

October - December 2014

# The Link

**NORTH ROAD CHAPEL**

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**BIDEFORD**

# THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

## Part 13

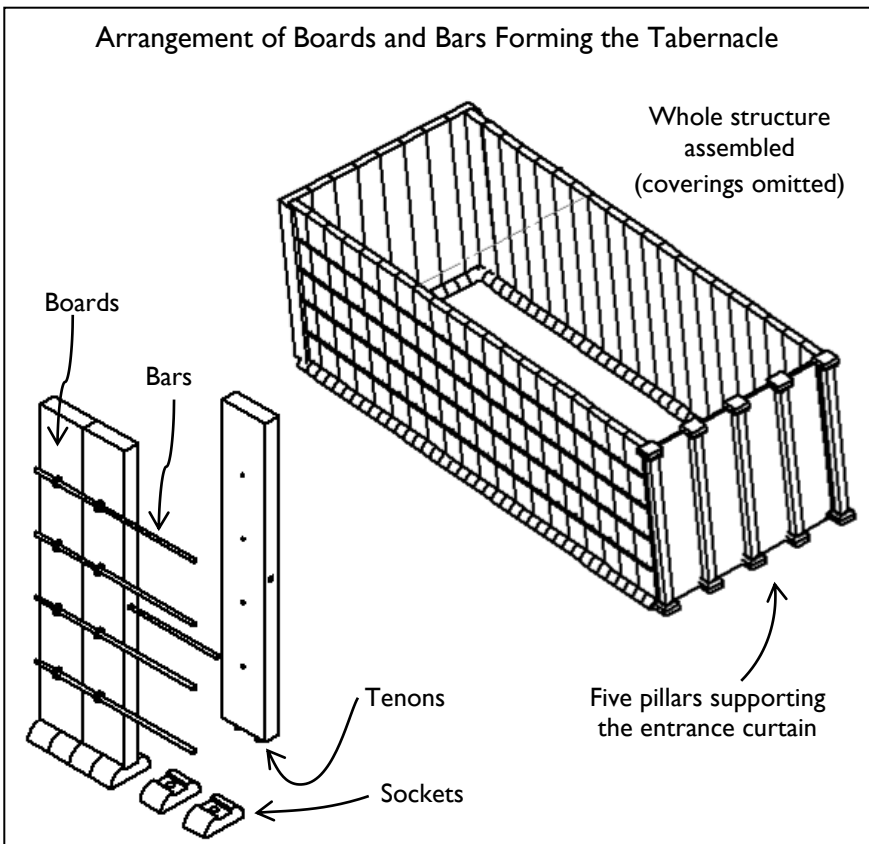
*“And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle.*

*And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.*

*And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.*

*And thou shalt make bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount.” (Exodus 26:15-30)*

The many-layered coverings of the Tabernacle (which have occupied the previous two articles) formed the ceiling and ‘roof’ of the structure. However, beneath these broad sheets of material, the main building of the Tabernacle had solid walls composed of large timber panels or baulks, described in the chapter as ‘boards’. Each board measured approximately 15 feet (4.5 metres) tall and 2¼ feet (0.7 metres) wide. They were arranged together to form three sides of a rectangle, with 20 boards on each of the ‘long’ sides (north and south), and six on the short (western) end. Two further specially-shaped boards formed the corners.



In order to remain standing upright, every board had two pegs or ‘tenons’ on its bottom edge, which located into two silver feet (called ‘sockets’). To hold the individual boards together as a whole, every one had four rings attached to its outer surface, through which long rods or ‘bars’ could be fitted. Finally, a fifth rod was passed through a series of corresponding holes bored in the middle of every board. This ran the entire length of each wall, in the style of a tie-bar. To give a correct impression of this intricate construction, a diagram is provided.

All that is set forth in these Old Testament figures is but a hazy foreshadowing of glorious New Testament truth. An explanation and fulfilment begins to appear in the Gospels, but even there, the revelation is not complete. As the Lord Himself declared: *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth”* (John 16:12-13). This statement and promise of Christ demands attention, for it indicates that all the truth is not to be found in the Gospels alone, but that after Pentecost, it would be made clear through the writings of the other Apostles. Then the full and final revelation would be given. Hence Paul writes: *“...I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, **to fulfil the word of God**; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but **now** is made manifest to his saints”* (Colossians 1:25-26). The word ‘fulfil’ means ‘to complete’. Again, the Apostle states: *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 14:37). Not everyone accepted the teachings that Paul brought, and he had to stress the point that **all** that he said and wrote was of God. It was ‘not the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God’ (cf 1 Thessalonians 2:13). So it is especially to the Epistles of the New Testament that one must turn in order to get the full explanation for much of Holy Scripture – which would otherwise be incomprehensible.

The entrance into the Tabernacle structure was at the eastward end, and it comprised five pillars, supporting a large moveable curtain. It is described thus: “*And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them*” (Exodus 26:36-37). This curtain is another figure of the Lord Jesus. He is the only approach whereby men may come to God in worship: “*no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*” (John 14:6), said the Saviour. Thus at the entrance, an observer was presented with the same four colours that were found in the linen ceiling of the Tabernacle – wonderfully setting forth the Mediator. These were **blue** (depicting His heavenly being, Immanuel – God with us); **purple** (symbolic of royal majesty – He is King of kings); **scarlet** (typical of His blood, shed that His people might be washed and made fit to enter the Holy Place); **white** (representing His spotless humanity). Ninety times in Scripture is Christ referred to as ‘the Son of Man’. In His life upon earth He wrought impeccable purity vicariously for sinners, to be imputed to them. Only clothed in that righteousness of Christ can they ever draw nigh to God.

Five pillars stood at the opening of the Tabernacle. These held up and displayed the entrance curtain. They were set in sockets of brass, and capped with gold (cf Exodus 26:37 and 36:38). Bearing in mind the foregoing comments concerning the full revelation of truth being completed in the Epistles, consider now the writers of those books: Peter, James, John, Jude and Paul. Five in all. And of these, Peter, James and John are specifically referred to as ‘pillars’ in Galatians 2:9. There is more than a suggestion here. The pillars which supported the curtain are representative of the men who, in the purposes of God, were used to lift up, and set forth Christ.

Those pillars, like many of the Tabernacle furnishings, were made of shittim wood (established in a previous article as being typical of the earthly life of Christ). This points to the fact that these men had ‘the life of Christ’ in them; by virtue of new birth, that statement had become true of them: *“I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”* (Galatians 2:20). Also, they were overlaid with gold – that is to say, the righteousness and glory of God was upon them. Paul describes himself as, *“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Philippians 3:9).

The bases or feet on which the pillars stood were of brass, a material used in Scripture to depict hardness and hardship; trial and suffering (cf Leviticus 26:19, Numbers 21:9). The writers who completed the canon of God’s Word, holding forth all the truth as it is in Jesus, suffered severely for it – some even unto a martyr’s death. They were ‘set in brass’ in a very real way. But now, each one (like those pillars) bears a golden crown. As Paul testified: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:8).

It is significant to note the order in which these items are described – first the curtain, and then the pillars. The pillars were ‘made for the curtain’, and not the other way around. It was the glorious tapestry which was all important; and to a worshipper standing in the Holy Place, the pillars would not even have been visible. The writers of the New Testament Epistles were great men – but they were **only** men. They stood behind the curtain. In all things **He** (that is, Christ) must have the pre-eminence (cf Colossians 1:18). The Apostles and their co-workers said of themselves: *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Corinthians 4:5).

*“I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another”* (Isaiah 42:8). So said the Almighty – and well did the writers of the Scriptures know it. Herein lies an application to all who preach or minister the Word of God today. Not one is worthy to bear such tidings; all, of themselves, are ‘unprofitable servants’ (cf Luke 17:10). It is the message that is everything; the messenger is nothing. Hence concerning gospel tidings borne by mortal men it is said: *“we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (2 Corinthians 4:7). In consequence of which, the Apostle elsewhere adds: *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”* (Romans 12:3).

Passing between the entrance pillars, and through the curtain, a worshipper’s attention would be drawn to the boards that formed the walls of the Tabernacle. The spiritual significance of these must also be sought out. This strange and magnificent structure is not described merely for interest, but for instruction. It is in the New Testament Epistles again that the full meaning may be found: *“ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them”* (2 Corinthians 6:16). In all the intricate detail given concerning that Old Testament dwelling place of God, He is setting forth a **spiritual building** made from **living material**: *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5).

Exodus 26:15 tells how each board of the Tabernacle structure was to be made from shittim (or acacia) wood. Like the Apostles previously described, **all** those who figure in Christ’s Church are endued with Christ’s life: *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and **this life is in His Son**. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you*

*that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:11-13).*

Look further at the detail of Exodus 26:15. Each board is described as ‘standing up’; none leaning; none out-of-true. So it is with every child of God – all are justified; all are seen in Christ, clothed in His righteousness. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (cf Romans 8:1, 33-34). Further still, Exodus 26:29 records that each board was overlaid with gold. The Apostle John supplies the key to this as he recounts Christ’s prayer to His Father: “*And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one*” (John 17:22). This is not speaking of the glory of God in His essential Deity, but that same golden glory which was manifested in Christ the Mediator, and is imparted to His Church. Christ and His Church are one; the Head and the members are one body; the heavenly Bridegroom and His bride are one flesh.

Now consider the footings of each board. Each one stood upon two ‘sockets’ of silver. The amount of precious metal which formed the foundations of this structure was immense; its fabulous worth can scarcely be calculated. Where did it come from? Further information is found in Exodus chapter 30, where it is described how that in times of national census-taking, each person would give ‘ransom’, or ‘atonement’ money: “*When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord... And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls*” (Exodus 30:12, 16). Then in a later chapter, the use to which this coinage was put is stated: “*And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel*



*of the sanctuary... And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket” (Exodus 38:25, 27).*

The Tabernacle was based upon ransom money, and atonement silver. What a picture! Every regenerate sinner stands upon the atonement made by Christ – His finished work. Every believer is brought into the Church of Jesus Christ by virtue of the ransom that He has wrought. They are planted upon redemption ground, and can say with the hymn-writer:

“I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e’en where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel’s Land.” (Cousin)

This truth is emphasized in the words first written to the saints at Corinth: “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

There were two silver sockets to each board. Why was this, and what did it signify? The children of God, regenerated by His Holy Spirit, stand upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This is their one and only foundation. Yet there is a two-fold aspect to redemption. The Scripture describes the Lord’s people as those who, “...*are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the **saving of the soul***” (Hebrew 10:39). The ‘saving of the soul’ has reference to the spiritual aspect of salvation. Every true Christian is brought to faith in Christ, and is blessed with eternal life; they have it, here and now. But whilst alive upon earth, they have also their natural bodies, and still must contend with the old nature, ‘the flesh’ and mortality. A salvation which delivered the soul but went no further, would be incomplete and partial, a provision for only part of man’s being. “*But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that*

*raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you... ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the **redemption of our body***" (Romans 8:11, 23).

The saints alive on earth have only the 'first-fruits' as yet. There is a further aspect of salvation yet to come. All will ultimately know and prove the 'redemption of the body'. "*For this corruptible **must** put on incorruption, and this mortal **must** put on immortality*" (1 Corinthians 15:53). Why is this transformation so imperative? Because it is part of the covenant; the foundation deed. God has said it. God's people stand upon it. This is one of the bases upon which faith is resting. The Christian knows that one day mortality will be swallowed up of life (cf 2 Corinthians 5:4) the endless life of resurrected, glorified humanity.

One other important point concerning these bases of silver: they separated the shittim wood from the sand of the wilderness; they interposed between the timber and the barren ground. So also, by virtue of redemption, the 'saved' are separated from the 'world'. Christ comes between – there is a division because of Him, "*our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*" (Galatians 1:3-4).

Look now to the bars or rods. They had a special function, which was to hold the boards together, to give needed strength to the whole structure, and to control its alignment. In the Epistles, different categories of persons are mentioned who are especially raised up of God, and given to the Church for specific purposes: "*And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of*

*the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Whilst Apostles and Prophets no longer exist in person, their writings do – the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures. What bars these are! They are the very strength of the Church, and the only things which will keep it together, and ‘in line’. The duty of rightly dividing and disseminating this Word is committed to Pastors and Teachers – and what a responsibility this is! If there had been any flaw or fault in the Tabernacle bars, the boards would have been distorted, and the imperfection transmitted to the whole building. So it is with the Minister if he does not declare all the counsel of God; if he is weak on any point of doctrine or practice then the membership will be out of line; there will be irregularities, no ‘unity of the faith’ and no harmony. Only bars which were absolutely straight were suitable for that sacred building, and so it is today in the spiritual antitype, the Church.

One further bar ran right through those boards, in an even more intimate and integral way. It was distinct from the others in that it was inward, and thus invisible. Here is set forth the **Holy Spirit** who indwells each individual believer. He is unseen, yet abides in their very hearts, the centre of their personality – just as the fifth rod ran through the midst of the boards. The words of Christ confirm this: “*And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him;*

*for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17). It is this ‘rod’ running through every board which binds the whole together and makes it one building, or one Tabernacle – the dwelling place of God, His Church: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Church of the redeemed: every member baptized into His body by the Spirit of God. This is that greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands – the **spiritual** Tabernacle, of which every elect soul through sovereign grace is ‘a board’. May God bless the consideration of this glorious theme.*

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

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“By examination of those Biblical objects whereof the measures are either given or taken it will be seen that they are structures designed of God for the people He elects to save and to bring into association with Himself; in other words, that those structures are for the salvation, the occupation, and the worship of His elect. What we learn thereby is chiefly that, in respect to all such structures, God has His own predetermined and exact plan, from which no deviation is permissible. Hence the precise measures. [An] instance of measurements for structures to be used by a people chosen of God is that of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and its appointments. The purpose of this structure is declared in God’s commandment to Moses: “*And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it*”, and then follows a statement of the dimensions (Exodus 25:8-27:21). The prominent lesson here appears to be that, in respect of worship as in respect of salvation, God has His own plan which admits of no alterations of man’s devising.”

P Mauro (1859 – 1952)

# THE BOARDS AND BARS

Shall we look first at the characteristics revealed in the boards:

**1. They Were Made Of Shittim Wood.** The acacia tree, from whence such wood comes, is a native of the Sinaitic Peninsula and the desert. There was a time when we, who are now the saints of God, were strangers to His grace. We grew in the world and drew from the world's barrenness that which met the needs of our life. In such a condition we were never truly happy nor satisfied.

**2. These Trees Were Cut Down.** Saul of Tarsus was one of these trees. While on his way to Damascus he was met by God and was cut down to the earth. Do not we remember when the Spirit of God cut across our lives and laid us low causing us to say, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). This means a severance from the old life, our link with the earth broken.

**3. The Trees Were Then Cut Up.** This was a very necessary thing because the natural condition of the acacia tree is knots and twists. There is nothing straight about it and it is, therefore, of little or no use for building purposes unless trimmed. What an outstanding type of the believer! How we do need to be straightened, and oh! how we object sometimes. The work of the Spirit is a continuous one. So many feel they have all when they receive salvation, but that is far from true. There is development, shaping into Christlike character, a daily growing in grace and in knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. The sap of selfishness must be dried out, the knots of hardness must be smoothed down to gentleness and compassion and the twists of half-heartedness must be straightened; for they will never make for a perfect fitting and a unity in the Spirit in which the Lord always delights to dwell. The boards, having thus been prepared so far as their natural condition was

concerned, were then overlaid, and thus beautified, with pure gold. How suggestive! remembering that wood is a type of humanity, and gold of Divinity because of its imperishableness. God not only works in the natural man and transforms the human nature, but He also clothes us with His own Divine nature. Peter tells us that we [are], “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4).

So much for the nature of the boards; now a word as to their shape. Each of the forty-eight boards was ten cubits high and a cubit and a half in width. The thickness is not stated. On the face of each board there were rings through which bars were passed. Each board had at the lower extremity two tenons, or two feet, to allow it to stand solidly on its foundation... All tents were erected by driving in the stakes and pins. Their existence was dependent on a grip of the desert. But to these boards were given two feet, and for them were provided two sockets, so that they stood independent of the sand of the desert. They just stood upright in the desert and not of it. Once they, as trees, were well rooted into it. What separated the boards from the sand? Silver – a ransom price. You, dear reader, if Christ’s, are not your own. You, too, should be in the world but not of it, separated through the blood of Christ. “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing*” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Are you among those who say, ‘It is difficult to stand’? May we remind you that God has given you two feet and two silver sockets. There are so many Christians who have one foot established in the “*redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24), but they have the other foot in something else – pleasure for one, politics for another, socialism for yet a third, while a fourth is always concerned about the various ‘-isms’ abroad ... When [these things] are put on a par with Christian living, so as to cause one’s testimony and faith to be weakened, then stability is lost.

While these boards have no relationship with the desert, they certainly have with each other and with God. First note their union with each other. Forty-eight boards, 10 x 1½ cubits, stood so ‘fitly framed together’ as to become one building. They all stood as it were shoulder to shoulder with such a unity that daylight could not be seen between them. There was no rubbing nor chafing because they were so well-balanced. All this was resultant upon an equal foundation. It is when believers are out fundamentally that they are out with each other. One leaning toward this theory and another toward that dogma means a loss of unity and fellowship into which the Enemy of souls enters and splits the work, or else he causes a chafing which creates an irritability that brings discord and discontent.

Not only were the boards “*compacted by that which every joint supplieth*” (Ephesians 4:16) but they were equal in their height, forty-eight boards ten cubits high. How practical is the teaching of the tabernacle! Solomon said that: “*Jealousy is cruel as the grave*” (Song of Songs 8:6). It has ruined many a man, but God would have us learn from the evenness of height that there is no room nor place in the church for one to look down upon, or despise, another, or to be jealous of another. We must follow the inspired exhortation of the Apostle Paul who said, “*Let each esteem other better than themselves*” (Philippians 2:3). Let us reach “*unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13)...

Silver sockets kept the boards from sinking into the sand or losing equality of height. Their close relationship with each other prevented a tilting to the right or left. One thing remained, they could lean backwards or forwards and so get out of line and touch with each other but for a yet further provision made by the Lord. ‘Thou shalt make bars for the boards and overlay them with pure gold’. These bars consolidated the whole into one ... What do they teach us? The Apostle Paul tells us that God has given five gifts of ministry to the Church;

they are found in Ephesians 4:11: “*And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*”. To say that these bars thus speak of church ministry is no speculation, for if we read on in Ephesians 4, ‘comparing spiritual things with spiritual’, we shall find that both the bars and the gifts were given for a similar purpose: “*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love*” (Ephesians 4:12-16). Taking away the bars from the boards would mean that a broadside wind would scatter the boards like ninepins, and the whole structure would collapse. Likewise if we had not this God-given ministry in the church, every wind of doctrine would scatter the flock; but God has not only established the church in the present [age], but He also has supplied the means of consolidation. Therefore, ‘touch not the Lord’s anointed’, and despise not the ministry.

Still writing to the Ephesians the apostle draws yet another comparison between the tabernacle of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament. “*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Ephesians 2:21-22). The tabernacle was a habitation of God in wood and gold. The church is a habitation of God in spiritual and living stones.

C. W. Slemming, “*Made According to Pattern*” 1938



# THE UNITY OF THE FAITH

## Ephesians 4

That there should ever have been a ‘Church at Ephesus’ is nothing short of a miracle. The city itself was the centre of an international cult, and idolatry on such an epic scale, that it produced one of the ‘seven wonders of the ancient world’ in the Temple of Diana. Yet there, in that spiritually hostile environment, the Apostle Paul found ‘about twelve’ men, who formed the beginning of Church which would endure to the end of Bible history, and beyond. The congregation was a diverse one from the outset (cf Acts 19:8-9, 17-20), and the threat of schism from within was as great as that presented by persecution from without (cf Acts 20:29-30). This was the situation into which the Epistle to the Ephesians was originally sent, and its Divinely-inspired content includes one of the best defences to the dangers which then assailed the Church: “*keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3). Still today, these words are relevant and necessary for the Lord’s people.

When the Word of God speaks of unity, it does so in very specific terms. This is not that compromising, conniving, ecumenical ‘unity’, promoted by liberal churchmen of the present day. It is expressly described as **spiritual unity**. The persons between whom it can be fostered are identified as those who: “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [they] are called*” (Ephesians 4:1); and the personal virtues or behaviours most conducive to this unity are: lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, and love coupled with truth (cf. v.2, v.15).

Then in Ephesians 4:4-6 a remarkable list is given; a list of certain fundamentals of the faith which are all characterised by unity, or ‘oneness’. They are stated here for two reasons. First, as a **motivation**, or reason for spiritual unity: since these things are ‘one’,

so likewise ought the people of God to be ‘one’. Secondly, as the **foundation** or basis for spiritual unity: the people of God can only be ‘one’, if they acknowledge and attest the uniqueness and singularity of these Biblical principles. It helps to identify those with whom union may be had.

### **One Body**

The Biblical analogy of the Church as a ‘body’ is highly instructive: a diversity of members with a great variety of functions, yet all interdependent upon each other and together comprising one body, over which Christ alone is Head (cf 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Sadly, this beautifully-illustrated doctrine is marred by many manmade errors. Proponents of ‘relative religion’ give credence and validity to other ‘bodies’. Others would blasphemously entitle a pope or a monarch as an alternative ‘head’ of the Church! All such deny the fundamental truth that: “*ye are called in **one body***” (Colossians 3:15).

### **One Spirit**

There is only one Holy Spirit, and He, being God, is changeless and constant in His nature and His operation. He indwells the heart of **every** believer from the time of regeneration onwards, to comfort, reprove and guide (cf John 16:7-15) as the Word plainly declares. Those who espouse the notion of a ‘second blessing’, or who ascribe to the Holy Spirit the lying signs and wonders of ‘charismania’ do not know the one Spirit of whom the Scripture speaks (cf 1 John 4:1-3).

### **One Calling**

The way of salvation is unique, and central to it is the effectual call of God’s grace. This call is heavenly in origin (cf Hebrews 3:1); unconditional, or irrespective of personal merit (cf 2 Timothy 1:9, 1 Corinthians 1:26); communicated by God’s Word (cf 2 Thessalonians 2:14); a call **from** the darkness of sin, **to** a life of holiness (cf 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 1:10). An alleged ‘call’ from another source, by other

means, or having lesser effects than this, is at variance with that one way of salvation which God has appointed.

### **One Hope**

The glorious hope associated with this calling is more fully described as: “*the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*” (Ephesians 1:18) – the heavenly destiny of the Lord’s people. Those who share this same hope will not be looking for earthly reward, or for physical fulfilments of spiritual promises. They will not be entangled with the tawdry, temporal pleasures of this world. Rather by their lives and testimonies will they prove, “*they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly*” (Hebrews 11:16).

### **One Lord**

“*No man can serve two masters*” (Luke 16:13) says the Scriptures. The title of ‘Lord’ speaks of the dominion and authority of Christ in the life of the believer. Alas that some, with divided loyalties, try simultaneously to follow Christ and other masters: materialistic, human or self-made. Others, through lack of obedience and submission to the Word, behave as though they had no Lord over them at all. Yet the fact remains, “*the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is **one Lord***” (Mark 12:29).

### **One Faith**

So fundamental is the matter of faith, that the whole Christian walk can rightly be called: “*the faith which was **once** delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 5). It is through faith that God’s saving grace is appropriated (cf Ephesians 2:8), while without it, it is impossible to please Him (cf Hebrews 11:6). And the nature of true faith is one and the same in all those who truly have it, namely; ‘faith alone, in Christ alone’. “*We having the **same spirit of faith**, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak*” (2 Corinthians 4:13).

## One Baptism

‘Believe and be baptized’ (cf Acts 2:38, 8:37) is the repeated command of the New Testament, and this is the **only form** of baptism known in the Word of God: Believer’s Baptism, upon confession of faith. Likewise, the **only mode** of performing it presented in Scripture is that of immersion. It is a tragedy that so simple an ordinance, so plainly stated, has been the source of such controversy and diversity of practice. The fact remains: there is only ‘one baptism’ to be found in the Bible.

## One God and Father

“*For there is one God*” (1 Timothy 2:5), the consequences of which doctrine should be to drive away from the heart and imagination of man any and every alternative object of worship. The fact that this God is also the one Father of all His people speaks still deeper truth. They are therefore brethren and sisters. It is incumbent upon them to “*Be ... therefore followers of God, as dear children*” (Ephesians 5:1). The fatherhood of God should provoke the emulation of godliness in them. As they grow more like Him, so will they become the more united to one another.

There are many who bemoan the lack of true spiritual unity among the people of God, and wonder why it is absent. The reasons surely, are these: Two persons cannot walk together except they be agreed (cf Amos 3:3). There can be no unity, where fundamental truth is wanting, or is denied; and there are many who, “*have need that one teach [them] again which be the first principles of the oracles of God*” (Hebrews 5:12). Here in Ephesians 4 is a simple Affirmation of Faith; the only ground upon which Biblical union can be established. The glorious end results of which, are these: “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13).

R. J. Steward

## EDITORIAL

The integrity and completeness of the Tabernacle structure was essential for its strength and function. There were a set number of boards to form the walls, and unless and until all were in place, the building was unstable and liable to fall. If any board was missing, it would have proved impossible to construct the enclosure. Gaping holes in the sides of the Holy Place would have rendered proper, God-honouring worship impossible.

These simple facts about this Old Testament building speak volumes about the New Testament Church, which it so clearly pre-figures. The integrity and completeness of the local Church is essential for its strength and function. Schism between the members of a Church is injurious when it arises (cf 1 Corinthians 3:3). But ironically, within the Churches today, segregation is fashionable, and very popular. Every possible division is exploited: some meetings for men, other events for women; young people's gatherings, different ones for older persons; home-groups and house-meetings; even, in some larger assemblies, separate services for those of different ethnicities and languages. What a breeding-ground for cliques, strife and discord! A fragment of the membership, meeting in isolation, does not constitute 'the Church'. Where only a 'part' is assembled, there is great risk of imbalance, instability and impropriety.

One of the abiding glories of the Church on earth should be the way in which it unites young and old, male and female, persons from all walks of life, together in one. This is God's design, in order that His people may be of mutual help to one another (cf Titus 2:1-10, Romans 15:1-2). This is its strength. It should be the delight and privilege of every Church member, not to meet up in some independent faction, but rather to 'give thanks to God in the midst of the congregation' and to 'praise Him among much people' (cf Psalm 22:22, 35:18).

There was once a little-known Church of about 120 people. Its members comprised mature believers and new converts, men and women, young and old. They practised the principle of whole-Church unity. And, “*These **all** continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ... they were **all** with one accord in one place*” (Acts 1:14, 2:1). Upon that gathered, united congregation the Holy Spirit descended with power, and worked so mightily there, that they were lifted in a moment from obscurity to become the epicentre of the Gospel.

God grant that more Churches in this day and age would follow the godly example given in Jerusalem – and share alike the blessings.

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It was with great joy, on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August, that the Church, family members and friends assembled to observe the marriage of Mr Samuel Wort and Miss Hannah Prichard-Ellis. Samuel has been brought up at North Road Chapel from childhood, and a member since 1999, while Hannah has relocated to Bideford from County Limerick in the Republic of Ireland. At the service – in which Mr A. Prichard-Ellis (bride’s father) read the Scriptures, and Mr D. Wort (groom’s father) led in prayer – the text preached upon was: “*as being heirs together of the grace of life*” (1 Peter 3:7). True believers, when truly and Biblically married, share the same **life**, physical and spiritual; the same experience of saving **grace**; and the same glorious status as **heirs** of God, together.

The Church had the further pleasure of receiving Hannah into membership on Lord’s Day, 21<sup>st</sup> September. Having been baptised in June 2007, she had since attended Grace Reformed Baptist Church, Limerick. It is the united prayer of all at North Road Chapel that Mr and Mrs S. Wort will continue to be blessed, and made a blessing, among us.