

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

"JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD."

A Sermon by the Pastor Dr. T. T. Shields.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 4th, 1932.

(Stenographically Reported—Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c.)

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"—I. Peter 4:17, 18.

Prayer by Rev. W. S. Whitcombe.

We come into Thy presence to-night, O gracious Lord, with a deep sense of our sinfulness. We confess our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us. O Saviour, we have not to plead the earth beneath or heaven above, but our own exceeding need and Thy exceeding love. Because that love has been manifested in that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we through Him might believe and live; because herein is love not that we loved God but that He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins; because of Thy great love and mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord, we dare to come into Thy presence this evening. We come before Thy throne in the name of our High Priest seated at Thy right hand, Who intercedes effectually for us.

We praise Thee for all Thy grace. We stand amazed in Thy presence, at the magnitude of Thy love. We praise Thee to-night with our whole being because of all His death on Calvary's cross has brought to us. We thank Thee for the joy of sins forgiven. We praise Thee for Christ within us, the hope of glory. As we meditate this evening on these things, we pray that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened. Teach us truly to evaluate the worth of spiritual things. Thou knowest that the world is ever near us, ever drawing us away from Thee, that the enemy of our souls is constantly present to tempt us. We can find no encouragement to go on in the things of Christ apart from the Spirit of the living God.

We pray for Thy presence this evening, and for the power of Thy Spirit in our hearts, that we may be taught the things concerning Jesus Christ, that we may be enabled to love them, and given grace as we go back to the task Thou has given us in the coming days, in all things to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Use Thy Word to-night to carry conviction to each one who hears. To those of us who love the story of Jesus and His love, wilt Thou give a greater appreciation of His work in our behalf, a clearer apprehension of our privileges in Christ Jesus. We pray for those who have heard the story often, who know it intellectually, but who have never re-

ceived the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts as Lord and Saviour. Bring conviction of sin, smite men down before Thee, enabling them to cry out, God be merciful to me a sinner. Let Thy Word be a hammer which shall break in pieces; for Thou who canst break in pieces canst also bind up and bring the healing balm of salvation.

We wait in Thy presence, knowing that Thou canst meet our every need, knowing that,—

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found—
Grace to cover all my sin:
Let the healing streams abound;
Make me, keep me pure within."

Whatever our need be, however great our sin, we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, claiming Thy blessing, Thy salvation, through Him. May this indeed be a night of salvation here and to those who listen by the side of their radio. Speak, we beseech Thee, in mighty power, and give us each and all grace to hear and to obey Thy Word; for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Amen.

That we may have some knowledge of the context, let me read from the twelfth verse, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that

judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us; what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

"The house of God" here referred to, I think beyond question, is the church of God elsewhere described as "the house of God", "the church of the living God", "the pillar and ground of the truth". The judgment referred to is not a condemnatory but a corrective judgment. The argument of the text is simply this, that God must deal with sin, and that even the suffering of the fiery trial to which believers are subject is part of the providential discipline designed to bring us closer to God, and to the Fountain of cleansing. Hence judgment must begin at the house of God.

If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged with the world. It is argued even then, with all that grace can do for us, that the righteous scarcely are saved. That, we shall explain a little later. Then this tremendous question is asked, if that be so, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I.

First, as simply as possible, LET US LOOK INTO THIS SAYING THAT "JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD." Believers are not saved in their sins, but from their sins: "Unto you first God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." It was prophesied of our Lord before His birth at Bethlehem, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." It is a libel upon Christianity to represent the gospel as little more than a ticket to heaven, a way of escape from the condemnation resulting from our sins. The gospel is the message of God which tells men, not only how they may be saved from the consequences of their sins, but how they may be delivered from its power and dominion.

You witnessed this evening the ordinance of baptism. There is no place in the scheme of redemption by grace for antinomianism. The promises of God are not contrary to the law. Grace has no quarrel with the law: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The gospel takes the objective law from tables of stone, and writes it upon the fleshly tablets of the heart. God puts His law within us. That is the meaning, the function, of grace, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Then the question is asked, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" To which this answer is given, "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The supreme illustration of the principle is found in the ordinance which you have witnessed, which is but a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection, of Christ: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death"—that is

what baptism is, a planting in the likeness of His death—"we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."

The argument is, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Christ came to save us from our sin. He has already blessed us, in His plan and purpose, "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." He Who called us to Himself has made provision for us, has provided for us "all things that pertain to life and godliness".

That being so, the believer must, of his own volition, deliberately, and by an act of self-surrender and patient submission, bring his life under review, and under the judgment of God. So ought we to live in the light of this holy Word; so ought we to learn to make application of its principles to our life; so ought we to regard the exigencies, the experiences, of life as so many messengers of God to meet us on the pilgrim journey, and to discover what may still be in us that is displeasing to Him, as so many customs officers stopping the traveller and searching him to see whether there is any contraband about him.

It was that principle that inspired the Psalmist to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." So ought we to judge ourselves, dear friends, as believers, and by the dispensations of Providence. When difficulties are multiplied, and adversaries seem to increase in number, when adversities throng us of one sort or another, when winds are contrary, and all life seems to be awry, when the enemy persecutes us, when we are reproached for the name of Christ, it becomes us to consider whether we are spoken against as evildoers, or whether we are reproached for the name of Christ. The very tribulations through which we pass have a salutary effect upon the believer. We do well to ask whether the trouble is all on our own account, or whether we are reproached for the Name we bear.

Judgment is a continuous process in the life of the believer. Not the judgment of condemnation; that is for ever past for the believer: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We are saved through faith in Him, yet must we be merciless inquisitors, investigating our own actions and motives, and praying constantly for the purging of the grace of God, for the burning of the holy Fire, that we may more and more be conformed to the image of Him Who has called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light". That is the course that ought to be pursued by every Christian: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We should seek always the judgment of God upon our actions, upon our words, upon our motives, upon our spirit; to bring our whole life, indeed, under the white light of this divine testimony, that we may learn whatever is displeasing to God, and by His grace to put it away.

I appeal this evening to some who are nominal Christians, some perhaps who listen to this service in the quiet

of their own homes, and I ask you very plainly and very kindly what your religion means. You profess to be a member of the household of God; you profess to be one of the living stones in the spiritual temple; you profess to belong to the house of God—is there any divine judgment being passed upon your life day by day? What has Christ done for you?

There are thousands of people in this city who are members of Christian churches, who bear the Christian name, and of some of them it may be said without the slightest exaggeration that it is difficult to discern in them any distinctively Christian qualities, anything that marks them as being separated from the world and the evil about them. They go to church on Sunday, but on Monday there is no difference between them and the non-professor. They are governed in their business by precisely the same principles that govern the men of the world. They are no more honest than the law compels them to be. They are no more just, not to say generous, with their employees than men who make no profession. They are as grasping and exacting as men of the world six days of the week. No one would call them dishonest. They give sixteen ounces to the pound, and pay one hundred cents to the dollar—and that is all the law can demand of them. But they are pretty well versed in the law, and they know how near to go to the borderland. I remember once having to deal with a man who seemed to be especially well versed in the fine distinction between civil and criminal law. I said to him, "You impress me as a man who has given altogether too much thought to that fine distinction. You seem to be trying to avoid the condemnation of the law, and not to be honest for honesty's sake." There are some people who are not one whit better as men of business than people who are not Christians. They engage in many doubtful ventures. They expose many of their patrons to great risk, and sometimes involve their clients in tremendous loss.

On the other hand, there are men who work for others who have no conscience in their work, who render not a bit better service than men of the world. A fraction of a minute after the whistle has blown—and sometimes before it has stopped blowing—they are out on the street. Sometimes they have little conscience about purloining their employer's time.

How shabbily many professing Christians live! How imperfectly they adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, mixing with the world, and the men of the world! It is difficult to tell the sheep from the goats. They are very much like sheep on Sunday, but for the rest of the time you would never know what they were were it not for the tag that indicates they are church members! If your religion means no more than that, you bear a tremendous responsibility. It is no light burden you carry when you assume the Christian name without the savour of Christ about you, when you are a hypocrite, nothing but a church member who has never been born again, never been made a new creature in Christ Jesus, to whom the Word of God has no authority, to whom Jesus Christ is neither Saviour nor Example.

Verily, the time has come when judgment ought to begin at the house of God. The great judgment of the future ought to be anticipated, and a clear line ought to be drawn between those who are real Christians and those who are not. The church that has a mixed membership, made up of men and women who are not partakers of the grace of life, men who are not walking with God, who yet

dictate its policies and direct its conduct, has no possible hope of being an instrument of divine power, of being in any true sense a "house of God".

I remind you of how our Lord, in the days of His flesh, went into the temple and found there men who were making material gain of their religion, and that He drove them out with a whip of fine cords, saying, "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." If the judgment of God, the fire of God, could burn in many of our Christian churches to-day, if the light of the gospel could shine upon heart and conscience, quickening men into newness of life, what a revolution it would effect in many a church! What a revolution in many a life! There would be an absolute transformation of life and conduct if judgment should begin at the house of God.

I beg of you, do not trust in mere church membership. Do not trust in your profession. You must be a partaker of life; you must be a partaker of Jesus Christ; you must be a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; there must be in you a new creation, or else you have no part nor lot in this matter, you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity". To you who are not within these walls, I say, Take your Bible to-night, turn to the thirty-second and fifty-first Psalms, and the third chapter of Romans, and read the terrible description of men who are out of Christ, and see how you appear in the sight of God. Let judgment begin. Let the Spirit of God convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, that you may get right with God before it is too late.

I appeal to any who may hear me to-night over the air, or in this building, who are *backsliders*, who have taken the name of Christ upon you, who are called Christians, and who yet are not living as Christians ought. A fearful responsibility rests upon you. A terrible load must rest upon the conscience of the backslider. I beg of you, for your own sake, for your own present and future peace and joy, to come back to God, to get right with God. Be cleansed again by the precious blood; come back as the prodigal came, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Take the humble place, for your own soul's sake, that you may have peace with God, and be justified by the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I venture to urge upon you this step *in the interest of those to whom you have become a stumbling-block*. I know the religion of the Lord Jesus has many adversaries. I know that it has enemies. I know that many of our educational institutions are centres from which the principles of agnosticism, on the negative side, and sometimes of positive infidelity, are disseminated. People are taught to believe the Bible is not true. I heard a man speak over the radio to-day about Belshazzar's feast, and he said there was nothing supernatural about it, that it could be explained on purely natural grounds. I say, I know we have that kind of opposition, the opposition of what we call Modernism and of a science falsely so-called; and yet I venture the opinion that all such opposition is as nothing compared with the real damage occasioned by the inconsistency of those who profess the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have met with hundreds, in the course of my ministry, whose excuse for not being Christians, for not being in the church, was that the people who are in the church are not one whit better, but rather worse, than many outside the church. I know very often that is

only an excuse. I know sometimes their criticism is without justification. But in many cases they are right. They do not exaggerate. They are right when they say that thousands of people who are called Christians are not one whit better than those who are not thus called. I have seen people who were very orthodox in their profession descend to conduct of which many a sinner would be utterly ashamed.

Nothing will so retard the progress of the gospel, and make it difficult to bring men to Christ, as the inconsistency of the people who profess faith in Christ, but whose character and conduct cannot be differentiated from those of men of the world. What a fearful thing it is to be a stumbling-block in other people's way!

There are parents who will have a fearful account to give to God some day. I do not mean parents who are outwardly sinful, but worldly parents, people who live for the things of time, whose children are patterning their lives after the example of their parents. Those parents are professing Christians, office-holders in the church, deacons, elders, or it may be ministers; and their children see nothing of divine grace, and nothing of the Spirit of God in the homes in which they live. Is it not time that judgment should begin at the house of God? Is it not time that those who profess faith in God should come back to God, and live as people who know the joyful sound?

Then this further argument. I believe *there is nothing that dishonours the name of the Lord Jesus* like the life of those who have turned to their own way. How heart-breaking it is to those who do seek by divine grace—imperfectly, I know; full of faults, subject of necessity to judgment in their own lives—to see professing Christians become careless, to go back into the world, as though they had forgotten the Lord Jesus entirely! But how dishonouring to the name of Christ! How His honour is dragged in the mire by men who thus live before the world! For His sake, backslider, for the sake of those who are stumbling to perdition over you, for your own sake, your family's sake, I beg of you, make sure work of this matter. Let judgment begin in your own heart and life. Come back to God. Be right with Him ere you close your eyes this evening.

I appeal to *everybody of the Christian name* who hears me to-night. We heard from friends this last week who hear our service in Nebraska, North Dakota, Québec, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, and other States, as well as throughout Ontario. There may be tens of thousands who hear this word to-night. Some of you are not Baptists. I do not know what you are, but if you bear the Christian name I beg of you, in the name of the Saviour of sinners, bring your life under the judgment of the gospel. Let it be measured by the principles and precepts of the divinely-inspired, infallible, and authoritative word of God, and bow to its judgment. Let judgment begin with you ere you close your eyes. Be sure that through the cleansing of the precious blood you are right with God.

II.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS SAYING, "If the righteous scarcely be saved"? *It certainly does not mean that any true believer need be doubtful about his salvation.* Paul spoke of his hope of eternal life after this fashion, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." You cannot possibly

have a surer foundation for the feet of faith than the oath-bound promise of a God Who, in the nature of the case, cannot lie; to Whose essential nature all that is untrue is alien. If He has promised eternal life, and given it to you who belong to Him, even though you wander far from Him, He will bring you back again. And as I have often admonished you, you had better come when He calls, lest the Good Shepherd send His dogs after you. There is a rod in store if you do not come when He calls.

We do not need to be doubtful of our salvation. What does it mean then, "If the righteous scarcely be saved"? *It does not mean that a man must earn his salvation.* "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not "by works of righteousness that we have done"—or can do—have we been saved; nor can anyone be saved. "If the righteous scarcely be saved." Does it mean that if a man by his utmost efforts can barely earn eternal life? No! He cannot earn it. One might as well try to pay a debt of a billion dollars with a penny of some debased coinage. Our good works have no value in Heaven's exchequer. We cannot meet the requirements of the divine law.

I think *it means that redemption was secured for us at infinite cost.* No man could do it, no institution; but "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son". The price of our redemption was paid by Him. It is written, "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever;) that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." It is not within the bounds of possibility for any man to pay the debt he owes to God.

It were easier for the British Government to pay the last farthing of her indebtedness with one single payment than for the richest man on earth to offer the slightest compensation to the outraged law of God which he has by his sin violated. The righteous are scarcely saved in this sense, that Heaven's exchequer was emptied. God gave His Best and Last, and has nothing more to give. He gave Himself in order that, by His own suffering, His law might be vindicated, that order might be maintained, and that thus it might be possible for Him to be just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth on Jesus Christ.

It means much to be a Christian. It is said that we are more than conquerors. It is in the sense that the spoils of war, spiritual warfare, are great. Thus we learn to "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." We are more than conquerors. We not only conquer by divine grace, but we are richer for the conquest; stronger and better for having gone to war spiritually.

But it requires the grace of God—and all the grace of God—to save any one of us. It is no easy thing for anyone to walk with God. Our adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion; we are beset with difficulties and temptations on every hand; there are fightings within, and fears without; there is the "old man" perpetually bringing us into trouble. But thanks be unto God, by His grace, by His abounding grace, even the chief of sinners may be saved, washed in the blood, quickened by the Divine Spirit, made children of God, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if

so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." I am sure that when by grace we are brought into the divine Presence, and when we have an understanding of the divine holiness, such as is impossible to us now with our limited understanding of spiritual things, when at last we see Jesus Christ as He is, we shall marvel that it was possible for even God to snatch us as brands from the burning, and present us at last faultless before His presence "with exceeding joy".

It is not a matter to be trifled with. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." We are saved by the righteousness of Jesus Christ,—fully saved, completely saved, saved forevermore, but with no surplus; saved by a sovereign act of an almighty God. Nor could we be saved any other way.

III.

YOU SEE THE FORCE OF THE QUESTION IF THAT BE SO? If it requires the payment of so great a price, and the ministry of the Spirit and of all the angels, to save one who trusts in Christ—if it requires all that, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If, having the advantage of the cleansing blood, the guidance of the infallible Book, if being made the subjects of the regenerating and tutoring ministry of the Spirit of Truth, and the further profit and privilege of the perpetual intercession of our great Advocate on high, if the angels are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, if all there is of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with all that God can do, be necessary for the salvation of a soul, what shall become of the man who spurns it all, and presumptuously tries to save himself? That is the argument of the text, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear" without the precious blood, without the regenerating grace of the Spirit of God, without the promises of God by which we are made partakers of the divine Nature, without an Intercessor in heaven? If the only Advocate qualified to plead before the Bar of Heaven shall say, "I pray not for them"; if he be excluded from His intercessory ministry, left to grope his own way in the darkness, what possible hope is there of anyone's finding his way to heaven? "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

The answer is in the negative. There is no hope at all. There is no chance. "If the righteous scarcely be saved," the ungodly and the sinner can never be saved because they spurn the one and only salvation that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Let those of us who are Christians seek afresh the grace of God that we may be His disciples indeed. "Then shall ye be my disciples indeed." Let us be genuine disciples of Jesus, adorning the doctrines of the gospel in all things.

Will you backsliders not come home to-night? Will you nominal Christians whose hope is in a church membership? It is a vain hope. Will you not come to Christ to-night? I know it is difficult. I know it is hard to admit that we have been in the house of God, professing members of the family, and yet never to have been born again.

As for you who are unsaved, trying to work your way to heaven, will you not cease from that effort, and come to Him Who is the sinner's Saviour? Cast yourself upon Him; trust Him for time and for eternity. I give you these simple promises, "Verily, verily, I say unto you,

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath"—not shall have, but—"hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life"; "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." May God the Spirit speak with the voice that quickens the dead, that those who are dead in sin may hear the voice of the Son of God and live; for His name's sake, Amen.

Let us pray:

Receive our thanks, O Lord, that we are still living in the day of salvation, that we may still say, Behold, now is the accepted time. Bless the testimony of Thy word wherever it has reached to-night. May the slain of the Lord be many! Take all anger from men's spirits. We do not like to be told that we are sinners. We do not like to be told that we are utterly bankrupt. But it is God's truth, as Thou knowest. May the Holy Spirit make those who have heard Thy word to understand it, and bring scores to the feet of Christ. Save every unsaved person within these walls to-night. Bring home the backslider. Oh, bring him home. Save church officers—or preacher, if one has heard this word who is really not Thine. We trust that is true in but a few cases, but there may be some who have actually stood in Thy house, and proclaimed the Word in Thy name, and yet have never been partakers of its grace and power. If there are such, Thou gracious sovereign Spirit, save them, for Jesus Christ's sake. This we pray for all in this house, and for all our radio hearers, perhaps many thousands. Amen.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES (Continued)

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Thursday Evening, December 1st, 1932.

*Sixth in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on
Biblical Theology (the third on the Book of
Judges) which is included in the Curriculum
of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Our lesson this evening is in the third chapter of Judges. Once again let me ask you to keep clearly in mind that the historical portions of the Word of God are much more than mere chronicles; indeed, though it consists of records of historical events, they are not written in strictly chronological order. There is in the Book of Judges and indeed in any other historical portion of the Word of God, a philosophy of history. It tells us not only what came to pass, but why it came to pass; it identifies the forces operating behind these human events, showing why various things were permitted of the Lord, and why His sovereign control gave particular direction to certain events.

Israel have occupied the promised land, and the Lord has fulfilled to his servants the word which He had given to Abraham their father. Notwithstanding, this chapter tells us that certain nations were "left"; they were not destroyed—and they were left by divine permission, by divine order. In an earlier chapter, we noted the people of Israel were censured for not driving out certain of the enemy: "The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites"; "Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Methshean"; "Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites"; "Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron."

Now we are told the nations which were left, were left by divine direction. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh"; "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born." We wonder sometimes why God does not at once remove certain difficulties out of our way. We wonder why the Lord permits certain evils to continue in the world; why, indeed, the world as a whole is not purged of its evil.

I.

We are told that these nations were "LEFT" BY THE LORD "TO PROVE ISRAEL BY THEM". I suppose in *our personal struggle after holiness* we sometimes wonder why the "old man" is left. I have a good deal of sympathy with those who believe in the irradiation of the old nature—sympathy in this sense, I mean, that the wish is evidently father to the thought. I confess that the "old man" is no friend of mine. I wish he were not left. I would gladly be done with him. Would you not? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But that body is here. That adversary of all spiritual impulses is still with us.

Certain evils have to be dealt with. Sometimes we have become almost war-weary, and have wished that the "old man" and all his works had forever departed, and that for us the millennium had already dawned. I have wished it many times, but I have certainly to confess that I have never entered into the realization of that desire. The nations are left.

The principle operates *in the individual life*. The greatest battle we all have to fight is not a battle without, but a battle within ourselves. We have great reason to praise God that it is written, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." There is a constant fight, and yet we may have the victory, and be led by faith to cry, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." But there is a constant struggle. There is enough evil in every one of us to test us daily, and to lead us to cast ourselves upon God, and wholly to depend upon divine grace for whatsoever deliverances we may experience.

That is equally true of *outward conflict* as well. In the history of the Christian church, if you carefully analyze it, you will find few new things. The heresies we fight to-day are the lineal descendants of the heresies our fathers fought. The Canaanites were not all killed. There were some of the Jebusites, the Perizzites, and all the rest of them, "left" in the land. There was a remnant—if not according to the election of grace, according to the disciplinary necessities of the elect. And the Canaanites have a numerous progeny. In succeeding ages of the church's history, she has had to fight the same battle over and over again. The old heresies were revamped.

What we call Modernism to-day is not new. It is as old as the Old Testament. It had its origin in the garden. I think I could easily show you that philosophically all that we now contend against in the tenets of what we call Modernism was germinally involved in the original temptation in the garden. There was first the suggestion of a doubt, "Hath God saith?" Then an attack upon the veracity of God, upon the truthfulness of His Word. And then an attack upon the divine Character: "If that

is the sort of God you worship, we do not want Him—Hath God said?—God doth know."

In that there is the germ of all heresies. The devil was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. Let us remember that. We hold up our hands in horror and say, "This is a dreadful age; this is a dark day." And so it is. But there were dark days before we were born. There were Canaanites in the world of our fathers, and some of them were "left" for us to fight. You read about Martin Luther and his spiritual courage, and say, "I wish I had lived in his day. I should have had something to fight for." You have exactly the same thing to fight for to-day, in principle if not in form.

That principle works *in the life of a nation*. It is amazing how slow people are to learn the lessons of history. Certain ministers in this city, not many months before the war, talked much about peace, and about arbitration, and all the rest of it. All who doubted the possibility of the utter abolition of war were "back numbers", and I know not what else. But as soon as war was declared, and the war-drums began to beat, these men beat the drums as loudly as anybody. There have been "wars and rumours of wars": there will be "wars and rumours of wars" until the white horse and his Rider come down the skies. There is no League of Nations now in existence, or that can be brought together, that can change that fact. That tendency resides in the nature of man, and though we may limit it, lessen its horrors, and suppress it altogether for a time, yet ever and anon it will break out again. It seems to be a providential order of life that men should have to fight for an existence.

"These are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof." You say you do not like that? Some of our Modernistic friends speak very strongly about the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges, saying they are altogether too terrible, and unethical.

I remember a remark in a sermon by Dr. Joseph Parker on the text, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." He said something to this effect: Some wise man down there will say he objects to that doctrine; that it is not just; that it ought not to be, and that he will not believe it. Very well, said Parker, I am not here to explain it, but simply to ask you a question, Is it a fact? After all the Modernists, clever men as they may be, have said about the horrors of war—and nobody can exaggerate it, nor deplore it too strongly—is it a fact that war after war takes place? What is the use of saying, "Peace, Peace", when there is no peace? For it is true of the world at large, as of the individual, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." We have not come to the day when swords can be beaten into plowshares, nor spears into pruninghooks.

II.

But what a gracious God we have! *He numbered the Philistines*, "five lords." He said, "That is about all they can stand." "Five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the com-

mandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."

Are you having a hard time? Is anybody finding life easy? Few people hold picnics in the winter time. There is a hymn about December being as pleasant as May. Sometimes it is—and sometimes it is not. I rather think we all have our difficulties. Do not pull a long face and complain that you have them all, because you have not. They are fairly well distributed. Everybody has his or her share. But always remember that our gracious superintending God knows the exact strength of the opposition, namely, "five lords of the Philistines". Not six. That would have been one too many. The principle is, whether it applies to the individual, the church, or the nation, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I have heard many people, when they had just got out from under some almost intolerable burden, say, "Thank God. I could not have borne it another day. I have had all I could possibly stand." That is why you got out from under it. God knew that you had reached the limit of your endurance. He never tests us above that we are able. Our God, while He is never before time, is never behind. He always arrives. It may be about the fourth watch of the night, it may be when the ship is about to sink, but He will come to you on the waves, or on the field of battle. Let us take these situations and remember they are all part of the divine plan. It will help us to prove our mettle, and sometimes our muscle—and there is not much difference between the two.

When you students get to be pastors I hope you will not look for a perfect church, for I fear you will be without a pastorate if you do. The pastor is called for "the perfecting of the saints". If all saints were perfect we ministers would be out of a job—and that would be too bad! You will not find a perfect church. You may desire a spiritual church, and the Lord may give you one, or one that you can convert into a spiritual body by the blessing of God; but do not be impatient if you find a stray Canaanite in the pew. Just say, "I wonder what he is for?" He is one of the nations the Lord left to see what sort of man you are, to prove you, to see whether you can stand it or not.

I have often wondered why some people were left in the world—and I think I know one reason. It is possibly to "let patience have her perfect work." I do not know what some people are for unless it be to try the patience of other people. I shall not identify Number One and Number Two. I suppose we all try other people's patience, even as other people try ours. Perhaps that is why we are allowed to live together, that we may rub the corners off each other.

I remember one very unhappy marriage that came under my observation. I attributed all the difficulty to the fact that the wife was an only daughter, and the husband an only son. Who in the world could live with "an only daughter"? Or who could live with "an only son"? They were both spoiled. Father and mother thought their only daughter was *the* only daughter, and the other parents thought the same of their only son. They had been waited on hand and foot, and when they got married they each expected it—and neither got it. And there was trouble. Let me give you young people a little advice: do not marry

an only daughter! Do not marry an only son! Or at least before you do, give him or her a long probation.

It is a distinct advantage to be born into a home where there are a number of others. You will be properly brought up, I can tell you. Did you ever go into a factory where they turn things with a lathe, chair spindles, and that sort of thing? For some of them they have a large hollow drum into which they throw the pieces of wood after they have come from the lathe. The drum is locked, a belt adjusted, and around it goes. Inside that drum those spindles rub each other into smoothness. It is a picture of a family, learning to be patient by the rubbing process.

There are a few words in the English language that by no possibility could I mispronounce, and a few I could not possibly misspell. I mispronounced or misspelled those words once—and I never heard the last of it. When I was a little boy four or five years old, just learning to read, we had coming to our house magazines for little folk. One was called *Chatterbox*, and in one of the issues there was a story about a little girl named Daisy who was in a peck of trouble. The title of the story was, "Daisy's Dilemmas." One day I picked up that book, spelled the title of the story to myself, then said it aloud, "Daisy's Dil-emmas". I think for a month or two that was my nickname; I had it for breakfast, dinner, and supper. It made no difference where we were, if my father was present, no word was ever allowed to pass. We were trained kindly, but critically, to watch each other's speech.

That is what the church is for. Some people imagine a church is a place where we can sit and sing ourselves away to everlasting bliss. It is a place where the saints meet, and everybody has opportunity to learn patience with each other, to help each other, to love each other, like one large family. When you find awkward people, put them down among the nations that were left to find out what is in you.

"And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites." They were left to prove whether they could obey the Lord, and trust Him in their national life. But instead of contending with these alien principles round about them, they allowed them to dwell among them. Let me suggest that we should never toast the "old man"; never say nice things about him, nor make a truce with him, nor dwell with him. Our only safety is to be perpetually at war with him. The only safe attitude for us is to be everlastingly at war with the old nature. We are to bring it into subjection. The "old man" is to be crucified. We are not to dwell among the Canaanites.

A certain lady I met in California speaking about the prevailing heresies, said, "The only way I can maintain my own faith is to fight these things. I must contend against them for the sake of my own spiritual health. If I do not, I find that through my intercourse with the people I meet socially, by and by I begin to make apologies for the things they believe. I become tolerant of them, and say they are not bad; that we ought to be more charitable. Then I find myself half believing the same things myself."

It is dangerous to dwell with the Canaanites. It is dangerous to make peace with any principle that is manifestly alien to the will of God. We must never be at peace with that which is contradictory of the truth revealed in this Book. We are in the world, but we are not

of the world. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil"—and from the evil one. There is only one way to do it, and that is to be always fighting.

I read one day of a coloured preacher in the Southland who had been loud in his condemnation of the devil, and all his works, upon whom some boys planned to play some pranks. He was preaching one night in his own church. Behind him there was a large window. It was dark outside, but light within. Suddenly his congregation began to leave him, and make for the door; there was a regular stampede. "My brethren, do not run away", said the preacher. To which they replied, "Look behind you, Preacher, and you will run too." He looked behind him. Some mischievous boys had emptied a pumpkin, cut eyes, nose, and mouth, and put up an illuminated image of the devil himself. These superstitious coloured people thought that Satan had really come to church for once, and they were going with all speed to the door. The preacher looked around and said, "O Massa Devil, I have said a lot of hard things about you, but honest I nebber really meant them."

That is the way some people fight: they do not mean it. They try to placate the Canaanites; they mix with men of the world. The only safe way for us to do is to be entirely separated from these things. The problem of the transmission of power is evermore a problem of insulation. In the measure in which we are separated from the world, and the things of the world, in that measure shall we have power with God and men. The church ought not to dwell with the Canaanites, but fight them all the time.

"They took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods." I know it is difficult to speak on a subject of that sort, but I am sure that in my experience as a minister I have seen hundreds of Christian people, men and women, utterly ruined, so far as their spiritual usefulness was concerned, by alliance with the Canaanites. What a tragedy it is! Thanks be unto God for a united home. Before you set up a home, young people, make sure it shall be a home in which God will have the first place. Otherwise it must always follow, "They served their gods." The world will drag you down to its own level.

III.

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim." It would be bad enough to be sold into anybody's hand, but what must it be to have a master with a name like that! "And the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years." If they had nothing else to do but to pronounce his name, they had a bit of hard labour.

There is a principle there. I do not suppose the children of Israel recognized the hand of the Lord in that catastrophe. It was just one of the inevitable things. Circumstances were not favourable. They were overwhelmed by a superior foe. "Well", they would say, "we cannot prevent it. We must do the best we can." There did not appear to be anything supernatural in it. There did not appear to be any miraculous element in it. Yet there was. It was part of the divine providence. When adverse experiences come to you, when the world is turned upside-down for you,—it may seem to be a small world, but if it

is upsidedown, it is difficult to adjust yourself to it. We wonder why these things happen.

We must not always assume, when adversity comes, it is because the Lord is angry. We must remember, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Sometimes it is for our further progress and greater advancement in the kingdom of God. But, on the other hand, we do well to enquire whether our difficulties are not of our own making. When we find this man of the long name worrying us, we may well ask if the Lord has not permitted that because we did not trust Him as we might have done. There is that principle in life, at all events.

"When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother." "Caleb's younger brother". It is not always an advantage to be a younger brother,—although usually I think it is better than to be an older sister; because an older sister very often has to be a sort of second mother to the family, and usually has a hard time.

Who wants to be a younger brother—or an older brother, for that matter? Everyone wants to be himself. The Right Honourable Winston Churchill is not a member of the present Government, but he is admittedly a clever man. Mr. Frank Smith, as he once was, and later Lord Birkenhead, and Winston Churchill were college chums, and each had a good opinion of himself. They happened to be in the same political party. I have somewhere read that they talked of their future, and concluded there was no political party in England big enough to make room for both of them, so they tossed a coin to see which should become Conservative, and which Liberal. They were each altogether too big to play second fiddle to anybody. Winston Churchill joined the Liberals, and Smith remained a Conservative. Winston Churchill went to South Africa. He became a journalist, and I do not know what happened to him for a time. He was spoken of in those days as "the son of Lord Randolph Churchill," and he became so wearied of being known as somebody's son that he said, "The time will come when they will no longer speak of me as the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, but they will say Lord Randolph Churchill was my father." I suppose that came to pass.

Caleb was a great man, and until now we did not know he had a younger brother; but now that Caleb is old, and has had his innings, his younger brother comes into his own.

We used to hear of Joseph Chamberlain's filling the whole political horizon. When he first propounded his imperial ideas they had a postcard in England on which was a text of Scripture, "Go unto Joseph, what he saith to you, do." They were freely used in England. After a while Joseph Chamberlain disappeared, and Sir Austen Chamberlain inherited his father's greatness—including his monocle—and he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. The outside world scarcely knew he had a younger brother until Neville Chamberlain at length came to the front and became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

So cheer up, your older brother will not live for ever. By and by you will get your chance!

"And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years." Othniel was a good

man. He was able so to subdue the enemy, and to put Israel's terror upon them, that the victories he won lasted forty years, and the land had rest forty years.

Let me offer this suggestion to you. You cannot ensure the peace and prosperity of your church for ever. When you are gone nobody can tell what will happen. The wise man said, "I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" Nobody can tell. But Othniel secured rest for Israel during his lifetime forty years. That was not a mean contribution. It is said of David, "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The same might be said of Othniel. He met the emergencies of his day. He fought the battles of his day. He won victories for God's people in his day. He did the best he could, and the fruit of it was enjoyed by God's people for forty years.

I heard a man argue against the erection of large churches. Poor little man! He said, "It is folly to build places like Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Spurgeon has no successor, nobody who was able to keep the building full." Well, what if they could not? He kept it full for nearly forty years! That was a fairly good record. If it went up in smoke after that time, forty years were a great contribution to a man's own day and generation. Let us do our best for our day, like Othniel, even if we are somebody's younger brother.

"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord." "Again"! "Again"! Observe the same principle: "And the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord, and he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years." After the forty years of peace had passed they were again subject to tribute for eighteen years. Why? Because they did evil "in the sight of the Lord". Again I say they may not have known that this was a divine visitation. It may have taken the eighteen years for them to recognize it as such.

The Lord does not need to send an angel from heaven to deal with us: there is always an Eglon waiting to worry us—and he can always get help from the children of Ammon and Amalek.

"When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord"—it is always the same: the Lord waiting for His people's cry—"the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded." You must not despise left-handed men. Of course, I know they are not like us! We are right-handed men! But did you ever play cricket against a lefthanded man? He is a nuisance! He is a nuisance anywhere, but he is often more skilful than the righthanded man. My point is that you must not insist that everybody do their work in your way.

A doctor told me that parents who force children who naturally use their left hand, to use their right, do a very foolish thing; that, as a matter of fact, a lefthanded man is differently constituted from a righthanded man. It is not habit. The right lobe of the brain controls the left side of the body, and vice versa; and somehow they get crossed. To try to make a lefthanded man use his right hand would be about as appropriate as to make a man walk on his head. It was not made to walk on, and would disorganize his whole constitution.

But how many people are like that. Everything must be done their way, and if you do not do it their way, you may go to Coventry, or to Halifax, or to some other beautiful place where awkward people are consigned. And do you know what that attitude is? "Firmness", "Strength of will"! If you want to see strength of will I would introduce you to Paddy's pig! It can be stubborn because it always wants to go the opposite way from that in which its master wants it to go. It does not mean that you are superior because you "put your foot down". It is well to be determined, but see that you have something to put your foot down on. "When I say I will do a thing, I will do it." Make sure what you have said is the right thing. If it is a matter of principle, then you should stand for it, by all means. But oh, the stubbornness and wilfulness of men because Ehud is lefthanded. "I will not have him for a judge"; "We prayed, and the Lord sent us a lefthanded man." Well, what of it? He was a skilful man, in any case. Some men can do more with their left hands than we can with our right. Then in the name of common sense, get out of their way.

I read last night of an artist who has no hands at all; he paints pictures by holding the brush between his teeth. I wish we could get some people to emulate his example—when they were painting pictures they would not be talking. It would be an excellent substitute for some of the conversation we have to listen to.

"The Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded"—some of the Benjamites were ambidextrous—"and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man." It ought to have been easy to deal with him.

But here is a problem, a bit of treachery that cannot be justified; and yet there is true psychology in it. Eglon was a man who was always ready to receive presents. If you are out to receive presents, you may get the wrong sort. He exposed himself to danger. It was when Ehud went to give him a present, thus gaining access to his presence, and his immediate attendants went out, that Ehud drove his dagger into Eglon, and "went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them."

Thus Ehud slew the enemy of Israel. While we cannot justify that method, on the other hand, we must bear in mind that Eglon's habits of life invited the very thing that caused his death. It usually does. If a man will have presents he may find a dagger in the gift.

"And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the forts of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years."

The lefthanded man brought them peace again. Othniel brought peace for forty years; then eighteen years of servitude; and now at last eighty years of rest followed the deliverance wrought by this one man.

IV.

The biography of the next judge, Shamgar, is written in twenty-six words: "And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel." That is all that is said about him. He was not a warrior: he was a farmer. He drove a team of oxen, and I expect he drove them well. I expect he knew how to do it. He became expert in the use of an ox goad. I am not. I should not know what to do with it, would you?

The Lord used a lefthanded man, and now He finds a man from the country who is not a soldier, but a man of vital personality, a man who knows how to do one thing, and to do it well. He knows how to use one instrument, and with it he slew six hundred Philistines, and delivered Israel. Let us learn to do what we do as well as it can be done. David with his sling and stone, Samson with the jaw-bone of an ass, Ehud, the lefthanded man, and now Shamgar with his ox goad. The Lord has all sorts of work to do, but He gets it done. Who were the judges? Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar.

"IF GOD IS LIKE JESUS."

An Answer to Rev. W. A. Cameron and Dr. S. G. Bland
By Miss Florence Campbell.

(Readers of "The Gospel Witness" who have not become completely hardened to the scepticism of the age, were shocked to receive the report of a sermon by Rev. W. A. Cameron, of Yorkminster Baptist Church, Toronto, from Dr. Salem Bland, in "The Star Weekly" of October 22nd last, and reprinted in part in this paper's issue of November 10th, entitled, "If God Is Like Jesus".)

It is the practice in the class of Toronto Baptist Seminary which makes a special study of the tenets of Modernism, to demand that the students write answers to samples of the religious aberrations of our day. Last week such an essay was required, based on one paragraph of the article referred to above. Each student wrote his or her answer without any personal help. We print below the quotation in question, and then the essay of Miss Florence Campbell, now in the third year of our course. Readers of "The Witness" may judge for themselves of the consistent, incisive, and discerning, quality of this regular class work of our pastoral and missionary training-school.—W. Gordon Brown, Toronto Baptist Seminary.)

Excerpt From Dr. Bland's Article.

"It was pointed out that the implications of this faith must be frankly faced. For example, if God is like Jesus, then *many things said about God in the Old Testament and even a few things in the New must be reverently but firmly set aside.* A Being like Jesus can never have slaughtered all the first-born in Egypt for the sin of Pharaoh, nor could he have visited Pharaoh's household with great plagues, because Pharaoh desired to take Sarai as his wife, Abraham having untruthfully represented her as his sister. Other illustrations were given and could easily be multiplied, of things ascribed to God which were certainly not Christlike. Wisely and reassuringly it was pointed out that the glory of the Old Testament is that it is *the record of the passionate persistence of a race in its quest for God.* That the earlier parts of the Old Testament are on a morally and intellectually lower level than the latter is something to rejoice in as a demonstration of the inspiration of the spirit of God in guiding a race once childish and savage and grossly superstitious to the lofty heights on which Jesus of Nazareth could appear and fulfil His mission."

Miss Campbell's Essay.

What a strange mixture of ideas is contained in the thought that many things in the Old and New Testaments may "reverently be set aside"! To reverence them is to admit that they are of God, and to admit that they are of God is to end all possibility of conscientiously setting them aside. If they are not the words of God, and do not accurately

describe Him, they may firmly and unhesitatingly be abandoned.

The consideration, then, is whether or not the Bible is the Word of God. Christ accepted it as such. He refers to it as "the commandment of God" (Mark 7:9), and as "that which was spoken unto you by God" (Matthew 22:31). He implies that it is God Who says, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mark 11:17). He quoted it constantly, using it to vanquish the tempter, to teach His disciples, to teach the multitude, to justify the actions of His disciples when accused by the Pharisees, to justify His own actions, to vindicate His claim to be the Son of God, and to comfort and strengthen Himself.

Christ's authority on the matter may be questioned; but "If God is like Jesus," and if Jesus did not tell the truth about these things, then He represents God as a liar. If He did not know the truth about these things, then He represents God as being ignorant. If Christ, while representing the character of God as contradictory to the description of Him in the Old Testament, sanctions the Old Testament, He is, to say the least, illogical. Christ is the final authority upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. God is not revealed in some aspects only of Christ's life, but "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the final revelation of God, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets", but Who "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son". If He is in the final revelation, He ought to be recognized as the final authority on all previous revelations, of which He says, "They are they which testify of me."

The character of Jesus Christ agrees with the revelation of God's character in the Old Testament. The righteousness of God is represented in the slaying of all the first-born of Egypt. It is not stated that this judgment came because of Pharaoh's sin. We must take into account the sin of the cruel taskmasters, the idol-worshippers, and the magicians who counterfeited God's miracles. Yes, they all deserved death. God had before declared all men to be sinners, when He said, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Even the Israelites were included in this condemnation, but they were saved because God chose to save them, through faith in His promise. Their faith was manifested in their obedience to the command to shelter under the blood. God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to multiply His wonders in the land of Egypt, so that those who died did not die in ignorance, but in wilful sin.

Certainly Christ's character agrees with this, for "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." If God is just, He must demand retribution for the sins of the Egyptians, and they died guilty. He must also demand retribution for our sins; and Christ, Who is innocent, died for us. If Jesus could say to the hypocrites of His day: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation", He could also say: "About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. . . . Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

God's mercy is revealed in His dealings with Pharaoh. He did not plague Pharaoh's house because Pharaoh desired to take Sarai as his wife, but to prevent him from doing so. Afflictions are not always a curse, but sometimes a blessing, even to the unbeliever. There is nothing in the Old Testament ascribed to God which is not Christlike, for His actions are in striking agreement with God's acts in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament, rather than being a record of "the passionate persistence of a race in its quest for God", is a shameful record of man's rebellion against God, Who is merciful. It is not once recorded that man set out to find God, but it is clearly shown that man passionately and persistently sought his own way. Adam deliberately disobeyed God, and

(Continued on page 12)

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR.

Lesson 52 December 25th, 1932
FOURTH QUARTER.**THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.**

Lesson Text: Luke, chapter 2.

Golden Text: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—Luke 2:11.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Monday—Isaiah 9:1-7.

Tuesday—Micah 5:1-7.

Wednesday—Matt. 1:18-25.

Thursday—Matt. 2:1-12.

Friday—Matt. 2:13-23.

Saturday—Luke 1:18-25.

The circumstances connected with the birth of Christ are, in general, well known; yet in their recital they are always fresh and interesting. Matthew and Luke give supplementary accounts of the event, and both must be read in order to gain an understanding of the whole. The account in Luke is our special study, though reference may be made to the other account. In our text there is first recorded the fact of the enrolment for taxation, which was the earthly cause for the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at that time, the Jews being directed to go to their tribal centres for this purpose, (vs. 1-5). In this we see the overruling providence of God, man's laws and customs being used for the carrying out of the divine purpose. It was prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, (Micah 5:2), and while from the human standpoint this seemed an impossibility owing to the residence of Mary in the northern part of the country, (1:26, 27), yet just at the proper time and in the ordinary course of events she was in the right place, and God's word was fulfilled. The contemplation of this should give us increased confidence in the word of God. Nothing is impossible to Him. He knows all things, and each divine prediction is certain to be fulfilled.

The account of the birth of Christ is given in a modest and simple manner: "The days were accomplished that she should be delivered" we are informed, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn", (vs. 6, 7). In this brief statement we have the record of a miracle, the account of our Lord's incarnation, and the manifestation of God's love for men. The miraculous element in our Lord's birth relates to the fact of His virgin birth. Respecting this there are two aspects, the divine and the human. Concerning the first, we read He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, (1:35; Matt. 1:20). God is the source of all life, and in the light of His presence, the miraculous is easily explained. In the second aspect Mary is in view. She was a divinely chosen instrument for the carrying out of the

heavenly plan, (1:26, 27). God is sovereign in the use of persons and things. Note the privilege of being used by God, also the fact that Mary was ready to be used. She was ready by birth and training, also in character, being pure, blameless, righteous, and submissive to the will of God, and in position she was where God desired her to be. God cannot use the unready, therefore readiness of obedience brings its own reward.

The significance of our Lord's birth must be emphasized in connection with the same. In it we have God becoming incarnate, taking upon Himself our flesh, (John 1:14), for the purpose of dying for our sins, (Matt. 20:28), in this manifesting His love for men, (John 3:16). Our Lord's pre-existence must be kept in mind. He was God the Son, (Heb. 1:8), as well as the Son of God, (John 20:31), existing from all eternity, (John 17:5), but coming to earth on man's behalf in accordance with the eternal divine plan, (John 3:16, Eph. 1:4). In its significance the truth of God's word is affected, in relation to the veracity of its writers, and the truthfulness of its predictions, the place of our Lord's birth being stated, (Micah 5:2), the manner of the same, (Is. 7:14), the character of His work, (Is. 9:6), and the first intimation of the nature of that birth, (Gen. 3:15). These prophecies are substantiated in the New Testament accounts, but if the birth had not occurred in the way indicated these scriptures would have been proved wrong, with the consequent weakening of faith in the other parts of the Bible. The character of Mary is also affected in that if our Lord was not begotten of the Holy Spirit, He was born out of wedlock, with all that that implies.

It also affects the nature of Jesus; for born as indicated, apart from the Holy Spirit He could not be divine. And this clearly affects our salvation for to the accomplishment of this we need a divine Saviour.

In the light of its significance it should never be said that belief in the virgin birth of Christ is of little importance. Objection is sometimes made to the belief on the basis that it is contrary to general experience. It is admitted that the event was unique, but this does not prevent its accomplishment. God was doing a new thing intentionally, and with foreordained purpose. It is also urged that such a birth cannot be understood. But who is there who really understands a natural birth? And there are many things in this world which are believed though not understood, such as the working of the mind, and the co-ordinating of the various parts of the body in human activity. And again it is stated that belief in the virgin birth is not necessary to the gospel, or in other words, one may believe in the gospel, while rejecting the record of the virgin birth. This is a most illogical position as may be noted from a study of the significance of the event. It is part and parcel of the whole, and one cannot weaken one part, without affecting all parts. Let this be proved wrong, and one cannot be sure of the rest. Thank God the record is true; there is no doubt concerning the veracity of the writers; the character of

Mary is beyond reproach; the nature of Jesus is divine, and our salvation is supernatural in its origin and accomplishment. Note the suggestiveness of "no room for them in the inn". The inn was filled with other persons, as so many human hearts are filled with business, pleasure, sin, and the cares of this world, and have no room for Jesus.

II. THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS, (vs. 8-20).

After the birth of the Saviour the angel of the Lord, accompanied by a multitude of the heavenly host, appeared unto the shepherds who were watching their flocks by night. Angels have appeared at various times to men, generally at crises in their history, as in the cases of Abraham, (Gen. 18:2), Lot, (Gen. 19:1), Gideon, (Judges 6:11), and Peter, (Acts 12:7), thus manifesting God's interest in men and His earnest solicitude for their highest welfare. The nature of the appearance described in the text is worthy of consideration, (vs. 9, 13), and the message conveyed by the heavenly messengers, (vs. 10-15). In this message several things are observed. First, the injunction, "Fear not", (v. 10), then the nature of the message, "good tidings of great joy", the recipients of the same, then the shepherds, and later, "all people", the reason for such tidings, the birth of the Saviour, (v. 11), the sign unto the shepherds, the babe in swaddling clothes, (v. 12), and the glory song, (vs. 13, 14). Note the two aspects of peace, that with God, (Rom. 5:1), and that of God, (Phil. 4:7); also the visit of the angels to Bethlehem, (vs. 15, 16), their testimony concerning Jesus, (vs. 17, 18), Mary's wise attitude, (v. 19), and the return of the shepherds, (v. 20).

III. THE CIRCUMCISION AND PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE. (vs. 25-39).

In accordance with the requirements of the law, Jesus was circumcised, (Lev. 12:3), and received His name, which signified Saviour, (Matt. 1:21). In connection with the presentation note the significance of His presentation to God, (v. 22). All the firstborn were His in a very special sense, (v. 23; Ex. 13:2), as all children belong to Him, and should be dedicated to Him early in life and brought up for His service. Observe the prophetic message of Simeon with its reference to the significance of the life and death of Christ, (vs. 25-35). He is referred to as light and glory, (v. 32), as being set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, (v. 34), and Mary is warned of the sword which would pierce her own soul, (v. 35). Note also the thanksgiving of Anna, (vs. 36-38), and the return of the parents and child to Nazareth, (39).

IV. THE ATTENDANCE AT THE PASSOVER, (vs. 40-52).

In connection with this visit note the age of Jesus, (v. 42), His understanding of Divine things, (v. 46), His consciousness of His divine mission, (v. 49), His subjection unto His parents, (v. 51), in obedience to the law, (Ex. 20:12), and His increase in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man, (v. 52).

The Union Baptist Witness

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LENDING TO THE LORD.

Every church and every individual, whether in a position to do so or not, is faced with many calls for help at this time. It is not always possible to supply the need which is presented, but it is always well to remember that "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord," and that when it is within the power of a Christian to help he should do it as unto the Lord, especially to those of the "household of faith".

There are many who need much sympathy. A letter before us reads: "I am hoping you will pray that we may not lose heart at this time. No one knows the difficulties we have to face." This is from a letter of a little Christian mother whose husband has had no permanent employment for over two years.

BLESSING AMONG THE CHURCHES.

Emmanuel, Verdun, Que.

It is just a little over a year since Pastor Roy Hisey took charge of Emmanuel Church, Verdun, and looking back the church has much cause for praise. During the year they have seen a number of conversions and now, with the beginning of a new year, their hearts are greatly encouraged. Nine have recently followed the Lord in baptism and others have made application. At the church services are to be noted those who have grown tired of listening to a modernistic theology and are seeking spiritual food. On Sunday, December 4th, five new members received the right hand of fellowship and two others, who were to be received, could not be present owing to unforeseen circumstances.

Buckingham, Que.

We hear of blessing at Buckingham where Rev. Matthew Doherty labors so faithfully. Souls have been saved at the regular church services and a baptismal service has recently been held. One convert is a young man whose business is in Ottawa but who has attended the Buckingham services when home on Sunday; another is a woman who has been prayed for during some four years. One elderly man has come back to the Lord and there are many others under conviction and in "the valley of decision." Pray for them.

Lindsay.

The little church at Lindsay has experienced blessing in its midst. A real deepening is most evident and the people are rejoicing in the Lord. Their numbers have been added to, and the testimony of the church is appreciated by even those of other denominations who still believe in the power of the Blood. The Pastor, Rev. J. M. Fleming, writes that the finances of the church demonstrate the liberality of his people, and advises that, "It has been unanimously agreed that we prayerfully press on to seek a self-supporting basis by the end of the business year."

South London.

Outside work has been finished on the building and the people have witnessed their new church home completed in record time. It is expected that everything will be in order for the opening by Christmas, and that service is anticipated with joy. Pray that the blessing of the Lord will rest upon the labors of the Pastor, Rev. R. D. Guthrie, and his people, and that many souls will find peace within the walls of the new building dedicated to the Lord.

Runnymede, Toronto.

At the Runnymede Road Church, Toronto, Sunday, December 4th, was a day especially set aside for prayer and waiting upon God. The spirit of intercession continues and the prayer meetings of the church are times of great blessing and refreshment.

Chatham.

Three have made public confession of Christ in the services of the Chatham Regular Baptist Church recently and others are under conviction.

A Building Available.

One of the many causes of our Union meeting in a hall from week to week has an opportunity of securing a church building at a rental of \$50.00 per month. The building includes an apartment which could be used by the pastor and offers many advantages from the standpoint of location and getting the work properly established. If the rent for but two months could be assured, the cause feels sure that it would be able to carry on and enlarge its work. Pastor and people are alike sacrificing much that the work may prosper, but the opportunity which now presents itself should appeal to those who would rejoice to see a small investment bear much fruit.

THE MISSIONARY BULLETIN.

A special Christmas Number of "The Missionary Bulletin" will be in the mails shortly and those who wish it forwarded to friends are asked to communicate with the office without delay. Again a call for prayer is made on behalf of "The Bulletin". Definitely remember its service and the many places it takes its messages. Pray for its preparation.

"IF GOD IS LIKE JESUS."

(Continued from page 10)

fled from Him. It was only because Noah "found grace" in God's sight that he was prepared to build the ark. The beginning of Abraham's righteousness was with God. Isaac was sent by God. Jacob was a deceiver, but was saved because of God's grace, Who said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." So throughout the Old Testament God is not sought by man, but rebelled against. The Israelites constantly, even after many manifestations of God, warnings and entreaties, sought to serve idols.

Thus there is no wisdom in this statement. It is contradictory to the words of The Truth when He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Neither is there any reassurance in it, except to some, perhaps, who cannot reconcile Scripture with their own theory. The glory of the Old Testament is the sovereign grace of God, Who in spite of constant disobedience on the part of the objects of His grace, succeeded every time in accomplishing His purpose.

To compare the moral and intellectual level of the earlier with the latter part of the Old Testament, we must decide first which is the earlier part. Moses lived in 1500 B.C. Christ refers to the creation and quotes Genesis 2:24 to refute the Pharisees. Then He says, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so", making Moses the writer of the law, and placing the second chapter of Genesis before the time of the Law. He surely would not have said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female", if He did not accept the whole passage as true; for how could He have

expected them to recognize this verse as a regulation of life if it had been placed in the midst of a myth?

We may then compare Adam with the people of Nehemiah's day. It is enough to say that God talked with Adam, worked with him, and that they were often together. What higher moral or intellectual standard is there? He had intelligence to dress and keep the garden, to name the creatures, and he had power to choose positive innocence or guilt. But we find Nehemiah rebuilding a ruined country, reforming a sinful people. He read again the law that was written long before, by Moses, and discovered that the people were breaking it. He exhorted the people to keep it, to return to the former high plane of living. Man certainly did not fall to such a low level by persistent and passionate search for God, but by a deliberate, constant, rebellion against Him.

I see no cause for rejoicing in such an idea as that God, through long ages, allowed the race to remain in childishness, superstition, and savagery, guiding their gropings towards the light, only very slowly, almost imperceptibly, when He could just as easily have revealed His righteousness and dispelled the darkness. Such a process of cruelty and neglect would be impossible to a Person Who is like Jesus. But it was not so; God set His high standard of justice before intelligent men and women, dealing especially with the superstitions into which they longed to follow the enemy.

The lofty heights on which Jesus Christ of Nazareth came and fulfilled His mission were a filthy stable, a still more filthy society, governed by criminal rulers, a corrupt religion made up of hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, and His own misunderstanding disciples. But He came in spite of sin, He fulfilled His mission to the letter, even thirsting on the cross that they should offer Him vinegar to drink in fulfilment of the ninety-sixth Psalm. He could do this because He was and is God.