

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- 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.

Not All Names in Church History Are What They Seem.

Dear Friends,

It is easy to become mixed up with names. For instance, in Spurgeon's "Treasury of David," in Psalm 119 you find Spurgeon quoting from a commentator called *Willian Cowper*. Our minds may automatically go to that great poet and hymn writer, William Cowper. But our minds mislead us, in for we have two different men.

William Cowper the commentator is not the William Cowper whose name appears so often on the pages of our hymn books, and who is the author of some of the majestic pieces of praise that the churches sing. Although that William Cowper of the 119th Psalm showed himself to have "the pen of a ready writer," it was the composition of those psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that it was employed, and not in the commenting on the Psalms. The William Cowper of the psalm was a very early Bishop of Galloway -1566-1619 – whose commentary on the great psalm of David bore the title of, "A Holy Alphabet" for Sion's Scholars. We trust that the comments reproduced by Spurgeon in his "Treasury" on the 119th Psalm have given something of a taste of that old schoolmaster of another age.

Now, the case of the two William Cowpers is by no means unique in the history of the churches of Christ. There are quite a number whose names are the same, or very similar or almost the same and it is sometimes easy to mistake the one for the other and so, introduce a misleading idea or thought into our minds.

The two *Augustines* is a case in point. Augustine of Hippo is not to be confused with Augustine of Canterbury. The former was the great evangelical leader of the Church in North Africa in the fifth century, who did such noble battle with the Pelagians over the issue of free will of man. The latter lived almost two-hundred years later-on, and was a Benedictine monk who was sent to England by his great friend, Pope Gregory 1. It scarcely needs pointed-out, I'm sure, that he was "a different kettle of fish" altogether from his namesake who had gone before him.

Another name identifiable with Canterbury is the name **Boys**, and it is Mr Spurgeon who cautions us not to confuse the name *John* Boys with that of *Thomas* Boys, who came sometime later. Commenting on the works of John Boys, Mr Spurgeon says they are "Rich, racy, and running over." "Boys is all essence," he says; and then he adds, "What a difference between the *John* Boys of 1638 and the *Thomas* Boys of 1827! Note well the name," he says. And then, with regard to Thomas Boys' commentary on the New Testament, in typical Spurgeonian fashion, he pronounces, "students do not require this *Boys*' exposition!"

There are probably quite a few names within the historical pale of the Christian church that are not likely to find duplication to any great extent. We can only think of one Oecolampadius! And although among the ranks of the Reformers, we doubt that it would ever become a craze for Christians to name their male offspring after the old German saint. Nor can we think of many who rejoiced in the name of *Increase* Mather, or *Thankful* Owen, or *Godsgift* Kirby! On the other hand, there have been some almost-unique "coincidences" even at local church level.

At one point in the life of the Baptist church on Burra Isle, in the Shetlands, the pastor and the two deacons were all named *John Inkster*. At the Lord's Table, then, each Lord's Day, there was a John Inkster "in the midst" and one on either side regardless of how they arranged their seats. One of the three was at last called home, but the other two, as pastor and deacon, went on to serve the church, and at the end of their course had notched-up 107 years between – John Inkster being pastor for 55 years, and John Inkster being deacon for 52 years.

The case of the Inksters on Burra Isle might remind us of the eventual conclusions of Mr Spurgeon when he has tried to untangle the mass of *Browns* within the history of the Church of Christ in Scotland. No doubt, many have shared his complexity. John Brown of Haddington, and John Brown of Edinburgh, and John Brown of Wamphray – not to mention the occasional David, etc., here and there. "*Browns* to the left of us, *Browns* to the right of us," he says, "the Lord bless them all!" And we might well echo that sentiment with regards to a whole list of the Lord's servants, past and present. While we would be thankful for Thankful Owen, who could be anything else but thankful for the great John Owen himself; not to mention the various Hodges, Haldanes, and Erskines, who have worn the same family crest in the battles of the gospel. It is a blessed thing where certain who share the same "human" name have an interest in the Divine name as well, but it isn't always so. Sad to say, some who are of the name in the history of the Church are of a very different spirit from those whose name we revere or treasure, and, indeed, the old saying holds true that "grace doesn't run in the blood."

John Trapp was the famous old commentator of the 17th century who produced a rare exposition of the Whole Bible in five volumes, but his exposition is very different from that of his

grandson, *Joseph*, who did a commentary on the gospels in the following century. *Joseph* Trapp opposed the whole evangelical awakening, and had no sympathy whatsoever with the truths that his grandfather before him had taught and preached. If a commentary, quotation, or book simply says J. Trapp, make sure it is good old *John*, and not bad young *Joseph*.

An identical case is met with in America in the name of *Charles Chauncy*. The “original” Charles Chauncy was an opposer of Archbishop Laud in England, and eventually escaped to New England, where he later became president of Harvard College. His great-grandson was also called Charles Chauncy, and like Joseph Trapp in England, he too completely opposed the evangelical awakening in America. He engaged in a war of words with Jonathan Edwards, and ended his days as a Unitarian, virtually laying the foundations for the establishment of that heresy in the States in the 19th Century.

Much the same kind of thing applies in the case of Bishop *Ryle*. Few there are who have not enjoyed and benefitted from the writing of J. C. Ryle, but it is one of the saddest cases in the history of the church that Ryle’s favourite son, Herbert, completely turned his back on his father’s evangelicalism, totally imbibed the German Biblical criticism of the last century, and wrote a destructive commentary on the Book of Genesis that is fit only for the fire. Don’t confuse the writings of Herbert Ryle with those of the esteemed J. C., they are like darkness compared to light. Some names on a book mean a lot; some very little. The important thing is that our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Yours sincerely,

W. J. Seaton (March 1983)



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 103

Title. “A Psalm of David.” Doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because of a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others, so among even the inspired psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This one hundred and third psalm has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of the mountains of praise, it is “the apple tree among the trees of the wood.”

Division. First the psalmist sings of personal mercies which he had himself received – verses 1-5; then he magnifies the attributes of Jehovah as displayed in his dealings with his people – verses 6-19: and he closes by calling upon all the creatures in the universe to adore the Lord and join with himself in blessing Jehovah, the ever gracious.

C. H. Spurgeon

Whole Psalm. It is observed that no *petition* occurs throughout the entire compass of these twenty-two verses. Not a single word of supplication is in the whole psalm addressed to the Most High. Prayer - fervent heartfelt prayer - had doubtlessly been previously offered on the part of the psalmist, and answered by his God. Innumerable blessings had been showered down from above in acknowledgement of David’s supplications; therefore,

an overflowing gratitude now bursts forth from their joyful recipient. He touches every chord of his harp and of his heart together, and pours forth a spontaneous melody of sweetest sound and pure praise.

J. S. Stevenson

Verse 1. “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” What work so fitting for a “soul” as this, and who so fitting for this work as “my soul?” My body, God knows, is gross and heavy and very unfit for so sublime a task. No, it is my soul that must do it; and, indeed, what else has my soul to do? — it is the very work for which it was made. If to “bless the Lord” meant nothing more than to say, “Lord, Lord,” then my tongue alone would be sufficient for it, and I should not need to trouble any other parts about it. But to bless the Lord is an eminent work, and requires not only *many*, but very *able* agents to perform it. Therefore, my soul, when thou goest about that work, go not alone but, take with thee, “all that is within me.” All the forces in the whole army, whether it be my heart or my spirit; whether my will or my affections; whether my understanding or my memory – take them all with thee, and “bless the Lord.”

Sir Richard Baker

Verse 1. “... all that is within me ...” Let your *conscience* bless the Lord by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless Him, by decisions in accordance with His Word. Let your *imagination* bless Him, by good and holy musings. Let your *desires* bless Him, by seeking always His glory. Let your *memory* bless Him, by not forgetting any of His benefits. Let your *hope* bless Him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let your every

sense bless Him by its faithfulness, your every *word* by its truthfulness, your every *act* by its integrity.

John Stevenson

Verse 3. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” In this lovely and well-known psalm, we have great fulness of expression in reference to the vital subject of redemption. “Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities.” It is not “some,” or “many” of thine iniquities. This would never do. If so much as the very smallest iniquity – in thought, word, or act – were left unforgiven, we should be just as badly off, just as far from God, just as unfit for heaven, just as exposed to hell, as though the whole weight of our sins was yet upon us. Let the reader ponder this deeply. It does not say, “who forgiveth thy sins previous to conversion.” There is no such notion as this in scripture. When God forgives, he forgives like himself! The source, the power, the channel, and the standards of forgiveness are all divine. When God cancels a man’s sins, he does it according to the measure in which Christ bore those sins. Now, Christ not only bore *some*, or many of the believer’s sins, he bore them all; and therefore, God forgives “all.” God’s forgiveness stretches to the length of Christ’s atonement, and Christ’s atonement stretches to the length of every one of the believer’s sins – past, present, and future. “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from *all* sin.” 1st John 1:7.

Things Old and New, 1858.

(To be continued.)

Covenant Comforts by Joseph Alleine.

Probably the most famous book that Joseph Alleine ever wrote was his “Alarm to the Unconverted.” It was that book, together with Richard Baxter’s “Call to the Unconverted” that Charles Haddon Spurgeon resorted to in his time of conviction of sin: “Oh those books, those books!” he later wrote, “I read and devoured them.” And no wonder, for scarcely is there another book like Baxter’s “Call,” unless it be Alleine’s “Alarm” when it comes to the convicted soul seeking out the true path of repentance and faith in Christ. And what Alleine’s “Alarm” is to the seeking soul, his “Covenant Comforts” to the man or the woman who has found Christ, or rather been found of Christ, and is looking to him for all needed grace on the path that leads to everlasting bliss. This is what “Covenanting with God” is all about. It’s the believer paraphrasing to his own heart all that God has promised to be to him and do for him as he walks this pilgrim road that leadeth unto life, and this is the theme that old Joseph Alleine took up to give his people at Taunton as a light on a dark road when he was separated from them.

The Act of Uniformity of 1662 had seen the majority of the Puritans ejected from their pulpits and severed from their congregations, and Joseph Alleine was no exception. Cast into Ilchester jail, he decided to minister some comfort to his separated flock and took in hand to write God’s covenant promises to His people that their souls might be established. The book, of course, required to be licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and as this was not obtained, it was seized and ordered to be burnt in the King’s kitchen. One of the palace officials, however, discovering that there was a ready market for the little volume, rescued the unburnt copies and sold them for

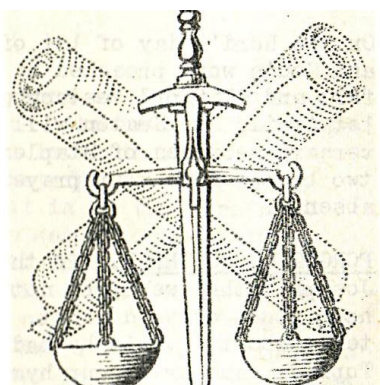
his own profit. His treachery was discovered and the copies that he had not managed to sell were again condemned, this time to have their pages blackened with ink and then confined to the flames. Undaunted by the fate of his work – which could easily become his own fate – Joseph Alleine produced a second edition, and at least one copy of this was used in a remarkable way to the saving of a sinner’s soul. The copy was stolen from a bookstall in Yorkshire, but was later returned by the thief with the humble confession that its pages had been the means of his conversion. And so, the history of the little volume itself is a vindication of the message of its pages, that God is working His covenant purposes out for the good of His people, and from the promises of that everlasting covenant they may draw all comfort for “each perplexing path of life.” Here are a few extracts from Alleine’s work; may they bless your soul, dear reader.

“Hear, O ye ends of the earth, the mighty God, the Lord hath spoken: Gather my saints unto me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. Behold, I establish my covenant between Me and you. By my holiness have I sworn that I will be your covenant friend. I lift up my hand to heaven, I swear I live for ever; because I live, you shall live also. I will be yours: yours to all intents and purposes; your Refuge and your Rest; your Patron and your Portion; your Heritage and your Hope; your God and your Guide. While I have, you shall never want; and what I am to Myself, I will be to you ...”

“Here I seal you your pardon. Though your sins be as many as the sands, and as mighty as the mountains, I will drown them in the deeps of my bottomless mercies. I will be merciful to your uprightness; I will multiply to pardon; where your sins have abounded, my grace shall

superabound; though they be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Behold, I declare myself satisfied, and pronounce you absolved: the ransom is paid, your debts are cleared, your bonds are cancelled. Whatever the law, or conscience, or the accuser hath to charge upon you, here I exonerate you, I discharge you. I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake. Who shall lay anything to your charge when I acquit you?"

"What though your enemies are many? More are they that are with you than they that are against you; ***for I am with you.*** What though they are ***mighty***? They are not ***Almighty***; your Father is greater than all, and none shall pluck you out of my hands. Who can hinder my power, or obstruct my salvation? My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Amen."



***Justification
and
Sanctification
From
Psalm 103 Verse 3***

The third verse of Psalm 103 – “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;” grants us one of those great verses of the Word of God setting out, both our Justification and our Sanctification side-by-side.

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities:” that is Justification; “Who healeth all thy diseases:” that is Sanctification. The distinction between Justification and Sanctification is clearly and simply outlined in the famous illustration of Robert Trail, 1696, and quoted by J.C. Ryle in his book on Holiness.”

“Justification is an act of God about the *state* of a man’s person, but sanctification is the work of God about the *nature* of a man. Justification is an act of God as a judge about a delinquent, absolving him from a sentence of death, but sanctification is an act of God about us, as a physician, in curing us of a mortal disease. There is a criminal that comes to the bar, and is arraigned for high treason; the same criminal has a mortal disease that he may die of, though there was *no* judge on the bench to pass the sentence of death upon him for his crime. It is ‘an act of grace’ that absolves the man from the sentence of the law, that he shall not suffer death for his treason – *that* saves the man’s life. But notwithstanding this, unless his disease be cured, he may die quickly after. Therefore, justification is an act of God as a gracious Judge; sanctification is a work of God as a merciful Physician.”



Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

Once upon a time, there was a little boy called Johnny who had a bad memory. One day, his mother asked him to run down to the grocer’s shop for a box of spice. She needed the spice for

the cake she was starting to mix. “Hurry now, Johnny, and come straight back with the spice, because I’m waiting for it,” his mother reminded him. And so, off he went, feeling quite important. He reached the shop in record time, bought the spice, and then, started off home, putting the box of spice in his pocket for safe-keeping. As he was passing the village playing field, he noticed some of his friends playing football. “Come on, Johnny, have a game with us, we’re a man short for the team.” Would you believe it, Johnny puffed out his chest, stretched his full height, and ran over to join the game, completely forgetting that his mother was waiting for the spice.

What a good game he had; he had scored a goal, too! Johnny was still thinking about the game when he went in through the garden gate. But not for long, for there was his mother waiting for him at the door. Oh, dear, she was angry. And what was Jonny’s excuse? That’s right: “I forgot.”

I wonder how many boys and girls have bad memories like Johnny. Most of you, I’m sure, when you do something, you shouldn’t or fail to do something you should, you usually explain by saying, like Johnny, “I forgot.” Two little words, but they can do so much harm. Not only in ordinary everyday things, but, even more especially, in important things such as the things you are taught in Sunday School and church about God and His blessings, and His promises, and especially His gift to us – the Lord Jesus Christ who died that we might be forgiven.

In the second part of the Pilgrim’s Progress, Mr Greatheart says to Christiana (Pilgrim’s wife) and his children, “You must know that *Forgetful Green* is the most dangerous place in all these parts.”

Boys and girls don't be betrayed by your bad memories. Always try and remember all that God has said through the Bible. Do what God says there – “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Seaton.

Who is Saying What?

When the apostle Paul invited a “curse” upon his head if ever he preached another gospel, he was, surely, setting a continuous pattern for the believer’s attitude towards the Word of God and the words of men. “But if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed.” The apostle was, of course, fully persuaded that what he preached was the word of God, but what he is doing is pressing home to his reader the absolute necessity of *their* being fully persuaded as well. If they fail to be, then they may well be carried away from the truth of God to the mere opinions of men, simply on account of the accepted “standing” of those men. “In other words,” the apostle is saying, “When you hear us preaching, you are not to ask yourself, ‘*Who* is this that is preaching?’ but ‘*What* is it that is being preached?’ And if we are found preaching anything other than the pure Word of God as God has so graciously revealed it to us, then lay your anathemas at our feet and let us be accursed.”

Now, the importance of that principle for our day cannot be emphasised enough. How many denominations, or associations,

or churches are being led in completely unscriptural paths simply because the denominational leaders or its ministers say that the path is alright and safe to travel? The deciding factor in much that has been entered into by various church bodies has not been the Word of God, but the words of men. And the reason that these words of men have been so readily accepted and acted upon has been on account of the personality, or the position, or the reputation of those who uttered them. Implicit trust has so often been placed in the advice of men without one reference to the clear commands and teachings of the Word of God. And even this trust has been based upon what those men might have said or believed twenty or thirty years ago, but have long-since abandoned. “See how the mighty are fallen,” is a sad word that must be written as the spiritual epitaph of some who have done valiantly at an earlier period in their Christian warfare, but who have now virtually surrendered their swords to the onslaughts of popular opinion or ecclesiastical acclaim.

Brethren! Not, *Who* is it that is speaking, but *What* is it that is being said.