

The Gospel Witness

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T. T. SHIELDS, *Pastor and Editor.*

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1: 16.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

A RELIGIOUS DEVIL.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, March 23rd, 1924.

(Stenographically reported.)

"And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing."—II. Samuel, 15: 11.

WE have a proverb to the effect that history repeats itself, the truth lying behind it being that there are certain principles which are eternal. They may vary in their expression from time to time; but they are themselves essentially the same. The story which lies behind my text is illustrative of a spiritual condition that always obtains. Absalom was the attractive son of David, king of Israel. He had sinned grievously against his father, and against his father's dominion; but he had been permitted to return to his father's city. "And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" Thus, little by little, he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel," until when he had thus sowed with a sufficiently liberal hand the seeds of sedition, he asked permission of the king to go to Hebron to pay his vow unto the Lord. He obtained the king's consent; and, ostensibly bent upon a religious errand, he set out for Hebron. But he "sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not anything".

Absalom's conduct is illustrative of another prince whose hand is lifted up against the Lord's Anointed. From the beginning of this Book two principles are shown to be ever in conflict—light is at war with darkness; good is at war with evil; God is at war with the Devil; and wherever the Lord's Anointed takes the throne, there is ever a contrary proclamation, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron." For a little while this evening I ask you to think with me about that spiritual prince, who is blinding "the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should

shine unto them"; and shall try to show you how the folly of those who follow his leadership is illustrated in the course of these "two hundred men who went in their simplicity, and knew not anything".

I. Here then is *A Brilliant Leader*: "And with Absalom went two hundred men".

Absalom was a man whose supreme ambition was to destroy the power and prestige of the Lord's anointed. I know that like Jacob, he disguised his hand and his voice and bowed to the king while he spoke in terms of filial affection, but the murder was out, when he said to the spies, "As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then shall ye say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron." That was the ambition of his life, to reign instead of God's anointed.

And underlying this simple historical fact there is this truth of equal historic authenticity, that there was in David's day, as there is in ours, "a spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". Just as you may observe the principles of righteousness and unrighteousness perpetuated, and the spirit of good and evil reincarnated, respectively, in Isaac and Jacob, and Ishmael and Esau; and by contact and contrast revealing and emphasizing each other; so, whenever and wherever in human history the light of truth has shone from God, it has been partially eclipsed by an evil presence who has thrown his dark and ugly shadow across the lives of men. And whether it be in the national, or ecclesiastical, or individual life, wherever the will of God is done, in a word, whenever God's Anointed takes the throne, there is always immediately a display of spiritual anarchy, a proclamation to the effect that "Absalom reigneth in Hebron". When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord, Satan is never absent on account of inclement weather, or because of rheumatism, or any other "ism". He is always there and brings his "isms" with him.

"The devil is voted not to be,
And, of course, the thing is true,
But who is doing the terrible work
The devil alone should do?
Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint?
Who digs the pits for his feet?
Who sows the tares in the fields of time,
Wherever God sows the wheat?
And who is mixing the terrible draught
Which palsies the heart and brain?
Who loads the bier of each passing year
With ten hundred thousand slain?
Who blasts the bloom of the earth to-day
With the fiery breath of hell?
If the devil is not, and never was,
Won't someone arise and tell?
Won't somebody step to the front, forthwith,
And make his bow, and show
How the frauds and crimes of a single day
Spring up? We should like to know!
The devil is voted not to be,
And, of course, the devil is gone;
But simple people would like to know,
Who carries his business on?"

Absalom was not only a leader, but a man of *wonderfully attractive personality*. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." He was, physically, a perfect man—a man who commanded the attention, the interest, and admiration of all who observed him. But for this he could not so readily have led men in the ways of evil. It was the attractiveness of his person which deceived those who followed after him.

From the beginning, the Devil has ever clothed his temptations in an attractive form. It is his business to make sin pleasant to the eye, and "to be desired to make one wise". Sin is not repulsive in its beginning. The Devil does not tempt men by exhibiting to their view the finished product of sin; but sin attractively disguised. Somewhere I have read the story of a Scotsman viewing a celebrated picture of the Temptation, in which the tempter was

represented with horns and hoofs, manifestly belonging to the infernal regions; while, in contrast, Christ was represented as a marvellously attractive Person. As the Scotsman viewed the picture, he said in his own tongue, which I shall not attempt to imitate, "If the tempter had come to me in that guise, he would have had a tough job with me, too." But it is not thus the Devil approaches men in his endeavour to lead them in opposition to the Lord's Anointed. He comes like Absalom, with flowing locks, and flashing eye, and glowing countenance, and royal robes, with all the golden glitter of the palace, with all the winsomeness of a radiant personality. This is ever so. I have been struck with the fact that most of those who deny the truth of Scripture are "nice" people. Esau often manages to put Jacob to shame. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison." Error is always made pleasant and palatable. Long before our doctors learned to do it, the Devil learned how to wrap his gospels in sugar, and to get people to take his poison without making a wry face about it.

Sin, I say, is attractive and pleasant, invariably, at the beginning; but its purpose must never be lost sight of. Absalom's intention was to proclaim himself king in David's stead, to usurp the place of the Lord's anointed. We had it in our lesson this evening: The tempter showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said unto Him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me". That is what he wants—anything to displace Christ. I read a letter in "The Globe", I think it was last week as I was going on the train to Michigan. It was signed, "A Layman"; and it was a criticism based upon an article in The North American Review by Dr. Shailer Mathews. The title of the letter was "The Fact of Christ"; and the layman strongly registered his objection to Dr. Mathews' teaching as involving a repudiation of the fundamentals of the faith. But he said something to this effect: that he was not concerned with the dispute about the Old Testament; that such matters might well be left to the scholars; but that when men like Dr. Mathews attacked the Person of Christ, even the laymen would have something to say. I was very glad to read that gentleman's statement; but, if he happens to be here to-night—I do not know whether he comes here or not—I should like to say to him that he has not thought very deeply on these matters; for if he did he would learn that all attacks upon the Bible are but disguised attacks upon the Lord's Anointed. You cannot repudiate the Old Testament, or any part of it, without joining in Absalom's proclamation that "Absalom reigneth in Hebron"; that someone else, other than Christ, is the supreme authority in these matters. Whatever the form of sin, whether it be in the physical realm, or in the intellectual realm, or in the higher realm of the spirit, it is all one in the end: the purpose is to dethrone the Lord's Anointed; it is a protest against the pre-eminence of Christ. Sin is always the exaltation of man's will against the sovereign will of God; it is rebellion; it is lawlessness.

But let me remind you that *Absalom owed no small part of his influence over men to the fact that he was a religious leader*. He is just now going to Hebron to pay the vows which he made in Geshur. He asks permission of the king; he quotes the very word of the king as his authority for his errand; and he bids men follow him in this religious journey.

The Devil's chosen realm is the realm of religion. The devil most to be feared is a religious devil. There are a multitude of people who imagine that if they go to church they must be doing the will of God; that, if they adopt some form of religion, it does not make very much difference what it is as long as they are religious. It is, however, in that realm the Devil accomplishes his darkest and most destructive purposes. It was by one of the twelve our Lord Jesus was betrayed. It was by means of religion the kingdom of Israel was destroyed: "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin", led them into sin by a false religion. "The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them: It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan". Jeroboam was a man of compromise, a man who substituted something else for the divinely ordained means of worship; and the people bowed before idols from then to the end. It was by religion Israel was ruined; and to-day the Devil is busy manufacturing new religions; anti-Christian systems are multiplying over night. Eddyism, and Russellism, and Spiritism, and many other forms of religion

which are positively, in nature and essence, anti-Christian, opposed to Christ—these are the religions the Devil advertises in the religious section of the daily press: "Free Lectures on Christian Science"; "International Bible Students' Association", and all the rest of it. It is Absalom going to pay his vows unto the Lord.

The same is true in this battle for the truth of the Book. The Devil has captured nearly all the colleges of the land; he seeks to organize the students of the various colleges, labels them with a lie, and calls it The Student Christian Movement, which is utterly anti-Christian, Unitarianism, a denial of the deity of our Lord. The presses are busy turning out religious books by such men as Dr. Mathews; and the other Dr. Mathews we used to have in McMaster University; Dr. Faunce; Dr. George Cross; Dr. Fosdick; Dr. George Jackson, and others. Doing what? All busy in the Devil's service, taking the crown from the brow of the Lord's Anointed. The Devil is working overtime at being religious, going to Hebron to pay a vow unto the Lord.

II. In the second place, Absalom was A CLEVER STRATEGIST. "With Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called"—*they were personally invited*. The Devil believes in personal work, in getting his men and his women, and his boys and his girls, one at a time. He believes in special meetings; he has meetings all the year round, every day in the year, using every possible means of calling people away from Christ and into his service. We ought to be busy, dear friends—those of us who are Christians; we shall have to be very busy, indeed, to keep up with our adversary. He has a thousand tongues to our one always; like the giant of Gath, he has six fingers to each hand, to our five.

"And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate". He called his victims and votaries *early*; he did not wait until high noon to begin his work. But just as the day was breaking, and before others had begun their business, Absalom was ready to meet and to greet them. He called them early. That is why we should be ever on the alert to turn the feet of the young into the way of faith, and into the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Somewhere I have read of a certain mother who said to a certain old minister, "Mr. So-and-so, I do not intend to give my boy religious instruction until he shall have arrived at years of understanding. I think if I begin to teach him at twelve years of age, that will be sufficient." "Do, as you will, madam," said the minister; "but the Devil will not wait until he is twelve years of age." And he won't! This Absalom will get up early in the morning. Listen! "While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat". While David's faithful and loyal servants were still in their beds, Absalom was about his business, calling men to his standard.

He intercepted them as they came to the king for judgment. He knew that he had a real rival in the Lord's anointed; and that, if they came within the circle of that great king, he was likely to lose his hold upon them. And so he stood across their path as they were coming up to David. He said, "Talk to me first." That is ever the Devil's way,—to keep men away from Christ. He will talk to you by the hour; he will recommend to you many books; he will have no objection whatever to your being religious, nor to your devoting much time to religion, providing only that you do not come to Christ. He will let you join the church; he will let you take office in the church; he will let you preach some sort of a gospel; he will let you engage in all kinds of religious activities; he will offer no objection to anything you do as long as you do not come to Christ. Across the path he stands to intercept you as you come to the King for judgment. When Jesus came down from the mount, and he found the father of the boy who was possessed of an evil spirit in despair because the disciples could not cast him out, Jesus said, "Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him." You will listen attentively to me now; but when in a few moments, in the name of the Lord, I summon you to come to Christ, you will find, unsaved men, that the Devil will stand across the end of the pew; he will waylay you in the aisle; he will do something to prevent your coming to Christ. That is his strategy always.

And when he meets them *he invariably compliments them* "See, thy matters are good and right." What fools we all are! We are prepared to listen to almost any man who comes with a pleasant smile and a fulsome tongue to tell us we are the finest people in the world. I have a great many people come

to see me these days; and they begin, very often, by expressing their great admiration for Jarvis Street Church. As soon as a man talks like that, I resolve to be careful. When they have done with that, and proceed to express some good opinion of the Pastor, I am more careful still. After they have put it on very thickly, they usually tell me they are in need of something: "Thy matters are good and right." We like to have people talk like that. I remember my father years ago describing a certain minister as one who had learned how to butter his way. Even ministers are not beyond the influence of one who says, "Thy matters are good and right—There is nothing the matter with you; there is much the matter with other folks, but not with you. You are all right." That is the kind of gospel people like. There was a time when preachers talked about sin and sinners; but we have outgrown all that: "Thy matters are good and right—You don't need any blood to cleanse your sin away. You don't need any repentance at all." Study the religions of the day! What are they? They are founded on Absalom's philosophy, "Thy matters are good and right." What is Eddyism? Just that: There is no sin; it is an illusion of mortal mind. There is nothing wrong. "Thy matters are good and right"—it is a most complimentary religion. If you can persuade yourself to believe a lie, you may learn to wear the smile of Christian Science. What is Russellism? Exactly the same thing in another form—no judgment, no hell, no accounting. Why? No need of it! "Thy matters are good and right." What is Modernism? Modernism is based on the philosophy of Evolution. What is that? Merely that we are getting better all the time! "Thy matters are good and right." You don't need any repentance. You are a better man than your father; you are growing better and better every day. I do not know anything about the merits of Coueism in its physical application. The Devil propounded that philosophy, long before Coue was born, in the spiritual realm: "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." "Thy matters are good and right." That is what we go to church for, isn't it?—to be told our matters are good and right. Isn't that what you came here for to-night? If you did, you will not be likely to come the second time. People do not keep coming here who want that kind of message; because that is not what the gospel says. The gospel says, "Thy matters are all wrong." This great Physician says, "You have a deceitful heart, a mind at enmity with God, a defiled conscience, a weak will: The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." The gospel does not compliment men; but the Devil does. Beware of the preacher who never touches your conscience, who never makes you feel uncomfortable! Beware of any system of religion that compliments human nature. It is of the Devil, even if it is under a Christian name; it is the voice of Absalom standing in the way of men as they come to Christ and saying, "Thy matters are good and right."

"Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" Do him justice in what way? He would approve of me; he would give me a religion that approves of my nature as it is. That is what men want—a religion requiring no change, no repentance of heart, no transformation of life at all. "And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him". There is always death in the Devil's kiss. "And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." That is what the Devil wants—to steal men's hearts, to alienate their affections from Jesus Christ.

III. And now a word or two about HIS ARMY OF DUPES: "And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called." Great men? Oh, yes! Who were they? Ahithophel, David's counsellor,—Professor Ahithophel, if you please! They were not little men; they were not a company of nobodies; they were key-men in many positions; and they imagined, I have no doubt, that they were the most enlightened men in Israel. This record is written by the pen of a divinely inspired historian; and he strips the mask off the whole matter. "Two hundred men"—what about them? Will you tell us? Yes:—"They went in their simplicity, and they knew not anything".

It is astonishing, is it not, that the rejectors of this gospel pose as being somewhat superior? Did not the Devil say in the beginning: "Follow me; do

as I tell you, and 'your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'?" But in the day that their eyes were opened to that from which God would have protected them, they became morally and spiritually blind, and "they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing." "If our gospel be hid,"—A man said to me not long ago, "How do you explain it?" and he quoted certain men. He said, "Would you not say he is a man of great natural powers?" Yes. "A man of intellect?" Yes. "A man of education?" Yes. In this particular case, he said, "Is he not a scholar?" Yes, I think so. "How then do you account for his attitude toward the Book, toward the whole Christian revelation?" Just in this way:—"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." That is the whole matter: "They went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing."

I wish I could be complimentary to human nature and be true at the same time; because, as the Book teaches, and as Moody used to say, "We are a pretty bad lot." And you know that is true: "They went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing." *They did not know that Absalom was a liar.* That is what he was—one of the worst of all liars. They accepted what he had to say at face value. The Devil was a liar from the beginning; and he deceives men by persuading them to believe a lie. "They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Again, I think it was Moody who used to say that a lie could travel around the world while truth was getting its boots on. Why is it? A lie has help wherever it travels; because people would rather believe a lie than the truth. It is easier always for people to believe a lie than the truth, for the simple reason men are not naturally truthful. And the penalty the liar pays for his lying is not that nobody will believe him, but that he cannot believe anybody else.

These men *did not know the purpose of Absalom.* They did not know that his splendidly attractive physique, his beautiful appearance, only disguised his moral deformity; they did not know the black heart that was underneath; and so they followed him to the end. They did not know they were going out of Jerusalem in the sense in which they did leave it. They were going to Hebron. They turned their back upon the altar of sacrifice, the place of atonement, and the mercy-seat; and they went elsewhere: "They went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing."

That is the picture! We have to-day men by the wholesale being led astray. They did not know that they were not going to a place of pleasure and rewards, but to a battle. And at last the battle was joined. Absalom numbered his men; and he went forth against the Lord's anointed. And David numbered his men; and the battle was set in array; and in the wood of Ephraim twenty thousand men, Absalom included, were slain, among them two hundred who had gone in their simplicity, and who knew not anything.

To be against Christ is to be on the losing side, my friend. There was a time when it looked as though David were weakening. They turned to Absalom by the thousands, and the tens of thousands; and they came to David saying, "Ahithophel is gone. This one and the other one has gone. The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." David left the capital city, left it in the hands of the enemy, and went up Mount Olivet, weeping as he went up, even as his greater Son wept at a later time; and it looked as though the Lord's anointed was utterly defeated. Sometimes it looks like that now, when you hear of preacher after preacher putting aside the Bible, turning away from the Cross, ceasing to preach the blood, repudiating the very fundamentals of the faith; when you see pulpit after pulpit, church after church, prostituted to Absalom's service—pulpits, that were formerly used to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed Son of God, used to call men into rebellion against Christ; until in this very City you can go to hundreds of places fifty-two Sundays in the year, and never hear, never be told how a poor sinner can be saved. It looks dark enough. I am touching it just now, through my brethren, all over the American Continent. I met a company of men in Michigan last week, and they said: "Is it any use at all? Is it any use to stand against it? It seems as though the enemy had it all his own way. The tide of unbelief seems to be flowing in; we cannot stand against it." Absalom had his day; but, blessed be God, there came God's hour—God's hour struck; and Joab went forth to

the battle. And this splendid Absalom, with his flowing locks, as he galloped through the woods, supposing he was sweeping on to victory, his long hair wrapped itself around the branches of an oak tree; his beast went from under him; and he was left suspended in the oak until God's messenger of justice came. "He took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak." He died in rebellion against the Lord's anointed, and with him other men: every one of the two hundred who had yielded to his blandishments went down to destruction and death. Then the king came, and melted the hearts of his people; they vied with each other—those who "loved his, appearing"—in welcoming him back again; and he swept in triumph into his city, the Lord's anointed came to his throne.

Blessed be God! Though the days are dark; "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Which side are you going to take to-night—the side of Absalom, or the side of David? Ittai the Gittite came to David in that dark day. "What," said David, "you coming Ittai? Hadn't you better follow the crowd? You had better go with the crowd."—(An Old Testament anticipation of that word, "Will ye also go away? * * * To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.") "Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. * * * And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there will also thy servant be." And there was Hushai the Archite, David's friend; and Barzillai the Gileadite; and a whole multitude of people who, in the day of darkness, said, "No; not Absalom but David"; and, at last, the king came back to reward his servants. And, some day, He is coming back again! Do not hang your heads, you Christians: lift up your heads; we are on the winning side! Your redemption draweth nigh! ("Hallelujah!"). Absalom will be defeated. He is already bruised; but he will be put under our feet shortly; and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. May He lead us all this evening to reach a wise and right decision!

FROM OUR MISSIONARY, MISS ALICE M. BROUGHTON.

Extract from a letter.

"The robbers have been doing their awful work around us, destroying life and property. Many villages are burned to the ground, and those who have escaped with their lives have nothing left. We do not know how many thousands are in this band. The soldiers went out to meet them, but they were defeated, and returned with many wounded. Reinforcements had been sent, so the robbers did not follow them into the city. They turned south and entered another city where were three foreigners, Mr. and Mrs. Duff, and a widow lady. Mr. and Mrs. Duff were wounded trying to escape over the city wall, while their companion was captured. The bandits asked a little school boy where the foreigners were, and when he replied "he did not know", they shot him dead. Since the government passed a law to kill all the robbers and not receive them back into the army as they used to do, they are more heartless, killing, torturing and destroying right and left. We have been ordered out already four times to a place of safety, but our senior Missionary says the only safe place is in heaven, and the Lord will take us there when it pleases Him. Ours is a robber infested district; around us are their haunts and since the Lord has brought us here, it is not for us to run to safety if there was a safe place, and leave these poor people to be tortured. The last time our city was attacked we had such a wonderful deliverance that the Chinese soldiers testified that it was the foreigners' God that fought for them and saved the city. There were about 5,000 in the robber band, and they said they saw fiery men and horses riding around the top of the city wall. After bombarding for three days and three nights, they withdrew. All that was done was to pray, and the Lord did the rest. But it was real prayer, those three days and nights. At present we are not allowed out of the city gates."

THE publication of this paper as a missionary enterprise is made possible by the gifts of members of Jarvis Street Church and others, and is sent to subscribers by mail for \$2.00 (under cost) per year. If any of the Lord's stewards who read this have received blessing, we shall be grateful for any thank-offering you may be able to send to The Witness Fund at any time; and especially for your prayers that the message of The Witness may be used by the Holy Spirit for the defence of the Faith, the salvation of souls, and the exaltation of Christ. As our funds make it possible, we hope to add to our free list, from time to time, the names of ministers at home and missionaries abroad.

EDITORIAL

A VITAL MESSAGE

The following article from the pen of Prof. H. T. Andrews, D.D., is reprinted from *The British Weekly* of March 20th. It is a word which all Baptists should read with care. Addressing a company of ministers only this week (April 8th) in Hackensack, N.J., we referred to the tendency toward ecclesiasticism in the Baptist denomination, and mentioned the fact that in some states the names of ministers who did not obey the officials were left off the printed list of ordained ministers. One of the state secretaries was present, who said such names had been omitted in that state because they had been ordained in opposition to the State Committee on Ordination. This brother seemed to see no infraction of Baptist "liberty" in the appointment by the Convention of a committee to dictate to a church whether or not it should ordain its pastor. The same tendency is becoming more and more pronounced in our own Convention. Some of the paid servants of the churches whose expenses as they go from church to church are paid out of denominational funds, arrogate to themselves episcopal powers, and unless pastors and churches do as they are told, they are black-listed. It would be more serious were it not that the majority of Canadian Baptist pastors have a decided objection to chains.

Another reason for publishing Prof. Andrews' article is the bearing it has upon Church Union. If the tendencies so pronounced in some of the denominations to-day are not checked, history will undoubtedly repeat itself, and, as Dr. Andrews' article suggests, the Spirit of God will find new bottles for His new wine.

THE MACHINERY AND THE POWER

Forty years ago, Mr. Herbert Spencer wrote a brochure entitled *Man versus the State* to prove that the complex system of modern civilization was detrimental to the development of the life of the individual, since it fettered a man's freedom and put his mind in chains. The same kind of antithesis holds good in the case of the Christian religion. The history of the church is the record of an age-long struggle between the Spirit of God and the ecclesiastical machine.

I.

In nearly every case where there has been a great movement of the Spirit in the past, a breach with the existing Church order has been found to be inevitable. Jesus Christ told His disciples quite definitely that it was impossible to pour the new wine of His teaching into the old bottles of Judaism, in spite of the fact that the religion of Israel from first to last had been one long *Preparatio Evangelica*. Martin Luther discovered, much to his sorrow and chagrin, that he could not infuse the principles of the Reformation into Roman Catholicism. John Wesley and George Whitefield learned by dire and painful

experience that it was impossible for them, much as they wished it, to sew the Evangelical Faith as a new patch on to the old garment of Anglicanism. The more they tried to do it, the worse the rent became. It is not too much to say that nearly every new force in the history of Christendom has been compelled, despite itself, to challenge the ecclesiastical machine, with the result that the machine has had to be broken or abandoned before the new movement could succeed.

Moreover, in recalling to memory the movements which have triumphed over the machine, we must not forget the others which proved too weak to resist its opposition. At times the machine has been like a huge Juggernaut which trampled ruthlessly down all efforts at reform. The face of Europe would have been very different to-day if the Huguenots had not been driven out of France and John Huss martyred in Bohemia. In almost every age the machine has claimed its victims, from Wycliffe and Galileo down to Robertson Smith.

II.

If the machinery has proved an obstacle to the work of the Spirit, what is to be our attitude to it to-day? Are we to follow Samuel Butler, who, in his *Erewhon*, regards Utopia as a world without machinery? Are we to emulate the policy of Gandhi in India—"a handloom in every cottage and no mills or factories"—and say, "a Bible in every home, but no ecclesiastical system"?

The most striking commentary on any such suggestion is to be found in the fact that whenever a great Movement of the Spirit has come and broken away from the old order, it has always found it necessary to create a new organization of its own. Experience has taught us—and here is the paradox of it—that some kind of machinery is essential to Christianity. Without organization the Christian Church would be a rope of sand. Fellowship is essential to the development of the Christian life. There is an element in the collective experience of the Church which cannot be attained by the individual experience in isolation. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." The Christian was never meant to be a kind of Robinson Crusoe living on his own desert island. The highest virtues and graces of the Christian character cannot be grown in solitude. Anchoritism has always proved a deadly failure, and Monasticism has invariably carried within itself the seeds of its own decay. Besides, the organized forces of evil can only be mastered by organizing the forces of righteousness. No man can exercise his fullest capacity for service except in co-operation with others. Two units always count for more than two when they are united in common work. "One man shall chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight"—that is the arithmetical progression of co-operative service.

Far from drawing the conclusion of Mr. H. G. Wells that "the Church is the disease of Christianity," we are bound to admit that it is essential, not merely to the *benesse*, but to the very *esse* of the Christian religion.

III.

Organization may, therefore, be either a blessing or a curse to the Christian Religion. It is a blessing in so far as it provides a medium through which the Spirit may work upon the world. It is a curse when it cramps the action of the Spirit and hinders its working. When organization becomes a mere machine then its effects are unspeakably disastrous. The fundamental error has always been in regarding the machine as an end in itself. From the beginning of the Church's history up till the present hour that has always been the prime heresy. The Church has always possessed far more men of the machine than men of the Spirit. Its ecclesiastics have invariably outnumbered its prophets.

Then again, the very complexity of the machinery is often fatal to the free play of the Spirit's activity. It seems almost to be an unwritten law of the spiritual realm that the simpler the organization, the more room there is for the Spirit's influence. Pentecost is the greatest event in the history of the Church, and yet Pentecost came while organization was in its most rudimentary form. When the machine has once been constructed, the temptation is to impose innumerable rules and regulations upon the work of the Spirit. We lay down our "chartered channels" and say that it is only through them that any fresh stream of the Spirit's power can come into our world. And God laughs at us in His heavens, and "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." The most serious objection to the Lambeth proposals for Reunion is that their effect would be to create a gigantic ecclesiastical machine which might easily prove the prison-house rather than the Temple of the Spirit.

There is one test and one test only of the validity of a Church, and it is this, "Is it a true organ of the Spirit?" Nothing else really matters. The value of a machine depends not upon the beauty of its contour or the intricacy of its works but upon its efficacy in fulfilling the purpose for which it was created. The New Testament does not leave us in any doubt as to the object of the existence of the Christian Church. It did not come into being merely as a new experiment in human brotherhood or as a school for the culture of the spiritual life—

"Machinery just meant

To give the soul its bent,

Try it and turn it out, sufficiently impressed."

Its real purpose is described in the phrase "the body of Christ." The body is the organ or instrument of the soul. It is through the faculties of the body that the soul finds means for self-expression. A man may be an artist and may have seen a wonderful vision in the moment of his illumination; but before he can transfer the vision he has seen to other minds he must make use of the organs of the body and paint the picture for other eyes to see. The Church exists to enable the living eternal Christ to reach the heart of humanity. Any part of it which does not fulfil this purpose is worthless machinery—an encumbrance rather than a help to the Christian Faith, and an insuperable drag on spiritual progress. What the Church needs most of all to-day is not to spend its strength in tinkering with the machine, but to spread its sails to catch the wind of the Spirit of God.

—Professor H. T. Andrews, D.D., in *The British Weekly*.

RELIGIOUS UNEMPLOYMENT

It is a matter of general observation that the Lord's work in most churches is done by comparatively few people—that is to say, the majority of church members belong to a great army of unemployed. We have said it before, perhaps, in different ways; but, to stir up the pure minds of our readers by way of remembrance, we say it again: that no industrial or commercial concern in the world could keep out of bankruptcy if so large a proportion of those who were supposed to be on the working staff were to spend their time in idleness, as the proportion of church members who do practically nothing in the work of the Lord. What is the remedy for this condition of things?

Certainly not the multiplication of organizations. It would profit nothing to set a lot of people turning wheels or operating machines that produce nothing; and a very large number of church organizations are very much like a toy called Bizzy-Andy, which we saw a little girl operating. Its only use was to keep two little hands busy putting marbles into the chute to keep the machine going. How shall professing Christians be provided with really useful employ-

ment, which will accomplish something for God and react upon their own spirits by giving to them a sense of the divine approval?

We know of only one way, and that is by letting the Spirit of God have right of way in the church life. When a church goes to prayer, and the Spirit of God comes upon the people, it is very wonderful to observe how rapidly people are developed; how unexpected abilities are discovered, and talents, that were hidden away in napkins, unearthed and invested. The Spirit of God is a vital power; and, when He possesses men and women, He will find His own way of expressing Himself. No idler can be happy. But when a church is set to work by the direct ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people, it will soon become a church that overflows with the joy of the Lord.

**THE WHOLE BIBLE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON COURSE.
LESSON XXIX. APRIL 20th, 1924.**

ACHAN AND AI—Joshua 7, 8.

We read of "the goodness and severity of God". This is a lesson of divine severity. It is a wholesome reminder of the fact that God is the Judge of all the earth, and the Ruler of the universe. We do well, of course, to remember that God is love; but love is not the only divine attribute. Here God appears as a Judge. The children of Abraham were not allowed an earlier possession of Canaan, because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full". Joshua's conduct, in this instance, can be justified only on the assumption of his being divinely and explicitly appointed to execute the judgment of God. A man who acts as executioner in giving effect to the capital sentence of the law is free from blood guiltiness. He is only the hand of the law executing a just sentence. Similarly, Joshua and his people must here be regarded as executing upon the wicked inhabitants of Ai sentence of the divine Judge. As for the sentence itself, we must let God be God, and believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

I. Here Then is a Lesson of Individual Responsibility for Collective Defeat.

The men of Ai were few; and those who reconnoitred the city reported that it might be easily taken, recommending only about two or three thousand men as necessary for the task. But with the loss of thirty-six, they fled before the men of Ai. The effect upon the morale of the people was alarming; and they feared it was the beginning of troubles. (1) In the face of defeat, it was well to enquire of the Lord, and, if we have any complaints to offer, to pour out our complaints before Him. (2) God knew, as He always knows, the cause of defeat, and told Joshua there was sin in the camp. (3) Thus the lesson is taught that no one liveth unto himself. The transgressor not only brings trouble to himself, but to every one related to him. (4) This principle has special application to the church. It is possible that one man's sin may bring defeat to the many.

II. It Teaches Collective Responsibility for the Punishment of the Individual.

(1) When the people were made aware that the disaster was due to the presence of sin, the obligation was put upon them to discover the sinner. To be indifferent to the matter would be to share the guilt of him who had wrought folly in Israel. Thus when the cause of Christ languishes, it becomes an obligation resting upon the whole church to discover the reason for defeat; and to be careless of such a matter involves participation in others' sin. (2) When the evil was discovered, the congregation was required to execute judgment upon the transgressor, and to put away the accursed thing from among them. If they had compromised; if they had insisted that Achan was a very agreeable gentleman, that the seriousness of his offence was exaggerated, Israel must have continued to flee before the face of her enemy. So now the Church of Christ cannot escape responsibility for permitting Professor Achan to continue his teaching, or any other sinner to conceal his wrong.

III. In the Confession of Achan, there is Revealed the Principle of Moral Declension, or of the Progress of Evil. (Vs. 21).

(1) Achan "saw". It was when the woman "saw" that it was pleasant to the eyes. The only way to avoid temptation is not to look upon it, to "turn away our eyes from beholding vanity". (2) That which he saw he coveted. There is a proverb to the effect that "what the eye does not see, the heart

does not crave". Through the lust of the eyes, the desires of the heart are inflamed. (3) That which he coveted, he took. The will is influenced by desire. We are all disposed to desire what we see, and to do according to our desires. (4) That which he had taken, he hid in his tent. Thus the wrong was concealed. And so are we all tempted to cover our sins, rather than confess them. (5) But the further principle is here taught that that which is hidden from others is open and naked to the eyes of the Lord.

IV. We have here also the Conditions of Collective Victory.

(1) It involves collective obedience. The people acted with unanimity in obeying the commandment of the Lord. (2) Notwithstanding the promise of victory, there was a use of legitimate means. We are admonished to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. (3) There was a full execution of the divine command. A partial obedience means disobedience. The principle involves an uncompromising attitude toward evil. (4) Joshua magnified the law of the Lord. Prosperity is promised to those who meditate in the law of the Lord day and night.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The April Open Meeting of the Women's Home Mission Board will be held in the Annette St. Baptist Church (corner of Annette St. and High Park Ave.) on Thursday, April 17th, from 10.15 a.m. to 3 p.m. Take Dundas car to High Park Ave., and walk south.

It is hoped that every church will send a large delegation, especially those in the West. Bring sandwiches, Annette ladies will serve hot tea and coffee. Specially urge your new Circle members and the uninterested in your church to attend. It will bring new life to your church.

Intercessoin hour at noon, led by Mrs. Richards, of Immanuel Church. Pray for the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

Young Women's Mission Circle. The regular meeting of the Young Women's Mission Circle will be held on Monday, April 14th, at 8 p.m. Mrs. Whitman, missionary to Africa, will speak.

Cottage Prayer Meetings. The next cottage prayer meetings will be held as follows: Wednesday evening, April 16th, at the home of Mr. S. C. Coates, 59 Wolverleigh Blvd.; and on Friday evening, April 18th, at the home of Mr. H. T. Ingall, 225 Wright Ave.

Last Sunday, the morning message of Rev. John McLaurin was richly blessed, and several young people volunteered for missionary service. In the evening their was a great congregation. Several responded to the invitation and came forward. Two were baptized (and eight the Sunday before which we did not report last week), and forty new members were received. Five hundred and eighteen remained to the Communion Service.

The Church Calendar

Sunday. For the week beginning April 13th, 1924.
 9.45—**Bible School**, including an Intercessory Class. W. J. Hutchinson, Supt.
 11.00—**Public Worship.** Pastor Wm. Fetler will preach.
 6.00—**Prayer Meeting** in Church Parlor.
 6.30—**Communion Service.**
 7.00—**Public Worship.** Pastor Wm. Fetler will preach.
 Baptism will be administered.
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday—8.00—Prayer Meeting.
Tuesday—8.45—Bible Lecture by the Pastor.
Wednesday—10 a.m.—Meeting for Prayer. 3.00—**Women's Gospel Service.** 7.15—**Junior Mid-week Service.**
Friday—7.00—Bible Institute Class for Ministerial Students. 8.00—9.00—**Class in Christian Doctrine.**
Saturday—3.30—4.30—Class in Christian Doctrine.
The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School.
 3.00. **Evangelistic Service, 7.00—McMaster Evangelistic Band.**
Monday—8.00—Young People's Meeting.
Friday—7.15—Junior Meeting—Mr. F. Turney and Mr. W. J. Hutchinson.
Wednesday—8.00—Prayer Meeting.