

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

CHURCH UNION.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 18th, 1925.  
(Stenographically reported).

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."—Ephesians 1: 22-23.



HERE is, perhaps, no question more vitally interesting religious circles to-day, particularly in this part of the world, than the question of Church Union. I always feel when I speak of it that I ought to qualify the term and say, "so-called" Church Union. Baptists, Anglicans, and others, view the discussion from the standpoint of spectators, because they are not a part of it; yet it is impossible that we should be indifferent toward a movement of such magnitude. We are bound to consider its reaction upon the life of other religious bodies.

Of one thing I am sure: we shall all agree that the church is a divine institution; like the family and the state, it is of divine origin. Our Lord Himself said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." He is Himself the Architect and Builder of that spiritual body described in the Word of God as "the church".

The term "church" is used in more than one sense in the New Testament. It refers, for instance, to the whole body of God's elect people. I use that term without any apology to those who do not like that word "elect", because it is not only in the Westminster Confession of Faith; it is in the Book, whether you like it or not. The church stands for the whole body of God's redeemed people, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." Now, so far as that church is concerned, happily, we have no need to discuss the question of union: that body has always been united. In the very nature of the case it must be so. Its life depends upon union, upon its union to the Head and therefore to each other. Certain members of it may be called Methodists; some others, Presbyterians; some, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Baptists, and what-not; but if they are really God's redeemed people, if they have really been made partakers of the grace of life, if they have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost—then they are one in Christ. There can be no separation there, either from the Head or from each other. That is a glorious union! "He gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

True believers wherever they are found, instinctively recognize the unity of the Spirit which belongs to the true people of God. We may meet people who

are strangers to us, they may be of a different religious name, and of a different race, and of a different color; but if they have seen the Lord Jesus, if the eyes of their hearts have been opened to behold His glory, and they are really His,—there is a fellow-feeling among all such wherever they are found.

The unity of the Spirit is very real. We find it in the assemblies of believers of all names again and again. I am afraid that some of us have been wedded to names: some of us, perhaps, are Presbyterians—if by conviction, I congratulate you; but if for the simple reason that your father was such, then I commiserate you. Some of you, perhaps, are Methodists; or others, Anglican; and some, perhaps, are Baptists simply because they were brought up in Baptist homes—that is a poor foundation for anyone's religious conviction. As I think you will understand before I conclude my address to-night, I am somewhat of a Baptist myself; and yet I frankly say that I have far more fellowship with some unbaptized believers than with some Baptists.

Take a man like Dr. Shailer Mathews, Dean in Theology of a so-called Baptist institution—denying the Lord who brought him, denying everything that is fundamental to the Christian faith. Shailer Mathews is a baptized infidel,—that is all! Harry Emerson Fosdick is another. The mere fact that they are called Baptists does not join them to me in any sense. I repudiate them; and I am bold to say I have no fellowship with them whatever. I am far happier with some unbaptized Presbyterians and Methodists who are genuine Christians than with some baptized pagans who call themselves Baptists. This ordinance which you have witnessed to-night has nothing to do with saving the soul. If baptism has any effect at all upon such modernists, it is to add to their condemnation, in that by their baptism they profess the truth which they themselves absolutely deny. The modernist Baptist is the most inconsistent mortal upon earth.

I have nothing to say that is particularly unpalatable to paedobaptists. I think we Baptists have our hands so full cleaning our own house that we cannot say very much to other people. I want this evening to call everybody back to the original pattern as found in the New Testament. There is something more important than these ecclesiastical names by which the people of God are so generally known. We need not concern ourselves about the union of the body of believers—the redeemed people of God—they are already one! No matter what their name may be; nor where they are found, if they are really saved through faith in Christ and have been brought into vital union with Him—that body of people are one the world around.

But the term "church" is used also to designate the local assembly of believers. In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read, "The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." The Lord had said He would build His church. He ascended into the glory and sent the Holy Spirit; and as the result of Peter's sermon at Pentecost three thousand people gladly received the Word and were baptized. They believed on the Lord; they received the Word, not reluctantly, but gladly; and they were baptized; "and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."—And then we read, "And the Lord added to the church"—that is, to the company of believers—"daily such as were being saved."

Now, it would help us to solve these problems about which we are so much concerned if we could understand what a church is. What was the New Testament church? I have no other authority than this Book. I am more concerned as to what it says than about the Westminster Confession of Faith, although that is an admirable instrument in many respects. But its value depends upon the measure of its accord with the Scripture; therefore we may as well go to the fountain head and learn what the Word of God says about the church.

What is it? A conglomeration of good, bad, and indifferent men; of all sorts and sizes of people of every imaginable opinion, who have come together as a religious group, and thereafter come to a place dedicated to the worship of God a couple of times a week—is that a church? Oh, no! A church—the New Testament church was made up of people for whom God Himself had done something,—the Lord, not the minister, not Peter, nor James, nor John—but into that company of believers the Lord Himself came; and He did something in the hearts and lives of men and women, and made them different by His grace. In other words, He regenerated them; He made them new creatures in Christ Jesus. "And the Lord added to the church." In other words, the teaching of the New Testament is perfectly explicit that membership in the church should be restricted to regenerated people—nobody else has any business

there. Therefore a church is a company of regenerated people who recognize Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

At your leisure study carefully the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will see that there is a creed there that is the base of everything, that is the foundation of the church-to-be. Just project yourself, if you can, into that historic situation, and what are the facts? A company of people—deluded, poor, ignorant, people, according to the general estimate—have been following a discredited Prophet, a Prophet concerning Whom many have said that He was nothing but an imposter, a deceiver of the people, a mover of sedition. And this Prophet has been repudiated by the religious world of that day; and they have invoked the arm of the state to terminate His testimony; they have brought Him to the cross, they have buried Him out of sight as a deluding and dangerous man—that is the general estimate of the Man called Jesus, that He was nothing but a man.

Now, upon what cardinal principle was the New Testament church founded? See what Peter says. He reminds them when the multitude come together, of the crucifixion of the Lord: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And this body of people are now united to give their testimony to the fact of His resurrection; and they argue that point. Had I time I should like to take you through that second chapter of Acts, and show you how irresistible their argument is; how Peter explicitly declares that all that is taking place is in fulfilment of all that was predicted: "This is that which was spoken." And he declares that the prophecy spoken by David could not possibly have referred to himself: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day"; that when David spoke these ancient prophecies he saw in prophetic vision the coming Messiah. And Peter said, "This Man Whom you crucified is none other than He Whom the Old Testament predicted should come; and He was raised from the dead, whereof we all are witnesses; and He is ascended into the heavens and has sent His Spirit." I have quoted it to you so often, and I expect to keep on quoting it to the end of my ministry,— "Therefore," says this great logician, this master-preacher, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." That is the cardinal principle.

"When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent—repent—change your minds toward Christ; give Him the supreme place; make Him your Saviour and Lord. That is what to do—Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. \* \* \* Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.'

Upon what was the church founded? Upon an acceptance of the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ: upon the efficacy of His blood, upon the fact of His resurrection, upon the assurance of His ascension and intercession, upon the fundamental fact that He has all authority in heaven and upon earth. That is what the church is founded upon!—not upon a statement a committee of the General Assembly may formulate; not upon what a committee of the Methodist Conference may say! And there was not one man, there was not one woman, who found a place in the fellowship of those early believers who had the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a doubt as to the essential Deity of Jesus Christ. If anybody doubts that, he has no place in a Christian church.

From this platform two or three years ago I gave a series of lectures in exposition of a series of tracts issued by the Department of Evangelism and Social Service of the Methodist Church, entitled "The Christian Hope." I said then what I now repeat, that in all the long history of the Christian church, I do not believe that any such infidel literature was ever issued in a Christian name as those tracts. The Methodist Church of Canada, by the fact that a fac-simile of the signature of the Secretary of that Department, Dr. T. Albert Moore, is stamped upon the front page, where it is said to be issued by authority of Conference in order to combat the growing belief in the doctrine of the personal return of the Lord, must be held responsible for those pamphlets.

There is not one solitary doctrine of the gospel of God's grace which those tracts do not blatantly deny. Ingersoll, or Voltaire, or Tom Paine, or any one of them, could not have surpassed the blatant infidelity of those tracts. They stand still as an official utterance of the Methodist Church! Thousands of Methodists, if they knew it, would repudiate them. I am not speaking of Methodists: I am speaking of official Methodism. But the writer of those tracts, or the body of people sanctioning them, would never have been given membership in the body of believers at Jerusalem, who bowed before Jesus Christ and crowned Him Lord of all.

A church is made up of regenerated persons. If you are going to have Church Union in any true sense—for what is true of the larger body will be true of the units, of the elements, of it—if you are ever to have any spiritual union, there must be a recognition of that principle. You can subscribe to creeds as much as you like; but if you have a company of people who are divided as to the authority of Jesus Christ, you cannot have union. That is cardinal,—a recognition of the Lordship of Christ!

In the late war there was long discussion about unity of command. We never accomplished anything until that was effected. And, strangely enough, that principle has sometimes been argued as a reason for this so-called Church Union. But that is not unity of command. The great problem when discussing that principle during the great war was, Who is to be generalissimo—Haig, Foch, who shall command? To whom is the supreme command of the Allied Armies to be given? And when at last it was effected, no one proposed that the soldiers should all wear the same uniform, or that they should all speak the same language: The French remained French; the Belgians remained Belgians; the British remained British; the Americans remained Americans; the Canadians, Canadians; and so on. The armies were not reorganized or renamed—but they recognized one authority. Who is to exercise supreme authority in the church of Christ? The Pope? Not for me! Who is it to be, the General Assembly, or the Governing Body of your United Church, or the Assembly of your continued Presbyterian Church? Who is to be in command? Here is the secret! He "gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." It is a spiritual unity we ought to seek, based upon a recognition of, and an obedience to, a spiritual Authority,—and that authority resides in Him Who is the Head of the church; and there is none other!

Another thing: The function of the church is distinctly and distinctively, spiritual. Go back to the New Testament record, and observe what the church did. What was it there for? "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved", or, as were being saved, as the Revised Version has it. The church was growing and multiplying, increasing the numbers of regenerated persons. And if you follow those early apostles in their ministry out into the world, you will find they did one thing—just one thing—only one thing. And the church still has the same business to-day! Here was a group of people who had seen the Lord. They said to Caiaphas, Annas, and all the kindred of the high priest, and to Pilot and Herod, and to the whole lot of them. "You are all wrong. He is not dead: He is alive; and we know it." And our business is to tell the world that Jesus lives,—that is the church's mission.

And when they began to encounter opposition, what did the enemy do? They were "grieved that—What?—that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." That is what they did. Read the whole New Testament and you will find that that body of believers that the Word of God calls the "church", lived for one thing only,—and that was to bear witness to the reality of Christ, and His saving and redemptive work. If the church would mind its own business and stick to that, it would thereby not only save the souls of men, but as a by-product it would revolutionize society.

Someone says, "Do you not believe in the Ontario Temperance Act?" Yes! I am glad we have the Ontario Temperance Act; I am glad it is written on the statute books in Queen's Park,—but I would rather have its principles written on human hearts. It is well to have it there: these things should be by-products of the religion of Jesus Christ. But it is not the programme of the church! The church's mission is regenerative and revolutionary, and not reformatory. We are not here to reform the world. A student told me that he had heard his professor talking about how much better the world was getting. There are many good things here, thanks to the mercy of God. Our evolutionary friends tell us we are getting better all the time, that we are being

evolved. "Well", I replied to my student friend, "if that be so, when I give thanks for my many mercies, I will thank the Lord that I did not arrive earlier." We have a long way to go before we are fit for the company of angels.

Oh, we are very clever; we are very clever! I was driving along a city street the other day and I saw a big black car go around the corner. At first I thought it was a hearse; but I afterward discovered that it was an armoured car. It stopped outside a bank door; and a man stepped out with a rifle; and held it with both hands. Then another man got out of the car and went to the bank and tapped on the window. Presently the door was opened and these men went in,—I suppose to take the money from that branch to the head office. And I said to myself, "That is wonderfully efficient; that is a magnificent car; and how splendidly everything is done." But I could not help adding, "But what a terrible commentary on our so-called civilization that it should be necessary!" We are getting better—but we are very far from "best". The great need of the world, my dear friends, is so to change the hearts of men that we shall not need those rifles, nor even the Ontario Temperance Act.

That, I say, is the church's mission, to witness to the great fact that Jesus Christ lives; and that He can make men and women over again. How I long to see that done in Toronto! I want you to use your imaginations: here is a considerable building; there is another a block up the street, Old St. Andrew's; Sherbourne St. Methodist, a block over here; a great church on Bloor Street—two or three of them; Metropolitan Methodist, Bond St. Congregational, New St. Andrew's, St. James Square, Cooke's Presbyterian—just sweep the whole city with your imagination and think of all these churches. And assuming they are all made up of people who have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus, suppose they were to go down to their work to-morrow morning—in every office, in every shop, in the schools, on the streets, everywhere—with one burning witness, saying, "God helping me, I shall tell as many people as I can possibly reach to-day, that Jesus Christ is able to save." Turn one or two hundred thousand flaming evangelists like that out into the city witnessing for God, and you will not need your armoured car. Half the policemen will have to resign, because they will be out of a job. And such a revival would sweep this city as the world has never seen!

If you take your little broom and try to sweep this world clean, you will find you will wear out a great many brooms. It is like trying to sweep back the tide. The very best we can do with our reforms is to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, and our best human efforts leave men "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness". I repeat: The function of the church is spiritual, and only spiritual; to be the channel of God's redeeming grace, the instruments of the ascended Lord to Whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, to effect the salvation of the souls of men.

How does that fit in with the programme of your Church Union? I don't think even an astronomer could measure the distance between the Church Union programme and that—it is millions of miles from it!

Again: The function of the church is never political—never! When Paul went to town, he did not first call upon the Governor. After a while, however, usually, the Governor came to see him—to put him in jail. Paul did not send in his card and say, "I have come". Oh, no! He went as a witness of the despised and rejected Saviour of men; and nearly always got into trouble for doing it. But now the church is to engage in politics! In the discussion at the Port Arthur General Assembly, one speaker said he would like to see the government of Canada that would dare to oppose the will of a united church. What right has any church to impose its will upon the government of all the people? And I say to you Baptists who used to stand for separation of church and state, for liberty of conscience, for freedom to worship God—the day is coming when your testimony will be needed in this respect again. Dr. Chown—I mention names because when I do not they say, "Why deal in generalities?" And when I mention names they say, "Why deal in personalities?" I cannot please them anyway, so I might as well shoot straight, and everyone will know what I am at. (Laughter)—Dr. Chown told the people of Canada that the United Church would promote "godly" legislation. I wonder what kind of legislation that is? "Godly legislation!" That is not the business of the church. After a while we shall have to ask permission of the United Church to live!

I have heard a great deal about economy. I am not speaking without thinking on this matter. I attended a meeting of the General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church nearly twenty years ago, and sat through the entire discussion on Church Union. And they all preached from one text, and that text was "economy". There was very little reference to the Word of God. If economy be the great desideratum, you can carry it further than the church. I have four walls to my home; and I have a furnace that heats my house. It does not heat any other. Why should not we all live together? That would be economy, would it not? But there are some advantages in having your own house. And there are some advantages in being permitted to worship God as your conscience may direct. Do you see? You know the argument, that it is unnecessary and wasteful to send half a dozen milk wagons and half a dozen bread wagons down a certain street, when one wagon could carry all the bread, and another all the milk that could be used on that street, and therefore let us form one great corporation. That will be economy. Did you ever get cheaper milk on that account? Do you not know—now mark this!—do you not know that while the foundation of every kind of combine is economy, the top stone is always monopoly? And the whole movement of Church Union has been measured in terms of the market-place! It does not belong to the atmosphere of this Book at all.

Now, my dear friends, I would like to pause to say this, That the conception of the church as being formed into one great organization under one human government is not Christian: it is anti-Christian. It has no warrant in the Word of God. It is not New Testament; it is Pagan; it is Roman! It is not founded in equity and justice. New Testament churches were independent bodies of independent believers brought together by a common interest in Christ, to worship God freely, recognizing only His authority. There were no bishops in the New Testament in the sense in which there are bishops to-day. I am a bishop; but they do not call me "your Lordship"! Every pastor is a bishop in the New Testament sense of the term. But the only other bishop mentioned in the New Testament is Jesus Christ, Who is called the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Pastors are not set over churches by Stationing Committees. Oh, no! They are the gifts of God to the church; and they come to their appointments by obedience to the Holy Spirit. Some of you know a little about Jarvis Street. If I had been placed over this church by a human committee I should have been unplaced long ago. A free pulpit in the so-called United Church will be unknown. But you remember how Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Believing that the Lord placed me in Jarvis St. much against my own will, I concluded that the only thing for me to do was to stay here until He removed me. And I am here still; and it seems likely I may stay a little while longer. If any of you do not like it, the doors are not locked.

The church, then, is a body of saved people; and a pastor is a saved man—or ought to be. He has no right to be there if he has not been appointed to his position by the Spirit of God, with the evidences of God's blessing sealing his ministry. But in these days of general apostasy—I am afraid I shall have to say—given an organization that can control the church and pulpit, what liberty will any preacher have, I should like to know! I feel rather strongly about this, because I believe that the need of the hour is prophets of the Lord. We have numbers of ministerial parrots!—yes, and ministerial gramophones! I have a book in my study. I gave it to one of the brethren, and said, "Read it, and tell me what you think of it." He read it, and brought it back; and said, "There is nothing new in it; it is just what others say in another way." I said, "I knew it. None of these modernists have anything new to say; they are only dressing up the Devil's lie in new suits of clothes."

And the Devil wants a great big organization over which there can be a central authority that will dominate the whole church. And in a very short time you will see who will be in authority over that body of people called the United Church. I believe the whole movement is part of the general apostasy. You Presbyterians fought for your liberty in olden times. Presbyterians used to believe something; and rather than surrender their faith in Christ, they died for it: they went to the stake. Some of the noblest witnesses for Christ the world has ever known have been Presbyterians. The West was terribly disturbed by the "One Big Union" movement as applied to industry; but it was not half as dangerous as the ecclesiastical O.B.U.

But what now? What now? I congratulate you Presbyterians on having to fight for your lives. It will do you good. I was thrilled when I read last night of six companies of Presbyterians meeting somewhere outside of their own churches. I said, "Praise the Lord! There are some people who have backbone yet." The handicap of the modern church, has been that it has had too easy a time. Preach the gospel in such a way that it will stir up the Devil, and it will do you good; for you will be subjected to all sorts of hardships, and privations, and persecutions, and to all sorts of slander,—but you will flourish the more. Jarvis Street Church is growing, not on our account, but through the blessing of the Lord. All over this Continent the churches that are really growing and touching men for God, are churches that are contending for the faith, almost without exception. God has given us in this place the largest membership of any Baptist church in Canada—although men tried to destroy it. It is nothing to our credit: the power of the Holy Spirit has brought it about. I say that for the comfort of you Presbyterians. I would a little rather see you Baptists (laughter); and when you build your new church, see that you put a baptistery in it. I hope you will do that, and stand squarely for the faith.

There are some papers in this city that will not help you. If you have blessing in your church, they will have no room to report it. But if you have any sort of difficulty, they can be depended upon to advertise it. If you have blessing you can depend upon their being silent. I can recommend most heartily to you the Toronto Star. I take it, and I read it. I think it is a most valuable paper. I think every person who has any religious interest ought to read the Toronto Star, in order to know what not to believe. But it is a most excellent paper, a splendid paper. It will tell you all about this mundane sphere; but whoever writes the editorials must be as blind as a bat spiritually, and can not know even the alphabet of the Christian religion. I know that is a daring thing for a preacher in Toronto to say about a daily paper; but they could not do me any more harm than they have already tried to do—so that I am indifferent. It is always a blessing to touch the bottom, because then you can't go any lower. I do not know that the Toronto Star will send me a free subscription for a year; but this word should add subscriptions to their list. But I do most heartily recommend the paper to you for the reason that the truth, in matters religious, almost invariably lies in the direction opposite to what the Toronto Star says!

You non-concurring Presbyterians are launched on a sea of glory; you have something to endure for the Lord's sake. But it will do you good: it will put iron into your blood; it will drive you back to the Book of the Lord and to the Lord of the Book; it will make the Lord Jesus Christ more precious. You will begin to find out that there is something better than bricks and mortar, namely, the Lord Jesus. You will understand how your forefathers found a little bit of heaven worshipping God in dens and caves, where they could exercise their freedom of conscience. And very especially, you Baptists—I have a special obligation to you—my appeal is to get away from all names. I am not disturbed by being called a Baptist. I do not agree with our Plymouth Brethren when they say we are gathered in some other name than Christ's. We are not. We are called Baptists because we baptize. We do not very much care what we are called; but I have come to the place where I care nothing for denominational labels, and I will not believe anything simply because Baptists say it is the correct thing to believe, or to do, or to teach.

What a glorious thing it would be if every man and woman here this evening who has named the name of Christ, were to say, "I have been thinking too much of these externals; and I will try to get back to personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and let Him direct me what to do. And I will try to be a real witness for Him. If that makes me a Presbyterian, I will be a Presbyterian; but if it makes me a Baptist—as it is likely to do—(Laughter), then I will be called a Baptist. But whatever it does, I will put Jesus Christ first; I will obey and magnify the Word of the Lord!" And you will find there will be a revival in your own heart; and it will spread wherever you go—in the office, in the shop, in the school, everywhere—a revival fire will blaze up, and blessing will come on the people of Toronto.

There are some of you here this evening who have said, "I am bewildered. I take up the Saturday evening paper, and look over the lists of church announcements; and I say, 'What ought I to believe?'" I will tell you Whom you

ought to believe: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Just believe on Him first. Begin! Never mind the church. Begin with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let Him speak to you, and tell you what a sinner you are; how He died for your sins according to the scriptures, and was buried, and rose again. Yield to Him; and let Him wash your sins away. And then say, "What next, Lord? I want to be a hundred per cent. for Thee. I want to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth". And the compensation that will come to us through fellowship with the Lord Jesus will more than make up for all the breaks in our human fellowships; for then we shall be one with Him.

I wish I could talk to you longer; but I have kept you too long now. I bring you, however, this simple message, that the unity of faith, the unity of the church of Christ, must be based upon a recognition and acceptance of the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ. And when any other takes His place, and another authority is substituted for His, as it is revealed in His Word, you will have disunion. That is what you are getting now.

Suppose some man were to come to this church and gradually introduce the doctrines of Unitarianism! And suppose he were to turn a majority of this church to accept his views; and then by a simple majority vote convert this church into a Unitarian church? A vote of the church is taken, and by a majority of four or five—perhaps more—out of the sixteen hundred members we have here, they carry the day; and the rest must either accept the new order or walk out on the street without house or home. The people who joined this church did so in good faith, thinking it was a Baptist church. They have lived for it; they have put their lives into it—but a majority of the membership votes them out of house and home! Or, suppose instead of that, the minister should say, "I believe in the United Church"; and suppose he could carry a majority of the people with him, and they were to say, "We will vote to apply for membership in the United Church"? And suppose they carried their point by a majority; the hundreds of others would have no option but to join the United Church, or have the church property taken away from them.

That is what is happening to-day to thousands of people. They believed that the Presbyterian Church stood for something; they joined it in good faith, believing the principles it professed; they put thousands of dollars into its institutions. But by a simple majority, they are voted out of their inheritance. I do not believe that any institution founded on such principles of injustice can receive the blessing of God. It is not founded in equity and justice at all. Those who suffer from it are to be congratulated; for there is a God in heaven; and He will look after you, and you will have blessing in the end. Blessed be His name! Jesus is coming again—notwithstanding the Methodist pamphlets: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." When that day comes it will be a blessed day for all the blood-washed throng. All nations, and people, and tongues, will be brought together—and we shall see Him as He is. The marriage of the Lamb will take place; and the members of His body will be found ready.

Oh, I wish everybody here this evening would subordinate all other considerations to the one desire, and say, "I want the bridal garments on; I want the best robe; I want the robe of His righteousness."

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

Will you come to Him to-night, you who are unconverted? And if any of you have been putting your own will, your own authority, or the authority of your church, before Christ, if you have been following afar off—let Him have first place this moment and henceforth. May He help us all to do so to-night. Will you who believe, who do now trust Christ, but have never confessed Him, come forward as we sing,

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

(Many came forward in response to the invitation).



## EDITORIAL

## "DEMAS HATH FORSAKEN ME".

The biographical touches in some of Paul's epistles are exceedingly instructive. They show that men of his day were subject to like passions with ourselves; and that human nature in that ancient time was just as changeable as it is to-day. In his epistle to Philemon, Paul names Demas as among his "fellowlabourers"; but writing to Timothy later he says, "Demas hath forsaken me".

Everyone who has had any extended experience in the Lord's work will have shared the Apostle's disappointment. How many there are who begin well but are soon hindered! Many a pastor on entering upon his work in a certain church has been welcomed in terms of glowing appreciation at a meeting presided over by Demas. For some time they have walked and talked together, and have shared each other's counsel; they have seemed to others almost like David and Jonathan. But by and by, Demas goes not with him to the work! It is important, therefore, that whoever would be a leader of the hosts of the Lord must learn how to do without Demas.

In time of war it must be very trying for those who are fighting to see their comrades falling out by the way: some from physical incapacity, some from sickness, some from wounds, and some taken from them by Death himself. But the soldier cannot take time to weep; he must not allow even his affections to overmaster him. He must make straight for his goal, even though he reach it alone. So in the Lord's work, whether it be in the pastorate, in the work of teaching the young, or in some other form of Christian service, we must not fail in our endeavours on account of Demas.

But how disposed most of us are to lean upon other people, and to condition our fulfilling of duty upon the co-operation of some Demas! And when he fails we are tempted to find in his defection, justification for slacking our own hand. This should never be. We must go on with our work.

It will help us, moreover, clearly to discern the reason for our being forsaken. Demas left Paul because he "loved this present world". Those who fall out of the ranks because of some flagrant wrong-doing are very few; but those who are allured by "this present world" are very many. And most of these disguise the reason for their conduct even to themselves. Demas may have persuaded himself that he had discovered certain incompatibilities in the great Apostle; he may have insisted that other solemn obligations required him to go to Thessalonica. It is almost certain that he would have been unwilling to admit that he was actuated in his course by a love for "this present world",—but that was the fact! And it is still the reason why many turn aside from their divinely-given task.

But what are the elements of this present evil world? There are some who forsake the church and the gospel for the merry-go-round of the world's pleasures; but these are usually as light of head as they are of heart. With many, the world's fascinations are cleverly disguised. We have known men to contend for the faith most valiantly when in the midst of an army of valiant men; but if such an one is a pastor, when he changes his place and finds that in his church there are certain very influential men who prefer that all contention should be avoided, the erstwhile soldier resigns his sword and persuades himself that the war is over; and that it is no longer necessary for him to fight. He would be startled if he could hear the Master say that it was because he loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Unwilling to incur the displeasure of men, or in any way to disagree with amiable gentlemen who may be so blind as not to know the issues of the war, they forsake the army; and write their history in a text of Scripture: "The children of Ephriam, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." But the reason for such desertion of the cause of truth is that they have "loved this present world".

We have known some ministers who have turned back in the day of battle because they were reluctant to break the fellowships of years. But if a careful analysis of the underlying motives were made, many an orthodox neutral, many an able-bodied soldier who has put himself on the retired list, would discover that it is all because he has "loved this present world".

It is encouraging to note that all those who have been chosen of God

for positions of leadership in times past, have had Paul's experience with Demas: Lot parted company with Abraham; even Aaron and Miriam were reluctant to go all the way with Moses; David knew what it was to be forsaken; and all the great prophets, at times, had to stand alone. But the outstanding Example of this principle, as of all others worthy of emulation, is that of our Lord Himself. Though all His disciples forsook Him and fled, He went straight forward to Calvary; and "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."

Whoever will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, will leave Demas behind him somewhere on the road!

### "GASHMU SAITH IT".

There is a very suggestive word in that treasury of practical wisdom, the book of Nehemiah, in the sixth chapter and the sixth verse. The enemies of the Jews sent a letter to Nehemiah "wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words."

God's builders must always expect that their motives will be impugned. Every man who has been used of God to build some part of the walls of Jerusalem has been charged with supreme egotism, with a desire to exalt himself and make himself king. He may have received the clearest commission from God to do the work in which he is engaged, and may be confirmed in his conviction of duty, as Nehemiah was, by "the hand of my God which was good upon me"; but all that will avail nothing to silence the criticism of Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian. God's builders have always to face the tongue of misrepresentation and slander. We have sometimes thought it is the Devil's device to occupy the people of God by tempting them to spend their time in refuting his slanders.

Nehemiah was informed that certain things were "reported" about him. Thus do the sharp tongues of the wicked endeavour to strike to the heart of God's faithful ones: "They say"; "everybody believes"; "it is the general opinion"; "it is reported"! In this way an atmosphere and attitude of opposition is created; and usually there is someone to stamp with his personal authority that which is "reported", and to accelerate the speed of the circulating rumours. "And Gashmu saith it"!

So far as we are able to determine, Gashmu served no useful purpose in the world except to credential the enemy's slanders. How truly modern is this line of ancient history, "Gashmu saith it"! Gashmu has wrecked many an individual church. Nothing is so dangerous to the welfare of any church as one or more unsanctified tongues. Trifles are magnified into important issues when some utterly trivial rumour is given the certification of Gashmu.

Happily the writer of this article is free from these perils at the moment; but in time past we have suffered much from the signature of Gashmu. We have seen people of no consequence, of no weight or influence in any circle where they are known, become important messengers of what "Gashmu saith"—"Of course, I do not know the facts of the case myself; I am not on the inside of matters; I am not taken into official counsel,—but when Mr. So-and-so says it, you may be sure there is something in the wind." Which, being interpreted, is to say, "It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it"!

We have observed the same principle in operation in inter-church or denominational affairs,—irresponsible rumor-carriers dignifying their silly talk by the solemn assertion that "Gashmu saith it".

Moreover, this very quotable gentleman is often invoked by the critics of the Word of God. We were once afraid of the sayings of the higher critics; but we discovered their hollowness, their unreliability, and, in many cases, their puerility; and we have observed that their chaff-like intellectualism could move no one, were they not able to say in support of their, "we may well suppose"; "it would appear"; "it is extremely probable"; "it may seriously be questioned"; "the assured result"—were not all these driven home with a "Gashmu saith it".

Since Gashmu has so long been vocal, it is perhaps vain even to hope that he will cease from his talking. But what shall we set over against this ever-

lasting irritant, that "Gashmu saith it"? The best of all answers is a "thus, saith the Lord". Let a man be commissioned by a word from heaven, and sustained and directed and inspired by a word from heaven, and he will by that same word become invincible. He will then be enabled to go on with his work until all the breaches in the walls are stopped, and the Holy City becomes again the city of the Great King. He will be able to do all this in spite of what "Gashmu saith"!

## The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXXI.

February 8th, 1925.

### CONSPIRACY OF HAMAN.—Esther, chapters 1-4.

The book of Esther is remarkable among the books of the Bible for the fact that in all its pages the name of God does not once appear; and yet a study of the story it contains is a striking illustration of the principle, that all things work together for good to them that love God. It is a record of the operations of God incognito. And many a redeemed life is like the Bible in this respect, that God appears on nearly all the pages of its history; but every life has its book of mystery, a period in parentheses, during which God works behind the scenes—but still works!

"Thrice blessed is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is on the field when He  
Is most invisible."

#### I. The Anticipations of Divine Providence.

The divine purpose wrought out in this book was known to the Lord from the beginning; and he must be very blind who does not see the hand of God at work. 1. It appears in the first place in Mordecai's bringing up of Esther who was first called Hadassah. The death of Esther's parents seemed to her a black day in her history, no doubt; when she was cast upon the care of her older cousin Mordecai. She may have felt very keenly her dependent position; so, on the other hand, Mordecai may have felt that it was no little burden to care for the child. Yet how wonderfully the whole story turns upon this simple line, Mordecai "brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter"! So, often, great issues hang upon simple events; and out of some act of duty rendered at a price of sacrifice, great and lasting good often issues in later years. 2. Esther being chosen as queen of the Persian court, from some points of view, had its disadvantages: from others' and the world's viewpoint, it would appear to have been a distinct honour. The Book shows it was divinely ordered as a link in the chain of the divine purpose later to be revealed. So, step by step, God orders the goings-out and the comings-in of His people, bringing His counsels of grace to pass. 3. Mordecai's opportunity to serve the king also seemed to come almost by chance. He overheard by some means the plots of the king's enemies: "The thing was known to Mordecai." And as a matter of simple duty, expecting no reward, Mordecai communicated to the king information of the conspiracy. So, if our ears and eyes are open, we may find multiplied opportunities of doing good, which, if they be faithfully improved, will redound to our profit in God's own time.

#### II. The Temporary Ascendency of Evil.

1. The first two verses of the third chapter tell a story which is repeated in every newspaper of the land. It is natural for Haman to get on, and to have his seat advanced "above all the princes that were with him". It is the mark of the wicked that he is not in trouble as other men are, that his eyes stand out with fatness, that he has more than heart could wish; and yet of him it is written, "The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming." 2. Haman was jealous of Mordecai's immunity to the lure of worldly ambition. He was not merely angry that Mordecai refused to do him honour; but envied, though perhaps unconsciously, the truer wisdom and the strength of character which held Haman's prosperity in contempt. It is not

position but character which divides men. The same spirit moved Haman which moved Cain in the beginning. Though he be poor and despised, the wise man and the strong man will always be envied, just because he is wise and strong. 3. This history is an illustration of the truth that jealousy is as cruel as the grave. Just as Pharaoh destroyed the male children of his day, and as Herod ordered the slaughter of the innocents in his determination to murder his Rival, so now Haman is willing to shed the blood of a nation, to rid himself of one man whose strength he instinctively felt challenged his supremacy. 4. Here, again, we have the principle of the vicariousness of suffering: for Mordecai's sake, all his people are condemned to death. 5. We have here, also, an illustration of the murderous jealousy of the enemy of souls against our Mordecai, and his furious rage against all His kindred.

### III. The Dark Hour—and the Dawn.

Mordecai's concern for his kindred in the opening verses of the fourth chapter reminds one of the opening verses of the tenth chapter of Romans. So, if we appreciate the machinations of the enemy, and perceive that he has brought us all into a position where we are condemned already, we should be concerned for the salvation of those who are under the curse. 2. Mordecai's only hope was in the palace where the fatal decree was issued; and there he dared to hope he had a friend at court. And as he came to the king's gate, so must we come for ourselves and others, saying,

"I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know,  
I must for ever die."

3. In Esther we find a doubtful intercessor, for she has no promise of the king that she may come to him at any time to prefer her requests. Indeed, she fears to enter the royal presence, lest the golden sceptre, the symbol of the king's pleasure, should be withheld from her. How blessed it is to know that when we come to the King's gate, we have within a Friend Whose petitions the King never denies, to Whom the golden sceptre of His favour is always extended; and by Whose intercession the curse must pass! 4. Doubtful as Esther was, the spirit of the Cross is in her resolution; and in the desperate attempt to save her people, she is herself willing, if need be, to perish. Our greater Intercessor, in order to provide for us an all-prevailing plea, did Himself lay down His life; and in the measure in which we share the spirit of the Cross, we shall also learn the power of the effectual, fervent, prayer of a righteous man.

### LAST SUNDAY IN JARVIS STREET AND MASSEY HALL.

We had anticipated great blessing for Sunday under the ministry of Paul Rader; but the services surpassed our most sanguine expectations. At 9.45 Mr. Rader taught Dr. Shields' class in the Bible School, when eight hundred and fifty were present; and when the doors were closed at ten o'clock for the teaching hour, multitudes of people were turned away. There were six hundred and fifty-nine in the remainder of the school—a total of fifteen hundred and nine. At eleven o'clock the auditorium was packed to its utmost capacity; and the Spirit of God brooded over the assembly.

In the evening Mr. Rader preached twice: in Massey Hall at 6.15, and in Jarvis Street Church at 8.00. At the Massey Hall service upward of three thousand heard the great preacher; while at Jarvis Street long before the hour of service, every available seat was taken, hundreds were standing, and many were turned away. Thirty-two responded to the invitation at both services; and altogether it was a great day!

### MONTHLY COMMUNION SERVICE.

Next Sunday evening, February 1st, will be largely given to the Communion Service. Following the three fellowship meetings of last week, it is expected this will be the largest Communion Service ever held in Jarvis Street. A large number of believers will be baptized, who, together with others who have joined the church during the month, will be given the hand of fellowship. Every member of the church is urged to be present at this service.