

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 N. Needham, W. J. Seaton and Pastor G. S. Marley
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Archive of Audio Sermons.

Refined Christianity or Rugged Discipleship?

"The Cost of True Christian Living"

Dear Friends,

It seems to have become an accepted fact now that the food that we generally eat in our western world is far too “refined” for our good. What we require more of in our diet, we are told, is “roughage” – that essential ingredient that belongs to a healthy system and helps produce a healthy system. We wonder if there isn’t a spiritual counterpart to all this, and if it isn’t the case that a proper intake of “fibre” is being neglected in some areas of some Christians’ thinking and action.

What we mean is this: there will always be a tendency within the human heart to endeavour to “refine” some of the more rugged and demanding aspects of the Christian life and the Christian gospel. This can be done, of course, at a base level, to make the gospel and the Christian life more palatable to ourselves; but it can also be done with a sincere desire to make the gospel and the Christian life more presentable to others. “If others see that we are just like themselves, etc., - then” The truth is, of course, that Christians are not like others; and the constant danger is that in endeavouring to show that we can “take our part in this world,” we only end up by showing that this world is still too much a part of us.

Over the past number of years, we have been accustomed to the use of the word “Reformed” in various aspects of the Church’s life. There are Reformed Baptists, and Reformed Presbyterians, and Reformed Evangelicals – and so forth. We

would like to suggest, (without wishing to add to the titles etc.,) that perhaps the time has come for some to begin viewing themselves as Reformed “fundamentalists”!

Fundamentalism, of course, is an old term, and it really has its roots in that protest that was made against the inroads of modernism and liberalism into the professing churches of Christ in the last century. What it simply amounted to was that those who came under the designation held to the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith; what where sometimes describes as “Three Rs” – Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by the Blood; Regeneration by the Spirit. It’s a good basis, and we wouldn’t go all that far adrift if we ever had it before our eyes.

Old fundamentalism, however, wasn’t only concerned about what a person professed to believe, but how they actually lived; and although there were some “abuses” of the principle, and mismanagement of the principle, the principle was a very straight-forward and Biblical one, viz – that “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” In other words, when a person professed to be Redeemed by the blood, and Regenerated by the Spirit, it was evident in their life. There were things that they *used* to do that they no longer did; there were things that they had no interest in before that now became central in their lives. There were certain things that they *gave* up, and certain things that they *took* up. It was as simple as that; as whereas some aspects of it might be held up to question in some people’s minds today, it had that over-all feature of “roughage” that was less dangerous to the system than much of the “refined” processes that our spiritual diets have become accustomed to today.

Old fundamentalism didn't spend a lot of time in analysing the word to see how far it could venture into it while still retaining some kind of a Christian testimony; it "separated" from it. And even if it did over-react in some areas, no one will question that it is safer to stand six feet from the edge of a cliff than six inches. Old fundamentalism didn't try to apologetically "explain" the bible to that most elusive of characters, "modern man" it unapologetically preached the Bible. "oh, yes," say some, "but some of its exegesis and exposition wasn't up to scratch." Perhaps not, but whiles it preached a heaven to gain and a hell to shun it was concentrating more on its office and commission than all the dissertations and niceties of our day put together. Old fundamentalism didn't look to "infiltrate and influence" denominational structures and churches where Christ was denied and His gospel spurned; it withdrew from such. Flirting with a corrupt world or a corrupted denomination both had their dangers – they infected and influenced. It has always amazed us that those who go into rotten churches or denominations to "influence" them, don't consider for one minute that they themselves might be the ones who will be influenced. Influence is a two-way process, and sad to say, the record bears out the fact that many who "went in," or "stayed in," to influence, ended up by being influenced.

In a word, then, are we in danger of an over-refined Christianity today? Bear in mind that taking up the cross to follow Christ, and experiencing the cost of discipleship is every bit a real part of the Christian life for us today as it ever was. The actual "application" of the truth might be different, but the truth is still there, and is still to be applied. In some parts of the world, actual persecution for righteousness sake is still experienced; taking up the cross can have almost a physical meaning and outworking. But is there no cross for us to bear, in

our part of the world, and in our “free society” and environment. Indeed, there is. But has our “refined” view of things helped to blur that fact, and ease that fact out of our thinking? I like the wording of many of our old hymns:-

“The only gospel we can own,
Sets Jesus Christ upon His throne;
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtained on Calvary’s *rugged* tree.”

Regardless of our day, or our age, or our setting, the Cross of Christ is just as rugged and rough as ever, and none of us need think for one minute that we can rightly bear it and not feel the “chaffing” of it on our shoulders. One of the great snares confronting many Christians today is the desire to be socially accepted and acceptable; (is this why some remain in a compromised state Churches etc.?) But perhaps it is time to consider that a stand against social pressure is the very way in which we are to bear the cross today in our part of the world. If our spiritual systems, of course, (like our physical systems,) have become accustomed to a diet of “refined” Christian thinking and acting, they may draw back from this idea. The great question remains; however, can we be spiritually healthy without such “roughage” in our lives?

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (October 1983)



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 104 (Concluded)

Verse 14. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth ... and bread which strengthens man’s heart.”

Everybody – the child and the old man, the beggar and the king – like bread. We may remember the unfortunate man, who was cast on the desert isle, famishing with hunger, and who cried at the sight of a handful of gold, “Ah, it is only gold!” He would willingly have exchanged this, to him, useless material, for a handful of bread. O let us never sin against God by lightly esteeming his bread. Let us gratefully accept the sheaves we gather, and thankfully visit the barns that preserve them. Let us never sit down at the table without asking God to bless the gifts we receive from His gracious hand and never eat bread without thinking of Christ our Lord, who calls Himself the living bread who came down from heaven to give life to the world. And above all, may we never go to the table of the Lord without enjoying, through the symbols of the bread and wine, His body and blood, whereby we receive strength to nourish our spiritual life. Yes, Lord, thou satisfieth both body and soul, with bread from earth and bread from heaven. Praise be to thy holy name, or hearts and mouths shall be full of thy praises for time and for eternity.

Frederick Arndt

Verse 21. “The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.” God feeds not only sheep and lambs,

but wolves and lions. It is a strange expression that young lions when they roar after their prey, should be said to “seek their meat from God;” implying that neither their own strength nor craft could feed them without help from God. The strongest creatures left to themselves cannot help themselves. As they who fear God are fed by special providence from God, so all creatures are fed and nourished by a general providence. We may think a lion might shift for himself; but no, ‘tis the Lord that provides for him – the young lions seek their meat from God. Surely, then, the mightiest of men cannot live upon themselves. As we receive from God life and breath, so we must receive from God all things needful for the maintenance of this life.

Joseph Caryl

Verse 24. “**O Lord, how manifold are thy works ...**” They are not only for number, but manifold for variety. Mineral, vegetable, animal – what a range of works is suggested by these three terms. No two men, even of the same class, are exactly alike, and the classes are more numerous than science can number. Works in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. Works which abide the ages; works which come to perfection and pass away in a year; works which with all their beauty do not outlive a day. Works within works, and works within these again – who can number one of a thousand? They are all His works – wrought by His own power, and they all display His wisdom. They are all wisely made – each one fits into its place, fills it, and is happy in so doing. “The earth is full of thy riches.” It is not a poor-house, but a palace. And if His house below is so full of riches, what must His house above be?

C. H. S.

Verse 25. “So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable ... leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.” Fish, great and small, sport and play in the element of water; but as soon as they are brought out of it they languish and die. Mark, O soul, what the element is if thou wouldest live joyful and blessed.

Lange’s commentary of the Psalms

Verse 35. “Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.” This is the first place where *hallelujah* (Praise ye the Lord) occurs in the Book of Psalms. It is produced by a *retrospect* (looking back) on the works of creation and by the contemplation of God’s goodness in the preservation of all the creatures of his hand; and also – by a *prospective* (looking forward) view of that future Sabbath, when, by the removal of evil men, God will be enabled to look on His works, as he did on the first Sabbath, before the Tempter had marred them, and see “everything very good.”

Christopher Wordsworth

***Mrs Seaton's Letter
to the
Boys and Girls***



Dear Boys and Girls,

Most of you probably know the story of the Rich Young Ruler who came to Jesus once and asked Him what he must do in order to have "eternal life." Our Lord Jesus spoke these words to him, "If you would be perfect," said the Lord, "go and sell

what you have, and give to the poor." The Bible tells us that the young Ruler "turned away sorrowful," for he was very rich, and he did not want to give up his riches in order to follow Jesus.

Many people are like that, boys and girls, but in this letter I want to tell you of another rich young man who heard these words of Jesus, but who did what Jesus through the Bible told him to do.

The young man's name was Peter Waldo, and he lived in the city of Lyons, in France. About the year 1170 – that's more than eight hundred years ago – Peter Waldo called to see one of the men who was a priest in one of the churches in Lyons. "Sir Priest," he said, "I have a question to ask. The other day a friend of mine died. Men will die, I suppose; I will die. But my friend was not ready to die. Sir Priest," he said, "tell me, what is the surest road to heaven?" the priest took down a copy of the Bible, which was written in Latin, and read some words. Then he spoke the words in Peter Waldo's own language. They were those words that our Lord Jesus Christ had spoken to the Rich Young Ruler many years before: "If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." As day followed day Peter Waldo thought on these words, and in the end he said to the Lord, "I will do it."

"Soon Lyons was ringing with the news," we read, "that rich Peter Waldo the merchant had sold everything he possessed and had given the money to the poor." He wasn't sad, or sorry, for now he knew that he had that "treasure in heaven" that Jesus spoke about. Like most people in his day, he wasn't able to read or write, but he began to learn, so that he could read the Bible for himself. He was disappointed, however, for he soon discovered

that all the Bibles were like the one the priest had read from and written in Latin, or some difficult language. But Peter refused to be beaten, and in a little time he persuaded two of his friends, who were great scholars, to translate the Bible into the people's own language.

Now as he began to read the words of Jesus for himself, he was struck by another saying of the Lord's: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Gathering his friends around him, he read these words and said, "Then we must go." They had very little money, or even none at all; but they each had a copy of the words of Christ, and off they went. Some of them carried a pack on their backs which was full of items they could sell in order to buy some bread and things to live on. As they went to the lonely farms and houses they used to call out their "wares," and once the people had bought what they wanted, Peter Waldo and his friends would say, "But I have a treasure much more rare and precious than these." Then, out would come the words of the Lord, and soon the gospel was being told to people who had never heard it before.

After a time, however, the priests began to forbid the people to listen to these *Waldensians*, as Peter Waldo and his friends were now called. They were greatly persecuted because they believed that they must preach the gospel to everyone. Many hundreds were put to death by the priests and their armies; sometimes whole villages were burned, and every person killed or taken prisoner to the dungeons. Some of them were frozen to death in the winter snows, and some others, who had hidden in caves, were suffocated as the priests lit fires at the mouth of the caves to try and smoke them out.

In spite of all this, however the Waldensians refused to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, or to give up His Word – the Bible. We promise, "they vowed, "to maintain the Bible without admixture ... persevering in this holy religion, though it be at peril of our own life, in order that we might transmit it to our children, intact and pure, as we received it from our fathers."

Peter Waldo has now long-since died, boys and girls; but now that he has died he has gone to be with Christ in heaven because of his faith in Him; and there, of course, he will have that "treasure in heaven" that our Lord Jesus spoke about in His words. I trust that you have faith in Christ and that you serve Him in the way He asks you to.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Seaton.

Marjorie Bowes – Wife of John Knox

Mrs Bowes and her daughter, Marjorie, were among the gentry of Berwick-upon-Tweed at the time when John Knox was posted there by Archbishop Cranmer, in 1548. Knox was forty-four and only on the threshold of his great career. Two years before this, Knox had been captured at St Andrews by the French and put to the galleys. On his release he dared not show himself in Scotland because of his outspoken sermons there just before his capture. But he had hardly arrived in London before he was recommended for the work of teacher-preacher, and was very soon allocated to Berwick, an important garrison town. The work appealed greatly to him. He threw himself into it with zeal and love, soon causing a remarkable change of heart in the district.

Mrs Bowes had already been drawn from Popery towards the Reformed doctrines but now “received from his sermons much instruction and pleasure. She highly esteemed his talents and character” and became as a mother to him. During those two years a mutual attachment sprang up between Knox and Marjorie Bowes, and before he left Berwick he “made faithful promise to her before witnesses.” However, Mr Bowes, Sir Robert his elder brother, and some other relatives were opposed to the match; partly through family pride, and partly from lack of sympathy with the Reformation. On this account the marriage was postponed, and sorrowful letters reveal the wounded feelings on the part of Knox and Marjorie towards their relatives.

By 1553 Queen Mary had come to the throne in London, and Knox, up in Berwick, had now married his Marjorie though her father still dislike the union. The mother and daughter were anxious that Knox should live permanently in the district – away from London, and out of danger’s way. Mrs Bowes earnestly pleaded for her husband to use some of his ample means to settle them in a suitable home, but nothing would persuade him to do it. Nor would Knox give up his work, which now held grave danger. Poor Marjorie had to live under the constant frown of her father and great anxiety for her husband. Courtiers and learned men who had to tolerate the bold words of the royal chaplains now turned on them and the lives of these godly men were in jeopardy. Knox, back in London, narrowly escaped death and fled to France.

With him out of the way, Marjorie and her mother were now subjected to quite a persecution from the father’s side of the family, not so much for holding the Reformed doctrines as for foolishness in not conforming to the ruling of the moment. But neither of them would yield. In spite of a timidity of character

(indeed Mrs Bowes was a woman of deep abasement of spirit for whose encouragement Knox wrote his “Fort for the Afflicted,” an exposition of Psalm 6.) they “determined not to forsake upon any consideration the faith which they had embraced from full conviction of its truth”. Knox confirmed them in this by his letters “... Continue stoutly to the end and bow you never before that idol, and so will the rest of worldly troubles be unto me more tolerable ... Comforting myself I appear to triumph that God shall never suffer you to fall in that rebuke.” Throughout this persecution they were able secretly to meet a few like-minded persons, and although deprived of preaching they regularly enjoyed a simple form of worship- together.

There came a happy reunion “at the close of harvest 1555” but Knox really wished to make a secret journey into Scotland. Meeting his friends there he found “an ardent thirst for the Word” and could not tear himself away. Eventually Marjorie and her mother, who was now a widow, joined him in Edinburgh, moving about from friend to friend. It was too dangerous for him to settle, and when the next year he received an invitation to become pastor to the English congregation in Geneva he felt he should accept. Marjorie and her mother bade adieu to their friends “with no small dolour to their hearts and unto many of us” says Knox, and set sail from Leith to Dieppe. After visiting and taking farewell of the brethren in different places (like Paul), Knox followed them.

For three years they lived peacefully in Geneva and two sons were born there. Marjorie was beloved by all who knew her abroad, Calvin calling her “a wife whose equal is not everywhere to be found.” (He had lost his Idelette seven years previously) The friendship of Calvin, a little younger than himself, was precious to Knox, but all the time he felt to be in exile, so that

when he received an invitation from the Scottish Protestant nobles he responded to it at once, and when home in January 1559, leaving his family until he felt assured of their safety in Scotland. They were duly sent for in June and made the tedious journey – licences and passports needed, much like today. Marjorie did not long survive the settlement in Scotland. Though he now had a regular ministry and a “comfortable establishment for her and her children” it was too late. She died at the close of that year, leaving this blessing to her two sons, Nathaniel and Eleazar, “that God, for his son Christ Jesus’ sake, would of his mercy make them his true fearers, and as upright worshippers of him as any that ever sprang out of Abraham’s loins.”

The two boys grew up to be worthy sons of their godly parents. Both trained at St John’s College, Cambridge, one becoming a Fellow and the other a preacher at the college.

It was about two years after the death of Marjorie that Mary, Queen of Scots arrived at Edinburgh, so that she never knew of the great troubles and conflicts between those two opposite characters, which is now almost all that the modern reader knows of Knox, events which have been highlighted and distorted in many a novel and television play.

From: Ladies of the Reformation, by J. H. Alexander.

Israel, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learned the gospel too:
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw a Saviour's face.

The Paschal sacrifice,
And blood-besprinkled door,
Seen with enlightened eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile the world to God.

The lamb, the dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth
Should be the soul's defence;
For He who can for sin atone,
Must have no failing of his own.

The scape-goat on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more –
In him our Surety seemed to say,
Behold, I bear your sins away!”

Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free,
The type, well understood,
Expressed the sinner's plea;
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of thy grace,
The same in every age:
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsaf'd to me.