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

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SPURGEON AS A DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

An Address by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered Tuesday Afternoon, October 8th, 1934, at the Cannon Street Hotel Auditorium, London, England, at the Annual Meeting of the Bible League of Great Britain.

I greatly appreciate the privilege of speaking to-day under the auspices of a society that is set for the defense of the gospel. Mr. Spurgeon, in his day, remarked on the too common desire for religious neutrality, saying, in effect, that Mr. White held one view, and Dr. Black the opposite; and Professor Gray a third which was better than either; but Mr. Whitey-Brown was most popular of all. Being true of many in Mr. Spurgeon's day, it must be a common human characteristic, for *whitey-brown* is still a very popular religious colour.

To those for whose mental vision the Word of God sharply divides asunder the soul and spirit, and distinguishes between the psychological and pneumatological, the *Oxford Group Movement* is significant of the times, and symptomatic of the prevailing religious temper. One may be a Trinitarian or a Unitarian, a Protestant or a Roman Catholic, an Evangelical or an Anglo-catholic, a Supernaturalist or an Anti-supernaturalist, a Creationist or an Evolutionist, a Revelationist or a Rationalist, a Fundamentalist or a Modernist—or a composite of all of them; and without change of conviction, or even of opinion, he may be a full-fledged member of the *Oxford Group*. With a penchant for the composite, the inventor of a composite Pentateuch—a spirit which can easily be identified—the unnamed spirit now offers us a synthetic religion. Adolph Hitler has said that German chemists will render Germany independent of external food supplies by the production of synthetic foods. Similarly, there are those who are determined to have a religion that is independent of any divine revelation, and, the *Oxford Group Movement* being witness, independent of reason and common sense as well.

The "house-party" principle is not peculiar to the *Groups*, but is common to all religious neutrals; and is a subtle substitution of human interests and relationships for the weightier matters of truth, and righteousness, and right relation with God: "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except

they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

The principal danger of our day, religiously, inheres in the prevailing religious attitude; an attitude which too often shows itself even in those who do really believe the Book, an attitude which may be described as a determination to avoid at all costs any ruffling even of the surface of our self-complacent religious tranquillity.

In most of the celebrations of the centenary of Spurgeon's birth the thing which, properly understood and viewed in true perspective, was most characteristic of the man, has been entirely ignored. The "downgrade" controversy, so-called, was more than an incident in his incomparable career; it was the culmination and climax of his life's testimony. For Spurgeon was always a controversialist—as every convictionist, if I may so say, must be. Mr. Spurgeon set out to combat error from the beginning, and his earliest sermons abound with warnings against those things which are contrary, in the biblical sense, to sound doctrine.

This evening I shall speak more particularly on *Spurgeon's Testimony to the Inspiration of Scripture*: this afternoon we may, I hope, refresh our own spirits by reminding ourselves of his example as *a defender of the faith*.

I.

SUCH A DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE ATTITUDE AS SPURGEON ASSUMED IS MORE EMPHATICALLY NEEDED TO-DAY THAN WHEN SPURGEON MADE HIS PROTEST. Surely it must be recognized that religious conditions have not improved since the late eighties and early nineties. Evangelical principles are at a far greater discount to-day than they were then. What was considered religious liberalism then would be called evangelical conservatism now; what was called religious "downgradeism" then, has

developed with ever-increasing speed into tobogganism now. If anti-Evangelicalism speeded on its way in a coach-and-four in Spurgeon's day, it hops from place to place in a high-power aeroplane in ours. Where the earlier higher criticism used rifles, present-day Modernism employs machine guns. The enemy who fought in red, or blue, or green, uniforms in Spurgeon's day, have since developed and employed to the utmost the science of religious camouflage; and where the enemy then veiled himself in the thinnest smoke screen, he now blinds our eyes and drenches our camps with the deadliest poison gas.

Comparatively few Evangelicals are as yet awake to the perils of the hour. Where in Spurgeon's day, Modernists showed themselves as isolated units, now they march as a thoroughly disciplined army; and those whom Spurgeon saw practising their goose-step around their own barracks, have since violated every evangelical Belgium and Luxembourg; and are now thundering at the gates of Paris, and raiding London.

There is a true analogy between the Germanic powers in wartime and that of Modernism to-day. The departments of propaganda, of espionage, of recruiting, prison-camps with their torture, of submarines, and aeroplanes, are all active. Where the enemies of the gospel in Spurgeon's day fought on the surface, and in the open, they now fight from strongly entrenched positions where they have been gradually "digging themselves in" in educational and professorial chairs, in administrative offices, in "augmentation" and "sustentation" boards and committees, and in all official ranks from corporal to field-marshal. But notwithstanding the enemy's perfection of the science of deception, it now requires less discernment to recognize the anti-Christian nature—I will not say *character*, but use the stronger word, *nature*—it requires less discernment to recognize the anti-Christian nature of Modernism than formerly.

Modernism has proceeded by the steps of the original temptation: from the suggestion of a doubt of the truth of God's word, it has advanced to a denial of the divine veracity; and from that, to the impugning of the divine character; issuing at last in the rejection and utter repudiation of all divine authority. The "culture" of an anti-evangelical "scholarship" now appears as the author of the most pronounced infidelity. Evangelicals are therefore forced to recognize that Modernism is not a dilution of Christianity, but a denial of it; not a modification of Christianity, but the murderer of it. The Bible, the God, the Christ, the salvation, the heaven, of Modernism are not ours: for Modernism knows no objective authority, no authoritative revelation; no God certainly known; no Christ Who is Himself God the Son; no blessed atonement, no salvation that is of grace, no supernatural powers available for man's emancipation from the bondage of sin. There is, therefore, nothing left for believers Who would be true to the Lord and His Word to do, but to accept the gage of battle, and contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

II.

THERE ARE GRAVE REASONS WHY THE WAR IN WHICH SPURGEON ENLISTED SHOULD BE PROSECUTED WITH THE UTMOST VIGOUR IN OUR DAY.

In the first place, *we cannot otherwise be loyal to Christ.* Modernism is not a mere academic discussion

and appraisal of a book: it is not an attempt to clear away the accumulated rubbish of tradition, and to re-discover some solid foundation for faith. It is a systematic attempt to mine the whole fortress of divine revelation, with a view to its utter destruction.

That means that there is an attack upon the person of the Captain of our salvation. If there be truth in the allegation that the Cruiser Hampshire was destroyed by an internal explosion effected by a disguised enemy who had shipped as a British sailor for the express purpose of destroying the British commander, Lord Kitchener, it affords a striking illustration of the ways of Modernism. All attacks upon the Bible, its supernaturalism, its alleged scientific and historical inaccuracies, its unethical precepts and programme, are launched from within the professing Church, and in truth are directed against the person of Christ. The devil's principle of attack is similar to that enjoined upon the Syrian army by their king, when they fought against Israel at Ramoth-gilead: "Fight neither with small nor great," said the king, "save only with the king of Israel."

I have entirely misunderstood the meaning of Christianity if it does not necessitate the union of the redeemed soul with the living Christ. How then shall we be silent when He is attacked, His knowledge discounted, His veracity impugned, His authority rejected, His Deity denied? Could a wife be loyal to her husband were she, without protest, to allow his honour to be dragged in the mire? To be neutral at a time like this, to be terrified into withholding our testimony when the Word Incarnate is on trial before the modern Sanhedrin, and where the secular power is invoked to give effect to the wicked will of a faithless religion, would be to be guilty of Peter's sin; and to be silent in such circumstances for fear of losing certain emoluments, or in the hope of gaining pecuniary reward, would be to tread in the footsteps of Judas Iscariot.

Therefore I say, *for the sake of our own spiritual health*, we must assume the offensive attitude toward Modernism that is discernable in Spurgeon. A very close analogy may often be discerned between physical and religious conditions of life. Any physician will tell you that in our present complex life it is a physical impossibility to escape contact with the bacilli of certain diseases. For example, the germs of consumption, of tuberculosis, are everywhere. We breathe them in if we breathe at all. Why, then, is it that comparatively few people are prostrated by that deadly plague? It is because their systems have developed a quality that is antagonistic to that particular bacillus. Germs entering such a body are afforded no hospitality, and therefore no opportunity to do their deadly work. Hence the body's acquired immunity proves its salvation.

The same principle holds in respect to one's spiritual health. We cannot be neutral toward anything that is not "according to Christ" without endangering our own spiritual well-being. To open the mind to every religious vagary, and in the name of toleration or charity, to take up a neutral attitude toward error, must inevitably issue in a seared conscience, and in a heart that is more like the inn at Bethlehem, offering hospitality to everybody but Christ, than to the little chamber on the wall reserved for the exclusive use of the Prince of glory.

A lady who impressed me as being a woman of unusual spiritual intelligence and discernment, once re-

marked to me, "I find that continuous contention for the faith is indispensable to my own spiritual well-being." That was ever Mr. Spurgeon's attitude; and while charitable toward all who were in error, he was ever intolerant of error itself.

In this connection also it may be remarked that in war-time *they enjoy a decided advantage who wear a uniform*. Everyone knows they are soldiers. Nobody mistakes them for spies. It is, of course, true that they must accept the consequences involved in the wearing of the uniform. Such an one needs no name or number, nor even a voice to proclaim him a soldier of the king. So it seems to me that every true believer should be so pronounced in his convictions, so uncompromising in his attitude in respect to the gospel, and all that is opposed to it, that no one need ever enquire as to his position.

That was true of Mr. Spurgeon. The whole world knew where he stood in respect to all the great principles of Evangelical Christianity.

Furthermore, *the war against Modernism, must be prosecuted in the interests of the unwary and uninstructed*. Once more I may refer to the *Oxford Group Movement*. Such a religious absurdity could never have gained currency save through minds that, however enlightened in popular estimation, were crassly ignorant of the most elementary evangelical truth: Before the devil—who is a master strategist—launched his Modernistic offensive, he destroyed the teaching ministry of the church. The men who ought to have been "pastors and teachers", prophets of the Lord, expounding the great verities of our holy religion, had degenerated into mere essayists, spinning their own theories respecting subjects relating, for the most part, to the life that now is. The congregation of a typical, cheaply sensational, and superficial, pulpit occupant, becomes the finest culture-bed in the world for all unscriptural errors. People who are inoculated with biblical truth will instantly react against the absurdities of Groupism, the inanities of Christian Science, and the plausibilities of every form of ultra-spiritual and ultra-emotional heresies.

Members of the Bible League, and men of like spirit the world over, have never had any fear for the Bible. Being the word of God, it must endure for ever. It is for the blind who are led by the blind, we must be concerned. Men and preachers who have the true shepherd spirit, and a passion for the souls of men, cannot but contend against the hungry wolves that would devour their flocks.

Once more. In estimating the influence of Spurgeon we must bear in mind the principle that *Modernism is usually credentialed by great names*. It is something like the *Oxford Group* in that respect, only it makes its appeal, allegedly, on grounds rather of an intellectual than a social superiority. It boasts that it is the religion of "educated" people. There is a quality of snobbery that seems to be native to human nature. There are many who will not mourn their ignorance if, without being a deacon, they can "purchase to themselves a good degree" that will label them as "educated".

Modernism, while doubtless it has really provided a gymnasium for the entertainment of mental athletes, appeals to the native snobbishness of men who become Modernists because it is fashionable. Thousands of preachers are more familiar with books that have been

written to oppose the Bible than they are with the Bible itself; and differ from their feminine hearers only in this respect, that the women follow the fashion in what they put *on* their heads, and their preachers, in what they put *in* their heads. In the ways of Modernism, as in other particulars, it is "like sheep" men go astray.

Who can tell, therefore, what a steadying influence Mr. Spurgeon exercised by giving the authority of his great name to the defense of the gospel? How many men who were sound at heart, were kept true to the gospel by Mr. Spurgeon's heroic example! We have no such name, any of us, as his; no name in the evangelical world to-day carries such authority as did the name of C. H. Spurgeon. Notwithstanding, every one of us has a certain influence within a more limited circle. Let us therefore be outspoken and uncompromising, that we may set a worthy example to such as may be somewhat weak in the faith.

But of course the supreme argument for the prosecution of the war against Modernism is *that such a course is entirely scriptural*. The greater part of the Bible was born in controversy. It is, indeed, the record of the long war between light and darkness, between truth and error. The greater part of the New Testament was written to set somebody right who was in danger of going wrong.

Frequently the Scripture states its case negatively as well as positively: "Not by works of righteousness"; "Not of works"; "Be not conformed to this world". These and numerous other passages set forth the principle that it is necessary constantly to be at war with error.

If the principle of religious controversy be wrong, why did Stephen, filled with the Holy Ghost, use such language as this?—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." If religious controversy be wrong, why was the New Testament written? Why the writings of the fathers? Why all the martyr fires? Why the Reformation? Have not all these movements been used of God for the conservation of the faith? Having been allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, in loyalty to Christ, to our own highest interest, to the spiritual welfare of our contemporaries, and to the enlightenment of generations yet unborn, we must contend for the "faith once for all delivered unto the saints".

III.

BUT HOW, THEN, SHALL WE CONTEND?

I would say, first, *in uniform*. That is to say, we must be enlisted, separated, men. We must distinguish between things that differ, and come out from among all errorists, and be separate, and "touch not the unclean thing". We must, of course, exercise every care to guard our motives. Contention for the truth's sake, for the glory of God and the salvation of men, is always justifiable. But mere contentiousness should have no place with us. We ought to contend with the utmost vigour. Theodore Roosevelt once made a remark to

the effect that there might sometimes be justification for refusing to fight at all, but there could never be justification for fighting feebly. Either we should yield the citadel to the enemy without battle, or, otherwise, we should contend for the faith with all our might. There can be no wisdom in using mere pop-guns in real warfare.

And let me here remark that it is *sometimes necessary to deal with persons*. That is to say, to call the false teachers by name. I know that is unpopular in some quarters. Mr. Spurgeon was blamed and censured for refusing to name the men whom he criticised. I know too well the difficulty of supplying legal proof of some things of which one is morally certain. Infection may follow the footsteps of a disease-carrier, and one may be morally certain that such an one is spreading a plague, and yet it may be impossible absolutely to demonstrate that the carrier is the cause of the infection. On this principle, it may sometimes be dangerous to name a man as a heretic. But when the adversary has written a book, when his teaching has been committed to print, his views become a subject for legitimate criticism; and there can be no sound reason why he should not be named. It is true that we may not succeed in immediately dispossessing the false teacher, but we can at least identify him, and warn the unwary to beware of him.

The first step in the direction of curing any disease is to identify and isolate the germ. So ought we to do in this battle for the faith.

But all this should be done *with reliance upon the Holy Ghost*. In the last analysis, the Holy Spirit is the only effective apologist, and only as we contend for the faith in His power can we hope to be successful.

IV.

But here I would venture to warn my brethren that **WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE CRUELEST WARFARE**. We are not fighting merely for ecclesiastical dominance, for denominational recognition. The issues involved are issues of life and death, heaven and hell. I am just as sure of the inspiration of Modernism as I am of the inspiration of the Bible—as surely as the Bible is from God, Modernism is from the devil. And you cannot offer it an effective opposition without having all the power of the pit turned loose upon you.

War is no respecter of persons. One might have supposed that a man of Mr. Spurgeon's incomparable record, a man whose ministry had been blessed during his lifetime to the salvation of countless thousands—possibly of more people than were ever converted through the instrumentality of a single voice in all the world's history—it might have been supposed, I say, that a man of that sort would have been immune from attack. But he was not. He was cruelly denounced by ministerial midgets who were not worthy to black his boots. But if the adversary did not spare our glorious Lord, it would be folly to expect him to show any quarter to men.

We must, then, in this spiritual warfare, *be prepared to meet with every kind of injustice*. War is always a lawless thing. Rules of war may be drawn up in peacetime, and certain practices may be outlawed by international covenants when nations are at peace with each other; but when war actually breaks out, the rule of might is the only rule that is recognized. So is it in the battle for the Book. Modernism has no conscience. It

cares nothing for the truth. In this warfare the practices which obtained in the trial of the Word Incarnate are repeated. Witnesses are produced who will swear to a lie. Mercenary souls are still bought for thirty pieces of silver, and used for the betrayal of the truth.

Therefore no one should become a soldier of the Cross who counts his life dear unto himself. Our Lord forewarned us that if the world had persecuted Him it would persecute us; yet we have His promise that if they have kept His saying, they will keep ours also.

V.

I cannot close this address without reminding you of **SOME OF THE COMPENSATIONS WHICH THEY ENJOY WHO GO TO WAR**.

For one thing, *the Bible becomes a new Book*. I have come to believe that the Bible cannot be wholly understood in the study. It is a guide-book, made for use on the road. It is a military text-book, designed for the use of the soldier in the field. There are large sections of Scripture which must be meaningless to men of vacillating, compromising, cowardly spirit. But when we take the field for God, and stand boldly for the truth, the Bible becomes our daily, our hourly, compensation.

Surely contention for the faith brings to us also a *new experience of divine fellowship*. When the disciples enquired of our Lord, "Where dwellest thou?" He said, "Come and see." Again He said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me"; and, "Where I am there shall also my servant be." How can we follow Christ if we never go where He goes? How can we enjoy His fellowship if we run away from the tasks in which He is engaged, if we desert from the army which He commands? Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, had rather a trying experience when they were cast into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace; but they found their freedom in the furnace, and a new fellowship as they walked amid the flames in company with the Son of God.

There are many of my ministerial brethren who complain that they have no freedom. They are bound, even as these three heroes of ancient time. My brethren, if you would be free, refuse to bow down to the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. If you do, inevitably you will find your way to the furnace—and thereby and therein you will find such freedom of action, such fellowship with God, as even the angels in heaven might envy.

Daniel was a man of wide experience, and was greatly beloved, and doubtless for years had been the object of the care of God's angels. But it was not until he was thrown to the lions that he made the acquaintance of the angel whom God sent to shut the lions' mouths. And if we would be on visiting terms with heaven's aristocracy, and hold converse with angels of highest rank, all we have to do is to face the lions, and we shall meet the angel in the lions' den.

This will discover to us a *new comradeship too among the saints of God*. Soldiers speak a language peculiar to themselves. And those who do battle for the truth of God find with their fellow-soldiers a comradeship which no perfunctory performance of religious duty can ever bring. And when thus saints become soldiers, and soldiers hold fellowship with other saints, the Christian church becomes an invincible force. And the minister who thus daily puts the principles and promises and pre-

cepts of the gospel to the proof discovers a new power and fruitfulness in his own ministry.

Read Mr. Spurgeon's sermons again—any of them, all of them, and you will scarcely find one that is not controversial. He was as a soldier buckling on his armour, and taking the field against all the powers of darkness in the name, and in the strength, of God the Holy Ghost.

How better can I close this address than by quoting to you the charge of that great hero born of the faith, the Apostle Paul? And as we obey the first part of his charge we shall be able to appropriate the comfort of its conclusion: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

NOTE ON THE TWO SPURGEON ADDRESSES

A good while ago we announced our intention of publishing a Spurgeon Centenary Number of THE GOSPEL WITNESS. Our engagement to speak in England, however, made it difficult to issue that number in advance of our visit. We therefore decided to postpone the special issue until our return, and include the two addresses delivered under the auspices of the Bible League. Those two addresses are printed in this issue.

The Editor's speaking engagements covered a period from September 16th to October 28th inclusive, forty-three days in all. During that time he delivered sixty-nine addresses, speaking for three weeks and a half in London; then on the Thursday of the fourth week, in Porth, South Wales; Friday of the same week, in Cork; and from Saturday until the following Friday, in Northern Ireland; thence to Edinburgh; back to Liverpool; up to Glasgow; then to London, and to Tunbridge Wells for October 28th.

While these addresses did not deal specifically with Mr. Spurgeon's ministry, the whole mission was designed to re-emphasize the great truths for which Mr. Spurgeon stood. In the plan we had in mind for the Spurgeon Centenary Number of *The Witness* we intended to cover a much wider field than is covered in these two addresses, but we believe greater good will be accomplished if from time to time in the future we publish what was originally intended for one issue, in instalments. For instance, what Mr. Spurgeon taught respecting the Atonement; and particularly what he taught respecting the second coming of Christ. With the help of others of our staff, we have gone through the fifty volumes of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, and we shall publish some of these extracts from time to time. We are inclined to think that some of our readers will be surprised to discover that the authority of Mr. Spurgeon's great name cannot properly be invoked for the support of certain teaching respecting the second coming of our Lord, which is now so prevalent.

In explanation of the second address it should be said that the quotations from Mr. Spurgeon's sermons and addresses as printed here were not used in full in the delivery of the address, but brief extracts were quoted. In the printed address, however, we have thought it wise to include the extensive quotations as originally selected, so as to give the full context.

SPURGEON'S TESTIMONY TO THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

An Address by Dr. T. T. Shields.

Delivered at Cannon Street Hotel Auditorium, London, England, Tuesday Evening, October 8th, 1934, under the Auspices of The Bible League of Great Britain.

Spurgeon died in eighteen hundred and ninety-two, forty-two years ago, but even now his voice is still greatly missed; and his memory, to a great multitude, is still fresh and fragrant.

I recall years ago reading a sermon by one of the great American Baptist preachers, Dr. P. S. Henson, who was successively pastor in Chicago, New York, and Boston. In Tremont Temple, Boston, he succeeded another great preacher, famous in his day, Dr. George C. Lorimer. In his inaugural sermon, on assuming the pastorate of Tremont Temple, Dr. Henson told his congregation that years before he had succeeded Dr. Lorimer in the pastorate of the First Baptist Church, Chicago. He paid a glowing tribute to his predecessor as a man and as a minister, and said that for several years in Chicago he felt that he was hardly able to make himself heard because the echo of Dr. Lorimer's voice still lingered about the place.

So may the whole world of Evangelical Christianity say of Spurgeon: He is not dead, but speaketh; the echo of the music of his matchless voice can still be heard. The influence of his beautifully symmetrical Christian character, the fruits of his incomparably effective ministry, and the power of the glorious gospel he proclaimed, still abide.

Notwithstanding, since Spurgeon's day, a new generation has arisen to which the great things which he taught have not been ministered. In the realm of theological authority a new Pharaoh has arisen which knows not our Joseph. It is well, therefore, that the whole story should be retold, that the alluring romance of this great figure should be proclaimed afresh as a humbling challenge to a vainglorious generation, and as an inspiration to great multitudes of people who do not esteem as a strange thing the great things of God's law.

In this evening's address I shall refrain from mentioning the details of the inspiringly familiar story of the circumstances of Spurgeon's life, or of his unprecedentedly fruitful ministry. I propose, rather, humbly and gratefully to record my own simple tribute to his greatness, and my own appraisal of his unique place in Christian history; with some attempt to set forth my own view of the philosophy of his life and work. This I shall do by speaking of Spurgeon on this occasion as a Bible preacher.

One cannot, with any hope of accuracy, analyze the Spurgeon phenomenon without recognizing *his apparent precocity*. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that his place in religious history is comparable to that of Pitt the Younger in the history of this country; for it would probably be correct to say that, by the time he was twenty-one years of age, C. H. Spurgeon was the most conspicuous figure in the evangelical world.

How is his youthful preeminence to be accounted for? That he was a man of uncommon mental capacity I think is generally conceded. He was, by nature, cast in an unusual mold. Moreover, his remarkable native powers had been highly developed, and thoroughly disciplined, at a very early age. Diminutive theoretical educational technicians have had the audacity to speak of Spurgeon as "uneducated". As well might some miniature hot-house shrub, could it become vocal, describe the giant oak of the forest that had braved a thousand storms, as "uncultivated" because it had not been pampered and petted in its little hot-house pot.

Education consists essentially in developing and disciplining and directing to the highest degree, and to the noblest purpose, a man's natural capacities. The average youthful mind needs, for such development, the direction of an intellectual senior, and the reinforcement and regulation of another's will. Hence the value of the regimen of college and university life. But here and there is found a man possessed of such native qualities that he becomes in himself both student and faculty; and therefore makes more progress in a year than most men would in four or five, and is found to be as mentally mature at twenty-one as the average man would be at twice his age. And in all departments of human activity and progress, history has chiefly been made by men of just such independent personal resourcefulness and power.

By what criteria shall we appraise Spurgeon's *intellect*? One scarcely knows whether to be amused or indignant at the presumptuous attempts of certain religious tapers to estimate the dimensions and potentialities of this intellectual sun through the medium of their six-penny spy glass! I will make a confession: when Dr. T. Reavely Glover made his inexcusably vulgar attack upon the memory of this mighty man of God, my temper outran my judgment. I planned a reply which should reach every Baptist minister in the English-speaking world. I had an initial thirty thousand envelopes made and printed for the job. Then I cooled down. I thought I saw the great and magnanimous Spurgeon smiling. I remembered a Spurgeon story of a minister who called to see Mr. Spurgeon, and told him he was in great trouble. He had a member of his church who was strongly opposed to his ministry. He said that he always sat in the front seat, and as soon as the minister announced his text, this man put his fingers in his ears, and so continued to the end of the sermon. Having told his story, he asked Mr. Spurgeon if he did not think that was a terrible situation, and enquired what he would do in like circumstances; to which Mr. Spurgeon replied, "I think I should ask the Lord to send a fly to light upon his nose." The man saw the humour of the situation, and found relief in a hearty laugh.

That was characteristic of the attitude of our hero. He ever refused to exercise his mind with trivialities. Remembering this, I felt that the vulgar attack made upon Mr. Spurgeon's memory was not worth a reply. Of one thing one may be sure, that by the time the centenary of the birth of some of these critics rolls around, there will be nobody to celebrate it, for the reason the world will have forgotten that they ever lived.

It is difficult to measure the intellectual stature of Spurgeon. I venture humbly the opinion that for native mental capacity and power of absorption, for rational vigour, for analytical acumen, for analogical acquisitiveness, for fearless inquisitiveness, and power of courage-

ous exploration, for poetic insight and imagination, for philosophic comprehension, for prophetic vision and compass and perspective, for heroic abandonment to the consequences of knowledge, for daring intimacy with truth—in many centuries few minds have equalled, and none have excelled, that of C. H. Spurgeon.

But when all this has been recognized and acknowledged, there still remains the wonder of Spurgeon's ability as a youth to describe nearly every conceivable phase of human experience, and to play upon every element of human emotional, intellectual, and volitional, life as upon a harp of a thousand strings. When but a youth I recall laying down a volume of Spurgeon's sermons, and enquiring of myself, Whence and how did this youth of twenty-one acquire so intimate a knowledge of the whole gamut of human experience? And one day I found a satisfactory solution of the phenomenon; and in the discovery I thought, and still think, I discerned the explanation of the depth, and breadth, and height, the wealth of content, the timeless character, the enlarging compass and abiding fruitfulness of Spurgeon's ministry. Here it is: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."

But no estimate of Spurgeon's intellectual qualities can be even approximately correct which does not take account of *the quality of his spiritual life and endowments*. Challenging as the statement may be, belief is less an exercise of the understanding than an attitude of will: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." In the First Epistle to Timothy, three times within the compass of three short chapters, conscience is linked with faith, Paul insisting that "faith unfeigned" is inseparable from "love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience"; and that whoever thrusts from him a good conscience, inevitably "makes shipwreck concerning the faith"; and that the full Christian revelation, "the mystery of the faith", is not to be held by any peculiarity of intellectual aptitude, but "in a pure conscience". In Paul's view therefore, if the woof of a man's belief is intellectual, its warp is moral. While religious belief is sometimes regarded as though it were a fabric woven in reason's loom of material called facts, the truth is, that it is not a mere manufacture at all, but a cultivated growth; which, while rising out of the surface-soil of the intellectual, is yet rooted in the subsoil of conscience and the moral nature.

Hence there is a mutually complementary and reciprocal relation between what a man is and what he believes, between what he believes and what he is. A conscience drugged with dereliction will inevitably be fogged the understanding with unbelief. A man's view of the Bible must, in the nature of the case, be affected by his relationship to the Person the Bible enshrines. Spurgeon's pellucid view of the doctrines of grace, and of the Bible as their authoritative source, was the natural result of his personal intimacy with Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus a person of superior piety, though of mediocre

mental capacity and attainments, may have a clearer understanding of divine truth than the greatest intellectual religious theorist.

I remember to have read, but where I have been unable to recall, that Mr. Spurgeon, who was not given to boasting, and who was humbly reticent so far as his own spiritual attainments were concerned, remarked to some friends that he believed that during his waking moments, over a period of twenty years, he had not been unconscious of the presence of Christ. Ah, that is the meaning of such great sayings as this: "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I believe Spurgeon's personal relationship to Christ, his unbroken communion with Him, his passionate love for the Master, is the truest explanation of his spiritualized intellectuality, and his intellectualized spirituality—the only possible explanation, indeed, of his attitude toward the Bible and the essential doctrines of the gospel of grace.

I propose to try to give you some idea of the development of Spurgeon's view of the Bible, and of that system of truth which he conceived the gospel of Christ to comprehend.

We hear much from our critics about their growth in knowledge, and their progressive acquaintance with facts; much, too, by implication, to our disadvantage, of the handicap of a "static" mind. But within the realm of any man's knowledge there are certain factual elements which never change; there are facts which never cease to be facts. The multiplication table, in principle, cannot wholly be ignored even by an Einstein. The greatest of all composers, whoever he may be, or may have been, never escaped from the harmonious bondage of the musical scale; while not even a Shakespeare himself could dispense with the alphabet.

Is there no analogy here to elements of spiritual knowledge? May not a spiritual babe know some things from which he will never depart, though he should become a spiritual Methuselah? Why should Christian men boast of the release from the thralldom of "revolution"? It is one of the chief glories of Spurgeon and his ministry that while there was undoubtedly a progression in knowledge, and an enlargement of view, in the essentials of his faith he was to the end of his ministry what he had been at the beginning. And the Scripture adequately explains this fact: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man

teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

In many respects the truest indications of the quality of a man's inner self are given in his spontaneous utterances. Sermons are not, or ought not, to be impromptu expressions, but considered presentations of truth. Notwithstanding, the necessity of weekly output injects into the weekly product elements of spontaneity. The preacher who is constantly before the public is more likely to express his heart than his head in his regular pulpit deliveries:

Let us hear then a little of Spurgeon's view of the Bible as expressed in a sermon preached in March, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, at Exeter Hall. As he was born the nineteenth of June, eighteen hundred and thirty-four, and the sermon was preached the eighteenth of March, eighteen hundred and fifty-five, he was three months short of his majority. The text of the sermon was, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing":

"First, then, concerning this book, who is THE AUTHOR? The text says that it is God. 'I have written to him the great things of my law'. Here lies my Bible—who wrote it? This volume is the writing of the living God: each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Everywhere I find God speaking: it is God's voice, not man's; the words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth. This Bible is God's Bible; and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, 'I am the book of God: man, read me. I am God's writing: open my leaf, for I was penned by God; read it, for he is my author, and you will see him visible and manifest everywhere.' 'I have written to him the great things of my law'."

That is surely a very strong assumption of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

In the same sermon he speaks of the authority of the Scriptures after this fashion:

"First, my friends, stand over this volume, and admire its authority. This is no common book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece; here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by man, we might reject them; but oh, let me think the solemn thought—that this book is God's handwriting, that these are God's words. Let me look at its date; it is dated from the hills of heaven. Let me look at its letters; they flash glory on my eye. Let me read the chapters: they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies: they are pregnant with unthought-of wonders. Oh, book of books! And wast thou written by my God? Then will I bow before thee. Thou book of vast authority, thou art a proclamation from the Emperor of Heaven; far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting thee. Reason! thy place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this book ought to say. Come thou, my reason, my intellect, sit thou down and listen, for these words are the very words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh! if you could ever remember that this Bible was actually and really written by God! Oh! if ye had been let into the secret chambers of heaven, if ye had beheld God grasping his pen and writing down these letters, then surely ye would respect them. But they are just as

much God's hand-writing as if you had seen God write them.

It would surely be difficult to find a stronger statement than that. Again he speaks of its truthfulness:

"Then, since God wrote it, mark *its truthfulness*. If I had written it, there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm on it, and would cover it with their evil spawn; had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once, and perhaps quite right too. But this is the Word of God; come, search, ye critics, and find a flaw; examine it from its Genesis to its Revelation, and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz, or any earthly substance. This is a star without a speck; a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without its paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! it cannot be said of any other book; that it is perfect and pure; but of thee we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in thee, without a particle of folly. This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error; but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. Why? Because God wrote it. . . . Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiakim, to cut passages of the Word, because they are unpalatable. Oh ye who dislike certain portions of the Holy Writ, rest assured that your taste is corrupt, and that God will not stay for your little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you ought not to be suited; you have no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like; he wrote the truth. Oh! let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure truth. Here from this fountain gushes *aqua vitae*—'the water of life', without a single particle of earth, here from this sun cometh forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible; thou art all truth."

There is no room there for the modernistic idea that the Bible contains certain elements of truth, but with a large admixture of error. All this which I have quoted from a young man not yet twenty-one!

But now let me quote from two sermons preached in the year eighteen hundred and eighty-seven: the first, in March of that year, and just thirty-two years and a few days later than the sermon from which I have just quoted; the second quotation is from a sermon but a few days earlier in the same year:

"Notice, that our Lord believed in the *divinity of Scripture*. He says, 'How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?' But if the Scriptures are only the writings of men, there is no necessity that they should be fulfilled. If they are merely the fallible utterances of good men, I see no particular necessity that they should be fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted upon it that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and the reason was, that they are not the word of man, but the Word of God. The Scriptures were evidently the Word of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He never trifles with them, nor differs from them, nor predicts that they will vanish away. It is he that saith, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'

"He believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures, and also in their *infallibility*. 'How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' He does not hint that the Scriptures might be a little mistaken. He does not argue, 'I will bring the twelve legions of angels down to deliver myself, and it is no matter to me that then the Scriptures will be made void.' Oh, no! the Scriptures must be true, and they must be fulfilled, and therefore he must be betrayed into the hands of men. He settles it as a matter of necessity that Scripture must infallibly be verified, even to its jots and tittles.

See, brethren, the *priceless worth* of Scripture in the estimation of our Lord. In effect he says, 'I will die rather than any Scripture shall be unfulfilled. I will go to the cross rather than any one word of God should not be carried out.' The prophet Zechariah has written, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.' The fulfilment of that prophecy fell due that night, and the Son of God was prepared to be smitten as the Shepherd of the sheep, rather than the word of the Father should fall to the ground. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life'; but Jesus would give his life for the Scriptures. Brethren, it were worth while for the whole church to die rather than any truth of Scripture should be given up. Let all our thousands be consumed upon the altar as one great holocaust sooner than the Scripture should be dishonoured. The Word of the Lord must live and prevail whether we die or not. Our Lord teaches us to prize it beyond liberty or life. . . .

"To come back to our translation: *they received not the gospel as the word of men*. In these days there are some who receive the gospel, but they receive it as the word of men. This is their spirit—'Yes, I know that such is the view that is held by Mr. Black; but there is another view held by Dr. White; and another view is upheld by Professor Gray. All these different "views" are supposed to be very much upon a par.' Beloved friends, this is not our way; there is the truth of God, and there is a lie; and I want you always to feel that there is a solemn difference between the true and the false, and that no lie is of the truth. 'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.' If one says, 'Yes', and the other says, 'No', it cannot be that they are both true. Salvation is of grace, or else of man: it cannot be a joint-stock-company affair. There is truth, and there is error; and these are opposite the one to the other. Do not indulge yourselves in the folly with which so many are duped—that truth may be error and error may be truth; that black is white, and white is black, and that there is a whitey-brown that goes in between, which is, perhaps, the best of the whole lot.

"There is an essential difference between man's word and God's word, and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other. If you receive even the gospel as the word of man you cannot get the blessing out of it; for the sweetness of the gospel lies in the confidence of our heart that this is the word of God. You fall back upon Holy Scripture in the grief of an aching heart; but you cannot rest however soft the pillow of the promise may seem to be, till you can surely say, 'I know that it is of God.' If you have even the shadow of a doubt about it, comfort oozes out. The life of comfort flies before doubt, even as love is said to fly out at the window when want comes in at the door. Prick the heart—ay, with but a needle's point—and life will go; and prick the heart of faith—ay, even with the smallest doubt, and the life of joy is gone! The joy of faith, and the strength of faith, yea, and the life of faith, are gone when you distrust the word of the Lord!"

Let me go on now two years farther to May, eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, only three years before his death. Here we have a strong statement respecting the verbal inspiration of Scripture:

"Looking at the text, does it not strike you as a marvel of condescension, that Jehovah, the infinite, should use words? He has arranged for us, in his wisdom, this way of communicating with one another; but as for himself, he is pure spirit and boundless: shall we contract his glorious thoughts into the narrow channel of sound, and ear, and nerve? Must the eternal mind use human words? The glorious Jehovah spake worlds. The heavens and the earth were the utterances of his lips. To him it seems more in accordance with his nature to speak tempests and thunders, than to stoop to the humble vowels and consonants of a creature of the dust. Will he in very deed communicate with man in man's own way? Yes, he stoops to speak to us by

words. We bless the Lord for verbal inspiration, of which we can say, 'I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food.' I do not know of any other inspiration, neither am I able to conceive of any which can be of true service to us. We need a plain revelation upon which we can exercise faith. If the Lord had spoken to us by a method in which his meaning was infallible, but his words were questionable, we should have been rather puzzled than edified; for it is a task indeed to separate the true sense from the doubtful words. We should always be afraid that the prophet or apostle had not, after all, given us the divine sense: it is easy to hear and to repeat words; but it is not easy to convey the meaning of another into perfectly independent words of your own: the meaning easily evaporates. But we believe that holy men of old though using their own language, were led by the Spirit of God to use words which were also the words of God. The divine Spirit so operated upon the spirit of the inspired writer, that he wrote the words of the Lord, and we, therefore, treasure up every one of them. To us 'every word of God is pure,' and withal full of soul nutriment. 'Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' We can heartily declare with the Psalmist, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words.'

"Our condescending God is so well pleased to speak to us by words, that he has even deigned to call his only-begotten Son, 'The Word'. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' The Lord useth words, not with reluctance, but with pleasure; and he would have us think highly of them, too, as he said to Israel by Moses, 'Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul.'

"We believe that we have the words of God preserved for us in the Scriptures. We are exceedingly grateful that it is so. If we had not the words of the Lord thus recorded we should have felt that we lived in an evil time, since neither voice nor oracle is heard to-day. I say, we should have fallen upon evil days if the words that God spake of old had not been recorded under his superintendence. With this Book before us, what the Lord spake two thousand years ago he virtually speaks now: for 'He will not call back his words (Isaiah 31:2). His word abideth for ever; for it was spoken, not for one occasion, but for all ages. The Word of the Lord is so instinct with everlasting life and eternal freshness, that it is as vocal and forceful in the heart of the saint to-day as it was to the ear of Abraham when he heard it in Canaan; or to the mind of Moses in the desert; or to David when he sang it to his harp."

I need give you but one quotation in support of the principle of the equal inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. This also was spoken in the year eighteen hundred and eighty-nine:

"Above all, do not drop into the semi-blasphemy of some, who think the New Testament vastly superior to the Old. I would not err by saying that in the Old Testament you have more of the bullion of truth than in the New, for therein I should be falling into the evil which I condemn; but this I will say, that they are of equal authority, and that they cast such light upon each other that we could not spare either of them. 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' In the whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, the words of Jehovah are found, and they are always pure words.

"Neither is it right for any to say, 'Thus spake Christ himself, but such-and-such a teaching is Pauline.' Nay, it is not Pauline; if it be here recorded, it is of the Holy Ghost. Whether the Holy Ghost speaketh by Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or John, or James, or Paul, the authority is still the same. Even concerning Jesus Christ our Lord this is true; for he says of himself, 'The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's, which sent me.' In this matter he puts himself upon the level of others who were as the mouth of God. He says again, 'For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me,

he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.' We accept the words of the apostles as the words of the Lord, remembering what John said, 'We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error' (I. John 4:6). A solemn judgment is thus pronounced upon those who would set the Spirit of Jesus against the Spirit which dwelt in the apostles. The words of the Lord are not affected in their value by the medium through which they came. Revealed truth is all of the same quality even when the portions of it are not of the same weight of metal."

Here is a quotation on this subject respecting the fulness of inspiration of the entire Bible, without admixture of error:

"It is also a book pure in the sense of truth, *being without admixture of error*. I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are, mistakes of translation; for translators are not inspired; but even the historical facts are correct. Doubt has been cast upon them here and there, and at times with great show of reason—doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season; but only give space enough, and search enough, and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture. Old manuscripts, coins, and inscriptions, are on the side of the Book, and against it there are nothing but theories, and the fact that many an event in history has no other record but that which the Book affords us. The Book has been of late in the furnace of criticism; but much of that furnace has grown cold from the fact that the criticism is beneath contempt. 'The words of the Lord are pure words': there is not an error of any sort in the whole compass of them. . . . The new theory denies infallibility to the words of God, but practically imputes it to the judgments of men; at least, this is all the infallibility which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from heaven, than with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of 'modern thought'."

But once more; in February, eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, Mr. Spurgeon confessed his own faith in contrast with the attitude of those who deny the unique inspiration of Scripture:

"These were not a critical, sceptical people. They trembled at the Word, and did not sit down on the throne of usurped infallibility, and call the Scriptures to their bar. There are men abroad nowadays—I grieve to say some of them in the ministry—who take the Bible, not that it may judge them, but that they may judge it. Their judgment weighs in its balances the wisdom of God himself. They talk exceeding proudly, and their arrogance exalteth itself. O friends, I know not how you feel about the prevailing scepticism of the age, but I am heart-sick of it! I shun the place where I am likely to hear the utterances of men who do not tremble at God's word. I turn away from the multitude of books which advocate doubt and error. 'The evil is too painful for me. If I could be content to be an Ishmaelite, and have my hand against every man, I might seek this company, for here I find every faculty of my being called to warfare: but as I love peace, it sickens and saddens me to meet with the enemies of my soul. If I knew that my mother's name would be defamed in certain company, I would keep out of it; if I knew that my father's character would be trailed in the mire, I would travel far not to hear a sound so offensive. I could wish to be deaf and blind, rather than hear or read the modern falsehoods which, at this time, so often wound my spirit"

"To be for ever holding the truth of God, as though it might yet turn out to be a lie, were to lose all the comfort of it. To be for ever prepared to desert our Lord and Master, to follow some brand-new philosopher,

would be perpetual disloyalty: Nay, we have not come thus far at a guess. We have known our Lord and his truth for these forty years, and it is not may-be-or-may-not-be with us now. We neither speculate, nor hesitate; but we know whom we have believed, and by his grace we will cleave to him in life and in death."

These quotations are surely sufficient to establish the fact that from the beginning of his ministry, to the end, Mr. Spurgeon never for a moment wavered in his conviction that the Bible is the very word of God. It is surely folly to talk of honouring Spurgeon's memory while dishonouring the Book he so consistently revered.

To Mr. Spurgeon, the Bible was the supreme court of appeal. So ought it to be with us. Differ as we may in some of our interpretations of what the Holy Book contains, if we are one in our readiness to accept the decisions of the Book as being the final authority upon any subject with which it deals, there is hope of ultimate agreement. But Bible-believers can find nothing in common with those who either deny, or debase, or despise, or even condescendingly compliment, the Bible.

One man may live in a house that has more and larger windows than his neighbour's, and thus may enjoy more sunshine; but the light in each dwelling in such case would be derived from the same source. So, with our varying capacities of perception and reception there will be varying opinions upon many matters. But such light as shines is the light of the Orb of day. But, if all the windows be shuttered, and the day be excluded, and tapers of human wisdom be substituted for the sun of divine revelation, the light that is in us must be darkness—and then how great is that darkness!

I have already said that Mr. Spurgeon's view of truth was determined largely by his personal intimacy with the Lord Jesus; and of course it is equally true that his knowledge of the Lord of the Word was communicated through the Word of the Lord. Mr. Spurgeon was a systematic theologian. He ever viewed truth relatively.

Dr. Joseph Parker was himself one of the greatest preachers of his day—perhaps second in popularity only to Mr. Spurgeon himself. And, in the main, he was true to the principles of the gospel. Yet the two men were poles apart in their mental outlook. Parker was a brilliant preacher, but his sermons were devoid of system. I do not mean that they were homiletically defective, but rather that they were without doctrinal order and relation. Someone, I think it was Carlyle, somewhere describes certain editors as editing their papers after the manner of upsetting a cartload of coals. Joseph Parker preached after the manner of emptying a casket of jewels; but they were of all sorts, and sizes, and qualities.

Spurgeon, on the other hand, was keenly logical and analytical; and viewed one truth in relation to another. His conviction of the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures inevitably made him a Trinitarian, involving belief in the essential Deity of Jesus Christ. Every doctrine he preached was the inevitable corollary of that major premise. The death of Incarnate Deity could be no accident. Hence it was purposeful, adequate, and determinative. An acceptance of the involved principles of substitution and expiation was logically inevitable; and that view of the eternally pre-determined redemptive purpose of the Incarnation made him a Calvinist.

The word, Calvinism, he defines in the preface of the first volume of his sermons:

"The word Calvinism, is frequently used here as the short word which embraces that part of divine truth which teaches that salvation is by grace alone."

So then his theological system of grace, as he conceived it, was based upon his conviction of the Deity of Christ. The truths of total depravity, effectual calling, and final perseverance, inhered in the truth of the sovereign immutability of the Saviour he adored.

May I at this point, without offence, call attention to the difference between the abiding residues of these two ministries. It was but a short time after Dr. Joseph Parker's death that his pulpit became the centre from which was disseminated a radical new theology. On the other hand, through varying fortunes, in the forty-two years which have passed since Spurgeon's death, while none of his successors would presume to claim equality with him, the message of the Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit has continued to be that of the gospel of salvation by grace.

Surely it would be idle to contend that David's sling and stone were no factor in his victory over Goliath; and that that great triumph was to be attributed exclusively to the personality of the shepherd-lad without any relation to the instrumentality he employed. And would it not be folly, while recognizing Spurgeon's greatness, and desiring that the same abounding fruitfulness should characterize our ministries, to agree to discard, or delete, or emasculate, the gospel he preached?

Let us hear for a moment something from his last great conference address. Thus he spoke:

"After preaching the gospel for forty years, and after printing the sermons I have preached for more than six-and-thirty years, reaching now to the number of twenty-two hundred in weekly succession, I am fairly entitled to speak about the fulness and richness of the Bible, as a preacher's book. Brethren, it is inexhaustible. No question about freshness will arise if we keep closely to the text of the sacred volume. There can be no difficulty as to finding themes totally distinct from those we have handled before; the variety is as infinite as the fulness. A long life will only suffice us to skirt the shores of this great continent of light. In the forty years of my own ministry I have only touched the hem of the garment of divine truth; but what virtue has flowed out of it! The Word is like its Author, infinite, immeasurable, without end. If you were ordained to be a preacher throughout eternity, you would have before you a theme equal to everlasting demands. Brothers, shall we each have a pulpit somewhere amidst the spheres? Shall we have a parish of millions of leagues? Shall we have voices so strengthened as to reach attentive constellations? Shall we be witnesses for the Lord of grace to myriads of worlds which will be wonder-struck when they hear of the incarnate God? Shall we be surrounded by pure intelligences enquiring and searching into the mystery of God manifest in the flesh? Will the unfallen worlds desire to be instructed in the glorious gospel of the blessed God? and will each one of us have his own tale to tell of our experience of infinite love? I think so, since the Lord has saved us 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God'. If such be the case, our Bibles will suffice for ages to come for new themes every morning, and for fresh songs and discourses world without end."

Further he added in respect to the Scriptures:

"We are resolved, then, to use more fully than ever what God has provided for us in this Book, for we are

sure of its inspiration. Let me say that over again. WE ARE SURE OF ITS INSPIRATION. You will notice that attacks are frequently made as against verbal inspiration. The form chosen is a mere pretext. Verbal inspiration is the verbal form of the assault, but the attack is really aimed at inspiration itself. You will not read far in the essay before you will find that the gentleman who started with contesting a theory of inspiration which none of us ever held, winds up by showing his hand, and that hand wages war with inspiration itself. There is the true point. We care little for any theory of inspiration; in fact, we have none. To us the plenary verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture is fact and not hypothesis. It is a pity to theorize upon a subject which is deeply mysterious, and makes a demand upon faith rather than fancy. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture, and believe it in the most intense sense. You will not believe in a truer and fuller inspiration than really exists. No one is likely to err in that direction, even if error be possible. If you adopt theories which pare off a portion here, and deny authority to a passage there, you will at last have no inspiration left, worthy of the name."

As to the relation of his belief in, and his use of, the Bible as the word of God, he has this to say:

"To-day it is still the self-same mighty Word of God that it was in the hands of our Lord Jesus. How it strengthens us when we remember the many conquests of souls which we have achieved through the sword of the Spirit! Have any of you known or heard of such a thing as conversion wrought by any other doctrine than that which is in the Word? I should like to have a catalogue of conversions wrought by modern theology. I would subscribe for a copy of such a work. I will not say what I might do with it after I read it; but I would, at least, increase its sale by one copy, just to see what progressive divinity pretends to have done. Conversions through the doctrines of universal restitution! Conversions through the doctrine of doubtful inspiration! Conversions to the love of God, and to faith in his Christ, by hearing that the death of the Saviour was only the consummation of a grand example, but not a substitutionary sacrifice! Conversions by a gospel out of which all the gospel has been drained! They say, 'Wonders will never cease'; but such wonders will never begin. Let them report changes of heart so wrought, and give us an opportunity of testing them; and then, perchance, we may consider whether it is worth our while to leave that Word which we have tried in hundreds, and, some of us here, in many thousands of cases, and have always found effectual for salvation. We know why they sneer at conversions. These are grapes which such foxes cannot reach, and therefore they are sour. As we believe in the new birth, and expect to see it in thousands of cases, we shall adhere to that Word of truth by which the Holy Spirit works regeneration. In a word, in our warfare we shall keep to the old weapon of the sword of the Spirit, until we can find a better. 'There is none like that; give it me', is at present our verdict."

Perhaps I ought explicitly to state something which everything I have said thus far implies. When all allowance has been made for his natural qualities, augmented by divine illumination, when we have recognized his personal devotion to Christ, his surrender of heart and intellect to the inspired Word, and the resultant wisdom and skill in its continual employment, we must, at the same time, recognize that his ministry of power was a ministry of the Holy Spirit. I have viewed with a holy covetousness the spiritual frame which enabled the Apostle Paul to write to the Romans, "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Surely that is an example of the daring of faith! Can anyone other than an apostle speak after that manner? But here is a quotation from a sermon preached two days before

C. H. Spurgeon was twenty-one, on the text, "The power of the Holy Ghost":

"It is concerning the power of the Holy Ghost that I shall speak this morning; and may you have a practical exemplification of that attribute in your own hearts, when you shall feel that the influence of the Holy Ghost is being poured out upon me, so that I am speaking the words of the living God to your souls, and bestowed upon you when you are feeling the effects of it in your own spirits."

What a daring thing was that for any man to say, particularly a youth of twenty-one years! We have all known superficial emotionalists who have attributed their psychic activities to the operation of the Holy Ghost. But we have seen these religious ebullitions quickly subside, and leave their subjects in a condition of apathetic deflation. But listen to Spurgeon speaking at a date thirty-three years removed from the date of the daring utterance I have just quoted. Speaking of the Spirit and the wind, he says:

"The spirit of God works differently at different times, according to the necessity of the case, and according to His own will; for he bloweth as He listeth as well as where He listeth. Sometimes I have almost trembled to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. I remember a brother praying that we might be filled with the Spirit of God; and I, being very young then, yet ventured to ask him whether he knew what he meant; and he looked at me with astonishment when I said, 'Where He comes He is the Spirit of judgment, and the Spirit of burning.' It is a blessing, no doubt, to be filled with the Spirit; but who may abide the day of His coming? Like the Lord Jesus, He is as refining fire, and like fuller's soap. We might have had the Spirit much more copiously had we been able to bear the wondrous work within us."

And here is another saying:

"When you hear the Scriptures, and read the Word, the Spirit of God speaks to you. It is well to hear the Spirit whisper in the ear of conscience when He brings home the truth, and makes the mind to feel its power. Sweetest of all is it when the newly-opened ear hears the Spirit of God speak to it with its own peculiar 'still small voice'. Then it is sweetly true 'thou hearest the sound thereof'. My dear hearers, do you know anything about this? Has the Spirit of God so wrought with thee that thou hast recognized the sound thereof? It is a manifest work: hast thou felt it?"

And in this same sermon is a biographical passage descriptive of Spurgeon himself as a mystery:

"The man that lives near to God is a mystery, more or less, at all times. He is not all he desires to be, nor all he hopes to be, but he is far beyond what he ever expected to be. Strange impulses move him at times, so that he does things which he cannot himself account for. He feels that he is bound to do them, and he does them, and has the warrant of having done rightly in the result of what he does. I am sure that every child of God who walks in the light of his countenance, will understand what I mean when I say, that we are moved in singular ways; so moved, that we ourselves hardly know how; but so moved that Wisdom is justified of all her children. Strange is the power of the Holy Spirit over the heart of the regenerate; and this is made manifest in the singular changes of which they are the subjects. God's own people know what it is to sound the deeps, and outsoar the heights. Up, up, up, where the callow lightnings first spread their wings, we mount in ecstasy; and then down we go, down into the abysses where sea-monsters have their dens: such strange beings are we when under the highest power. The wind sighing through the trees, or singing amid the cords of an Aeolian harp, is not more strange than the experience

of a genuine child of God. I know what it is to run before Ahab's chariot with Elijah, and I am afraid I know what it is to faint under the juniper, and need to be awakened that I may partake of food, that I may go forty days in the strength thereof. The Christian man does not understand himself, but his varying experiences go to make up that sickness of self and fondness of Christ which is so desirable.

"I will give you two words you cannot explain, just to show the mystery of our manhood. 'Spirituality': now, then, turn to your dictionaries, and see whether they define it. You know what it is: you cannot tell me, and I shall not tell you, because I cannot. There is another word—'unction': You know what it is. If you hear a sermon that has none of it you know what the absence of it is; but when an unction rests upon the Word, can you tell me what it is? I cannot tell you; but I pray that I may have that unction myself. Of course, the ungodly make jests upon the expression, because it has no meaning to them. Yet the children of God delight in it."

Thus we have seen that toward the close of his ministry Spurgeon laid the same emphasis, and placed the same dependence upon, the power of the Holy Ghost, that he did in the beginning. In his last conference address he spoke of the Holy Spirit as the strength upon which believers must rely. Here are a few sentences:

"Remember, next, that the Holy Ghost will never set His seal to falsehood. Never! If what you preach is not the truth God will not own it. See ye well to this. What is more, the Holy Ghost never sets His signature to a blank. That would be unwise on the part of man, and the Holy Lord will not perpetrate such a folly. If we do not speak clear doctrine with plainness of speech, the Holy Ghost will not put His signature to our empty prating. If you do not come out distinctly with Christ and Him crucified, we may say farewell to true success."

Thus, from the beginning to the end of his ministry the Scriptures were Spurgeon's supreme authority; Christ crucified and risen at once his constant theme and continuous experience; and the Holy Ghost the only power adequate for Christian living and gospel labour.

I say, therefore, my brethren, if we are to exercise fruitful ministries, comparable to that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, only as we breathe his atmosphere, as Daniel did, with windows open really toward the heavenly Jerusalem; as we nourish our souls, as he did, upon food from the King's table; as we employ his weapons, preaching the same gospel in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, shall we in any measure emulate him. There is no substitute for these things.

For myself, this is my confession of faith with respect to the Bible: If this building were large enough to hold and did contain all the Biblical scholars of the world; and if they should all unite to tell me that the story of the Deluge is unhistoric; that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; that the book of Jonah is not historically true, I would believe Christ's naked word before the contrary judgment of all the scholarship of the world, and stake the interests of my soul for time and for eternity upon the unsupported word of my absolutely infallible Lord; and, if need be, be a fool for Christ's sake. And I then should be much less a fool for His sake, than the contrary attitude would make me for the sake of agreement with a "scholarship" falsely so-called. For though I thus speak for the purpose of emphasis, I am convinced that the body of thought which is worthiest the high and honourable title of "scholarship", and which represents the findings of disciplined intellectual powers in co-operation with spiritually enlightened and

penetrating understandings, will always be found to be in agreement with the word of Him who is Incarnate Truth.

When we thus approach the Bible as being instinct with the personality and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, what a world of intellectual and spiritual treasure it becomes to us! We have walked with Him among the flowers of Eden; and where first the shadow of the curse fell athwart the path of sinful man. We have seen him walk the waves of the shoreless sea of judgment; and, in the patriarchs' tents, in the voice of angels, we have heard the Word which was in the beginning with God. In the tabernacle of the wilderness, with its crimson ritual, and in all the forty miraculous years, we have heard Him speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. We have followed Him with Joshua in His triumphal progress into Canaan's promised land; we have found Him sitting among Israel's judges; and in the fields of Boaz, near to Bethlehem, we have heard His whispered promise of the marriage of the Lamb. Where, indeed, have we not found Him? Is there a scripture path untrodden by His feet? Is there a valley which has not echoed with His voice? Is there a mountain which has not been transfigured by His presence?—"The voice of My beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." And we have followed Him—through historical wildernesses, and biographical mountain solitudes, and through genealogical deserts, only to find that the wilderness and the solitary place are made glad for Him; and in His presence the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. In psalmist's melodies; in words of transcendent wisdom; in pregnant type, and glowing symbol; in wheels that are dreadful; in chariots of fire; in seraphic visions of enraptured spirits of prophets, priests and kings, we have seen and heard the form and voice of our Beloved; until, at last, He has come to us from out the grave, being declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, and with perfect knowledge of both worlds, He has joined us on the Emmaus road; where with burning hearts we have heard Him, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expound unto us in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Therefore by the illumination of His presence in its pages; by the seal of His authority upon all its principles, and precepts, and promises; by His own invariable assumption of the Scriptures' infallibility, there is wrought into our deepest spiritual consciousness the unwavering conviction that the Bible is the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever!

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 23rd, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—II. Corinthians 9:15.

The advent of the Lord Jesus to this earth marked the bestowment of the greatest of all gifts: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Nobody asked for His coming. No mortal made any contribution to that gift. He was the Gift of God to an impoverished, ruined, world. I suppose the practice of making gifts at Christmas time has grown out of a recognition of this simple principle.

That gift is here described as "unspeakable". And yet He is called "the Word." God uttered Himself in His Son. He came as the divine Ultimatum, the epitome, the summary, of all that God had ever said. All the principles of His revelation, all the prophecies which had been uttered by inspired men, all the promises given to the world in His Word, became incarnate in Him: "Last of all he sent unto them his son"; "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." God has nothing more to say to men anywhere, at any time, than he has already said in His Son. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It is rather a paradox to call Him "the Word", and, at the same time, describe Him as "unspeakable". What does it mean?

Surely it means that the revelation of God in Christ is far greater than any of us has ever dreamed. We have understood a little, but there is much more yet to be understood. The mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, is but half expounded. All that is involved in that Gift awaits our exploration, and discovery, and appropriation, by the illuminating and enabling grace of our God, Who "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

In the eighth and ninth chapters of this epistle the apostle has been speaking of giving and receiving, the ministering of our substance to those who are in need. Then, as though it was beyond his ability to describe the measure of our obligation, he breaks out into this ecstatic utterance, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Jesus came to the inn at Bethlehem, but we should never have heard of Him had it been possible for Herod to succeed in his murderous intent. Bethlehem was but the beginning of that divine parenthesis, that manifestation of God described as "the days of His flesh". If we would understand the Gift of God which we celebrate at this season, we must take the wider view of His earthly life, His death, and resurrection—of the whole purpose of the Incarnation, when Deity stooped to this earth,

when Infinity wrapped itself in swaddling bands, and the King of eternity smiled upon the world in a little Child.

I desire you to think for a few minutes particularly of the suggestion contained in the phrase, "His unspeakable gift". How many there are who are ready to measure everything by rule and compass! How many there are who profess competence to interpret to the last detail the prophecies of the Infinite! They are fond of mathematics. They boast of their exactitude. But there is about Christ, and about the revelation of Christ, that which defies definition; there is this unspeakable, undefinable, unutterable, element; because it is a revelation of the Infinite, and our minds as yet are but finite.

I.

Think for a moment then of that UNSPEAKABLE ELEMENT IN THE WHOLE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION AS MANIFESTED IN THE PARDONING GRACE OF GOD. The blood of the Lord Jesus is said to have a voice, for it "speaketh better things than that of Abel". We are not to suppose it is here intended that the Gift of God is without voice. The idea rather is that when we have explored its utmost significance, when a sanctified imagination has taken to itself wings, when we have endeavoured to measure the outmost bounds of His revelation, God says to us, "There is more than that. As yet you have understood only the alphabet."

Let us consider that aspect of things, the voice of His pardoning mercy. What does the blood of Christ say? Is there anybody who understands what it says? I know it says enough for us to rejoice in its message, but it says so much that if our understandings are enlightened, we shall be able to sing intelligently those lines of the hymn,—

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away."

The blood of Christ, the gift of God in Christ, saves us from condemnation. But who knows what condemnation is? Who knows what anybody is saved from by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Who knows the consequences of sin? Is it true that the thorns that sprung from our evil sowing have been plaited into a crown about His blessed head? Yes, that is true. Is it true that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace is upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed? Yes; that is true. But from what have we been saved? What had been the awful fate of every one of us if divine grace had not interposed between us and the precipice?

I can well understand that the mind of man would reel and stagger if any one of us were able to estimate the long result of sin. But some day we shall know,

some day we shall have a clearer apprehension of what grace has done for us in saving us from the consequences of our own evil doing. And when we see it at last, and know something of the depths of the pit that is bottomless, which we have escaped, know something of the heat of the flames from which we have been delivered—whatever that may mean—when from a divinely enlightened observation involved in knowing the awfulness of sin and its consequences, we are enabled to form some idea of what we are saved from, I think we shall say to each other, "I was always thankful to God when I knew my sins, were forgiven, but I had not the remotest idea of what was involved in it as I now know." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Oh to be saved from exclusion from the divine presence, from deprivation of all the felicities of heaven, to know that God's Gift has saved us from the awful consequences of our sin! That will be worth while, will it not? You children expect Christmas gifts from Santa Claus and others. But when a week has rolled around most of the toys will be broken, and most of the gifts will be useless; but this Gift, when countless millions of years have passed—if so eternity could be measured—this Gift will be infinitely more precious than it is now. It is an "unspeakable" gift.

What it will mean to be saved from the guilt of sin, I do not know. I do not know what sin is. I know it is the abominable thing which God hateth. I know it brings us nothing but pain and sorrow. It is a terrible thing to be a sinner, to have not only upon us, but in us, that loathsome plague that makes us utterly unfit to be where God is. When the leper came to Christ he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me"—live? No! That leper was not afraid to die. It was not death he feared: it was a living death that filled his soul with horror. He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Something like that was in the soul of the Psalmist when he said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

How terrible to be a sinner! How horrible to be unfit for the presence of God, or the angels! The Gift which God has bestowed upon us is designed to make us clean, to cleanse us from the guilt of sin, from all the consequences of sin. Do you know what I mean by the *consciousness* of sin? I mean, a sense of short-coming, a sense of contrast between what we are and what God is. Jesus Christ came to purge away that sense of sin. That is of inestimable value, but when by and by we get to heaven, and have spent an immeasurable time with God, when we know and understand why it was necessary for God to banish that awful, hellish thing called sin from His presence, and we know it has been banished from us, taken out of our natures so that we are conformed to the nature of God, and are made partakers of the divine nature—when we know something of what is involved in that transaction, we shall see a much larger significance in this gift which is here called "unspeakable".

You have read of men of prominence, men possibly of great learning, who have greatly distinguished themselves in some branch of human knowledge through wide and painstaking and long extended investigation. Would you like to meet such a man? "Yes; but I do not know that I should like to talk with him", someone says. Why not? "I should be afraid." Why? "I should be afraid to display my ignorance in the presence of a man of

such vast erudition." Have you not been over-awed sometimes by a great man's reputation? Would you not like to feel comfortable in the presence of a walking encyclopaedia? Would you not like to know everything, so that in the truest sense you would be an educated man, and at home in the world, comfortable, with no fear that people might ask you embarrassing questions? There are people you would count it an honour to shake hands with, but of whom you say, "I do not know that I could long feel comfortable in their company. I should be dumb with silence. I should not have much to talk about."

Perhaps we are more fearful than we need to be so far as men are concerned. But how could any of us dwell with God; be where He is, see Him in the person of His Son—not through a glass darkly, but face to face? Who would not be fitted to dwell in the eternal glory, to be unabashed amid all the splendours of heaven? Some of you, if you were to be presented at court, would have several uncomfortable weeks getting ready. Of course, you would like to be able to say that you had been presented to their Majesties. Some of you ladies would like to have your portraits in the paper, and a description of the dress you wore, and all the rest of it. That would give you standing among certain people, but I know some of you would be very uncomfortable in the process.

My dear friends, the future life of the redeemed consists in the freest possible intercourse of the soul with God. Whatever it means, we are to increase "with the increase of God." We are to "grow up into him in all things". If I may without irreverence say it, we are to be on terms of holy familiarity with God Himself, to be "without fault before the throne of God". It is yet to be fulfilled, "The tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he shall dwell with them."—He came to walk in the garden in the cool of the day. Sin had entered, and man hid himself from God—and he has been hiding from Him ever since. But by means of this "unspeakable" Gift, every barrier, every disability, every incapacity, is to be removed. We are to be brought back into everlasting union with God. What a salvation that is!

"Do you know what it means?" someone asks. No! "Does anybody know what it means?" No! "Did any preacher ever tell his people what it means?" No! "Does the Bible itself tell us all that is involved?" No! For the reason that we could not understand it. In principle, germinally, it is all there; but it will take us all eternity to estimate this Gift. It is "unspeakable". That which has effected the pardon of the soul, the forgiveness of our sins, the restoration of our souls, the high and holy privilege of divine communion—that which has made that possible is a Gift Whose value is utterly beyond human computation. It is, in short, an "unspeakable", undefinable, indescribable, Gift. Only a little do we know: we shall know more by and by.

II.

I must mention something else: THE POWER THAT IS INVOLVED AND RELEASED FOR OUR DELIVERANCE. What a price has been paid for us!

Of what power are the chariots of God that take us from earth to heaven? What did they cost? I cannot tell you. "You do not know the price?" No; it is unspeakable. I cannot tell you all it cost to lift a

fallen world from the depth of iniquity into which it had sunk, into the holy heights of fellowship with God.

Is there no standard by which it can be measured? Yes; but the difficulty is that we do not understand the standard. I have before called your attention to the great prayer of the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, where he measures the "exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe", and identifies it as being the same power that was exercised in the outstanding miracle of all time, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. He tells us something of what was involved in that resurrection, and he says the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, lifted Him from the level of death—that is where sin leads us—"and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places"—where is that, from death to His own right hand?—"far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all";—that that power is available to us. Some day we too shall be at His own right hand in the heavenly places, sharing the glorious triumph, the complete victory, of our Lord; for as He overcame, so shall we; and as He is set down on the right hand of God, so shall we sit down.

But when we have said all that, what do we know? "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come"—spanning all the ages, and all the oppositions of evil, that hell itself could release upon human kind, even spiritual powers—when they are all overwhelmed, and we are completely delivered from their mastery, and they are all under our feet at last, we shall say, "What power was it that gave us the victory?" Oh the folly of it, that we ever thought we could fight for ourselves, that we dared for a moment to believe that we could pit our puny strength against the adversary! But when we see that all the mighty resources of God were released for our deliverance when the little Babe came to Bethlehem, we shall appreciate something of the tremendous cost of that gift. We shall know something of what Paul meant when he said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

III.

There is A PEACE OF GOD which is described as "passing all understanding". But blessed be His name, it does not surpass our experience. We cannot understand it, but we may enjoy it. We are troubled sometimes on the surface, but "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". It is a great boon to have peace, to be at peace in a deep and abiding sense. But sometimes we are tossed about. The surface of life is anything but tranquil, even for the Christian. I have seen true Christians greatly agitated. I have seen many Christians no more composed than people might be if the house were on fire. But it was on the surface. For those who really know Christ there is a peace which passeth all understanding. We know something about it, but I am hoping for a still better peace than that some day. The adversary troubles us much, but he is going to be bound some day. We shall have done with him by and by. The "old man" troubles us too, but we shall have done with him some day. All evil

will be removed from us. There will be none without, and none within; and when at last we dwell in the city of which it is said, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth", we shall have perfect peace. You will not even need to use a duster there. You will never need to clean house in heaven. Nothing that could by any means defile will ever enter therein. When our earthly life is behind us, and we enter into peace with God, to dwell in eternal tranquillity, calm as God is calm, with nothing in the universe having power to disturb our peace, then we shall say, "The Gift which procured this for us is beyond all possibility of description or explanation."

IV.

I must leave this other word with you, because after all it belongs to this season very especially: there is A JOY UNSPEAKABLE involved in the gift unspeakable. There is a kind of joy that is on the surface, and that is easy to talk about. You hear young people—I do not hear them, but I dare say it is true—coming out of some place of amusement, telling each other what a good time they have had: And how happy multitudes of people will be over little things Christmas morning! We shall all crowd, but unless it was in Paris a few days earlier, I be children Tuesday morning. I hope you will never outlive your childhood. I hope you will never lose the wonder and the joy of childhood, with its ability to find interest in little things. You fathers will enjoy the little boys' toys greatly Christmas morning—winding up the engines, operating all the mechanical contrivances. I know you will explain that you want to show the boy how to do it, but the fact of the matter is, you will be a child yourself.

But we can easily describe these joys. They are very real and very precious, but there are joys deeper than those. There is a soul-satisfaction, there is an intellectual exhilaration, that may never find expression in words, which makes a man feel that life is worth living. You have taken a book, as you had a leisure evening, and sat down and held communion with some great soul, and said to yourself, What a world to live in! What joy there was in holding converse with a great mind!

But there are deeper joys than that. Even now we have a joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory". I doubt not there are many men and women here this evening who could tell us that they have had experiences with the Lord which are too deep and precious, too sacred, to tell anybody about. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." There is a joy that fills the heart of the believer when he knows that his soul is saved, and his inheritance is secure. What a blessing that is! The Gift that has procured that joy for us is an "unspeakable" gift, beyond doubt.

But there are higher joys than that awaiting us. There is a time awaiting us when the King shall come. There is a time coming when we shall see Him face to face. We are looking, I trust, for the glorious appearing—not for any secret coming—but for the "glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ". He is coming again. The Apostle Paul spoke of a crown of righteousness that was to be given to him. He was quite sure of a certain day when he would receive that crown from the pierced hand of his Master; and "not to me only", said he, "but unto all them also that love his appearing".

I think I got a glimpse of the meaning of that text which speaks of a "joy unspeakable, and full of glory", just after the Great War. I went to Paris, then motored to Mons, and from Mons to Brussels. There were no railroads at that time: they had all been blown up. I left Mons early in the morning, perhaps a week after the Armistice, and reached Brussels as all the city was preparing to receive King Albert, who was returning in triumph to his own city after four years of war. As we motored in I said to myself, I hope we shall be able to get a place where we can see something of the king's triumphal entrance. We managed it—I do not know how. I remember looking down upon the commander of the Canadian corps, Sir Arthur Currie, standing at the curb trying to see over the heads of the people—but I was on a balcony of a great office building at the corner of two streets around which the king was to come.

Right before me there was a vast square, and hundreds of thousands of people were there. Every sort of fraternal organization that Brussels could boast must have been there. They were there with their banners waving. There were bands of every description waiting to celebrate the king's appearing. Every sort of instrument and every noise-making thing that ever was invented, it seemed to me, was awaiting utilization. I have seen think I never saw so many people together as on that day. It seemed as though all the population of Belgium had come to Brussels—and as though all the people were on the streets. Hundreds of thousands of men and women were there, awaiting the king's appearance.

I was on that stone balcony, with some Belgium people. There were some ladies there, some business men, some officers. They were all ready to clap and proclaim the king. At last he came into view on a white horse, with his consort beside him, and his children just behind; with detachments of all the Allied Armies following, and behind all that, thousands of Belgium soldiers, with their

artillery and all the implements of war. The king came first, and as he appeared, instead of making a noise, instead of a great shout of welcome, the profoundest silence fell upon the people. There was not a dry eye, and I heard one of the ladies say, through her tears, "Magnificent! *Magnificent!* MAGNIFICENT!" But there was no trumpet sound, no clapping. That vast company of people stood in absolute silence as their beloved king rode in triumph first to the parliament buildings, and then to the palace. They had intended to shout, but their joy was too deep for that. They rejoiced with "a joy unspeakable, and full of glory".

Some day, my dear friends, this little Babe, the Ancient of Days, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, will come down the skies, attended by all the armies of heaven. When He comes, and we are made to understand what He is, and what He has done for us, even then we shall want to borrow this inspired saying and cry, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Have you said, Thank you? Have you ever thanked Him for coming? How can we thank Him? There is only one way that I know—

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

May He help us to do it for His name's sake.

Let us pray:

O Lord, by Thine unspeakable gift, Thou hast made us rich forevermore; and we would from our hearts thank Thee. We desire, indeed, that life itself should be one long psalm of thanksgiving and praise to Him Who has redeemed us by His precious blood. If there be one here this evening who has never given God thanks for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, help such an one to receive Christ into his or her heart, and thus to praise Him forever. Make this an occasion of grace to us all, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

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