Whenever you see a ‘therefore,’” he told them, “always look and see what it’s there for.” In other words, the “therefores” of the Word of God point us to the conclusions of the lessons and truths that have gone before; and to understand the concluding word, it is always necessary to look back to what *has* gone before. In our sermons in John’s gospel here in Inverness, when we recently came to what must be surely one of the most amazing “therefores” in the whole of the Bible. It occurs in the seventeenth verse of chapter ten and belongs to our Lord’s conclusion of the whole truth that He has been setting forth in the allegory of the Good Shepherd.

He has begun that allegory by showing Himself to be the “Rightful” Shepherd to the nation of Israel who has come to call His elect people out of that nation. He is the One to Whom “the porter opens,” and whose voice the sheep hear and follow out of that “sheepfold” and into another more glorious fold, or flock that He has come to gather. The way “out” of that fold of Israel, and “into” the fold of God is by Him alone, for He goes on to explain that, not only is He the Rightful Shepherd of those sheep, but He is the Rightful “Door”, as well. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” And not only the Door to give access to God for the natural-born Israelite, but for the men and women of every kindred and tongue and nation under heaven – “I am the door,” He says again, “by me, if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved.”

Our Lord of course, is speaking about His great work of coming to this earth to redeem fallen mankind to His Father in Heaven; and as the gospel has been ordained “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,” so our Lord begins with Himself, first, as the shepherd and Door to Israel, before He moves on to show the full extent of His

saving work wrought out upon the earth. “I am the door, by me, if *any man* enter in ...” And so, too, with the picture of the Shepherd: “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep ... and *other sheep* I have, which are not of *this fold*: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be *one fold*, and one shepherd.” Needless to say, that “One Shepherd” is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that “one fold” is the Church of Christ – bought and redeemed and saved from all the world through the work of the Good Shepherd who “lays down his life” for the gathering of that church. *Then* comes the “amazing therefore” that we mentioned in verse 17; “Therefore,” Says our Lord, “doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.”

What an amazing word, my friends! The language, of course, is accommodated to our understanding, but it is meant to leave our understanding absolutely clear, with regards to what our Saviour wishes us to grasp. God the Father *always* loved His Son; this, surely, goes without saying. But, our Lord is unmistakably saying that His Father’s love towards Him rose to its highest heights when He stooped to the sacrificial death of the Cross and offered Himself an atonement for the Church of the Firstborn of God! “Therefore,” says our Saviour. And what is he about to conclude? He is about to conclude His allegory of Himself as the Shepherd laying down His life to redeem that flock of men from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south. And, “Therefore,” He says, “doth my Father love me, *because* I lay down my life.”

Never did heaven, or earth, or hell, witness such a purpose or work, or plan than the salvation of the Church of Christ. And how it becomes those who confess to know the Lord in these days to have glowing and thankful hearts that ever they were included in that eternally purchased flock, through which God would glorify His Son and reconcile fallen man unto Himself.

These are the days when the Church has been greatly downgraded in many people’s eyes, so that obligation towards, or service in, or subjection to it is looked upon as something quite apart

from “my own and personal salvation.” They are difficult days, without doubt, and the true church of Christ would barely seem to exist in some areas. But, be that as it may, regardless of how things have developed, the great essential concept of the Church of Christ as God’s most treasured possession from all eternity must never be lost. In fact, we would say without hesitation, that one of the most potent forces in the very situation that has developed has been the losing of that very concept.

Once men begin to think so little of the Church, then it pleased the Lord to greatly remove the Church in so many ways, and in so many places. Let our Saviour’s “Therefore,” therefore, be a balm and boost to our souls that there is nothing like the Church of the Lord in all the annals of time or eternity. Remember it has been purchased with the amazing price – “the blood of Jesus Christ” – aye, says Paul to the Ephesian elders – “the blood of God.” Surely, God gave His highest price, for His dearest possession. “**Therefore**, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.”

Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

The Old Violin

*(Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, M.C.)

‘Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while,
To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile. –

“What am I bidden, good folk?” he cried,
“Who’ll start the bidding for me?
A dollar – a dollar – then two, only two –
Two dollars, and who’ll make it three?
Going for three!” But no; -



From the room far back, a grey haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loosened string,
He played a melody pure and sweet,
As a carolling angel sings.

The Music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, “*Now* what am I bid for the old violin?”
And he held it up with the bow.

“A thousand dollars – and who’ll make it two?
Two, and who’ll make it three?
Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
And going, and gone,” cried he.

The people cheered, but some of them said,
“We fail to understand,
What changed the worth?” – quick came the reply,
“The touch of the master’s hand.”

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless world,
Much like the old violin.

A “Mess of Pottage;” a glass of wine,
A game – and he travels on;
He is going once – he is going twice –
He is going, and almost gone!

But the Saviour comes, and the foolish world
Is so slow to understand,
The worth of a soul, and the change that’s worked,
By the touch of The Master’s Hand.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John chapter 3 verse 16)



“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2nd Corinthians, chapter 5 verse 17)

**Note about the Poet - Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, M.C. A Padre in World War 1. He was nicknamed 'Woodbine Willie' for giving Woodbine Cigarettes along with spiritual aid to injured and dying soldiers.*



Dear Boys and Girls,

It's always good to have a try at things, and especially to try to serve God with all our hearts as that great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells us in these lines that I've taken from one of his books for you this month –

“Of all the pretty little songs I have ever heard my youngsters sing, that is one of the best which winds up –

‘If at first you don’t succeed,
Try, try, try again.’

Can’t do it sticks in the mud, but Try soon drags the wagon out of the rut. The fox said Try, and he got away from the hounds when they almost snapped at him. The bees said Try, and turned flowers into

honey. The squirrel said Try, and up he went to the top of the beech tree. The snowdrop said Try, and bloomed in the cold snows of winter. The sun said Try, and the spring soon threw Jack Frost out of the saddle. The young lark said Try, and he found that his new wings took him over hedges and ditches, and up where his father was singing. The ox said Try, and ploughed the field from end to end. No hill too steep for Try to climb, no clay too stiff for Try to plough, no field too wet for Try to drain, no hole too big for Try to mend.

‘By little strokes
Men fell great oaks.’

If you want to do good in the world, the little word ‘Try’ comes in again. There are plenty of ways of serving God, and some that will fit you exactly as a key fits a lock. Don’t hold back because you cannot preach in a great Church; be content to speak to a boy or a girl at school; very good wheat grows in little fields. You may cook in small pots as well as in big ones. Little pigeons can carry great messages.”

The gospel is a great message; boys and girls, so take Mr. Spurgeon’s advice and “try” all you can for God.

Mrs Seaton



Sermons in Candles

By C.H. Spurgeon
(part 1)



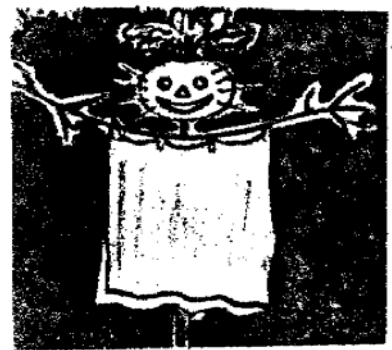
During an address that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was giving to some of his students in the Pastor's College, he was urging on them the value of "illustration." One of the students remarked how difficult it was to find good illustrations for one's sermon, to which Spurgeon

replied " ... if your minds were thoroughly aroused, and yet you could see nothing else in the world but a single tallow candle, you might find enough illustration in that luminary to last you for six months". This remark was met with some doubtful expressions, Spurgeon tells us, and so, to prove the validity of his words he produced his famous "sermon in Candles" which we hope to adapt for this magazine over the next six editions.

I am not an adept at lecturing, and when I take to it under constraint, I either signally fail in it, or else the successful production is a sermon in disguise. You cannot drive out nature by a command: the old pulpit hand must preach, even though you bid him do somewhat else. I have preached now for so many years the use is second nature; and a lecture, a speech, and address, and I fear even a conversation, all have a tendency to mould themselves sermon-fashion. This lecture has become a cairn, upon which stone after stone has been thrown. To use a figure from the subject itself – my candles have been dipped again and again, and each time they have grown in bulk, till I feel that they are now ready to go from the maker to the consumers.

Candles were far more familiar objects in my boyhood than in these days of gas and electricity. In my time the greatest of wonders was a Lucifer-match.

We had practical fun with candles too; for we would scoop out a turnip, cut eyes and a nose in the rind, and then put a candle inside. This could be judiciously used to amuse, but it might also be injudiciously turned to purposes of alarming youngsters and greenhorns who ran away, under the apprehension that a ghost was visible. Other things besides turnips can be used to frighten foolish people; but it is a shame to use *The Light of Truth* with such a design.



By the way, a candle blown out does not yield the most delicate of perfumes. If the light of professors of religion is blown out, the result

is most unsavoury. How well it is for us that we have to deal with one of whom it is written "A smoking flax will he not quench"! Even when faith is so low that we are rather an offence than an illumination, He will not quench it, so tender is His love.

Solomon spoke of a candle when he said, "The spirit of man is as the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly". Did he not refer to conscience? Did he not mean that conscience is in some respects a divine light - "The candle of the Lord?" and in all respects a discovering light - searching all the inward parts? Take care that you never trifle with this candle. A loss of light in the conscience means decrease of light for our whole manhood. I am afraid that conscience in many persons has become no better than an unlighted candle, not giving light, nor even making darkness visible. I have heard of a man who said "Conscience! Conscience! I have plenty of conscience." "Yes," said one, "and it is as good as new, for I have never known you to use it". In that case, it was a candle unlit, and as the old rhyme has it: –



"A candle that affords no light,
What profit it by day or night?"

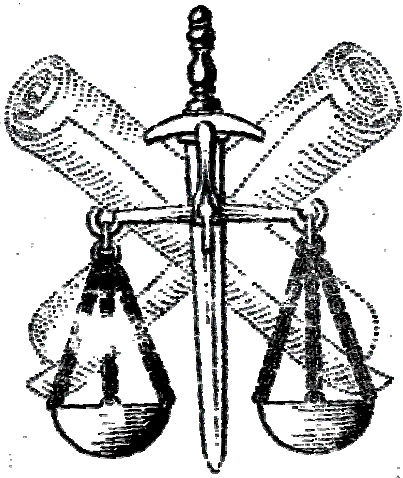
God grant that we may never do violence to our conscience even in the least degree; for this is to quench our own light!

On one occasion, having a candle on each side of me in a small pulpit, I was somewhat vigorous, and dashed one of the luminaries from its place. It fell on the baldhead of a friend below, who looked up with an expression, which I can see at this moment, and it makes me smile still. I took no more notice of the accident than to weave it into what I was saying: and I believe most of my hearers considered it to be a striking practical illustration of the remark which accompanied it, "How soon is the glory of life dashed down!"

"The Lord will light my candle so, that it shall shine full bright: The Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light".

(Psalm 18:28 from the Scottish Metrical Psalms).

The Trial of Anne Askew



“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Our Lord to His disciples; Matthew chapter 10, verses 18 to 20.)

Numerous are the martyrs of Jesus who have known the truth and the upholding of those words from Matthew’s gospel spoken by our Lord to His disciples so many years ago. The names of Latimer and Ridley, or Hamilton and Wishart, immediately spring to mind as being of those who received “a mouth and wisdom” which all their adversaries were “not able to gainsay nor resist.” But, as all these were men who had proved themselves to be “able ministers of the word of God,” it is, perhaps, more especially in the “ordinary” member of the Church of Christ that we see the glory of this promise most vividly portrayed. Such is the case of Anne Askew, the twenty-five year old martyr of the gospel who was burnt at the stake in Smithfield Square in the year 1546, but who so astounded her accusers right up until the final hours of her death when she committed her soul into the hands of Him who had kept it throughout the weeks and months of her trial.

Anne Askew was born near Grimsby in the year 1521. Those were early days in the things of the Reformation, especially as far as our own islands were concerned, and John Calvin was still a schoolboy at Noyon in France. Anne married at an early age, but it soon became clear that it was an ill-matched marriage, and as her faith developed and increased, the gap between husband and wife widened until she was finally shut out from her home altogether, because her husband couldn’t bear the stigma of being married to a woman of “protestant” sympathies. Right from the beginning it would seem that Anne Askew had been born to persecution as the sparks fly upwards, and

soon she was forced to leave the region of her birth completely, first of all moving to Lincoln, and then London itself.

Ann was of that prophetic spirit of Amos that had heard the lion roar, and could do nothing else but speak. However to speak of the things of the gospel in those days was but to invite the wrath of the “church” and the state, and when Anne Askew made it known quite openly, “I had rather read five lines of the Bible than hear five masses,” the future course of her life was set, and in March 1545 she was formally accused of embracing the protestant heresy.

Now began the trials that were to last, on and off, over a year, and when all the official and theological might of the city of London was brought at various points in an effort to make this young “heretic” recant and re-enter the mother church of Rome. Listen to her here being interrogated by the Lord Mayor of the city, on the charge of denying the “reality” of the Mass:

Lord Mayor: Thou foolish woman, sayest thou that the priests cannot make the body of Christ?

Anne: I say so, my lord, for I have read that God made man; but that man made God I never yet read, nor, I suppose ever shall read.

Lord Mayor: No, thou foolish woman. After the words of consecration is it not the Lord’s body?

Anne: No it is but consecrated bread, or sacramental bread.

Lord Mayor: What if a mouse eat it after the consecration? What will become of the mouse? What sayest thou, foolish woman?

Anne: What shall become of it, say you, my lord.

Lord Mayor: I say that that mouse is damned.

Anne: Alas, poor mouse!

This last reply finished the session for the court fell into laughter, and it was not thought advisable to continue! She was met with the old chestnut that she had no right to quote scripture at all, seeing that the apostle Paul had forbidden women to speak. But she very consistently pointed out that this injunction had to do with “teaching” the congregation, and as she had never entered a pulpit there was little that she could be charged with before the apostle.

The next opponent to enter the arena with the young saint was no less a person than the ill-famed Bishop Bonner himself. He tried to ensnare her with questions relating to the value of private Masses which were to be said for the souls of loved ones in purgatory. “What idolatry is this?” said Anne, “that we should rather believe in private masses than in the healthsome death of the dear Son of God!” Seeing that face-to-face confrontation was virtually useless, Bonner hit on a new plan of campaign. He produced a document which she simply had to sign as her confession of faith, and so, gain her release. She told him that she would sign the document provided that he added one sentence which would state that she believed those things written in it where they were in agreement with the Word of God. Needless to say, this was not what Bonner required; nor was he happy at a future date when she made her confession on paper in the following terms: - “I, Anne Askew, do believe all manner of things contained in the faith of the Catholic Church.” The Bishop well knew that Anne’s “Catholic church” was very far different from the “Roman” Catholic Church.

There followed a short period of freedom from imprisonment, but when Anne was rearrested she was to face the most formidable opposition that she had yet encountered. But God abode faithful in giving her words to speak to the scattering of her foes. Bishop Gardiner attempted to play the fox, but ended up like one of those in Samson’s escapade and had his tail burnt. He attempted to take Anne aside and speak to her in a private and fatherly manner. But Anne saw through the deception; “At the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter must stand after the doctrine of Christ and Paul,” she told him. “Then you must burn,” shouted the enraged Gardiner. “Search the scriptures,” was the young girl’s reply, “and you will never find that

Christ and His apostles put any creature to death. God will laugh your threatenings to scorn.”

Once again, the great issue of the Mass was raised, and with renewed vigour and courage Anne Askew delivered a scathing challenge to the assembled prelates; “As to that which you call your God,” she said, “it is a piece of bread. For proof of that, watch it any time you please, for if it lie in the box three months it will grow mouldy and so turn to nothing that is good. *Whereupon I am persuaded that it cannot be God.*”

The sentence of death soon came, and Anne was removed to the Tower of London to await the burning. During this time she was cruelly dealt with, as John Foxe gives testimony of in his famous Book of Martyrs; “First, she was led down into a dungeon,” he tells us, “where Sir Anthony Knevet, the lieutenant, commanded his jailor to pinch her with the rack; which being done as far as he thought sufficient, he was about to remove her, supposing that she had suffered enough. But Wriothesley, the Chancellor, displeased that she was so speedily released, when she would make no confession, commanded the lieutenant to bind her on the rack again. And when Knevet, less brutal than his superior, refused, and urged the weakness of the poor victim, the Chancellor threatened to report his disobedience to the King. Then he (the Chancellor) and Mr. Rich, throwing off their gowns, must needs play the tormentors themselves, first enquiring whether she were with child. To which she nobly answered ‘Ye shall not need to spare for that, but do your will upon me.’ And so, quietly and patiently praying unto the Lord, she abode their tyranny until her bones and joints were almost plucked asunder, so that she was carried away in a chair.”

It was only a matter of time now before the trial of Anne Askew would draw to a close on that July morning of 1546. There were three others led out to the stake along with her, but even up to the last, it was her words as given to her by the Lord that made ready testimony to her God and strengthened those others of like precious faith now about to die a like cruel death. The preacher for the occasion was

Nicholas Shaxton – no doubt appointed to that task in a last-bid effort to weaken Anne Askew, and also as a means of torment to his own soul. Shaxton had been himself imprisoned for failing to comply with church strictures, but on hearing the sentence of burning being pronounced upon himself, he recanted, and signed the offending articles. No sooner had Shaxton ended his sermon over the martyrs than Anne was given a letter, written in the King’s own hand, and offering her freedom if she would but follow the preacher Shaxton’s example and recant. Her reply were the last words that fell from her mortal lips, “I came not hither to deny my Lord and Master.” And the flames were but a chariot of fire to bear her soul to its eternal rest.



Gleanings in the Psalms (Psalm 60)

Divisions - Properly the song may be said to consist of three parts; the complaining verses, 1 to 3; the gladsome verses, 4 to 8; the prayerful verses, 9 to 12. We have divided it as the sense appeared to change.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. “O God, thou has cast us off ...” David knew that the displeasure of the Lord had brought calamity upon the nation, and to the removal of that displeasure he set himself by earnest prayer. To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people, but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the Divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary. When a cast-off soul sighs for its God it is not indeed cast off at all.

Spurgeon

Verse 3. “Thou hast shewed thy people hard things ...” God will be sure to plough his own ground, and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild.

Trapp

Verse 4. “Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it might be displayed because of the truth.” Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself His servants, and commissioned them for His service, presenting them with a standard to be used in His wars. Their affliction had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then being fitted for the Lord’s favour, He gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that He had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it. For the truth’s sake, and because the true God is on our side, let us in these modern days of warfare emulate the warriors of Israel, and unfurl our banners to the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if the Lord had meant to destroy us He would not have given us the gospel.

Spurgeon

Verse 4. “Thou hast given a banner ...” Perhaps the delivery of a banner was esteemed an obligation to protect; this is how David would then reason; “Though Thou didst for a time give up Thine Israel into the hands of her enemies, thou has now given her an assurance of Thy having received her under Thy protection.”

Thomas Harmer.

Verses 6 and 7. “God hath spoken in his holiness ... I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, Ephraim also ...” God has spoken the word, says David, therefore it shall be done. No sooner does God speak than the psalmist sounds the trump of victory: “all’s mine – Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine, Moab and Edom are mine.”

Joseph Caryl

Verse 7. “... Judah is my lawgiver.” All his subjects should be brought under one head, one governor, who should give them laws, according to which they should be ordered or governed. This power and authority belonged to the tribe of Judah, according to that prophecy of Jacob (Genesis 49 verse 10). No way, no means to bring the people into unity, but by bringing them under one head, one law-giver, by whose laws they may be regulated and governed. Now in the Church, and in matters of religion, this one Head is Christ, even that “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” as He is called in Revelations 5 verse 5. He is the Lawgiver of His church, and let Him so be. This will be found the one, yes, and the only means to breed on holy and religious unity, and bring home straying, wandering sheep.

John Brinsley

Verse 9. “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?” The believer, when he promises himself great things, must neither be senseless of the difficulties of opposition that he is to meet with, nor of his own inability to overcome those difficulties. But, being sensible of both, he must look to God for assistance and furniture to overcome. When David considered the strength of the fenced royal cities of the enemy, he saith, “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?” But he finds his answer in the next verse, “Wilt not thou, O God ...?”

David Dickson

Verses 11 to 12.

“Help us from trouble; for the help
is vain which man supplies.
Through God we’ll do great acts, he shall
tread down our enemies.”

(Metrical Version)