

# 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

THE OXFORD GROUP'S DOCTRINE OF SIN

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, February 5th, 1933.

(Stenographically Reported)—Broadcast over CFRB, 690 k.c.,  
as is every Sunday evening Service of Jarvis Street Church, from 7 to 9 o'clock Eastern Standard Time)

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

"Of sin, because they believe not on me."—John 16:7-9.

In the treatment of any disease the first essential is a thorough understanding of the nature of the disease to be treated. Until medical science knows the nature of a particular disease it is unable to discover a cure for it. Hence, you have men the world over investigating the cause of that terrible scourge, cancer. So far, medical science has not been able to determine what causes cancer, or really the nature—I do not mean its outward form, I use the stronger word, the nature—of the malignant thing itself. And until the nature of the disease is discovered there can be no reliable remedy.

Of course, here and there men may stumble upon a remedy, and cures may be effected—not of cancer, but of other diseases—one might almost say, accidentally. But that is the work of the experimenter, of the empiricist; not of an exact scientist. Whenever a disease appears that is destructive of human life it becomes the first care of physicians to endeavour to isolate the bacillus from which it springs, and by which it is propagated. Until that is done, it is well-nigh impossible to prescribe a cure.

Thus, also in the practice of medicine, the physician's first task is always to discover what is wrong with the patient. I remember travelling in the United States a few years ago and reading in the papers of a Bishop of the Episcopal church who was laid aside through illness. He was somewhat of a humourist, and when a clerical friend called upon him and said, "I understand you are improving?" he replied, "Yes, I think I am." "I have been told you were suffering from such-and-such a complaint." "I hope so." "You hope so?" "Yes; it would be rather too bad to get well of the wrong disease." What he meant was

that that was what the doctor had diagnosed his case to be, and he hoped the right treatment had been applied. That is always the task of the physician: to fit the cure to the complaint.

Certain diseases symptomatically simulate one another, and it is often difficult to discover which of several diseases a patient is suffering from. It then becomes the task of the diagnostician to differentiate between these several diseases, and to assure himself as to which of the possible causes lies at the root of his patient's ailment. When once he has positively identified the disease, he will know what remedy to apply.

A still simpler illustration of my principle you may find in your motor-car. You drive into a garage—or have the service truck pull you in—and are usually greeted with the question, "What is the trouble now?" In a few instances you are able to tell him, but more often you are forced to say, "I do not know. You will have to find out." If he is a skilled man he will not begin by immediately taking off a tire—unless he sees you have a puncture—but will endeavour to ascertain where the trouble really lies.

So is it in the treatment of the soul. It is imperative that we should know what is wrong with us. That there is something wrong, and something of a very serious nature, there can be no doubt; that men generally are suffering from some moral ill there can be no question. But what is the nature of the disease? Is it an external thing which may be treated with external remedies? Or is it something that is rooted in human nature itself? How shall we discover? You will see at a glance that the

nature of the remedy will depend very largely upon the diagnosis.

Is sin purely mental? Is it an affection of the mind? Is it an illusion of mortal mind? If that is all, then the cure prescribed is likely to be mental too. But if it is something deeper than that we shall require a more powerful remedy.

Consider the case of Modernism in its broadest sense. Our modernistic friends are not ashamed, I suppose, of their Modernism; so they will offer no objection whatever to my speaking of it. Evolution is the prolific mother of many, if not all, the principles of Modernism. According to that theory—which I hold is not science, but a kind of philosophic madness—according to that theory, human nature is on the upgrade; human nature is better than it used to be. Of course, the most ardent Evolutionist would admit that we have not yet arrived at perfection. We are moving in that general direction, but in our pilgrimage it must be admitted that we are subject to a good many disabilities still. But they belong to a former state of existence, and we are emerging from a lower to a higher moral plane. When once the man has begun to climb upward you surely will not blame him for having to climb; but rather congratulate him on his aspirations, on his ambition to be a better man than he is. So whatever moral disabilities may afflict us, they are to be gradually sloughed off; and we are not to be blamed for our present moral state.

If that be so, this thing that we have been accustomed to call sin needs another name. If there be no guilt in it, if it be not rebellion, lawlessness, anarchy, in the very nature of it, but only an external symptom of a condition that is inherent, and which is inseparable from our original animal ancestry, then I think we ought to have a convention and congratulate ourselves on our attainment, and slap each other on the back and say we are getting on very well.

But that view of human nature, and of the universe, strikes at the very root of Evangelical Christianity. If there be no guilt in sin, no moral blameworthiness, then there is no need of atonement, there is no need of expiation; and some other interpretation than that He died in our room and stead must be put upon the death of Christ.

I am endeavouring to establish this principle, that the nature of the remedy prescribed inevitably depends upon the nature of the disease. We must, therefore, consider what sin is.

What is sin? What is the nature of this universal malady? That it is here nobody, I suppose, will question. The evolutionist may contend that this ordered universe has come to be by a fortuitous concatenation of atoms; but a railroad cannot be run, nor a bank conducted, nor a restaurant successfully operated by mere fortuity. When the cook puts certain ingredients together she must, of necessity, have some idea of what the result will be—or very soon the restaurant will have no customers. And the bank must study accuracy, and the railroad must have an accepted schedule by which to operate its trains.

We cannot afford, as I said to you last Sunday evening, to be mistaken in the matter of religion. We need to know what sin is, in order that we may know something of the remedy required.

I speak without disrespect of this new Movement of which we are hearing so much, which is not new at all. Our Oxford Group friends tell us they are not a new sect, they are not a new cult; but that they have come merely

to energize organized religion, and to be of real assistance to the churches. I affirm that the Oxford Group is very decidedly a new sect, that it is at base a new cult; and, as such, must be studied and treated. I speak as I do this evening at the request of some friends who are not Baptist, but who thought it well that I should elaborate somewhat the point in my lecture of a week ago Thursday, where I dealt with this chapter in, "For Sinners Only", entitled, "What is Sin?"

I select the best of it, and take what Mr. Russell, the author of the book, describes as "the best definition of sin that we have." These are his words:

"The best definition of sin that we have is that sin is anything in my life which keeps me from God and from other people."

I remember hearing a great preacher on one occasion deliver an address in which he exhorted his hearers to "beware of the plausible". We need to heed that exhortation. There are few people who really think beneath the surface of things, who have cultivated the habit of careful and logical analysis. Take that definition:

"The best definition of sin that we have is that sin is anything in my life which keeps me from God and from other people."

The assumption is, therefore, that it would be right and desirable that we should all be in fellowship with God, and with other people. Let us consider those principles in the order in which they are stated here. With what God are we to be in fellowship? "Anything that keeps me from God." What God? One of the Oxford Group writers ("The Principles of the Group," by *Sherwood Sunderland Day*, pp. 6 and 7), speaking of their doctrine and practice of "sharing", as they call it, says this:

"Confession to God alone is often not good enough in that it may cost nothing and may be merely the confession to a subjective picture of God which the person has built up for him or herself. In such a case, what actually happens is that the person does not confess at all—there is no real pain and repentance—it is an easy way of trying to ease one's conscience. Confessing to another person always costs and is thus a test of our honesty in hating our sin."

Many people, reading that, would say, "That is true, is it not?" Is it? My question is, What God have we in mind? To what God are we related? How may we know God? Here the practice of confessing sin to one another is recommended in order to avoid the danger of confessing to a subjective idea of God. Very well, if that is all I have, if that is my only realization of God, a "picture of God" which I have fashioned out of my own mind—if that is the only God I know, a mere mental abstraction, a mental conception of God, and nothing more, will confessing my sin to a man whom I can see make God any more real? Do you not see that at that point what this doctrine really proposes is a substitution of man for God? It is changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man"; and because, forsooth, one has no real God, because his faith cannot apprehend God, because the only God he has is a subjective image of God, therefore he must find a fellow-sinner that he may share his sin with him.

"Anything that keeps me from God." What God? If you begin to make your own god, if you fashion a god according to your own conceptions of what God ought to be, or if you are content with the mere outline of "the four absolutes", "absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love", if that is

all there is in God, and if sin be, in the first case, that which keeps one only from such a god, I affirm that such a conception is leagues removed from the biblical revelation of God, and the biblical definition of sin.

"Anything in my life which keeps me . . . from other people." Have you noticed how men who think alcohol in some form is necessary to any real fellowship seem to find a basis of agreement unknown to others? If you get into their company, in a little while you will find you are not very welcome. You may find yourself in a company of men of unclean speech. Bear testimony as a Christian against it, and see if your very testimony for Christ will not keep you from "other people". Take your stand against worldliness in its various forms, take your stand for the Word of God, and declare your unwavering conviction that the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the inspired and infallible word of God, and I promise you that you will be unwelcome in many circles.

Is it therefore a sin for me to take a positive position in respect to matters that I conceive—whether rightly or wrongly—that I conceive to be right? Must I withhold my testimony and be neutral lest I offend "other people"? "Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," said the Apostle. I affirm that it is impossible for any minister, or any true Christian, to be a servant of Christ, to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth", and please men at the same time. It cannot be done. You cannot strike at the root of these things which are destructive of Christian faith, and, at the same time, earn the encomiums of men who radically differ on these points.

I have never read anything more unsatisfactory, I have never read anything more superficial, I have never read anything that is supposed to be a statement of scriptural truth, that was farther removed from the Word of God than that. Sin is something more than that. Entertaining that view of sin I do not wonder that the Oxford Group sees no need of an atonement, no need of an expiatory sacrifice.

Rev. S. M. Shoemaker, Jr., of New York, one of the principal writers on the work of the Oxford Group Movement, is quoted by J. C. Brown in his book, "The Oxford Group Movement—Is It of God or Satan?" as follows:

"In his (Shoemaker's) recently published book, 'I, if I be Lifted Up,' he writes:

"I think that the thing that made Him say, 'It is finished', was the knowledge that He had lived long enough to infect the world with a new principle."

"He also thinks that our Lord must have said to Himself: 'This little handful, the whole fruit of My labours, is the one hopeful society in the world, the only true initiates in the open secret of how to live, the vanguard of the new humanity. They got what I said. They saw the point. They dared to follow. They will carry on. It is finished.'"

Was there ever a greater misrepresentation of truth than that? It is a mere burlesque on the Word of God.

What saith the Scripture? Outward reform is all to the good. There can be no reasonable objection to a psychological revolution, so far as it goes. But real redemption, the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is something far deeper than that. My objection to the Oxford Group is that it is a garage-man who thinks nothing happens to the car but a flat tire, a crumpled fender, or some-

thing that everybody can see. It is nothing more than the old programme of making clean the outside of the cup and the platter. Because a man makes restitution of a few cents or dollars here or there, because he turns over a new leaf and calls his wife, "My dear", instead of scolding her, and behaves like a decent man in some of the relationships of life instead of being a perfect bore, he is supposed to be "changed", converted! That, of course, is all to the good: but surely it does not go far enough. Wash the outside of the cup and platter, by all means, but do not stop with that.

Sin, I repeat, is a more serious malady than that. The Bible says that sin is the transgression of the law, or that sin is lawlessness. All unrighteousness is sin. Then in the text I have read to you our Lord Himself said that the special function of the Holy Ghost would be to teach men what sin is, for He said, "When he is come, he will convict the world of sin."

What is sin? Impurity? Yes. Drunkenness? Yes. Dishonesty? Yes. Disorderliness? Yes. Selfishness? Certainly. I could go on and name a thousand outward sins. But when I have named them all, I have only touched that which is symptomatic, that which is on the surface, the outward manifestation of sin. These are sins, not sin. Sin is a deeper thing than any of these.

What is sin? "Of sin, because they believe not on me." I know it is very easy to disparage doctrine. I know it is very plausible to speak of the "Christ of experience". I know it is easy to speak with contempt of theory. "We do not want your doctrine," say they—and immediately they formulate and ask you to accept another doctrine in lieu of the one of which they are disposed to rob you.

If that theory is logical, why not dispense with our chemical, physics, and electrical laboratories? Why the elaborate experimentation there? Why this effort to trace matters from the effect to the cause, and to discover the operation of laws that elude the casual observer? What is the function of science but to strip off the externals, to get down to original causes, and to demonstrate the truth in certain matters of the physical realm?

Nobody would contend that any science is an exact science, and yet surely we are deeply indebted to the discoveries and achievements of science. When a bridge is to be built across, say, the Hudson in New York, or across the St. Lawrence in Quebec, the engineer sits down in his study, after having measured the span, and considers the stress and strain to which it will be subjected, the weight of steel required, and all the rest of it. I do not understand it, it is utterly bewildering to me; but when I cross that bridge I am grateful for the engineer who did what I could not do; and I am thankful he had his theories. That bridge is the result of having tried many theories, and proved them to be wanting; of having corrected them, until by and by the bridge was erected according to the established theories of the engineer's science, and now carries thousands from one side of the river to the other.

I do not know much about chemistry. I do not know much about dispensing medicine. But I should like to know that the man who dispenses prescriptions for me is a man who has sound pharmaceutical theories, a man who knows how to do it, and is not working haphazardly.

Are we to believe that all the centuries of Christianity that are past, the testimony of the countless millions

who have died in the faith of Christ, and have put to the proof during their life their theories, if you like to call them so, their doctrines of grace, their science of theology, and established the truth of them, have been in vain, and that it has remained for this aggregation of empiricists to come along with their "no theory" idea, and ask us to "scrap" everything, and to adopt their new methods? The removal of sin involves more than calling each other, "Tom", "Dick", and "Harry"; more than laying a foundation for human fellowship. It is more than removing things that prevent people from being good-humoured with each other. Sin is the rejection of Christ, the refusal to believe in Him. That is the comprehensive sin; that is the sin that is the mother of all sins. That is the sin that involves all moral wrong in itself.

And the Spirit of God comes to show a man that though he is with his neighbours perfectly honest, perfectly pure, perfectly unselfish, and also very loving, that though he be all that, and altogether an amiable gentleman belonging to the select company who wear a special jacket when they have dinner—I do not object to the jacket; I like to wear one myself—a man may be all that, and he may talk about "following Christ", and may even profess to surrender to Christ, and yet, by his whole teaching he may be leading people to refuse to believe in Christ as He is revealed in the Word of God.

I do not want your "subjective picture of God". I do not want your subjective Christ. I want, first of all, the Christ of the gospel, the Christ of the Book. "He that believeth not God," it is said, "hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." To refuse acceptance of the record is to call God a liar.

I have not time to do what I should like to do on this one point. I wish I could lecture to you for a year on the subject—but I will not try to compress what I should then say into one address because I am limited by the radio! But what is it to accept Christ? Whose Christ? The Christ of the Scripture. I am positive of this, that the promise of His coming binds all the books of the Bible together. The person of Christ is the keystone to this arch of revelation. The crimson line of His blood goes through the entire Book. And to believe in Christ is to know Him, not only as the Son of God, but as God the Son; to know that from everlasting to everlasting He is God.

But my special emphasis this evening is just here. I would remind you that that is what the New Testament says about Christ, that in Him the Old Testament finds its fulfilment. When John introduced Him he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord did not object to the characterization; He offered no objection to the figure by which He was introduced. He knew that He was the Lamb of God Who came to die for the sin of the world. He Himself said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom instead of many." When He began to unfold the purpose of His mission and ministry to His disciples, and told them that He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer, Peter, ready of speech always, said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." You remember our Lord's answer? He identified the voice that protested against the cross and its significance, and said, "Get thee behind

me, Satan: thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

There is nothing the devil hates like the blood of the cross. After His resurrection our Lord, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself", and He said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." In effect He said, "My death was no mistake. It was predicted of me in all the Scriptures. And while I came to fulfil that which was written, nowhere did I more completely and mightily fulfil it than when I bowed My head in death on the cross." Jesus Christ represented Himself as the sinner's Substitute, as the Lamb of God, as the Sacrifice, as the sinner's Scavenger, "Who taketh away the sin of the world". And with this agree all the words of holy Scripture: the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and that glorious book at the conclusion of the canon. I say, therefore, that to represent Christ in any other character than that, or to fail adequately to emphasize that distinctive and essential part of His ministry, is to offer men some other Christ than is portrayed in the Bible.

It is folly to say that I believe in Christ if I repudiate His own words, and deny the very thing that He said He came to do. So that when we come to see sin in its true character, as the opposition of the human soul to God's delineation, His diagnosis of that malignant thing that has death at the heart of it—to refuse to accept that, and to refuse to bow as a guilty sinner in the presence of the Crucified, and to accept the cleansing, purging, power of the precious blood, that is sin. Even if you do greet everybody at a house-party, even if you do persuade many people that it does not make much difference what they believe so long as they are all good fellows and love each other, unless you believe in, to the point of surrendering to, the Christ of the record God has given to us of His Son, you have not really repented and believed the Gospel. To me the Oxford Group is one of the most subtle cults of the times, against which we need to be much on our guard.

There is one way of life: there is only one. "I am," said Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The way of the cross leads home. Of the plate where the blood is sprinkled, God has said, "There will I meet with thee." And my question to you, my friends, within these walls this evening, and to you who listen by radio, is simply this—not, Are you on good terms with your neighbours? I hope you are. Not, Have you paid your debts? I hope you have; at least, I hope you would like to, and would be willing to, if you had the wherewithal in these days of depression. Not, Whether your wife thinks you are a very excellent husband. I have no doubt she does, and I hope she is justified in her estimate. Not, Whether you are a good citizen. I hope you are. I hope you are not too intimate with the police, that you have only a nodding acquaintance with them, and a cheery word to encourage them in their task. No! No! Not these things. Nor yet whether you are a member of a church; nor whether you go through a form of prayer; nor yet whether you read the Bible; nor yet whether you walk circumspectly in your life-relationships. To all these questions I venture to hope you would, were I to give you an opportunity, return an answer in the affirmative.

But we need more than that, and my question is, Have you been to the—

“ . . . Fountain filled with Blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
Where sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains”?

Can you say it?—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there have I, as vile as he,  
Washed all my sins away.”

If you have, I think you can finish that great hymn of Cowper's:

“Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.

“When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,  
Lies silent in the grave,  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing Thy power to save.”

Let us pray:

As we bow humbly in Thy presence, O Lord, we trust there are hundreds, mayhap thousands, who bow penitently with us before Thee. Save us from every false trust; save us from depending upon any saviour but the crucified and risen Christ. Once again we offer the publican's prayer for ourselves—and oh, that many may offer it for the first time, God, be merciful to me a sinner! May we this night be justified! May the full assurance of faith be given to many, that ere we close our eyes we may know that Thou hast washed our sins away; that the voice of the Spirit, through Thy word, may be heard saying to us, Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever! For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

#### THE “GROUP” MOVEMENT, OR “BUCHMANISM”

By Rev. Chas. Fisher, M.A.

(From “The Reaper,” the official organ of The New Zealand Bible Training Institute, Inc., Rev. Joseph W. Kemp, Editor.)

A number of correspondents have written enquiring regarding the new Oxford Movement, which has gained such popular acceptance in many countries. The following notes were written for private circulation, and then by permission appeared in “Watching and Waiting”. The writer is the Rev. Charles Fisher, M.A., Pastor of Lansdowne Hall, W. Norwood, S.E., and as they answer several of the questions sent to us liberty is taken to reproduce the article, in the hope that enquiring minds may be helped.

“Buchmanism has many features which appeal to me tremendously, viz., its utter unconventionalism and break-away from stereotyped methods. There is a buoyancy and freshness about their meetings and methods which is a real tonic! Would to God we could catch something of the same kind of liveliness in our ordinary church meetings! Also its complete breaking down of all ‘class’ distinctions is splendid, and other features are worthy of high commendation and imitation!

“But it has also got some very sinister features, which make me very careful about the whole movement; I have tried to study it with an open mind, ready to approve and adopt it if possible, but I am convinced that it is actually divisive, and that its ultimate end will be very harmful to all true Evangelical faith, I mention a few things:

“1. **Fraternalization of Opposites.**—It is possible for Catholics (Anglo-Catholic and I believe even Roman Catholic) to meet with Modernists and Evangelicals in spiritual meetings and to maintain fellowship! Now all true fellowship must be in the Truth; and as there are vital differences between the positions mentioned above, this new ‘fellowship’ seems

to be a strange hybrid thing. A fellowship of all true Evangelicals, altogether apart from Denominational barriers, but solely on the basis of loyalty to the Word of God, is a very desirable, and indeed necessary thing. But that would be a unity in Spirit and in Truth. The other is in defiance of, or in complete oblivion of, great doctrinal issues, and therefore cannot be right.

“2. **Worldliness.**—Here is a religious movement which has managed to do away with ‘the offence of the cross’. Ardent advocates of this movement find it possible to go to the dance and the theatre and to indulge in betting just as much as before they were changed’. One reads of a man taking his partner aside from the dance, and leading her to the Lord, and then going back to join the rest of the worldly throng. ‘We have not so learned Christ!’ There may have been a ‘change’, but there has been no ‘New Birth’, for when that takes place, ‘Old things pass away; lo, all things become new.’

“3. **Authority of the Word.**—There seems to be a strange absence of any sense of the importance of the authority of the Bible. Not that it is discarded; in fact, hints on Bible reading are issued officially by the Movement; but it is for devotional study, rather than for doctrinal use, that this is done. ‘Listening in’ to some message from one knows not where, in a state of quiescence or receptiveness, is actually a far more important feature of this cult than definite Bible study and prayer. I consider this to be one of its greatest dangers, for unless we know what station is broadcasting we may be completely deceived! We are warned to ‘try or test the spirits.’ But how can that be done by one who is ignorant of the Word of God? Our Lord gave repeated warnings of the coming of deceivers, yes, so subtle and alluring as ‘to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.’ Therefore it behoves us to be specially on our guard with regard to listening to outside voices, ‘charm they never so wisely.’ If Satan can be transformed into ‘an angel of light,’ may not these guidances be mere will o’ the wisps?

“4. **Psychological Rather Than Pneumatological.**—So far my remarks have been of a merely negative or critical character, pointing out the dangers of the Movement; now I am going to try to give an explanation of it, so far as I understand it. The Apostle Paul distinguished between ‘the works of the flesh,’ and ‘the fruit of the Spirit’; that is, I am convinced, the great issue here. All the wonderful ‘changes’ of this Movement—and some of them are very remarkable—seem to be brought about by human means, rather than by divine means! It is sadly possible to simulate the fruit of the Spirit. All Christian workers know how only too often they have been compelled to admit that what looked like good ‘wheat’ proved to be only ‘tares.’ It is possible for the house to be ‘emptied, swept and garnished’ without there being any change of heart. Under the influence of the very wonderful enthusiasm of their meetings, or of the keenness of the individual giving his testimony or ‘sharing’, as they call it, it is possible for someone else to determine to have a similar testimony, and they can do it! The fruit of the Spirit is not moral reformation. A man can live a moral life without being converted, as for example Saul of Tarsus! But it is only the Holy Spirit that can enable a man to see the Kingdom of God.

I have come to the conclusion that this Movement is a kind of ‘false fire.’ It is an effort calculated to attract those who are ‘spiritually minded’; those who want their lives to count for something worth while in the world; all those who could be classed under the title ‘men of goodwill.’ By its zeal, and earnestness, and fervour, it attracts many who have found the churches ‘dull as ditch-water,’ and they are prepared to put all their energies into making their newly-found ‘religion’ go. And so the devil has stolen a march on the forces of the ‘lowly One of Nazareth,’ and he has drawn off many who would seem to have been just the recruits that the true Church needed! But the Captain of our salvation is not asleep! And His great Recruiting Officer, the Holy Spirit, is not neglectful of His work, and God will yet bring His purposes to pass! ‘Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.’ (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). I feel certain that ere long it will be seen quite plainly that this whole Movement is alien to the mind and method of the Holy Spirit of God. If so, let us be wise and hold aloof, even if we cannot as yet condemn it.”

## A LEVITE LOOKING FOR A PLACE.

A Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,

Thursday Evening, February 2nd, 1933.

*Twelfth in a Series of Thursday Evening Lectures on Biblical Theology (the ninth on the book of Judges) which is included in the Curriculum of Toronto Baptist Seminary.*

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson Text: Judges, chapters 17 and 18.

Our lesson text for this evening will be found in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the book of Judges. Let me read a few verses in the first chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes:

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us."

That brings these chapters right up-to-date. It may, on the surface, sound a little like ancient history, but I think a careful reading will identify the principles here described; and you will be led to see that even the oldest portions of the Word of God are newer than this evening's newspapers.

### I.

Here is the story of a woman who had a hoard of silver, eleven hundred shekels of silver; and the second verse tells us that she lost them. Somebody stole them from her. That is not ancient surely! That is up to the minute. She was very angry because of her loss—and that is a little like modern human nature too! This woman went to the extent of pronouncing a curse upon whoever had stolen her property. She was really in a bad way, like many people of our day. You may judge of the estimate a man puts upon his property by the intensity of his feeling occasioned by his loss.

It is not pleasant to lose anything, and especially to lose it by theft. You would rather have given it away, and had the credit of being a benefactor than to have someone appropriate that which was your own. I gather that this woman was not different from other women—or from men—in that respect. There is nothing the Bible condemns more than covetousness, the opening of our hearts to the world, and the things of the world, and letting mere things take possession of us. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." A man may be a millionaire and make no idol of his property. On the other hand, a man may be poor, and yet allow a few cents to obscure his view of God. Whatever is put in the place of God is bound to result in spiritual distress and utter bankruptcy.

Perhaps the depression will do the world good. Perhaps we have been living at too rapid a rate. Perhaps it is a good thing for people to lose their eleven hundred shekels of silver occasionally, to find out whether there are other elements in life of greater value than mere silver and gold.

This woman discovered that her son was the thief. When parents fail to put God first they must not be surprised if their children put them last. This woman found her greatest sorrow in her own home. Her son, perhaps moved by the intensity of his mother's feeling, and the bitterness of the curse she had pronounced, at last acknowledged that he was the culprit. He made restitution of that which he had taken away. Apparently his mother was not greatly disturbed by the quality of his act. It was the loss of her possessions which troubled her. And when he had restored that which he had taken away, the curse was turned into a blessing; she readily forgave him, and said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord".

### II.

We have here a piece of history that requires microscopical examination. It is well to observe the beginnings of evil. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" It is well to be always on guard against the entrance of the smallest evils. The Bible says that covetousness is idolatry. What wonder that this woman should resolve to convert a part of that which had been restored to her into a molten image as a kind of thank-offering to God? She did not intend that it should be a substitute for God: she intended only that it should be a representative of Deity, and she resolved to make a molten image.

It is worthy of note, however, that of the eleven hundred shekels she used only two hundred shekels for the image, so that she had nine hundred shekels to the good! It is very suggestive of Ananias and Sapphira who wanted to be religious, but who did not want their religion to cost them too much. They kept back part of the price, as did she.

Micah, her son, was not a very young man, for he had a grown family of his own. From which I take it that this covetous woman was not a young woman. Remember, the evils of youth become accentuated in old age. If you do not learn to control your temper while you are young, there is not much chance of doing so when you are older. All the individual eccentricities, as years are multiplied and control is diminished, become more and more pronounced. I suppose this woman began by being prudent, by laying up for a "rainy day". Some people seem to think the rest of life is going to be a rainy season!

The woman of our story called her son into partnership with herself. This dishonest son and covetous mother devised a religion of their own. They made an ephod and teraphim, after they had made a graven image and a molten image, and "consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest"? Was not that a comfortable sort of religion? A home-made god, a home-made ephod, home-made teraphim—and one of the family for a priest! If you cannot be satisfied with a religion of that sort you are hard to please.

But that is the kind of religion people have to-day. They are not even taking it readymade, they make it for themselves.

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." There was no objective, overruling, authority. They sang, I suppose, in those days—

"You go to your church, and I'll go to my church,  
And we'll all walk along together."

Why not? "Everybody did that which was right in his own eyes." That is a description of the religious condition obtaining in this period of Israel's history here described. It was a kind of religious anarchy. Every

man was his own priest, every man made his own god, every man took his pad and wrote down the guidance he received! It is all of a piece: this is the Oxford Group right up-to-date, right up to the minute.

Micah "consecrated one of his own sons, who became his priest". There are many orthodox people who are guilty of that sin.

That was the beginning of idolatry in Israel. Up to this time in the book of Judges you read frequently, "The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord". But they returned again to the Lord. You remember how Moses dealt with the calf that Aaron made? He ground it to powder, and from then until now there has been no idolatry in Israel. These idols were introduced—no; not by Mrs. Eddy, but by a Mrs. Somebody, Micah's mother.

### III.

The next part of this story belongs particularly to you young men who will be pastors. I want to speak to you for a moment, but the rest of the folks may listen in if they desire.

"There was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a place." John Wesley did not invent ministerial itinerancy. Here was a wandering priest or preacher; he had no place. And of all the helpless creatures on earth I know of no one more helpless than a preacher without a place. This man wandered about "to sojourn where he could find a place". I have met many such. We have had a few come into our Union of Regular Baptist Churches.

Incidentally, let me say a word to the members of this church. Some day, I do not know when it will be, but some day this pulpit will be vacant; you will have a funeral. After a while you will settle down to get another preacher, and when you do there will be many wandering Levites come around this way. Be careful whom you take in.

This man came to Micah. I have had many come to me saying something like this, "I am serving just now in a Tabernacle, or church of another denomination, but I could be quite content to serve with the Regular Baptists." The wandering Levite is not particular where he serves, so long as it is "a place". One place is as good as another, so long as there is good cooking and other incidentals. Let me say to you young men that there is nothing more contemptible than a mercenary preacher, a minister looking for a place. When you become ministers, if you have to look for a place, you had better conclude that you are in your wrong place. If the Lord has called you to preach, you will not need to call on Micah to see if he can get you a position.

Micah said, "Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place" — he did not know whether that was it or not, but Micah said unto him, "Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel"—one suit to wear every day, and one to wear on official occasions—"and thy victuals"—otherwise, his board. "So the Levite went in." What more could one want than that—a stated salary, kept in clothes and food, and a place in Micah's household as his priest? "The Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons."

"And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah." I do not know why Micah put him in the place of the son he had consecrated. Micah was of the tribe of Ephraim, and no man of that tribe might legally serve as a priest. When the Levite came along, he was qualified; and I suppose the son stepped aside. "Now", said Micah, "know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest."

What a picture of many a church to-day! They have made their own molten image and graven image, their own ephod and teraphim, their own form of worship. Now they have their own pastor—and, if you please, he is a Levite. "You ought to hear our new minister. He is a great man. He is a graduate of some great university. He is an M.A., and D.D., and X.Y.Z.—particularly X. We do not know who he is, or whence he came, but he is a Levite." There are many churches like that. When they get a new pastor they say, "Now we shall have revival." Do not be so sure of it. Many things in that house of Micah need straightening out; and revival will depend upon something more than having an approved and highly recommended minister for a pastor.

Listen to the story. This Levite was a man who was sojourning "where he could find a place". There are many preachers like that. I remember being at a minister's home a few years ago, and his wife asked me, "Mr. Shields, how long have you been in Toronto?" (I forget how long it was at that time, I think about sixteen years). "That is a long time", said she, "I wish you could get some kind of glue and attach it to my husband so he would stay somewhere. I am tired of moving from place to place."

This man may have been a star preacher, but if he was he was a wandering star, for he was always moving from one place to another, coming to "sojourn where he could find a place".

"In those days there was no king in Israel." That explains many things. We live in a day when there is no king in the church; I mean, there is no authority, there is no government, no word to regulate anything in the average church.

I am thankful the Oxford Group came to Toronto for one thing: It has served one very useful purpose: it has shown that the majority of the churches in Toronto—and you may put it in the papers if you like—are nothing more than Pagan temples. They are utterly destitute of any element of Christianity. If the Group's visit has done nothing else, it has exposed the spiritual bankruptcy of the average modern church. "There (is) no king in Israel." There is no order, no government, no norm, no standard, no supreme court to which matters in dispute may be referred.

### IV.

"In those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel." Laish had been assigned to them, but they had not taken possession of it. There are many Danites in the world who have not taken possession of their inheritance. Nor can anyone possess his inheritance without conflict and labour. Every man must take possession of his inheritance for himself. The Danites had been inactive. They now appointed men

to spy out the land, to see what possibility there was of taking possession of it. They came to Mount Ephraim and to the house of Micah, and there they lodged. When they came in they met somebody there. He may have been changed in appearance. I do not know whether those two new suits of clothes had altered him or not, but they did not recognize him by his general appearance, but said, "We have heard that voice before." Then to the priest they said, "Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here?" And in effect he said, "I had been looking for a place"—and a man who looks for a place may turn up anywhere. "Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest—Do you not think I have done pretty well." They said, "Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go—It is all right; you are on the right track."

No doubt they were greatly impressed with his "guidance". He had asked counsel of the ephod. Mark you, the house of God was in Shiloh. There was the Urim and Thummim. There was the place to which they should have looked for counsel, and not to a homemade god, and to a Levite who was out of his place, who was somebody's hired man. That is a poor job for a true Levite.

"They came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them; for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth."

Remember, they ought to have had this land long ago, this oasis in the desert where there was no want of anything might have been theirs.

So before the believer the inheritance that is yours in Christ awaits your possession. We have observed that right through, that obviously the land of Canaan was not a type of heaven, but of the heavenly places in Christ Jesus wherein we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him, and where we must wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"; even as these people had to wrestle against the sons of Anak. This particular city was occupied by people who had ceased to fear the children of Israel—because they had ceased to give the people of the land any cause to fear them.

"There went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim." Please observe this,

that as they went on their way they came again to the house of Micah, and they said, "See those houses there? There is a religion already made. They have an ephod and teraphim, a graven image, and a molten image. Shall we go in and see?" "And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him."

While the six hundred men waited outside the five men went in and took the graven image, the molten image, the ephod and the teraphim; and the priest stood at the entering of the gate, by the six hundred men that had been appointed. Then they said to the priest, "You have had a pretty good position here, but we are a committee. We have come from a big congregation. You have had only a small church here, one family—is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?"

What would you expect that sort of preacher to say in answer to that? He had always been looking for a place—and he was still looking for a place. I do hope that you young men will never descend to that kind of thing. I remember in years past there were certain men in the Baptist denomination who were always candidates for every vacant pulpit. I am ashamed to say that, but it is a fact. I have in mind now certain men whose names stand out as men who were always journeying, and ready to sojourn wherever they could find a place. They were always looking for another place. As soon as it was announced that a pulpit was vacant Micah would be sure to get a letter from Rev. So-and-So, or from his friends.

I was in a certain city one day, and a business man said, "I have something I should like to show you. I do not want to reflect on the ministry, but I must say I do not like this." "What have you?" I enquired. "Look at this", and he pulled out a pile of letters. First he had received a letter from a distant city with newspaper cuttings telling what an extraordinary man Mr. So-and-So was. After a while he received another letter from a city as far east as the other had been west, telling of the singular ability of this man; then by and by from the north, and from the south. Letters began to rain in. This friend said to me, "And I dare say that man supposes I am foolish enough to believe that this just happened; but I know what is back of it. I know all these men are writing at his request. Do you not think that is a disgrace to the ministry?" I said, "I think it is; and I should think you would have little difficulty in deciding that, whoever you call to be your pastor, it will not be that wandering Levite."

If the Lord does not call you to preach, and sustain you in your place, do not descend to such methods as that. You might far better apply to the city for a job cleaning the streets—or cleaning something. Let us not drag the high and holy calling of the ministry to that low level.

The priest who came to dwell in the house of Micah virtually assisted in stealing the "carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image"—and then went away. Poor Micah lost his priest, his religion, and all the rest of it when his pastor left him! Micah went after them. He could not fight them, but



he thought perhaps they would be amenable to reason: "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, what aileth thee?" If you have a religion that somebody can steal from you, it is not worth much. Micah had not lost much had he only known it. Nor has anyone when thus he can be deprived of his religion.

They told him he had better behave himself or he would lose his life—and he went back home without his gods or priest.

The children of Dan took possession of Laish, entered into it and "set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."

That is the history of modern times. Make your own religion; or, if you cannot do that, steal it from somebody else, and set it up. When the seat of authority, and the record which God has given us of His Son, and absolutely the only guide from earth to heaven, are disregarded and rejected by men, they make a religion of their own. Let us abide by that which is written.

Turn those two chapters over. I have only offered a suggestion or two; you will find them full of the principles that obtain in the modern cults of our day. When once people repudiate the principle of divine authority, and become a law unto themselves, make their own god, their own ephod and teraphim, consecrate their own priest, and have a religion all their own, there are no lengths to which they may not go. You have heard of the boy of whom his mother was so proud. She said that he was going to be a great violinist. He could not only play, but he could make violins, for he had made a fiddle, all of wood, and all out of his own head! These people made a religion all out of their own hearts. There was no divine element in it. It was pure paganism. Just such a religion goes by the name of Christianity in many churches of our day.

### THE "OXFORD GROUP" ON TRIAL

Rev. John McNab, M.A., Toronto.

From *The Presbyterian Record*, February, 1933.

The advance guard of the Oxford Group, Rev. Hallen Viney of Cambridge, England, presented the claims of the group to the Assembly's Committee on Evangelism and our church officials. Dr. MacNamara asked him, "What do you teach?" Mr. Viney stumbled and stuttered and made no reply. Being sympathetic to the coming of the group I suggested that they taught salvation from sin—and Mr. Viney gave a rather hesitating motion of assent to that suggestion.

That question, which was really left unanswered, revealed as some of us later learned one of the several weaknesses of this group that is touring Canada. They really have no definite doctrines. They declare that they have no "taboos." They relate their experiences of being "changed" but they have no teaching ministry. Indeed in one of our largest Presbyterian churches, a man with his wife, who had been "changed" in Montreal, stated that he did not know whether it was conversion or not. The minister had to point out to the congregation that the Presbyterian Church stands for conversion, and not only believes in the act of justification but in the work of sanctification.

There is an unmistakable challenge in the group to an absolute surrender of our lives. Such a challenge is the most helpful thing that comes to us. The standards that they set before us are absolute honesty, absolute love, absolute purity, and absolute unselfishness. Some people sense danger in the word absolute and point out correctly that no one but God or His Son can attain unto absolute perfection. Nevertheless if all ministers and religious workers would shake up their churches and classes by a personal challenge to the

highest type of Christian living, it might be productive of a revival of religion. First of all we must get right with God.

Having said these things in their favour let me point out that the sad thing is that, within their system, there are two principles of guidance and sharing which enable them to let themselves down easily—"Sharing" is the confession to another of all our sins trivial and great. It must take place "Under Four Eyes". It is a revival of the Roman Catholic practice of confession, but with a distinct difference.—Whereas in the confessional of the Roman Catholic Church the priest hears the story and there it ends, the "sharing" in the "Oxford Group" may be printed in the newspapers or made before an entire congregation. Without such "sharing" there is no remission of sin. Is it not strange that they should oppose the teaching of the New Testament? The first epistle of John says in chapter one, verse nine, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and no one can ever claim that the confessional, which has been within the Roman Catholic Church for centuries, has been a source of spiritual power.

The other principle of "guidance" is likewise dangerous, morally dangerous, for it leads to a life that is casual and the type of character that results is responsible to no one. One can excuse himself from engagements or appointments by simply saying that he felt "guided not to go." In a large city church some members of the group arrived to speak. The minister asked them who would speak first. "We never thought of that," they said. Let us have "a quiet time." They brought out pencils and paper and waited. Then the young leader said, "What did you get?" "I got that the lady should speak first"—"So did I," answered the other. One can see that such mechanical "guidance" is largely mental suggestion and is not far removed from the ouija board of the spiritualists.

The technique of the movement is based on a profound knowledge of mass psychology. There is also a thorough understanding of those things in twentieth century cults that have appealed to the people. One hesitates to say it and yet we found within the movement a little of Christian Science, a little of spiritualism and even a little mormonism. The leaders of the movement declared again and again that they did not want large crowds; they wanted to pick their people. The very fact that they declaimed against crowds made many people curious and they came eager to see what the movement held. They were urged to return because you could not see what they were doing, except you followed a series of meetings. This is the centre of the emotional appeal within the movement, repeated visits to hear the self-unveilings of those who give testimony provokes self-analysis or self-introspection. Even their approach to any religious teaching was along psychological lines. When Canon Grensted of Oriel College, Oxford, was questioned with regard to his religious viewpoint, his interviewer said, "I consider there are two necessary things in the Christian religion. The first is our own inner consciousness of God, and the second is the objective reality of God;" and Canon Grensted replied, "I deny that second." That means that for this outstanding teacher of the "Oxford Group," God is purely subjective.

Although we had high hopes for the movement one can only say that the worst cannot be here discussed. The leader of the movement, Dr. Frank Buchman, was compelled to leave Princeton University some years ago, because of his "sex-sharings" with the undergraduates and the effect of "guidance" upon their characters. President Hibben declared, "As long as I am President of the University there is no place for Buchmanism in Princeton." Such leading British journals as "The Spectator" and "The New Statesman and Nation" have printed balanced articles that warn the British public against the perils within the movement. The editor of "The New Outlook" in criticizing the movement says, "A meeting for ministers at which matters of sex were discussed will abide as one of the hideous memories of a lifetime."

There now remains a tremendous challenge to the church. The crowds that went to the meetings in Toronto reveal that the masses are looking for spiritual leadership. The people are both hungry and thirsty for a new outflow of vital religion. Will there be a stirring amid the dry bones, and quickening and a new power that will bring a spiritual rebirth to our palsied members? Shall we who are the shepherds in Israel fail our Master in this crisis? When Jonathan Goforth started out to begin our mission in Honan, the founder of the China Inland Mission sent him a significant message, "If you would enter that province for Christ, you must go forward on your knees." So, we too, must go forward on our knees.

## Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 8

No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 9

February 26th, 1933

## FIRST QUARTER

## JOINING THE DIVINE PROCESSION.

Lesson Text: Ruth, 3 and 4.

Golden Text: "Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part; but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning."  
—Ruth 3:13.

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS:

Monday—Lev. 25:25-31.

Tuesday—Deut. 25:5-10.

Wednesday—Luke 19:1-10.

Thursday—John 19:1-10.

Friday—1 Peter 1:1-12.

Saturday—Rev. 5:1-14.

## I. RUTH WAITING (3).

In this chapter there is the record of a somewhat curious, though interesting and significant, experience in the life of Ruth, which led to her marriage with Boaz. At the direction of Naomi, her mother-in-law, she visited the threshing floor of Boaz, and stayed all night thereon. The action seems strange in our eyes, and would not receive commendation in our social circles, yet it is well to remember the circumstances of the occasion, the purpose of the action, and the fact that the persons concerned acted in a virtuous manner throughout the transaction. There is no question as to the violation of the law of purity, it only relates to that of propriety, and that we cannot fully understand or explain unless we can project ourselves with certainty into the circumstances of the occasion. The purpose which dictated the plan related to the marriage of Ruth with Boaz, in accordance with the law governing the duty of the nearest of kin, (Deut. 25:5-9). This purpose was fulfilled.

Respecting the incident, observe first the expression of Naomi's desire for the marriage of Ruth. She desired her to find rest, that it might be well with her, (v. 1). This manifested the kind and unselfish disposition of the older woman. It was not herself she was looking after primarily, the welfare of her daughter-in-law came first. It should ever be thus in our relations with others. There is no doubt Naomi profited from this union, but it came as a result of putting others before herself. Instruction concerning marriage may not be out of place here. There are many mismatched pairs, and there are many miserable homes, and counsel is needed on the part of the young that they may be informed of the right way, and guarded against the pitfalls which beset the way. Warning is needed concerning the unequal yoke, con-

demned alike in Old and New Testaments, (Deut. 7:2, 3; 2 Cor. 6:14), and guidance is helpful in pointing out the necessity of seeking God's will in this, as in all other matters.

Following the question concerning rest in marriage, there come the directions for the procuring of same, several particulars being contained therein. First, the statement concerning the relationship of Boaz, (v. 2), then the information relating to his location that night, (v. 2). "He winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor". This was in accordance with the custom of those days, of the master taking upon himself the responsibility of attending to this important part of the harvest operations, the work being done in the evening when the wind was blowing, in order the better to ensure the separation of the grain from the chaff. We are reminded by this of the condition of the wicked, who are like the chaff which the wind driveth away, (Ps. 1:4). Naomi then directs Ruth to prepare herself for meeting Boaz, (v. 3), and explains how she should act when she reaches the threshing floor (v. 4), obedience to the same being promised by Ruth, (v. 5). The story is then unfolded of the presence of Boaz on the threshing floor, (vs. 6, 7); of the discovery of and interview with Ruth, (vs. 8-13), and of her return home in the morning laden with the barley, (vs. 14-18). Note Ruth's appeal to Boaz as the near kinsman, her request for his protection, symbolically implied in relation to the covering of the skirt, the recognition by Boaz of the character of Ruth, his promise to perform the part of kinsman redeemer, and his kindly, considerate attitude throughout the incident. Observe also the spiritual application relative to our Lord as the Kinsman Redeemer, and Ruth as the seeking sinner, desirous of securing protection, rest, and union in Him. On Boaz' part there is manifest grace, and on that of Ruth, faith, both combined resulting in the blessing of union.

## II. RUTH RESTING, (4).

A very interesting record is given in this chapter of the way in which a kinsman-redeemer performed the duty devolving upon him. The place of the transaction was the gate of the city, (v. 1), an uncovered enclosure used generally for business purposes, (Deut. 22:15). In such a place Boaz took his seat, and calling to the one who was nearer of kin than himself to sit down with him, (v. 1), he secured ten of the elders of the city as witnesses, (v. 2), and proceeded to conduct his business. First, he explained its nature in relation to Naomi, (v. 3), then he placed the proposal before this individual to redeem her inheritance, (vs. 4, 5), who, finding it impossible to do so, (vs. 6, 7), gave the right to Boaz, (v. 8), who speedily accomplished it, (v. 9, 10), and received the good wishes of the assembled people, (vs. 11, 12). Note the sincerity, willingness, and diligence of Boaz in this matter, the publicity, certainty, and security of the transaction, and the implications relating to the redemption and restoration of the inheritance, and the marriage of Boaz and Ruth.

An account of the marriage and its consequences follows, and concludes the chapter and book. "Boaz took Ruth, and

she was his wife", and to them a son was born, (v. 13). Naomi received the blessing of the women on this event, (vs. 14, 15), she became the child's nurse, (v. 16), from the women the name of Obed was given the baby, (v. 17), and the writer ends his history by showing that Obed was an ancestor of David, (vs. 18-22), and consequently of our Lord. The purpose of the book was probably to make known this interesting genealogical record.

There are interesting historical features to be noted in this connection with this lesson, such as those relating to the time in which the persons lived, the place in which they dwelt, the circumstances attendant upon their movements, the working out of the nearest kinsman law, and their connection with the royal genealogical line. But the most profitable lessons are to be derived from the spiritual application of the incidents found in the story. Redemption may be taken as the theme of the whole, and concerning this we are first conscious of the fact that an inheritance had been lost and required to be redeemed. Naomi, with Elimelech and her sons had left their inheritance and gone to a strange land, (1:1). This reminds us of the loss sustained by man through the disobedience of Adam in the garden of Eden. As a result of his sin the inheritance was lost, Satan gained control over mankind, (Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19, R.V.), death became the experience of men, (Gen. 2:17), and the whole world was affected as a consequence, (Rom. 5:12; 8:22). Note further scriptural statements respecting man's unregenerate condition as sinful, (Rom. 3:23), lost, (Luke 19:10), dead in trespasses and sins, (Eph. 2:1), and under the wrath of God, (John 3:36).

We are impressed with the need for redemption, realizing first, the impossibility of man's accomplishing this on his own behalf. Naomi required Boaz to do this for her, and we require our Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ, to do this for us. This inability on man's part is due to his helplessness, sinfulness, spiritual poverty, and death. He simply could not, and cannot redeem himself. A redeemer in such a case must be one from without, but yet related to those he is redeeming, and this was fulfilled in our Lord's incarnation. He was God, (John 1:1), but He was also Man, (Phil. 2:8), therefore a kinsman in the flesh. He also had the necessary power, disposition, and opportunity, and accomplished His work perfectly, (John 19:30). Note in addition His great and tender consideration for men.

The nature of our Lord's redemptive work may here be explained. This relates to His death on Calvary, where He died for the sins of the world, (1 John 2:2). This work was foretold throughout the Old Testament in statement and type, (Is. 53:1-12; Lev. 16), and is propounded in the New Testament as a fundamental of the faith, (1 Cor. 15:3), and the necessary basis for salvation, (1 Pet. 2:24). The price paid in this redemptive work was the blood of Christ, (1 Pet. 1:18, 19), and the blessings arising therefrom are, eternal life, (John 3:16), an eternal inheritance, (1 Pet. 1:4), and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, (Eph. 1:3), and these are received through faith, due to the marvellous grace of God, (Eph. 2:8).

# The Union Baptist Witness

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## YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEETINGS.

Last week reference was made to the preparation of Missionary Programs for use of Young People's Societies and we expected to outline a program this week, but there has come to our hands a Bible study course as prepared by Rev. Morley R. Hall of the Westbourne Baptist Church, Calgary, Alberta, which is of such interest as to take precedence, in that many Young People's Societies are looking for just such a course.

The theme of the study is "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," and Pastor Hall's arrangement of the study is simple and easily followed. The first leaflet deals with "The Personality of the Holy Spirit" and the second one, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of the Holy Spirit".

We would covet for any group of young people this important study and we are glad to note that the leaflets will be supplied monthly from Pastor Hall at the rate of 10 cents each. Address requests to Rev. Morley R. Hall, Westbourne Baptist Church, 13th Ave. and 4th St. E., Calgary, Alta.

## THE CONFERENCE AT CHATHAM.

The letter which we have received from Rev. E. C. Wood, pastor of the Chatham Regular Baptist Church, not only tells of the work in their midst but also reports on the Pastors' and People's Conference held in Chatham on Thursday, January 26th, and we are, therefore, quoting:

"We are longing for the Lord to prepare us for, and send to us a mighty revival that we, His children, may be brought into closer contact with the Lord Jesus, and that many souls may be won for Christ.

"The various activities of the church in Chatham are progressing favourably. The singing of the choir still brings much joy to the hearts of many who listen in, as letters and phone calls testify; the Bible School is gradually increasing in numbers and the Happy Hour is well attended. We also have a Junior Mission Band, and a Joy Club doing work for our missionaries. The Joy Club is for senior girls and the word 'Joy' stands for 'Jesus First; Others Next; Yourself Last'. Each meeting is divided into three periods in the same order—first the devotional period, then the missionary work and last the social time. In this way the young ladies are instructed in the Word, have a share in our missionary work and have a short period of good fellowship and cheer. The most important meeting of the church, the Prayer-meeting, is well attended and the ladies of the church hold a prayer and missionary meeting. Our young people's meeting is also doing nicely.

"Last Thursday, the Pastors' and People's Conference was held in Chatham and we had a glorious day of fellowship with the Lord through intercession and the Word, and with His saints. The sessions, both afternoon and evening,

were well attended, and an instructive and delightful time was enjoyed.

"After the business, and opening exercises of the afternoon session, Mr. F. S. Kendall of the Calvary Baptist Church, Windsor, spoke from 2 Corinthians 1:20, 'For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.' Together we revelled anew in the wondrous provision of God for us in and through Christ Jesus our Lord, and were strengthened and encouraged to face the trials and difficulties of our pathway, by the certainty of the knowledge of the presence, and the keeping power of our blessed Saviour and Lord.

"At the evening service, we were privileged to have two speakers for, since Rev. William Fraser was present and had been in close contact with the Oxford Group and because that subject was much in the thought of many present, arrangements were made for Mr. Fraser to outline some of their doctrines. The address was instructive and interesting and gave to those present some first hand knowledge of the methods and teachings of this sect.

"Rev. J. Fullard of Essex then brought an excellent message from John 19:5, 'Behold, the Man!' The Deity of our Saviour was held before us, as well as His amazing condescension in suffering such humiliation, shame and that inglorious death, in order to redeem us from sin. It was a stirring evangelical message which brought joy to the hearts of believers, and conviction to sinners, and we pray that it may yet be used to the salvation of some souls.

"The whole day was most enjoyable, and those present from the churches in Windsor, Courtright, Wilkesport, Essex and Chatham, praised the Lord for His goodness unto them."

## MOUNT PLEASANT, TORONTO.

The past several months have been months of progress in the work carried on at the Mount Pleasant Road Baptist Church, Toronto, as the Pastor, Rev. Alex. Thomson, and his people have together made great sacrifices and have continued to make their testimony heard in the section of the city in which they are located. Mount Pleasant Church has ever been a missionary church, its young people's department is a missionary department where the young lives are trained and nurtured and it is not surprising to find many in that church who have very definitely given themselves to Christian service, or to hear that the Lord has separated unto Himself for distinctive missionary service at home and abroad several of its young people.

At Mount Pleasant Road there has been the joyful experience of seeing men and women and young people born again in the services of the church and the baptismal waters have been stirred as those who have accepted Christ as Saviour have been obedient in following His commands.

The Children's meetings on Friday evenings continue to attract a large number of the boys and girls of the neighbourhood and real interest and enthusiasm is shown. Another phase of the work which has proven instructive and profitable is that under the direction of Mr. Percy Clubine, missionary-elect to Liberia, and at the present time Science teacher in one of the Collegiates. Mr. Clubine has been conducting a series of lectures in which he has thoroughly dealt with the theory of Evolution and the fallacies of it. Questions were welcomed and a thorough discussion of the subject entered upon. The value of such consideration of a matter of vital interest, directed by one fully qualified, cannot be estimated, and with the Mount Pleasant Church, we join in praise to God that this Christian young man is being so used of God in the days preparatory to his leaving for foreign missionary service. The training of the splendid Mount Pleasant Orchestra has also been in the hands of Mr. Clubine and the instruments used are his donation to the work.

The Women's Department of the work is also prospering. Week by week the ladies meet for prayer and instruction. The spirit of those meetings cannot be described, but a visitor testifies that as she joined in prayer and heard the intercession made for the Pastor of the church and for all, the work of the church, together with the very definite remembrance of the work of the missionaries at home and abroad, her heart was refreshed and burdens lifted. The ladies are studying the work which the Lord has very definitely given to our churches. The Office Secretary of the Union had the privilege of bringing to them, at a recent meeting, a review of the work, and the students from the Toronto Baptist Seminary will be speaking at the next several meetings. The preparation of a Comfort Box is also engaging this faithful band.

## AT LONG BRANCH.

With what thanksgiving the news of blessing is received and our whole constituency will rejoice that the Lord has been graciously working upon the hearts of the young people attending the Long Branch Baptist Church and several have come to Him. On Sunday evening, February 5th, Pastor A. Penman had the joy of leading four young women through the waters of baptism, and two young married men are expected to follow shortly.

We sometimes wonder if the reporting of numbers gives any conception of the glory which redounds to Him who saved us, when sinners are turned from darkness to light, or if we who know the joy of peace and assurance, rejoice as we should that victory over Satan has been gained through the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the Lord's anointed. Even as the

Heavens rejoice over one sinner who has come to the Saviour, our hearts should be exalted and our joy be unspeakable as we hear of the blessing which has come to our churches.

The missionary spirit abides with the Long Branch Baptist Church and a missionary week is planned. Rev. H. L. Davey is bringing a message to the church on Sunday evening, February 12th.

#### WHEATLEY.

Word comes from Immanuel Baptist Church, Wheatley, that the Lord is blessing abundantly. On January 18th, the Annual Business meeting of the church was held. It was a joyous occasion and there was much revealed in the reports and statements which was gratifying. It was very evident that all were doing their utmost to carry on the work of love entrusted to them and the enrolling of one new member under existing circumstances was encouraging.

The loss of two members by death, Mr. and Mrs. James Chute, was keenly felt, and these saints of the Lord are greatly missed, but the untiring efforts of Pastor W. Lempriere as he visits the homes of the members, and carries the message of salvation into other places, cheers the hearts of the people and the assurance of a harvest time encourages the workers.

Pastor Lempriere is endeavouring to start a Sunday School in one of the country churches which is not being used at this time. Pray for his success, for there are many in the district who attend no church at all and yet there is opposition being met with as Mr. Lempriere attempts to minister to a needy people.

The children's services held both in Wheatley and Port Alma are looked upon as opportunities for reaching the unsaved and prayer is very definitely requested for this young Pastor, who so unsparingly gives of his time, witnessing upon every opportunity concerning the things of the Lord.

#### BELLEVILLE.

The meetings held in Belleville when Rev. H. L. Davey brought to the people there great missionary messages, were greatly appreciated. On Sunday evening, January 29th, the church was filled to capacity and there were many strangers present who showed a keen interest. On Monday, when an impromptu meeting was arranged on finding that Mr. Davey could make train connections which would enable him to reach Orillia for his engagement there, another great meeting was held. God's people were stirred and some unsaved were deeply moved.

The regular work of the church is progressing well. Souls are being saved and the prayer meetings are a source of real blessing.

#### ORILLIA, BETHEL.

It was an enthusiastic people who greeted Mr. Davey at Orillia and a crowded hall upon two occasions bespoke the interest of the church.

By special arrangement, Rev. H. L. Davey spoke at the Collegiate Institute and there some six hundred students assembled to hear him. His visit was greatly appreciated and as the students

cheered the speaker again and again, it was felt that an interest in Liberia was created that would bear fruit. Pray that the Lord may speak to some of those young people and that through the medium of that meeting there may be a consecration of life.

#### THE WESTERN WORK.

The Bulletin of the Regular Baptist Fellowship of Alberta has come to our hands this week bringing with it a message of comfort and exhortation. Through the Bulletin we hear of the trials of the work in the Western Province and rejoice in the blessing which follows in their wake.

At Drumbeller, where Pastor H. C. Phillips ministers, a new church has been opened. It has meant no small amount of effort and sacrifice on the part of pastor and people to bring this building to com-

son and his wife are missionaries indeed. Pray for the work in that place and also at Benalto.

The ministry of the Westbourne Baptist Church, Calgary, is an ever increasing one. What that church and its Pastor, Rev. Morley R. Hall, means to the work in the Province of Alberta and beyond, is little known. The Westbourne Church is as a lighthouse set upon a hill. Pray for every department of the church's work and for the printed matter and lesson leaflets prepared by Pastor Hall.

Then from British Columbia we have received a very special message during the past week. It comes from Kamloops, where Rev. W. J. Thomson is ministering at the Baptist Church. The work is giving much encouragement and the prayers of the friends in Ontario and Quebec will certainly follow it with much interest. We know that Mr. and Mrs. Thomson will be happy to hear from the friends in the Union from time to time, and they should be addressed care of Box 127, Kamloops, B.C.

#### THE MISSIONARY BULLETIN.

The February issue of the Bulletin will be mailed about the 15th of the month. The office secretary will appreciate it if lists of names for this month's Bulletin are sent in at the earliest possible moment that there may be no delay in the receipt of the Bulletin by new readers.

#### COMFORT BOXES.

It is most gratifying to know that the Lord has put the matter of comfort boxes upon the hearts of our people and that a very definite service is being rendered as they are prepared. Enquiries have, however, revealed that there are some pressing needs which should have immediate attention. Anyone who might have a good used suit that would fit a man 5 feet, 10 inches tall and weighing 160 pounds which they can spare (size 40) should immediately get in touch with the Union Office. It can be placed at once and would be most acceptable.

A suit is also needed for a young man who is six foot two inches tall and has a chest measurement of 40, and one for a fifteen-year-old boy who is five feet tall and weighs ninety-eight pounds.

Children's clothes can also be placed. Possibly some reader has garments which have grown too small for her own family and these could be passed on to little ones who are not properly clothed at present.

#### EAST YORK MISSION.

Pastor Bernard Jeffery had the unexcelled happiness of seeing another soul pass from death unto life on Sunday last, when Mr. Twining visited the Mission and gave one of his splendid talks, using bird life and the habits of God's feathered creatures to illustrate the Gospel message.

#### STANLEY AVE., HAMILTON.

A week ago, the Stanley Ave. Baptist Church, Hamilton, was crowded to capacity to hear the Bird Man, and at that service four surrendered unto the Lord. Again we say Rejoice! The Lord is visiting our people and we continue to wait upon Him.

## "RED RUSSIA"

### Paradise or Perdition?

will be the subject of  
a lecture

by

REV. E. E. SHIELDS

of Chicago in

JARVIS STREET CHURCH

Thursday, February 16th

8 o'clock

As Home Director of the

Russian Missionary Society, Inc.,

Mr. Shields has access to inside sources of information not open to many. Remember date and place. You are invited. An offering will be received.

pletion. The financial strain has been heavy, and still is. Pray for this noble band of workers.

Pastor Charles S. McGrath continues to minister at Crossfield. A building is needed badly there and several hundred dollars have been promised to help in the erection of it, but sufficient funds are not yet in sight. Pray for this cause.

The work at Edmonton, where Rev. Gordon W. Searle ministers, is enjoying the Lord's blessing. The Lord has given the church many souls of late and a number of believers have been buried in the waters of baptism.

A Regular Baptist Church has been organized in Condor, where Pastor Dickin-