

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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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 Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002. (A Work in Progress)

*A Ministerial Caution*  
*(The Pastor's Letter May 1978)*

Dear Friends,

We sometimes hear it said that such-and-such a preacher or minister "is very deep" or, "really a teacher."

By that it is generally meant that nobody can understand much of what he preaches about: The break down in the communication involved is usually accepted as being a deficiency on the part of the overprivileged hearers of such a man, and it is seldom questioned, whether or not the aforesaid preacher or minister is really "deep" at all in the things that constitute spiritual and biblical depth. That there are and have been, some men who go in and out of the deep recesses of the things of the Spirit we may be in no doubt, and we ought to be thankful for their labours even though it requires labour on our part to find out their meaning at times. However, this is not the general rule, and it is certainly not meant to be a constant feature of a preacher or minister set over a Church of Christ to "feed the flock of God" in his care. No, no; too often the attributing of great spiritual depth to a preacher on account of his obscurity in preaching is a pointer in the very opposite direction and only bespeaks his shallowness in these things.

To often what "bamboozles" a particular preacher's congregation is not the depth of spiritual or scriptural exploration, but the abandoned use of technical, theological, and philosophical terms and language. Lumps of high sounding material hurled at (or, rather, over) the heads of a congregation may really only betray the fact that the speaker

involved has been unable to "digest" the material himself - at least in such a way that would enable him to give "meat in due season" to them before him. With this state of affairs as a real possibility in our hearts and our minds, a spirit of constant self-examination is ever called for on the part of those of us who consider ourselves called to be ministers and preachers of the Word of God.

On the dust cover of the older copies of the Banner of Truth edition of Charles Bridges' Christian Ministry, there is a very graphic woodcut. The woodcut depicts a pulpit rising out of an open Bible while another open Bible sits on top of the pulpit; on one side of the pulpit there is a minister engaged in prayer while on the other side of the pulpit sits a minister at his desk, with books before him and books behind him. That wood-cut seems to sum up so well the character, and the purpose of that great book and I am personally sorry that it doesn't still adorn the covers of the new additions. But the message is clear: The minister is both a "private" and a "public" person. The church has set him aside in order that he might draw aside to give himself to that part of his work which involves the study of God's word through prayer and meditation and searching out all things relevant and related to that study.

***But***, this is not an end in itself for the minister. The great purpose is that he himself being instructed and fed might be able to feed and instruct others also. Our reading and study within our calling to the ministry are not for our own pleasure, nor even for the exclusive profit of our own hearts and minds, but for the good and for the edification of those to whom we preach. The pursuit of study for its own sake can be an expression of the "easy" life that we are meant to turn our

backs on. The real labour, generally speaking, comes, not in the reading and discovering of things old and new for ourselves, but in the digesting, breaking down, arranging, and presenting of those things for others in true spiritual and biblical terms and concepts. When we do this, then we find that each true believing man or woman receives those things according to their capacity, whereas they may receive nothing out of mere technical terms and philosophical phrases.

The problem, then, is one that very often lies, not with the hearer but with the preacher; not with the pew but with the pulpit. And it is, surely, only an aggravation of the condition to set on such preachers' heads the laurels of spiritual and Biblical depth in their ministry. We read that as our Lord went about preaching the people were "able to hear." How He might have spoken who was the Word of God incarnate. Yet He spoke to make Himself understood. The darkness, and the blindness, and the resistance to what He often said is another matter, but the general testimony to His general ministry is that he spoke so as to be clear and plain. We ought to aim at nothing less.

Charles Bridges in that *Christian Ministry* quotes an old preacher concerning this kind of ministerial task and endeavour: - "The Divine who spends all his time in study and contemplation on objects ever so sublime and glorious while his people are left uninstructed, acts the same part the eagle would do, that should sit all day staring at the sun, while her young ones were starving in the nest." We ought to aim at that sobering sentiment that seemed to underscore the ministry and preaching of the great apostle Paul; "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,"

Colossians chapter 1 verse 28. May the Lord implant it within our hearts and minds.

Yours sincerely,  
W. J. Seaton.

## *More Minor Prophets*



### Micah:-

Micah, called the Morasthite, to distinguish him from Micaiah, mentioned in 1st Kings 22, prophesied both in Israel and Judah in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His predictions refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, the captivity, and the return, and point very vividly to the coming of Messiah. He was contemporary with Isaiah, whom he resembles in several respects. He is referred to in Jeremiah chapter 26 and verse 18, and quotations from his book signifying the birth of Christ at Bethlehem are made in the gospels: “And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,” etc.

### Nahum:-

Nahum is supposed to have prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, about B.C. 712. Josephus, the Jewish historian, supported by several commentators, places him some years earlier, but the balance of opinion accepts the date here given. His prophecy is directed against Nineveh, which was destroyed by the Medes and Chaldeans about B.C. 626.

## Habakkuk:-

Habakkuk directs his prophecy against the nation in general and against the priests and nobles in particular. His words are full of warning and reproof on account of the corruption and lawlessness that he sees on all hands. God's apparent "delay" in judging this situation causes Habakkuk great perplexity, but the initial perplexity is nothing compared to what he experiences when God intimates His "remedy" - the raising up of the Chaldeans to march through the land to possess it. After standing on his watch-tower, however, he acknowledges God's ways, and from that watch-tower, interview with God, there comes the great theme of redemption - "The just shall live by faith." the last chapter takes the form of a hymn of praise that raises to the heights of trust in Jehovah.

## Zephaniah:-

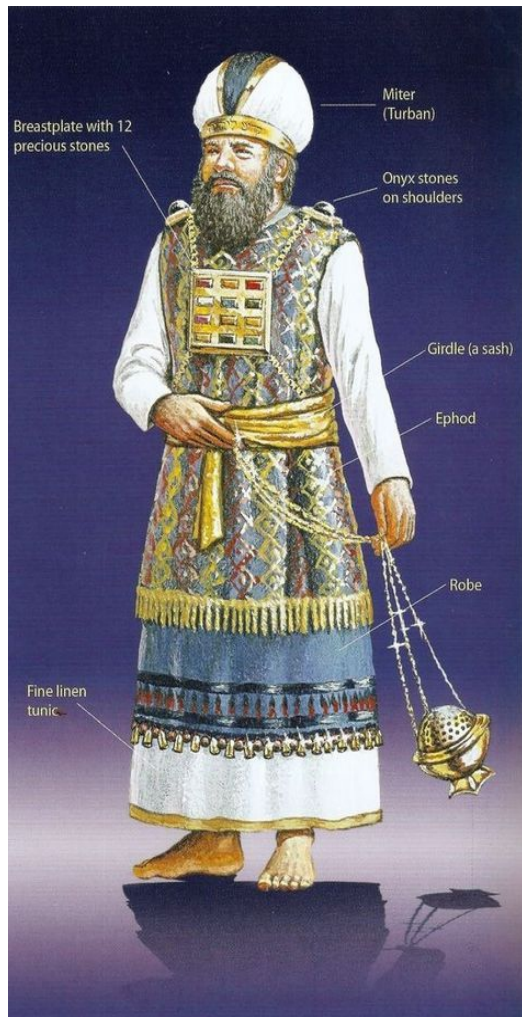
Zephaniah is supposed to have been a descendant of King Hezekiah and to have prophesied during the reign of Josiah – B.C. 642 to B.C. 611. He is the messenger of judgments decreed against the neighbouring nations, and he reproves the people of Jerusalem for their idolatrous practices, and the nobles for their violence and oppression. He likewise predicts the destruction, captivity, and return.

## Haggai:-

Haggai is the first of the prophets who prophesied after the captivity. He probably returned with the first band in the first year of Cyrus, and in company with Zerubbabel, and Joshua, the High Priest. The object of his writing is the apathy of the people in not pressing forward with the building of the



prayers of the High Priest for the people, because of the blood of the sacrificed animal which he carried in his hand and which he “sprinkled” inside the Holy Place.



The High Priest, then, in the land of Israel in the Old Testament days was God's way of accepting the prayers and the confessions of sin of the Children of Israel, and forgiving them for their sins.

In the New Testament scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ is often called, “Our Great High Priest.” This is because He entered God's “Holy Place” in heaven after He died on the Cross and shed His blood as the sacrifice for sins. Because He is in god's presence, then, God hears our prayers when we pray to Him in the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ; and not only that, but the Bible tells us that Jesus also prays for us in God's presence if we are really trusting in him.

Isn't it grand how God shows us a “picture” in the Old Testament of what He would do for us through Jesus His Son when the New Testament days would come. I trust you know, or will come to know, our Lord Jesus Christ as your Great High Priest and Saviour.

Love,  
Mrs Seaton.



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

### ***Psalm 81***



**Title: "A Psalm of Asaph."** Asaph's sermon before the judges ("the gods") is now before us. He speaks very plainly, and his song is characterised rather by strength than by sweetness. We have here a clear proof that all psalms and hymns need not be direct expressions of praise to God. We may, according to this psalm "admonish" one another in our songs. Asaph no doubt saw around him bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic psalm. He was praising God when he rebuked the sin which dishonoured Him.

*Spurgeon*

**Verse 1. "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods."** He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state, he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to Justices, justice shall be meted out. A higher authority will criticise the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven. "He judgeth among the gods." They are gods to other men, but He is **God** to them. He lends them his name, and this is their authority for acting as judges, but they must take care that they do not misuse the power entrusted to them, for the Judge of judges is in session among them. Such plain teaching as this psalm contains was needful

indeed, and he was a bold man who, in such uncourtly phrases, delivered his own soul.

*C.H.S.*

**Verse 3 "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy."** On one occasion, a woman came and kneeled before Francis 1st of France to beg for justice. He told her to rise to her feet, for, said he, if it is justice I owe thee, then justice thou shalt have; if thou *beg* anything of me, let it be mercy. Would to God, men and women had a grasp of that principle with regards to their appearing before the Judge of their souls in an eternal day. How many will want to tell God about the various works of merit they performed, and the respectable kind of life they led. They will look to the justice of God at such a time as that; but what a thing to be shut up to the impartial justice of the eternal Judge who knows each and every one of us through and through. What is needed is "mercy" for us, not justice against us - and for this, we need to beg right here and now through Jesus Christ the Lord. When mercy is received, then, it becomes to us what one saint has rightly called, "The plea of the first believer." He also calls it, "The contemplation of Enoch, the confidence of Abraham, the burden of the prophet songs, the glory of all the apostles, the believer's hosanna and the angels' earth, nor one glorified spirit in heaven, if it were not for mercy."

**Verses 6 and 7 "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."** Even you which glisten like angels, when all the world admires and sues and bows to, which are called honourable, mighty and gracious lords; I will tell you what your honour shall come to. First, ye shall wax old like others; then ye shall fall sick like others, then ye shall

die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall rot like others, then ye shall be judged like others. One sickens, the other sickens; one dies, the other dies; one rots, the other rots. Look in the grave and tell me which was the rich man and which was the beggar - who was Dives and who was Lazarus.

*Henry Smith.*

**Verse 7** "Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." *The thought of death should pull down the plumbs of pride. Thou art but dust animated. Shall dust and ashes be proud?* "I have said, Ye are gods;" but lest they should grow proud, He adds a corrective; "Ye shall die like men." Ye are dying *gods!*

*Thomas Watson*

**Verse 8.** "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." A metaphor taken from the common gesture of judges, whose usual manner it is to sit while they are hearing cases, but to arise and stand up when they come to give sentence.

*T. Gataker*

**Verse 8.** "... for thou shalt inherit all nations." All nations are Thine inheritance. Thou gavest a special inheritance to Israel; but all lands are Thy Canaan, and all will be judged by Thee.

*Christopher Wordsworth*

# ***Living Dogs and Dead Lions***

***By  
C. H. Spurgeon***

Life is a precious thing, and in its humblest form, it is superior to death. This truth is eminently certain in spiritual things. It is better to be the least in the kingdom of heaven than the greatest out of it. The lowest degree of grace is superior to the noblest development of unregenerate nature.

Where the Holy Ghost implants divine life in the soul there is a precious deposit which all the refinements of education and the ennoblings of philosophy cannot match. The penitent thief on the cross excels Caesar on his throne; Lazarus among the dogs is better than Cicero among the senators; and the most unlettered Christian is, in the sight of God, superior to Plato. Life is the badge of nobility in spiritual things, and men without it are only coarser or finer specimens of the same lifeless material, needing to be quickened for they are all dead in trespasses and sins.

A living, loving, gospel sermon, however unlearned in a matter and uncouth in style is better than the finest discourse devoid of unction and power. A living dog keeps better watch than a dead lion, and is of more service to his master, and so the poorest spiritual preacher is infinitely to be preferred to the exquisite orator who has no wisdom but that of words, no energy but that of sound.

The like holds good of our prayers and other religious exercises. If we are quickened in them by the Holy Spirit, they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ though we may think them to be poor and worthless things; while our grand performances in which our heart is absent, like dead

lions, are mere carrion in the sight of the living God. Quicken us, O Lord!

## **Practical Thoughts to Consider**

### ***Petrified Books.***

Petrarch's works are said to have lain so long in the roof of a Church in Venice that they turned into stone. To many men it might well seem that the Word of God had become less creed; but a stone upon which to sharpen the daggers of controversy; a stumbling-block for young beginners; a millstone with which to break opponents' heads, after the manner of Abimelech at Thebez.

Proclaimed without tenderness and argued without affection, the gospel from such men rather resembles a missile from a catapult than bread from a Father's table. To turn stones into bread was the temptation of our Master, but how many of His servants yield readily to the temptation to turn Bread into stones! The inspired word to us is spirit and life, and we cannot afford to have it hardened into a spiritual Stonehenge. Far rather would we have it as our own "household book," our bosom companion, the poor man's counsellor and friend.  
Anonymous

### ***From the Pen of Philip Henry.***

Two things we should greatly beware of:  
"There are two things we should greatly beware of - that we may never be ashamed of the Gospel; and that we may never be a shame to the Gospel."

Three things which if Christians do, they will prove mistaken:

1. If they look for in themselves what can only be found in "another" - that is Righteousness.
2. If they look for in the Law what can only be found in the Gospel - that is Mercy.
3. If they look for on the earth what can only be had in heaven - that is Perfection."