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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE"

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto.

"Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them, made shipwreck concerning the faith."—I Tim. 1: 19.

"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."—I Tim. 3: 9.

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PROPOSE to enquire what place the principles of the Christian religion should have in the development and direction of the intellectual life. Supposing a man to be a Christian, in his processes of thought, and his resultant intellectual conclusions, which, in their totality, constitute his mental attitude toward truth, truth apprehensible and infinite, how far, in these respects, is he to be influenced by that spiritual essentiality which constitutes him a Christian?

And involved in that question and its answer is the further consideration, How far do intellectual virility and inquisitiveness facilitate or frustrate Christian faith?

These enquiries force us to begin by asking, What constitutes a Christian? Does the pursuit or the possession of knowledge give the soul standing before God?

A Christian is not one who, by searching, has found out God, but one whom God has found out. Christian faith, in the very nature of things, rests, not upon human discovery, but upon divine revelation. A Christian is not so made by his own research, but by the divine self-disclosure in the Gospel of Christ.

But does that preclude the Christian's asking questions? Does revealed truth put a premium upon ignorance, and a ban upon enquiry? Let the history of the Christian Church, and of Christian learning answer. But perhaps the most effective answer of all will be found in an authentic example in an individual life of a thoroughly spiritualized intellectualism, and an intellectualized spirituality.

No student of Paul's writings will venture to question their author's profound intellectual capacity; and no one familiar with his history will doubt the wealth of his mental furnishing in those branches of learning concerned with discoverable truth. The breadth of his intellectual consciousness was quite commensurate with the best scholarship of the day; he was not secularly ignorant though spiritually endowed.

And yet no man could be more settled, and, indeed, established in his religious conviction than he. A man of doubtful mind does not speak like this, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema."

But is such settled and unwavering faith in the Christian revelation possible to-day? You may have heard of a certain bishop whose only criticism of a new hymn book was that there were in it no hymns specially selected for the use of theological students and professors; whereupon someone replied, that the theologians might be well served by using the hymns appointed "For Those at Sea." However that may be, it will be agreed that such a settled faith as Paul's would be of priceless value to its possessor if such religious establishment were now possible. It may be, and often is, a good thing to be "at sea," if we know where we are going, and are reasonably sure of getting there. Better the spirit of the strong-winged migrant, which hungers for the fruits of many climes, than the dull content of a domesticated duck whose explorations are confined to some muddy pool. But lacking the migrant's infallible instinct, can the soul which hungers for the truth be sure of its way? "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain." Is it implied, that for rational human creatures God has provided a written law? Is the pen of the inspired scribe God's substitute for instinct? And with the Word of inspiration before us, may we have stability without stagnation, progress in all knowledge with a corresponding deepening religious certitude? With wind and will for the upward climb, though the summit be wrapped in cloud, can we be sure of the path, and are there shoes to be had which will keep our feet from falling?

If you ask Paul how he learned to make the intellectual and the spiritual elements of life the servants and complements of each other, you will be likely to receive an answer in his charge to one who, like himself, was called to intellectual and spiritual leadership. And Paul tells Timothy, that religious certitude, and continuity of hope and purpose, and immunity from doctrinal aberrations, consist in "love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." And lest he miss the proper emphasis, he tells him he can war a good warfare only by "holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith." And yet again he admonishes him that the fitness of deacons for their office can be assured only by their "holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience."

Thus three times within the compass of three short chapters he links conscience with faith. He insists that "faith unfeigned" is inseparable from "love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience"; and that whoever thrusts from him a good conscience, inevitably "makes shipwreck concerning the faith"; and that the full Christian revelation, "the mystery of the faith," is not to be held by any peculiarity of intellectual aptitude, but "in a pure conscience."

In Paul's view, therefore, if the woof of a man's belief is intellectual, its

warp is moral. While religious belief is sometimes regarded as though it were a fabric woven in reason's loom of material called facts; the truth is, that it is not a mere manufacture at all, but a cultivated growth; which, while rising out of the surface soil of the intellectual, is yet rooted in the subsoil of conscience and the moral nature. And it is to prove to you that he only can think clearly who lives purely, I speak this evening.

I.

And to do this, I ask your consideration of, and consent to the proposition, that **THE INTELLECTUAL IS A SUBORDINATE ELEMENT IN CHRISTIAN FAITH.**

This will appear if you reflect that *the whole Christian revelation is a disclosure of moral truth.* The Bible, from beginning to end, assumes a great moral catastrophe involving the ruin of human nature. Like rescuers bringing light, and air, and food, from an upper world to entombed miners, the Bible unfolds a plan for the liberation of the soul from the spiritual darkness and death in which sin has involved the race. And, as such rescuers would be likely to do, when bent on saving life, the Bible keeps to its task. It does not teach science or philosophy directly; but it will never be found unscientific or contrary to sound reason. You will never learn astronomy, or geology, or biology, or any other branch of science from Genesis; but I venture to say you will never find any absolutely proven fact of science to contradict its pregnant speech. And so the Book throughout. Its function is to reveal a moral order, and the Person of the moral Ruler. It ultimately fulfils its function in its record of the divine Incarnation, adjusting the moral balance in the atonement by blood, and releasing for human salvation a regenerating moral Power through resurrection. And the record of the preparation for, and the consummation of that incomparable achievement will never be found to be untrue to fact,—to any fact of history, or of science, or of experience. Its consonance with truth, however, in all these aspects, essential as it is to any theory of divine inspiration, is yet subordinate to its main purpose, to make clear the relation of man to his Maker, and the divine plan and purpose of redemption.

This being so, the Christian revelation, as a written Book, and as a record of the Incarnate Word, and as a promise of a regenerating Spirit, and as a prediction of a Day of reckoning and judgment, *lays siege to our moral natures.* It never asks whether you have been to school, whether you know anything about the origin of species, or the measure of ethereal spaces; its first and last word to you is of sin and salvation. It speaks of origins. It assumes you don't know, and tells you; and its assumptions are as true as its assertions. It thunders at the castle gate demanding surrender to Deity—"In the beginning God!" The voices of Sinai and Calvary are the same, they declare the same truth, they proclaim the majesty of the divine law, the perfection of the moral order, and the glory of the divine Ruler; and while offering amnesty to the rebel, they summon you to an acceptance of the divine government. But nowhere is the King uncrowned. God is mighty in generation in Genesis, and mighty in regeneration in Jesus. The Word predicts the curse of thorns in Genesis, but wears the thorns in Jesus, albeit as a crown. And as He sovereignly lays down His life upon a cross, it is indelibly written above His head, "This is the King."

Thus the demand of the Christian religion is for submission to a moral government, operative in all the created order; though not mechanically or automatically operative, but transcendently resident in and directed by God Himself.

Hence *Christian belief is essentially a moral act.* It consists in assent to,

and reliance on, moral truth—moral truth incarnate in Christ. Unbelief, therefore, is not an intellectual disability, but the expression of a moral bias against God. And therefore is it written, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." The condemnation resting upon unbelief is not a divine judgment upon intellectual incapacity, but upon positive moral turpitude; by that I mean the "enmity against God" which inheres in "the carnal mind." Hence faith is not cardinal an intellectual act or attitude, but an act of the will. The purely intellectual faculties are exercised in the confirmation of the choice which a quickened conscience has perceived to be right, and a re-enfranchised will has made. But the act of believing, or trusting, in a word, Christian faith, consists essentially in the enthronement of Christ as the embodiment of all revealed truth; and whether by a little child or a man of mature and highly trained mind, the act is the same; it is the simple surrender of the will to God.

I have a letter from a gentleman in the West whom I have never seen. From his letter-head I observe he is a Master of Arts. He describes himself as "a seeker after truth." Among many other questions he asks, "Does repentance precede faith?" And that is a very important question. Can you tell me the mutual relation of repentance and faith? Can you resolve them each into its elements, and separate the moral from the intellectual? No man can repent without some appreciation of the moral quality of the act repented of; but such appreciation involves a combination of moral and intellectual perception. So, too, of faith in relation to repentance. Faith involves an appreciation of the moral worthiness of its object. Thus you see that the intellectual in both faith and repentance is a subordinate element.

It may perhaps simplify the matter to the minds of some, if I try to show you that *there is a sense in which repentance must precede faith*. I find a striking illustration of this principle in an Old Testament incident. Bible students will readily recall the general outline of the life of Israel's notorious king, Ahab. And you will remember that throughout his career he maintained a steadfast opposition to the word of God as spoken by His prophets. The word of God was an expression of the will of God, and Ahab's opposition to the divine word was manifestly rebellion against the divine will. He could not believe because he would not obey. His general attitude throughout his life is fairly shown in his typical exclamation on meeting Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" But the life-long conflict of principle which characterized him appears in his life's great crisis,—such a crisis as we all must reach. It came to Ahab when he set his heart on Ramoth in Gilead. At the request of his confederate Jehoshaphat, he "enquired of the Lord" whether he should go up against Ramoth to battle. But such enquiry, to him, meant asking the four hundred prophets who were careful never to cross the desires of the king. Of course they prophesied as they knew the king desired them to do, and promised him success in the venture. But when Jehoshaphat insisted that further counsel be sought, Ahab said there was yet another prophet, Micalah, the son of Imlah. "But," said the king, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Micaiah, however, was sent for; and when he came prophesied the opposite of the four hundred. Ahab was thus shut up to a choice between the word of the four hundred on the one hand, and the word of Micaiah on the other.

It would not be difficult, judged by all ordinary standards of life, to understand Ahab, had he complained that he had some difficulty in believing the word of Micaiah, as against the word of the four hundred. But if you look

carefully into Ahab's problem, you will readily see that it was not an intellectual difficulty at all. Belief of the word of the four hundred prophets required no change of life in general, and no change of desire or purpose with respect to Ramoth-Gilead. To believe the word of Micaiah, on the other hand, necessitated a moral revolution. It meant the erection of new standards of life and conduct. It involved surrender to the divine. Which, being interpreted, means, that Ahab could not believe the word of God by Micaiah without repenting; that belief of God's word always involves obedience to it, and hence moral qualities must be predicated of belief and unbelief.

Perhaps I ought here to explain what I mean by the word "moral." When I say that unbelief is to be accounted for on moral grounds, it is not implied that it has its root in any kind of immorality. In extreme cases that may be true. I use the term "moral" in contra-distinction to that which is non-moral: the Christian revelation being an unfolding of truth concerning the laws of the moral realm, having to do with principles governing the oughtness of things, or of right conduct, our attitude toward that revelation is an indication of our attitude toward the moral principles revealed, and therefore is chiefly determined by purely moral considerations.

This understood, we may enquire what is comprehended in "the mystery of the faith"; and how that faith may be held without shipwreck.

II.

WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH WHICH WE ARE TO HOLD?

The word "faith" has not always the same significance in Scripture. Sometimes it means the act of believing and the attitude of soul expressed in belief, as in such passages as these, "O woman, great is thy faith," and, "Lord, increase our faith." But "faith" is sometimes used to denote the thing believed, as when it is said the churches were "established in the faith;" and Paul is reported as "preaching the faith which once he destroyed;" and Jude exhorts to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints."

In our second text, "faith" is used in the subjective sense. "Holding faith and a good conscience," means to maintain an attitude of faith, steadfastly to believe, and so to obey the truth believed as to have a conscience void of offence. "Which some having thrust from them, made shipwreck concerning faith;" means that some have done violence to conscience, they have treated conscience as Ahab treated Micaiah when he put him in prison in order that he might be untroubled by the prophet's admonitions while pursuing his chosen course; and having "thrust from them," a faithful, admonishing conscience, they have forthwith accommodated their belief to their conduct instead of moulding their conduct by their moral belief, and thus have "made shipwreck concerning faith" (not of the truth revealed, that cannot be shipwrecked), but of their own hold upon the truth.

In the third text "faith" is objective; it stands for that which is revealed. Our question therefore is, What must we believe? What is the substance of that faith which can be held only "in a pure conscience"?

It will, perhaps, help us to an understanding if we first of all try to clear away some possible misconceptions. I remind you, therefore, that "*the mystery of the faith,*" is quite independent of all human interpretations of it. It is, in fact, of the very essence of faith as an act, that it is independent of every thing save its divine Object; and it logically follows that the Substance of the faith objectively considered, like the sun shining in his strength, is unchanged by

the clouds which would obscure his light. Knowledge of the truth brings liberty. But to be shut up to the acceptance of any human interpretation of what God is, what He has done, and what He has said, would involve the forfeiture of our moral and intellectual freedom. It is not possible for any man to express in words all that he believes of God. To the spiritually enlightened soul "the mystery of the faith" is bound to be something more than any verbal expression of it. To any of you who are only nominal Christians, it will seem that I speak vaguely, but those who are "partakers of the divine nature" will understand. Once at the close of a prayer-meeting, where many had related joyous experiences of the heavenly places, one brother remarked to me privately, "But some experiences are too sacred to talk about." And the soul who really knows "the mystery of the faith" and keeps company with Christ in "the secret place of the most High" will understand that there is a sense in which Paul's experience when "he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not possible for a man to utter," is shared by every true child of faith. "The mystery of the faith" is ever a mystery which defies exact or formal expression.

It may also be said that "the mystery of the faith" is *not identical with an intellectual theory of the Bible*. For myself I rejoice that I am able without any mental reservation, and with "a pure conscience" to take very strong ground in this matter. To me, the Bible is the unadulterated word of God. I have not the shadow of a doubt that it is so. To me, Genesis in its entirety, is as truly inbreathed by the Spirit of God as the Gospels. In a book written for all ages by the Spirit of God, I should expect to find nothing untrue to fact, but I should also expect to find truth manifold and deeply involved. And I am led therefore only worshipfully to wonder at its pregnant speech, from which the truth, new-born, speaks to every succeeding age. And from reading books about the Bible, even the best of them, when I turn to the Bible itself, I feel myself to be like a man coming out of some damp and dimly lighted cellar, into a beautiful and fragrant garden, lighted from heaven, and aired by a breeze from the infinite sea. And so long as I am permitted to enjoy the flowers and fruits of the King's Garden, and to study the design and purpose of its planting with the royal Gardener Himself, I am not in the least disturbed by "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so-called."

If faith were wholly an intellectual matter of interpretation differences would spell confusion; but we have learned that "the unity of the Spirit" is something which we are to "keep" "till we all come into the unity of the faith." The heart of this "mystery," the communicable light, and life, and energy of it, refuses to be confined to intellectual processes or verbal forms of expression, even as electricity cannot be confined to the carbon filament of an incandescent light. Credal statements or verbal expressions of belief give, so to speak, partial mental visibility to that which "passeth knowledge." But "the mystery" must remain an inexpressible mystery, an "unspeakable gift," so long as we know only in part and prophesy in part.

And when this is said, one may venture to stretch a verbal wire for the light to travel by, though the subtle energy of "the mystery" be so much more than the wire. And *this "mystery of the faith" I apprehend to be, the central truth of the Gospel, that there is a Saviour Whom men may believe:* "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The knowledge of that mystery in all

its fulness and glory is dependent upon Holy Scripture. But as a man is saved by hearing and believing the voice of God as it speaks to him in even one verse of Scripture, and irrespective of his knowledge of other parts of Scripture; so I conceive that such Scripture as we are enabled by the Spirit to believe and rest upon, may be sufficient to initiate the soul into this mystery. "The scripture of truth" is the medium of our spiritual knowledge, and our knowledge therefore, is proportioned to our acceptance of the Scripture. So Paul teaches in his benedictory conclusion to the epistle to the Romans: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." In the epistle to the Colossians he is still more explicit when he speaks of "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The centre and soul of "the mystery of the faith" is Christ; and "the riches of the glory of this mystery" * * * Christ in you, the hope of glory." The truth and promise of that is the sum of all divine revelation.

III.

We have now to enquire, HOW THIS MYSTERY IS TO BE RECEIVED AND HELD.

It is a matter of experience with every true Christian, that *the reception of the Gospel, which involved belief in Jesus Christ as God, the Son, the Saviour of sinners, synchronized with a moral awakening.* We are no more to be credited with making the light to shine, than we are responsible for the break of day. Christ dawned upon us: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And with the morning conscience awakened, there dawned upon us a new consciousness of moral evil about us and within us. The Bible calls that experience conviction of sin. And that conviction was born of a knowledge of our relation to Christ: "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." He was "the mystery of the faith" unveiled, "God manifest in the flesh."

And when we trusted Christ as our Saviour, it was not the reason, primarily, which found rest. There was still much of mystery remaining. But there stole into our hearts a moral satisfaction which we called peace. Conscience no longer troubled us on account of our past. We could not understand how the thunders of Sinai suddenly ceased, nor how the calm and songful beauty of a summer morning succeeded the black night of angry storm; we only knew, or rather felt, that the blood of Christ "purged our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Satisfied as to the past, conscience now became the monitor of the Spirit, approving or reproving as we obeyed or disobeyed the will of God made known to us by the voice of the Word and the impulse of the Spirit.

And now I ask you who are believers, *If your faith in Christ has not ever been in exact proportion to your obedience of Him?* Have you not always found in relation to His precepts that "wisdom is justified of her children"? Have you not found every formula of His justified when experimentally compounded? Have you ever had reason to regret obedience to His prescriptions?

There may have been not a little intellectual uncertainty as to the wisdom of a certain course; but when you have done that which you were sure was morally right, has not reason eventually approved the wisdom of following a good conscience? Where "a pure conscience" leads the way, does not an enlightened understanding approvingly follow?

And is it not thus that "the mystery of the faith" is to be held? It is surely significant that this word was spoken of deacons, for a deacon is not merely a counsellor, but a ministrant, one who serves. And only as we live Christ's life of service can we fully enjoy His salvation; and only as we believe can we have strength to obey. The mystery "kept secret since the world began, now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

But now for a few moments let us turn to *the other side of the question*. Some are here described as thrusting from them a good conscience. That must mean that their conduct is such that conscience no longer keeps them company as an approving friend. And that does not necessarily imply that a man has turned aside to some flagrant sin. It may mean, in the beginning at least, only that he gave more time to the newspaper than to the Bible; or that he substituted the reading of books about the Bible, for the reading of the Bible itself. Or it may have begun in quite another way. Some plain precept of Christ has been considered, but obedience has been delayed. It may have related to what seemed quite an unimportant matter. Indeed I have known the principle to contribute to "the iniquity of our holy things," when, in my own experience, the study of the Bible itself was substituted for obedience to its teaching.

I remember one occasion in my early ministry when I was enjoying the luxury of a full day in my study. And what greater delight can a preacher know, than to be shut up with his books, with opportunity to revel in all high and holy thoughts? And especially when such study is to be turned to the profit of other hungry souls! If ever a man may depend upon divine illumination and inspiration it is surely when so employed. And so I found it on that memorable day. Every common bush was ablaze, and even in desert places I heard the Voice.

I was living then where letters were to be had only by going to the post office for them. Early in the afternoon, with no little reluctance, I left my study long enough to go for my letters, impatient to be back at my desk again. Returning from the office I crossed the end of a street on which a man lived who was very sick. He was a professed Christian, but he was not at all a lovable character. I had visited him several times, and was by no means sure that I had been able to help him, or that he appreciated my attempt. But as I came to the end of his street I felt that I ought to go and call on him. But the fact was, I was rather unwilling to go to see him at any time, and to-day, I reasoned with myself that it was not likely he would care to see me, and that I could not afford the time. I must get back to my study and to the burning bush, and get on with my sermon. I persuaded myself that it was far more important that I should prepare to speak to a considerable congregation than that I should turn aside to visit an unresponsive and unappreciative invalid. So I returned to my study.

But I soon found that all was changed. The fire in the bush had gone out. The solitary places were no longer glad for me. My Horeb was without angel visitor, or still small voice. All the flowers in my paradise had closed their blossoms as when the sun goes down. And no birds were singing anywhere.

My heart still tried to indite a good matter, and to speak of the things which I had made touching the King. (But my tongue refused to be as the pen of a ready writer.

I laboured all through the afternoon and evening to rekindle the lamp, and to reawaken the voices that had sung to me in the morning, but all in vain. The next day I returned to my task, but though it was morning without, my study had not light enough to read the Book by. And it never occurred to me during these hours to associate faith, the faculty of spiritual discernment and penetration, with a good conscience. I had yet to learn that a good conscience is as oil to the lamp of faith.

But at length it flashed upon me as a revelation, that the fruitlessness of my labour was due, not to sudden intellectual disability, but to moral delinquency: I had refused to do what I knew I ought to do. Then I ran away and made that call! When I came back I found, as Ezekiel found in his temple vision, "the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east,"—through the door through which it had departed!

I wish I could say that the lesson learned that day had never been forgotten. But who of us has not received an order from the Master, and instead of running swiftly to obey, we have presumed to stop to talk with Him, only to find that He would not talk with us! When a good conscience is thrust away, and conscience speaks only as an accuser, have you not observed how all the mental faculties with one accord begin to make excuse? How easy it then becomes for a man to persuade himself that his course is justified although it is contrary to the rule of the mystery of the faith. I affirm that it is all but axiomatic that "the mystery of the faith" is approved by our reason just to the extent to which it is obeyed. Christ is infallible only to those who do His will.

God's only controversy with the soul concerns our attitude toward the divine Incarnation and Exemplification of the moral law, Jesus Himself. So also CHRIST'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE SOUL IS ALWAYS ON MORAL GROUNDS. God will forgive you everything if you will agree with Him in your attitude toward Christ. But can a man disagree with God on anything without being morally culpable? I believe every disagreement with Christ, who is "God manifest in the flesh," can be shown to have a moral foundation. Let me take a typical instance, Christ's testimony to the historicity of the Deluge. Even if it were only a matter of historical criticism, or alleged scientific fact, I know whose side I would choose to be on. For myself I will take Christ's unsupported word upon any subject against the so-called scholarship of the world, and glory in being called a fool for His sake.

But what is your objection to the story of the Deluge? Scientific? On that score unbelief may encounter difficulties quite as great as faith's. But for argument's sake, let us admit the difficulty. You deny the divine interference with the regular course of nature, and with that, the principle of miracle, of which the resurrection is the supreme example. Or you challenge the justice of such a judgment. But when you do you impugn the moral government, and the Governor of the universe. For men suffer just as much now as then. There was no horror of the flood which has not had a thousand repetitions in human history on a smaller scale. Your whole objection to the record which Christ stamped with His own approval is a moral objection. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

To dethrone Absolute Justice, to refuse to believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is on the throne, and can do no wrong; to do violence

to His witness in our hearts, and set up our depraved and puny judgment against His, is to drag anchor, and, driven about by every wind of doctrine, to make utter shipwreck of faith.

Our only safety is to put Christ upon the bridge of our soul-ship in full command. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." With Him as our Captain, with "a pure conscience" for our compass, keeping its needle true to the directions of this chart of Inspiration,—a chart prepared and authorized by the only One Who did ever cross to the other world and return to be a Pilot to others, with all flags flying, and the shout of "All's well" we shall sail into the desired haven at last.

EDITORIAL

"A FIRE OUT FROM BEFORE THE LORD."

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him: and He will show them His covenant." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

"The secret of the Lord" is not the evolution of an idea: it cannot be "found out," but remains a secret until God puts it among "the things which are revealed." An abiding recognition of this truth would save us from much confusion and alarm; it would lead us to fear the scarcely-adamantine "results" of an assumedly infallible "scholarship" as little as we now fear the maledictions of a supposedly infallible Pope. There is a modern academic superstition of fancied, professional, religious, infallibility which is as foreign to the truly scientific spirit, as ecclesiastical indulgences or witches' incantations. And the true child of faith in whom is "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ," who "knows whom he has believed," and with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness, looks upon that religious empiricism, so often incorrectly labelled "scholarship," which denies him half his Bible, much as a thoroughly trained physician looks upon an Indian "medicine man." If the stone which was designed to be "the head of the corner" was "rejected" by unenlightened "builders," what wonder if lesser stones are regarded, by builders having no more spiritual light, as having no integrant part in the temple of Truth!

"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and could not have been ignorant of their religion. But when he demanded of Pharaoh that the people be allowed to go to serve the Lord, he intended no imitation of any form of worship known to him; for he said to the King, "We know not with what we must serve the Lord, until all come thither." The New Testament tells us that Moses did not make the tabernacle after Egyptian or any earthly patterns. The "source" of his plans is plainly indicated: "Who (the priests) serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

And by the tabernacle "which was a figure for the time then present," we are told "The Holy Ghost this signified, That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." The New Testament agrees with the Old in this, that every item of the Mosaic ritual found its place "as the Lord commanded Moses." Read the concluding chapters of Exodus, and the first nine chapters of Leviticus, and learn what "the Holy Ghost signifieth" in what "the Lord commanded Moses."

When Moses had consecrated Aaron and his sons according to divine direction, by the offering of sin-offering, and burnt-offering, and the ram of consecration, Aaron began his ministry as high priest. And when he had prepared the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings, and Moses and Aaron came out and blessed the people, "The glory of the Lord appeared unto the people, and there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." This was the fire which henceforth was ever to be burning upon the altar, and never go out.

The Mosaic ritual, therefore, was differentiated from all other forms of religious worship by its perpetual, SUPERNATURAL altar-fire. Others might copy the tabernacle and its furniture, its sacrifices, and its priesthood; but the fire kindled from heaven defied imitation. It was the sign and seal of a supernatural religion, a religion based upon a supernatural revelation of God, which promised and exemplified the exercise of supernatural, of miraculous power in the lives of the people. And that distinguishing, supernatural element was ever to abide: "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out."

When God made a covenant with Abram, "And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness," and he enquired of the Lord whereby he should know the certainty of the promise, God told him to prepare a sacrifice: "And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a lamp of fire that passed between those pieces." When Moses was called to be the liberator of a nation, God spoke to him out of the bush that burned with fire, and was not consumed. When Israel journeyed forth from Egypt, "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." When Gideon asked the angel for "a sign" of his divine appointment to be Israel's deliverer, "The angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock; and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. And the angel departed out of his sight." And by that supernatural fire, "Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord." When the angel appeared to Manoah, and to his wife the second time, promising the birth of Samson, "Manoah took a kid with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on, for it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord." At the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings, and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering." When the temple in Jerusalem replaced the tabernacle, at its dedication, "When Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering, and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house."

The supernatural altar-fires of the Old Testament dispensation were signs of the Divine presence, symbols of greater glory, fiery "shadows," thrown by the true Light of better things to come.

Again, a sign is needed. Men say the grave of the Crucified is empty, that He is risen and returned to glory. They say that He was more than man, that He was God manifest in the flesh: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

That is the significance of the supernatural altar-fire. It lights up the whole Bible with a light that is brighter than seven suns, a light which no human taper kindled—it shines from that city wherein is no temple: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

But what lesson has this supernatural fire for to-day? Is the Christian religion still on trial? Have two thousand years not sufficed for the last word to be spoken? Does anyone, at this late day, presume to compare Christianity with other religions? The Bible with other books? Christ with other teachers, with other prophets, with other "scholars," with other men? Yes! The last human answer has not yet been given to the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

But there is an answer. Let the prophets of Baal with all the religions they represent, again assemble. With a trumpet tone of certain triumph, a supernatural Christianity still rings Elijah's ancient challenge around the world, "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God!"

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR "EN ROUTE".

Between Medicine Hat and Calgary, Alta., Feb. 12th.

Nearly seventy hours on a train is equal to a month's vacation; not, of course, in physical comfort, in that respect it is rather wearying, but to be cut off from telephones and tellyfolks is like putting one's mind to bed. But when the Editor travels abroad it seems as though Jarvis Street and *The Gospel Witness* were known everywhere. Leaving Toronto, we had a Jarvis Street member for conductor. Conductor Coates is the embodiment of courtesy, a Christian gentleman who is a true servant of the people. Arriving at Winnipeg we heard the station policeman call our name. It was a telegram from Edmonton beginning, "We have learned from *The Witness*," etc. It was an urgent request to include Edmonton in our itinerary. A few steps further and we met Mr. and Mrs. P. J. Smith and Mr. Claydon—more *Witness* readers, and warm friends notwithstanding! Our genial travelling companion, Brother George Long, made friends everywhere. A happy man makes other people happy; hallelujahs inspire hallelujahs; and Brother Long's habit of taking the goodness of God for granted induces in others a habit of praise.

We found quarters in what Winnipeggers call "The Royal Alex", the palatial hotel of *The Canadian Pacific Railway*. It is like everything else that Company controls, and manifestly exists for public comfort. And by the way, as one who travels a good deal, we are constrained to say that Canadians have reason to be proud of this great Corporation. It is a paying concern; but it makes its money by service, and deserves its great prosperity. We sometimes wish we could show some of our American and English friends how things are done in

Canada. When we take our trip around the world we have about decided to make it C.P.R.

All that is by the way. We did not intend to write a word of it; but feeling particularly comfortable at the desk at which we write in a C.P.R. observation car, we could not help it. We shall have to tip the porter just the same!

In Winnipeg Rev. P. Cundy called to see us at the hotel. He is a true man of God who is doing a splendid work. He and his church, Emmanuel Baptist, are giving a real testimony for God.

At three o'clock we spoke in Elim Chapel. There was a very large gathering for an afternoon meeting. Mr. Sydney Smith, who, with the saints of Elim, stands uncompromisingly for the faith once delivered, presided. There was a fine atmosphere. Our readers will forgive us for saying it was just like Jarvis Street. There was unmistakable evidence that many had been praying for the service. It was a gracious hour wherein God drew near.

We had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Smith in their beautiful home in Fort Rouge. What an inspiration to meet a man of large interest and influence who puts Christ first, whose only hobby is to glorify God! We have met many men of some such capacity; but how few escape the lure of the world and are out and out for Christ!

At the evening service Elim Chapel was crowded with a congregation in which nearly all the churches in the city were represented. We confess we enjoyed the service and the people seemed to enjoy it also.

Here again we felt the larger ministry of Jarvis Street. The Pastor is always reluctant to leave his own pulpit for he knows no other church like Jarvis Street. But it is due to the Jarvis Street saints whose generosity makes the publication of *The Gospel Witness* possible, that they should know the wide ministry it is exercising. What a crowd of *Witness* readers were in Elim Chapel! We were delighted to meet one lady and her two daughters (one of the daughters is a medical doctor), all of them *Witness* readers.

And here we pause to tell a tale. A year and a half ago or more this lady was returning from Europe with her husband. He is a sturdy Scotsman—the sort of man whose quality of mind confers distinction on any journal he elects to read regularly. He called with his wife to see Jarvis Street Church, and was given a copy of *The Gospel Witness*. He became a subscriber, and has been a staunch friend ever since. One day he sent \$60.00 to the office, \$25.00 each for himself and his wife for a thankoffering for blessing received through its pages, and \$10.00 thankoffering for his daughter, and several new subscriptions beside. And they have been sending in new subscriptions ever since. If *The Witness* had two or three hundred friends like this Manitoba family, it would soon have the largest circulation of any religious paper on the Continent.

But there were many other *Witness* readers in Elim; and one brother knew nothing of *The Witness* but had read much *Witness* material in other papers. We venture to pass on to other editors this suggestion: they are welcome to print anything they like from *The Witness*, but we should be obliged if they would mention *The Witness*, as well as the Editor's name. Our happy experience at Elim made us feel afresh the importance of *The Gospel Witness*. It would have but little value were there not a vital church behind it in which the principles of its teaching are being put to the proof; but it touches more people every week than could be crowded in our great auditorium in all services in a month.

At the close of the Elim service a good sized crowd of Baptist laymen representing several, if not all, the Baptist churches of Winnipeg, gathered around;

and urgently requested, almost insisted, that we give Winnipeg a Sunday for large theatre services. They were so hearty, and urged the need of such services so earnestly, that we consented to wire to Toronto to have arrangements made if possible to supply the pulpit for March 1st. This we did, but at this writing do not know with what success the attempt to secure supply has met.

It was almost pathetic to observe the hunger of these strong men for the Word of the Lord. Why, oh, why, will so many ministers deal in chaff instead of wheat? Everywhere people are crying for bread, and there is a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. Why will not preachers learn that in the end they forfeit the respect of the very people they think to please by their smooth prophecies? But wherever one goes nowadays there seems to be on the part of the pulpit an excessive caution which engenders in some a deepening religious indifference; and in those who believe and love the gospel, a holy contempt for a time-serving ministry.

Leaving Winnipeg February 11th at 10.45 p.m., we are now well beyond twenty-four hours on our way to Vancouver. This will be mailed in Calgary in the hope that it will reach Toronto in time for next week's *Witness*.

Arriving at Medicine Hat at 9.30 to-night, we stepped out to get an airing for the twenty-five minute stop; and were delighted to be met by Rev. W. L. McKay and his wife and three of his new parishioners. We said, "How did you know we were on this train?" He answered, "We figured it out from *The Witness*." And so we were met by *The Witness* again. We believe we shall meet many in Heaven some day who will tell us they learned the way thither through *The Gospel Witness*. God grant there may be thousands!

Mr. McKay is full of hope for Medicine Hat church. He has been well received, and there seems to be great enthusiasm for the new Pastor. We had time to go over the church which is near the station, and found it a good workshop. We are sure Mr. McKay's fine record in Parliament Street will be repeated in Medicine Hat.

We hope to send our readers an additional word from Vancouver by wire for the issue of Feb. 19th and another letter for Feb. 26th.

Let us add for our English and Australian, as well as for our American readers, that in this land of boundless prairie we have found delightful weather. Yes; they say it is cold sometimes! Yes, even Westerners admit that the mercury has a downward tendency in the winter time. We noticed a house not far from the track this afternoon, destitute of paint or any adornment except an overgrown thermometer. It was fastened beside the door; and by its size seemed to be designed to afford facility for registering the mercury's downward course. In Ontario we know when it is cold without the thermometer's instruction, but in this country they need a thermometer half the size of the front door to assure them that by the mercury's verdict summer has not yet come. Otherwise they might put on summer clothes too soon, for while the thermometer sometimes suggests that it is cold, out here "you don't feel it." Certainly we did not; for the weather has been almost balmy to-day. The ground in Medicine Hat was entirely free from snow. But now we must get the sandman out of our eyes, so that they may be wide open to see the glorious mountains in the morning.

DR. MAGUIRE IN PULPIT THIS SUNDAY.

Dr. Gabriel Maguire, of Montreal, whom we have all learned to love, will be with us this Sunday. Dr. Maguire will teach the Pastor's class and preach at both services. We rejoice in Dr. Maguire's coming and anticipate great spiritual blessing.

The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXXIV.

March 1st, 1925.

THE VISION OF THE CROSS—Isaiah, chapter 53.

There can be no question as to the place this chapter holds in relation to the great fact of the Atonement. The first verse is quoted by Paul in the tenth of Romans as an evidence that not all have obeyed the gospel. The same verse is quoted also in John 12:38. It was this chapter which the Ethiopian eunuch was reading; and it was from the seventh verse of the chapter Philip preached Christ. Where we have New Testament authority we need seek no further.

I. How Christ is Viewed by the Carnal Mind.

1. Not all obey the gospel, nor is the arm of the Lord revealed to everybody. The verses above quoted are the proof. 2. To the natural man, there is nothing attractive in Christ; rather, He has no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that they should desire Him. It is well to keep this principle always clearly before us; and remember that only by a revelation from above can the beauty of Christ be appreciated. 3. It is the rule that Christ is despised and rejected: there is no proof that the gospel is not of God in the fact that men do not welcome it. Contrary is the case. This prophecy was literally fulfilled in the life and death of Christ; and has found its fulfilment in millions of rejectors of the gospel since. 4. Even those who now believe and obey Him have to confess, "We hid as it were our faces from Him."

II. The View of Faith.

1. When the understanding is enlightened the soul exclaims, "Surely he hath borne our griefs." We see then that His wounds were ours; and that He died to make our peace. 2. Sin nowhere appears so exceeding sinful as at the Cross; and there the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance. Learning the significance of His death we confess, "All we like sheep have gone astray." Then do we learn that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." 3. The voluntariness of His sacrifice is especially mentioned; He yielded Himself to the cross. He who was the Lord of all became as a lamb for the slaughter, and as a sheep that is dumb before its shearers. No man took His life from Him: He laid it down of Himself. The only adequate explanation of the Cross is this, "for the transgression of my people was he stricken." 4. The prophecy which was later fulfilled at His death is recorded in the ninth verse: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Thus we are reminded of Paul's saying, that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

III. The Promise of Sovereign Grace.

1. The Cross was no accident: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Though it was by wicked hands He was crucified and slain, He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 2. It was His soul which was made an offering for sin,—not merely His body. Others have suffered physically just as much as Christ suffered. The malefactors on either side shared with Him the pains of crucifixion. But it was His infinite soul, into which the grief of the world was poured, that gave value to His death; it was His soul that made an offering for sin. 3. The Atonement cannot fail in its ministry to human need: "He shall see his seed." There was no speculative element in the death of Christ. He knew from the beginning all that it would accomplish; and all that He had

planned it would accomplish must come to pass. 4. Moreover, the Atonement insures the satisfaction of His own soul. All the works of nature are the works of His hands, for "without him was not anything made that was made"; and when the created order was completed, He said it was very good. (But He derives less satisfaction from the glories of a million worlds than from the gratitude of one redeemed soul. 5. The Atonement, also, is the ground of His own exaltation: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death." In Philippians, the second chapter, we are taught that it is because of His humiliation and obedience unto death that He is highly exalted, and given a name that is above every name.

SPECIAL TELEGRAPHIC DESPATCHES FROM VANCOUVER TO JARVIS ST. AND THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

Vancouver, February 15th.

"Affectionate greetings to whole Jarvis Street congregation. I am praying this may be a day of great blessing at home. Two great prayer meetings here yesterday, with representative luncheon meeting. We had a full church this morning and a service of mighty power. There is a great spirit of prayer among the Vancouver brethren, and expectations of the kindling of revival fires. Love to all.

T. T. SHIELDS."

Vancouver, Feb. 16.

"Sunday was a great day. The building was crowded in the afternoon, while many were turned away from the evening service. There were hundreds of consecrations to God's service in the afternoon and a number of conversions at the seven o'clock meeting. There is the sound of abundance of rain. Love to the home folk.

T. T. SHIELDS."

GIFT MONEY SENT TO SPREAD WITNESS MESSAGE.

During the Editor's absence we venture to print the following letter, which reached *The Witness* office this morning. A five-pound note was enclosed:

_____, Manitoba,
February, 15th, 1925.

Dear Sirs:

I have derived great pleasure from reading *The Gospel Witness*. I think most people around here that I know are reading it.

I should have sent money to you before to help spread *The Witness*; but am obliged to confess that we have had a hard year. The note I enclose was sent me for a gift from the Old Country.

I send my *Gospel Witness* to the Old Country when I have read it. I am a member of _____ Baptist Church. Please do with the money what you think best.

_____,"
We receive many such letters every week; and would take this opportunity of once again thanking our readers for their co-operation in the spread of *The Witness*. We wish we could publish the letters of ministers and others to whom *The Witness* goes weekly through the generosity of our subscribers.

LAST SUNDAY'S SERVICES.

There were nine hundred and twenty-seven in the Bible School at 9.45. The Pastor's class reported great pleasure and profit from the teaching of the lesson by Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Chicago. Dr. Hoyt preached inspiring sermons morning and evening to a full house. At the close of the morning service several came forward in response to the invitation. Dr. Hoyt has been with us for three of our week-night services; and his ministry in our midst has been one of great blessing.