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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

UNREGENERATE HUMAN NATURE IN ITS TRUE CHARACTER

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, September 20th, 1936

(Stenographically Reported)

"And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

"Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

"And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

"And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him."—Matthew 26:47-50.

Christianity, the revelation of God in Christ Jesus—in a word, the gospel of grace—is predicated upon the assumption that human nature is inherently bad, intrinsically depraved. If man were not a sinner, there had been no need for a divine atonement. Had there been no need for atonement, the Incarnation had been unnecessary; and the story of Bethlehem's Babe need never have been written. If man, in his natural state, were not inherently sinful—not only a sinner, but sinful—there had been no need of regeneration, no need of the ministry among men of the creative Spirit of God. So that a recognition of man's natural state is fundamental to any appreciation of the purpose and genius of Christianity.

The hypothesis—let me put it that way for the moment until we have established it—of human nature's corruption being a Christian fundamental is quite generally denied in our day. The popular theory of evolution is partly responsible for such denial. It is generally assumed that man has emerged from a state of savagery, and that the savage evolved from the beast. In this place we have never believed that nonsense. I make no apology for saying that. Some years ago a very distinguished lawyer, a deacon of this church, remarked in one of our deacons' meetings, "The man who rejects the doctrine of evolution puts himself without the pale of educated men." I replied, "Thank you, Doctor, for giving me my proper place. I very gladly accept the exclusion, and am willing to go still farther, without the camp bearing my Master's reproach."

But there are others who do not deliberately subscribe to that strange delusion, who have yet imagined that the

restraints of civilization, and the refining influence of education, have effected at least an outward reform of human nature. Thus we have come to speak of the "dark ages", and of the "middle ages", and of course, of our age of great enlightenment and advancement!

Italy itself was once famous for many things. She has given to the world much of its art, and not a little of its noblest literature. The very name of Rome of ancient time was synonymous with law and order. And beyond all question it is the seat of an organization which modestly claims for itself the title of being the only really Christian church on earth. Yet Italy the civilized, the inheritor of Rome's tradition of lawfulness and justice, and claiming a Christian name, has been guilty of what everybody of moral sense must regard as an atrocious crime.

I read recently a full account of the debate in the House of Commons, of Britain's foreign policy. Nobody attempted to justify Mussolini, but the weakest government Britain ever had did attempt to justify itself. But we do not need to go to Abyssinia or Rome. I think man's inhumanity to man is sufficiently illustrated at home. I do not know that it is very much kinder to starve men to death than to shoot them outright, or to blow them up with dynamite.

Sometimes I am half amused by some of my ministerial—I had almost said, *brethren*. But the modernists would not call me their brother. They believe in the universal brotherhood of man, but I think they would except me! I see no evidence of brotherhood. Perhaps we have not rubbed off the veneer quite as boldly as Italy and Germany have done, but I fear there is a good deal

in our own social life that would disprove the assumption that man has left his savagery very far behind, if indeed he has emerged at all.

We cannot, however, understand human nature as it really is in the valleys or on the mountains of Ethiopia, nor yet in the offices of the sweatshops of Canada—for there are some. Human nature in its true character can be appraised only as it is viewed in comparison, contrast, and actual contact with Jesus of Nazareth. In Him you have human nature in its ideal form, human nature at its best, utterly divorced from sin; and joined with it, Deity revealed in grace. He came to the world "full of grace and truth". If you would know what human nature is, you must study it in comparison, and contrast, and, I repeat, in actual contact with the character of Jesus Christ.

I take the character of Judas Iscariot as a subject of study, that we may see what human nature in the raw is like, when you get under the crust of civilization and beneath the veneer of social restraints, and see it as it really is.

I.

We see here THE REACTION OF HUMAN NATURE TO THE TOUCH OF THE DIVINE. Lord Tweedsmuir, the Governor-General of Canada, has very fittingly registered objection to the hackneyed use of that chemical phrase, "reaction". I remember when I heard it first. I called at an American Y.M.C.A. office in Russell Square, London, during the war, to inform the Secretary of the presence in a certain hotel of a very distinguished American. This very important young man, sitting behind an oak desk—which was about the only important thing about him—called another young man more insignificant than himself, and said, "Go over to such a hotel and ask to see Dr. So-and-So, and bring me your reaction on him." I thought at the time of the proverb that a cat can look at a king. So he can, only the cat will not know he is a king—because he is a cat. It requires true greatness to appreciate greatness. I conceived at that moment a special dislike for the use of the word reaction, yet it is sometimes appropriate, and is a graphic phrase when used in metaphorical speech. So, with apologies to Lord Tweedsmuir, I use it this evening to show you human nature's "reaction" to the touch of the Divine.

There are some metals the quality of which may be determined by their reaction to certain chemical solvents. There are chemical reagents that are used for the purpose of chemical analysis. The chemist studies the reaction of certain elements one upon another. The moral qualities of Jesus Christ are reagents which disclose the real quality of human nature, and by their use only can we accurately analyze and appraise human nature for what it is.

In Jesus Christ we have truth in the absolute. Our Oxford Group friends talk about their "four absolutes", but they do violence to the word. That is one of the biggest of all words. He only is absolute Who is God, beside Whom "there is none else". Truth in the absolute is incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. We are not told that He is true, nor even that He is wholly true, but that He is *the* truth, that He is "full of . . . truth". Some day we shall understand that we cannot know the truth respecting anything in the universe apart from Christ. We are warned to "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of

men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ". Nothing is true that is at variance with Christ.

He is the truth in respect to everything that comes within the purview of human intelligence. He is *the truth about God*. You cannot know God apart from Christ. God in the totality of His being is revealed in the person of Christ. The truth *about man*, man in all his relations and relationships, in relation to things and to persons, and to all realms, to all worlds, temporal and eternal, can be known only through Christ, for it is written of Him, "He is before all things, and in him all things"—not some of them—"all things consist", or hold together. It is God's plan to reconcile, to attune all things to Himself, through Jesus Christ.

Christ is the standard of truth, the norm, the divine balancer—whatever you like to call Him, the divine Criterion by which everything is to be measured—in short, He is *the* truth. He came a Light into the world that whosoever followeth Him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. The light which shone in the face of Jesus Christ was the light that outshines the sun. He was the Father of lights, in comparison with Whom the greatest of lights were but as sparks.

We have heard of X-rays and other rays that have the power of penetrating substances that were once supposed to be impervious to the passage of light. Sunlight cannot shine through a piece of wood, but the X-ray can. We have learned that light has a penetrative power, whether it be that generated by electricity, or by the light of the sun, all are but radiations of that great Light.

But though He came full of truth, was Himself *the* Truth, Judas lived with Him for three years—and never saw the light. He ought to have walked in the light, but at the end of the time the record demonstrates the fact that not a faint gleam of that light had ever penetrated the closely shuttered heart of his. He abode in darkness, in the outer darkness—while living in the presence of the Light of the world. Talk to me about human nature's being good? It has the very darkness of hell in it. The mind and heart of Judas were shut. He never knew who Jesus Christ was. He never learned to relate time to eternity by looking at Him. He never learned anything of right human relationships by measuring Himself in the light of that Truth. At the end of three years he was as benighted as he was at the beginning. Human nature became dark with untruth when sin entered.

Human nature as represented in Judas was *unaffected by the fact that it spent three years in the presence of the very acme of divine wisdom*. How we need wisdom to-day! You and I shall need it as we go to our tasks to-morrow, that we may know what to do, and what not to do; what to say, and what to leave unsaid; what road to take, what objects to pursue. How we need a guide! How we need the direction of wisdom!

"But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold"—and, O Judas, hear it!—"neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall

be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?"

O Judas, thou hadst it at thy finger-tips. Thou couldst have touched it; you couldst have caressed it; yea, and possessed it; thou couldst have opened thy heart and mind to the highest Wisdom of the universe. This was He Whose voice was heard saying, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

And that Eternal Wisdom became incarnate, speaking with a human tongue. To Him was given "the tongue of the learned", that He "should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary". He spake it day after day, year after year, until they who had understanding said, "Never man spake like this man." But not one word of wisdom ever penetrated the darkened understanding of Judas. In the presence of the Wisdom that made the worlds, his mind was unenlightened. Well did the Wise Man say, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" The price to get wisdom was put into the hands of Judas, but he had no heart for it, being a fool to the end.

Young man, do not let your professor persuade you that wisdom lies in rejecting the Bible. It is a lie from which the world is suffering in agony to-day. Wisdom is with Christ; but these wretched human natures, fallen to the lowest depth by the weight of our sin, have become incapable of receiving divine wisdom, even when we live in the presence of it, as Judas Iscariot did.

Look at human nature in relation to the manifestations of divine power which characterized the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Sometimes we say, If only God would make bare His arm, if only He would bow the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at His presence, men would believe. Would they? What had Judas seen? He had seen the power of God manifested in the augmentation of the gladness and joy of Cana's marriage feast. He had seen that God in Christ loved to make people happy, and to teach them how to sing. He had seen the power of God manifest as this God-man opened the eyes of the blind, that they might see the beauties of His world; in the opening of the ears of the deaf, that they might hear its music. He had seen Him touch the lame man until he leaped as an hart. He had seen Him cleanse the leper from his loathsome disease, and make him happy with the sense that he was clean—yea, he had seen Him feed the hungry by His power. Reflect upon this. Judas was almost certainly among the disciples who received the broken

bread at the hands of Jesus Christ in the desert place, as He took five loaves and blessed and gave to the disciples, and they to the multitudes. Judas had seen the five loaves and two fishes satisfy the multitude of five thousand men, beside women and children. And if they were there in the same proportion as they form a part of religious services of our day, there must have been more women than men. I can imagine Judas coming back for more and more bread, until he saw that vast concourse satisfied. He was among the disciples who gathered up the fragments that remained, and looked upon the basketfuls—more than they had at the beginning. What a Man this Jesus was—but Judas saw nothing!

Ah, and he had been on the sea in the storm, terrified with all the others, when this wondrous Sovereign of the sea rose, Master of all, and said, "Peace; be still"—and there was a great calm. But Judas felt no wonder. More than that, as we heard this morning from Mr. Daggett, he had seen this strange Man vanquish death itself. He had commanded the dead to come forth to life, and they had come forth. There are three instances on record. But the human nature of Judas, while playing all about him was that Almighty which spake the universe from naught, remained untouched by the power of God. O men and women, be afraid of the sin that can do that to a man! Be in terror of that damnable thing that can make a man insensible to the presence of God.

And *what patience* had been shown to Judas! This gracious Teacher had given the disciples line upon line, precept upon precept, until by and by He moved into the shadow falling upon Him from the place called Calvary, heavy in spirit; and He said at last, "One of you shall betray me." They all said, "Is it I?" One of the Evangelists specifically tells us that Judas also which betrayed him asked, "Master, is it I?" The Lord Jesus said, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."

How Jesus Christ warned him! As though He would say, "Judas, I know what is in your heart. I am telling you so that you may awake in time." But it had no effect upon Judas. He went out to do his deadly work.

Shall I show you *human nature in contact with divine grace as exemplified in the person of the Lord Jesus?* He was "full of grace". He was grace incarnate. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He lacked nothing in His proper person of the complete Deity; for both the Father and the Holy Spirit were ever with Him, and He was "God manifest in the flesh". When first He spake in public, beginning His ministry in Nazareth, "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth". Long before, the prophet had sung, "Grace is poured into thy lips." And it was! He never spake but He spake graciously. Even when He spake in warning, there was infinite tenderness in every word. In sorrow of heart, almost in broken tones I think, He said on that last occasion when they were assembled for the supper, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. . . He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." As though He would say, "O sinner, if thou knowest that hellish thing that is in thee, repent before it is too late. I am

telling thee it is there." But Judas did not repent. He was just a man, human nature unregenerate showing what it really is.

There was one thing which perhaps more than anything else reveals the utter depravity of the heart of Iscariot, and that was *the place which Judas selected as the place of betrayal*. Luke says of Judas: "He went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude." What a picture of Judas that presents! In league with the enemies of the Son of God, and under promise to deliver Him up for thirty pieces of silver, he seeks opportunity to betray Him. His betrayal was not a sudden impulse; it was not a surrender to temptation from without, as was Peter's denial. The initiative was with Judas. Imagine, if you can, the working of his mind, as he considered all the possibilities of the case. He determined he must find his Master in some quiet place. He did not want to betray Him in the presence of the multitude. He would do his work without tumult. But where could he come upon Jesus alone, or, at the most, when but a few of His disciples were with Him? Judas may have considered many possibilities, but at last he remembered that Jesus was wont to repair to a certain place in the garden of Gethsemane to pray. John says: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." Was there no protest in the soul of Judas against the dreadful deed he contemplated? Was conscience so defiled as to approve his course? He knew that Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray. He had been with Him there, and had seen Him, and perhaps heard Him in converse with the Father. Who can describe the wickedness, the fiendishness of the deed? To choose the holiest spot on earth, where the Holy One communed with His Father, to betray Him to His enemies—while He was in the place and in the act of prayer. But Judas did that! Surely only Satan could do that? Yes; but Judas had sold his soul to the devil for thirty pieces of silver!

At last he came to the garden. He had said to those who were his Master's enemies, "He it is whom I shall kiss. You will know Him when I kiss Him. Hold Him fast." And he came saying, "Hail, Master"—and he kissed Him. And the Master said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" As though Judas had come to the very brink of the abyss and was about to step over, and the arms of Love were thrown around him, as Incarnate Grace seemed to say, "O Judas! Judas! Think, man! Think what thou art doing! Wherefore art thou come?" But it made no difference to Judas. Sin has so blinded the mind of man that in his folly, he actually spits into the face of God, and utterly rejects Him Who is the effulgence of the Father's glory.

Is that not a dark picture of human nature? But is it overdrawn? Is it not illustrative of many a man since the days of Judas? Has the truth shone upon you? Have you shut your heart against it? Have you pulled down the blinds? Has Wisdom's voice been heard by you? And have you said, "I prefer my own way?" Have you seen the power of God exhibited as Judas had, and gone

on just as you were? Has anyone here shut his heart against the grace and tenderness and patience of the God-man? If that be true, you are yourself an exemplification of this truth, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

II.

And now view this matter from another angle for a moment. This story illustrates the principle that **THE EVIL INHERENT IN HUMAN NATURE IS ALWAYS POSITIVE AND AGGRESSIVE**. I have spoken of Judas as on the defensive, fortifying himself, resisting all divine approaches. But he did not content himself with that.

Judas, I believe, from the very beginning, *had nursed in his heart a covetous desire for worldly possessions*. He had nursed the desire until it grew like a python, and at last wrapped its fatal coils about him and literally crushed his soul to death. Any man can do that. Evil as human nature is, it usually finds its strongest expression in one particular direction—in one direction in one man, in another in someone else. It is not always, nor only, the rich man who is covetous. The man who has nothing may have the most covetous heart. But Judas had always wanted the things of this world, and his eyes had been so bent toward the earth that he was incapable of seeing the sun. He had become shortsighted. It is possible to shut one's self up within a little space until one is unable to see beyond it. One's eyes may become so focused upon things at hand, as to lose all power to see beyond. Judas had done that, and although he lived in the presence of the King of eternity, he had never got a glimpse of "the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". His imagination had never been irradiated by even a gleam of the ideal life to be realized within the city of jasper walls, and pearly gates and golden. He was of the earth earthy, and could see nothing beyond.

By and by that thing which he allowed to become his master, blinded him to everything the Saviour said and did, and when Jesus Christ said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly", he went out—"and it was night". He went to the chief priests—they did not come to him: he went to them—and said, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." Judas was a good business man? He made a good bargain that day! Thirty pieces of silver! What a fortune! He persuaded himself that thirty pieces of silver would buy him peace and joy and satisfaction, and perhaps prominence and progress among his fellows. I know not what it would buy—thirty pieces of silver?

"What will ye give me, and I will deliver *him*." Of whom was he speaking? He spoke of Wisdom that "the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom?" Judas, here it is. It is worth more than gold, more than silver: "The price of wisdom is above rubies." This Man is wisdom, all the wealth of a million worlds incarnate, the Fountain and Flower of wisdom, the Kohinoor of the Heavenly Court, the jewel of all jewels—are you going to sell Him? "Yes." What are you going to get for Him? "Thirty pieces of silver." Was there ever a bigger fool out of hell than Judas—unless it is you, for doing the same thing—to barter the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver! That is what men are doing by the thousand still.

Judas for three years passed among his fellow-disciples as a disciple indeed; and when on that last night Jesus Christ gave the sign of the sop, for some strange reason they did not understand it. When He said, "That thou doest, do quickly", it is written, "Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things which we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor." So cleverly had Judas concealed his true character that the men who had lived in closest intimacy with him for three years did not recognize him for what he was. A fine man was Judas. I rather think he was nice-looking. The devil is fond of nice-looking men—and nice-looking women, too. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Judas was probably a very suave, agreeable gentleman, who seldom spoke harsh words to anybody. He was probably gracious and polite—with a heart as black as hell.

Do you know what happened Judas? When he went out from the presence of Jesus Christ it is recorded, "Satan entered into Judas." Judas did not need to be born again to make room for Satan. There is plenty of room in the natural heart for the devil to establish himself. You do not need to do anything but go out from the presence of Jesus, to shut your heart against the Holy Spirit; and you may be sure that Satan will enter in.

At last he sold his Master—and got his thirty pieces of silver. A good bargain? When he saw that Jesus was condemned, suddenly the thirty pieces of silver appeared in a new light. They were as coals from the pit in his hand. He hurried back to the high priests and said, "I do not want your money. Take your thirty pieces of silver. I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Sin has an awful power of self-revelation. If a man could only see before he has committed the deed what he sees afterward, he would not do it. But when he had done it, the die was cast; and Judas was reluctantly compelled to bear witness that he had sinned against the innocent blood. He did not want the price. He found it true, "Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof." He threw the money ringing down upon the temple floor, and the pious gentlemen said, "It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in." Judas, in spite of divine patience and infinite grace, driven by the self-destructive thing within him, hurried—listen! he hurried his condemned soul to perdition. Rejecting the hand that would have pulled him back from the abyss, he plunged over it, committing suicide.

Everyone who rejects Jesus Christ is a spiritual suicide—not always as to the body, but as to the soul. Do not ask me to believe in human nature—in yours or mine. I stand amazed at the grace of God. I wonder He did not let us all go to the pit, where we deserved to go. I wonder that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son—but He did. Some of us are on the road to heaven to-night, not because we wanted to go, not because we chose it, but because a sovereign mercy arrested us, and made us to know the way of life. Can you understand what Jesus Christ meant when He said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born

again"? These human natures will have to be changed; and no church, or priest, or ordinance, can change them. Nothing but, first, the cleansing of the precious blood, and then the regenerating power of the divine Spirit. Then, as we believe on Him, instead of Satan, Jesus Christ Himself will enter in, and take possession of our sinful hearts, and cleanse them to His liking, and furnish them for the habitation of His Holy Spirit. So shall we be saved to-day, and saved for ever. May He save us all for His name's sake! Let us pray:

O Lord, once again from the study of Thy Word Thou hast shut us up to Thyself. We have nowhere else to go, no one else to whom to look. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. We thank Thee that so many of us know Thee. We thank Thee that Thou hast created within us a clean heart, and hast put Thy Holy Spirit within. Make this a night of grace in Thy sovereign mercy to some who up to this hour have thought that perhaps they could make themselves better. Teach us the folly of the attempt, and bring every unconverted man and woman, every person within these walls to-night without a certain hope in Christ, humbly to the feet of the Lord Jesus, there to yield themselves wholly to His saving grace. We ask it in the Saviour's name, Amen.

BOOK REVIEWS

After Conversion—What?, by Lionel B. Fletcher. Published by Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., London. 1s. (35c. in this country).

"Conversion is not an end in itself, but it is an entrance into a life that will grow in richness and revelation as we prepare to receive it" (p. 22). The Evangelist expands and illustrates this statement throughout the book, showing first that Jesus is the Christian's Saviour, and if Saviour, then Keeper and Teacher. He discusses a definite experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion, which comes through complete surrender, and results in true victory, but he is careful to state that this is not necessarily accompanied by overwhelming emotion, by great excitement and much noise. "You may view such a manifestation with deep suspicion, lest it be Satan himself coming to deceive you" (p. 35).

He insists that "without Bible study and prayer as the regular spiritual exercises of your life every day, you will never become a strong virile Christian" (p. 43), and suggests the use of a well-bound Bible, a concordance, and a good commentary. He especially emphasizes the necessity of a daily period devoted to systematic study of the Word and to prayer. Every Christian is exhorted to be a member of a church, and having made sure that he is in the place where God would have him, to find something to do there, and to give his tithe to the work of the Lord. "Let your minister feel that you are one of his best and most reliable members" (p. 70).

Mr. Fletcher advises young converts as to confessing Christ among secular society, meeting times of testing, and overcoming temptation, and even discusses the relation of the believer to sports. He closes with an appeal to every Christian to be a missionary, coupled with some timely instruction on zealous, yet tactful witness for Christ.

The simple language in which the book is written, and the many illustrations culled from the author's own experience make it pleasant and instructive reading, and we commend it as an excellent volume to put into the hands of the new convert.—A. D.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

Our Churches in Quebec

The churches in Quebec have always felt that the great distance separating them from the rest of our churches has deprived them of the Christian fellowship of which their position as a Protestant minority makes them feel the keen need. It was, therefore, a special pleasure to meet a number of our pastors in Montreal and the Ottawa Valley and to speak in their churches during the past week.

(Continued on page 8)

FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE WATERLOO

On the evening of September 21st, 1921, a great business meeting was held in Jarvis Street Church, attended by six hundred and sixty-six persons. The meeting was an adjournment of the ninety-third Annual Meeting which first convened April 29th, 1921. The question at issue was the continuance or otherwise in the pastorate of the church of Dr. Shields. We shall not now go into the particulars of that meeting, except to quote the first paragraph of the resolution submitted, which was moved by Mr. J. Francis Brown. The first clause was: "That the pulpit of this church is hereby declared vacant, as from this date, September 21st, 1921." The resolution was seconded by Mr. H. R. Wellington, in the following words: "I second Mr. Brown's motion and also move that the question be now put and that the vote be by ballot. The reason for this motion is that it permits of no amendment but makes a vote necessary on the main question."

Thus Mr. Wellington, while seconding the resolution, moved that the "motion be now put". The object was, of course, to prevent a discussion of the question. This heroic action was seconded by Mr. J. B. Lawrason. While there was objection to the question's being voted upon without discussion, the minute says that "the Pastor suggested that those opposed to the motion should consent to the vote being taken by ballot and without debate". The main question, then, of the resolution was voted upon by ballot, and was defeated; and the Pastor was sustained.

During the intervening fifteen years we have received many requests from ministers and others that the whole story of the Jarvis Street battle for freedom of the pulpit to be loyal to the Scriptures should be published. We have had a feeling throughout that it would be better to allow some time to pass, until the new Jarvis Street was sufficiently established for all to recognize the justice of the verdict which was rendered the 21st of September, 1921.

We believe that fifteen years may fairly be reckoned as a good test of the stability of the work. We have therefore decided to publish the story of Jarvis Street's deliverance in serial form, in THE GOSPEL WITNESS. It is really a thrilling story. We know of nothing in the religious history of any country quite like it. The story is full of teaching for pastors, deacons, and church members generally. It shows what may be accomplished by a company of people who stand their ground for the truth. It shows also to what fearful hazards a church is exposed which retains on its membership roll the names of people who "have a name to live but are dead" religiously. It is replete with suggestions respecting the need for New Testament discipline, in a New Testament church. It shows also what God is ever willing to do in a church which will cast itself upon Him, and shape its affairs according to the teaching of His Word. It shows what may be expected in the life of a church where the Spirit of God is really recognized as the Chief Executive.

Membership Statistics

While statistics cannot tell the whole story, a few statistics may whet the appetite of our readers for the story that is to be told. The present pastorate began in May, 1910, and the battle, the story of which we are by and by to relate, was set in array actually at the Annual Meeting of 1921. The statistics we quote will convey

only the full year's report, and therefore lead us up to the 31st of March, 1936.

For the first eleven years before the great decision was taken, namely, 1910 to 1921, the report of additions to the church membership was as follows: By baptism, 460; by experience, 112; by letter, 577; a total of 1,149, or an average of 104 additions per year. Many churches probably would consider even such a report as that as furnishing some ground for thankfulness. Viewing the second period, from 1921 to 1936, the number received by baptism was 2,008; by experience, 698; by letter, 663; a total of 3,369 for the fifteen years, or an average addition of 224 per year. Taking the whole period of twenty-six years, 2,468 were added by baptism; 810 by experience; 1,240 by letter, making a total of 4,518, or a yearly average of 174.

The Finances for Twenty-Six Years

We may now turn to the financial aspect of these twenty-six years. For the first eleven years, or before our emancipation, the total revenue of Jarvis Street Church amounted to \$436,494.65. That included in 1914-15 nearly \$30,000.00 for a special building fund; and from 1919 to 1921, between \$40,000.00 and \$50,000.00 for the special denominational Forward Movement. It also included amounts that were not actually passed through the treasury of Jarvis Street Church, but were given to various outside objects and credited to the giving of Jarvis Street. But we have deducted none of these amounts from the total \$436,494.65.

It may be worth remarking that for the first year of the present pastorate, 1910-11, the total income of the church was \$28,465.44. The average receipts for the eleven-year period was \$39,681.33. That covered a period when Jarvis Street was looked upon as being the richest Baptist church in Canada. At the great decision in 1921 it was generally said that "all the wealth had left the church".

For the fifteen years since 1921, the total revenue of Jarvis Street Church has been \$935,381.18, an average of \$62,358.74, or an increase of about sixty-three per cent. It is worthy of note that this period includes the six years of the depression.

The total revenue for the twenty-six years was one million, three hundred and seventy-one thousand, eight hundred and seventy-five dollars, and eighty-three cents (\$1,371,875.83) or an average of \$52,764.45 per year or \$1,014.70 per week for the twenty-six years.

But in addition to those who have been baptized and received into the fellowship of the church, many hundreds of others have professed conversion. During the first eleven years—we shall give complete statistics later—the Sunday School average was somewhere between two and three hundred. Our average Sunday School attendance now has long exceeded the thousand mark, sometimes rising to an average attendance of twelve and thirteen hundred for the year. During the fifteen years, Jarvis Street has sent out from its own membership more ministers and missionaries than in the preceding ninety-three years of its history.

In addition to that, Toronto Baptist Seminary has come into existence. It was originated by Jarvis Street,

(Continued on page 8)

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

REV. WILLIAM J. JONES, EDITOR

Vol. 11 3rd Quarter Lesson 41 October 11, 1936

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Lesson Text: Jeremiah, Chapters 23, 24.

Golden Text: "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—Jeremiah 23:6.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Ezek. 34:1-16; Tuesday—Ezek. 34:17-30; Wednesday—Is. 11:1-10; Thursday—Is. 40:1-26; Friday—Heb. 8:1-13; Saturday—II. Tim. 3:1-17.

EXPOSITION

The prophecies of this lesson were applicable in the reign of Zedekiah. Vs. 1-8, the opening section of Chapter 23, shows the condemnation of Judah's rulers and the praise of their successors. V. 1 reveals that the shepherds (rulers) of Judah were faithless to the people, and not true pastors (cf. 22:3, 13). Therefore, (2), for not visiting the people for good, Jehovah will visit them with punishment [Note His covenant title [Ex. 24:10], indicating the seriousness of their crime]. But Judah will be restored to a fruitful heritage (3) under faithful rulers (not one sheep being missing), particularly One whom they foreshadow, the Branch of David's line (5-8). "Behold the days come" (5) calls attention to the importance of the announcement of the Prophet. This verse is a Messianic promise, one of the few in this prophecy. It refers to the Shoot or Branch (Is. 11:1), that which springs out of the ground immediately. He will prosper and will be a just ruler (cf. II. Sam. 8:15). Under Him all Israel will be restored (6), Him whose name is Righteousness, and thus whose people are righteousness too (33:16). There is a hint at Zedekiah here, for his name is like that of Jehovah Tsidkēnū. Such restoration (7) will eclipse the Exodus (cf. 16:14f.) in glory and in extent (8).

The sins of the prophets of Judah (9-15). V. 9 opens the section dealing with the Prophets (9-40). Jeremiah was shocked and broken-hearted (9) at the gross immorality of the prophets who committed adultery, literal and spiritual. Their iniquitous course brought drought (10). The priests too (11) were immoral (Is. 56:9-12). However, their ways were to be made slippery and dangerous, culminating in a visitation from Jehovah (12) their pursuer (Ps. 35:6). The Samaria prophets of Baal and other gods were idolatrously wicked, but the prophets of Judah were immoral as well, supporting evil-doers in their religiosity, and leading the people astray (14). Judah's sin and that of her prophets was the greater (14) in the sight of God (cf. 3:6 f.), therefore her punishment would be bitter (Deut. 29:18; Lam. 3:15).

Warning against false prophets (16-22). False prophets (cf. 8: 8; 14:14, ff.) in their own imagination (16) prophesied peace (17) to those who opposed Jehovah, and promised them immunity from punishment (cf. 4:10). But those falsifiers had not stood in the intimate, friendly Council of Jehovah (18) the revealing chamber of the Lord (cf. Amos 3:7). Vs. 19, 20 is a digressive section on the punishment of the wicked who may be the false prophets, too. Though not mandated (21), these prophets spoke in His name. But (22) had they received divine revelations, they would have spoken the Word of God and rebuked the people for their transgressions.

Jehovah sees and will punish false prophets (23-32). But the prophets did not reckon with the all-seeing, ever-present God (23), whose knowledge is universal (24). With repeated claims, they attracted attention to their messages (25), but the true God knew their deceits (26) by which the people were led to forget the precise nature of Jehovah, as were their fathers (cf. 2:23). The test of a true prophet (cf. 13:1-4) was correct teaching concerning the character of God (27) and His Word spoken faithfully, that is, in its genuineness (28). God would not allow confusion of man's word with His Word, as adulteration of wheat by stubble, for His Word is penetrating and powerful (cf. Heb. 4:12), like a fire or a hammer (29). Therefore, Jehovah opposed the false prophets who filched their messages from the true prophets in order to add weight to their own deliverances (30). He was against them for using the authentic formula of prophecy, "He saith" (32). He opposed them for their

lying dreams and impudent boldness, because they thus misled the people, causing them loss and not profit.

The Abuse of Revelation (33-40). The word "burden" which in true prophetic language originally meant "utterance", was misused by Jeremiah's enemies flung back at him in derision as if his message was a burden, a weight. But Jehovah would not allow such mockery and therefore, told Jeremiah to tell the scoffers that they were a burden (33, 36), and that their slighting use of that term would itself prove a burden to them. They must desist from using it (34), or else if insisting on using it they would be banished from Jerusalem and brought to disgrace by God Himself (39, 40). Their great sin, therefore, was the perversion of the words of the Living God (36).

In Chapter 24 we have set before us the vision of figs (1-3) and its meaning (4-10). In v. 1, which dates the passage, clearly showing the prophecy to pertain to events during the reign of Zedekiah, the vision is stated. Zedekiah may not be mentioned directly because of his weakness, and therefore because he did not need special rebuke or censure (cf. 23:6). The very good and the very bad figs were very early, August figs (cf. Is. 28:4), whimsically described in v. 3 by the Prophet.

The good figs represented the exiles (note the high class of artisans deported) of Judah, those who submitted to the Babylonians (5). They were to receive good in being returned to the Land, and were to be established in prosperity (31:27 f.). Moreover, they were to be spiritually regenerated and blessed as the people of God (7). The bad figs, on the other hand, represented Zedekiah and the remnant in the Land, as well as those who had gone to Egypt at one time or another in Judah's last days (8). They were to be a consternation (cf. 15:4) throughout the earth, whither God was to send them. This new captivity, whose implications are seen in the world to-day, was to be preceded by horrors (cf. 15:2) similar to those preceding Jerusalem's destruction (10).

APPLICATION

In 23:23, 24, the omnipresence of God is so expressed that one cannot escape the dramatic picture of One whom sinners cannot escape, backsliders evade, believers avoid. To the saved His presence is at once a warning and a comfort. And His Servant, the Messiah, sprung from human stock (23:5), from sinful Israel, and the late, sinful Davidic kings is omnipresent. Himself righteous, inherently so, was to rise a King, quietly, unobtrusively. So He comes to us in salvation. He is to be in the future, a true ruler, the Messiah. In a sense, the Land of Israel is to see future blessing, but the godly Israelite looked upon the Land as the place of God's glory, not their home in a material sense. The prosperity of the homeland (5, 6) is really that of the Kingdom, not the "kingdom of God on earth" of which Modernists speak, a kingdom not differing essentially from the millennial kingdom of some evangelicals! No! The prosperity of everlasting kingdom! After the testing of this world, comes the prosperity of the next (24:6), in a spiritual kingdom (24:7). How gracious that such a gift, such gifts come through Him who is our righteousness (I. Cor. 1:30; I. Jn. 2:2)!

In 24:2 we learn that men are irrevocably divided into two classes, and their goal in life determined by their natures more than their circumstances, for the figs were both subject to the same environment, yet differed. So men to-day. We learn that good people are tried, and suffer (24:5). Contrariwise, often ungodly men prosper, but in so doing do not indicate that God is spiritually blessing them. His blessings in common grace are to the just and unjust. Some church members foolishly defend unscriptural methods in church work by saying they have been prospered! That is not true which works, or succeeds in human esteem.

The false prophets with a vain display of religion boasted of dreams (23:25, 28, 32), forgetting that dreams were a low form of revelation, coming to Jacob, for instance, at a low point in his spiritual career. And their subjective feelings, moods, and attitudes (23:16) were mystical, opposed to the objective authority of God. So to-day, men depending on unenlightened human reason, have no norm, no standard. And people love to have it so (5:31)! Word stealing (23:30) the taking of orthodox words, and claiming authority (31) is not new. Sometimes we feel like ceasing to use Scriptural terms such as "Master" and "Teacher" when wrongly applied to our Lord. Let us rescue them, giving true Scriptural meaning to them, for they are inspired.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

(Continued from page 5)

I found the work at Verdun in good condition; under the leadership of a strong Board of Management this church has maintained a consistent witness to the gospel which has been blessed to the salvation of souls. They have also succeeded in reducing their building fund indebtedness appreciably. At the St. Paul's Church in the East of Montreal I heard a splendid exposition of the fifty-first Psalm given in French by Pastor Arthur St. James, and afterwards had the privilege of addressing the meeting in English. This fine little building is as neat and attractive as paint and hard work can make it, and is a credit to all who were concerned in its erection and upkeep.

Through the kindness of a devoted Christian brother in Montreal I was enabled to visit the churches of the Ottawa Valley by car. It was profitable to meet the friends in these centres, and to share the joys and sorrows of the pastors. The church at Sawyerville, together with the Pastor, Rev. R. E. Jones, was particularly cordial in welcoming a representative of the Union for it has had few visitors from other churches, situated as it is, within a half hour's run of the boundary of the State of Maine.

The Province of Quebec is quite different from its sister province, Ontario. The physical appearance of the country, with its great rolling hills of the Laurentian chain, is in striking contrast to the smooth undulations of the Old Ontario countryside. In the districts where the French-Canadians predominate (and there are fewer and fewer places where this is not so) the visitor might well believe that houses and farm buildings, with the ever-present church spire in view, belonged to Normandy or Brittany, rather than to the New World. And there are problems and difficulties for our people to meet in this province that always arise when the gospel of grace is confronted by a powerful, unscrupulous foe, rooted in ignorance and superstition, that never sleeps. Nevertheless, while there are unusual difficulties, there are also unusual opportunities and, it behooves our Union fellowship to bear up these brethren in prayer.

W. S. WHITCOMBE.

Sunderland

The Sunderland District Association of Regular Baptists will hold their Fall sessions in the Bethel Baptist Church, Orillia, Wednesday, September 30th. The afternoon session will begin at 2 o'clock standard time, and the evening session at 7.30.

Rev. W. N. Charlton, of Hespeler, Vice-President of the Union, will be the special speaker at both sessions. The afternoon address will be devoted to Sunday School work, along which line a discussion will also be conducted. Sunday School workers are requested to bring their particular prob-

lems or questions, that they may be prepared to take part in the discussion period.

Come one—come all—and let us have a time of real Christian fellowship and instruction together.

FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE WATERLOO

(Continued from page 6)

and has been largely supported by Jarvis Street. Its graduates are now pretty well scattered over the earth, serving on many mission fields, and as pastors in from forty to fifty churches in Canada.

Beside that, THE GOSPEL WITNESS has come into being, and in the aggregate millions of copies of sermons from the Jarvis Street pulpit have been circulated all over the world. Among the readers of THE WITNESS there are many hundreds of ministers of all denominations. Before the depression we had about three thousand ministers among our readers. We have not quite so many now, because the depression reduced the number of our ministerial subscribers. It is impossible to say what has been accomplished by THE GOSPEL WITNESS. We have heard of large numbers of conversions. We have been assured too that it has exercised a steady influence in the lives of many young ministers, and that even the most mature have not been above acknowledging that THE GOSPEL WITNESS has been helpful to them.

Perhaps that is enough to report for the present of what God has wrought in the fifteen years; and it is enough surely to show why the adversary was determined to silence the testimony of Jarvis Street pulpit if possible. Beginning with the November 5th issue, and week by week following, we shall tell the story of Jarvis Street's struggle for liberty to declare "the whole counsel of God". We shall have to go back to 1919, and to the Baptist Convention in Ottawa of that year, to show where the opposition originated, and how McMaster University, through its agents in the church, sought to silence our protest against Modernism. It is a thrilling story, we repeat, and we ask our readers to exert themselves to spread the news that this story is coming, and urge every reader to endeavour to send us some new subscribers. We shall be grateful also for lists of names to whom we may send our advertisement of this forthcoming story.

A PLOT THAT FAILED

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