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The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 16

“And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side: And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver. And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. The hangings of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four. All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their sockets of brass. The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.” (Exodus 27:9-19)

The main structure of the Tabernacle, the Brazen Altar (described in the previous article) and the Laver all stood inside a large rectangular enclosure, measuring 100 cubits by 50 cubits (approximately 50 yards by 25 yards). The boundary was a fence or screen of linen hangings, supported by a pillar every five cubits. Each pillar was equipped with a brass socket in which it stood for stability, silver hooks to bear the

linen, and silver ‘fillets’ (the word could denote finials for the posts, or possibly rods which went between them). In addition, the reference to ‘pins’ or tent-pegs in Exodus 27:19 suggests that each pillar may have been secured by means of guy ropes fastened to the ground. (For a fuller depiction, readers are referred to the diagram provided in *The Link*, October – December 2013, p. 3).

One point worthy of note is that no part of the Tabernacle was paved – neither the outer courtyard, or the Holy Places. Everything rested upon the bare sand of the desert. Herein lies a useful application. The worshippers at the Tabernacle were not to be concerned with ‘things below’, but instead to be occupied with the fine linen, the gold and the wondrous tapestries with all their deep significance. They did not regard the ground under their feet, but fixed their attention on the furnishings over and above them. When the people of God come to worship Him, all earthly thoughts should be put out of their minds. The practice must be, “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Colossians 3:2).

An observer, standing inside the courtyard of the Tabernacle would have been presented with a very striking sight. The predominant colour, visible in every direction, was the brilliant white of the fine linen hangings, all in absolute alignment, standing straight and upright, with perfectly square corners. As has been pointed out in previous articles, the fine linen is symbolic of righteousness. That spotless white material, the wall surrounding the whole structure, was a standing witness to the holiness of God, whose dwelling it was. The dazzling whiteness of that perimeter which signified His abode was in sharp contrast to the canvas and goat-hide tents of the multitude outside.

The Psalmist had an appreciation of that spotless precinct, in which stood the atoning Altar and the cleansing Laver, and these thoughts form the basis of many of the Psalms. For example: “*How amiable are*

Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God... For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:1-2, 10). *“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come into His courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him, all the earth”* (Psalm 96:8-9). *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name”* (Psalm 100:4). It was the eager desire of the true Israelite to be constantly within that enclosure. The thought of that court deeply stirred them. Does not all this have an echo in the Christians’ experience? They come initially through the gate to the altar of Calvary, there to receive that redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Having been thus redeemed, cleansed from all sin, and justified before God, they henceforth desire to be ever appearing before Him, with the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to His name. Communion with God and His people are their highest joys.

There was a single entrance into the courtyard, provided at its eastern end. This was one of the shorter, 50-cubit sides of the rectangular enclosure. This side comprised two 15-cubit sections of fine linen, and between them the ‘gate’: a multi-coloured hanging, 20 cubits wide, supported on four pillars of its own. As it faced towards the east, when the sun rose, its rays would beam upon this gorgeous tapestry, the style of which was the same as the entrance door to the Holy Place, the inner ceiling of the Tabernacle, and the veil of the Holy of Holies.

Thus Christ is once again set forth. From nature’s dark night the Daystar appears. *“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:78-79). The first shimmering of daylight in the wilderness would have shone upon the tapestry that was the gateway. So does all

the light of divine revelation focus upon Christ. He is the only entrance and approach unto God. *“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved”* (John 10:9), said Christ Himself.

The width of this gate is particularly mentioned in Exodus 27:16 as twenty cubits (approximately 30 feet) which by any standard was a tremendous opening. This speaks of Christ in the general call of the gospel. *“If any man thirst”* said He, *“let him come unto Me, and drink”* (John 7:37); *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”* (Revelation 22:17). This call is universal in its scope, it is to all men, to the uttermost parts of the earth. This aspect of truth was clearly prefigured in the Old Testament economy: *“And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice...”* (Leviticus 17:8); *“And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord”* (Numbers 15:14-15). A means of access was provided for all who came seeking entrance, whether Jew or Gentile.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Tabernacle was a ‘free for all’, or that it was overrun by heathen nations or unbelieving Jews. The total size of the Tabernacle and its courts, contrasted with the proportions of Israel’s camp give an indication here, reminiscent of Paul’s words that ‘they were not all Israel (spiritually) who were of Israel (nationally)’ (cf Romans 9:6). The vast encampment of Israel is a fitting picture of nominal professors of Christianity, which are very numerous! But how small are the confines of the true Church. Many are called at the entrance gate, but few are those who actually enter in

(cf Matthew 22:14). It is a minority who walk in the narrow way (cf Matthew 7:14); it is a little flock who inherit the kingdom (cf Luke 12:32). A verse from the Psalms beautifully sums up the matter: “*Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple*” (Psalm 65:4). Blessed indeed are they, who are **chosen** of God, **caused** to approach, and henceforth dwell in His courts by grace.

Having considered the door, focus now on the actual hangings of the outer court. Anyone entering this courtyard found themselves surrounded by fine linen; enclosed by pure white. This was a completely new sight, and entirely different from the desolate and unclean desert round about. It was all part of the same wondrous experience: once outside, now inside; once cut off from God, now inside the door. This is true for every sinner still today who – hearing the general call of the gospel, through the grace of God in the power of the Holy Spirit – obeys the call. Receiving Christ into their heart by faith, they pass through the door, and are brought into a true relationship with God. They are clothed in the righteousness of Christ; called with a holy calling, not according to works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus (cf 2 Timothy 1:9).

Everything in the Tabernacle speaks of Christ, as has been demonstrated in many previous articles, and this also applies to the pillars and white linen surround of the outer court. However, some aspects of the Tabernacle and its construction have a double application, and also pertain to the believer. For example, the Psalmist says: “*That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*” (Psalm 144:12). Here, the analogy is of corner-stones in a palace; in Galatians 2:9 the apostle refers to certain disciples as ‘pillars’.

Through grace, there are certain attributes and qualities manifested by Christ that are also reflected in His true people. The person who is born again of God's Holy Spirit has the very life of Christ within. They are not removed from the earth at regeneration; rather they are placed in the World, though no longer being of it (cf John 17:11-16). Standing in the righteousness of Christ, they should be marked out by something of that same holiness. Indeed, their lives must indicate a clear line of separation from the world.

*“I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and **made you go upright**”* (Leviticus 26:13). God makes His people ‘upright’ in Christ, and they are called to stand as pillars for the truth thereafter: *“...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15). By this it can be seen that the Pillar stands upon Truth – grounded in it; but also, being a pillar, he upholds the Truth – supporting all the teachings. If this is not the case with any professed believer, then he is not ‘behaving himself’ in the house of God; he is lacking any manifestation of that ‘uprightness’ which grace has conferred upon him. Such misconduct is deserving and demanding of censure.

The outer wall of the courtyard was also characterised by its perfect alignment. The pillars were not placed at random – dotted anywhere, in any order. Rather was there strict formation. Here it must be emphasised that the God of Heaven is a God of order and stringent regulation. Pertaining to His Church, He says: *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40) – that is, the Biblical order; according to the pattern laid down in Scripture. Unity is the hallmark of those outer pillars – each one was in perfect line with the others. Looking at the professing Church today, on a worldwide scale, the picture is anything but. In fact, Christendom is in a totally confused

muddle; and whilst ‘unity’ is the popular theme of many modern pulpiteers, they have not the foggiest idea of the unity that the Scriptures teach. The Bible speaks of the ‘unity of the faith’ (cf Ephesians 4:13), which is to say, ‘all believers, all speaking and practising the same things, all of one mind, on one truth’. It is only when all the pillars are upright and in line that the curtain of true righteousness can be displayed. If some pillars are down, others out-of-true, some not in line, the curtain will at best hang in creases, and in many places be dragged to the ground. Then, there ceases to be a clear line of demarcation between the inside and the outside.

It is right for every believer to have a prayerful concern for the sad state of the church-at-large; but the Lord does not hold them responsible for the condition of each and every assembly around the globe. However, the members of a given local church **are** chargeable for the state and welfare of the places to which they particularly belong. The notion of ‘denominations’ or ‘collectives’ of churches is alien to the Word of God. The New Testament order is for independent, autonomous, self-governing and self-contained bodies of believers, under Christ their Head. Each local church must strive (by God’s enabling grace) to be a true replica and ‘working model’ of the one great Church Universal, as seen in Christ, in all that perfection. And whilst to attain such a degree is not possible in this world, they should still not be content with anything less.

To this end, every local church should prayerfully give themselves to adherence to Divine Truth, desiring that all might, *“speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Corinthians 1:10); no tottering pillars who will drag down and besmirch the testimony; none that will crash to the earth and so cause the purity of the church’s witness to be rent.

It seems likely that two cords or ropes were attached to each pillar. Although only the pins are specifically mentioned in Exodus 27, other details do occur: “*The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the door of the court, The pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords*” (Exodus 35:17-18); “*The hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the hanging for the court gate, his cords, and his pins, and all the vessels of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of the congregation*” (Exodus 39:40). Guy ropes invariably occur in pairs to provide two balanced forces, and so stabilise a post or pillar. Think of the stabilising influences upon the life of a believer; for example, **prayer** (from man to God) and **the Word** (from God to man). Nothing is more suited to maintain believers in a position of uprightness in this present evil world.

There is another detail to be mentioned: these cords were attached to pins or pegs of brass, driven into the ground. Brass is symbolic of judgment. Even so must study of the Scriptures and an active prayer-life lead to deep heart-searching and drive believers to sincere and genuine self-judgment, and to a proper Biblical assessment of the churches in which they stand, and of the world around them.

The Tabernacle enclosure, when erected and maintained according to God’s pattern, made a clear and definite separation between the inside and the outside. This is the will of God – no admixture of His own children with the people of the world. Yes, they must bear a Christian testimony and witness, by life and by lip, to the door into God’s presence; they must be helpful and kind; but any further they must not go. There can be no fellowship with the world; no forming of close alliances or associations with unbelievers. This includes secession from those who falsely profess faith, but have not the accompanying practice (cf 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Only such principled separation conforms to the holiness of God, and allows righteousness to be clearly manifested.

“Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16) saith the Lord. This is the teaching of the Tabernacle in summary; its whole burden is ‘holiness unto the Lord’. This is its application to Christians in the present age too. The whiteness of fine linen in all its purity is to be displayed by each local church unto the world. Such can only be achieved through the uprightness of every pillar, all standing in line with God’s truth.

In conclusion: what was the main function of the priests, and all who entered in to the Tabernacle? Was there a group stood at the gate, shouting gospel slogans all the time? Indeed, what was the chief purpose of the Tabernacle in the wilderness? Was it some novel form of evangelism? Were there special meetings for children, or women’s meetings one afternoon a week? Was there a youth club, a toddlers’ group or a businessmen’s fellowship? No – there are no such things to be found in either the Old Testament church, or the New. Their great concern was the worship and glory of God; to see that everything was done in accordance with the pattern showed – obedience to His Word. Then everything else followed, and God supplied the rest.

What a lesson for God’s people today! Their purpose and aim must be to glorify Him in genuine heart-worship, and by implicit obedience to His mandate. Every believer is a priest in the New Testament church; all are called into the holy service of priesthood. Within the Tabernacle, everything prefigured and spoke of Christ. Likewise in the gatherings of the local church in the present, Jesus Christ must be central. His person and work are the focal point, and this can be demonstrated in the praise and prayers; in the preaching of the Word; and in the weekly observance of the Lord’s Table.

Sacrifice was continually in the Tabernacle – it was prominent and inescapable. Now, there remaineth no more offering for sin; because once in the end of the age Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He made one sacrifice for sins for ever (cf

Hebrews 10:18, 9:26, 10:12). But while the New Testament Church has no continuing sacrifices, there is to be a continual remembrance of that one great offering. Even so did Christ institute that ordinance, for never must the mind of the worshipper drift from that which is central to all the plans and purposes of salvation. May God's blessing attend the exposition of His Word.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

“If the white linen of the court sets forth Christ in His perfect testimony to the world, in a secondary sense it tells the believer what he should be in testimony to the world. Alas! how many of us break down in practical righteousness, and how little we realise that practical righteousness is more than the honour of the man of the world... it is the acting towards others in the grace in which we have been set up by God. In this connection, the pins and cords that were used for the court (cf Exodus 35:18) and likewise the Tabernacle, set forth that we cannot testify in our own strength. Just as the pillars and boards were held up by a power outside themselves, so the believer is maintained in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

A. J. Pollock (1864 – 1957)

“The court preserved the Tabernacle from accidental or intentional profanation, and gave the priests a certain measure of privacy for the prosecution of their duties. Its presence was a perpetual reminder that man should pause and consider, before he rushes into the presence of the Most High. It seemed to say to every worshipper: *“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God... Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth”* (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2).”

F. B. Meyer (1847 – 1929)

HARMONY IN THE CHURCH

The church is the body of Christ. He is its Head, and all who believe in Him are its members. The church is glorious because of the resplendent majesty of its Head. It is glorious also because of the beautiful harmony of its members.

The Imperative of Harmony

To all outward appearances the church frequently presents a picture of dissension rather than harmony. Nor are such appearances altogether deceiving. As a matter of plain fact, there is at all times considerable disharmony within the visible church.

For that reason Scripture enjoins church members to manifest their harmony “*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:2-3). For the same reason, when the apostle Paul was informed that there were parties in the church at Corinth, he wrote to that church: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

What accounts for disharmony in the church? Two factors especially. There are always those in the church who are not of it. Inevitably they occasion division. With reference to such members Paul wrote to the Galatians: “*I would they were even cut off which trouble you*” (Galatians 5:12). The faithful exercise of discipline is definitely in the interest of harmony within the church. And those who are truly of the church are still at best very poor Christians. The frequent disobedience of the members of the church to its Head drives them apart.

The obvious reason why the members of the human body normally act so harmoniously is that all of them alike obey the head. If only all the members of the body of Christ would obey the Head, who has enjoined them with all the emphasis at His divine command that they love one another as He has loved them, what harmony the church would display! Instead, church members indulge so often in the twin sins of pride and jealousy. So few of them have learned to: “*esteem other better than themselves*” (Philippians 2:3). Time and again they must be told to lay aside “*all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speaking*” (1 Peter 2:1). Like the disciples of old, who disputed with one another which of them was greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they need to be reminded of the Master’s telling words: “*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:3). Those who fail to repent of the sin of wanting to be first, will not even be last.

The Semblance of Harmony

Often the church is harmonious only in outward appearance, not in reality. Then harmony is a mere sham. That occurs whenever the church forgets or declines to be militant against whatever evil dwells in its midst. There is flagrant sin, let us say, among prominent members of a given church. To combat such sin will unavoidably disturb the peace. The offender is excused with the trite remark that there is not a church member who does not sin. Thus the storm that threatened to break is dissipated. Peace is maintained. But a malignant disease keeps gnawing at the vitals of the church.

Or let us assume that there is controversy in a church on an important doctrine. There are two opposing groups or wings. It is practically a foregone conclusion that many members will refuse to take sides. They pride themselves on striking ‘the golden mean’. Although the doctrine at issue is of such moment that Christianity stands or falls with it, they opine that this particular doctrine is relatively insignificant.

Although one side is essentially right and the other essentially wrong, they insist on the obvious fact that neither is infallible. They are certain to condemn both sides for the ‘bitterness’ that mars their debate, and often they have a point here; but they forget that they themselves are guilty of the heinous sin of doctrinal indifference. They boast of their zeal for the church’s peace, but the sad fact is that they are working overtime for its destruction. Middle-of-the-road pacifism in significant doctrinal controversy has ruined many a church.

The prophet Zechariah exhorted the Jews of his day: “*Love the truth and peace*” (Zechariah 8:19). He did not urge them to seek peace at the expense of truth, for he realized that peace purchased at that price is not really peace at all. No, he regarded truth as an absolute prerequisite of peace that is truly peace. He also knew that the way of truth is the sure road to peace.

The Reality of Harmony

There is much disharmony within the church. There is also a great deal of simulated harmony. These are sad facts. But they do not alter the truth that the church of Jesus Christ is characterized by a very real harmony. The book of Acts paints a beautiful picture of the early church at Jerusalem: “*All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people*” (Acts 2:44-47). Although the New Testament nowhere commands other churches to imitate the [communality] of the Jerusalem church, every true church of Christ is characterized by a goodly measure of the same harmony, for the same Spirit indwells it...

In the same letter in which he berated the Corinthians for divisions among them, the apostle Paul strongly stressed the truth that believers

are members of one body. And not only did he exhort them to behave toward one another as members of the same body should, he also declared boldly that in essence, harmonious co-operation of the members of the church is as much a fact as is the harmonious co-operation of the members of body. The church **is** the body of Christ. Believers **are** the members of that body. They **are** controlled by one Head. Therefore they **do** act harmoniously. All that is plainly implied in the assertion: “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The harmony that prevails among the members of Christ’s body is made to stand out strikingly in relation to their diversity. Harmony presupposes diversity. When voices sing identical notes, no one thinks of harmony. But when different voices singing different notes blend with one another, the product is harmony. If the body consisted of several parts, all of the same size and shape, harmony would be out of the question. Now that it consists of many widely differing members, all aiding one another, the quality of harmony is outstanding. There is much diversity among the members of Christ's church. Some have five talents, others but one. Some have attractive characters, others are relatively unattractive. Some are leaders, others followers. Some are rich, others poor. Some are highly educated, others unlearned. Some are strong in the faith, others weak. But each needs all the others. They complement one another. They co-operate with each other. Collectively they constitute one body. And all are bound together by the greatest of Christian virtues – love.

That is harmony indeed. And such harmony is of the essence of the church. Where it is wanting there is no Christian church. It is found in every true church. For the church is undeniably the body of Christ.

R. B. Kuiper (1886 – 1966)

Excerpted from: ‘The Glorious Body of Christ’

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

“And I will put a division between My people and thy people” (Exodus 8:23)

The word ‘division’ in this verse may be translated ‘redemption’. It is so rendered in Psalm 111:9 and Psalm 130:7. *“The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel”* (Exodus 11:7). Redemption leads to separation. Separation is the necessary complement of redemption. In creation, separation is based upon the essential difference in kind and character between the things separated. Abraham’s was founded upon election, the promises and covenant of God, but in the [Israelite] nation the basis of their separation is redemption. Ever afterwards in Israel’s history the Lord appeals to them to be a people separate unto Himself on the ground that He had redeemed them and that therefore they were His by ‘redemption rights’.

It is essential to note the difference between what **did** differentiate them from others, and what **should** differentiate them. The one may be termed their positional and the other their conditional separation. The one was absolute, depending upon the fact of their redemption, the other was varied, depending upon their spiritual condition. The second grows out of the first, it is the essential sequence...

In the Wilderness, [they were] a pilgrim people. They had the Tabernacle, where dwelt the Shekinah Glory – Divine Guidance; they were provided with Manna from heaven daily and with water from the smitten rock – Divine sustenance; they were given the law – the Divine Oracles, which revealed to them their responsibility, the highest moral code that any nation ever had. These differentiated them from all the other nations. *“Israel shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the other nations”* (Numbers 23:9). No nations had such privileges as

they. The Lord God was with them and the shout of a King was among them (cf Numbers 23:21). Hence their responsibilities were correspondingly great.

As a pilgrim people marching through the wilderness to their promised inheritance they were given certain prohibitions, which are recorded for our admonition in Deuteronomy chapter 2, for we too have been constituted strangers, or ‘temporary visitors’ here by the Cross of Christ, and hence we are to be pilgrims. May we not degenerate into aimless wanderers!

“Meddle not with the children of Esau, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth, because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession” (Deuteronomy 2:5). The territory marked out in the providence of God as the inheritance of the descendants of the man who had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage was forbidden ground for these pilgrims. God had something better for them – a land flowing with milk and honey. Esau may well represent the man who places more value upon the gratification of physical appetites than upon spiritual things. *“I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). The believer’s inheritance is in the realm of the spirit, and not even a foot breadth of the territory of the old man – the flesh, is to be his. Whether it be the flesh in its religious, self-righteous character, or in its more coarser forms, the true Christian is to recognise that they ‘that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and its lusts’ (cf Galatians 5:24). He must view things from God’s Throne and believe the report, ‘the end of all flesh has come before me’.

“Distress not the Moabites, for I will not give thee their land for a possession. I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession... Distress not the Ammonites, for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession. I have given it unto the children of Lot” (Deuteronomy 2:9,

19). Lot was the world-lover, the one who was attracted away from the fellowship of Abraham by the allurements of Sodom. Moab and Ammon were his children and the pilgrim people were strictly forbidden to distress them or to try and possess their land. Oh! the tragedy of being satisfied with the second or third best, the danger of contending for things that are not ours by New Covenant rights. The pleasures of this world, the things which the world indulges in and enjoys, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The desire to be somebody and reckoned as great in the eyes of the ungodly world has ruined many a testimony. The believer should neither care for the world's frown nor cater for the world's caresses. The world's caresses may be represented as floral wreaths placed upon the grave of a dead and buried testimony, a life that has lost its power for God...

Israel was also intended to be a peculiar people, a people **specially** for the Lord. They were not to be conformed to the ways and customs of the nations around them. They were to be governed by the Word of God. This was not easy for them as their after-history proved, and it is no easier for the believer today as can be gathered from the conformity of so many who profess to be the Lord's people to the latest fads and fancies of the world, even at the expense of loyalty to Christ and adherence to all that God hath said.

“Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind”. The word ‘transformed’ is found in two other places in the New Testament: Matthew 17:2, ‘transfigured’, and 2 Corinthians 3:18, ‘changed’. It is the word from which we get the term ‘metamorphosis’. The caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly. What a change that is! This change can only be brought about in the believer by having the mind renewed through the reading of the Scriptures, by looking into the mirror of the word of God at the image of the Lord reflected therein. Thereby we shall be transformed into

the same likeness even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The conformity of the believer to Christ is the final purpose of God in redemption. (cf Romans 8:29). The record of the failure of Israel to maintain these lines of demarcation and its sad results should be sufficient warning for the believer to-day to seek to keep himself unspotted from the world. World-conformity, worldly fellowships and alliances, with defeated Christian lives as the net gain, are alas too prevalent. Victorious Christian living demands a purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord and be separate from the world.

J. M. Davies (1928)

“The Christian, while in the world, is not to be of the world. He should be distinguished from it in the great object of his life. For him, ‘to live’, should be ‘Christ’. Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he should do all to God’s glory... In your spirit, as well as in your aim, you should differ from the world. Waiting humbly before God, always conscious of His presence, delighting in communion with Him, and seeking to know His will, you will prove that you are of heavenly race. And you should be separate from the world in your actions. If a thing be right, though you lose by it, it must be done; if it be wrong, though you would gain by it, you must scorn the sin for your Master’s sake. You must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Walk worthy of your high calling and dignity. Remember, O Christian, that thou art a son of the King of kings. Therefore, keep thyself unspotted from the world. Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not these eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in His beauty; let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the golden streets; let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are ere long to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy”.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

EDITORIAL

The Old Testament types of the church afforded by the Tabernacle, and afterwards the Temple, have certain features in common. One of these is the prominence and visibility of the structures. The Tabernacle was situated in the very centre of the encampment of Israel, and surrounded by the brilliant white walls of the outer court. The Temple, with its imposing pillars and porch was set upon a high point overlooking the city of Jerusalem. Hence the Psalmist asks: “*Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?*”, “*Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?*” (Psalm 15:1, 24:3). This attribute of ‘visibility’ is a vital characteristic of the Church in the present age. “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house*” (Matthew 5:14-15).

The people of God, in their physical, local gatherings are often styled ‘the Church visible’, as distinct from the Church in its universal and spiritual sense, which cannot be perceived with mortal sight. The very purpose of God in leaving His saints upon earth for a season, is that they might be **seen**, and a practical demonstration of truth given by them. This ‘visibility’ has a three-fold application:

To the World

Light is of greatest utility and potential blessing to those who are in darkness; and it is upon the unbelieving majority around them that the local church is commanded to ‘let their light shine’. Even persons who never hear the preaching of the gospel may receive a **visual** testimony from a church in their midst. Alas that many Christians are neglectful of this ‘wordless’ aspect of their witness. Simple things, such as the manner, regularity and timeliness of their arrival at the house of God;

the suitability and sobriety of their dress for worship; their conduct and conversation as they depart; even the cleanliness and upkeep of the building in which they assemble – all these factors are readily apparent to the watching world, and must be attended to, “*That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without*” (1 Thessalonians 4:12). Yes, there are weightier matters of evangelism to be considered; and these ought to be done, whilst not leaving the other undone.

Nor let it be forgotten that the condition of, and relationship between members **inside** the church is of consequence to persons **outside**. The presentation of the gospel is sadly undermined in congregations where there is discord or indiscipline. A church divided against itself cannot hope to stand before the world and declare the Truth. Judgment must begin to be exercised in the House of God – for if the preached Word is not first honoured and obeyed there, what hope when it is brought before unbelievers? True spiritual unity is essential to all the other operations of the local church. The Saviour’s design and prayer for His people is this: “*that they may be made **perfect in one**; and **that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me***” (John 17:23).

To the Saints

The Church on earth has a still higher purpose and function: it is for the benefit of the Lord’s people. It is designed for their protection and provision; their guidance and growth. The flock of God is to be, “*as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land*” (Zechariah 9:16); they are raised like ‘a standard for the people’ in order that the ‘redeemed of the Lord’ may be ‘sought out’, and brought into the city of persons ‘not forsaken’ (cf Isaiah 62:10, 12). By observing the local church, isolated and individual believers should be inspired to say: “*Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates*” (Psalm 122:1-2). Thus are the solitary set in families (cf Psalm 68:6) there to fulfil the New Testament principle of membership one with

another (cf Romans 12:5); to serve and praise God in a collective and corporate manner (cf Psalm 22:22).

Visible churches may also be of encouragement to each other, when they fashion and conduct themselves according to God's Word. Concerning the church at Colossae, Paul could say he was 'joying and **beholding their order**, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ' (cf Colossians 2:5); and of the Thessalonians: "*ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God*" (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Without the need for any words, that church gave a visual demonstration of the power of God in their midst. So must the Lord's people today.

To the Lord

Standing in the appointed place of public worship, a godly man of old once prayed: "*O Lord my God... hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before Thee: **That Thine eyes may be open upon this house** day and night, upon the place whereof Thou hast said that Thou wouldest put Thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant prayeth toward this place*" (2 Chronicles 6:19-20). That prayer is answered in perpetuity, for the Lord loveth the gates of His earthly 'Zions', above all other dwellings (cf Psalm 87:1). It is a thought at once both solemnising and comforting, that the Divine gaze of Almighty God is continually set upon the places where His people assemble. In the person of Christ, He gathers in the midst of the smallest company that truly bears His Name, and walks amongst His own candlesticks. Thus does every local church resemble that fountain in the wilderness called 'Beer-lahai-roi', where the Lord's people can each testify: 'here have I also looked unto Him that seeth me' (cf Genesis 16:7, 13-14).