

July – September 2000

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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel *chapter seventeen*

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9,10).

The subjects of Christ's supplication in these verses are the ones whom, "*Thou hast given Me*", not perverse rebels or those who are the enemies of the gospel. Some have interpreted these words as being exclusively applicable to the eleven disciples who were present in the upper room at that time. Doubtless there was a special emphasis upon them, but to place such limitation is a fallacy proved by the Lord's words uttered later in this prayer; "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word*" (v.20).

Two categories of people are in view in verses nine and ten of this chapter; the unbelieving world and the remnant of grace. The remnant, God's elect, are all those whose names are in the Book of Life, written from the foundation of the world (cf Revelation 17:8). "*I pray for **them***", those who **have** believed and those who **will** believe - not for the world. Many find this statement a problem; how can this Scripture be harmonized with the words of the Saviour on the cross when He prayed for His enemies, saying, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:24)? What is more, our Lord has taught us to love our enemies, to bless them which curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us (cf Matthew 5:44). Yet in this prayer of John 17, Christ makes it very clear that He is not including any in His petitions other than His elect. How can this be explained, and is this the way in which **we** should pray? The answer to the second part of this question is No! As for **our** praying, the Word of

God clearly states, "*I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men*" (1 Timothy 2:1). Abraham, that great man of faith, who is designated in Scripture "*the friend of God*" (James 2:23), had it disclosed to him by the almighty, immutable God Himself, that Sodom and Gomorrah were to be totally destroyed under Divine judgment. Nevertheless, Abraham stood before the Lord in fervent intercession for those sinful cities (cf Genesis 18:23- 33). The apostle Paul also, was well aware of the great sin and apostasy of the Jewish nation, which culminated in the crucifixion of Christ; nevertheless, he says, "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved*" (Romans 10:1).

If praying in such a manner was in order for these holy men of old, and Christ Himself prayed in a more universal manner on other occasions, why this apparent, severe restriction in His petitions in the upper room? The reason is that the prayer in question is mediatorial, it is a prayer of the Lord in His high-priestly capacity. There is **one** Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus (cf 1 Timothy 2:5); this is an example of what is going on in heaven all the time on our behalf. None other can pray or function in this manner.

In Matthew 6:9-13, our Lord gives us instructions as to how **we** are to pray; "*After this manner pray ye*", but no such instruction is given in John 17, for no mortal can pray after the manner of the great High Priest; none dare assume such a role. It is vitally important that we see the difference between the prayers of Christ as a perfect, holy Man and His prayers as High Priest. When Christ prayed for His enemies, it demonstrated His absolute conformity to the Law, which requires man to love his neighbour as himself, even though that neighbour be his enemy. In every point did Christ fulfil that Law. When He prayed for those who spitefully used Him, it was no formal utterance; it was in sincerity of heart that He prayed for His

foes, even to the degree of weeping over them, as He did for the Jews in Jerusalem, who were to formally and officially reject Him.

This is the manner after which we are to pray; for as perfect Man, He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (cf 1 Peter 2:21). In the capacity of Mediator, He stands **unique, supreme**. Therefore it is totally different when He prays after the manner recorded in John chapter seventeen. As Mediator and High Priest, His only concern is for His own, those whose names are engraved on His breast, namely His elect.

It is important to notice the little word "*I*" in verse nine, "*I pray for them*". This was no earthly Mediator, no ordinary High Priest ordained from amongst men. This was the eternal Son of God, incarnate, God manifest in flesh, the God-Man. As the **Man** Christ Jesus, He had glorified God on the earth. A Man in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. He had finished the work assigned Him, which was all done to the complete satisfaction of a holy God. Now as the **perfect Man, victorious Redeemer, and great High Priest**, He approaches His Father saying, "*I pray for them whom Thou hast given Me*". In this we see Christ as an interceding Mediator, not only by office, but also by merit. "*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*" (v.4).

The Lord Jesus Christ, having offered Himself **without spot** to God (cf Hebrews 9:14) as both sacrifice and priest, returns to heaven within the veil, the holiest of all, with His own blood. "*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*" (Hebrews 9:24). The Mediator appears for **us**, His people, in the courts of Divine Holiness; He presents His Person in all the holy perfection of His life and the propitiatory value

of His death. His presence at the right hand of the Majesty on high is an everlasting representation of His merit. There He functions upon the eternal throne, highly exalted and given a name which is above every name, having power over all flesh, Head over all things to the Church. In all the excellency, power and dignity of His office, He says, "**I** pray for *them* which Thou hast given Me".

How careful Christ was throughout the upper room discourse and now in this mediatorial prayer, never to isolate any of the three Persons of the Trinity. In His work as Mediator, Christ never deviated from His Father's will. The Father chose an innumerable company of Adam's race to salvation; these were given to the Son to redeem, as His bride. To this Christ concurred; He did not cut out, nor add any listed in that covenant. Indeed not! "*All Mine are Thine and Thine are Mine*", He says. Absolute and total agreement concerning **who** and **whose** they were. The Father held title by election, the Son held title by redemption.

In the same discourse in John 16:15, where the Lord is speaking of the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, He says, "*All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He (the Holy Spirit) shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you (those elected of the Father)*". All this perfectly harmonizes with other sections of Holy Writ, such as, "*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 1:2). The Father elected, the Son redeemed and all that number, the Holy Spirit will sanctify. The Son did not die for those whom the Father did not choose; nor does the Holy Spirit sanctify those who were not redeemed by the Son. This is the golden chain in salvation; no link must ever be broken, for to do so is to set forth God's great salvation in an unbiblical manner.

Sadly those who do not teach election present a broken chain. By missing out this link they preach a universal atonement, setting forth that Christ died for all men. In doing this they disrupt the absolute unity of the Godhead, which is a most serious matter, for it presents the Son working at cross-purposes to the Father. If Christ did die for all men, then how can His words be true when He said, *"I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"* (John 6:38). Preachers of universal atonement do not realize the magnitude of their error, for they present a Christ who operates outside the will of God and as such, He would be an untrustworthy Mediator! This constitutes a disobedient servant of Jehovah. How shallow is the thinking of such preachers for they have never come to grips with fundamental doctrine! However sincere these men are, they are not true to the Word of God, and tragically mislead others. What a rude awakening will be theirs in a coming day.

The Scriptures reveal in a way which can never be gainsaid, that God the Father chose a remnant of fallen humanity out of the world and elected them unto salvation; these, and these alone, were given to Christ. *"Thine they were* (by election), *and Thou gavest them Me* (to redeem)" (V.6); *"and Thine are Mine"*. It is the **same** company and the **same** number every time. *"I pray for them"*; Christ is praying as Mediator of the covenant, therefore it is only those who are included in that covenant, the election of grace. Consequently He adds, *"I pray not for the world"*. To have included all and sundry in this prayer would have put His great work as Mediator outside of the will and purpose of God the Father in His sovereign election. Those of us who by grace are chosen of God, having our names *"written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world"* (Revelation 17:8), does it not humble us in the dust that unworthy, hell-bound sinners should have been chosen out of earth's millions by a holy God and ordained unto eternal life (cf Acts 13:48)? Yet this is the glorious truth, set out so clearly in Holy Scripture.

This vast number selected out of every tribe and nation, who in their natural state were alienated and enemies of God (cf Colossians 1:21), were elected by the Father and given to the Son. By means of incarnation, He was to become a Surety, to live and die vicariously, having the sins of **all** the elect imputed to Him, suffering the wrath of God due to every one. By this propitiatory offering of the incarnate Son, reconciliation would be effected for the sins of His people (cf Hebrews 2:17); by the sacrifice of Himself, their sin would be put away (cf Hebrews 9:26) and they would be perfected for ever (cf Hebrews 10:14). In consequence of this justification through His blood (cf Romans 5:9), each elect soul would be effectually called by the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, in their respective generation. To these Divine deliberations before time, in a past eternity, the Son concurred, as He stated, "*I delight to do Thy will, O My God*" (Psalm 40:8); all "*Thine are Mine*". So did Christ take full charge and underwrite each one that the Father gave Him.

G.V.Wigram, of the nineteenth century, had a sound understanding of these truths as he wrote:

"What raised the wondrous thought,
Or who did it suggest,
That blood-bought saints to glory brought,
Should with the Son be blest?

Father the thought was Thine,
And only Thine could be;
Fruit of the wisdom, love divine,
Peculiar unto thee.

And Jesus joys to own
His chosen bride as His -
Flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone,
To share the weight of bliss.

The Father and His Son,
And Holy Spirit too,
In counsels deep, and power have shown
What wonders love can do.

Now, Saviour, Thy delight
Is to prepare Thy bride,
Till in the glory, clothed in white
She's seated at Thy side".

This brings us to the final clause in this section, "*I am glorified in them*" (v.10), namely the "**them**" for whom He prayed. Christ will be eternally glorified in His Church. His glorified bride will ever adore Him, magnifying His wondrous person and work throughout eternity. However, there certainly is a practical application here.

As the Mediator uttered those words, "*I pray for them*", it was with reference to them being "*in the world*" (v.11). His chosen ones will not need His prayers when glorified in heaven. The concern of our great High Priest in this prayer is our state in this present evil world; we, who by grace have been called **out of the world** but are still sojourning in it. Our great High Priest says, "*I am glorified in them*". Can this really be true of us? How can we glorify God and how can Christ be glorified in us whilst in these fleshly bodies? Only by the way in which we live; not in a monastic type of existence, not isolated, but separate from the world.

We are ordinary people and as such, we are to live an ordinary life, but in an extraordinary manner; in all things we should live as unto the Lord. "*Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). This has reference to our daily walk and conduct **in** the world through which we pass. In verse four of

this chapter, our Lord said to His Father, "*I have glorified Thee on the earth*". It is this which is required of every one of **them** for whom the Mediator prays, that **they** too might glorify God on **the earth**, pending their translation to glory.

W.H.Molland

Worship

Worship is a subject greatly misunderstood by many people, and poses a number of questions which draw forth a multiplicity of opinions. What is worship, who can worship and how and where does one worship?

The English Dictionary defines the word as 'paying divine honour to God'. This carries the thought of adoration, veneration, reverence and homage. However, worship is best explained in the Scriptures and there is none better to elucidate upon this subject than the Lord Himself, which He does in an understandable way in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. On this occasion the Saviour was in Samaria and engaged in conversation with a local woman who brought up this very subject by saying to the Lord Jesus, "*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*" (John 4:20).

The centre for worship in Samaria was Mount Gerizim; here a temple had been built, but the Samaritans had mixed their worship of the true God with the inventions of men (cf 2 Kings 17:29-41). Historians state that 'they had a certain fear of the Lord but it was mixed after the manner of the world'. Mount Gerizim was a rival temple to the one in Jerusalem, which the Jews rigorously opposed, rightly claiming that Jerusalem alone was God's centre for worship. As the conversation with this woman continued, Christ pointed out that 'ere

long the worship in the temple at Jerusalem was to cease (cf John 4:21), therefore there was no point in disputing the pros and cons of either Jerusalem or Gerizim, for the gospel age was soon to dawn when there would be no special geographical area at which to gather for worship. He then abruptly tells this woman, "*Ye worship ye know not what*" (John 4:22). The worship in Samaria was such a mixture as to have become empty and meaningless. Having made that clear, the Lord continues by stating that **salvation** had now come through a Saviour, not of the Samaritans but of the Jews, the promised Messiah, the Son of God incarnate. Through Him alone could worship ever be acceptable to the God of heaven.

From this point in the conversation, the Lord commenced to explain more fully the subject of **worship**. "*The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him*" (John 4:23). This focussed upon a completely new order as fresh revelation was dawning; the rays of the gospel were beginning to shed light. "*The hour cometh, and now is*" - here He is speaking, not of the covenant keeping God of the **nation** of Israel, but of "*the Father*", a more intimate relationship. As the new covenant dawns, the great question is not **where** men are to worship, but **how** they are to worship. In future neither a worshipper at Jerusalem would be regarded as true just because he happened to worship in that city, nor would the person worshipping at Gerizim be reckoned false, merely on account of being in that locality, as neither would indicate credibility. It is those who worship in spirit and in truth who are genuine worshippers, no matter where they are on earth, Judah, Samaria, Assyria, Egypt or anywhere else in the world. We are not to assume that Christ was speaking contemptuously of the ceremonial law and the Old Testament economy; rather is He showing that those things pertaining to that order were merely shadows and a pre-figuration of better things to come.

This hour of inauguration of the "*better covenant*" (Hebrews 8:6) ordained from a past eternity, was now dawning. A people were to be called out of every kindred, tribe and nation, not exclusively Jews or Samaritans. They would be a royal priesthood unto God, a holy nation of purged worshippers, men and women who would, through sovereign grace, have access into the holiest of all by virtue of the Redeemer's blood. The veil, which had prohibited entry into the holy place of the tabernacle and temple, was to be torn asunder. The Holy Spirit, who was to be sent down from heaven, would effectually call out by His invincible power, a "*peculiar people*" (1 Peter 2:9), from the nations of the earth. These elect souls, ordained unto eternal life, would be sought out by the Holy Spirit and it is these whom the Father seeketh to worship Him (cf John 4:23).

The word 'seeketh' means 'to pursue'. God, by His Holy Spirit, would 'pursue' and 'seek out' every one chosen in Christ, wherever they might be. All that number, whether Jew or Gentile, would be effectually called in their respective generations and baptized into one body - **the Church**. These chosen people will be kings and priests unto God for ever and ever, true worshippers for all eternity. The Father 'seeketh' this, or is 'in pursuit' of it. By this we are not to form the opinion that the God of heaven is searching for those whom He might never successfully locate; indeed not! He is pursuing by His Holy Spirit according to a predetermined plan, which is "*ordered in all things, and sure*" (2 Samuel 23:5). For the accomplishing of God's eternal purposes, the three Persons within the Trinity are involved, which will ultimately result in eternal homage and worship to God and to the Lamb (cf Revelation 5:11-14 & 7:9,10), a flawless worship "*in spirit and in truth*" for ever. This is the climax and culmination of that which was always in the mind of Almighty God. A remnant of Adam's fallen race upon whom He would manifest His grace by redeeming them through the blood of His Son, sanctifying them by His Holy Spirit and bringing them to heaven at the last,

glorifying them like unto Christ the Mediator; a worshipping, adoring host which no man can number. This is the great plan and design which the eternal God had ever 'pursued'.

All this is very wonderful; to contemplate it fills the child of God with rapture, but is true worship restricted to that future, sublime realm? Does not our heavenly Father expect true worship from His children now, even whilst upon earth? Is it not possible to worship in the spirit, in a true manner before we reach our glorified state? It is, and it is required of us.

This leads us more objectively to this important matter of **worship**. The discourse between Christ and the Samaritan woman continues as the Lord says, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). The opening phrase of this verse is fundamental to a right understanding of this subject. "*God is a Spirit*", that is, invisible to mortals on earth. He "*only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see*" (1 Timothy 6:16). He is the almighty, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, supreme Being, the true and living God. "Being of beings, throned afar"; yet He is not remote, not unknown, for only in the previous verse of this chapter, He is spoken of as 'Father'; One who is pursuing a plan which will bring all His chosen people to Himself in bonds of intimate relationship; even giving the spirit of adoption, making them His own children (cf Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5).

We are not to get the impression by this note of hallowed intimacy that the eternal God is being reduced to man's level; rather is it man, through sovereign grace, being raised to such heights as to become "*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:17), who at the end will receive the glory of Christ the Mediator (cf John 17:22). The people of God should always be mindful of the majesty, glory and

splendour of the One to whom they are eternally linked, and address and worship Him accordingly "*in spirit and in truth*", "*with reverence and Godly fear*" (Hebrews 12:28).

Much of that which is termed worship today is fleshly rather than spiritual; external rather than internal. Examples of this, are ornate buildings, stained glass windows, costly fittings and organs often valued at tens of thousands of pounds. Does God require this, or is it because men love to have these things? Shoddy, unkempt meeting places most certainly are not being advocated. Buildings set aside for corporate worship should be congenial and kept in immaculate condition, for this is honouring to the Most High, but they should be plain and free of ostentation. The Tabernacle, which was designed by Jehovah Himself, whilst it had exquisite drapings, precious metal and valuable timber, yet it was nothing but a tent.

Some may ask about Solomon's temple - **Solomon's** temple! His motives were good, but God did not set any store upon the architecture and magnificence of that building. Was it not razed and built again on several occasions? As it stood when the Lord was upon earth, how often did He visit it other than the outer courts? It was His custom on Sabbath days to go to the synagogue (cf Luke 4:16). Synagogues were plain stone buildings with simple fittings - nothing to appeal to the flesh. Let us not forget what the Lord said with regard to the Temple in His day, which was little more than a showpiece for religious activity, "*See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Matthew 24:2). It is important also to register that Christ never left any instructions that such buildings should ever be erected again to the so-called '**glory of God**'. Magnificent buildings of great architectural worth have been erected, as we know, and what denominational pride has ensued as a result! Such extravagant

buildings are entirely outside the mandate for New Testament churches.

*"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth". 'Must' - there are no alternatives, no options; this word 'must' is authoritative. It is interesting to note that the word 'must' often appears in the early part of John's Gospel: "Ye **must** be born again" (John 3:7); "Even so **must** the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14); "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him **must** worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). These three references are not without significance, for the Trinity is once again in focus. God the Holy Spirit effects the new birth, God the Son was lifted up to die and atone for sinners, God the Father is the object of worship. It is **only** when a person has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and justified by virtue of the work of Christ, that that person can worship God. The Word of God is clear on this, for it categorically states, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 15:8). This poses that all important question, What is true worship? It is the internal action, the response of the new nature, the breathings of that spiritual life which has come about through new birth. Hence the emphasis placed by the Holy Spirit, "Ye **must** be born again". Mortals cannot worship in a true and real sense if new birth has not taken place, for they have not the capacity and neither are they fitted to do so. The apostle Paul wrote, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).*

*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Try as it may, the flesh cannot comprehend God, who is Spirit. But that which is born of the Spirit **is** spirit; following new birth, there is spiritual life, a link is formed with God. Then, just as the sparks fly upward, so do the sparks of spiritual life return to the Divine source. The new nature within wells*

up to its heavenly spring; this is worship in the spirit; it issues forth to God from His redeemed people and them alone. It proceeds from within and is occupied with God and that which pertains to His glory. Anything of man or of the flesh is a distraction and hindrance, indeed it can nullify worship.

So much of that which goes under the guise of worship in many places today is geared to fleshly appeal and attraction. Great emphasis is laid upon solos, groups and choirs; a bright and lively service is a 'must' if a church is to be successful. The appeal of music has replaced the "*foolishness of preaching*". Was a choir laid on at Pentecost to attract the people? Was Mary Magdalene requested to sing a solo, or Lazarus asked to give a testimony? Did Philip organize a group to accompany him to Samaria so that they could assist by presenting the message in song? Are any of these things laid down in Scripture as being essential to corporate worship? If so, many dear saints of God are greatly impoverished.

Worship must be in the spirit, that is, from the new nature, not something which appeals to the flesh or is attractive to the natural man. It must also be "*in truth*", that is, according to the Word of God. Anything introduced into corporate worship which is extra-Biblical, whilst it may delight the ears and eyes of men, will never delight the ear of God and it is an abomination before His eyes. Men cannot worship the true God in the true manner by gazing upon wonderful architecture, admiring skilled artistes, listening to accomplished musicians, being thrilled by the oratory and showmanship of a professional evangelist. All these things do have some kind of magical effect upon many people today, but this plays upon the emotions, it is a caricature of worship and is highly dangerous to those who are so influenced, for it is neither in the spirit or according to truth.

It is correct to say that the more spiritual the worship, the less attractive it will be to the flesh. True spiritual worship within the context of a gathered company of God's people must ever be decorous, orderly and reverent, each member of the local body striving to be obedient to that standard of conduct which the Great Head of the Church requires, as laid down in His Word. Divine worship is a most solemn exercise and must never be approached in a casual manner. *"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him"* (Psalm 89:7). The worshipper is to be solely occupied with spiritual matters, fully entering into the truth contained in the hymns of praise, carefully following the prayers, duly attentive to the reading and the preaching of the Word of God. No preacher should ever shun to declare the whole counsel of God (cf Acts 20:27), keeping back nothing that is profitable (cf Acts 20:20). Every believer assembled in the spirit must consciously be at one with the Lord, His truth and one another, able to say spontaneously at the end '**Amen**' in an audible manner. This applies to every genuine brother and sister in the Lord; it is evidence of the **unity** of the spirit and of the faith (truth). This is the communion of the saints and Divine worship in **reality**.

These are the hallmarks of true corporate worship. It is in this way that we shall *"give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name"*; and know of a truth what it is to *"worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"* (Psalm 29:2).

W.H.Molland

Visiting Preacher D.V.

Lord's Day 17 September 2000 Dr.S.S.Short (Weston-super-Mare)

Extracts from:

'The Nature of a Gospel Church, The Seat of Public Worship'

by John Gill D.D. (1697-1771)

"The materials of a gospel church should be men of holy lives and conversations; holiness of both heart and life becomes the house of God and those who are of it; none should have a place in it but such. Those who are admitted into fellowship with a particular church of Christ should be truly baptized in water, that is, by immersion upon profession of their faith; so at Jerusalem, the three thousand penitents, after they had received the Word, were baptized and then, and not before, were added to the church. The first church at Samaria consisted of men and women baptized by Philip, they believing what he said concerning the kingdom of God. Lydia and her household, and the jailor and his, being baptized upon their faith, laid the foundation of the church at Philippi. The church at Corinth was begun with persons who, hearing the Word, believed and were baptized. The members of the churches at Rome, Galatia and Colosse were baptized persons (cf Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12), **but** not their infants with them, who were neither baptized nor admitted into membership in the churches. No one instance of either can be produced in Scripture; they are not members by birth; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, carnal and corrupt and unfit for church fellowship. Nor do they become such by the faith of their parents, for even their faith does not make them themselves church members without a profession of it, and giving up themselves to a church, and received by it into it. Men must be believers before they are baptized and they must be baptized before they become members; and they cannot be members till they make an application to a church and are admitted into it.

There must be a union, a coalition of a certain number of persons to form a church-state; one cannot make a church; and these must be united as the similes of a tabernacle, temple, house, body and a flock of sheep, to which a church is sometimes compared. This union of saints in a church-state is signified by their being joined, and as it were, glued together; it is a union of spirits so close as if they were but one spirit. So the members of the first Christian church were of one heart and one soul (cf Acts 4:32), being knit together in love (cf Colossians 2:2); and it becomes members to endeavour to *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3).

There should be a zealous concern for unity of wisdom, and that nothing be introduced into it contrary to the pattern showed and directed to in the Word of God; and that they serve the Lord with one consent, and with one mind, and with one mouth glorify God (cf Romans 15:6). To prevent discord in affection, judgment and worship, and to secure peace, all strife should be avoided and even checked at the beginning of it. The advice of the wise man is good (cf Proverbs 17:14). Equally good is the advice of the apostle, *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory"* (Philippians 2:3). Proud and contentious men, who seek to promote strife and division, are not to be encouraged in Christian communities (cf 1 Corinthians 11:16). The peace of a church is to be laboured after by its members and by all means to be pursued; the comfort of saints in fellowship with each other is a strong argument for peace and unity (cf Philippians 2:12-16). Above all, as saints would be desirous of having the presence of God with them, they should be concerned to *"be of one mind"* and *"live in peace"*; then may they expect, and not otherwise, that *"the God of love and peace"* shall be with them (2 Corinthians 13:11).

It becomes church members to separate themselves from men of the world and not to touch things which are defiling; they are in a church-

state which is a garden enclosed. They are a separated people and should dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations, or the people of a vain world. They are called out of the world and therefore should not be unequally yoked with the men of it; with men unrighteous, ignorant, lawless, disobedient, dead and profane sinners, with whom they can have no profitable communion; indeed from all such in their own societies who walk disorderly, they are directed to withdraw themselves. In conversation they are to abstain from sinful men; not that they are to have no commerce nor correspondence with them in civil things, for then, as the apostle says, they must needs go out of the world; but that they are not to join with them; they are not to walk as other Gentiles do, in the vanity of their minds; nor to walk with them in the same paths of sin and folly; nor keep up any intimate and familiar converse with them; knowing that evil communications corrupt good manners.

Nor should they keep company with erroneous persons, with men of unsound principles; for such who cause divisions and offences contrary to the gospel of Christ, are to be avoided and their conversation shunned. Such who cavil at and consent not unto wholesome words of Christ, and the doctrine according to godliness, are to be withdrawn from; and such who have imbibed heretical notions are to be rejected; and such who bring not the doctrine of Christ with them are not to be bid God-speed, nor to be received into the houses of God's people.

Church members should be constant in assembling together for religious worship. It is remarked of the members of the first Christian church to their honour, that they "*continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). That is, they constantly attended on hearing the Word preached by the apostles which they gladly received and persevered in and kept up their communion with them and one another, and were

not missing at the Lord's Supper and times of public prayer; though in aftertimes an evil manner, a bad custom prevailed among some of these Christian Hebrews as to forsake the assembling of themselves together, which the apostle takes notice of, to their dishonour (cf Hebrews 10:25); a custom of bad consequence, both to communities and particular persons; for what one may do, everyone may do, and in course public worship ceases and churches break up. Such a practice is very prejudicial and hurtful to individuals; it is not known what may be lost by missing an opportunity or an ordinance, and what trouble and distress of soul may follow upon it, as the case of Thomas shows, who was not with the rest of the disciples when Christ first appeared to them. It is dangerous to indulge in an indifference to, and any degree of neglect of the service of God in His house; the evil may grow and at last issue in apostacy, as in the stony-ground hearers.

It behoves all members to strive together for the faith of the gospel, and earnestly to contend for it, and not to part with any of the truths of Christ and the doctrines of grace; and should be careful to keep the ordinances as they were delivered, and not suffer any innovation in them neither as to the matter and substance of them, nor as to the manner in which they are to be observed; and they should walk in them all with great unanimity and constancy, and should stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and not be entangled with any yoke of bondage, nor suffer any human invention and unwarranted practices to be imposed upon them.

It becomes members to be examples to each other in a holy walk and conversation. Holiness becomes the house of God and the members of it. Their light should shine both in the church and in the world, that others beholding their good works may imitate them and glorify God. They that name the name of Christ and profess to be His, should depart from all iniquity, doctrinal and practical. They should be concerned to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

and show out of a good conversation their works with meekness and wisdom. They should endeavour to fill up in a becoming manner all stations and relations in life, civil or economical, in the world and family; as of magistrates and subjects, of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; as well as in the church, as pastors, deacons and private members, and be careful to perform all duties relative to them; that so their fellow members may not be grieved nor stumbled, nor the good ways of God be evil spoken of, nor the name of God and His doctrine be blasphemed, nor any occasion given to the adversary to speak reproachfully; and by a strict attention to these several duties of religion, they will show that they behave themselves in the house of God as they ought to do".

"It is an inexpressible grief to me to see the Church spending its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever-changing sentiment of the world about it".

B.B.Warfield

"Faith looks straight to the command in order to obey it, and takes the promise for support. It pushes on its way regardless of dangers. Moses must go forward, though the next step lead the people into the sea. Whatever appearances may say to us, it is by advancing in the narrow way of obedience, that we prove the truth of the promises, and the faithfulness, wisdom and power of our promise-keeping God".

R.C.Chapman

Editorial

We live in a day when society to a very large degree, has no real knowledge of sin; consequently the social conscience, instead of being sharp and quick to condemn the sore evils of this age, has become blunt and an attitude of tolerance is adopted. The reason for this is that the one and only true, absolute standard, namely the Holy Scriptures, is almost totally rejected. The consequence of this departure will result in a community doing that which is expedient, according to human wisdom in any given situation. A society of this nature has lost its cohesion, inevitably leading to lawlessness, where everyone works according to their own principles and lifestyle. Tragic as this is in the world, how much more so in the Church, among the professed people of God, where the exceeding sinfulness of sin is rapidly being eroded. Tolerance and expediency is evident in denominations and many groups of professing Christians. Where this has occurred, the Word of God ceases to be authoritative on many issues. Problems within the church involving specific individuals, are dealt with on their merits, or overlooked and explained away, regardless of a clear Biblical authority. There is an ever-increasing tendency for many Scriptural principles and practices to be ignored in the interests of so-called Christian unity, which in fact is no unity at all. To disregard instructions clearly set out by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures of Truth is to mar that **true** unity, which these inspired Scriptures clearly set forth. To be led by the Spirit of God is to be led into "*all truth*" (John 16:13). The third Person of the Godhead will never guide any person into a situation where certain aspects of Truth have to be compromised. Christians who are happy to operate contrary to Truth, show unmistakably that they are setting their own principles. By so doing, they erode that cohesive **Truth**, the force of which is the only basis of unity found in the Word of God and which is essential to the building of the Church, that it be **fitly** framed together and so grow into a **holy** temple in the Lord (cf Ephesians 2:21).