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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

IF HITLER SHOULD PROVE TO BE THE FINAL ANTICHRIST, WHO IS MUSSOLINI?

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, June 9th, 1940

(Stenographically Reported)

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."—II. Thessalonians 2:1-10.

We have come to a day when in many categories of thought men are becoming unashamed to admit they have changed their opinions. Not so very long ago in England there was a school, not confined to those who are usually spoken of as conscientious objectors, who as a philosophy believed and preached in season and out of season the doctrine of pacifism. Even after heavy clouds rolled up on the horizon there were not a few very influential people in Britain who pursued a policy of what they called "appeasement".

I do not know that you could find another period of ten years, in British history at least, which was marked by more confusion of thought, politically, than the last ten years. We passed from a policy of disarmament, conciliation, compromise, and appeasement, to a position where it was generally recognized that nothing but a policy of defensive force would avail.

In France there has been an equal variety of political views, and France has frequently had to change her Governments. They represented, I assume, from time to time the changing complexion of political thought in

France. That had its effect upon the military situation, and the military philosophy had also a reaction upon the political outlook. France had definitely adopted a defensive policy, believing that it was better to rest behind firmly fortified positions than to go to meet the foe; and with that political view the whole military defensive plan of France was conceived. But almost in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, that conception of things was dissipated and theoretical castles which they had erected were as quickly dissolved. Man after man was retired, including the Commander-in-Chief, and many of the principal Generals. The entire Government had to be reformed and reconstructed.

In England, for years Mr. Winston Churchill has tried to warn his fellow-countrymen against the dangers that he believed were imminent; and recent events have justified his gravest fears, and his most earnest warnings. Without seeming to say, I told you so, we have frequently in this place endeavoured to bring into the light of God's holy Word the strange religious and

political imaginings of our day. And I venture to believe that those who have looked upon the world situation through the medium of Scripture, believing the Bible to be what it claims to be, the Scriptures of truth, were never deceived into believing that evil, whether lesser evils, or greater, could ever be appeased. There is but one direction laid down in the Scripture in respect to that matter. Nowhere are we admonished to endeavour to appease evil, or compromise with it; but always to "abhor that which is evil." Nor are we ever or anywhere instructed to yield to, but always to "resist" the devil. And if it had not been for the setting aside of God's Word and its teaching, Britain would never have been found in the state of unpreparedness in which she stood at the time of the regrettable and shameful compromise of Munich. Nor would she now be found so ill-prepared to meet the foe.

There is but One Who is able to see the end from the beginning, and He is both the End and the Beginning, the Alpha and the Omega. There are no surprises to Him; and therefore the Word of God so long despised by many, neglected by others, and positively denied by the great mass of such as are known as the intelligentsia, the Word of God itself has been forewarning us; and had we but had ears to hear, we should have recognized the origin and nature of the evil thing which threatened, and should have been prepared.

In view of these considerations, it is not surprising that many people should be rather disturbed in their thought religiously; it is not surprising that, driven by the logic of events, people should be driven to a reorientation of their religious views, particularly in relation to last things. Let no one be ashamed to acknowledge his change of view. I have never numbered myself among those who desired to be wise beyond that which is written, or presumed in advance of the fulfilment of prophecy, dogmatically—not to say like some, oracularly—to interpret and predict that which is to come to pass.

I have reminded myself again and again—and my hearers too—that our Lord Jesus exercised in the days of His flesh a prophetic office, that in His oral teaching there was a very large predictive element relating to the ultimate issue of the conflict between light and darkness, and good and evil; and relating too, particularly to Himself, and to the experience which should be His, not in the remote future, but in the years that were then at hand. He spoke of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, of His exodus. He predicted His going up to Jerusalem, and being delivered into the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees and chief priests, and being killed, and rising again on the third day. He even said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

His enemies named that as one element in the indictment, but His disciples were no wiser than His foes. The New Testament explicitly tells us that there was not one of them who understood, notwithstanding His most explicit teaching, that Jesus would rise again from the dead. But it is written after the event, by an inspired writer, that these things which Jesus had spoken respecting His resurrection "understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified"—in the light of that tremendous fact, and driven by the irresistible force of its logic—"then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they

had done these things unto him." And it is said, particularly with respect to His saying about the destroying of the Temple, "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." That is to say, they understood them, and believed them, only in the light of their own fulfilment.

I have always felt the deepest reserve toward, and have been disinclined to yield myself to, such positive interpretations of prophecy as undertake to outline a programme for the future, and insist that "thus and thus saith the Lord". Such may be someone's interpretation: it is not necessarily what the Scripture teaches. I have, for myself, the profoundest conviction of the inspiration, infallibility, and supreme authority of every word of Holy Scripture; and will take second place to no one in my insistence that the Bible is the very word of God. But with equal force I must insist that what the Scripture actually says about future things, and what you or I, for the moment believe it to say, may be two different things.

And furthermore, we may often find within this Book principles and promises and precepts which may superficially be understood, and which have a direct and present application to everyday experience, the ultimate significance of which no one may now be able to understand; for God's Word, like His works, are manifold and often have a meaning within a meaning. So a single Scripture may be fulfilled again and again. But there must be an ultimate fulfilment; there must come a time when the word finds its complete fulfilment and establishment by the performance of that which is promised.

So in days like this there must be many who ask questions of themselves to which I suppose many fear to give an answer; for as we read of the events of current history from day to day, we are driven, in spite of ourselves, to ask if there be any mystery wrapped up in it, if there be any Scriptural explanation of present-day events which may have escaped either our observation or our understanding.

John in his day said, "Ye have heard that Antichrist should come." That, I suppose, among the early church was a settled conviction, that there would come a day when the powers of darkness would mass their ultimate might, and would endeavour to force a conclusion with the powers of light and righteousness. There would be many battles, but there would be, as they believed, a final battle in the war which would result in victory, not for all that was opposed to God and His Christ, but in victory for the Lord's Anointed.

But John said also in his day, "And even now there are many antichrists." He identified the spirit of antichrist as the spirit that should deny that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. It has been true through all the course of human history that there have been antichrists; and that there has been abroad in the life of the world a spirit of antichrist. For every Abel, there has been a Cain; for every Moses and Aaron, a Jannes and Jambres; for every Elijah, an Ahab; for every John the Baptist, a Herod. Even among the disciples Judas appeared; and so, wherever the gospel has been proclaimed, there has always been an opposing spirit, and as surely as the Holy Ghost was given to glorify Christ, so there is an evil spirit whose special mission

is to magnify everything and everybody that is opposed to Him.

But the Bible teaches that there will be the ultimate Antichrist, whoever or whatever it or he may be. We have read in Revelation—that marvellous and mysterious book, which I believe nobody as yet has completely understood—great and unmistakable principles apart from all symbolic or parabolic teaching. In the verses I have read to you there is a clear and explicit declaration that there will be someone or something that will arrogate to itself or to himself all the qualities, the dignities, the authority, the glory of Deity; and that such an one will be in full flower and flood when Jesus Christ Himself shall return.

It is always a matter of interest when a great personality appears. I hate the practice, but it is common in our day, that if a man is to be advertised, they must publish a reproduction of his photograph. Whenever I go anywhere, I avoid it so far as I possibly can—because I want a congregation. But the principle is there, that people are interested in persons; whether the man be known as a man supremely good or supremely evil, the record of his life challenges attention. The average decent, law-abiding citizen who goes faithfully about his work, does not get into the paper; but if he happens to be a man of conspicuous ability in some direction,—or he may be a good-for-nothing scoundrel who is not fit to live, who robs a bank or murders someone, then, in either case, his likeness is printed upon the front page. People are interested in the study of these extremes.

WHO OR WHAT IS THIS ULTIMATE ANTICHRIST? I do not know anything more bewildering than to search into the records of the past and assemble a list of the interpretations, the guesses of imaginative men, as to who may or may not be the Antichrist. If you examine into these interpretations, you will find that certain circumstances of the time have given rise to them. Expositors endeavoured to interpret scripture in the light of such events as were then transpiring. But what a wide variety, and how utterly contrary to each other, many of them are!

Some see in the beast of the thirteenth of Revelation, and in this lawless one of the text a symbolic representation of a system, an economic system, an educational system, a religious system. They see a spirit of Antichrist in the social order of the day. Some of the old interpreters combined the system with an institution, and were quite sure that the Papacy was the Antichrist, and that out of Rome a personal Antichrist would come. So sane and conservative a man as Gratton Guinness, so interprets these scriptures; and the saying of one of the verses I have read, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming", he interprets as marking the Reformation, and the subsequent dissemination of the Word of God, undermining the very foundations of Rome, and gradually consuming her, ultimately to be destroyed by the full blaze of Christ's coming.

Others have seen in the prophecy of the coming of Christ the promise of the emergence in human history of some outstanding superhuman person. Inasmuch as Antichrist is to be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire, it is argued that the beast must really represent a person. There were some who were confident that

Nero was the Antichrist, and that he would become—there were those who held it even after he had passed, and that he would become reincarnate, and that the Antichrist would be a reincarnation of Nero. Napoleon was favoured as a candidate for the position by many—and perhaps it was not surprising. He seemed to be a person of superhuman power; he seemed to be able to melt the hearts of men, and bend the multitudes to his will. But he died at St. Helena—and men had to change their ground.

I say these things to show that thoughtful men and women must at least see the necessity of exercising a holy caution before reaching conclusions in respect to this matter.

There is some truth in all these conjectures: men and movements may be antichristian in principle and in spirit. Though we differ from each other in a thousand particulars, there is a real solidarity about the human race, for we are made of one blood—Hitler to the contrary notwithstanding. And because that is true, varied as are our moods, tastes, and habits of life, with the passing and unfolding centuries, it becomes true—and must be true in the nature of the case—that history repeats itself; and because that is true, we can always find historical parallels to things that are now occurring, and which are predicted; therefore if the prophecy relating to the ultimate conflict be true, it will not be difficult to discover certain parallelisms when we compare current history with the prophecies of the future. And because of these things, I say, we need to exercise care. But not one of them—nor all of them together—can possibly have exhausted the significance of the scriptures which predict the coming of a final Antichrist.

My reason for that assertion is that the scripture I have read is most explicit. I think you do not need anyone to interpret it at that point, that the final Antichrist will be here in his full power when Jesus Christ shall come again; because this scripture says he will be consumed "with the spirit of his mouth, and (de-

"The following quotation from *"Light for the Last Days,"* by Dr. and Mrs. H. Gratton Guinness, pp. 254-55, illustrates how even the most careful and cautious prognosticator may be mistaken.

"Thoughtful readers will weigh the facts and draw their own conclusions, asking themselves, in the light of all the chronological facts mentioned in this work, if the year, B.C. 604 witnessed the rise of the typical Babylon, the supremacy over the typical Israel, what event is the corresponding year in this time of the end likely to witness? There can be no question that those who live to see this year 1917 will have reached one of the most important, perhaps the most momentous, of these terminal years of crisis.

"Yet we must also call attention to a further interesting fact connected with the last possible measure of this comprehensive and wonderful *"Seven Times,"* that starting from the capture of Zedekiah and the burning of the temple in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, and terminating in A.D. 1934. The termination of the *"times of the Gentiles"* meets at this point the 1335 lunar years, dated from the Omar capture of Jerusalem, an event more momentous in its effects on Palestine and Jerusalem than the Hegira era of the commencement of Mohammedanism. No chronological prophecy of Scripture indicates any date whatever beyond this year, as astronomic considerations forbid the thought that the supplementary seventy-five is to be added to these solar measures.

"Here then we reach the close of this long chronological section of our endeavour, like Daniel, to understand by books the number of the years whereof the Lord hath spoken."

stroyed) with the brightness of his coming." And so long as it is true that Jesus Christ has not come the second time, it must also by the most inevitable sort of logic be true that the final Antichrist cannot have come and passed; for he will pass only when Jesus Christ shall personally return and destroy him. So at that point we are able to arrive at certitude. Whatever may have been said in the past, however ingenious these interpretations, and whatever element of truth there may have been in them in that they had some resemblance to Antichrist, they were not *the* Antichrist, for Jesus Christ has not yet come the second time "without sin unto salvation".

I am not surprised that many should have wondered at the marvellous developments in Russia during the last twenty years. Who would have supposed that an empire of one hundred and eighty millions of people could almost overnight be brought into subjection to a comparatively small company of ruthless men, headed at last by one man who would assume the authority—and more than the authority—of the Czar? I say, in advance of that event, if anyone had predicted that it could be, we should have said, "That is nonsense; quite impossible."

So of Italy, and even more emphatically so of Germany. I do not know, to be fair, of any chapter in history which records in the same space of time the uprising from obscurity to world-prominence, and from impotence to the exercise of a very real threat of world-domination—I say, history, so far as I know it, has no record, no sort of parallel phenomenon. That being so, we do well to ask questions about it; not to be too dogmatic, but at least to approach the matter with an enquiring mind.

But there is a vast difference between a resemblance and a true likeness. The police have a rogues' gallery. I have had occasion sometimes to call the police, and enquire about someone I have had to deal with. An officer came, and took out a package of photographs and asked me one after another, "Is that the man?" The Bible is a great picture gallery. To read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is like a trip to Westminster Abbey. There the names of the heroes of faith are inscribed. It has a rogues' gallery too; there is a picture in the Book of this ultimate Antichrist.

Why is it there? I suppose so that when he comes, those who may be alive and remain when he shall be revealed, will be able to open their Bibles and read it, and perhaps, their blood chilling in their veins, be led to say, "It must be he; it must be hell's champion come to earth." But according to some all such enquiries are useless, that any such identification is quite impossible. A friend told me the other day of hearing a Bible teacher, so-called, address a luncheon of business men. He said, "Gentlemen, some of you may have been enquiring about Hitler and Stalin and Mussolini, but be easy in your mind: the church of the redeemed, all of them, will be taken out of this world before Antichrist will appear, and there will be no sign of his coming, no indication of his presence anywhere, until the church has been raptured and taken out of the way."

If that could be possible, I am all for it! I am quite ready for it to come now. But if that be not the teaching of Scripture, in view of present-day events, it is a terribly dangerous doctrine. I believe it is not the

teaching of Scripture. I believe it is a dangerous delusion which has no scriptural warrant.

But if we examine these three pictures in the light of this, do we find Stalin there, or Mussolini, or even Hitler? Read that story in Revelation. I think we can go thus far. We who believe the Book, believe in the Holy Trinity: that God is one, but that He has manifested Himself in three persons, or as Joseph Cook was wont to say, three Subsistences in the one Substance: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Bible, in the chapter I read, tells of the father of all evil the dragon; and that just as the Father in heaven gave all authority to the Son that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him, so the dragon gave his seat and authority to the beast that had a threefold likeness to a leopard, a lion, and a bear. Then follows the description of another beast, the one with the ten horns, and the other with two horns, to whom the first beast delegated his power, and the second beast parallels, imitates, and challenges the work of the Holy Ghost; for just as the Spirit of God is sent to glorify the Son, so the second beast exercises himself to make all men worship the first beast, and to glorify him. There is unmistakably in that symbolic representation of things, whatever it may mean, a trinity of evil, challenging the Holy Trinity, and imitating the works of God.

Some see in the first beast the reincarnation of some conspicuous personage who has been slain, for he had a wound that was healed, and it is said to be a wound unto death. Wildly imaginative in some cases, and yet plausible in others, are some of these interpretations. Whoever and whatever he may be, that such an one will come, the final book of the Bible predicts; and equally plain are the unmistakable teachings of this second Epistle to the Thessalonians, together with the passages in John's letters, where he speaks of Antichrist coming at last, and many antichrists being here now.

Well, it is an ugly chapter. It is a chapter that one would scarcely read by itself, or for any comfort it might yield.

But let us see if THERE ARE ANY RESEMBLANCES.

There are. This beast *speaks great things*. He is noted for his speech, and his blasphemy. So is Hitler—but others have also been noted for such things. He blasphemes God and His tabernacle. We must not forget that Hitlerism in its development, seems to be approaching the status of a religion, and even in the school books of Germany the *Fuerher* is substituted for Christ; and the children are taught that Christ was a disreputable Jew who died upon the cross, with whom Germans, as such, must have nothing to do.

Antichrist *makes war with the saints*. I suppose that could be said of Hitler. And the chapter says that he was given power over all people, and nations, and tongues. Such a man as B. W. Newton, a conservative man of days past, speaks of what he is pleased to call "the prophetic world," by which he means territories and nations bordering the Mediterranean, the various empires that have found their centre there; and takes the view that the Bible has little to say prophetically about any other part of the world. But of this beast it is said that "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." It is a picture of ultimate world-domination by an evil power.

But if you examine it you will find that that power is worshipped by all those whose names are not written

in the Lamb's book of life; this evil power apparently makes itself attractive to the masses of the people, to all but those who are spiritually enlightened. I do not know how far one should press that, because there are so many who would worship anything rather than pay the price of resistance. We must at all events remember that it is written that a day will come, whether in our day, I dare not say, but a day when there will be such a time of testing as the world has never known, and when all, without any exception save those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world, and who are themselves regenerated by God's grace, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, and made, not members of churches, but members of Christ—when everyone except such as are genuinely saved, will bow before an evil power, and join him in blasphemy against God, for the sake of their own miserable, physical existence.

That is one reason why I regard the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine as being very dangerous. I cannot say that I have observed any special consecration on the part of those who advocate that theory, and I am by no means assured that should they suddenly be surprised into a discovery that they were wrong, and that there is a tribulation which the saints must endure, and a time of testing which they must survive if they are really Christ's, they would meet such a situation bravely. It is better that we should be forewarned on these matters, and be ready.

But there is a simple principle. All but those who have been genuinely made new creatures in Christ, and who have been led to subordinate everything to their hope in Christ, will capitulate to Antichrist. And I want to ask you, What sort of religion have you? What sort of religious hope have you? Is it something that means more to you than your business, your family, your standing in society, your material comforts? Is it something that is more than life itself? Have you such a hope in Christ that would enable you to say this evening, "As God is my witness, I know that I would rather die than deny my Lord"? If you cannot say that, you have not the kind of religion we may all need even in our day; therefore we had better be sure that we have a hope that will stand any test, and survive any trial.

When I read that chapter this evening, did you ask a question? *If Hitler is the first beast, can Mussolini be the second?*

I think some kind of beast would do well as a symbol for either of them, and the more vicious and vile the beast the more appropriate and accurate the symbol. But if that were so, it would be Mussolini who would take on the specially religious character; he would be the false prophet. Soon we should see manifestations of super-human power, for miracles can be wrought by the power of the devil as by the power of God. "The magicians did so with their enchantments." They imitated the miracles of Moses—up to a point. Then they had to admit, "This is the finger of God." God does not need to copyright His works, because He is able so to transcend all other efforts as to make it impossible that anyone in the universe should imitate Him.

But I do not think Mussolini is the second beast. If he is, he would need to be radically changed, because this second beast takes a subordinate position, and he actually spends himself getting people to worship the first one. I cannot see Mussolini doing that! What he might do,

I do not know, but there is no present evidence of such inclination. Do not be afraid that I am going to put you in a pit of depression before I finish. I believe the gospel is always good news, properly interpreted.

Let us suppose Hitler could succeed. What if he were to be victorious? Some seem to think in the United States that he may win. If they really believed that I should think they ought immediately to go to war with him. But if Hitler could succeed, what then? I do not believe such a colossal system of error as is represented by the Roman Catholic Church can reasonably be dissociated from any view of the ultimate winding up of things. One is a little perplexed to know where Rome is. I do not think Rome wants us to be particularly aggressive in the war in Canada; and while I am not at all sure that the Papacy would like to see Hitler victorious, I am sure that it would like to see the British Empire so weakened as to be unable to resist her machinations. If I were to see any sort of rapprochement between Hitler and the Pope, if Rome should eventually supply him with a religion, we might then begin to discern some likeness to Antichrist; because this system of which Antichrist is the head, will ultimately blossom out as a religious system, opposing itself to all that is called God or is worshipped.

Napoleon saw the power of Rome, and he sought to link Rome's power with his own. I should not be surprised, were Hitler to succeed, to see him doing the same thing. But that quality is not yet sufficiently defined in Hitler, though there are some indications of a religious trend, a trend toward religion that is not Christian but anti-Christian in its very nature and essence. His opposition to Rome could as easily be changed as his opposition to Communism if it should promise to serve his purpose.

What if, for a moment, we assume the possibility that even in our day the final Antichrist is being developed out of the midst—would you welcome it? What if it were so? If it were so, I suppose Hitler would succeed. No armed might could withstand him; and unto him would be given power over all nations, and peoples, and tongues. "Oh," someone says, "that is a truly terrible assumption." Even to think of it is almost treason. I do not give that as my opinion, nor do I think it; but I am asking you to assume it for the sake of its argument and implications, for the moment. What if it were so?

We shall do well to assure ourselves that we have an experience of grace that can stand that test. How many would submit to the mark of the beast, if that is to be a reality of the future, whether literally or figuratively interpreted? There was a time before I had had a certain extended and painful experience, when I assumed that all who professed and called themselves Christians were all they professed to be. I supposed that ministers who professed to believe the Book, and to be grounded in the great principles of evangelical Christianity, when put to a test, would instantly take their stand for the principles they professed. But I have seen ministers mown down like grass by a scythe. I have seen Baptist ministers, men who professed to believe all that we here believe, shout themselves hoarse, and cheer to the echo a man who denied the Book, who denied the blood, and who was a denier of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I do not speak extravagantly: I have seen men do all that for bread and butter.

What would the seventy-five United Church ministers do? I could name a minister in this city who said, "It

is simply preposterous to expect me to put God before the interests of my family." What would such a man do? What would your ecclesiastical politicians do? What a revelation there would be if the day should come when a man would have to choose between loyalty to Christ and death itself?

Have you a religion that could stand that? If you have not, what proof can you furnish of its genuineness? If we are uncertain, let us make sure that ours is not a counterfeit religion, that we really know Christ.

If Hitler be the Antichrist, some of us might become martyrs to the faith. They found on some of the German prisoners or bodies of German soldiers in Holland and Belgium "black lists", death lists. When they went in, they were to search out these people—and they did search them out—for wholesale murder. I suppose they may have a Toronto "black list". Is your name on it? I should not be surprised if mine is! I have damned Hitler enough to get there. What if it were? Would you dare to face Antichrist, and die rather than worship him?

That is not a wholly dark picture. If Hitler were Antichrist, we could be sure that Jesus Christ was on the way. We know his reign will be very short, and we know what will be the end of it: Jesus Christ will come. Do you not long for the day when you can pick up your newspaper and read that Hitler and his hordes are on the run? I lie awake and dream of reading, "Hitler is on the run." Can you conceive of the picture drawn in the Word of God, of some evil power exercising dominion over the whole earth and saying, "I have captured it; it is mine; at long last, I rule"; when suddenly the lightning shines from one part of heaven to another part under heaven, and, quick as the lightning, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

Then men will say, "I wish I had stood up against Antichrist. I wish I could have foreseen the day when the Son of God would come down the skies." What a glorious day that will be! If Hitler should be the Antichrist, I am certain of this—I am as positive as any oracular interpreter could be; I am absolutely positive of this, that if he should turn out to be the Antichrist, and his rule the blackest hour of the world's history, I know that it is the hour just before the dawn when the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. What a day of vindication of faith that will be! Fools for Christ's sake, are you? Your name like the offscouring of the earth? Do not be afraid. The day will come when you will pass as one of heaven's wise men for having put Christ before all others.

Personally, I do not believe Hitler is Antichrist. I do not say he is not. There are many resemblances, but I cannot see the full figure. I fail to recognize in him all that Antichrist is to be, if Antichrist is to be a person. He is mighty, but not almighty; wise, but not all-wise; resourceful, but I do not think he is even as resourceful as we are. And I believe that the day of rejoicing over Hitler's overthrow will certainly come.

Some day we shall see the King in His glory—but there will be no Leopold in the procession. I cannot help believing that the Lord will send us, before He comes again, before the final apostasy, culminating in the revelation of Antichrist, a great revival of religion. But whether or no, my question to you is, Are you prepared for the

worst? There is a sense in which the worst might be the best, for we should then be sure that our Beloved was even at the door. The all-important thing for every one of us is that we should be sure that we are in right relation to God through Jesus Christ. I conjure you, in the name of my coming, conquering Lord, while yet there is time, be ye reconciled to God. That is the supreme wisdom. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." May we know its cleansing power, and be absolutely sure that we have passed from death unto life. Then we can face the future without fear.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

THE WAR'S EFFECT UPON LANGUAGE AND FAITH

"I hate *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love." So the A.V. in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm has it. The Revised Version renders it, "I hate them that are of a double mind: but thy law do I love." Young translates, "Doubting ones have I hated, and thy law I have loved."

The idea is of a divided branch, a double or doubtful mind, of varying and sceptical opinions. Thus the Psalmist expresses his abhorrence, his detestation, of uncertain, varying, and doubtful standards of moral values, in contrast to his love of the gold-standard of the fixed and unmistakable law of God. It is philosophically impossible to arrive at absolute moral values apart from a certain revelation of the Absolute. Hence, when men reject the principle of a divine and infallible revelation, they substitute therefor the mental meanderings of the moral prospector who spends his life assaying the vain thoughts the psalmist earnestly hated. And for every doubtful value, a doubtful word must be discovered or invented.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the certainty and finality of the Christian hope, says, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness (or boldness) of speech: and not as Moses which put a vail over his face." In that, he was like his Master Who, using the same word, said, "I shall shew you plainly of the Father"; and His disciples said, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb." If the gospel is designed to serve as a word of direction from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from earth to heaven, it ought to be declared in the plainest possible speech: "We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak; knowing—"

For a long time plain-speaking, like plain dressing, has been most unfashionable. It has seemed to be believed by many that words were most wisely used to conceal, or at least to disguise, one's thoughts, rather than to express and identify them. This has been especially true in respect to definitions of morals and religion. Ambiguity has been esteemed a virtue, and vagueness of speech a sign of sagacity. A woman of limited means, restricted to a limited wardrobe, avoids distinct or pronounced colours, with a view to rendering her sameness of apparel inconspicuous. Thus the stoney-ground opinions of the unconvinced speaker or writer never pene-

trate the rock, nor wrap their roots about it so as to grow up into oaken convictions, but spring up only in form and colour of sickly verbal neutrality; and by and by prove to have no root in themselves; and to be as inconsequential as they are impermanent.

Hence, in these realms referred to, there have been neither east nor west, neither north nor south, neither white nor black, neither good nor evil, neither friend nor foe, neither hot nor cold, neither light nor darkness, neither heaven nor hell, neither God nor devil. To speak positively of these concepts were to risk being regarded as an extremist. "Pastel shades" may be attractive in wallpaper; but are too indefinite for use in the lettering of sign-posts designed to catch the eye of the rapidly-moving motorist.

The fashion of indefinite, ambiguous speech has produced a mentality that is habitually neutral toward moral and religious questions. It would be going too far to say that one cannot think without words. There are thoughts, as there are emotions, which cannot be uttered; and more which cannot be uttered easily either in ready-made or semi-ready phraseology. Notwithstanding, the verbal forms in which we array our thoughts have a reaction upon the mind, and either cloud or clarify our thinking. So it comes to pass that the euphemism we invent to mitigate the offensiveness of a possibly unwelcome idea, must have a narcotic effect upon our own minds; and, if persisted in, will so dull our mental and moral perceptions as to render the mind as incapable of definite and morally accurate thinking as of clear and decisive speech.

It may sometimes be a benediction to be afflicted with a pain or a distemper which no opiate can subdue, and no professional euphemistic Latin designation can disguise. Then physician and patient are thrown back upon the necessity of plain speech. When germs and principles pass from the realm of theory to experience and practice, they have a habit of shedding all disguises, and appearing as the naked truth; which can be described and understood only as they are and appear in truth. And because of this, the empiricist and the pragmatist often see more of truth than the scientist or the philosopher. Therefore, while the saying is true that in war truth is the first casualty, it is also correct to say that truth is the ultimate survivor; and as varied styles and colours in wartime give place to unmistakable, identifying, uniforms, so war burns up much of life's artificiality in speech and practice; and leads to a revaluation and reappreciation of the neat and undiluted truth, of truth undisguised and unadorned.

In attempting to deceive others, a man succeeds, ultimately, only in deceiving himself. The disguise of reality leads to the denial of it, and ultimately to the acceptance of its opposite as being true.

The countries of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium, and the countries of Eastern Europe which have tried, or are still trying so desperately to maintain a neutral position, and the United States, depending upon its geographical isolation to enable it to keep out of a world-conflict of principles, illustrate what has been the mental and moral attitude of religious leaders and institutions for a generation. In respect to what is as clearly and unalterably revealed in Holy Writ of the inexorability of principles of righteousness and truth, is the invariability of the operation of natural law revealed in the earth about us and the heavens above us.

much of twentieth century Christianity has endeavoured to be neutral. With what result? With precisely the same consequences which have fallen upon Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium—and must fall upon all others still calling themselves neutral.

The lesson is, that between light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, God and the devil, neutrality is impossible; but a state of perpetual war must be maintained until our glorious King shall achieve His final and complete victory. Every Christian church must be a church militant, or must become a church desolate.

France has passed through a revolution in a few weeks, not in bitterness and blood, but a revolution in ideas effected by the leadership of General Necessity. We are told that since nineteen-thirty-five, her military plans and preparations were inspired by a school of defense, which held that a policy of adequate defense would be more economical and more successful than a policy of attack. But the defensive theories were destroyed almost overnight, and the neutral and negative gave place to the positive and aggressive. Oh that France had recognized five years ago the principle, "Be not overcome of . . . but overcome with"! "Abhor—cleave"!

Nor were British statesmen any wiser. Our—no, *their*—catch-words or slogans were, "Disarmament", "Non-intervention", "Appeasement". Now they have all given place to their opposites. Fire has a way of proving both our words and our works, of what sort they are; and the fire of war has proved that these negative principles were only wood, hay and stubble. Our fools' castle of *disarmament* and *non-intervention*, with its topstone of *appeasement*, a paper maché ideal, has been destroyed, but the foundations of truth and righteousness and justice, and their corollaries, abide. Therefore we shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

So then the war is swiftly bringing us back to the multiplication table, to the alphabet, to the decalogue, to the axioms of morals and religion: and to plain and uncompromising speech. Many words, long relegated to obsolete or archaic verbal categories, like weapons of war to glass cases in a museum, are now being requisitioned and put into everyday use again. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. FOR THEN WILL I TURN TO THE PEOPLE A PURE LANGUAGE, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

MUSSOLINI GOES TO WAR

So much has been said about Mussolini's entrance into the war that it seems wise to let the matter rest where Premier Reynaud put it when he said of Italy's action: We have nothing to say; the world will judge.

It is reported that Mussolini said something to the effect that it would be better to be a lion for a day than a sheep for a hundred years. Perhaps! But a Wise Man long ago observed, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." And the British bulldog is pretty hard to kill. We are inclined to think that Mussolini will realize his ambition, and pose as a lion for a day.

It may be just as well that Mussolini has made the

plunge, for the elimination of the Italian dictator is just as essential to European and world peace as the elimination of Hitler. Beside which, the civilized world has some scores to settle with Mussolini. The voice of Abyssinian blood, so wantonly shed, cries aloud for vengeance. Mussolini will add to our difficulties for a while, but it will be like the beginning of daylight-saving time: the hour we lose in the beginning, we shall make up at the end. Much of the trouble Mussolini causes us now will be more than compensated for by his having been removed as a nuisance when the time for concluding peace arrives. And further, Mussolini has multiplied the candidates for the hangman's rope, including himself, at the end of the war.

Bible School Lesson Outline

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PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Lesson Text: Matthew 25:1-30.

Golden Text: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh"—Matthew 25:13.

For Reading: Matthew 25:31-46.

In the course of our Lord's discourse to the disciples on Mount Olivet (Matthew 24) He had indicated certain signs by which they might identify the approach of the end-time. Since the exact time of His return was not to be revealed (Mk. 13:32), they must ever be watchful (Matt. 24:36-51). The parable of the virgins and the parable of the talents illustrate this exhortation.

I. The Parable of the Virgins: The Test of Profession—verses 1-13.

The expression "the kingdom of heaven" signifies the sphere of Christendom (Compare Matt. 13:24, 33, 44, 45, 47), which includes those who merely profess allegiance to Christ, represented by the five foolish virgins, as well as true believers, represented by the five wise virgins. Christ is the Bridegroom for Whose coming the virgins wait (Matt. 9:15; John 3:29; Eph. 5:29, 30; Rev. 19:7; 21:2-9).

The foolish virgins did not make adequate preparation for the bridegroom's coming. Evidently they thought that he would come in the early evening, and they governed their actions according to their own surmises. They did not take sufficient oil to last throughout the night hours. The lamps used in Palestine at this time resembled low covered saucers with a sort of nozzle at one end. The oil was placed in the saucer, and one end of the wick floated in the oil, while the lighted end protruded from the nozzle.

The fact that the bridegroom tarried suggests that the time before the Lord's return was to be comparatively long (Compare verse 19). In the meantime, the attitude of indifference became general; "they all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 24:48; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4).

The bridegroom arrived at an unexpected hour (Matt. 24:44). Midnight seemed a strange time for the bridal procession and the wedding supper. Yet, his would-be attendants should not have relaxed their vigilance so as to be caught unprepared (Song of Sol. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:4). They were almost startled by the cry: "Behold! the bridegroom! Come ye-out to meet him!"

It was a sad awakening for the foolish virgins. Their own resources had failed, and this was no time to secure help from others. Oil is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and each must receive the Spirit for himself by faith. There are those who would depend upon the profession of godly parents or friends, but in the time of reckoning they will discover that they must bear their own responsibility (Rom. 14:12).

The door was shut, indicating that the opportunity was lost for any who were not prepared (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 2:3; 3:7, 8). In vain did they call the bridegroom; they were none of his (Matt. 7:21-23; Rom. 8:9; 2 Tim. 3:5). The Christian is one who renders heart allegiance to the Lord. Urge the scholars to come to Christ now, that they may be ready to see Him and welcome Him at any time.

Believers should ever be watchful (1 Thess. 5:6). Two Greek words are translated "watch" in the New Testament. The one means "to keep awake" or "to be vigilant" (Matt. 25:13; 26:38, 40, 41; Rev. 3:3). The other one, which is sometimes translated "be sober", denotes the absence of any beclouding or dulling influence (2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7; compare Lk. 21:34-36).

Believers should also keep their lamps trimmed. The lamp speaks of testimony (Matt. 5:14-16; Rev. 1:12, 13; 2:1, 5). Christ provides the oil and the light, but we are to be the lampstands, upholding the light and letting it shine brightly and clearly through us (Phil. 2:15, 16).

II. The Parable of the Talents: The Test of Service—verses 14-30.

The Lord would have His servants be faithful as well as watchful. While our hearts long for Him, our hands will work for Him. We would not have him find us sleeping or slothful when he comes for us.

In this parable the man travelling to a far country represents the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us. All three servants, spoken of as "his own servants" seem to represent believers, but it may be that the unprofitable servant pictures a mere professor, like the foolish virgins of the other parable.

A talent would amount to approximately one thousand dollars in our money. Talents were distributed to the servants according to each man's ability. At the present time spiritual gifts are bestowed by a sovereign Lord in accordance with this principle (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; Eph. 4:7). We are His stewards; all that we are and have are His alone (1 Cor. 4:7; 6:19, 20).

The Lord will surely return, even although He may seem to delay (2 Pet. 3:9). The parable of the pounds, the thought of which is somewhat similar to the parable of the talents, was given because it was thought that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear (Lk. 19:11-27). We are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10). Christ will reward His servants for their labours (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12), and those Christians who have been faithful will suffer loss, but their souls will be saved (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

The servants of the Lord will be rewarded for faithfulness, not for cleverness or success (1 Cor. 4:2). The two-talented man received the same praise as the five-talented man. The same obligation rests upon all who belong to Christ to develop and invest all their talents, resources, abilities and capabilities in a manner which will be pleasing to Him. The one-talented man was not punished because he had only the one talent, but because he had failed to use that talent. The parable may imply that the temptation to misuse, abuse or neglect our resources is greatest when those resources are the least. We are sometimes apt to think that we have not much to offer to our Lord, and it may seem that our carelessness would not be noticed. Yet, "little is much if God be in it" (Mat. 14:17, 18), and God does not judge according to men's standards (Mk. 12:42, 43; Acts 3:6). We are accepted according to what we do with what we have; not according to what we have not (2 Cor. 8:12).

The wicked servant blamed the master for his own fault and failure. His heart was not right before God; so that he misunderstood and slandered his lord as exacting, unreasonable and hard. His excuse was not valid. If he had entertained such an opinion of his master, he should have hesitated to incur the master's displeasure by wasting his goods.

The unprofitable servant did not receive praise, like the other servants, but rather blame; not promotion, but expulsion; not honour, but disgrace; not joy, but grief; not reward, but punishment (Matt. 8:12).

Let us not grow wearily in well-doing, but let us be diligent in the Master's service while we watch for Him (Lk. 19:13; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:9, 10).