

The Wicket Gate Magazine

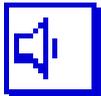
A Continuing Witness



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The Doctrine of In-it-to-win-it-ism.

(The Pastor's Letter March 1975)

Dear Friends,

It appears that the doctrine of “In-it-to-win-it-ism” is fast gaining ground among those who lay claim to being “Reformed”, or “Calvinistic” in their beliefs. “In-it-to-win-it” was, and is, the great cry of those who remain within doctrinally-mixed, or ecumenical churches. By their influence *in* these churches, or organisations, these people claim, they will eventually *win* these churches etc. to the true scriptural pattern. For any who have an eye of discernment at all, it is obvious that the premise stands totally discredited. Far from the mixed thing becoming the thing influenced, it becomes the thing that influences, and the “winning” voices grow weak, then faint, then silenced, as year proceeds to year.

Now, for this state of affairs to exist and find acceptance in the generally non-doctrinal and weak evangelicalism of our day is one thing; however, for it to begin to be recognised as valid among those who claim to be “reformed in doctrine and in practice” is something else again, and sets a sad spectacle before us. How pathetic, that reformed Christianity should now begin to jump on a band-wagon that has virtually trundled itself into the ground. Have the “In-it-to-win-it” voices stayed the hand of pollution in those denominations, churches, and organisations that have begun to rot long ago? Indeed they haven't. And let no reformed brother imagine that it is the doctrine that is wrong, and if he can only bring the “Five Points” to bear on the plague sore then the body will be made clean again. Is this to undervalue the glorious doctrines of grace? Indeed, no. But, it is to be graciously reminded that reformed Christianity is more than words from a pulpit.

The crying need of our day is an endeavour to be reformed in what we *do*, as well as in what we *say*, in our churches. And, if any

body of professing Christians should have a high doctrine of the nature and purpose of the Church of Christ on this earth, it should be “reformed” Christians. The one thing that many other forms of Christianity has eroded over the past hundred years or more has been the doctrine of the Church, so that the Church, by turns, has become a “take-it-or-leave-it” sort of organisation, a concert hall, or a place to go on Sunday to hear and feel something that might be of benefit to “mine own and personal salvation.”

But, the Church of Christ is the Body of the Lord; and it is the one place on this earth where God has ordained that His praise should dwell. The gathering of the church of Christ has, therefore, one primary purpose; it is not evangelistic to the unconverted, nor ever inspirational to the people of God – although both of these things will be present where she fulfils her primary purpose. But the primary purpose of the church's gathering is to worship and praise Almighty God. How is this brought about? “By the preaching of the Word” you say. Yes! But that is only one side of the truth. It is not only by the preaching of the Word but by the hearing of that Word, as well. Worship in the house of the Lord is to be reciprocal. Not only must the voice, and the heart, and the mind of the preacher echo out - “Thus saith the Lord,” but the response of the people must *re*-echo out - “Amen, our God is a great and gracious God.”

Now, this is exactly where “In-it-to-win-it-ism” completely falls to the ground. Of course there can be no perfect church – perish the thought, for who could join it! But, obviously, the nature of the church where the worship of God is being conducted must be evident in that church's composition. In other words, where an “evangelical” minister is preaching the Word of God from week to week to a congregation composed, in the main, of nominal church-goers quite hardened to that gospel, with a handful of professing Christians present, is this the worship of God by the church of God? Evangelism it may be, but we would sincerely question whether or not it is “the true worship” involving the “true worshippers” whom the Father seeks through Jesus Christ His Son to worship him. And likewise, when a “reformed” minister is preaching what he believes to be the entire

counsel of God in an atmosphere that is largely alienated and opposed to his doctrine, does this constitute the true worship of God as a reformed Christian might be thought to hold that worship?

“Oh, yes,” comes the reply, “but the reformed brother is going to change all that; he is 'In-it-to-win-it.'” Well, of course, as we've said, that has been the song of general evangelicalism for years now; and, sad to say, it appears that it has proved to be the “swan song” to uncompromised and uncompromising witness. But, here is the whole point, and one which confessedly reformed Christians must see – what becomes of that central and primary purpose of the church, even under a reformed ministry, in the meantime. In other words, while the brother is “winning” his situation, for say, five, ten, fifteen, twenty years – years of opposition, and abuse of the truth, and cross-purposes in the church, and wrangling with those to whom he has joined himself in membership - what becomes of the worship of God during all that time? Where is that God-ordained task of the church in both the preaching and the hearing, which alone constitutes worship during these “winning” years? Where is the “Thus saith the Lord” that should form the very backbone, and warp and woof of reformed preaching, *and* the glad “Amen” arising in the hearts and minds of those who have chosen to attend on such preaching, believing it to be the very truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus? What has become of that vital thing – the church's first great calling – during this interval?

Surely, a serious question, my friends, and one which should produce a different answer than “In-it-to-win-it.” If no better answer is forthcoming, then, we are forced to wonder, indeed, if the new “Reformation” movement is anything more than a paper reformation. Surely, it has man at the centre, yet, and has failed to grasp the old Catechism's burden, that “Man's chief end is to glorify God...” Of a truth, “the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” And it has failed to grasp the principle behind Moses' action when he was willing to divide the people in Israel in two when they were found worshipping the golden calf. The whole nation would have been quite prepared to continue in that form of things that called that man-made device, “Your god which hath brought you up out of

the land of Egypt;” did they not have Aaron – an ordained priest of the nation in “membership” with them, and so, giving credence to their behaviour? But, the patriarch knew better: the honour of the Lord was at stake, and better to have half the camp seeking that, than double that number giving only lip service to it while their eyes were still turned away in the direction of the gods of their own imaginations. “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?” That statement cost dear old Moses “about three thousand men” out of his congregation, but it was a small price at the end of the day.

The great essential of our day is to strive to give heed to that injunction of Paul's to Timothy, and learn, more and more how we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God” - “the pillar and ground of the truth” - where “the mystery of godliness” is brought before the people of God. The church of Christ is where those of like-mind gather to bow under that awesome and mysterious truth of their redemption, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” It is *he* that has done the “winning” of our souls to Himself; it is His name that we are to worship with “one heart, and one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Yours Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 68 - Continued)



Verse 11. “The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it.” In these next verses we do not sing of marching, but of battle and victory. “The Lord gave the word.” The enemy was near, and the silver trumpet from the tabernacle door was God's mouth to warn the camp: then was there hurry to and fro, and a

general telling of the news; “great was the company of those that published it.” The women ran from tent to tent and roused their lords to battle. Ready as they always were to grant the victory, they were equally swift to publish the fact that the battle-note had been sounded. The ten thousand maids of Israel, like good handmaids of the Lord, aroused the sleepers, called in the wanderers, and bade the valiant men hasten to the fray. O for the like zeal in the Church today, that when the gospel is published, both men and women may eagerly spread the glad tidings of great joy.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 13. “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver ...” The probable meaning is, Though ye have laboured and lain down *between the brick kilns* in Egypt – a poor, enslaved, and oppressed people, yet, ye shall gradually rise to dignity, prosperity and splendour. As a dove which has been defiled with dirt, disordered and dejected, by washing herself in a running stream, and trimming her plumage gradually recovers the serenity of her disposition, the purity of her colour, and the richness and varied elegance of her appearance.

W. Greenfield

Verse 14. “When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.” It is evident that David still insists upon the figure of the whiteness of silver. The country had, as it were, been blackened or sullied by the hostile confusion into which it was thrown, and he says it had now recovered its fair appearance and resembled Salmon. This makes the comparison more striking; for it intimates that as the snows whitened this black mountain, so the country had resumed its former beauty, and put on an aspect of joy, when God dispelled the darkness which had lain upon it during the oppression of enemies.

John Calvin

Verse 16. “Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in ...” This low, little, barren hill of Zion; and yet, God's election maketh the difference, as it did of Aaron's rod from the

rest, and does still of the church from the rest of the world, for the Lamb is on Mount Zion.

John Trapp

Verse 18. “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men ...” Some think it refers to God's going forth on behalf of His people Israel, leading them forth to victory, taking their enemies captive, and enriching them with the spoils. Suppose it to be so, we are warranted to consider it mainly as referring to Christ – or so the apostle has applied it in Ephesians 4 verse 8. The captivity which He led captive was our spiritual enemies who had led us captive – Satan and death. And having obtained the victory, He proceeds to divide the spoils that He received - “gifts for men” - as David made presents. And hence comes our ordinances, ministers etc., for ministers are *received for* and are *given to* you by Christ. As man, and as sinful men, ministers are as nothing, and wish not to make anything of themselves; but, as the gifts of Christ, it becomes you to make such of them. If you love Christ, you will make much of your minister, on account of his being *His* gift – a gift designed to supply His absence in a sort. He is gone (ascended), but He gives you His servants. By-and-by you hope to be with Him but as yet you are as sheep in the wilderness. He gives you a shepherd. If you fear God, you will be afraid of treating your pastor amiss seeing he is the gift of Christ. God took it ill of Israel for despising Moses: “He is *my servant*,” He said.

From Andrew Fuller's sermon to the church at Moulton, on the ordination of William Carey.

Verse 19. “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” Lay all the “benefits” together that concern estate, body and mind, and how can the axle of the soul but crack under the load of these favours? But, from what God has done for us as *men*, we look to what He has done for us as *Christians*. That He has embraced us with an everlasting love, that He has moulded us anew, enlivened us by His Spirit, fed us by His Word and Sacraments, clothed us with His merits, bought us

with His blood, being accounted vile to make us glorious, a curse to invest us with blessedness; in a word, that He hath given Himself *to* us and His son *for* us. Oh, the height, and depth, and breadth of the rich mercies of our God

Joseph Hall

(To be concluded)

Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

Remember the story I told you in my last letter about the two boys, Sam and Billy, and how they had each built a raft by the seaside where they lived? They had both had a happy morning playing on their rafts, but that afternoon, how sad Sam was as he stood helpless and watched his raft floating away out to sea on its own.

What had happened? Well, when they had gone off for their lunch, they had tied their rafts at the seaside, but whereas Billy had tied his to a rock, Sam had just tied his to a piece of stick that he had pushed into the sand. So when the tide came in, the stick was loosened from the sand, and off went poor Sam's raft.

Now, I told you that there was a story in the Bible very like that; it's not about two boys and their rafts, of course, but it is about rocks and sand. You find it in Matthew chapter 7, verses 24 to 27, and there, the Lord Jesus tells about two men who each built a house. The first man, said Jesus, built his house on a solid rock, and although a storm came, and the winds blew, and sometimes floods swirled around that house, it did not fall.

Why did it not fall? It was because it had a good firm foundation on that rock. Jesus called this man, "A wise man."

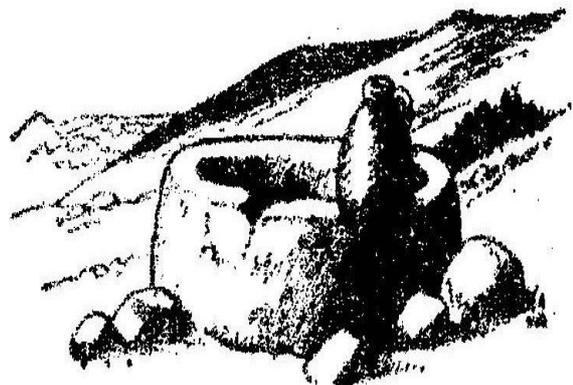
However, the other man was called “a foolish man.” Why? Because he took an easy way to build his house, and he built it on sand. When the storm, and winds, and floods came that house fell down flat. The ground that it was built on was not firm, it was loose, and the house had no solid foundation.

Jesus told this story to teach us a good lesson, boys and girls. The lesson is this: those people – men and women, and boys and girls – who hear God's truth in the Bible and obey that truth, and live their lives from day to day looking to Jesus as their Saviour, and the source, and guide, and example for all their actions, will be like that wise man. But those people – men and women, boys and girls – who look for their own way to live, and don't want Jesus to control their lives, are like the foolish man, and their lives will end in disaster, as his house ended.

It is a very serious story, boys and girls; read it over and over, and make sure that you are like the wise man, and follow Jesus.

Love,
Mrs Seaton

The Sweetest Song on Earth



“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's” Seems to be so entitled, as composed by Solomon, the wisest of men, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and as composed concerning the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace, of whom the son of David was an eminent type.

It belongs to the earthly Solomon, as the skilful work of his hands; to the heavenly Solomon, as the utterance of His heart to the Church; and of the heart of the Church towards Him. It is the Song of Songs, as the choicest both of all the songs of the sons of men, and of all that Solomon sung; the chief of his thousand songs and five; the sweetest, the simplest, the highest, the deepest of the songs of the Church in the house of her pilgrimage. Above all others, her song in the night, until the day break and the shadows flee away. “For this reason also,” said one who knew it well, “would I call it the Song of Songs, because other songs must be sung first, and this as the fruit of all the rest; grace alone teaches it; experience alone can learn it.” (Bernard.)

Bride of the Lamb, the song is yours; for if anywhere in the oracles of truth the new song is found, which can be learned by none but the redeemed from the earth, and sung by none but the virgins who follow the lamb, it must consist in part of this Song of Solomon.

Emphatically, this is a song which the men of earth can never learn. Like Christ Himself, it is a stumbling-block to one, to another foolish; but by this very token will you recognise the image of your Lord, and “Bind the book as a crown upon you,” glorying in the reproach of the cross.

The Jews revered the Song of Solomon as amongst the holiest of sacred books. Likening his written work to his noble; but less durable Temple of wood and stone, they compared the Proverbs to the Outer Court, Ecclesiastes to the Holy Place, and the Song of Songs to the Holiest of holies – the inmost sanctuary of God. The Christian Fathers compare the whole teaching of Solomon to a ladder consisting of three steps: Proverbs embraces instruction in morals; Ecclesiastes indicates the nature of things transient; and the Song of Songs contains the mystic union of Christ and His Church, that we may fly upward to the Great Bridegroom.

(A. Moody Stuart.)

Christ Glorified by the Spirit.

“Let the Christian feel that the teaching which lowers the work of Christ makes it dependent upon the will of man as to its efficacy, puts the cross on the ground, and saith, “That blood is shed, but it may be shed in vain, shed in vain for you.” - let us all feel that such teaching cometh not from the Spirit of God. That teaching it is which, pointing to the cross, saith, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;” that teaching which makes the atonement a true atonement which puts away the vindictive justice of God for ever from every soul for whom that atonement was offered, exalts Christ, and therefore, it is a teaching which comes from the Spirit of God. When your heart is brought to rest upon what Christ has done, when, laying aside all confidence in your own works, knowledge, prayings, doings, or believings, you come to rest upon what Christ has done in its simplicity, then is Jesus Christ exalted in your heart, and it must have been the work of the Spirit of divine grace.

C.H. Spurgeon