



Septimus Sears: A Victorian Injustice and Its Aftermath

David H.J. Gay

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Septimus who? Septimus Sears? Never heard of him! Such, perhaps, will be the response of many when first hearing of this book. But this good man is worth knowing, and David Gay wants to tell others about him. Some, of course, will know all about him already - or will they? Gay hopes to shine a little light on a particular aspect of Sears' life and work, a light which might help lift the fog of misunderstanding and misrepresentation which has shrouded his memory. More important, in so doing, Gay hopes to bring out some valuable lessons for us today. An English Victorian (1819-1877), Septimus Sears was the preacher in the Strict Baptist church, Clifton, Bedfordshire, for 35 years. What labours, and what blessing attended his ministry! A man mightily used by God in his generation, he deserves to be better known; he was, simply, one 'of whom the world was not worthy' (Heb. 11:38). Sadly, however, he was hindered by his hyper-Calvinism. Although he changed his views somewhat, even when he did get closer to biblical freeness in addressing sinners, Sears never managed to throw off the shackles of hyperism. Even so, he was wrongly and bitterly attacked by (principally) John Gadsby in the Gospel Standard for being too free with sinners! Moreover, this false accusation was then embodied in additions to the Gospel Standard Articles - unchanged to this day. Although some want to let this episode sink further and further into oblivion, Gay is convinced that it is a tale which needs telling. Why? Certainly, not to pick over old sores! But, since the lessons of this Victorian injustice serve as a warning to us of the way in which hyper-Calvinism stifles gospel preaching, the facts must come out. This slim volume is the substance of the paper David Gay read at the annual meeting of the Strict Baptist Historical Society in March 2009. As such, it represents only work in progress. In due course he hopes to publish a fully-detailed book on the subject.

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