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

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WHY I BELIEVE THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH CANNOT PRECEDE THE GREAT TRIBULATION

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 21st, 1940

(Stenographically Reported)

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"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—Matthew 24:21, 22.

The Scripture admonishes us, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." That should be the supreme concern of everyone who has been born again, who is a child of faith. We have been brought under a new authority. We know no higher law than the will of God; and for us, the will of God is revealed in the Word of God. This point, I shall not argue this evening, but content myself with the assertion that, to us who worship in this place, the Bible—our Modernist friends to the contrary notwithstanding—is the divinely inspired, infallible, and therefore supremely authoritative Word of God.

To that Court we bring our case; and it should be our endeavour to learn exactly what the Word of God teaches in respect to all matters related to the individual Christian life, and to the world at large, now and in the future. I must not come to the Bible to establish my position. I must not use the Bible in order to obtain sanction for my opinions. I must come to it sincerely desiring to know what the Bible teaches on any subject—whether it be the doctrine of the Lord's coming, or any other subject. I at least know no higher authority than the Holy Scriptures which are to me the inspired Word of God.

It is very wise, I think, frequently to re-examine the foundations of our faith. We are told to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. We are told to "give diligence to make (our) calling and election sure". We

are instructed to "prove all things"; and to "hold fast that which is good". Truth will always bear re-examination. If what you believe is really true, it will not do it any harm to bring it to the Scripture, and test it by the Word of God. It will only confirm you in your faith if, on examination, you discover that the thing you believe is that which the Bible teaches.

If you sincerely desire to know the truth, you will be willing to bring all your religious opinions to the Word of God, and if you find they are not in harmony with the teaching of Scripture, but are contrary thereto, you will correct them, and you will be courageous enough to say, "I was mistaken. I had thought for myself, or had allowed someone else to think for me; but, bringing these things to the Word of God, I find I was wrong, and I accept the teaching of Scripture."

We may any of us be mistaken as individuals. I have endeavoured, through a somewhat extended period, to practise the accurate quotation of Scripture. I remember reading, when I was quite a youth, a saying of Mr. Spurgeon, to the effect that those of us who profess to believe in verbal inspiration must be at pains to be verbally correct. It is surprising how easy it is for us to fall into error.

I notice a certain man who is reputed to be a great Bible teacher—I shall not give you my opinion for the moment—says that there can be no new light on prophecy. You cannot do much with a man like that. You

cannot improve upon perfection; and it is folly to argue with finality or infallibility. If any man says, "I know the truth; there is no new light"; we may as well say, Good bye. He may be right or wrong, but it is useless to discuss a question with any mind that is thus locked and barred against any possible new light, by saying there can be none. But if and when we really desire to know the will of God, and not to prove ourselves to be right, there will not be much difficulty in finding what the will of the Lord is. Our great task is to rid ourselves of our preconceptions, and to come with open minds to the Word of God, and let the Bible speak to us for itself.

I remember on another subject, an experience I had some years ago before I became Pastor of this church. The membership of the church I then served was some five or six hundreds, and I had a list of members. Included in the list was the name of one of the deacons below whose name I had left a blank—his wife was not a member of the church. One day I playfully showed him my list, and asked, "Do you see the blank under your name?" "Yes; why is it there?" "That is for the name of your wife." "I wish you success", he replied; "I have made no impression so far."

The wife was a godly woman, she came to church regularly, and took part in the church activities, and seemed to be a spiritually-minded woman. One day when I dropped into their home she said, "I am out of condition spiritually. I am not just right, and I do not know what is the matter. I want to be right, I really want to know and do the will of God." "Are you sure?" She said, "I think I am." "Make sure of that first. Go to the Lord and put yourself before Him, and tell Him that you have come as a scholar to His school, and that you are ready to hear His word and to obey." "I think I have done that, but I will do as you say. What next?" "When you have done that, I suggest another step. Open your Bible, and see what it has to say about that which properly should stand on the threshold of the Christian life, see what the Bible has to say about baptism." "Do not talk to me about baptism," she exclaimed, almost crossly. "I am not going to," I replied. "Neither will the Lord while you are in that attitude. I thought you were willing to hear what the Lord had to say, and to obey it?" "I think I am; but I have had sermons and tracts upon baptism pushed upon me for years." I said, "I am not going to give you a sermon or a tract. I am not going to waste a minute on you until you are ready to hear what the Lord says, and ready to do what He teaches. Will you do that?"

I said, Good bye, and went away. About two weeks afterwards this lady sent for me, and when I called I said, "What is wrong now?" "I thought you would have come to see me again." "I had no intention of doing so." "Well, I have sent for you." "What for?" "I want to be baptized next Sunday." "What has happened?" "I am ashamed to tell you. I was brought up in a Methodist home, and I was prejudiced. Whenever I opened my Bible, I read into it what I had been taught. After you called the other day, I did go before the Lord and say, 'Lord, if there is anything in this, show it to me; I am ready to do anything I find the Word of God teaches me.' The moment I approached the Word of God in that attitude, it was as plain as day." I explained that that is what the Scripture says: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

I say, we need to re-examine this subject—not necessarily to surrender our opinions, certainly not unless the Scripture forces us to do so. We can re-examine our position without heat. I remember being in a minister's home one Sunday evening, to have a little chat after the service. His wife was the teacher of a very large Bible class. She asked me a question about the Lord's return, and related events. I said, "Mrs. So-and-So, I fear you would become rather warmed up. I know your position, and I think perhaps you know mine. Were we to begin a discussion of this matter, you might become annoyed. There is no profit in that, so let us not discuss it." She said, "No; I will not. I promise you I will keep sweet about it." "You are sure? All right, get your Bible." I asked her to open it at the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, particularly the verses I have read for a text.

What is the general position occupied by those who perhaps specialize on the Lord's return and the millennial question? It is to this effect—I can only state it in brief. It is held that Christ will come for His saints first, and that there remains nothing more which must necessarily be fulfilled before His coming for His saints. Therefore He may come at any moment. That is what is sometimes called "the any-moment" theory, or the "imminence" of the Lord's return. They teach that He may come at any time; and that we ought now to be expecting Him; that He will come for His saints.

Then, in this view, some time later, Christ will come with His saints. When He comes for His saints, they will be raptured, caught up to meet the Lord in the air. In due time, He will come back again with His saints, and between the time of His coming for His saints, and His coming with His saints, there is usually said to be a period of something like seven years.

I received a paper from the United States, that was supposed to be published the day after the rapture. People were everywhere missing—from the office, from the shop, from Sunday School, from the railroads, from their homes. The believing people had been caught away, and the rest had been "left".

The one who hinders or "lets", according to this view, is the Holy Spirit. "He who now letteth or hindereth will hinder, until he is taken out of the way." Christ may come at any moment, it is alleged, and rapture His church, gather it away, and simultaneously the Spirit's ministry will be terminated. The special dispensation of the Holy Ghost will end, and then the lawless one will be revealed; and for the first three and a half years the world will have rather a quiet time—not the "quiet time" of the Oxford Group however, but still there will not be any very great trouble.

Many of the Jews will have returned to Jerusalem, and others will return during that time. They will establish themselves in Palestine, and will rebuild the temple. Then, in the middle of this seven years Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews. Then the Great Tribulation will set in. Though it is a time of great tribulation, during those years the greatest revival the world has ever known is to take place. Not the church but the Jews will be the evangelists of the world. After the salt of the earth is gone, and the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, a multitude that no man can number, not of Jews only but of Gentiles, are to be converted—during the Great Tribulation. At the end of it, Christ is to come, and Antichrist will be destroyed. That, in brief, is the position.

I.

I shall begin by asking, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GREAT TRIBULATION OF WHICH THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK?

Certainly *it does not mean tribulation in general*. The Lord Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The Apostle Paul said, "We glory in tribulations also." I think there will be general agreement on this point, that throughout the Christian era, those who have endeavoured to live godly in Christ Jesus have suffered persecution. It is no easy thing to be a Christian now: it has never been easy. True believers have always had tribulation.

But that is not the tribulation of which my text speaks. This is to be *an incomparable tribulation*—nothing like it before, nothing like it afterward. Surely that is clear. This is *the* great tribulation of which Christ speaks, "Such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." That is the *great* tribulation. I shall not discuss how long it may be, whether seven years or three and a half years—or a millennium or more. Mr. Churchill said some time ago, that Hitler decided when the war should begin: we shall decide when it will end. That is an important matter. Whatever differing opinions there may be among us as to when this tribulation begins, or began, there will be unanimity of opinion respecting its termination: it will end at the revelation of Jesus Christ, when He will destroy Antichrist at His coming.

Once more! this great tribulation is usually *identified with the rule of Antichrist*; whoever he or it may be, it is while this person is exalting "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," that then the great tribulation will prevail.

I think it is a sound principle of interpretation to interpret the symbolic scriptures by the plain statements of the Word of God; but in the Book of Revelation we have a description, very probably of the rule of Antichrist, when "a beast rises up out of the sea," and so on.

I have heard and read descriptions of the great tribulation. I was at a meeting in London, and sat in a back seat in Kingsway Hall. I heard an eminent physician by the name of Scofield—not the author of the Scofield Bible—a patriarchal gentleman who, through some infirmity, was obliged to sit in his chair while speaking. He described the great tribulation—blood to the horses' bridles, and I know not what else. He spared no effort to paint a very terrible picture, and I do not suggest he did or could exaggerate the horror of it. But when he had thus painted it in the most lurid colours imaginable, he paused, and, in almost ecstatic tones, clasping his hands, exclaimed, "But, my brethren, we shall not be there!" And from all over the hall there was a chorus of responses, "Hallelujah", and "Amen".

I do not believe that view has a vestige of scriptural support. I am as convinced as I am that two and two make four, that it is a figment of the human imagination; and that it has been and still is entertained by hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Christian people, without a vestige of scriptural warrant. We shall see whether that be true or not.

Certainly this tribulation is a very terrible period, so terrible that *it would be unendurable to mortal flesh were it prolonged*. Jesus Christ Himself said, "Except those

days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." If they were extended indefinitely, mortals could not bear it. "But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Who the "elect" are, is a question which I reserve for a little later consideration. I think, then, we shall agree that the tribulation, the *great* tribulation, whatever it is, whenever it begins, however long it may continue, whether from the siege of Jerusalem forward, or, as some contend, for about seven years, will end with the manifestation of Jesus Christ in glory when He comes "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" for it is said of that day that the lawless one shall be consumed "with the spirit of his mouth, and (destroyed) with the brightness of his coming." Therefore the one who causes the great tribulation, though allowed of God, will be consumed, destroyed; and the Lord Jesus shall be manifest. It is well to begin where we can agree. You may not agree with the proposition I am arguing, but you will agree that the great tribulation will be ended with the coming of Christ.

II.

WHAT OF THE RAPTURE? You have heard the rapture passage from I. Thessalonians read this evening. *It is a certainty*. It is a promise that will be fulfilled. Paul said, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

If you believe in the inspiration of Scripture, if you believe the Bible is the word of God, you cannot escape acceptance of the teaching that the blood-bought church of Christ, believers in Him, are to be raptured, caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

I will go farther and say that *the rapture is not a secret event*. It is quite popularly held that the Lord will steal down upon His people, and they will be secretly caught away—no one will see or hear them go. Later it will be discovered that a great host of believing people are missing. Where is it in the Word of God? Certainly, it is not in the chapter which Mr. Brown read, for there it says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." If language means anything, it surely must mean that He will come "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." If you can make a secret-coming of that, language has no significance at all.

I believe in the personal, visible, return of the Lord—and I also believe in the *audible* return of the Lord. "Shout", "voice of the archangel", and "the trump of God". In the chapter from which our text is taken, we are told, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not

give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." There can be nothing secret about that. He will be heard, and He will be seen. Again: "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."

The New Testament does not tell us that the Lord Jesus will come two more times. He has come once, and He "shall appear a second time". I do not read of a third coming. That idea of coming for His saints first, and with His saints afterward, makes two more comings; and in order to accommodate that view to the Scripture which says there are only two altogether—"He shall appear the second time"—the pre-tribulation rapturists have to make His coming for His saints a secret event. Surely there can be found no scriptural warrant for that.

I had rather an interesting thing brought to my attention the other day. A woman recently converted in Kapuskasing, from Roman Catholicism, Mrs. Oscar Richer, when the priest came to enquire as to why she was leaving the Roman Catholic Church, had a great many questions waiting for him. She had one I had never heard before. When he came she said, "I want you to look at this: you tell me that Christ is in that little cabinet that you lock. My Bible says, 'If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.'" Who taught her that?

The same principle is applicable to the whole question of the Lord's coming. If anyone tells you that the Lord is coming secretly, the Bible says you are not to believe it; He will not come secretly; He will come openly; He will come like the lightning. Let me quote that text with its context: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Someone may say, "But there is a very important point which, so far, you have not dealt with. Do you not know that in the two epistles to the Thessalonians, there are three words used to describe the coming of the Lord?"

We are told that the Greek word translated "coming" (*parousia*) may be translated "presence", and does not necessarily imply visibility. The second word in its Anglicized form is epiphany (*epiphaneia*) which means appearance, brightness, manifestation. The third word is *apokalupsis*, or, in its Anglicized form, apocalypse; this word means revelation. Our friends tell us that the *parousia*, the *coming*; the epiphany, or the *manifestation*; and the apocalypse, the *revelation*, the complete disclosure, are different *stages* of the same event. You have only to read Thessalonians where these verses occur to see that that, to say the least, is a very doubtful theory. The same word (*parousia*) is used of the coming of Antichrist as is used of the coming of Christ, and certainly the coming of Antichrist will not be secret. He is to be "revealed", but his "coming" is spoken of too, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." Surely that indicates a manifest coming. Antichrist is to be destroyed by the brightness of His coming, the *epiphaneia* of his

parousia. I think a careful examination of those passages, will show that these words describe varying but simultaneous aspects of the same event, the second advent of our Lord.

Observe, further, verses six and seven of the first chapter of Thessalonians. Listen to this: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you: and to you who are troubled rest with us." Those who afflict the saints are themselves to be afflicted by a divine visitation; and "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us"—when? At the *parousia*. Meaning, as it is alleged, that He comes invisibly, silently, catching His saints away, distributing His rewards to the saints? Nothing of the kind—"To you who are troubled rest with us, WHEN THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS."

There is another verse—and I am going to use Dr Scofield's Bible this time—the third chapter of Revelation, verse ten. It is part of the message that was addressed to the church at Philadelphia: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

I cannot tell you how many times that verse has been quoted to me as a proof-text of the rapture of the church, before the tribulation. A dear friend of mine, one whom I love in the Lord, and in whom I believe, whose genuineness as a Christian and as a sound evangelical, I glory in, but with whose eschatology I do not agree, wrote me a letter and quoted that text, and said, "What can it mean but the rapture of the church before the great tribulation?" Scofield has a note here, in the margin, which says, of "the hour of temptation":

"Tribulation (the great) Rev. 7:13-14. (Psa. 2:5; Rev. 7:14).

I spoke to a conference of ministers in New York State a year or so ago, and I quoted the letter to which I have referred. They had asked me to speak on this subject, and I asked them to examine that text. To whom was it written? "To the angel of the church at Philadelphia." "Was there a church at Philadelphia?" They agreed that there was a church in Philadelphia of ancient time—not a mythical church, but a real church that had an historic existence. "Very well, to whom was that word addressed? Certainly, primarily, to the church at Philadelphia; and however wide the application may be in principle, it must have had its primary application to the church to whom it was then addressed."

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, did he not intend that the Galatians should make application of his epistle to themselves? It is for you and me, also, but primarily his letters were written to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philipians, the Thessalonians, and so on. Here is a letter that was addressed to the church at Philadelphia, and they were commended for having kept the word of His patience, and not having denied His name; and because of that, they were promised a particular reward. What was the reward? "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Said my friend, in his letter, "What can that mean but the great tribulation?" My answer is, "I do not know quite what it means, I only know that it cannot possibly

mean the great tribulation, if the tribulation is what, and is to be when, you say it is. You say the great tribulation is still future. Now it is historically indisputable that the last member of the church at Philadelphia was laid in his grave over eighteen hundred years ago, that they all died over eighteen hundred years before the great tribulation began, according to your theory. Therefore how in the name of common sense can a promise made to people who died over eighteen centuries ago, promising them deliverance from a certain 'temptation', or 'tribulation', have been fulfilled if that tribulation is still future? You cannot have it both ways."

Is that conclusive? When I said that to those ministerial brethren, one who was the author of a theological text-book and a professor in a certain seminary, who held to the Scofield eschatology, enquired, "May not that have been the Lord's way of delivering them from temptation, from the great tribulation?" I said: "I should like to understand you; correct me if I am wrong. Do you mean that the Lord fulfilled that promise, and delivered the Philadelphia church from the great tribulation, which even now you say is yet future, by letting them die nearly nineteen hundred years before the tribulation began? Is that what you mean?" "Yes." "Doctor", I said, "are you serious, or is that a joke? You will admit that during the intervening centuries there have been countless millions of Christians, nominal, and even real, who did not keep the word of His patience, who were not, on the ground of such faithfulness, entitled to that particular reward, who also were allowed to die?" Turning to the company I said, "Brethren, what our professor-friend has said is one of the finest illustrations of the absurd lengths to which that theory must drive one."

If the tribulation is yet future, that promise to the Philadelphia Church cannot possibly be fulfilled to the Philadelphians who are already dead. Therefore it cannot possibly refer to the rapture of the Church before the tribulation, since both are said to be future.

Why cannot the rapture precede the tribulation? "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." I said to the wife of my ministerial friend to whom I have referred in our discussion, "What do you make of that? There are no elect; they are all gone; the church is gone before the great tribulation begins." "Oh, do you not know that the 'elect' there means the Jews?" I replied, "I was waiting to hear you say that. It is your turn, now give me your authority." "Ah, but *it does!*" "I know, but that does not carry weight with me. I want your authority." "It is in Matthew's Gospel, and Matthew's Gospel was written for the Jews." "Yes, you say so. So do many others. But what is your authority?" "But *it is so!*" I replied and still reply, "You cannot find it in the Scripture, for the simple and sufficient reason that it is not there." "But there is the fig tree—'When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.' The fig tree means the Jews, and the budding of the fig tree is the Jew returning to Palestine—and they are going back now." I answered, "You say the fig tree means the Jews; but on what Scriptural authority?" "But *it does!*" "The Bible does not say so: 'Behold the fig tree, and ALL THE TREES; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.' So saith the Scripture, but who has

authority to say that the return of a few hundred thousand Jews to Palestine is the budding of the fig tree?"

There was a little boy who was brought up in a home where he had heard his father and mother discuss this question, and affirm that the Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews. He knew it; he had heard it again, and again, and again. One day this little fellow, the scion of a pious family, got into a fight—as little boys may do. It was a real fight, and he gave one of the neighbour boys a real trouncing. When he came in, victorious but not without some scars of the battle, his mother said, "What have you been doing?" "I have been fighting." "With whom have you been fighting?" He told her. "What were you fighting for?" "He started it; he hit me first." "But do you not know that the Bible says you should turn the other cheek?" "You cannot put that over me; that is in Matthew, and that is for the Jews."

Do you not see how such cutting and carving of the Word of God must destroy the authority of Scripture to those who so believe—even with a little child? We are told that Matthew's Gospel is not for us, it is not for the church. The Sermon on the Mount was not for the people to whom the Lord Jesus delivered that address. It is not for anyone but the citizens of the kingdom that is to be established some time by and by. If you can swallow that, you might well compete with the whale that swallowed Jonah. I cannot. That teaching is not in the Book—in Matthew or anywhere else.

If the "elect" are in the world during the great tribulation, who are they? There are some who are called "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We are all "elect" if we are believers. And who dares to say that the "elect" in Matthew's Gospel are the Jews, unless the Bible itself so affirms? Unless you can establish the Jewish character of Matthew's Gospel, and strip it of all authority for Gentiles, your whole pre-tribulation theory comes tumbling down in a crash, on the strength of that one verse. It annihilates the whole theory. The "elect" will still be here during the great tribulation. For their sakes, in pity for them, God will shorten it.

The coming of our Lord is to be preceded by a great apostasy. Yes, but what is that? Some say it is present-day Modernism. I grant you that the modern church, of all denominations, is largely an apostate church. I do not hesitate to say so. There has been a falling away from the faith—and that is bad enough. But is that the apostasy spoken of here? I wish some of my brethren would be a little more diligent in the reading of history than they are.

Think of the apostasy issuing in the Roman Catholic Church from the time of Constantine down. Think of a Church with more than three hundred million followers, with a man at their head who arrogates to himself the attributes of God, and whose followers call him, "Our Lord God the Pope"! There was a time when in all Europe there was scarcely a ray of light. Bad as we are to-day, I do not think we are as bad as Europe was in that day. You must go farther back than these last twenty-five or fifty years since Modernism put the church on the toboggan slide, to find the beginning of the great apostasy. Present-day Modernism is doubtless a part of it, but the falling away is surely centuries old. The

Church of Rome is not only a harlot, but the mother of harlots. Most of the heresies that have cursed the church, have emanated from Rome.

In the chapter Mr. Brown read to you, we are told that that day of the Lord will not come "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." In other words, the revelation of Antichrist himself will precede the revelation of Christ. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said, "Do not be deceived by what others say." I think he meant that. Some have thought that a forged letter had been sent in his name. That may have been; or he may mean, "I do not want you to misunderstand my first letter." Many of us have had to write a second letter to correct a wrong impression created by the first one. Be that as it may, until Antichrist is revealed, Christ will not come.

Will He come at any moment? I do not think so. Someone says, "But the early church expected him at any moment." No; they did not. Peter did not: he knew he was going to die. Paul did not: he knew he was going to die. I do not think it can be said that the apostolic church believed in the imminence of the Lord's return. I do not. I believe in the certainty of it. I am sure He is coming. His coming will be personal, audible, visible. He will surely come. But I think that if you follow the simple statement of Scripture that certain things must first take place, and that until they have taken place, Christ will not come, you will save yourselves many difficulties.

Someone sent me a letter that had been written by a man in England, addressed to a certain man who is a noted "Bible teacher". This brother writes two long pages—read the letter in the current issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS which you may get at the door. The writer complimented the "Bible teacher" on some of his books, and urged him to write another, for said he, "The time has come when people should be aroused to look for the Lord's return, to expect it." The letter was dated in April of nineteen hundred and thirty-eight. He said he had been a student of chronological prophecy for fifty years, and was sure the church would be raptured in nineteen hundred and thirty-eight or nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, but he was inclined to think in the earlier year. The Antichrist, after the church was gone, was to be revealed. That was to take place between nineteen thirty-nine and nineteen forty-six, and he would reign rather quietly until nineteen hundred and forty-three. Then the Great Tribulation would break out. Well, my calendar tells me it is nineteen hundred and forty—and if the church has been raptured, I have not heard of it. I hope to go when that day comes, but I have not heard of anyone's being "missing".

What folly! Is there anything that has discredited the precious doctrine of the second coming of our Lord as have these baseless speculations—until reasonable men have turned against it. When the subject is mentioned, they say, "Oh, we are weary of speculation about Antichrist and Armageddon."

I knew a certain man who had written a book. It was on the press, a wonderful book! One day he picked up his newspaper—and he had to go to the telephone and shout, "Stop the press." He had to go down and take one chapter out!

You have not to amend the Bible like that. Let us believe in the Lord's return with all our hearts. I believe the doctrine, the truth of the second coming of Christ is

as much a part of the revelation of God as that of the first coming. It is the complement of the first. He must come again. But let us not occupy our minds with these useless speculations, or allow our imaginations to substitute our own thinking for that which the Word of God plainly teaches.

Only this word. You ask, "Does it matter?" I think it matters. While I glory in Dr. Scofield's loyalty to evangelical principles, I doubt whether any greater harm has been done to the Christian Church in many centuries than has been done by the teaching of the notes of this book respecting the coming of the Lord. It is shot full of error. The church is to be caught away; the Spirit of God is to be withdrawn—so they interpret, "He that now hindereth will hinder until he be taken out of the way"—and after that, with no church, and no Holy Spirit with His peculiar and special function to convince of sin—after that, the greatest revival the world has ever known will take place! Brethren, I believe that that is a dangerous heresy. I say "heresy"—for that it surely is. People are led to assume we shall have a revival after the Lord's coming. We shall be looking down on it from heaven. The Jews, or at least a "remnant" will be preaching the gospel, and thousands of people will be saved—without the Holy Spirit! Without the testimony of the church!

Those who teach that Matthew is for the Jews, tell us that the Great Commission was not intended for the church. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." That was not given to the Christian church. That and all that is in Matthew was intended for the Jew, after the church has been raptured! I call such teaching by the ugly name of *heresy*. It is a most dangerous doctrine. It disposes people to sit down with their arms folded, and wait for the coming of the Lord. "We cannot do much anyway. Everything is going to the devil, and we may as well sit and wait. After a while, we shall be caught away and the Jews will succeed where we have failed." I cannot find any such teaching in the Bible.

III.

A FINAL WORD. In Peter's Second Epistle he warns the believers, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation . . . but beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance . . . wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."

Did you hear that? Peter says, "You wonder why He does not come? It is because He is reluctant to terminate the period of grace.—He delays the judgment. He waits, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." When you get tired of waiting, remember there are a great many people not saved, and "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also ac-

ording to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Peter plainly teaches that the period of grace, the dispensation of grace, will end with the coming of Jesus Christ. There will not be millions saved after the Lord comes. I can find no such teaching in the New Testament. Indeed, He will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God"—and what else?—"and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why will He come? To take vengeance "on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"—not to give them another chance to repent and believe it. My brethren, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

I do not know when the Lord will come, but I do know—I am as sure of it, for myself, as of my own existence—that when at last Jesus Christ comes down the skies, when that lightning flash shall sweep across the heavens, and the world shall be startled with the shout, and with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, when that takes place, the doom of every unrepentant soul will be for ever settled; the day of grace will be over; the day of judgment will be ushered in.

Believing all these things, what manner of men ought we to be? What manner of men ought we to be? How earnestly ought we to be beseeching others to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, lest the Master of the house should rise and shut to the door, and men should stand without, knocking at the door which can never be opened! May the Lord make us all "wise unto salvation" for His name's sake; Amen.

The Meaning of the *Parousia*

By Rev. W. Gordon Brown, M.A., Toronto Baptist Seminary

The following article has been prepared at the Editor's request by Mr. Brown, one of our Professors of Greek in Toronto Baptist Seminary. We have asked for this article to rid the minds of some of unnecessary confusion in respect to a subject in which some controversialists have invoked "the original Greek" to support a position which is untenable in any language.—Ed. G.W.

The word *parousia* occurs in the Greek of the New Testament twenty-four times in all. Of these the Authorized Version (1611 A.D.) translates two by "presence": 2 Corinthians 10:10, "his bodily presence is weak", and Philippians 2:12, "not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence". The Revised Version (English and American, 1881 A.D.) also translates "presence" in Philippians 1:26, "my presence with you again". Elsewhere the two versions agree on the translation "coming", but the Revision adds in the margin every time "Greek, presence".

"Presence" and "Coming"

For the history of the word, one may say that in the classical Greek the usual sense was "a being there, presence", whether of persons or things; it was, however, also used in the sense of "arrival", e.g., a "coming" to a place.

In the New Testament, as we have already seen, *parousia* two or three times means "presence" in the sense of

"being there". The other instances of the word mean "the presence of one coming, hence the coming, arrival, advent" (J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). In one double instance we have the "arrival" of a man, 2 Corinthians 7:6, 7, "the coming of Titus . . . his coming"; compare Philippians 1:26, of a return visit of the apostle Paul. The other eighteen instances, with the exception of the one concerning the mocking "coming" of the man of sin, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, all refer to the "return" of our Lord (but once of the "coming" of the day of God, 2 Peter 3:12). So in the Gospels the word occurs only in Matthew, and there only in the part of the discourse on last things recorded in chapter twenty-four, where we have it in verses 3, 27, 37, 39. In Paul's writings we have *parousia* in 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8. (It occurs thus most often in these two epistles that have to do with the second coming.) In the General Epistles we have examples in James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28 (where "in his (Christ's) *parousia*" is parallel to "he be manifested", from *phaneroo*, compare *epiphaneia* below).

It is interesting to note that by such a post-apostolic Church Father as Justin the Philosopher and Martyr (died about 165 A.D.) *parousia* is used of both advents, called "the first *parousia*" and "the second *parousia*" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, chapters 52, 151).

But why did the New Testament writers pick such a term as *parousia* if they meant the "advent" of Christ? There were other words to mean "coming", "arrival". There was *eleusis* (formed from the future stem of the verb *erchomai*, the common word to "come" or "go"); it may not have been a very common term, but in Stephen's speech it is used of the first coming of Christ, "They killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One" (Acts 7:52). Then there was the common enough *aphixis* "arrival", but in the New Testament it occurs only in its secondary sense of "departure" (Acts 20:29). ("Coming" in the Authorized Version of Matthew 24:48; 25:27; Luke 12:45; 18:5; 19:23; Romans 15:22 is in the Greek infinitive or participle of the common verb to "come", *erchomai*.) In Acts 13:24 *eisodos* "way in, entrance", the opposite of *exodos* "way out", our "exodus" is used of the first coming of Christ, but it is never employed of the second (compare, however, 2 Peter 1:11).

But why did the Spirit of God lead the author of the Gospel which gives our Lord's eschatological discourse most fully, the Apostle Paul, James the Lord's brother, Peter the "rock" and John the beloved, to use *parousia*? One name of our Lord is Emmanuel, "With us is God". In Him God was present with men. When He ascended, His Spirit He sent, and that Spirit is present in every believing heart and so in the whole Church of Christ on earth. But the Bride cries: "Bring near Thy presence, 'come, Lord Jesus'." She asks for the *parousia*.

"Royal Visit"

But is that suggestion really the answer to our difficulty? Why did the New Testament use *parousia* to describe the "advent" of the returning Christ? Here the older scholars were puzzled. Modern excavation, especially in Egypt, has unearthed great numbers of bills, receipts, records, invitations, letters, etc., written in the common Greek of everyday life; and these papyri have

thrown a flood of light upon the meaning of many words in the New Testament. Inscriptions from Asia Minor and elsewhere have been collected, and from these, too, we learn how people in New Testament times expressed themselves. This new knowledge offers us the reason why *parousia* was the word.

When a king or emperor was to visit a city, elaborate preparations would be made, just as we Canadians delighted to prepare for the triumphal procession across Canada, of our gracious King and Queen last year. Gifts would be collected, crowns made, and all for the *parousia*, as they called it, of royalty. The Latins called it *adventus*, our "advent". Sometimes the Greek-speaking peoples called the "visit" *epiphaneia* "manifestation", "appearing", our "epiphany"—the epiphany of the king. This was natural. The emperor was thought to be a god, and to him temples were built for worship. When the emperor came, their imperial "god and saviour" was manifest.

The Christians knew well the terminology of emperor worship, in protest against which they were soon to suffer terribly. Said they in effect: "We have a God, and our God will come Himself and manifest His glory. We look for His *parousia* and the *epiphaneia* of the Saviour. We would prepare for Him. We have been saved by His first *parousia*, we await His second *parousia*, the royal, triumphant, glorious arrival of Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords."

Striking also is the way in which *apocalypsis* "unveiling, revelation", our "apocalypse", parallels *parousia*, and so each interprets the other. In 1 Thessalonians 2:19 believers are to be Paul's hope, joy, crown of rejoicing "in his (Christ's) *parousia*". (Recall the preparation of a crown for a *parousia* of an emperor!) In 3:13 he prays for them to be "established . . . in the *parousia* of our Lord Jesus"; and in 5:23 he asks that the whole man may "be preserved blameless in the *parousia*". Now in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 that same Paul looks for "rest", "release" for troubled saints "in the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus from heaven". And similar expectation is that of Peter (1 Peter 1:7) for the "proof", "genuine element" "sterling temper" of faith to be "found to praise and glory and honour in the apocalypse of Jesus Christ." So must we "hope for the grace being brought to" us "in the apocalypse of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13; compare 4:13). According to Paul again, believers "earnest expect the apocalypse" (1 Corinthians 1:7 A.V., here "coming"). James tells us that we must "have long patience till the *parousia*" (5:7). Thus we see that *parousia*, epiphany and apocalypse are three kindred terms to describe one great future event.

Cremer's summing up regarding the *parousia* is good:

"The *parousia* of Christ denotes His coming from heaven, which will be an advent and revelation of His glory, for the salvation of His church, for vengeance on its enemies, for the overthrow of the opposition raised against Himself,—of antichristianism,—and finally, to realize the plan of salvation." (*Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, English Translation 1878, p. 234.)

If this older scholar were living to-day, he would have to add from the new knowledge that the *parousia* of Christ denotes His royal coming. For the arrival of the King, for His divine manifestation, for His glorious revelation, Bible Christians hope and wait and pray.

Union and Unity

There are a great many people who seem to be obsessed with the principle of the proverb that in union is strength. But not all proverbs are true—and that is one of the proverbial sayings that need examination. There is plenty of union in the commercial world, when a great many small concerns are forced by their larger competitors to the formation of a corporation. Such a union probably adds to the financial strength of the concern, but usually such a union is effected at the cost of moral principle. Very frequently the product of the larger company is inferior to that of any of the smaller ones, and the price invariably greater.

The same principle has been applied to religious organizations. There are people in England, for instance, who think the various non-Episcopal denominations might well surrender the principles which are distinctive to each, and which differentiate them from each other, in order to make a composite whole, some kind of united free church so-called. It is doubtful if in any sense it would be really "united", and almost certainly it would be anything but free. And further, it would forfeit all right to be called a church in the New Testament significance of the term.

We have no desire to be censorious, but we remember distinctly when the Methodist Church in Canada was a tremendous moral force. It must be admitted that before Union it had become very largely a social organization, and though we deplored its declining religious zeal, we gladly recognized its zeal for righteousness. At that time it was a potent factor in all moral reform. We venture to say that the entire United Church of Canada to-day exerts much less influence in that direction than would have been exerted by a local group of Methodist churches before Union. Of course, in fairness, some allowance must be made for the difference of the times, but even with that in view, it does seem to us that the bodies constituting the United Church have gained nothing in moral and spiritual force by union.

Unity is something vastly different from union. That is a thing of the spirit which is often quite independent of form. It is quite possible for people of different religious affiliations to realize a very pronounced unity of the faith, and to rejoice in a unity of the spirit. Where this is true, there should be no obstacle to the cooperation of people who, on minor matters, may differ in their opinions. Indeed, there must be a real unity among all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth.

Having thus written, we would not be understood to disparage union where there can be union and unity at the same time. We think, for example, that Baptists who are Baptists indeed, who believe in the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture, and who worship Jesus Christ as God the Son, Who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ought not only to rejoice in the unity of the spirit, and of their common faith, but being thus joined in heart, might well seek a union of hands for united cooperation in the work of the Lord. Mere differences of opinion and of judgment in respect to administrative matters ought never to separate brethren who are one in the faith.

By all means, let us have union where we can; have unity too; but it must ever be borne in mind in all such matters that believers should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; that righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness; nor light, communion with darkness; nor Christ any concord with belief; nor he that believeth, any part with an infidel. Forevermore it must be recognized that the temple of God can have no agreement with idols; and that the presence and power of God can be experienced only as His people are separated from that which is contrary to the Word and will of God.

Vote, "Yes"

We are sorry to have to take even a little time and space in discussing the plebiscite to be taken April 27th. We want it distinctly understood that in our view the whole business is a wicked waste of time and energy and money on the part of the Government. The Government flouts Parliament, treats the public with contempt, and does as it likes in its half-hearted war effort without saying, "By your leave." And yet it proposes to waste a million and a half of money in taking a plebiscite alleged to set Premier King free from a non-conscription pre-election promise which ought never to have been made.

Everyone knows that outside of Quebec, the majority of the people favour conscription. It is our belief that Mr. King has already been assured of a solid negative Roman Catholic vote, not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada—which makes it all the more necessary that every loyal British Canadian in the Dominion should vote, Yes, on April 27th. Quebec will certainly vote, No, almost unanimously—at least the Roman Catholic element in Quebec will. We believe that every voter who votes, No, or who abstains from voting, will be virtually voting for the Roman Catholic Church.

If a negative majority vote should be registered, Premier King would be able thereafter to say that the country as a whole is opposed to conscription, and our hands would be tied: we could say nothing. If we cut the gossamer cords by which the dear Premier professes he is bound, and if thereafter he fails to enact conscription, those of us who have voted, Yes, will at least be free to bring further pressure to bear upon the Government. Therefore we repeat, we are going to vote, Yes—not to set Premier King free, he is free already—but merely to maintain our own freedom of action. Whatever else you do on April 27th, be sure to vote, and be sure to vote, Yes.

This Week's Sermon

We republish an address this week which was published first in THE GOSPEL WITNESS January 25th, 1940, and later in pamphlet form. We have two reasons for publishing it this week. It is somewhat akin in argument to the sermon of last Sunday evening, which it displaces; and the edition of the booklet, which was a large one, is completely exhausted, and we are still receiving many applications for copies. We therefore reproduce the address in this issue. Copies may be obtained at 5c single copy, six for 25c, and at the rate of 3c per copy for ten or more to one address.

Colonel Munro's Testimony

The testimony of Colonel Munro which we printed in last week's WITNESS has been printed in pamphlet form, of a size that can be slipped into a Number Eight envelope. An initial edition of ten thousand has been printed, an edition which cost \$110.00 without the tax. Thus the booklet will cost us 1¼c per copy. We are anxious to have this booklet distributed very freely, and we ask our friends, not only to buy a supply for distribution, at the rate we have mentioned—four for 5c or eighty for \$1.00—and please remember that postage costs extra—but to contribute liberally to a fund that will enable us to circulate these copies freely among the troops; and also to publish further editions if necessary.

Meeting of the Union Executive

The Executive Board of the Union met March 17th. It was a great meeting, not only because of the business done, but because of the happy fellowship experienced. All reports received were not only encouraging, but inspiring. The Union is happily without a cent of debt in any of its funds. The contributions from the churches for the period under review were most gratifying, and the reports from the Home Mission fields, one might safely say, were thrilling.

Two churches, Fort William and Kapuskasing, declared for self-support. It seems but yesterday when we first thought of attempting to hold services in Kapuskasing. Two of the members of the Board promised \$50.00 each toward the venture. Now we have a new church, with a building of its own, a parsonage connected with it, and a group of earnest believers who are actually undertaking the maintenance of the work without outside help. This is one of the miracles.

Kapuskasing

Work in Kapuskasing was begun June 17th, 1936. To begin, and establish, a church, with a building of its own, and to come to self-support in the short space of six years, is marvellous in our eyes. We congratulate Pastor and Mrs. Vincent Lehman on their splendid leadership of the work, and the church on its fine following, and the happy result of their united ministry.

Fort William

Fort William is a church that has not had easy sailing, but under the wise and faithful leadership of Rev. Walter Tompkins, it has come to its present happy condition. Mr. Tompkins is doing magnificently in Fort William, as we are certain he will always do wherever he is.

Two other churches, Sudbury and Verdun, asked to have their grants reduced. The Board agreed to the reductions on condition the reductions were not made at the Pastors' expense. We have little doubt the churches propose to make up the difference.

Sudbury

Sudbury is another of our miracle churches. Rev. John Boyd went into Sudbury without the promise of a grant from the Board or from anyone—no, not without the promise of anyone: he had the promise of God. We believe Rev. W. S. Whitcombe handed him, as a personal contribution, a ten-dollar bill—and that was all he had. Mr. Boyd has built literally from the ground up—and

what a work he has accomplished. He has preaching appointments all about the place galore. How he does it, we do not know.

But not only so. Sudbury contributes largely to the funds of the Union. It has long been our contention that if we were to have a large and growing foreign mission work, we must give full attention to the requirements of our home mission funds; for it is only as we establish new churches, we are able to grow. The work in Sudbury was begun by Mr. Boyd, as we have said, from nothing, in May, 1937; and now the Sudbury church contributes to the funds of the Union, on an average, \$30.00 a month more than the amount of the Union grant. Surely this proves the value of investing money in home mission causes. We heartily congratulate Mr. Boyd and his people on their great success.

Verdun

The other church which asked to have its grant reduced was Verdun, Quebec. Verdun, as is generally known, is really a part of Montreal. Work in Quebec Province is extremely difficult. It is like carrying on work underground, where the sunlight never falls. The darkness—nay, the blackness—of the plague of Romanism, everywhere rampant, is a tremendous handicap. We believe the preaching of the gospel in utterly and avowedly pagan countries is far easier. Romanism is paganism at its worst because it calls itself Christian.

Rev. Thomas Carson is doing a fine piece of work in Verdun. Both he and his wife are graduates of Toronto Baptist Seminary, and together they make a fine team. In estimating the quality of any piece of work, one must take circumstances into account, and every Christian worker knows that some places are more difficult than others. For the Verdun church, under Mr. Carson's leadership, to be able to ask for a reduction of its grant, is altogether an extraordinary accomplishment.

Val d'Or

Another piece of good news came to the Board from Val d'Or. This work was started in May, 1937; and for a long time there seemed to be no prospect. People who are not informed of the situation can have little idea of the difficulties encountered in taking the gospel to such places as the mining towns of Val d'Or and Bourlamaque. The Quebec Government has a colonization scheme, and when these new territories are opened up, they make a contribution of \$4,000.00 out of public funds for the building of a Roman Catholic church. If a proper water system is installed in the presbytery—by which is meant the priest's house—the Government makes an extra grant of \$200.00. And wherever there is the slightest prospect of a new town springing up, the Quebec Hierarchy has only to apply to the Quebec Government for a grant, and a Roman Catholic church is built forthwith. In fact, the church is built before the town is built—before anything else is built.

The Protestant Handicap

Protestants must go in if and when they can. They must take their chances of being able to buy a lot, or of getting any kind of building in which to hold a meeting. But whatever they do, they must pay for it out of the voluntary contributions made to the mission funds of the particular church. Our readers will readily see how difficult it is for any denomination to compete with the Roman Catholic church under such circumstances. The money contributed by the Quebec Government is

contributed out of public funds, out of taxes paid by Romanists and Protestants alike. And all this in a British country, whose King is a Protestant; and in a country that is supposed to be free.

Well, into such a situation our missionaries went, and toiled against stupendous odds. Then we sent Rev. Wilfred Wellington and his wife. They wrought faithfully for some time, but at length, after due consideration, the Union Board felt it had gone as far as it could in Val d'Or, and decided to close the work. The Executive of the Union is made up of fallible men. The Board can do no more than use its best judgment, and it used its best judgment on this occasion. But Mr. Wellington believed he could see what the Board could not see, and resolved, Board or no Board, grant or no grant, he was staying in Val d'Or. He was helped by members of his family, and he stuck to it.

Mr. Wellington has managed to obtain some kind of building. He is speaking regularly over the radio. He has given himself increasingly to the mastery of the French language, and is now preaching over the radio to the French-Canadians in the French tongue. People are asking for the Word of God; and altogether the prospect of accomplishing a real work in Val d'Or is bright. Mr. and Mrs. Wellington are people of real faith. They have learned somehow how little will do to live on, and how much faithful people can do on very little. We salute them both as true heroes of the faith.

There was no request from Val d'Or for a grant, but the Board very cheerfully made a grant without being asked to do so. When the Board decided to close the work in Val d'Or it had nothing to guide it but bare facts. Mr. Wellington, who was on the spot, had that "spirit of wisdom and revelation" which sees beyond the immediate facts.

We write this as a member of the Board, without apology. We did the best we could at the time, but on the other hand, we cheerfully make this acknowledgment that the spiritual discernment of the man on the spot made his judgment better than ours. Our readers will understand why members of the Board, on adjournment, with such facts as the foregoing before him, felt that the hand of God was on us indeed.

During the first part of the Board meeting, in the absence of the President, the Chair was taken by Rev. H. C. Slade; and later, by the Vice-President, Rev. John Byers.

Congratulations

A very happy event was celebrated in Jarvis Street Church Saturday afternoon, March 21st, when Rev. W. S. Whitcombe, M.A., well known to all our readers, was united in marriage with Miss Leila M. Boyd, of Timmins. Miss Boyd is a graduate of Toronto Baptist Seminary, and though French is not her native tongue, she became the first French-speaking Protestant public school teacher in the Province of Quebec. She learned French in the Seminary. After two or three years of teaching school, Miss Boyd served for two years as deaconess in First Baptist Church, Timmins, Ontario, of which Rev. H. C. Slade is the Pastor.

The groom was supported by his brother, Rev. A. C. Whitcombe, B.A., Brantford; and the bride by her sister, Miss Isabel Boyd of Lachute. Two nieces of the groom, daughters of Rev. A. C. Whitcombe, Helen and

Mary, were flower-girls. The ceremony was performed by the Editor of this paper, assisted by Rev. H. C. Slade and Rev. John Boyd, Pastor and brother respectively of the bride.

The weather was about as inclement as it could be. According to the common phrase, "it poured torrents" all the afternoon. Notwithstanding, the church was practically filled on the ground floor, with many in the gallery, evidencing the great interest in the occasion, and the popularity of the parties concerned. After a reception at Haddon Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Whitcombe left for "somewhere in Quebec."

We should mention also that on Friday, March 13th, there was another kind of shower than that which drenched the earth last Saturday, when about three hundred gathered to express their interest in and affection for the prospective bride and groom. It would be beyond our ability to attempt to describe the dry but substantial shower which fell on that occasion. We are sure that all GOSPEL WITNESS readers who have profited by the writings of Mr. Whitcombe will allow us to extend hearty congratulations to Rev. W. S. and Mrs. Whitcombe on behalf of the whole GOSPEL WITNESS family.

The Editor at Victoria Avenue Church, Hamilton

On Wednesday evening, March 18th, it was the Editor's privilege to preach in Victoria Avenue Gospel Church, Hamilton, of which Rev. John Byers, formerly of Orillia, became Pastor at the beginning of January. The congregation crowded the building in every part, including the gallery, and some extra chairs were brought in. It was a very healthy-looking week-evening congregation, such as could be assembled in few places. The church is quite commodious, but as is our practice, we refrain from estimating numbers.

We had the privilege of meeting a number of men who were representative of the congregation, and were greatly impressed by the apparent strength of the whole organization.

The Pastor, Mr. Byers, had a splendid record in Orillia, where he ministered for fourteen years, building the church from nothing, and leaving it with a fine building all paid for. On the occasion of his leaving Orillia several public presentations were made to Pastor and Mrs. Byers, and it was evident that Mr. Byers had made for himself a large place in the respect of the people of Orillia. It was our privilege to preach for him on the occasion of the burning of the mortgage a little while before he left. The crowded congregation on that Monday evening, filling all aisles and vestibules, testified to the esteem in which Mr. Byers was held, and the appreciation of his ministry by people of all denomination.

The prospect in Victoria Avenue is very bright. Last Sunday evening Mr. Byers conducted a large baptismal service—we do not know the exact number, but a large number of persons were baptized. Victoria Avenue Church is virtually a Baptist Church in everything but name—and, well, we are hoping! Under Mr. Byers' leadership, great things will be accomplished in Victoria Avenue, and we hope to have much to report later. Meanwhile, THE GOSPEL WITNESS desires for the Pastor and the church the greatest of spiritual blessing.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 6 Second Quarter Lesson 14 April 5, 1942

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

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Lesson Text: John 20.

Golden Text: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore"—Rev. 1:18.

Reading: Matt. 28; Mk. 16; Lk. 24.

I. The Witness of the Leading Circumstances—verses 1 to 10.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women found the stone of the tomb rolled away, for a miracle had taken place (Lk. 24:10; Matt. 28:2-4). The scribes and the Pharisees, who had made the sepulchre as sure as was humanly possible, were powerless to prevent Christ from rising from the dead (Matt. 27:62-66; Acts 2:22-31).

Circumstantial evidence, while sometimes misleading if viewed by itself apart from considerations of character and motive, is exceedingly important in legal trials. This Scripture mentions three witnesses who testified concerning the empty tomb; Mary Magdalene, Peter and John. By the mouth of three witnesses a matter is established (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). Moreover, all three were competent witnesses. Contrary to popular opinion, Mary Magdalene was not a sinful woman, so far as the Scriptures reveal, but she was one whom the Lord had liberated from demon possession, and in loving gratitude she rendered joyful service to Him (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 8:1-3). Peter and John were the two leading disciples.

How vastly different all subsequent human history would have been had these early visitors to the tomb of Christ found the body within, still wrapped in grave-clothes! What if Christ had not been raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:12-32)! The word of Christ would have been proved to be unreliable (Matt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; Lk. 24:6-8); Christ Himself fallible and untrustworthy (John 8:46), hence human, and not Divine (Rom. 1:4). The evidence of the apostles could no longer be accepted (Lk. 24:48; Acts 2:32; 10:38-41). Sin could never have been mastered (Rom. 6:9, 14); death would have remained supreme (1 Cor. 15:55-57; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 1:18), and Satan would have been the victor, rather than the vanquished (John 12:31; 14:30; Col. 2:15). There would have been no salvation from sin, no ground for our faith that God had accepted the substitutionary work of Christ on our behalf (Rom. 4:23-25; 5:18; 8:34); no hope for the resurrection of the bodies of believers (Rom. 6:8; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 52, 53; 1 Pet. 1:3); no incentive and no power to live for Christ a life of victory and fruitfulness (Rom. 6:4-12; Eph. 1:19, 20; Phil. 3:8-11; Col. 2:12; 3:1). In a word, there would have been no Christianity, for Christianity is Christ. It is based upon the truth concerning His Person and work, upon Christ the dying, rising, living and coming One. "But now is Christ risen from the dead." Hallelujah!

It was not thieves who had robbed the grave of its prey (Matt. 28:11-15), for marauders would have been in too great hurry and danger to remove the grave-clothes or leave them in neat array. Besides, who would have stolen the body of Christ? Not His friends, for the guards placed at the entrance to prevent such action would have hindered them. Moreover, the followers of Christ were too discouraged, too disconsolate, too heart-broken with grief and disappointment to have engaged in such a dangerous and hopeless plot (Lk. 24:18-25). The enemies of Christ would not have removed the body, for they exerted every effort lest that should happen. The Scriptural explanation of the empty grave is the only logical one, and of course, is the correct one.

It would seem that the arrangement of the grave-clothes was such as to convince Peter and John that Christ had risen from the dead. The Word implies that their assurance was based on something other than the mere prophecy of Christ Himself (verse 9). Possibly the bands still retained the contour of the precious body around which they had been wrapped, and that as Christ was raised from the dead to new life

by the glory of the Father He stepped from the confining grave-clothes, leaving them just as they were. We know that the resurrection body of Christ was controlled by His Spirit (verses 19, 26).

II. The Witness of the Living Christ—verses 11 to 18.

When Mary Magdalene returned to the sepulchre it was no longer empty, for two angels in glorious apparel filled the gloomy chamber with Divine radiance. The angels delight to minister to Christ and His loved ones at all times (Matt. 28:2-5; Mk. 16:5; Lk. 24:4; Heb. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:12).

In Mary's first message to the disciples she said, "We know not where they have laid him" (verse 2). Her sorrow had now become more acute and more personal, "I know not where they have laid him" (verse 13). Exhort the scholars to change "we", "us" and "our" to "I", "me" and "my" in the exhortations of Scripture, and apply the Word individually to their hearts (Isa. 53:3-6; 1 John 4:16).

Our Saviour tenderly invited Mary's confidence by His questions. He had the right to ask her why she wept, for He alone could cure her distress. The risen Christ can bring us comfort for every sorrow, for He carried our griefs and bore our pains (Isa. 53:4; Matt. 8:17). He has now vanquished sin, the primary cause of all human suffering, and He has won the authority to wipe away every tear (1 Pet. 2:24; Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

Mary recognized the voice of her Beloved (Song of Sol. 2:8; 5:2; John 10:3-15, 27). He was her Master and her Lord. By His words "Do not cling to me" He was perhaps counselling her not to remain longer in the attitude of devotion at that time, but to go and deliver His message to the disciples. She would see Him again; He was not yet ascending. Worship must be accompanied by works.

III. The Witness of the Loving Comrades—verses 19 to 31.

The ten disciples were convinced that the Lord had risen, and that this was He Who had appeared miraculously in their midst. His resurrection body, although a real body of flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39-43), was nevertheless a supernatural body, bound no longer by the restrictions of the flesh to which He had lovingly and willingly subjected Himself that He might become our Redeemer (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9-17). The disciples recognized their Lord with gladness. His presence filled their hearts with wondrous joy (Lk. 24:32).

Christ made peace for us by the blood of His cross, and He has power to give His own peace to those who trust Him (Isa. 9:6; Lk. 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33; Eph. 2:14, 17; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15).

When Christ had bestowed the peace of His Presence and the power of His Spirit upon the disciples, He sent them forth to proclaim the good tidings of the forgiveness of sins, made possible through His redemptive work (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). God alone can forgive sins (Lk. 5:21), but His messengers are to proclaim the terms on which God grants or refuses forgiveness (Matt. 16:19; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

But Thomas would not accept the testimony of the other disciples (John 4:39-42). How patiently and tactfully our Lord dealt with the follower who asked for visible evidence of the reality of His resurrection! Our Lord's words to Thomas, revealing as they do a knowledge of the inmost heart of the disciple, were sufficient to convince him that this was Jesus, crucified and now risen, and that Jesus was God. May all join Thomas as he cries in faith and adoration, "My Lord and my God!"

John regarded the resurrection of Christ as the crowning sign or token of the Deity of Christ (Acts 2:22-36). John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to record a few of the miracles and messages of Christ in order that men might read, believe and have everlasting life (John 21:25; 1 John 5:13). May this Divine purpose be realized in the hearts of all our scholars!

GAMBLING IN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

The following excerpt is reprinted from a paper published in London, Ontario. It tells of a Juvenile Court Judge who rebuked two young lads brought to him on a charge of theft

for playing bingo. What this paper does not tell is more significant. The newspaper does not tell that the place they played bingo was in the Roman Catholic Church. One of our pastors was in court at the time of the trial and heard the boys confess that it was under ecclesiastical auspices that they had gambled with stolen money. But of course that did not get into the press.

The ecclesiastical authorities are too powerful in the editorial rooms of the secular press to allow anything derogatory to their church to find a place in the newspaper. We understand that in the province of Quebec bingo is taboo by the order of the Cardinal-Archbishop, but what is a sin in Quebec is officially sponsored by the Roman church in Ontario.

Here is the excerpt from the paper:

"Boys Too Young for Bingo, Judge Tells Pair in Court"

"Two small boys, charged with stealing \$36.00, cigarettes and candy were yesterday told by Juvenile Court Judge Donald Menzies they were much too small to be playing bingo, after they had admitted spending part of the loot playing bingo."—W.

5 DAYS TO THE YEAR'S END

The financial year of Jarvis Street Church ends March 31st. Some time ago we sent our usual Annual Letter to *Witness* readers, from many of whom we have received replies; but there are still some thousands from whom we have not heard.

The Gospel Witness is a missionary enterprise, carrying no advertisements. It could not maintain itself at its subscription price, and depends for its continuance upon the annual contributions of its friends. If you believe in the mission of the paper, and especially if you have received some blessing through its pages, we suggest you send us a thankoffering before March 31st.

BOOKS BY DR. T. T. SHIELDS

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"Other Little Ships"	1.00
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Sermons on the War preached in Jarvis St. Five cents each single sermon or any 25 for \$1.00 post paid from THE GOSPEL WITNESS, 130 Gerrard St. E., Toronto, 2, Canada.