

[R4816 : page 149]

THE TABERNACLE AND THE GOWN

LONDON TABERNACLE has a large gallery, seating nearly as many as the first floor – in all nearly 1,200. To suit this the pulpit is a high one, boxed in, so that only the head and shoulders of the speaker are in view. A plain black robe or gown, provided by the kindness of some of the friends, was worn by the Pastor (Brother Russell) in the pulpit, but not at other times. This raised from a few the query, Is Brother Russell becoming a Babylonian – preaching in a church edifice and wearing a robe?

It was thought well to explain, for the benefit of all, that the use of Church buildings was never condemned in the Bible, nor in the DAWN-STUDIES. St. Paul preached in a Synagogue whenever he had opportunity; so did the other Apostles, and so did Jesus. We do not favor the general striving for church edifices because of the expense, because the friends of the Truth are generally poor, and because what money we all can devote to the service of the Lord can be used more wisely as a rule – to accomplish a wider spread of the glad tidings of great joy. [R4817 : page 149]

We still view the matter thus. But at London, as in New York City (Brooklyn), it is our judgment that the cause is best served by having a plain Tabernacle for general worship and also for the Society's warehouse and office of publication. We have sought to do the Master's will, and believe we have done it in both cases.

As New York City is the American center, so is London the British center, or, indeed, the European center. It is to the advantage of the entire work everywhere that *Brooklyn Tabernacle* and *London Tabernacle*, even as names alone, should lend their dignity to the cause we love to serve. Both buildings are heavily mortgaged. The Society has other uses for its income, and is making no endeavor nor appeals for money to clear these off.

As for the gown of plain black: It is simplicity itself, and very much more like what the Savior and the Apostles wore than is a frock-coat. And as for wearing an ordinary, every-day business suit of blue or gray or tan in the pulpit – surely it is a bit irreverent, unless as emergency might make it necessary.

Respect for the Lord and for his Truth seems to call for respect even in the dress of the one who, for the hour, represents the Lord as his mouthpiece, "ambassador," or "able minister of the New Covenant," calling for the joint-sacrifices necessary to be found before the New Covenant can go into effect. We should not be understood as laying down a law respecting meats or drinks or wearing of apparel. We are merely suggesting that a fancy vest, colored tie and business suit do not appeal to us as specially to be commended. Rather, we would commend to the preaching brethren, so far as possible and convenient, a preference for black and white apparel – whatever the cut.

Prejudice is a weed which may flourish in comparatively well-kept heart-gardens. But it should always be plucked up as soon as discovered, or it will do damage – no one can tell how much – to the owner of the garden and to his neighbors.

THE GOLDEN RULE

The Golden Rule seems not to be fully understood nor appreciated by some of God's children who have gone beyond the *Law* which it represents and are seeking to *sacrifice*. The Golden Rule means – be just toward fellowmen, giving them the same *liberty* which you desire and claim as your right. Do not attempt to *fetter* them in ways you would not wish them to fetter you. All saints should remember that this is simply *justice*, not *sacrifice*. It is God's command – the very foundation of his throne, of his Government. Perhaps no other lesson is more needed to be learned by the Church than this. It is violated continually in the home and in the Church. Justice, before generosity; the Golden Rule, before sacrifice, is surely

God's order, and all who would be obedient to him and well pleasing will surely take heed to watch themselves in this respect.

FALSE DOCTRINE IS BABYLON'S FAULT

As for the churches nominal being Babylon because they meet in fine or poor buildings, with or without steeples, this is foolishness, well to be gotten rid of, and which none of us ever should have had. Similarly the dress of the minister has nothing to do with Babylonishness – although we do confess to prejudice against the changing of gowns during service and the wearing of colored gowns, etc., in Catholic and High Church ceremonials, as contrary to the *simplicity* of Christ.

Babylon's fault is her false *doctrines* – the mingled wine in her cup – the "*Golden Cup*" of the Divine Word – wherewith she and the world are so intoxicated that they cannot understand the Truth, but persecute it.

To come out of Babylon, therefore, does not mean nevermore to worship God in a specially constructed building; nor does it mean to do nothing that Babylon does and to wear nothing which Babylon approves. This application would mean that we might neither sing nor pray nor use an organ, etc., because others use these, whom we believe have departed from the faith.

It is difficult, of course, for us to keep our poor heads well balanced by the spirit of a sound mind; but the [R4817 : page 150] Golden Rule will surely assist. One dear friend claimed that he was afraid that others would be "*stumbled*" by these matters – especially that those who have gone out from us would use it as a club. Our answer is that those who have gone out need not be considered for one moment; they will twist and turn everything, for evil anyway. If we stopped to heed and please them we would do nothing that would please and serve God.

On the contrary, we believe that the general sentiment of thinking and pious people is *turning* from the rough-and-ready preaching, once so approved, to something more refined and reverential. There are still good people who consider it a sin to wear a collar or a necktie even at Divine service, but they are becoming fewer.

But the Golden Rule leaves these children of God free to dress as they please, without others busybodying in their affairs. Let experience teach them. Let them learn in the School of Christ that the advantages and liberties of the Kingdom of God (the Church) consist not in meats and drinks and clothing, but in righteousness and true holiness, represented by the Wedding Garment, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

