

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.

The Two Natures in the Christian Life Today.

By Jack Seaton (1984)

My dear friends,

Numerous are the lessons that the children of God must endeavour to keep ever before them as they are called to live out their Christian lives upon this earth.

One of the most vital lessons for our souls is the remembrance that when a man, or a woman, is born again of the Spirit of God there is implanted within them an entirely new nature which they just didn't possess before, and that alongside that new nature, the old nature is left to exist, although not to run rampant as it was able to do before the person's rebirth by the Spirit. The fact that these two opposing factors then come to be operative in the life of a child of God immediately turns that believing life into a veritable battlefield, and the believer in Christ is time and time again forced to emerge from the spiritual onslaughts that such a situation creates to the ever-fresh realisation that there is such a situation in the first place.

The young bride in the Song of Solomon expressed the sentiment of the Church of Christ for every generation; "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" she asked of Solomon, "as it were, the company of two armies." Even a casual read of the Song of Solomon will show what she was getting at: Solomon was her Bridegroom, and steadfast in his love towards her; she was his Bride, but her love very much ebbed and flowed. Yet, in spite of that, Solomon still continued to shower his love upon her. In the light of that, what could he possibly "see" in her – "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" In her own estimation there must have

been “two armies;” one eager and willing to love and to obey her faithful Bridegroom, the other, eager and determined to draw her away and cause her to walk in unfaithfulness. The picture is all too clear; it is the story of the heart, and the mind, and the life of every believing child of God; for whereas, it is the desire of their hearts to “run after” Christ continuously, nevertheless, they feel their feet dragging and even turning aside into another path. What is the explanation? There is “the company of two armies.” So that the believer in Christ is not only a “soldier” of Christ, but he is a battlefield, as well, where the conflicts for the glory of Christ are so often fought out by these two mighty opposing forces.

The apostle Paul names two of the most active battalions in these two armies in that the famous seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans; “I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” he says there, “but I see another law, warring against the law of my mind. ...” Lined up in a full array within the believer’s life is the law of God; but bristling with the impatience of disobedience is Another Law – stretched out to oppose that Law of God at every wheel and turn. What a discovery that can be to the newly-born child of God. In that first flush of new life, when God implanted the joy of His Word within our hearts and minds, it seemed as though heaven was in us before we were in heaven. The very mention of Christ’s Name was a joy to the soul. Then came a temptation out of the ranks of the Law of Sin; it moved around the heart and mind, it struck home to the soul, a battle ensued, and like the one that raged between Joshua and Amalek, sometimes the Joshua prevailed, and sometimes Amalek prevailed. Then came that realisation: “I find *another* law.” There was the “company of two armies,” and each would strive for mastery and dominion until the final blast of the last trump at the appearing of Christ.

It will do us good to remember who it was that uttered these words, and at what time he uttered them. They were spoken by that, almost unique, man, the apostle Paul; the one who was “caught up into the third heaven” where he saw things “unutterable.” And the time in his life that he found this “other law” so operative was when he would “do good!” “I find then a law that when I would *do good*, evil is present with me.” It’s when the law of God begins to operate in our lives that the law of sin becomes so active and launches its worst offensives. You endeavour to speak for Christ, and it’s as though a swing from the devil’s broadsword cuts the very tongue right out of your mouth at that precise moment. You approach the Word of God so that a certain course of action might find rest on the revealed truth of God in the Word, but it’s scarce possible to see because of the dust from the battle. Even the place of prayer, which ordinarily promises a retreat and a place of refreshing, can be turned into a running conflict to gain even so much as the concentration of the heart and mind for a few brief minutes. “The company of two armies!” The Law of God, and the Law of Sin.

The apostle Paul goes on to show his reactions to the offensives of these two battalions from these two factors that he finds at work in his life: “With the mind,” he says, “I myself serve the law of God; but, with the flesh, the law of sin.” Both armies, as it were offer “promotion” for good service in the conflict, and the two “natures” now existing within the believing child of God respond to these “enticements” according to their leanings. The new nature - the spiritual nature – within the believer strives after the joys of knowing and keeping the things of the Lord; but the old nature - the fleshly nature - naturally

turns to gratify itself with the rewards that the law of sin can set before it. So, the conflict continues.

We can break the two armies down, not only into battalions, as it were, but into regiments, or companies, or patrols' or even individuals, according as to how the fight develops and is waged within each of our individual hearts and lives.

There is "Assurance" on the one side, and "Doubt" on the other. At one time, it appears to be the most natural thing in the world to put to flight the armies of the alien by standing up and declaring, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth;" while at another, we smell the very courtyards of Doubting Castle itself where Giant Despair loves to parade the spoils of his warfare. There is "Faith" and there is "Sight," and each is a force that can do exploits, either for our spiritual good, or our spiritual detriment. There is "the Earthly" and "the Heavenly" and we might be sure that when the Earthly gets a foothold of advance within us, then "Sight" gains the day, and "Doubt" is soon running up the victory flag on behalf of the old nature.

How vital, then, to constantly remind ourselves that this is the situation that exists within us. To deny it, on the one hand, leads to a form of hypocrisy, where a man or a woman only establishes a "peace, peace, where there is no peace;" but to use it as an excuse for not "striving against sin" is to be but a traitor to Him who has called us to be "holy in all manner of conversation." No, to hold the truth in all practical vitality for our souls is to be truly aware of the situation it presents us with, and to strive to feed, and drill, and supply that army of the spiritual man, and to cut-off the lines of supply and communication of the carnal. One thing must be uppermost,

however: the battle may be waged within the soul; but is not *for* the soul! That was settled, once and for all, when the great Captain of our salvation entered into “the strong man’s palace” and led out a people to the eternal praise of His name.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton 1984

Extraordinary Providences ***(Loraine Boettner)***

There is another class of events recorded in scripture which may be more accurately referred to not as miracles but as “extraordinary providences.” In these cases, the Lord simply directs the forces which are already at work in nature so that they serve His purposes. Examples are most of the plagues which came on the Egyptians, the flight of quails which brought meat to the Israelites in the wilderness, the fall of the walls of Jericho if by an earthquake, the great draught of fishes recorded in the Gospels, the rolling away of the stone from the mouth of the tomb of Jesus on the resurrection morning which Matthew specifically tells us was caused by an earthquake, etc.

The importance of these events is not lessened by their being put in a separate class, for while not strictly miraculous, they do give clear evidence of Divine intervention. There was nothing miraculous, for instance in the locust plague considered in itself, for such plagues have continued to visit Egypt even to the present day; but when the plague came at the exact time that Moses as the Lord’s spokesman had said that it would come, and departed at the appointed time, or when the quails came in great numbers to the right place and at the very time Moses had promised, or when the walls of Jericho fell at the appointed time,

then, these events, taken in connection with the words of the prophet, became as clear evidence of Divine intervention as if they had been pure miracles. They proved the prophet to be the messenger of Him who controls the laws of nature and uses them to serve His purposes.

Throughout the Bible the laws of nature, the course of nations, the varying fortunes of individuals, are ever attributed to God's providential control. All things, both in heaven and earth, from the seraphim down to the tiny atom, are ordered by His never-failing providence. So intimate is His relationship with the whole creation that a careless reader might be led toward pantheistic conclusions. (That God is nature and nature is God). Yet individual personalities and second causes are fully recognised – not as independent of God, but as having their proper place in His plan. “To suppose that anything is too great to be comprehended in His control,” says Dr Charles Hodge, “or anything so minute as to escape His notice; or that the infinitude of particulars can distract His attention, is to forget that God is infinite. ... The sun diffuses its light through all space as easily as upon any one point,. God is as much present everywhere, and with everything, as though He were only in one place, and had but one object of attention.” And again, “He is present in every blade of grass, yet guiding Arcturus in his course, marshalling the stars as a host, calling them by their names; present also in every human soul, giving it understanding, endowing it with gifts, working in it both to will and to do. The human heart is in His hands; and He turneth it even as the rivers of water are turned.”

And with this agree the Scriptures, for we read, “Jehovah doeth His will in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet,” Nahum 1:3. “He maketh His sun to shine on

the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust,” Matthew 5:45. The famine in Egypt appeared to men to be only the result of natural causes; yet Joseph could say, “The thing is established of God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” The Lord sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions so that they should not hurt Daniel, Daniel 6:22. “Behold the nations are as a drop in the bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing,” Isaiah 40:15. “He changeth the times and the season; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings,” Daniel 2:21. “A man’s heart deviseth his way but the Lord directeth his steps,” Proverbs 16:9. “It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure,” Philippians 2:13.



Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

There was once a young boy who was caught in a great storm as he was out walking in the wild, hilly countryside. As the thunder and lightning got worse and worse, he noticed a kind of ruined building. So, taking shelter in it, he sat down in a corner and tried to keep himself warm. He sat there feeling very depressed and frightened, and thinking how hopeless his state was. Suddenly his eyes caught sight of a little beast carrying a grain of corn on its back. It was a little ant! The grain was much bigger than the ant, and what was more the ant was carrying it up

the side of a wall! Just imagine the sight of this little beastie and the big burden on its back.

The boy was fascinated, and as he watched, would you believe it, the grain fell to the ground, but the little animal started all over again. This happened sixty-nine times! But the ant persevered on, and the seventieth time the ant reached the top.

Well, the boy was so pleased with the ant's success, that he opened his mouth and cheered. And as he cheered he felt better and took courage himself and his fears left him. He waited patiently for the storm to finish, and then made his way back down the hill and home.

You know, boys and girls, isn't all that God has created – even down to the little ant – just quite marvellous? God “reveals” Himself and His power in His creation. Many time we can take courage when we are frightened by remembering that God who made all this world of ours is still in control of it. Nothing can happen that He doesn't know about.

However, boys and girls, over and above even God's creation is God's Word. God especially reveals Himself to us through His Word, the Bible, so when we have troubles or fears, not only can we look around us to all that God has made, but also we can look *into* the Bible, and find out all that God has to say to us there. Let us banish our fears by believing all that God has to say to us.

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

The Parable of the Trees.

One of the most spiritually privileged counties in the whole of Scotland in a bye-gone day was the county of Ross-shire, where the Lord appeared to be pleased to raise up faithful preachers and hearers of His Word for many successive years on end.

Among the most faithful of the preachers was Mr John Porteous and among the most faithful of Mr Porteous's hearers was a woman by the name of Elizabeth Munro. One Saturday evening, while visiting at the manse at Kilmuir, the good woman was afforded, by way of parable and illustration, a conducted tour of the congregation of which Mr Porteous was minister. He had informed her that his whole congregation was in his garden, and then, proceeded to "prove" this by showing her that the various types of Christians that were under his care were represented in the various trees that surrounded the old manse.



First stop was a tree that stood almost in the middle of the garden, and which was well-laden with sweet and delicious apples which it seemed to bear almost every year without fail. This reminded the old man of a Christian such as Grissel MacKenzie whose one son had become an eminent minister of the gospel at Tongue and whose other son had been the faithful catechist of Creich. She herself had been descended from the Pope's Legate who had been sent to Scotland to suppress the Reformation, but who had been converted through the gospel that he had once laboured to destroy. She herself went on bearing precious fruit

under the name of the family that the Lord had been so pleased to bless and own.

The branches of the next tree were fastened to wooden props. “This tree,” said Mr Porteous, “before it will yield fruit must be *drawn out* in this manner. So, there are some Christians in this parish that are so retiring and diffident that nothing can be got from them without means being employed to *draw them out*.”

Another tree had ropes fastened to the tops of the uppermost branches with which to bend them down, and thereby prevent them from being overturned by high winds. “Now,” said Mr Porteous, “I have in my congregation some Christians who have superior gifts, and are inclined to soar very high, and would be in danger of being overturned. Therefore, to keep them, and render them fruitful, the Lord keeps them lowly by personal, or mental, or family, or by relative afflictions, or other crosses in their lot.”

Another tree had its branches helped up by supporting props. “These,” said the minister of Kilmuir, “are to keep the branches from being trodden upon; they are so laded with fruit that they are bent to the ground. Some Christians in my congregation,” he went on, “are near their everlasting rest. They are so laden with the fruits of holiness, that they are bent to the dust with the sense of their utter vileness in themselves; and were it not that the great Husbandman supports them with the props of the promises, they would be utterly cast down.”

Lastly, they came to an old willow tree in a corner of the garden. “That tree,” said Mr Porteous, “when I first came to this place appeared to be dead. It continued so for many years, but last spring, to my amazement, I saw a tender twig springing out of it. That is old Samuel Ross in Milton, who for sixty or seventy

years was not only dead in trespasses and sins, but was one of Satan's generals in wickedness. But now, in God's sovereign and adorable grace, he has been plucked as a brand from the burning, and in his old age, some fruits of grace are seen manifesting themselves in him."

The setting sun reminded the Kilmuir minister that night was drawing near. "Now," said he to his old friend, I have spent some hours with you here; now, go home, and spend this night and tomorrow morning at the throne of grace on my behalf, and if I am dry in the pulpit tomorrow, the blame will lie at your door." It is said that he had "uncommon liberty" on the following day.

Christ's "Little Ones"

It is exceedingly touching to observe the tenderness of our Lord's habitual thought of his followers, as manifested in the affectionate designations which he applies to them. It was a land and an age in which the teaching function was greatly magnified. First and above everything else, therefore, his followers were his "disciples," and so he constantly thought and spoke of them. As his disciples, they were, of course, also his "Servants," – though he alone of all the "Rabbis" was really their Lord as well as Master. He preferred to think of them as "friends." Nay, they were more even than friends; they were his "children" or in the extreme expression of his tenderness, his "little children." His shepherd heart went out to them as his "flock," – or rather, in the fondness of his thought to them his "little flock." They were his "sheep," or even his "little sheep," – or rather, more lovingly his "lambs," – or even his "little lambs" – his "lambkins."

It will be observed that the use of what grammarians call, “hypocoristics,” or “endearing diminutives,” is characteristic of our Lord’s thought and speech concerning his followers. In a word, he employs “pet names” in designating them.

What may be looked upon as, in a formal point of view at least, the *typical* form of our Lord’s “endearing diminutives” as applied to his disciples, may possibly be discerned in a designation that occurs half a dozen times in the record of the gospel writers. We refer to the designation “*These* Little Ones.” The phrase is not *the* “little ones,” but ever “*these* little ones.” The emphasis is solely upon the objects to whom the designation applies. These objects are called nothing whatever but “little.”

This certainly seems to be just the perfect embodiment of the “endearing diminutive” – the “pet name,” so to speak, at its climax; it is the expression of pure affection. It seems, that is, to tell us nothing about Christ’s “little ones” except that he loves them very fondly and thinks of them with exquisite tenderness – going out towards them in a passionate impulse of protection. They were his “little ones” who needed him and whom he would never fail in their times of need, even though their time of need be all times, as indeed they are.

B. B. Warfield.



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalms 109

This is by far the most vivid and awesome of all the “imprecatory” psalms of David, where God’s curses and

vengeance are called down upon the Psalmist's enemies. It is applied to Judas Iscariot in the New Testament, and it is recorded that one old devout minister wrote the one word, "mysterious," alongside of this psalm in his pocket Bible. That sentiment might sum-up the feelings of many, but as Spurgeon remarks, we are to remember that it is "*A psalm of David*," and "not therefore the ravings of a malicious ... hot revengeful spirit." "David would not smite the man (Saul) who sought his blood," says Spurgeon, "he frequently forgave those who treated him shamefully; and therefore, these words cannot be read in a bitter, revengeful sense, for that would be foreign to the character of the son of Jesse."

And so, his divisions.

"In the first five verses David humbly pleads with God that he may be delivered from his remorseless and false-hearted enemies. From verse 6 to 20 filled with a prophetic furore, which carries him entirely beyond himself, he denounces judgment upon his foes; and then from verses 21 to 31 he returns to his communion with God in prayer and praise. The central portion of the psalm in which the difficulty lies must be regarded not as the personal wish of the Psalmist in cool blood, but as his prophetic denunciation of such persons as he describes, and emphatically of one "son of perdition" whom he sees with prescient eye. We would all pray for the conversion of our worst enemy, and David would have done the same, but viewing the adversaries of the Lord, and doers of iniquity, *as such, and as incorrigible*, we cannot wish them well. On the contrary, we desire their overthrow, and destruction."

C. H. S.

Imprecations. A father was asked by his young son whether it was right for a good man to pray for the destruction of his enemies in the way that David did in this 109th psalm. “I paused for a moment,” says the father, “to know how to shape the reply so as to fully meet and satisfy his inquiry; I then said ‘My son, if a murderer should enter this house by night, and murder your mother, and then escape, and the sheriff and citizens were all out in pursuit trying to catch him, would you not pray to God that they might succeed and arrest him, and that he might be brought to justice?’ ‘Yes of course,’ he replied, ‘but I never saw it like that.’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘the men against whom David prays were bloody men; men of falsehood and crime, and enemies to the peace of society ... and unless they were arrested and their wicked devices defeated, many innocent persons must suffer.’”

F. G. Hibbard

Imprecations of judgment on the wicked ***on the hypothesis of their continued impenitence*** are not inconstant with ***simultaneous*** efforts to bring them ***to*** repentance. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of divine retribution: the law of love to seek meanwhile to rescue the brand from the burning. The last prayer of the martyr Stephen was answered, not by any general averting of doom from a guilty nation, but by the conversion of one individual persecutor to the service of God.

J. F. Thrupp

Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers might be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were ***essentially*** sinful, how could Paul wish that those who preached any other gospel might be “accursed,” and especially, how could the martyred saints in

heaven call on God for vengeance, and rejoice in the execution of it? - (Rev. 6 verse 10 and Rev. 19 verses 1 to 6.) Resentment against the wicked is so far from being *necessarily* sinful, that we find it manifested by the Holy and Just One himself, when in the days of his flesh he looked around on his hearers “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” And then, in the great day of his wrath, he shall say to “all workers of iniquity,” “depart from me ye cursed.”

From Benjamin Davis

Consider what would have been the effect if these denunciations had been against the *sins* of men and not, as they are in these passages, against the *sinners*. Men would have said, “My sin is denounced, not me.” And what licence that would have given for sin! But man’s sin is identified with himself, and this makes him tremble. God’s wrath rests on *him* because of his sin. Condemnation awaits *him* on account of his sin. This is to help to make him anxious to be rid of it.

Frederick Whitfield