

30th June 2021

Landmarks

“Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”

Bible, Proverbs 22:28

When I was at Hampden Park in Glasgow recently for Scotland’s games in the postponed *Euro 2020 Football Championships*, the Covid-19 precautions meant we had to be in the stadium very early. There was a lot of colour to be seen as we milled about outside, including huge murals on the stadium walls of familiar landmarks in some of the European cities in which the football matches were being played. I was interested later, therefore, in the verse quoted above from the Bible’s Book of Proverbs.

Landmarks matter. And it *seems* that the writer of Proverbs is saying that *all* landmarks from previous generations should be preserved. Put there by our forefathers, we have no right to take them down. In fact, we are expressly forbidden from doing so. How does this sit, however, with the pulling down of statues of well-known figures who made their fortune in the slave trade centuries ago, or respect for buildings, including churches, endowed with money from what we now consider to be corrupt and immoral practices? Should *these* ancient landmarks be removed?

But when we look closer at this “proverb”, we find that it’s not about buildings and statues, or any other *physical* structure at all. The “ancient landmarks” were guidelines, features which defined property boundaries, limits of ownership, which allowed for clarity in the settling of disputes, and forbade anyone from intruding on – or annexing – another’s land.

We have such guidelines, important landmarks, in our spiritual lives too. Confusion results – and disputes arise – when such landmarks are obliterated, and we play around with what we know has been established for the good of all. Please don’t remove *these* landmarks. Don’t just follow your own selfish instincts. Don’t push your boundaries further than they should be. Don’t behave as if no one else matters. Let ancient truths be held sacred, not just because they are ancient, but because they are relevant now. And heed the call of the prophet Jeremiah when he says:

*This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is,
and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’*

A prayer for today

Lord, may your landmarks be my guidelines, and your ancient paths the ways I walk. Amen

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