

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 Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham

The Society of Saved Sinners

The Pastor's Letter (February 1971)

Dear Friends,

Most of us, no doubt, have some recollections of a particular minister or preacher that we may have heard on a good number of occasions, and who has used the same telling expression, or the same telling phrase in one of his prayers or sermons. I personally am thinking of a well-known preacher on the other side of the Irish sea who almost invariably concludes his gospel meetings with one short brief prayer: **“Lord – Save – Sinners!”** That's all! No high-flying flights of oratory, or cleverly construed benedictions. Just three words: **“Lord – Save – Sinners!”**

And yet, my friends, in that short closing prayer, are we not launched right into what must surely be one of the most vital lessons that the Church of Christ in our day is going to have to learn? What is the Church anyway, but a society of sinners saved by grace. And what is the work of that society of saved sinners, but to see others saved and brought into the place of redemption. This is fundamental. And yet, how much we seem to have forgotten that basic aspect of our churches' lives and have now begun to act and to think in what can only really be described as a very disturbing and unscriptural manner.

Church “A” has just lost their minister who had done a good work there and had built up the numbers attending on the means of grace from week to week. Church “B” along the road is almost gleefully rubbing its hands in anticipation that some of the “folk” from church “A” may become a little discontented with not having any “minister” of their own and begin coming along to them on a Lord's Day evening. Or, on the other hand, when church “A” does finally get settled with a minister again, some of the folk may not take to his preaching, the way they did to their “old” minister, and may feel inclined to shift their camp.

How pathetic! How unhealthy! How absolutely out of keeping with our Lord's command to go out into all the world and preach the

gospel. The picture is such a pitiful one that it hardly bears illustrating; but, if you like, it's like a dozen fishermen all flogging away at the one wee ever-decreasing pool where one poor old salmon has already been trapped, while the river bubbles with fresh-run fish straight from the sea. To put it another way, we're all fishing in the "inside" of the boat! We're so busy trying to cast our nets into the "hold" of the boat to "recatch" what has already been "caught" that we have failed to remember that the world swims on, getting bigger and ever more Godless, while the churches get smaller and every more lifeless.

Sinners saved! that's the direction in which we must learn again to cast our nets. Real live sinners, bristling with their sin and their rebellion against their God in heaven and, then, brought under the conviction of their sin by the Holy Spirit of God through the witness and testimony of the Church of Christ and added to that Church to take their place in telling "others also." This will be life from the dead, my friends. "catch-'em-alive-o!" as the old saying used to go. "Bring them in, from the fields of sin," according to the gospel hymn-writer. And it's good advice, for sinners who have been brought to see their sin and the worth of their salvation in Christ are the stuff that the church of Christ is made of.

You see, to desire an increase in our churches today from much of what is termed "evangelical" is but to desire a possible increase in our frustrations and invite on our heads a whole set of problems that we could well do without. Scanty prayer meetings, lack of willing workers in the spiritual endeavours of the church, worldly maxims and ideals in the conducting of the church's business. These are the accepted features in much of what proffers to be evangelical Christianity today and the results of half-a-century plus of "decisionist" evangelism where neither a true work of repentance from sin, nor a true work of faith in the heart was looked for, nor called for. Let us be perfectly frank: to throw our net into such a pool as that my result in our haling to the shore more than we bargained for.

Time to turn our eyes towards the world, my friends, and seek an influx of that which is the true growth of the church – sinners saved. The ranks are thinning, and, as time has shown, many of those who appeared to enlist in the cause of Christ have since proved themselves to be “none of His,” – probable because they were never rightly warned about the rigours of the battle, anyway. But, look! There is nation upon nation of rebel subjects who have never yet bowed to the majesty of our God and King. What splendid warriors many of them would make if the King would but touch their hearts with the Sceptre of His power. Time to go forth, then, and lay His claims at their feet. If God will but show them their sin and rebellion against Himself and turn them in repentance through the ministry of His church on earth, what worthy subjects they will make. Whatever the King has declared must be done, out of gratitude to the God of their salvation, they will do it. Well might we all pray: “**Lord – Save – Sinners!**”

Sincerely

W. J. Seaton

<p>Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs (Part 12)</p>
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Chapter 3 verse 11.

In our last edition all eyes were focused upon the “chariot” that King Solomon had built to convey his young Bride across the wilderness to the place of their marriage. This verse turns the attention to Solomon himself: “Behold King Solomon with the crown ... ,” it says. And how often the Lord’s people need to “turn their eyes upon Jesus,” and to see Him with the Crown of Omnipotence upon His brow. As one has rightly said, “Christians will have Christ anywhere except on His throne.” And yet, it is only when we learn to behold a Christ who has been crowned with glory and power that we really feel fully secure and under the sway of His gracious sceptre.

“Behold King Jesus with the crown,” is the exhortation that the voice of faith every needs to be delivering at the walls of doubting castle where we so often find ourselves. Christ has the crown of heaven and earth upon His head, for “He doeth his will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand, or say, ‘what doest thou?’”

The saints of a by-gone age knew all about “covenanting” with their Sovereign God and drawing abundant comfort from such a practice. This is why we find old Joseph Alliene exhorting us in his “Covenant Comforts,” – “What though your enemies are many? More are they that are with you than they are against you; **for I am with you.** What thought they are mighty? They are not **almighty**; your Father is greater than all, and none shall pluck you out of my hands.” Let us learn then, to “Behold” our heavenly King with the Crown.

But, again, the verse tells us that we are to “Behold king Solomon with the crown **wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals...**” It was Solomon’s wedding day and he was wearing the garland of rejoicing. And what a Crown of rejoicing that it was that our Saviour donned when He had poured out His life on the Cross to redeem His Bride, the Church, unto Himself. He “laid aside his glory,” for “the joy that was set before him,” and now, “God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name.” One day He is going to appear with that great name written clearly upon His vesture – “King of Kings and Lord of lords.” Until that day, let us “Go forth (by faith) ... and behold King Jesus with the crown ...”

(This is the last of this present selection of “Notes”).

Luther's Table Talk

The Natural Man. How should God deal with us? Good days we cannot bear, evil we cannot endure. Gives He riches unto us? Then we are proud, so that no man can live with us in peace; nay, we will be carried upon heads and shoulders, and will be adored as gods. Gives

He poverty unto us? Then we are dismayed, impatient, and murmur against Him. *Therefore*, nothing were better for us, than forthwith to be covered over with the shovel.

Godly Contentment. Like yon little bird upon the tree, he hath fed himself tonight, but he knoweth not where his breakfast will come from tomorrow. He sitteth there while the wind rocks the tree: he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing, and sleeps; and when he awakes in the morning, he sings –

“Mortals cease from toil and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow.”

God’s Word. Among all the gifts of God, the gift of His Holy Word is the most excellent, and, if we take away that Word, what else do we do but take away the sun out of the world? For what is the world without the Word of God, which alone bringeth life and comfort to the soul, and peace and quietness to the conscience. Which alone keepeth us in the favour of God; without the which there is no religion, and so no God. Although there be many and wonderful gifts of God in the world, given for the use of man, yet the only gift which contains and preserves all the others is the Word of God, for it pronounces and witnesses to us that God is our merciful Father; which also promises us remission of sins and life eternal.

Justification. Because the people were so prone to forget the great doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, I was obliged to almost knock my Bible against their heads, to sent it into their hearts.

Persecution. Cain will go on murdering Abel so long as the Church of Christ is on the earth.

Temptation. When tempted by the devil on once occasion that my sins were too black and numerous to be forgiven, I asked him to show me the scroll on which he had recorded them. “Are these all?” I asked him; and he brought another. “But, are there not yet more?” I enquired; and he brought another. “And more?” said I; and again he

brought another list. “Now,” said I, “take your pen, and write across the bottom of them all: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth me from *all* sin.’”

Marriage. God has set the type of marriage before us throughout all of His creation. Each creature seeks its perfection through being blended with another. The very heaven and earth picture it for us, for, does not the sky embrace the green earth as its bride? Precious, excellent, glorious, is that word of the Holy Spirit’s: “the heart of the husband doth safely trust in her.” (Proverbs, 31:11)

The Pope. If the pope were the head of the Christian church, then, the church were a monster with two heads, seeing that Paul says that “Christ is the head of the church.” The pope may well be, and indeed is, the head of that false church, which is no church at all.

God’s Appointed Time. Christ, our blessed Saviour, forbore to preach and teach until the thirtieth year of His age, neither would He openly be heard although the world were full of heresies, abominable idolatries, blasphemies against God His Father, and many impieties. It was a wonderful thing that He could abstain, and with patience endure them, until the time came when He was to appear in His office of preaching.

Death. Though I die, it makes no great matter; for I am in the pope’s curse and excommunication. I once thought to have been laid (like a saint) in the chancel under the table, but now I am of another mind. I know I have not long to live, for my head is like a knife, from which the steel is whetted away, and which is become mere iron. The iron of such a knife will cut no more; so it is with my head. Now, loving Lord God, I hope my time is not far hence; God help me, and give me a happy hour; I desire to live no longer.

(This is the end of this present selection from Luther’s Table Talk)

Great Hymns



and their Writers

“Jehovah Tsidkenu”

Robert Murray McCheyne

It was on the 18th November 1843, while recovering from a bout of the fever that was to cut short his life in its thirtieth year, that Robert Muray McCheyne wrote the words of his famous hymn which serve as a window to his thought in the great matter of his soul’s salvation.

McCheyne was an “upright sinner” in the early years of his life and, indeed, he tells us, was often mistaken for a Christian on account of his religious way of living. But, his “righteousness” was his own “self-righteousness,” and any thought of needing Christ’s righteousness and merits to atone for his sins had not yet manifest itself to his mind and heart.

“I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load:
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.”

For all his open religion, McCheyne was “a stranger” both to the grace of God and the God of grace. And the reason he remained a stranger was on account of the absence of any burden of sin such as had lain heavily on the shoulders of old John Bunyan’s Pilgrim. He was, as yet, in no sense of “danger” that he was “by nature” among “the children of wrath, even as others;” and where there is no knowledge of any danger from the wrath to come, there is no fleeing from that wrath. His own righteousness – his own works – his own efforts – his own religion – was sufficient for him at this point in his life, and the righteousness of God – “Jehovah Tsidkneu” (The Lord, my Righteousness) as he says, “meant nothing to me.”

Oh yes, McCheyne could be “affected” by the Cross and the thought of Christ dying there; and how we need to appreciate this facet of our human nature in our modern-day approach to evangelism, for not

everyone who is “affected” by the death of Christ is “saved” by the death of Christ. Listen to what McCheyne tells us:

“Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul
Yet thought that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu – ‘twas nothing to me.”

How “affected”, indeed, this hardened sinner was by the **general** doctrine of the blood-stained Cross of the dear Son of God, but there was, as yet, no **particular** application of that cross to his own heart. He had yet to learn the truth, “Jesus who loved **me**, and gave himself for **me**.” He had still to bow under the burden of guilt that it was he who had “pointed the nail, and fixed the thorn.”

But, “exalt free grace,” McCheyne seems to be saying to us as he comes to the turning point in his hymn, which relates the same turning point in his life. How does the sinner begin to see the “danger” that he is in by nature when under the condemnation and wrath of God? Only when God’s most Holy **Law** begins to shudder and shake the sin-hardened conscience so that we realise that “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment.” And this “Law Work” – let us never forget it – is the prerogative working of God’s Holy Spirit in the lives of those “vessels of mercy ... afore prepared unto glory.”

“When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,” says McCheyne. For the grace that “awakens” the self-righteous sinner to see his need of the righteousness of God in Christ to save his soul is just as sovereign and **free** as every other grace that comes to him from the Hand of Omnipotence:

“When free grace awoke me by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me (*the mighty Law of God was
having its perfect work*) I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see –
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.”

This is the course that McCheyne's pilgrimage in salvation took. From the sinner depending on his own self-righteousness, to the saint depending on nothing short of the very righteousness of God itself. This alone underlies the God-honouring life that this choice servant of God lived, and which must motivate every professing child of God that would live righteously in Christ Jesus. Not my own righteousness, but the Lord's righteousness. This alone brings the guilty sinner before the face of the God against whom he has sinned in thought, word, and deed; that he is "accepted in the Beloved," and that the Name of Christ is the password of heaven that gains him entrance at last. So McCheyne discovered.

"Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This 'Watchword' shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be."

This **Watchword**, says McCheyne, for, indeed, he entitled his hymn, "Jehovah Tsidkenu – The Watchword of the Reformers," and, it was that very thing. Ask Luther, or Calvin, or Knox where their hope of salvation lay; ask them as they handle the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; ask them as they pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Their answer is McCheyne's answer: **This** Watchword shall rally my flattering breath – Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord my righteousness.

As another great hymn puts it:

"I stand upon His merits,
I know no other stand;
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

Not only in this life is there but one true refuge of the soul – one covering for our sin – one shelter in a time of storm, **But** –

"When from life's fever, my God sets me free,

Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be.”

Two other verses of the original hymn which don't appear in the average hymn book also speak clearly the same doctrine of our acceptance before God only through the merits of Christ.

“I oft' read with pleasure, to sooth or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field –
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!”

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 31)

Verse 1. “**In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed.**” The psalmist has one refuge, and that the best one. He casts out the sheet anchor of his faith in the time of storm – “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.” “Let me never be ashamed,” he says. If David prays against being ashamed, let us strive against it. Lovers of Jesus should be ashamed of being shamed.

C.H.S.

Verse 2. “**Bow down thine ear to me ...**” We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying that we may hear what they say. To this the text alludes. Listen to my complaint, says David; put Thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my feebleness is capable of uttering.

Adam Clarke

Verse 2. “... be thou my strong rock ...” What the Lord has promised to be unto us by covenant, we may pray and expect to find Him so. “Be thou my strong rock,” says David in this verse, “For thou art my rock” he says in the next.

D. Dickson

Verse 3. “... therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me.” The argument used is one that is fetched from the armoury of Free Grace: not for my own sake, but for *Thy names sake* guide me. Our appeal is not to any fancied virtue in our own names, but to the glorious goodness and graciousness which shine resplendent in the character of Israel’s God. It is not possible that he Lord should suffer His own honour to be tarnished, but this would certainly be the case if those who trusted in him should perish.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 4. “Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.” *Omnipotence cuts the net which men’s policy weaves.* When we poor puny things are in the net, God is not. The old fable the mouse set free the lion, here the lion liberates the mouse.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 5. “Into thine hand I committ my spirit ...” These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome, of Luther, of Melancthon, and many others. “Blessed are they,” says Luther, “who die not only *for* the Lord, as martyrs; not only *in* the Lord, as believers; but likewise *with* the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, ‘Into thine hands I committ my spirit.’”

J.J. Perowne

Verse 5. “Into thine hand I commit my spirit ...” David committeth his spirit to God that he might not die, but Christ, and all Christians after Him, committ their spirit to God that they might live forever *by* death, and after death. This psalm is thus connected with the twenty-second psalm. Both of these psalms were used by Christ

on the cross. From the twenty-second He derived those bitter words of anguish, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” from the present psalm He derived those last words of love and trust which He uttered just before His death. The Psalter was the hymn book and prayer book of Christ.

Christopher Wordsworth

Verses 7 and 9. “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy; for *thou hast* considered my trouble ... Have mercy upon me, O Lord.”

Man’s plea to men, is, that he never more
Will beg, and the he never begged before:
Man’s plea to God, is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and, therefore sues again.
If thou wouldst learn, not knowing how to pray,
Add but a faith, and say as beggars say: -
 Master, I’m poor, and blind, in great distress,
 Hungry, and lame, and cold, and comfortless;
 O succour him that’s gravell’d on the shelf
 Of pain and want, and cannot help himself;
 Cast down thine eye upon a wretch and take
 Some pity on me, for sweet Jesus’ sake: -
But Hold! Take heed this clause be not put in ...
 I never begged before, nor will again.

Francis Quarles

Verse 10. “For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing ...” I find that when the saints are under trial and greatly humbled, little sins raise great cries in the conscience; but in prosperity, conscience is a pope that gives dispensations and great latitude to our hearts. The cross is therefore as needful as the crown is glorious.

Samuel Ruthford.

(To be continued in the next edition)

Some Timely Words

(Written by A.W. Tozer)

Jesus Christ has today almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by His Name. The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited, constitutional monarchy. The king is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a nation anthem. He is lauded, feted and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions.

Worship rises or falls with our concept of God; that is why I do not believe in these half-converted cowboys who call God the Man Upstairs. I do not think they worship at all because their concept of God is unworthy of God and unworthy of them. And if there is one terrible disease in the Church of Christ, it is that we do not see God as great as He is. We're too familiar with God.

The "old" cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. The "new" cross, if understood aright, is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. The "new" cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. The "old" cross is a symbol of death. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.

Evangelical Christianity is now tragically below the New Testament standard. Our religious mood is social instead of spiritual. We have lost the art of worship. We are not producing saints. Our models are successful business men, celebrated athletes and theatrical personalities. We carry on our religious activities after the methods of the modern advertiser. Our homes have been turned into theatres. Our literature is shallow and our hymns border on sacrilege. *And scarcely anyone appears to care.*

We need a baptism of “clear seeing.” We desperately need seers who can see through the mist – Christian leaders with prophetic vision. Unless they come soon it will be too late for this generation. And *if they do come* we will no doubt crucify a few of them in the name of our worldly orthodoxy.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

The story in this edition of the Wicket Gate is one which Mr Seaton told me and which I enjoyed very much.

Well now, let’s get started. One day a visitor arrived at a certain house and in this house lived a little boy called Charles. The visitor was a preacher and was very specially interested in boys and girls. He soon spied Charles and said to him, “Where do you sleep? For I want to call you up in the morning.” Charles showed him his little room, and at six o’clock the next morning Mr Knill – for that was the visitor’s name – called Charles and the two of them went into the garden. They sat down on a seat and in a gentle way Mr Knill told Charles about the Lord Jesus Christ and how happy those boys and girls are who learned to trust Him early in life. He then knelt down and prayed for Charles.

When the time came for Mr Knill to leave the house, all the family were gathered together for family worship, and the kind visitor took Charles up on his knee and said a very strange thing: “This child,” he said, “will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great numbers of people. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill.” (Rowland Hill was another great preacher.) He then gave Charles a sixpence if he would learn the

hymn: “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform,”
And he made Charles promise that when he did preach in Rowland Hill’s Chapel, as he said he would, that Charles would have that hymn sung there.

What a promise, boys and girls; and yet, it was a promise that was kept, for Mr Knill’s words about Charles came true. When Charles grew up, he began to preach and one day he was asked to preach in Rowland Hill’s chapel. “I will preach,” he said, “if you allow the children to sing, ‘God moves in a mysterious way.’”

As Charles announced the hymn he felt very close to God and he remembered how the words of the Lord’s servant, Mr Knill, had come to pass. And not only did the words about preaching in that particular church come to pass, but the words of Mr Knill about preaching to great multitudes, for, boys and girls, that boy’s name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and he became one of the greatest preachers the world has ever known.

Mrs Seaton