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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE SHAME OF CHURCHES THAT ARE DENS OF THIEVES
INSTEAD OF HOUSES OF PRAYER

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, February 28th, 1937

(Stenographically Reported)

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"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

"And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."
—Matthew 21:12, 13.

It is popular nowadays to assume that human society is progressing toward a better state. Probably such teaching was a little more prevalent, and a little more pronounced, a few years ago than it is to-day. No one will be disposed to dispute the contention that human society is, in a certain sense, progressing. It ought to be progressive. We are the heirs of the experience of all those who have gone before us; and we ought to learn how to take advantage of what they have discovered and left for our profit.

And yet a candid, impartial, and thorough, analysis of the matter will show that human progress has largely been in material things. It is true that we have learned how to press superhuman powers into our service, how to make life, at some points at least, a little more comfortable than it was for our forebears. But how far have we progressed in the higher things of life? Is it true that morally the world is getting better?

We see nations, drunk with sight of power, loosing wild tongues that have not God in awe. It will surely be acknowledged that in the realm of international relations, the world seems to have lapsed into barbarism. Our own Empire sought to set an example to the rest of the world by throwing away her armaments, by reducing ourselves almost to a state of defenselessness; but now, disillusioned, we are endeavouring as rapidly as possible to make up our arrears, and to save ourselves from being made to acquiesce in a state of universal lawlessness.

If we look at our own country, I am unable to see much to boast of. This is a new world, and both here and in the United States, we are disposed to take credit to ourselves which properly belongs to a gracious Providence. Our geographical position has saved us from very much that the rest of the world is forced to face. But if we examine our own immediate concerns, and look abroad upon, let us say, the Province of Ontario alone, I cannot see that we have much of which we may justly be proud. Certainly we are taking courses to-day which have never been known in this country before. No matter which way one looks, that is true.

I doubt whether public morals were ever lower than they are to-day. Not very many years ago, in small communities, it was quite common for people to leave their doors unlocked, in the confidence that nothing would be stolen. It would be a very dangerous practice to pursue that course to-day.

Whatever aspect of business life you bring under review, industrially and commercially, dishonesty nearly everywhere prevails. I hope you are not foolish enough to believe more than a fraction of what advertisers say of their products. Nobody in his senses would believe half he reads or hears in that direction. Of course there are exceptions to the rule.

And in the domestic realm, the same is true. We hear much about divorce, but that is not the worst of it. A lawyer said to me on one occasion, "You ministers know very little about the seamy side of life. If

you had to deal with what we have to deal with, you would realize what conditions are." I said to him, "But I have to deal with things before they reach you—and hundreds of other things you never hear of." We have come to a day when, if introduced to a woman, one is almost afraid to ask where her husband is. There are so many wrecked homes where there is no divorce.

I am not a pessimist. I have been here a good while, and have had a fair opportunity to observe the trend of public affairs, and I affirm that public morals were never at a lower ebb than they are to-day. It is almost impossible to shock people with anything. The public seem to have become incapable of moral indignation.

Since 1934 the Province of Ontario has been under the rule of the underworld. That is a strong statement. I say it deliberately, and by radio. I say it for the information of the Premier of this Province. The government of this Province has been under the influence of the basest elements of our provincial life. There never was, since Canada was Canada, a more corrupting influence in the public life of any nation, than the present Government of this Province. We ought to hang our heads in shame when reading of a report, submitted in our Legislature at a time when tens of thousands of people have not bread to eat, and when people are being taxed for the maintenance of tens of thousands of unemployed—a report to the effect that the liquor bill for this Province alone last year was nearly fifty millions of dollars. That of course is the wholesale cost; probably in beverage rooms and government liquor stores the consumers paid a hundred million dollars. If there were any moral sense left, if there were any public conscience remaining, the people of this Province would rise in rebellion against such an abominable state of affairs.

I cannot see the whole Province, but I have seen parts of it; and I am fairly familiar with this part of it; and I would not have believed that anything out of the pit itself could have effected, in three years, such a transformation of this district as that devil's agency in Queen's Park known as the Hepburn Government, has accomplished.

I recently sent workers to examine these dens of iniquity roundabout this quarter, a number on Friday night, and a number last night. I shall not speak of things that are beyond the law. The tragedy of it all is that these shameful conditions which now obtain are legalized, and that, whether we like it or not, we are made the unwilling partners in this damnable business, to the extent of nearly fifty million dollars last year.

I could call many as witnesses, but I shall ask only two young men to come to the platform and tell us what they saw in a few of the beer-parlours roundabout this church last night, they are students of Toronto Baptist Seminary, Mr. Graham Reeve, and Mr. Walter Tompkins. Mr. Reeve will speak first:

MR. REEVE: "Last night I went into the Avonmore Hotel across the corner from this church to obtain firsthand information, being careful to note: the number of women present, the percentage of young women, and the prevailing conditions.

"My first entrance, alone, was around 10.45 p.m. Apart from profanity, the men's room was orderly; about fifteen men were seated quietly at the tables, drinking. There are two large rooms set apart for the women and their escorts. The floor space I judge to be five times that of the men's quarters. The atmosphere of the women's beverage-rooms was sickening. A dense haze

of tobacco smoke made visibility and breathing difficult. Fully ninety per cent of those present, women as well as men, were smoking. The smoke screen was so thick, and the lighting effect so dim, that one could scarcely distinguish women from men, but I counted at least fifty-seven women in the two rooms. I saw one girl about fifteen years of age seated at a full table; whether she was drinking or not, she was at least exposed to the customary sights of such a place. The ages of the women would range from eighteen upward; the majority were in their twenties.

"In company with Mr. Tompkins, I returned nearly an hour later. The place was even more crowded than on my first visit, and increasingly noisier. There was an hilarity which showed the rising effects of the liquor consumed. I observed many who had been present when I was there first.

"We were prevented from making a careful survey in the Ambassador Hotel, directly across Gerrard Street from this building, by a uniformed hotel employee who stood on duty at the curtained entrance to the dance-hall. But clearly through the open entry, we could see that the women who were dancing were young, and there could be no mistaking the combination of drinking and dancing.

"Following this, we walked down and across to the Windermere Hotel. For the benefit of the audiences, seen and unseen, we should say that we had no difficulty in locating these places—all of those named by my friend and myself are on Jarvis Street, between Gerrard and Dundas, with the exception of the Hotel Tusco, which is next door but one to Dundas—one block.

"At the Windermere Hotel we were told by an employee that he was sorry we could not be served, but that the "last call" was taken at 11.45. "We have to be careful", he said, "because it is Sunday now. But if it were any other night, you could be served later." I asked if we could look around, and he said, "Sure." When we tried to enter the combined dancing-floor and women's beverage-room he shut the glass door; but that did not prevent our having a look around. Here again young women were much in evidence, and things were far from being dull—drinking and dancing were going on in the same room.

"I would say that the manifest evil is in the mixed drinking. The men's rooms were comparatively quiet, but in the women's rooms many young women were present, and as closing time drew near the noise and effects of drink increased. If those who profess to see no evil in these drinking haunts would take time to pay a personal visit of inspection between eleven o'clock and midnight—and one does not need to order beer to do so—it would do more to open their eyes, and change their minds, than any amount of talking and persuasion. One careful visit will for ever sicken the visitor, and cause him to throw his whole influence to the support of a purged Ontario."

DR. SHIELDS: Thank you, Mr. Reeve. Mr. Tompkins will now give us his observations.

MR. WALTER TOMPKINS: "Anyone who is familiar with this section of Toronto will support our observations of one night. I merely add a few facts to what Mr. Reeve has told you, for your consideration.

"Across from Jarvis Street Baptist Church, on the southeast corner, is the Ambassador Hotel. We visited this place, and noted that the dance floor was crowded

with couples, mostly young people. Later we returned as the place was emptying—drunken men stood noisily on the corner outside, and women under the influence of liquor were helped into cars driven by men who, if not drunk, at least had taken liquor.

"I saw a girl of about twenty-five years of age come out of the Walsingham Hotel, which is near the Ambassador, on Jarvis Street. She was obviously drunk, and as she crossed the road and proceeded down Jarvis Street she reeled along the sidewalk. This is not uncommon on Jarvis Street, and some here could vouch that they have been accosted by drunken women.

"About five minutes to twelve we passed the Tusco Hotel, which is on the east side of Jarvis Street, just below Dundas Street. We could see that a fight was in progress in the beverage-room. Shortly after, a woman under the influence of liquor was thrown out by several men. I say, "thrown", because she was violently resisting, and shrieking that someone had insulted her. She was followed by her husband, who was hopelessly drunk. Cursing loudly, and protesting that she had been insulted, the woman again sought entrance into the hotel, but was resisted by the hotel employees. Finally she was hurried to the sidewalk by some men who came from the hotel, and immediately a fight was in progress, with the woman sometimes lying on the street. In the struggle her husband was knocked down, and as far as I could see, was practically unconscious. Someone shouted for the police, who came and dragged the man along the sidewalk, and leaned him against a "call-box" until the police-van came.

"The hotel rapidly emptied, and drunken men and women poured out—among them, the girl I had seen staggering down Jarvis Street. She now had a male escort.

"We turned and walked home, meeting numerous drunks on the way; and we earnestly wished that some people we know who defend the beverage-rooms could have been present with us and obtained first-hand information. The facts we have given you are but a very small cross-section of the fruits of the liquor traffic. If the sights we saw are so tragic and revolting, what must the unseen be?"

DR. SHIELDS: Such conditions as have been described by these young men would have been absolutely impossible in Ontario a few years ago. The recital of a description of such scenes would have been quite enough to move the authorities to action. I am not quite clear as to the present status of these places in this neighbourhood. The Ambassador Hotel was refused a license to conduct a public dance hall, but they continue with their orchestra and dance nightly. The same was true of the Windermere Hotel, but they carry on as though they had a license. I do not know whether the license they applied for was to permit them to go farther than they are going now without permission.

There is to be a temperance convention held in Toronto Thursday and Friday of this week, in Cooke's Presbyterian Church. I hope something may be accomplished.

But what is the use of discussing these matters? Who is responsible for them? Shall we blame the church or churches for conduct like this? I read that a representative of a certain denomination, at an official meeting recently, complained of drinking among church officials, insisting that some church officials get drunk. I do not know what kind of church that is, but I suppose nearly anything is possible in our day.

But where is the difficulty? Does anyone suppose that it would be possible for the church to effect a complete reformation of the Province of Ontario? Will

anyone contend that, say, twenty-five years ago, there was no evil? Certainly not. But our Lord said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." It does not take very much salt to stay the progress of corruption, and if the church were what it ought to be, if it were made up of those who ought to compose it, people who have been born again, if it were really salt in the midst of the mass of corruption, would at least restrain these evil forces, and accomplish something for the betterment of human society.

I shall endeavour to show you this evening that the salt has very largely lost its savor, and that "it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Whether you object to my criticism of other churches or not, I do not care. I want the people of Toronto, and whoever may hear me this evening, to know something of what we understand a church ought to be. I do not want to be classed with those who drink, and gamble. If there are churches of that sort, I want people generally to understand that there is one church that looks upon these churches as being just as truly the agencies of the devil as the beer-parlours. Indeed, I believe such churches do more harm in the end than all the beer-parlours.

The responsibility for the present state of affairs in the Province of Ontario must be laid at the door of the professing Christian church and its ministers; for if the church generally, and its ministers generally, were about the Lord's business, if churches were doing what ought to be done, if churches were standing for the things for which they ought to stand, such conditions would be utterly impossible.

I.

Look for a moment at the story I have read to you, of our Lord's action in dealing with the defilers of the temple, which was representative of organized religion, of the religion of Jehovah in the days of His flesh. In the Old Testament we read of an effort on the part of some to build "a city and a tower, whose top (should) reach unto heaven". Though the Babel builders failed, and were scattered, they have been renewing their efforts from that day until now—trying by human means to build a tower that would lift men to the skies.

Jacob had his dream of a ladder set up upon earth whose top reached to heaven, and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Its significance is suggested to us by our Lord Himself Who virtually said that He was, in His own proper person, the realization of Jacob's dream, a Ladder set up upon earth, Whose top reached to heaven, upon Whom the angels of God ascended and descended, Himself being "the way, the truth, and the life."

When God communicated Himself to His ancient people, He summoned Moses into the mount, and showed him a pattern of heavenly things, and laid down the conditions upon which men might approach a holy God. The tabernacle was the result, with its altar of sacrifice, its cleansing blood, its high priest, its holy of holies, its mercy-seat. There God revealed upon what terms He would meet with sinful men. Hence the temple was designed to be "a house of prayer for all people". It was set up that men, might learn how, notwithstanding their sinfulness, they might come into the presence of a holy God—by cleansing from their sin, and making their prayer to be heard in heaven, God's dwelling-place. That was what the temple was for, and that is what its modern counterpart, the church, is for. A church ought to be a

house of prayer, a body of regenerated people, a separated society, a heavenly colony, a company of people whose citizenship is in heaven, and who recognize the Kingship of the Lord Jesus, and who are governed by the laws of His kingdom.

But what did our Lord Jesus find? Coming into the temple, He found the religious officials of His day—the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees—engaged in buying and selling. The tables of the money-changers were there, and in one way or another they were making profit of their religion. Nor were they even making it honestly, for the Lord Jesus, Who never erred, said that that which was designed to be a house of prayer, had been made “a den of thieves”.

What about the church to-day? Is it true of the modern church? Does the church generally represent God? A man came to me not very long ago—he had come from the West, and was taking a position with an insurance company in Toronto. The manager of the company, he told me, said to him, “What are your church connections?” “Religiously, I am a Baptist.” “Do you know anyone in Toronto?” “Yes; I know a certain minister.” “If you want to establish a connection to begin your business you must select a good church and work in the membership of that church. Whom do you know?” He named a certain preacher. “His is a fairly large church, and would be a good place to begin.” But said the man, “I do not use my religion in that way, sir. I hope I shall apply the principles of my religion to my business, but I will not join any church in order to make the church a means of profit.”

When I was in London, before I came to Toronto, there was an undertakers' firm in which there were three partners, each of whom had a family. The families consisted of grown people, and there were no two members of any one of the three families belonging to the same church. They spread themselves over several churches in order to get as much business as possible. God was greatly prospering us, and we had large crowds, and one of the partners came and wanted to join us, but I told him we were not ready for the undertaker! I gave him the cold shoulder, and told him ours was not a church where people were allowed to make merchandise of their religion. No honest man, not to say Christian, would stoop to anything so contemptible as that. Yet I fear that is all too characteristic of many churches to-day. They are houses of merchandise in very truth.

Furthermore, we have in our day a new situation. The church is made a school of dramatic art, if you please. You can read in any evening paper of dramatic societies belonging to certain churches. Shame on the church! Shame on the ministers who allow such things in the house of God! I care not whether it is Baptist, or United Church, or Presbyterian, or Anglican, or Roman Catholic—whatever it be: a religious institution that fosters that kind of thing is not a Christian church. It is one of the devil's chief agencies for the destruction of the souls of men, agencies of Hollywood, cultivating a taste for the theatre that, according to the chief of police of one of America's largest cities, is one of the greatest crime-producing agencies in the world to-day. Nor is that all. We have these places such as the Ambassador and Windermere Hotels. I anathematize them in the name of the Lord. They are veritable trap-doors to hell, existing for the destruction of young men and women. Yet I do not believe they are more evil—or so evil—as is the church that is made a dancing-school.

Some years ago when my friend, the late Dr. John

Roach Straton, of New York, was preaching for me here, he spoke strongly on these matters. I did not then know about them; I had never been in a dance hall in my life. It is not necessary to take poison in order to be sure it is poison: when you see the red label, leave it alone. On that occasion he said far stronger things than I would have dared to say because I could not speak from observation.

The next day a lady called me, the matron of a chain of hostels from Halifax to Vancouver, under the direction of a certain denomination, for the care of unmarried mothers. She asked me to bring Dr. Straton to see her. We went, and in that home there were about twenty-five girls, the youngest was sixteen, and the oldest was not more than twenty-five—all of them expectant mothers. Said this woman, “Tell these gentlemen what has been responsible for your downfall;” and one after another, without a solitary exception, said it was the public dance, and one of them said it was a dance in a church! When an organization bearing the Christian name is used to promote dramatics and dancing, surely the church has wandered leagues away from the Bible.

And now we have another evil. I do not know what *bingo* is, except that it is a gambling game. It may be a mild sort of gambling; but what does it matter what sort of game it is, whether it be cards, or horse-racing, or what-not? Gambling is gambling, and it cannot be dressed up and made respectable. The gambler is a potential thief. He is a dishonest man, who proposes to get something for nothing. He endeavours to profit himself by someone else's loss. He knows very well that he can get nothing which someone else does not lose. All that he gets, he gets unfairly, dishonestly. And when gambling gets into a man's blood, it is like a fever.

I had a man here some years ago who professed conversion. He was very penitent about his past record: he had been a gambler, and had wasted his money. He had a store, and he owed some money on the fixtures. He was afraid he would lose them, and wanted some member of the church to help him. Do not let anyone suppose the trick can be repeated, because we do not do it now. But a man who believed in him, advanced him five hundred dollars to save him from the bailiffs—but the bailiffs came later. He went to work for someone else, and stole a thousand dollars from his employer to bet on the horse-races. He was brought into court, found guilty, and sentenced to a term in prison.

His wife came to see me later, to ask if I would sign a paper seeking his parole before the expiration of his sentence. I said I should like to have a talk with her first. “Did you”; I asked her, “know about his gambling?” “Yes; I did.” “Did you encourage him in it?” “Not at first, but later I thought it would be a way of getting out of our difficulties, so I did encourage him at last.” I said, “You were a partner with him in his gambling?” “Yes.” I then said: “Instead of seeking your husband's release, if I had authority, I would send you to prison to keep him company.”

She ought to have gone to jail. And so ought the preacher or priest to go, who encourages gambling in his church. No man who turns the house of God into a den of thieves is worthy to be called a minister of Christ. I want to dissociate myself from all institutions of that sort that call themselves churches. I want all the world to know that in this place we abhor such institutions, that we believe they are of the devil's own brood, and not in any sense Christian.

A man told me only this morning of a certain priest

in this city who bought a bag of flour at a store, and persuaded the store-keeper to give him another bag. He paid seventy-five cents for the one he bought—twenty-four pounds. The flour was delivered to a church, and through this bingo gambling game the first bag netted the church eight dollars and seventy-five cents, and the second bag, six-seventy-five. A seventy-five cent expenditure was turned into fifteen dollars and a half—for the good of the church.

His Worship the Mayor, and Controller Hamilton, notwithstanding: these things are not made respectable by being conducted in the church. Do not tell me it is either good business, or good religion. A man is seven-eighths of a fool to indulge in such things. If someone has fifteen dollars and a half to give to the church, let him give it as unto the Lord. If he has fifteen dollars and a half to give to the poor, let him give it of a free hand. Or if he has but a fraction of the amount, let him give what he can as unto the Lord: "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." Gambling is not improved nor to be condoned, because held in a church. My objection is not to the game itself—it may appear not a very serious offence, only a simple game of chance. But it is the beginning of gambling. That is the point.

I am amazed sometimes when I see reproductions of photographs in the daily press of men prominent in horse-racing, men who have spent their lives promoting gambling—who because they have done well for themselves are lauded as "leading citizens." Leading whom? and where? If society were what it ought to be, if the public were morally sensitive; or had a due sense of responsibility to God or their neighbours, every such man would be treated as a social outcast, he would be looked upon as a potential criminal who had, unfortunately for the public good, escaped the penitentiary. I declare that these practices, altogether aside from the question of religion, lead inevitably to the ruin of those who participate in them, and they drag others down with them. I am ashamed to have to acknowledge that there is any institution on earth bearing the name of Christian which will so drag the adorable name of my Saviour and Lord in the mire, as to link it up with these practices that are inspired by the adversary himself.

Let me remind you further that when our Lord came upon such conditions in the temple, John says "he made a scourge of small cords, (and) he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." He was not "the gentle Jesus" then, was He? There was indignation in those eyes which were as coals of fire. The anger of a holy God blazed in His countenance, as He drove them out of the temple, saying, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

What followed? The religious officials did not like it. Many preachers will not like my address this evening. They will say, "He is an extremist." I am an extreme man where these things are concerned. If they do not like my sermons, our dislike is mutual for I do not like either their profession or their practice. I would say to any priest or minister who countenances these things, "You are a disgrace to the name you bear in encouraging people to start on that broad road that most certainly leads to destruction."

II.

Shall I tell you where the remedy lies? Our Lord Jesus purged the temple; He drove them out; He overturned the tables of the money-changers—and the money went

rattling to the floor, as He swung that whip of cords about Him. In His hand it must have meant something:

They sought to destroy Him, as the devil will seek to destroy any man who stands for righteousness to-day, in the church or out of it. Oh that He would come and purge His temple again! He does come, and where He is given the pre-eminence, where the authority of His Word is proclaimed, where the principles of His gospel are applied to human character and conduct, He still overturns the tables of the money-changers, He still drives them out—not with a whip of small cords, but with a two-edged sword.

That is what every preacher needs to-day. If I had the ear of my brethren in the ministry, I think I could speak to them from experience, and say, "My brethren, in the name of the Lord, Whom you profess to serve, let me conjure you to insist upon it, that you shall have a clean church, free from these things." I would rather have a congregation of half a dozen on a street corner with the proverbial soap-box—I do not know why they use a soap box in preference to other boxes, unless it is suggestive of a cleansing element—and be a free man, free to declare the whole counsel of God, and to admonish sinners to repent, then I would occupy the pulpit of the greatest church on earth where the minister is expected to tone down his message to suit the religious sinners in the congregation. We have no room here for drinking church officers. Thank God, I have none of them in the membership of this church, nor any patron of the dance-hall or of the gambling table. When the Lord Jesus Christ takes His place in the midst of His church, when a church is what a church is represented to be in the New Testament—made up of men and women, every one of whom professes to have been born again, and separated from the world and all its ways, shut up to God to do His work in the world—when you have churches like that, they will be respected, they will be feared.

It is very interesting to study the psychology of our text. These religious officials gather their robes about them, saying, "He is a fanatic. We do not like that kind of religion. We will have nothing to do with Him." They "sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine". I am often asked if I am not afraid to attack these beer-parlours, if I am not afraid someone will knock me on the head? No! I challenge them to do it,—all the liquor interests, and the Government thrown in, and the Roman Catholic church beside. They know very well that kind of thing would not pay. I am as safe as though I had an armed body-guard—and I do not carry arms. I indict these places as agencies of the pit and had I the power I would blot every one of them out of existence.

But what about you, my friend? Blessed be God, there is "a house of prayer for all people". There is One Who has fulfilled all that was promised in tabernacle and temple. He is Himself the Altar; He is Himself the Sacrifice; He is Himself the High Priest; He is Himself the Mercy-seat—and through the rent veil of His own flesh He entered once for all into the holy place, "there to appear in the presence of God for us."

We have not long to live here. It really is not worthwhile, and is but a short-sighted policy, to live for the things of time. I suppose we shall all end our life's work one of these days, and some people will have something to say about us after we are gone. It makes no difference what they say. Job said, "My witness is in heaven,

and my record is on high." But I want it to be known that, in the view of those who worship here, the gospel of the grace of God still stands. There is no other way of salvation but through the precious blood of Christ. It means as much to be a Christian in the New Testament sense as it ever did. It means what you saw in symbol in the ordinance of baptism this evening, to be buried with Christ "by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Are you a church member? Are you walking in newness of life? Are you adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things? Are you endeavouring to put Christ into your business, into all your affairs, whether you be an employer or an employee, whether you buy or sell, or whatever you do—have you learned that whatever you do, you should do all in the name of the Lord? We should be Christians seven days in the week, Christians everywhere, at home and abroad; always abhorring that which is evil, always resisting the devil, and always standing for the things of God?

If you are not a Christian, do you not wish you were? I do not mean, a church member. I would not waste my

time trying to multiply members of such churches as we have been speaking of this evening. But I would go far to lead a poor sinner to the feet of Christ. Will you trust Him? Trust Him wholly, for time and for eternity; and go out of this building to-night God's man, God's woman, separated from the world, shut up to Him, to live for Him in time, and to live in His immediate presence through all eternity.

I know of no other remedy for the world's ills than a return to the principle of individual salvation. You cannot build a Christian social order without Christians. You cannot build a Christian society of gambling, dancing, theatre-going churches. Only as we put Christ first, can we bring anything to pass that will last.

I have spoken to you simply this evening, but I cannot for myself remain silent in the presence of these evils. I do not know that I have any power to prevent them, but so far as I have any, I propose to exercise it. I can at least bear witness against them. If men and women are taken to destruction through these agencies, it shall not be for the want of warning them to flee from these things. Come to Christ now. None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.

THE STORY OF THE PLOT THAT FAILED

The History of a Church's Struggle to Maintain an Evangelical Ministry in a Free Pulpit

By T. T. SHIELDS

CHAPTER XVII.

At the inauguration of the church, recorded in the second chapter of Acts, it is said, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." The Spirit of God provided the very atmosphere of that upper room, filling not only the people, but the house as well. Nothing less than the condition there described is the privilege alike of the individual believer and of the collection of believers known as a church. It is said that He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus".

The atmosphere of the "heavenly places" should ever pervade the house wherein the people of God worship. Indeed, just as a diver, far below the surface of the water, breathes the atmosphere sent down to him from above, so believers are even here and now citizens of the heavenly country, whose privilege it is to receive their spiritual supplies from above.

Since writing our last chapter we have carefully perused the pages of the minute-book of the Finance Committee, which records the operations of a body dominated by that carnal element which was being led by the tool of McMaster University. I have been most interested in observing the positively satanic ingenuity displayed by men who obviously were devoid of any experience of divine grace, but were the willing instruments of "that spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience".

How imperative it is that the church should recognize the absolute necessity of committing its business affairs to men of definite spiritual qualities! It does not follow that because a man is fairly successful in business

or professional life, that he is therefore possessed of such qualities as will make him a useful administrator in the affairs of a Christian church.

Perusing these minutes, I have noted both with gratitude and with grief the name of one man possessed of qualities that were truly princely, and who might have been a leader and commander of the people but for his evident lack of resoluteness. He was a great-hearted man, of noble impulses, who had never deliberately led anyone astray, but who failed to lead people aright, for want of the quality of determination that would enable him uncompromisingly, frankly, and finally to say Yes or No, as considerations of righteousness and truth might require.

Throughout the year 1920 I lived as a man in normal health suffering from a tooth-ache which made existence little less than a prolonged torture. The bad tooth was the McMaster representative who had wormed his way into the Finance Committee, and whose operations were designed to keep the financial nerve of the church open and under constant irritation, with the evident intention of giving as much pain as possible.

Jarvis Street had no financial problem. Its financial resources were adequate to meet every need of the church. The B. D. Thomas Hall, a name which, without suggestion, I had given it, had remained unfinished for nearly seven years. Nearly thirty thousand dollars of unpaid subscriptions were on the books of the Building Fund Secretary. These young men who, judged by any standard of Christian usefulness, could be likened to nothing better than ecclesiastical mosquitoes, suddenly developed a concern for the completion of this building, for the sake of the memory of the man whose name it bore.

We find minutes too, proposing the increase of the Office Secretary's salary, a woman who later proved herself to be a not very distant relative of Iscariot. These young men became suddenly concerned over the salary of the caretaker of that time, and proposed an increase; and an increase for the caretaker of the Parliament Street Branch. While publicly complaining of financial straitness, in committee they were constantly maneuvering to create a deficit, and precipitate a financial crisis. The atmosphere of the minute-book of the Finance Committee of that day has nothing in common with the atmosphere of the upper room, but breathes the enmity of the serpent for the Seed of the woman.

Ministers who still have to endure such "assistance" and "service" and "help" as may be represented by a carnally-minded Finance Committee have my profoundest sympathy. There could not be found wealth enough in the world to compensate me for even a year's endurance of such humiliating stings as marked my experience of 1920. I would not liken those responsible to jungle beasts—that would necessitate an apology to the whole animal world. They were rather like the mosquitoes of a swamp, generating yellow or typhus fever. Personally insignificant, they possessed the power to infect a multitude with their deadly poison.

In the early part of 1921, the Executive of the Forward Movement Committee of the Convention proposed to follow up the financial campaign by holding conferences throughout the Convention territory, for the purpose of deepening the spiritual life of the churches. A conference on evangelism was held in Jarvis Street Church, and there seemed to be a promise of definite spiritual blessing. Arrangements for these conferences included, of course, the selection of certain speakers. I was assigned to the conduct of three conferences.

Although I had said nothing about it, in my own mind I had set my heart upon having one of my own Deacons accompany me. Seldom have I ever met a man to whom my affections were drawn out, as to him. We became quite close companions, and for a good while, if we did not walk to the house of God in company, we frequently walked from it; and spent many a Sunday evening after service together.

I have already, in this story, referred to our intimate association. He was a man of decided spiritual capacity, and I recall one Sunday evening when he prayed most earnestly in the prayer-meeting held before the service, and then, with three or four others, as I went to my pulpit, repaired to the vestry and spent the whole time of the preaching service with these men before God upon his knees, pleading for God's blessing upon the Word as it was preached. That evening there were several confessions of faith. In the after-meeting following, he prayed again; and I recall with what thankfulness I praised God for his fellowship.

When the conferences for the deepening of spiritual life were planned, it was my desire that this brother should accompany me, and I was delighted when I discovered that the desire was mutual. It was arranged therefore that we should go together, and the plan required us to speak in two Ontario cities, and in a large industrial town. There were to be two meetings in each place, afternoon and evening.

It was in the midst of winter, when the temperature was near to zero. We had a good warm meeting in the afternoon, at which both my friend and I gave addresses.

But there was no outward manifestation of anything out of the ordinary having been accomplished.

Here let me introduce a parenthesis in my story, and for that purpose, I must retrace my steps by several months. At the close of a Sunday evening service, a gentleman introduced himself to me, and said he had come from a city about two hundred miles away, for the purpose of seeing me. He had been present at both services, but thought it wise not to intrude until the day's work was done. He came to the vestry, and we remained in conference and prayer until one or two o'clock in the morning.

This man told me he was a Deacon of the Baptist Church in the city where he lived, and that his fellow-Deacons were all fine men, but they were about equally divided on spiritual matters. He said half of the Deacons desired to see the church spiritually aggressive, and athrob with the power of the Holy Ghost, but that the others were content with a respectable worldliness. Many of their members, he said, were fond of card-playing, and had their little dancing parties, and saw no inconsistency in being found frequently at the theatre.

I had, years before, preached in that church, and had been the guest of a member who was a civic official, whom I felt was a very excellent man; and it seemed to me that he and his wife would be decided assets to any church. Enquiring as to this man, the Deacon told me that he was all I supposed him to be as a fine gentleman, but that he was one of the worldly-minded Deacons who seemed to have but little interest in spiritual things. I was surprised to learn this, and felt certain there must have been a deterioration in his spiritual state from the state in which I had found him when his guest years before.

My visiting Deacon told me that some of the Deacons felt something ought to be done to bring about a better condition of affairs, but that some of them feared that a better condition could never be effected under the leadership of their then Pastor. Immediately I was on the alert, for I knew too well the tendency always to lay the responsibility for any want of progress upon the minister; and the further tendency of thinking everything could be bettered by a change of pastors, instead of recognizing that what the church needed was a change of attitude toward God, and a genuine spiritual revival.

Asked as to my advice, I only entreated my new acquaintance not to allow anyone to force him to any underhanded action; but that if things were really as they appeared to him, to return to his city, and at the next full meeting of Pastor and Deacons, to raise the question, and assume his own share of responsibility, and in a kind and brotherly way exhort his brother-Deacons, and his minister too if need be, definitely to seek a spiritual revival.

We prayed together, and at an early hour in the morning, parted company. I received no report from him, and do not know to this day what further course he took. But when the arrangements were made for these conferences to which I have referred, I was delighted to discover that the first church we were to visit was the church of which this friend had spoken. And now I must resume the account of the evening meeting.

The first address was delivered by my own friend and Deacon, and I recall distinctly the trend of his speech. Particularly he referred to the spiritual requirements set out in the scriptural standard of what a Deacon ought to be. He said, among other things, "When I read that, I have only sympathy and profound respect for the man

who, facing that requirement, should say, "The standard is a very high one; I am compelled to acknowledge I have not attained to it, and therefore I ought not to be elected a Deacon of a church." But there is one man whom I respect even more highly, and he is the man who will say, "It is a biblical standard to which I acknowledge I have not attained; but, inasmuch as it is written in the Word of God, I can only conclude it is not impossible of attainment. Therefore, though I am not that man, I am resolved that, by the grace of God, I will be that man if I am elected as a Deacon."

The address manifestly produced a profound effect. I followed with an address in keeping with his, and I felt that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit were there. While this particular church had been selected as the conference centre, I ought to say, it was attended by the ministers and lay-representatives of all the Baptist churches in that neighbourhood. When my address was over, the Pastor rose, and in a very mechanical way, announced a hymn as the closing hymn. It was quite evident that he had been on the outside of the influence of that service. The dew-fall seemed to have been quite general, but it appeared to me, by the tone and attitude in which the closing hymn was announced—and announced as "the closing hymn"—that the minister had remained as dry as Gideon's fleece amidst the prevailing moisture.

During the singing of the first verse, I turned to the minister and said, "I do not think we should close at this point. Have I your permission to make an appeal?" Permission was readily granted. I made an appeal, and said to the brethren that I believed there was a decided advantage, when the Lord came thus in power and gave us a desire for better things, in our openly declaring ourselves. I then appealed to ministers and Deacons, and all present, if they felt God's call to a deeper consecration, to leave their seats and come forward and say so.

In the congregation I saw the friend whose guest I had been, and who had been described to me as one of the worldly Deacons. He whispered to his wife, and they immediately left their seats and walked up to the front, and without invitation, knelt before the platform, the Deacon putting his arm about his wife's shoulders as they knelt to pray. My Deacon-friend, deeply moved, and with tears upon his cheeks, stepped down from the platform—it was only about eighteen inches high—and knelt beside the Deacon, putting his arm upon his shoulder. Then the procession started—ministers and Deacons came forward until there was a great company—I would not dare to say how many—on their knees before God. I can only add that we continued with confessions, and petitions, and praises, until long past the midnight hour. We sang the Doxology together, and bowed as a closing prayer was offered, leaving the place feeling that God had visited His people.

The next morning we journeyed to our next appointment. The afternoon meeting was largely attended; and we had another time of blessing. The same order was followed, and in the evening my friend and Deacon gave the same address, with some additions.

Among other things, he said this in effect: "Last evening my Pastor spoke very strongly in our meeting in such a city, and among other things emphasized the importance of bringing everything under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He said that, though Pastor of a church with large financial obligations, he would rather have the finances of his church in the hands of crossing-sweepers and scavengers, who had not a dollar to their name, and who knew nothing about business, but who

were spiritual men, living in daily fellowship with God, than he would have them in the hands of millionaires who were only nominal Christians." Then he added, "I hope he will repeat that part of his address this evening; with the same emphasis."

Here I may interject that that message fell like a sledge-hammer upon that company of men, because they all knew that the speaker was generally included in the millionaire class.

I followed—and I did repeat in principle what I had said the evening before, and with no diminution of emphasis. Again an invitation was given, and it seemed as though the whole conference came forward, that everybody spontaneously knelt; and we were still in prayer on that occasion when the clocks struck one in the morning. We felt that we had had a further visitation from God.

The third day we journeyed back in an easterly direction, to our large industrial town, a journey of nearly two hundred miles. The church building in that place was smaller, the space about the platform more restricted; but the same spirit prevailed. The attendance was large, practically taxing the accommodation of the church. And again it was but a conference-centre, attended by many ministers and Deacons from other Baptist churches.

Two addresses, afternoon and evening, were given, as at the other conferences; and an appeal was made at the close of the evening service. Immediately every inch of space about the platform, and on the platform, and in the aisles, was occupied by kneeling people, and the remainder knelt in their pews. There was another prolonged period of waiting upon God, with confessions, and petitions for help, and praises for the assurance of grace received.

Bible School Lesson Outline

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DR. T. T. SHIELDS, EDITOR

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson Text: John 16:7-15.

Golden Text: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."—Ephesians 5:18.

- (a) The Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Holy Trinity: Matt. 29:19; II. Corin. 13:14; I. Peter 1:2; I. John 5:7.
- (b) The Lord Jesus Christ promises His Spirit to all believers: Luke 11:13; Luke 24:49; John 7:38, 39; 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-14.
- (c) The promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost: Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:2-8; Acts 2:2-4; Acts 2:33-38.
- (d) This baptism of the Spirit was repeated when Peter first preached the gospel to the Gentiles: Acts 10:44-47.
- (e) This special manifestation of divine power was referred to by Peter as a special sign from heaven that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews: Acts 11:1-18, particularly verses 15 to 18.
- (f) Not once in the New Testament are we commanded to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was promised by the Lord, and fulfilled to the whole church at Pentecost, and all who believe receive the Spirit of Christ; Romans 8:9.
And all who are of the body of Christ have that Spirit: I. Corin. 12:13.
- (g) But believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, not baptized: Eph. 5:18.
Believers in apostolic times received the Holy Ghost: Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32; Acts 6:5; Acts 8:15, 17; Acts 9:31; Acts 10:19; Acts 13:2, 9, 52; Acts 15:8; Acts 19:2-6; Romans 5:5; Romans 14:17; Romans 15:13; Corin. 2:4.
- (h) The Holy Spirit is to be received by faith: Luke 11:13; Gal. 3:2, 8, 14; Gal. 4:6.