

The Gospel Witness

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AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.
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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

HOW TO BE AS FREE AND AS HAPPY AS A LARK

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

Preached in Massey Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 4th, 1938

(Stenographically reported)

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—Galatians 5:1.

I know of only one gospel for all peoples, for all generations, and for all dispensations, from the beginning to the end of time. Men were saved in the Old Testament dispensation precisely as they are saved in the New. They believed in a Sacrifice yet to be offered, as we believe in a perfect redemption effected through the sacrifice of Christ. There never has been any other way of salvation: there never can be to the end.

This is the gospel: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; or again: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Or yet again: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." So I might continue to quote passages of scripture, each of which might be regarded as a summary of the whole gospel.

But there are many ways of presenting the same gospel, many ways of preaching it, many ways of wrapping up the package of grace. Some of the Corinthians differed among themselves as to the relative qualities of various preachers. Some said they liked Paul the best, some Apollos, some Cephas; but they were all alike in this, that they preached the same gospel, and were messengers of the same God of grace. They differed only in their manner of preaching.

I believe there is nothing so inspiring to a true believer as to hear once again the way of salvation plainly declared. People who have been rescued from the jaws of death by reason of shipwreck, and have been brought safely to shore, surely cannot be indifferent to the launching of a lifeboat for the saving of others. I never hear the siren, or any kind of fire alarm now, without the horror of our own experience coming back to me; and

whenever I hear it, I feel like playing policeman, and going out and clearing the street, and saying, "Clear the way; let these men pass. Hurry, firemen! Hurry!" I never hear the gospel proclaimed, or read it, without being profoundly thankful that God, in His grace, has numbered me among the blessed people who "know the joyful sound".

On the other hand, sometimes the most effective way of presenting the gospel to the unconverted, is to discourse upon the advantages of life in Christ Jesus, to attempt to set forth some of the privileges which belong to those who have been redeemed by blood. I think it was Spurgeon, once speaking to a company of ministers, who said he sometimes endeavoured to magnify the Lord and His grace to his own people, so that sinners, hearing, might find their mouths watering.

I dare say you have sometimes come to your own home feeling that you were not very particular whether you had dinner or not; you were not hungry—at least you thought you were not, until an appetizing meal was spread before you. Then suddenly you discovered you had not lost your appetite after all! It is a good thing to help sinners to look through the window, into the Lord's banqueting-house. Perhaps, by God's grace, they may be made to feel hungry and led to desire entrance thereto. I have that double purpose this evening: to endeavour to lead God's people to a fuller appreciation of what Christ has done for them, of the life that is theirs in Him; and, while doing so, to entice the unconverted, indirectly to exhort them to "taste and see that the Lord is good".

My text is a word addressed to a company of believers who were in danger of drifting away from the simplicity of their faith, and becoming entangled in a certain yoke, in danger of losing something of their freedom in Christ Jesus. It is an exhortation to them to "stand fast", not

to suffer anyone to seduce them from their allegiance to Christ. Let us look at some of the implications of the text.

I.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ESSENTIALLY A LIFE OF LIBERTY, OF PERFECT FREEDOM. "Christ", the text says, "hath made us free." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." We live in a day when men's civil rights are not only being invaded, but taken from them, when civil liberty is in jeopardy the world around. But our religious freedom is of even greater importance and value—and that also may be lost. It is well that we should understand what liberties are ours, and at what price they have been obtained.

You remember the chief captain said to Paul, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." It had cost him something to become a naturalized Roman citizen, with all the privileges which such citizenship involved. But Paul responded, "I was free born." He was born a Roman, though a Jew. The Lord's people are not naturalized citizens of a spiritual kingdom. They have been born into it by a spiritual birth. They are "made free indeed", by the gracious ministry of the Son of God's love.

Let us *clear away some misapprehensions*. It is quite commonly assumed that the Christian life consists of a course of rigorous legal discipline, that such as are really the disciples of Christ are subject to exacting laws, and their lives are cast in a rather severe mould. People conceive of the Christian religion as a kind of strait jacket, as though it consisted in certain inhibitions, as though Christians were held back from certain desired indulgences by religious chains, and were driven forward to irksome duties by some kind of penal whip.

What strange misconceptions of the Christian life there are! There are those who pity us as though we were shut up within iron bands. They conceive of a Christian church as resembling somewhat one of Hitler's concentration camps, the members being under the task-master, and confined within certain prescribed limits. Our Lord said that the devil was a liar "from the beginning"—and he is. I have frequently pointed out to you in one way or another, that one of his favourite devices is to represent God as a hard task-master, who would rob His children of every possible joy. Men speak of Christians and of the Christian church as though they were never so happy as when securing the enactment of what they are pleased to call "blue laws"; and every devout soul is supposed to be especially engaged in destroying everyone else's joy.

There never was a bigger falsehood told than that. The fact is, the religion of Christ does not consist in the externals of life. There are habits of life that are appropriate to the Christian profession; there are courses of conduct which would be unbecoming to anyone who is a disciple of Christ. But addiction to the one, and abstinence from the other, are but symptomatic of an inward grace. It is not that people refrain from doing certain things because they must, nor do other things because they are compelled: it is simply because when Christ comes into a man's life, He effects a change in a man's inner nature. True freedom is of the nature of things. People cannot be made free by law. You cannot give people liberty by putting them within strong walls, merely to keep them in what they now call in Ger-

many, "protective custody". You cannot make people free that way.

Christian liberty is more than a legal product. Christ makes us free by effecting an inward change. Therefore if Christians are careful of what they eat and drink, of their general habits of life, if they refrain from some courses, and eagerly run in the way of others, it is in obedience to an inward impulse. A Christian is not like a sailing-ship, whose course is dependent upon wind and weather, and whose voyage is determined by powers without itself. A Christian is rather like a steamship, which takes a certain course by its own power, and independently of wind and circumstances. I have seen excursions advertised to take place "weather and circumstances permitting". A sailing-ship will sail "weather permitting", but a steamship will sail whether or no.

There are many professing Christians who are circumstantial Christians: they go where they go because of things without them that determine their courses. But it is not so with a true Christian.

II.

We must enquire therefore, WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US TO MAKE US FREE; AND HOW THAT FREEDOM BRINGS TO THE SOUL THE FULNESS OF SPIRITUAL JOY.

True joy can never live in bondage. A bird may sing in a cage if it is born to captivity, but if you catch one of God's free creatures that has known the freedom of the forest, and confine it within bars, though the bars be of gold, you have robbed it of its song. It will never sing again. You cannot be happy if you are hedged about with legal requirements. I know that Paul and Silas sang when they were in jail. It is true that stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage. These two disciples of the Lord sang praises to God while their feet were fast in the stocks; but their spirits were free. They were circumscribed only as to their bodies. It was only their bodies that were in jail: their spirits were free, roaming the heavenly places that are in Christ Jesus. Hence they were able to sing praises to God when the sun was down, when it was midnight in jail.

But an imprisoned spirit cannot sing. We must have freedom if we are to be happy, if we are to be joyful. Most of the birds have left us that were with us in the summer. Why did they go? An instinct told them that winter was coming. Some of them spent last winter in the south, and some of them had never been in the south: they were born in the north. They did not go to any ticket agent, or to an aeroplane office and ask how they might escape the rigours of a Canadian winter. There was something within telling them, "There is a better land than this for the wintertime. There is a place where the sun shines, and where there is plenty of food." Therefore their instinct said: "Let us go." And they went! They asked no one's permission. If they could talk, I dare say they would say, "You may stay with your sleds and skis, and with your furnaces and heavy wraps. We do not want them. We are going to a happy land far, far away." What folly it would be to try to entrap those creatures, and shut them up to our winter existence!

What is it that makes the soul free? If you put a man in straitened circumstances his soul may be cramped. Even if he is a lame man and cannot run a race, he will be uncomfortable with the door locked upon him. If you would get a song from him, you must do one of two things: change his circumstances, or so

change his nature that he will love his circumstances.

The sparrows did not leave us. Why? They do not mind the winter: they love it. They stayed because they like it. The others left us because they do not like it. There can be no liberty for any of God's creatures unless the very nature of that creature is made to harmonize with that creature's environment, whether it be man or bird. He must be where he wants to be; he must be able to go where he wants to go, and to do what he wants to do. If you put him in shackles, and bind him down to your method of life, he will be uncomfortable, and feel himself to be a prisoner. It is true that the children of God are environed by the laws of God; it is true that every believer is subject to the laws of God. Why is it that the man who is not a Christian finds some—how shall I put it, finds some habits of life to be hard and unpleasant? Just this: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The man who is not a Christian says, "I do not pray because I do not want to pray. I do not serve God because I do not want to serve Him. I do not love Him; I do not love His law. I have no desire for the life which the Word of God prescribes. If you insist upon my living that life, you might as well put me in jail."

There are people who this very night will spend the hour we spend here, in drunken revelry, and persuade themselves they are having a good time. To attend a religious service, to sing the praises of God, would be to give them a taste of what they would feel to be an earthly purgatory. On the other hand, if you could be precipitated into such circumstances as that, even with men of wealth who have muddled their brains, you would be disgusted. You would say, "Let me get out of this." They might be clothed in evening dress, the ladies might be elaborately attired, and all the surroundings speak of wealth and luxury; but you would say as a Christian, "Give me a pine bench where I may sit and study the Word of God, or meditate on spiritual things, and sing His praises; any place where I can serve God—and I shall be happy."

Wherein is the difference? In the man himself. The Lord's way of making us free is by so changing our natures as to bring them into harmony with His holy law, so that we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "Oh, how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day." Or again, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them", they shall find no occasion of stumbling.

You will see how absolutely necessary that is, if we are to enjoy any sort of eternal salvation. It is inconceivable that redeemed spirits should dwell anywhere but in the immediate presence of God. The very idea of God, in the infinitude of all the qualities of His being, necessitates a place and condition in which God Himself will be at home. May I put it this way, that the Father's heavenly home must be furnished to suit the divine taste; and the habits of all that dwell there must, in the nature of the case, conform to the requirements of His holy nature. That being so, freedom only from the penalty of sin would not make heaven for any one of us. If a man could go to heaven—if it were possible—with his nature unchanged, his nature still enmity against God, not "subject to the law of God", an "enemy in his mind by wicked works", his whole nature in determined antagonism to God and His law—if such a man as that could

be brought into the heavenly home, and I say it without irreverence, he would be as miserable as if he were in hell. He would be so completely out of harmony with his surroundings that he would be in bondage; there could be no freedom there.

Very well then: if you postulate heaven as a place where God is supreme, you must believe it to be a place of absolute holiness; and therefore salvation must consist in holiness. Not merely in outward morality, not in doing things the man does not want to do, nor refraining from doing things he desires to do, while his heart is unchanged. In the nature of the case, we must, at the very core of our being, be brought into harmony with God, and our natures must be so changed that they will love the law of God, and love its supreme manifestation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that that, if I may so say, philosophically, lies at the root of the great saying, "Whosoever loveth is born of God."

Do you see what a tremendous thing salvation is, then? Do you see how that immediately puts it beyond the range of human effort and endeavour? Do you see how it takes it out of the hands of the church, of the priest, of the minister, frees it from all these superficial, external things, and makes it a work of God, which is another way of saying, a work of grace? Only Christ can make us free. So then I come back to the text I quoted, "Ye shall know the truth." *The truth!* What is the truth? Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Ye shall know the truth." How shall I explain it?

Suppose a man with a glass of intoxicating liquor in his hand. He has many duties to perform, heavy responsibilities to discharge. He has in that glass a few ounces of liquid that will confuse his brain, and make him utterly incapable of doing the thing he ought to do, will rob him of his power of will to refrain from doing something that may destroy him—and he is just going to take it. What can you do for him? Take it out of his hand? That would serve temporarily perhaps, but he would still thirst for it, still long after it. Withdraw your hand from him, and he will be off to get it again. You have not set him free. But a man of intelligence, if he sees, in respect to that particular menace of his life, the truth that in that glass there is poison, disgrace, ruin, crime, and possibly death, yet will say, "No. It is a glass that will only inebriate." Man, will you not learn the truth? If only he can see the truth, he will desire to be freed from it. But the appetite is within. He says, "I know the truth in respect to that particular form of sin, but I cannot free myself from it." If he can go farther and learn the truth in respect to Jesus Christ that He is the only One Who can and will do it! And if then he commits himself to Christ, so that the miracle is wrought, his nature changed, and he is able to say, "My heart refuseth joys like these since I have known the Lord", he knows the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus Christ; and the truth makes him free. Later someone may say, "Let us drink." "No, thank you." "You used to do it." "I know." "Why do you not now?" "I do not want to." His liberty consists in the change within, wrought by the Spirit of God. There is no other way by which a sinner may be made free, and believers kept in enjoyment of their freedom.

I do not exhort you merely to accept a verbal statement of truth, logically to shut you up into a corner and

say, "You are a sinner; Christ died for sinners; therefore He died for you. If you will yield an intellectual and mental assent to that proposition, of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved." Salvation is more than that, for the reason that belief is always a moral act. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." You cannot really believe a thing without the whole man's participating in it: your affections, your will, your judgment, your intellect, your conscience—everything. All that is within you must speak in the confession, "I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

What does that mean? It means that life as required by God finds its only complete exemplification in the person of Christ; finds the only power by which it may be lived in the person of the Holy Ghost; finds the only remedy by which the sins of the past may be put away in the sacrifice of Christ; experiences the grace of the divine Spirit released for our sanctification, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in Him means to yield one's self entirely to Him, trusting to His precious blood to wash our sins away, trusting to the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost to give us new hearts, new natures; trusting to the abiding presence of the Spirit of God to keep us from falling. "Christ hath made us free." That is how He makes us free.

III.

BUT HOW WE ARE TEMPTED, ALL OF US, TO BE ENTANGLED AGAIN IN THE YOKE OF BONDAGE. These people were tempted to depend upon ordinances, to go back to the ceremonialism of the Mosaic law. Their religion was a combination of law and grace, a sort of linsey-woolsey thing, a patchwork affair, neither all of one nor all of the other, but a little of both. Paul argues in this epistle, "You are either saved by grace or by works." "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." But they were tempted to be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage".

I have known many believers who have been brought into a legal attitude of mind and have set up for themselves, and for others, set standards of conduct; and were thereafter constantly measuring themselves by those standards, and bringing themselves into bondage. There is grave danger of thus being "entangled with the yoke of bondage". It depends upon why you do some things.

I preached in a church in Edinburgh, said to be the largest congregation of the Church of Scotland in Scotland. The minister said to me, "Do you wear a gown?" "Not ordinarily", I replied. "Have you any objection to it?" I replied, "I will answer you with a story. I heard of a man who was asked whether he objected to wearing a gown in the pulpit. He said, 'If I must, I won't: if I need not, I will.'"

You know what he meant. In effect he said, "If you attach any importance to this bit of millinery, if you assume that this gown, the vestments you would have me wear, impart any sanctity or authority to my ministry, I will not wear them; but if it is a matter of form only, and has nothing to do with the essentials of the gospel of Christ, I have no objection to wearing them." I have no objection to a gown. The choir wears them

in Jarvis Street when we are at home, and I rather like them. (Amen!) Brother Hutchinson says, Amen. Why do we use them? To make all the choristers look alike. In the old days, our organist walked in one day wearing the hood that indicated the degrees that had been conferred upon him. Some people were horrified. They thought he was bringing them into bondage, but they were really bringing themselves into bondage. I do not care whether a man wears a gown or not so long as he wears a decent coat. The great Dr. Joseph Parker said once, "If I had my way I would have all ministers wear gowns: then they would all be well dressed."

As though the Lord Jesus cares anything about vestments! We are building a new church, and the pulpit is in the centre. If we were up-to-date, we should have a chancel and transepts. We would put the reading desk on one side and the pulpit on the other—and in the centre, something they call an altar. Do you see the significance of that in Protestant churches? We need no altar. "Once"—once! once! once!—"in the end of the age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look to him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Believers have never needed an altar since. The central thing in evangelical churches should be the pulpit, as representative of the gospel which proclaims that accomplished Sacrifice. Just as soon as people get away from the Bible, and from the simplicity of the gospel, they drag the pulpit to one side, to make a place for an altar. It is sheer nonsense, and few of the people know the significance of what they are doing, that they are imitating the paganism of Rome, with its perpetual sacrifice of the Mass, by giving the central place to an altar.

You can do that by attaching undue importance to ordinances. What is the ordinance of baptism? An external rite, a symbolic ceremony which proclaims the believer's oneness with Christ in death and resurrection, but which has no meaning unless the man has first, by grace, been made a partaker of the life of the Lord Jesus. If he has, his baptism is simply God's way for him to proclaim it to the world. But the moment you take baptism from that place and make it a saving ordinance, you get into trouble. "Dearly beloved, seeing this child is now regenerate"—nonsense! It is not. You teach your children to say the catechism?—"What is thy name?" And the answer is given. "Who gave thee this name?" "My godfathers and my godmothers in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom." The only thing wrong with that is that there is not one word of truth in it, except that the name was given by the child's godfathers and godmothers. It is taking baptism out of its proper place, and being "entangled again with the yoke of bondage"; making a ceremony God's means of salvation.

Consider the ordinance which we shall observe to-night. It is not a "sacrament" in the sense of its being a grace-conferring ordinance. It is possible for a man to partake of this bread, and drink this cup, and drink only damnation to himself, if his heart is not right with God. It is the inner preparation that fits a man for participation in this spiritual feast; otherwise, it has no significance. We are to be free from all these things: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

IV.

HOW CAN WE "STAND FAST"? I could tell you *why* we should, and I wish I had an hour in which to do so. Why should we be free? I told you a story once years ago, but I repeat it. (Mr. Brown ought to have many such stories for he spends a month or two in Algonquin Reserve every summer.) I was there for a short time once, with a friend. We each had a guide, and each a canoe. My guide took me over lake after lake, back into the interior. One day when paddling on one of those beautiful lakes, where we could not hear a street-car or a factory whistle, or a train, this man said, "You come from Toronto?" "Yes." "I was there once. I went to the zoo, and saw some things they called deer", then with fine scorn he said, "Them ain't deer. I will show you a real deer." On another afternoon we were paddling, on a lake where the forest came right down to the edge of the water; and I could see a dark line, circular like this gallery, where the deer in the wintertime had cropped the foliage. Presently in a whisper this young fellow said, "Put up your paddle, and do not say a word; leave the canoe to me. I will show you a deer. There is one at the far end of the lake."

We skimmed over the placid surface, as he kept his paddle under the water: he did not make a sound. There was absolute silence. We sped down toward the end of the lake. My eye was not trained as his was: I could not at first see anything unusual. Presently at the end of the lake I saw a run-way down to the water's edge; and a little distance back there was a tree that had fallen across the path, the upper branches of which were broken, but the lower ones were intact. There was no way under, but a way over. When we got down farther—I do not know how near, whether within fifty or a hundred yards—I espied a beautiful fawn that had come down to drink. (I have never had any sympathy with deer-hunters since. How anyone could shoot that creature, I do not understand; I could not do it.) It was the most beautiful creature I ever saw. As we approached, it either saw or sensed our coming. Suddenly it turned its ears forward, and raised the right front foot, for the fraction of a minute. It seemed to listen with ears and eyes and every pore of its body—*par excellence*—alertness—just for the fraction of a second; then it whirled, and, as up that pathway it went, the tree was no obstruction, it seemed not to leap but to fly over it—and disappeared in the forest with a cry like the cry of a little child.

I forgot where I was, but when I came to myself, my guide had put his paddle across the canoe, folded his brawny arms upon it—and was waiting for me to "come to". He had a broad smile almost of worship upon his face. Then he said, "Say, Mister, that's what I call a deer." Where had he seen the other? In the zoological garden, behind iron bars. The same in form, but not in spirit, making its way back and forth within its cage. But out in the woods we saw it where God made it to dwell, in the exercise of its glorious native freedom. I do not think you would have to exhort that deer to "stand fast" in its liberty—at least it ran fast! It was determined not be brought into anyone's yoke of bondage.

The Christian lives in God's open world, in heavenly places, made free by the grace of God, to do as he likes, and live as he likes, because God has taught him to love what God loves, and, to do what God wants him to do. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ

hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

How? *Allow nothing to intrude upon your trust in Christ*, in His finished work. Let your faith be a naked faith, a faith that will rest upon what Christ has done for you, and upon that alone. "Stand fast" upon that. Say to yourself and to everyone else, "I am made free by the meritorious work of Christ. Nothing that I can do can make me free."

"Lo, th' incarnate God, ascended
Pleads the merit of His blood;
Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude:
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

And then *depend upon the gracious Spirit to keep you true*. Believe in a present Saviour, in the person of the Holy Ghost Who lives within us, Who reigns within us, Who controls us:—believe, as we sang this evening,

"And His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath as even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven."

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone."

Know His will by the grace of His Spirit as revealed in His word; learn to love His law, to cherish it, to hide His word—not to hang it on the wall, but to hide it in your heart. He takes the law and writes it in our hearts. Then we can say, as did the Psalmist, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." Then we can soar away into the heavenly places which are in Christ Jesus. May He help us so to do for His name's sake, Amen.

JOHN BOYD VISITS OUR NEW FIELDS

The suggestion made at the Convention that the Union Pastors exchange with each other, led to a great and pleasant enlightenment of my mind concerning the conditions and opportunities in various parts of our northern harvest field. We decided that the Kirkland Lake and Sudbury pastors should exchange and each give a week to the other's assistance. Consequently I arrived in Kirkland Lake November 12th, and spent Sunday with Mr. Cunningham and his faithful co-workers. It was a great joy to meet with this recently united flock, who in their work and worship unquestionably manifest a passionate love for Christ and His gospel. They have been tempered by the heat of persecution and the coolness of indifference and contempt, and in the hand of the Divine Workman are a mighty influence against sin and for righteousness in this needy place. Having encountered difficulties which, humanly speaking, are insurmountable, this united company of holy people working for God bespeaks the perpetual operation of miracle-working grace in Kirkland Lake. We had the privilege of holding two week-end meetings and of making a fairly thorough survey of the town which presents one of the most challenging opportunities in northern Ontario.

From Kirkland Lake we made a hurried trip into our native Province of Quebec, there to make still more amazing discoveries in the rich and ripening harvest fields in the Noranda and Val d'Or districts. We had visualized these places as being little past the shack town stage, but to our great amazement found them to be prosperous and rapidly growing places of business. Nothing could be more thrilling than a survey of the Noranda field. Their building is a credit to any people, and its location is one of the best imaginable. Brother Wellington became interested in the value of buses to get Sunday School scholars as we do in Sudbury, so we made enquiry and found he could get a bus to bring a large number of children from an untouched section of the adjoin-

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"PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATIONS"

Comment by the Editor

The following letter is from Rev. John Thomas, M.A., and is a reply to a review of Mr. Thomas' book, "Philosophic Foundations", by Mr. Fred J. Leach, M.A., which appeared in our issue of October 27th.

Mr. Thomas has long been recognized as one of the ablest and most scholarly of the champions of Evangelical orthodoxy in Great Britain. "Thomas of Liverpool" has long been a synonym for unswerving loyalty to Evangelical Christianity. I have enjoyed the privilege of Mr. Thomas' friendship for a number of years, and welcomed his able contribution to the elucidation of the "Philosophic Foundations" or Revealed Religion in the book under review.

Doubting my own competence justly to review such a book at any time; and finding it all but impossible consistently with the duty of superintending the executive work connected with the erection of a great building, in addition to my usual responsibilities involved in the work of the CHURCH and SCHOOL, TORONTO BAPTIST SEMINARY, THE GOSPEL WITNESS, and other things, to find time for the detachment essential to the mastery of such a book as, "Philosophical Foundations", I asked my good friend, Mr. Fred J. Leach, M.A., to review the book for THE GOSPEL WITNESS. I must confess that I did not carefully read Mr. Leach's Review until I read it in THE GOSPEL WITNESS. I am rather glad Mr. Leach's Review was not wholly favourable, because it has called forth such an interesting reply from Mr. Thomas. I have absolute confidence in the adoring loyalty of both these brethren to the Lord Jesus Christ, and of their fidelity to the inspired Record which God has given us of His Son.

Mr. Leach, a citizen of the United States, is doing post-graduate work at Toronto University for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. He has not travelled in the realm of Philosophy so extensively as Mr. Thomas, perhaps has not soared to the same altitudes, nor fathomed the same depths; but it is my hope that he is on the way! And who knows but that, with Mr. Thomas as pilot, he may reach stratospheric altitudes yet? In any event, of this I am sure: both these philosophers have the same object in view, the honour of God's Word and the glory of Christ.

We shall probably hear from Mr. Leach again on this subject, and I hope from Mr. Thomas too. Meanwhile I hope all who have wings and diving equipment will purchase a copy of "Philosophic Foundations". They will find it of great help to the understanding of the principle that the Absolute is supremely revealed in a Divine-Human Personality Who is "The Truth"; and that all that the pen of Inspiration has recorded of Him is essential and not arbitrary; that it is based upon the nature of things.

T. T. SHIELDS.

Swansea, South Wales.

Dear Dr. Shields:

I am greatly obliged to you for obtaining a Review of my book for THE GOSPEL WITNESS, but I regret to find that the Reviewer has taken up a position so inflexibly hostile and, at the same time so continually inconsequent that even the slightest regard for the cause of truth would compel one

to expose it and give it the repulse it certainly deserves. Incidental criticism, however severe, an author is prepared to tolerate, if it has a groundwork of reason. But your Reviewer's hostility is both fundamental and absolute, although in the whole of his Review I fail to find any shadow of reason given for this inflexible antagonism. He does not show any philosophic standpoint of his own from which to criticise the philosophy of another, but is content, as it appears, to navigate the seas of Philosophy without a compass. I have known others who have thought this kind of venture reasonable, but I believe that most thinking people will regard it as irrational. Your Reviewer airily rejects all the great visions of philosophical Idealism from Plato down to our day, while, as a Christian, he can scarcely accept philosophic Materialism. So he becomes philosophically stranded on the shores of NOWHERE. Such a position easily explains the vagueness and inconsequence of his criticism, as well as the dead inertia of his Review. How can a man who has no Philosophy criticise the exposition of a new Vision of Philosophic IDEALISM?

Wishing to refute my Philosophy root and branch, he makes a great effort to destroy the deep foundation on which it rests. For, in all his Review there is not the slightest principle of construction to be found; it is all an anarchism of destruction. He lightly dismisses a deep philosophic foundation by saying that I have only substituted one Necessity for another, that is, I have only substituted Moral Necessity for the rational necessity of Hegel, which I myself have refuted and rejected. That sounds an easy way of routing my Philosophy, and your Reviewer takes it for granted that this airy dismissal settles the matter once for all. But even a schoolboy studying Logic could have told him that his implied Syllogism is one of the most vicious of Logical Fallacies, the Fallacy of the Ambiguous Middle. For the Philosophical signification of the middle term, Necessity, in these two compound terms, namely, Moral Necessity and Rational Necessity (as defined by Hegel) splits up into two different meanings as far as the poles asunder. The latter is Mechanism, the other is the infinite freedom of the Infinite Personality of Absolute Spirit. I have expounded this distinction clearly and at length in my book, but your Reviewer appears to have missed or disregarded the philosophical exposition in favour of a very superficial Formal Logic. I venture to say that the Moral Freedom of the Absolute Spirit will be accepted sooner or later by true Philosophic thinkers as the solution of one of the most momentous philosophical problems the thinking Mind of man is challenged to solve. It is too profoundly true to be dissipated by a bad Syllogism.

Your Reviewer, having no philosophic principles of his own is necessarily vague and inconsequent. There is a pointless hint about taking *creation* seriously. Let me assure him that I firmly believe in the Creation of the Universe as taught in Holy Scripture. In the beginning was the Logos, the eternal Reason. All things were made by Him, and apart from Him there was nothing made of all things created. With this revelation, not only is my Philosophy in perfect harmony, but it forbids us to believe in any other method.

There is also a pointless reference to philosophy and *Anti-theism*, a thing half said and then half withdrawn. Why did he not honestly face the fact that my Philosophy is the deadliest enemy of all religious Scepticism, including the scepticisms of Modernist Theologians. Already this is recognized over a wide area. The sceptics of all sections hate the book, and will do their best to hinder its circulation. I don't suppose that your Reviewer will be proud to discover that he is lending them a useful hand.

Does your Reviewer belong to that little class of sincere people, who believe that they honour the oracles of God by refusing to admit any revelation of truth to the reasoning human mind? Such dogmatic narrowness does injury to the cause of truth and puts a stumbling-block in the way of many earnest souls. The Scriptures plainly declare that the Reason which God has given to Man ought to be able to recognize His eternal power and God-head. I hold the Bible to be the unique and completely inspired Word of God. It reveals what the human Mind can never discover: But false Reasoning can put barriers in the way of approach to that Word of Salvation, and true and consecrated Reasoning can remove those barriers, and open a way for the misguided sceptic to listen to the voice of God in His redeeming Son. That is the function of my Book. Those that oppose it will

do disservice to the Word of God, and aid those who wish to keep men in the bondage of intellectual unbelief. It was for the same end that Bishop Butler wrote his great Analogy in similar days. The current of scepticism is, I believe, running through your schools and colleges and universities, as it is in ours, and I am more than dreaming of circulating the antidote I have prepared on your side of the ocean as well as on this side. I say boldly that every earnest Christian ought to give me help, and not hindrance. I hope that our reviewer will seriously reconsider his responsibility for such unreasoned hostility as he exhibits in very difficult to understand, especially as the attack is based on no definite philosophical Principle, and is vitiated by a consequent vagueness and inconsequence. This is not a question of debating Academics, but of serving the cause of eternal truth.

Yours very cordially,

November 9th, 1938.

JOHN THOMAS.

Bible School Lesson Outline

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

Vol. 2 Fourth Quarter Lesson 51 December 18th, 1938

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOUR

Lesson Text: Luke 2:1-20.

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

I. The Circumstances of His Birth—verses 1-7.

However much the haughty Roman Emperors might despise the humble Christians of the first century, a decree passed by Caesar Augustus himself had much to do with the fulfilment of the Divine plan for the birth of the Redeemer. Mary was dwelling at Nazareth, but, according to the Word of Scripture, the town of Bethlehem was to be the scene of the Advent (Micah 5:2). A decree went forth from Augustus, effective throughout the whole Roman Empire, that every citizen should go to the city of his ancestors, and there be enrolled. This census was probably intended to serve as a basis for future taxation.

It is interesting to note that, humanly speaking, the place and manner of the Saviour's birth were determined by an official decree of the Roman Government, and likewise the place and manner of His death (Matt. 27:26; Heb. 13:12). Yet, the Roman nation was but an instrument under the direction of the determinate counsel of God (Acts 2:23).

The Advent of the Saviour into this world is the pivotal event of all history. All the past was but a preparation for the coming of the Redeemer, and all the future was to be determined by that event. Similarly, Christ is the central Person of all Scripture. The laws of Moses, the prophecies and the writings of the Old Testament point forward to His coming (Luke 24:44; John 5:39); the Gospels and Acts unfold the fact of His coming; the Epistles and revelation expound its significance and results.

Christ was born a King (Matt. 2:2) of the house of David (Matt. 1:1). Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His legal father, both belonged to the line of David. All down through the ages, the prophets had declared that the Messiah should belong to the royal tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9, 10; Num. 24:17; Isa. 11:1; Heb. 7:14), and to the house of David (2 Sam. 7:13-16; Isa. 9:6, 7; 16:5; Matt. 22:42; Rev. 5:5; 22:16).

Christ was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:27, 34, 35), the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4). The Incarnation of the Son of God is a holy mystery, and a holy miracle. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, so that the Holy One born of her was the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Though heir to all the frailties of human flesh, He was absolutely without sin (Heb. 7:26); He was made merely in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3).

He Who had existed from all eternity (John 1:1) came into this world as a little child. He was Son of man as well as Son of God. He took upon Himself the form of man, that He might also take upon Himself the sin of man (Phil 2:5-9; Heb. 2:14). He became man that He might be the federal

Head of a new race. Adam, the head of the earthly race, had involved all his descendants in sin and death. Christ was the Representative of a new spiritual race, that He might bestow upon all who identified themselves with Him, His own holiness and life (Rom. 5:12-21).

The Lord Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Deliverer, the Saviour (Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:29-32; John 1:41, 49; Acts 5:31). In the Old Testament times those anointed for office were the prophet, the priest and the king. Christ performed the duties of Prophet when He revealed God to men (Deut. 18:15, 19; John 1:14-18). As Priest He offered Himself as a Sacrifice to God, and as Priest also He makes intercession for sinners (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:17; 9:11, 12). As King, He holds universal sway (John 18:37; Rev. 17:14; 19:6, 16).

The names and titles of our Lord mentioned in the first and second chapters of Luke, and in the first chapter of John, are most significant. They would make a profitable study. For example, among those titles are the following: Son of the Highest, King over the house of Jacob, the Holy One, the Light of the Gentiles, the Glory of Israel, the Word, the Light, the Only-begotten Son, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man, the Son of God.

II. The Proclamation of His Birth—verses 8-20.

It seems singularly appropriate that the first announcement of the Saviour's birth should be made to shepherds. Shepherds pass much of their time under the open sky. They have opportunities to behold the moon and the stars and all the wonders of God's world, and they can read His power and glory as therein displayed (Psa. 8; Rom. 1:20). They have no part in the wild tumults and strivings of the sons of men; they dwell "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife": In the solemn stillness of the night they can meditate upon Divine things. The shepherds on the Judaeen hills hearkened to the wondrous proclamation from heaven because their ears were not deafened by the clamours of earth (Psa. 46:10).

God called young David when he was but a lad, keeping his father's sheep (1 Sam. 16:11). Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, became the prophet of the Lord to Israel.

The tasks of the shepherd are typical of the various aspects of the work of Christ. The prophets declared that the Messiah would be a shepherd to His people, feeding, guiding, protecting, seeking and saving them (Psa. 23; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:23), and Christ confirmed their words (Matt. 9:36; 15:24; Luke 19:10; John 10:11-18). He is described as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

God chose angels as His messengers to proclaim the joyful news of the Saviour's birth. The angels themselves worship Him as Christ the Lord (Heb. 1:6). They were associated with Him throughout His earthly career: at the annunciation (Luke 1:26), at His birth, after the temptation (Matt. 4:11), in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), at the resurrection (Luke 24:4) and in His ascension (1 Tim. 3:16). They will accompany Him when He comes again in glory (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38). The sinless angels are interested in the salvation of fallen men (Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:10; 1 Pet. 1:12; Heb. 1:14).

JOHN BOYD VISITS OUR NEW FIELDS

(Continued from page 5)

ing town of Rouyn. In this way it is possible that their Sunday School can be doubled and the contacts made for Christ increased still more than that. We showed the slides depicting the work of some of the Seminary graduates the night we were in Noranda, and then hurried on to the more recently opened and needy districts of Val d'Or and Bourlaimaque. Only the unshakable sense of divinely appointed duty at home prevented our responding to the almost overwhelming appeal made by that district where dozens of mines and several growing towns are in utter darkness without a word of gospel testimony. We longed with an almost irresistible passion to be able to appeal to our people for help, but only one ear was open to our cry and to Him we cried, "Lord of light, and God of all grace, send labourers into this Thy harvest field." May God give us all hearts to pray, and wills to work for Jesus our Saviour's sake.—John Boyd.

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