

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 177 issued January 2026

### Index

1. Church Buildings and Buildings for Churches. W. J. Seaton 1984.
2. A Word About Controversy – By Robert Haldane.
3. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 106
4. A Seaside Lesson and a Bible Truth. Boys and Girls letter from Mrs Seaton.
5. What Saith the Scriptures. (Philemon).



At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://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.

## ***Church Buildings and Buildings for Churches.***

Pastor Seaton authored the following article back in 1984 and covers a small bit of the many questions that arose within the church in the 1970-72 as our church was being formed. Now, of course, it is part of the Inverness Reformed Baptist Church's history. However, all these years later it is one of the problems small church's still have to deal with is where to worship.

Dear Friends,

One of the major concerns for small churches today is to find suitable premises to accommodate the church's work and worship. Very often the first consideration is an existing "Church building" which, hopefully, can be purchased at some reasonable cost and then renovated, where renovations are in order. In the experience of many, however, this course has turned out to be beset with a good few problems and, whereas, the initial purchase price may be low, the cost of renovation and upkeep turns out to be extremely high. As a small church ourselves had to face the question, we thought that it might be of practical help to pass on our own experience and the course we adopted.

At the foundation of the church in November 1970, we worshipped in a local Funeral Parlour, but felt a move was desirable! A local "Church building" went on the market about that time, seating around six hundred, and in need of some repair. The cost turned out to be prohibitive, anyway, but it became apparent to us that the last thing that we really needed was a church building seating six hundred people.

We began to get down to some basics, and as the old saying goes, began to “cut our suit according to our cloth.” Eventually we come across two very “utility” looking wooden buildings –



optimistically advertised as “bungalows.” They sat in a good large piece of ground, so we paced them out and peered through the windows. The larger of the two buildings which we thought might be suitable for a place of worship, measured 36 ft long by 22 ft wide, with a small porch at the front and a lean-to

extension at the back. There were six small rooms in the main part of the building, and two in the extension. Thirty-six feet by twenty-two is not a large area, but after some rough calculations it was reckoned that if we could suitably remove the room partitions we would be left with an area quite ample for our use. We made application and our bid was accepted.

Into the 36x22 foot floors pace we are able to fit nine pews nine feet long from either side of the building, thus leaving a centre aisle of 4 ft. These eighteen pews in all seat 108 people and with an average congregation at present of around 70 this is quite sufficient, and very conducive in many ways. This should be one of the main considerations for any small church. What does a congregation of between twenty and thirty want with a building that hold six hundred! The best point to aim at is a building small enough so that it will not be a burden on the congregation, but large enough to allow an increase in congregation as the Lord might grant it.

As a congregation begins to out-grow such premises, then presumably, it will also be able to undertake something larger or add an extension, as the case might be. It's surprising, however, what "bursting point" would entail anyway. In our own case, we have in front of the pews the area that accommodates the pulpit, the organ, and the small communion table that we use. Around a dozen to twenty chairs can be fitted in that area. In a four foot wide aisle one chair can be placed at the end of each pew on one side; and, again in our own case, having built on a vestibule and toilet are in place of the old porch mentioned, we can seat another fifteen or twenty people, as the wide doors open onto the main worship area.

A brief tally of those figures will show that around 150 can be seated and accommodated. Some might think it could be a wee bit crushed at that, and that could be a bit of a drawback! And as I've said, once the Lord has filled a church's place of worship to bursting point, then it would appear that an extension or such like could be undertaken with such an increase. The simple point we would make to churches in need of premises is, don't confine your thoughts to a building with a steeple and stained-glass windows. It is not a "Church building" that is required, *it is a building for the church*. Such premises that will enable a local church of Christ in its area to function and grow to the praise of God.

There are two determining factors considering church accommodations: (1). That we must try and be good stewards. (2) That we must try and do all things decently and in order. The first will guard us against needless extravagance, the other will keep us from being tawdry. It is amazing how dignified we can be when we keep within our budget, and, at the same time,

endeavour to do all that we can with what we have to the honour and the praise of Christ.

We write these words sincerely, and experimentally. In taking the above course, we are thankful to say that we have never lacked, and as we began we still continue. Over the years since we moved into the buildings we have adopted the same practice. Perhaps a recent word in our sermons in Exodus applies in its own Israel Canaan, “little by little.”

Once we had done all the necessary renovation work, we then were able to instal a warm air heating system, and in more recent times have turned the second of the two buildings into a Christian Lending Library, which also houses the Bible Classes, and the Prayer meeting in the mid-week. The biggest changes – as far as our original wooden buildings are concerned – are external. Both buildings were eventually re-roofed, and both have been “harled.” Harling is that system of turning a wooden exterior into a cement one. It is not an expensive process, and once done, it is impossible to tell that the original walls were ever made of wood. With just a wee bit of thought, and a good dose of sanctified common-sense, you normally find that there is a way to do something that will prove less expensive and yet perform the same function.

Being a Baptist church, we, of course, required a baptistry in the building. We decided to place it at the place where the old kitchen of the house had been; that’s where the water already ran. We made some enquiries about the cost of baptistries; they were expensive. Realising that all that we needed was a “tank” in the ground to hold water, we simply dug down the appropriate depth and built in a concrete (water-tight) box. A set of steps

leads into it, and it is emptied after each baptism via a small pump.

These aspects of our own experience and practice we simply leave on record for any who can benefit from them. I'm sure we would have been happy if someone had jogged our own minds along certain lines when we were endeavouring to "make do and mend."

If the few thoughts are of use to any smaller churches, then we surely rejoice in that. There are numerous other things that we might relate, but it's part of the joy of it all in our own particular situations to find means of doing things that suit us best. In the overall, however, there are certain advantages that cannot be measured: the business of upkeep and repairs, for example. Remember how heating and lighting costs have increased, and will probably continue to do so. There are so many advantages; and above all, of course, there is the opportunity to spread the gospel more freely. If you are a small church at this time looking for a place of corporate work and worship, we would simply say, don't *over*look anything!

**Editor's note.** It is now over 50 years since we began to worship here in Telford Road, and we still give thanks to God for giving us these premises so that we as a church may gather one with another and worship His holy name.

"The beginning of true nobility comes when a man ceases to be interested in the judgement of men, and becomes interested in the judgement of God."

J. Gresham Machen.

## ***A Word About Controversy.*** ***(By Robert Haldane)***

Many religious persons have a dread of controversy and wish truth to be stated without reference to those who hold the opposite errors. Controversy and bad spirit are in their estimation synonymous terms and strenuously to oppose what is wrong is considered as contrary to Christian meekness. Those who hold this opinion seem to overlook what every page of the New Testament lays before us. In all the history of our Lord Jesus Christ we never find Him out of controversy. From the moment he entered on the discharge of his office in the synagogue of Nazareth until he expired on the cross, it was an uninterrupted scene of controversy. Nor did he with all the heavenly meekness which in him shone so brightly treat error and truth without a reference to those who hold them or study to avoid giving its proper appellation to those corruptions in doctrine or practice that endangered the interests of immortal souls. His censures were not confined to doctrines but included the abettors of false principles themselves.

And as to the apostles, their epistles are generally controversial. Most of them were directly written for the express purpose of vindicating truth and opposing error and the authors of heresies do not escape with an abstract condemnation of their false doctrine. Paul again and again most indignantly denounces the conduct of opposers of the gospel and by name points out those against whom he cautions his brethren. When Hymenaeus and Alexander erred concerning the faith, and when he delivered them unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme he did not compliment them as amiable and learned persons. Even the apostle who treats most of love and possessed so much of that

spirit which was eminently manifest in the divine Master does not avoid controversy nor in controversy does he study to avoid severity of censure on the opposers of the truth.

In the examples of opposing error left on record for our imitation we perceive nothing of that frigid spirit of indifference which smiles on the corruptors of the word of God and shuns to call heresy by its proper name. With what holy indignation do the apostles denounce the subtle machinations of the enemies of the gospel and in vain shall we look among those faithful servants of the Lord for anything to justify that trembling reserve which fears to say decidedly that truth is truth or that error is error. In what style indeed should perversions of the truth of God be censured ought they to be treated more as mere matters of opinion on which we may innocently and safely differ? or ought they to be met in a tone of solemn strong and decided disapprobation? Paul warned Christians against men who arose from among themselves, 'speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them' and instead of complimenting false teachers in his day denouncing an angel from heaven on the supposition of his preaching another gospel and if an apostle was withstood to the face when he was to be blamed are the writings of those who subvert the gospel to be passed without rebuke.

While a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference to truth is advancing under the mask of charity and liberality there is a loud call on all Christians to stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the true faith of the gospel to present a firm and united phalanx of opposition to error under every name from whatever quarter it may approach and not to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths to walk in paths in a way not cast up to make their land desolate Jeremiah 18 15.

Thus, saith the Lord “stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Should believers become unfaithful to their trust and be seduced to abandon their protest against false doctrines they may gain the approbation of the world but what will this avail them compared with the favour of God but if with prayer to God in the use of the appointed means they contend earnestly for the truth then they may expect the fulfilment of that blessed promise when the enemy shall come in like a flood the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

(Reproduced from the Link).



## ***Gleanings in the Psalms***

### ***Psalm 106***

Israel’s history is here written with the view of showing human sin. It is, in fact, ***a national confession***, and includes an acknowledgement of the transgression of Israel in Egypt. In the wilderness, and in Canaan – together with devout petitions for forgiveness. This rendered the psalm suitable for use in all succeeding generations, and especially in times of national captivity.

While we are studying this holy psalm, let us all along see ourselves mirrored in the Lord's ancient people, and bemoan our own provocations of the Most High; at the same time admiring His infinite patience, and adoring Him because of it. May the Holy Spirit sanctify it to the promotion of humility and gratitude.

*C.H. Spurgeon*

**Verses 1 & 3. “Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; ... Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.”** This is real and substantial praising of God. Thanks*doing* is the proof of thanks*giving*. The good life of the thankful man is the life of thankfulness.

*J. Trapp.*

**Verse 6. “We have sinned with our fathers ...”** Let us look far back to the age of sin; even as far back as the “original” from which come all the copy of imitation. Be they never so new in *act*, they are old in *example*. “We have sinned with our fathers;” antiquity is no infallible argument of goodness, for iniquity can plead antiquity. He that commits a new act of murder finds it old in the example of Cain. Drunkenness can be fetched from Noah; contempt of parents from Ham; women’s shamelessness from the daughters of Lot. There is no sin but has white hairs upon it and is exceeding old. Yet let us look back even further still – even to Adam. There is no age to sin.

*Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 7. “Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies.”** Because they “understood not His wonders,” therefore they “remembered not His mercies.” A shallow understanding causes a short memory.

*Homes.*

**Verses 12-13. “... They sang in his praise. They soon forgot his works ....”** The chapter which contains the portion of the children of Israel’s history here alluded to, (Exodus 15,) begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent – both uttered by the same lips and within

the space of three short days! Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh and destroyed their enemies. Their murmurs were caused by a mere trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed – when they found the waters of Marah bitter to their taste. Indeed, although they “sang his praises, they soon forgot his works.”

*Edward Payson.*

**Verse 13. “They soon forgot his works ...”** As it is with a sieve, the good corn and fine flour goes through, but the light chaff and coarse bran remains behind. Or as a strainer, when the sweet cordial is strained out, but the dregs are left behind. Or as a grate, that lets the pure water run away but if there be any straws, sticks, mud or filth, those it holds. So, it is with most men’s memories, so that the vain conceits of men are apt to be held in, when the divine instructions of God and His gracious promises run through. Like Israel, “They soon forgot his works.”

*William Gouge.*

**Verse 21. “They forgot their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt.”** Israel is now accused for the third time of forgetting God. In verse 7; afterwards, in verse 13; and now in verse 21. And that he might show the greatness of this forgetfulness, the psalmist does not simply say, they forgot God, but adds, “their saviour” – “they forgot God their Saviour.” And not just the Saviour of their fathers in former times, but their Saviour – their own Saviour.

*Musculus.*

**Verse 24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word.”** One great bar to salvation is spiritual sloth. It is here said of Israel, “they despised the pleasant land.” What could be the reason for that? Canaan was a paradise of delight, a type of heaven. Aye, but they thought that it would cost them a great deal in the getting, by way of trouble and hazard, and so, they would rather go without it. Are there not millions who would rather go sleeping to hell than sweating to heaven?

*Thomas Watson.*

(to be concluded)



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

Dear Boys and Girls,

The story I'm telling you in this edition is about two boys, Billy and Sam. They lived beside the sea. You can imagine that they find all kinds of interesting things to do.

One day, as they were playing on the shore, Sam said to Billy, “Let's each build a float out of whatever we can find on the beach.” So, off they went, back and forward, bringing all sorts of things – tin cans, bits of wood – pieces of oiled rope – all kinds of things you find scattered on beaches. At last, they got it all sorted out into two heaps, and each set-to and built a raft.

My, how proud they were of those rafts! They got a loan of two long pieces of rope and tied one on each of the rafts. And they began to have great fun floating them on the bobbing

waves. All too soon, it was lunch time, and they had to go home. “We must make our rafts secure,” said Billy, “so that we don’t lose them.” On saying this, he looked around for a safe place to put his raft. He noticed that on some rocks a little distance away there were a few iron hooks embedded on the rocks, just ideal for tying up the rafts. So off he went and clambered over the rocks, hauling his raft with him. At last, he got it well and truly tied up. When he got back to Sam, he noticed that Sam had taken a bit of stick and had pushed it deep into the sand, and tied his raft to it. “Don’t be silly, Sam,” said Billy, “the tide will come in and take it away.” “Well, I’ll risk that,” said Sam. “I can’t be bothered going over those rocks.” So, off they went for their lunch.

When they returned, how sad Sam was, for there floating off in the distance was his raft. The tide had, of course, come in, and the sand was not solid enough to hold the stick in place, and so, this was the result. “You should have taken the effort to secure it like mine onto a solid foundation like mine,” said Billy.

I’m sure you would all agree, boys and girls, with Billy. And, you know, there’s a similar story in the Bible, at the end of chapter seven of Matthew’s gospel. I’ll tell you what to do. Read it over, and see if you think it’s like the story of Billy and Sam.

Here is a verse from the Bible that will help you to start thinking:- “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 3 verse 11.)

Love,  
Mrs Seaton

## ***What Saith the Scriptures. (Philemon)***

The epistle of Paul to Philemon is the shortest of Paul's letters, but for all its brevity, it is full of food for the soul, and directions for the feet. It contains a word of greeting in the first three verses, followed by a thanksgiving for the witness and testimony of Philemon, and then comes the main purpose of the letter, which is a request on the part of the apostle Paul to the one to whom the letter is sent: the short note concludes with a hope that Paul can soon visit Philemon personally, and a request that Philemon will convey Paul's "salutations" to some of the other believers there with him.

The epistle is one of those parts of the Word of God that very much invite "sanctified speculation" with regards to what lies "between the lines." Philemon himself was converted under the ministry of Paul at some point in his life; and of his Christian calibre there can be little doubt. Paul speaks about the "love and faith" which Philemon manifested "toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints," and tells him that he has "great joy and consolation" in his love, "because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." It is this very standing of Philemon that gives Paul "confidence" to make his request of him, to the glory of the Lord.

Paul's request is on the behalf of a runaway slave from Philemon's household, named Onesimus; and it's at this point, especially, that one is tempted to "speculate" – with a sanctified imagination, of course: One thing is sure, Onesimus had come to

faith in Christ under Paul while Paul was imprisoned at Rome. He speaks of him as his “son,” whom, he says, “I have begotten in my bonds.” Just why Onesimus absconded from the home of Philemon, just why he made his way to Rome, just how he came into contact with Paul in his Roman prison – all of those questions lie unanswered. Did he continue with a life of crime that he had begun in Philemon’s house, once he had fled to Rome, and, therefore, ended up in prison in close proximity to Paul? Did he deliberately seek out the Lord’s apostle once he found himself like the prodigal with nowhere to turn? Whatever, the time had now come for Onesimus to go back to Philemon once more, and so, the aged Paul sends him with this letter in his hand, in which he simply requests Philemon to take Onesimus back into his service, and forgive him the wrong that he has committed against him.

It is the *way* that Paul makes his request that is full of interest, and typical of the Lord’s great servant. It is couched in gospel terminology, and provides one of the great gospel “texts” of the Word of God – in verse 18: “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” “In time past he was unprofitable to you,” says Paul, “but now is he profitable.” Grace has worked in his heart; and what parent hasn’t kept their hope alive for a wayward son or daughter with the words of Paul, in verse 15: “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever?”

In a very real sense, the epistle to Philemon is like Paul himself: little in stature, but mighty in word.

