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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, August 6th, 1950
(Stenographically Reported)

"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"—Esther 4:13, 14.

Prayer Before the Sermon

We come to Thy house, O Lord, this morning that we may give Thee thanks, and worship Thee as we ought to do. We bless Thee that we have ever found that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to call upon His name.

We have much for which to praise Thee. Thou hast been gracious to us all beyond our deserving, and this morning we thank Thee that goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives. We remember that Thou didst bid us dig deep for the planting of the seed, the fruitage of which depends in large measure upon the preparation of the soil into which it falls. Therefore we ask Thee to prepare our hearts that we may receive the truth in the love of it. Let it be mixed with faith in every one of us.

So grant us the ministry of Thy Spirit that we may understand Thy word this morning, and that its principles and precepts, and Thy exceeding great and precious promises may fortify us for the exigencies that await us, and of which we have no certain knowledge. Help us that we may put our hand in Thine, and that we may delight to follow the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth.

Look, in grace, upon this congregation. Put Thine arms about us all, and bring us every one a little closer to Thyself.

Should there be any who has never known Thee, make the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, to shine in all such hearts.

For all congregations similarly assembled in Thy name we lift our hearts in prayer and intercession. Be gracious to all of them. Manifest Thyself unto them as Thou dost not unto the world.

For those who are seeking rest and refreshment we pray that in the midst of their pleasure they may not be forgetful of Thee. Give Thine angels charge concerning them, to keep them in all their ways. Have regard, O Lord, for the little ones. Protect them from all danger, and all harm, and bring them back again to us.

So look upon this weary world in all its sin, and strife, and sorrow, and in Thy sovereign mercy, out of the chaotic

conditions now obtaining, if it please Thee bring peace. When the world was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, Thou didst say, Let there be light, and there was light. Thy word has still its ancient power. Speak the word, O Lord, we beseech Thee, in Thine own way, and through whatsoever channels and instruments Thou shalt choose, and somehow or another, by Thy gracious power, compel Thy will to be done in earth even as it is done in heaven.

Grant us now Thy help, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

I THINK I may safely assume that most of us are familiar with the substance of the story of Queen Esther. She had been brought up from a little child by her uncle, Mordecai. She was called to the court of Ahasuerus. She found favour in his sight, and became his queen, his favourite.

King Ahasuerus had exalted a man called Haman to the first place in the kingdom. Haman was known as "the Jews' enemy". All men in the kingdom bowed to Haman, a man of great authority. But Mordecai, the Jew, "bowed not, nor did him reverence." Because of that Haman was filled with jealous anger, and determined upon Mordecai's destruction. The only way by which he could effect it was to persuade the king to issue a decree for the destruction of all the Jews. We know in our day something of how anti-Semitism can spread like a prairie fire. Haman induced the king to issue a decree that on a certain day all the Jews should be destroyed, because he represented them as people of strange laws, a people who were not in harmony with the kingdom in which they lived.

Then Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes, and went to the king's gate, and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

He sent a message to Esther that she should go in to the king to make intercession for her people,—for as yet Esther had not made known her racial origin: it was not known that she was a Jewess. She replied that she had not been called in to the king's presence for some time, and that he had a law that whoever entered, unbidden, into his presence, should be punished with death, unless it should please him to hold out the golden sceptre.

When Mordecai heard this response from Esther, he uttered the words of the text. He sent her this message: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

You know the sequel. Esther went in to the king, and he extended to her the golden sceptre, and said, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall even be given to thee to the half of the kingdom." She ultimately told him of the plot for the destruction of her people. He asked who it was who had thus planned. She replied that it was "that wicked" Haman, the man whom he had raised to great honour, and supreme authority.

Now Haman had erected a gallows in the courtyard fifty cubits high, on which he intended that Mordecai should be hanged. When the king heard of it, he gave commandment that Haman, and not Mordecai, should be hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king promoted Mordecai to Haman's place, and modified his decree, giving the Jews permission to rise in their own defence which they did, and "enlargement and deliverance" came, and there was a great victory for the people of God.

That briefly is the story of the book of Esther.

The peril of Israel at that time was analogous to the spiritual state of the world, always exposed to the rage, and within reach of the Jews' enemy, who is also our adversary, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

As most of you know the book of Esther is remarkable for one thing: nowhere within its pages does the name of God appear. He is not mentioned anywhere in the book; yet He is there. You cannot read the story without observing the operation of divine providence, and providence is simply God *incognito*, God unidentified, unknown, but always operating.

This is a dark day. There is much to discourage us. I do not suppose any of you enjoy reading the newspapers. It seems almost impossible to look in any direction without seeing some occasion for concern, if not for alarm. In this restless world there is very much that is dark and forbidding. But we must learn to look for the silver threads of a providential plan in it all; and inquire, then, as to our duty in the premises, that we may learn what is our own duty to our own day and generation.

I.

I begin with this observation: THAT THE PROVIDENTIAL ORDER IS ALWAYS SOVEREIGNLY INDEPENDENT OF MAN.

Ahasuerus had given certain orders which promised to be fatal. Mordecai said to Esther, "Whether you do your duty or not, whatever your attitude toward the pres-

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Editor

T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editors

W. S. WHITCOMBE, M.A. (Tor.)

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

S. S. Lesson and Exchanges

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

Address Correspondence:

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada

Telephone RAndolph 7415

Registered Cable Address: Jarwitzem, Canada

ent situation may be, rest assured God will not be defeated. He will have His way and enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews, and if not through your instrumentality then it will arise from another place."

I remind you of that principle, that the providence of God, His providential order, in nature, among the nations, in the events of our time, and in our individual lives, is not dependent for the fulfilment of its purpose upon the caprice of the human will. If we hold our peace, and fail to do our duty, yet God will fulfil His promise, notwithstanding.

No one, I think, will doubt the providential ordering of the events of life. You may look abroad in the world, turn back the pages of history, whether of ancient, or profane, of secular, or of modern history, and you will find that running through it all there is a divine plan. The same is true of every individual life. Dark as some of the days may seem to be, contrary as some of the events of life may seem to be to our best interests, yet it remains true that there is a providence in human life, ordering the affairs of men:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them as we will."

"The threads our hands in blindness spin,
No self-determined plan weaves in:
The shuttle of the unseen powers
Works out a pattern not as ours."

There is a plan. It is true that all things work together for good to those who love God; and if that be true, then of the "all things" which constitute the elements of human life, in the life of the individual, of the nation, and of the world at large, of the "all things" there is not one that is exempt from the direction of the sovereign power of God: hence He is able to make all things work together for good.

I grant you that every often we cannot see it. God is *incognito*. He does not identify Himself. He does not always show His hand; but He is always present, notwithstanding: "I am with you all the days" — that is every day; that is this day, and all the days:

"Thrice blessed is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field, when He
Is most invisible."

In that providential order, "enlargement and deliverance" are always included. The goodness of God never fails. I would remind you that human history began with the evening and moved toward the morning. That was the order of creation: not morning and then evening, but evening and then morning. And the evening and the morning were the first day, and the second day, and the third day, and so on to the end. God is always moving from night to morning. If you do as you do with some books that you read, turn to the last chapter to see how it is going to end, you find there a city where there is no night, and no shadow, but where the Lamb is the light thereof. Goodness and mercy do always follow the people of God, and will to the end of the chapter.

Mordecai was quite confident of that. He could not believe that the wicked Haman could ultimately triumph. It looks as though he could, does it not? About ten years ago it looked as though Hitler were going to have the world at his feet. He strutted around in Paris, and had his photograph taken, and boasted that the next time he had it taken it would be before Buckingham Palace. When Mussolini boasted that he would receive his enemies with ten million bayonets, no doubt he foolishly supposed that that power was his. Where are these vainglorious tyrants now? They have passed away, and the world knows them no more.

Today there is another whose name is Stalin, and I suppose many people are greatly alarmed for what may come to pass. But the Haman principle always comes to nought in the end. Righteousness cannot be wholly destroyed. The principle and spirit of it, for which Haman and all the evil doers stand, is inherently mortal. It is bound to die. When the day is darkest, we must rest in the assurance that enlargement and deliverance will surely come.

I do not speak of optimism. The foolish man says, "I am an optimist." What is that? I think that word "optimism" is due for a long vacation, and if I had my way I would see that it was retired without pension. What does it mean? Very often it means ostrichism — closing one's eyes to facts; saying "all will be well in the end", with a Christian Science smile. The cheerfulness which the word of God commends to us, however, the rejoicing which is divinely commanded is not based upon a blind hope that somehow or another things will be all right.

When we became Christians we were not required — if I may use a colloquialism — to "check" our intelligence, nor to cease to think. There is nothing in the word of God to suggest that it is ever wise to close our eyes to facts, however formidable they may be. Christian faith is always an intelligent exercise of the mind. As I have often said to you, Faith is not reason in its infancy, but reason in its maturity grown to be a man.

Mordecai believed that enlargement and deliverance would come. Of course! Because he believed in God! It is because we believe in God that we cherish an unwavering conviction of the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness everywhere. And such conviction should reside always in the believer, however dark the day.

Have you ever said it? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" You may

feel an unreasoning depression, and disquietude of spirit. What is the cure? "Hope thou in God." What is the conviction? "I shall yet praise him for the health of my countenance."

The operation of this providential order is not conditioned upon human intelligence, or obedience. Esther said to Mordecai, "I cannot go in to the king. There is a law ordering anyone to be put to death who should presume to enter into the royal presence without being called, unless it should please the king to hold out the golden sceptre. But I cannot be sure of that, and should he fail to do so, I should fail to effect any useful purpose, and should sacrifice my life as well." So she was half inclined altogether to hold her peace.

"Very well," said Mordecai, "If you do, God will find some way of doing without you." And God can always do without us: He can do without any of us. He does not need the greatest skill of any statesman, or soldier, to effect His purposes. He is sovereignly independent, and He will get His work done, no matter what comes, whether you have a part in it or not.

We must apply that principle to all that we know of the divine plans and purposes. The scripture cannot be broken. God's gracious purpose cannot fail, though it may seem that it is going to do so. It is not dependent upon anything you say, or do. Deliverance will come, even though we altogether hold our peace.

II.

Now let us look at the other side. WHILE GOD IS INDEPENDENT OF US, WE ARE NEVER INDEPENDENT OF HIM. While His purposes are independent of our co-operation, we are never independent of His sovereign grace. God's purposes cannot fail. That is sure. The critics resort to some foolish assumptions sometimes, and reach some utterly absurd conclusions, as for example, when Jesus said in the presence of the multitude "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Why did He ask that question? Just to prove them, because the scripture says, "He himself knew what He would do." He always knows what He will do. He is never at a loss. He sees into the future, and arranges His plans, and sovereignly resolves upon their execution.

I would remind you that God always has "another place". Mordecai said, "Enlargement and deliverance shall arise from another place." Sometimes we think we are the only "place", the only person; and we are foolish enough to think we are indispensable.

There is a story in British political history, when the Marquis of Salisbury was the Prime Minister of Great Britain. I quote from Lord Randolph Churchill, father of the present great Winston Churchill, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was a very important position, and he was a very important man. He supposed that he was so important that the Prime Minister could not do without him. He went to the Prime Minister to make certain suggestions, and to insist that certain policies should be carried out. He spoke so strongly that at last he said that his continuance in the Cabinet would depend upon the Prime Minister's acquiescence in his proposal. Lord Salisbury said in effect: "You mean that if I do not carry out your plan you will resign?" "Precisely, Mr. Premier," said Lord Randolph Churchill. "Well," said the Prime Minister "with very great reluctance, I shall have to present your resignation to Her Majesty". It was in the days of Queen Victoria.

Lord Randolph Churchill never supposed that could be. He was certain that he was necessary to the Prime Minister, and that the whole Government would fall without him. He looked abroad everywhere, and could not see anybody just then to take his place. So he resigned, and his resignation was presented to the Queen, and accepted.

The next morning Lord Randolph in the newspaper saw that the Honourable George Goschen, later Lord Goschen, had been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. When he saw it, he said, "Great heavens, I forgot all about Goschen!"

Ah, yes; there is always a Lord Goschen somewhere. There is always "another place" where God can find His man. Do not imagine He is dependent upon you. "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place."

God never wants for instruments. You remember the famous saying of Winston Churchill, "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job." But God always has the tools. He has tools ready; in fact, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" He can speak, and it will be done. He can command, and it will stand fast. He is not dependent upon human instrumentality, nor upon what we know of His visible resources.

We do not know whether Russia has the Atom Bomb or not. I don't believe she has. I know it is assumed she has. But I do not believe it. But whether she has or not, we really don't know. We don't know precisely what her resources are, and we greatly fear that our resources are not adequate for every possible emergency. But there is one thing of which we may be sure: God, Himself, has His own provision somewhere. He makes "a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder"; He has only to speak, so we had better be humble before God, and never for a moment be so foolish as to suppose that God cannot do without us.

I like to read the Old Testament, and see what a large place God's chosen men occupied: Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and all the Judges, and Samuel, and Saul, and David, and all the rest. As you read your Bibles, you see one after another of these great men pass from the stage of action. *Somebody is writing this Book Who is the contemporary of all ages.* The story continues without interruption. Joshua takes the place of Moses, and the Judges the place of Joshua, and so on, to the end. So will it always be. Though you don't know the address, there is "another place".

But if we altogether hold our peace, *the wrongs we refuse to combat will finally destroy us.* God will give deliverance to those whom He has appointed, and if we disobey Him, and deliberately go our own way, then "Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed". That is what Mordecai said to Esther. "If you hold your peace, enlargement and deliverance will come, but it will be a sad day for you, Esther. You will be the sufferer." So is it with us if we fail to do our duty. Though God will have His way, we shall pay for our disobedience.

I would observe also, that *there is no privileged position or place, or condition, in which we may escape the operation of this general law.* Esther may have thought, "Well, I am sorry for the rest of my people, but if I hold my peace, I shall be quite secure in the king's house."

Mordecai said, "No, Esther, this law will pass all the guards, it will enter through the locked doors, and thou and thy father's house will be destroyed, even in the king's house, if you hold your peace."

My friends, we cannot escape the operation of the inexorable laws of God. It never pays to disobey, and if we disobey Him, somehow or another, some time or another, we shall pay the price of our disobedience.

A man may think to take the easy path, and escape the immediate consequences of doing his duty. Did I write it, or did I tell you, I do not remember, but somewhere recently I referred to a cartoon in *Punch* during the first great war, when the valiant King Albert of Belgium, so different from his treacherous son, Leopold, elected to take his place with his armies in the field, and left his capital city, and fought with his Allies against the enemy. There was a cartoon in *Punch* in which the Kaiser was represented as something like the Devil himself. Albert was standing before him, and he was pointing to the destroyed dwellings, and the ruined cities; and the Kaiser said, "You see, by your folly you have lost all." Albert proudly replied, "Not my soul, Sire." Leopold tried to save his kingdom, and lost his soul, and, deservedly, his kingdom, too. One cannot hold his peace, and escape the consequences of his dereliction. We must do our duty.

III.

But MEN ARE PRIVILEGED PARTICIPANTS IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE AND IN GRACE. Mordecai said in effect to Esther, "Your birth was not an accident. My bringing you up as Hadassah was not an accident. Your being called into the royal presence to be his queen was not an event unplanned. Esther, who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Who knows but that God in His plans and purposes, designed to use you as an instrument?"

The Bible is full of that. How the Old Testament saints fitted in to the place God had appointed in order that the will of God might be executed!

There is a plan, a purpose in your life. It applies to us all: although we are not very important. But someone may say, "Well, nobody cares whether I am around or not." People have said to me when I said, "I missed you last Sunday"—"Missed me! I did not suppose you knew whether I was there or not." Yes; we shall be missed though our places are filled. And God will carry on without us. He will miss us if we are not there. He has brought us each to the kingdom for a particular purpose.

But how specially does this apply to the kingdom of grace! He has given "to every man his work". I cannot do your work; you cannot do mine.

I think this summer morning of a story I told you one Thursday night, but it is worth repeating:

The one and only meeting of the World's Baptist Alliance I attended, was in Philadelphia in nineteen hundred and eleven, and was held in the great Baptist Temple of Russell Conwell. I was there not long ago, and counted the seats, somewhere between four and five thousand. Dr. Conwell vacated his church to let the Congress meet, and he preached in a smaller church down Broad Street. I went to hear him, I was not much interested in the Congress. I remember his simple sermon. His text was, "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God". He illustrated his principle

with a story. He said, "There are some friends here this morning who will remember a lovely day in Palestine, when we fished together in the clear waters of the Sea of Galilee. We could look down into the water, and see the fish sporting themselves. I cast in my line, and a big fish waddled up, but before he could arrive, a little fish darted in and caught the bait, and when the big fish came there was no dinner for him, so he turned away.

"I took out my hook, and baited it again, and threw it back in. I was determined to catch that big fish. But before the big fish could get the bait, and the hook, the little fish was ahead of him again. This happened several times, until I said to my guide, 'I want to catch that big fish'. He said, 'That is very simple: Catch the little one first'. 'Yes; but how shall I catch the little one?' 'Change your hook, and the little fish won't be able to clean off the bait, and you will catch it.'"

"So," said Dr. Conwell, "I changed my hook, and threw in my line again. The big fish was there, but again the little fish was ahead of him. He took the bait, and I hooked him, and pulled him out, and cried, jubilantly, 'I have him! Now for the big fish'. I changed my hook again, and baited it for the big fish. But before I could throw in my line, my companion cried, 'Hurray!' I looked and said, 'What are you shouting for?' He said, 'I have him'. He had caught my big fish!"

"But," said Dr. Conwell, "he could not have caught the big fish if I had not caught the little one first: 'So then, every one of us must give account of himself to God.'"

We may have to catch a little fish, or a big one, but whichever it may be, each has his place in the divine plan, and each will have his own reward.

"And who knoweth." *We dare not undertake to interpret God's plan.* We know not what God has willed. We know that He has called us to something: We must find out what that something is, and do it. And we shall do well to act in such a way as to discover for ourselves what our job is.

I talked with a friend recently, who told me about his son. He went to high school as a lad. He was going on to University, but went into business, and discovered he had a flair for business. He got into a large business affair. They said to him: "Never mind your Arts course. It is no good to us." It was not very long before he was Assistant Manager of a big store, and on the way to prosperity and prominence. He had found his job. He had found the thing for which he was fitted.

When a young man becomes very earnest in the things of God, people say he ought to go into the ministry. Why? There are other ways of serving God than in the ministry. A man cannot preach unless God sends him, but he may do other things if God has fitted him for them. He must find out what God has planned for him:

"I am not skilled to understand,
What God has willed, what God has planned;
I only know at His right hand
Is One Who is my Saviour".

Last night as I pondered over this text, I wondered how I should make application of this story to any who might hear me this morning.

God has planned your salvation. Perhaps you say, "He will save me anyway. That is His secret, and I am not going to try to solve problems which belong to God. But there drifted into my mind last night something that I

had read and marked when a youth, perhaps fifty years ago. I said to myself, I am afraid I cannot trust my memory for that (although I find I might have done so); so I thought I would find the old book, have it before me, just to tell you how my text applies to you who are not Christians: Here it is:

Spare me, dread angel of reproof,
And let the sunshine weave today
Its gold threads in the warp and woof
Of life so poor and gray.

Spare me awhile; the flesh is weak,
These lingering feet, that fain would stray
Among the flowers, shall some day seek
The strait and narrow way.

Take off thy ever-watchful eye,
The awe of thy rebuking frown;
The dullest slave at times must sigh
To fling his burdens down;

To drop his galley's straining oar,
And press, in summer warmth and calm,
The lap of some enchanted shore
Of blossom and of balm.

Grudge not my life its hours of bloom,
My heart its taste of long desire;
This day is mine: be those to come
As duty shall require.

The deep voice answered to my own,
Smiting my selfish prayers away:
"Tomorrow is with God alone,
And man hath but today.

"Say not, thy fond, vain heart within,
The Father's arm shall still be wide,
When from these pleasant ways of sin
Thou turn'st at eventide.

"Cast thyself down,' the tempter saith,
'And angels shall thy feet upbear.'
He bids thee make a lie of faith,
And blasphemy of prayer.

"Though God be good and free be Heaven,
No force divine can love compel;
And, though the song of sins forgiven
Should sound through lowest hell,

"The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects thy sanctity of will,
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still;

"As one who, turning from the light,
Watches his own grey shadow fall,
Doubting, upon his path of night,
If there be day at all!

"No word of doom may shut thee out,
No wind of wrath may downward whirl,
No swords of fire keep watch about
The open gates of pearl;

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"A tenderer light than moon or sun,
Than song of earth a sweeter hymn,
May shine and sound for ever on,
And thou be deaf and dim.

"For ever round the Mercy-seat
The guiding lights of Love shall burn;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn?

"What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of Heaven's free welcome fail,
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thy own dark jail?

"O doom beyond the saddest guess,
As the long years of God unroll
To make thy fatal wilfulness
The prison of a soul!

"To doubt the love that fain would break
The fetters from thy self-bound limb;
And dream that God can thee forsake
As thou forsakest Him!"

Let us not hold our peace. Let us fulfil our day's task,
and God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall
fear Him.

Let us pray:

O bless our testimony, Lord, this morning. Make us all
alert to Thine occasions passing by; and make us all ready to
do the will of God from the heart, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

And now let us sing to God's praise, Cowper's great
hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

LAST SUNDAY IN JARVIS STREET

THE morning and evening sermons preached by the
Pastor are printed in this issue of THE GOSPEL WIT-
NESS. There were fine congregations at both services,
and especially for a holiday week-end in August. Bap-
tism was administered; and the ordinance of the Lord's
Supper was observed at the close of the evening service.
There was a large attendance.

At the evening service the Pastor was assisted by Rev.
Duncan Macgregor, Pastor of First Baptist Church,
Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

EVENING SERMON

"I SAT DOWN UNDER HIS SHADOW WITH GREAT DELIGHT, AND HIS FRUIT WAS SWEET' TO MY TASTE"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto
Sunday evening, August 6th, 1950

(Stenographically Reported)

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is
my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow
with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."
Song of Solomon 2:3

WITHOUT apology I frankly confess that I accept
the time-honoured interpretation of this marvellous
scripture. "The Song of Songs," the book of the Canticles!
It is an inspired picture of the mutual love of the soul
of the redeemed, and the One Who is the Lover of our
souls. It is, in fact, one of the sweetest and most delight-
ful love-stories that was ever written.

In the first chapter the bridegroom and the bride have
been exchanging their felicitations in eulogistic terms of
endearment. It is the bride, I think, who speaks in the
first verse of the second chapter, saying, "I am the rose
of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Her beloved has
told her something of what she is in his eyes. She does
not reject the exalted expressions of his love.

There is a false modesty of which this bride is not
guilty. She admits that she is as a humble flower in
his eyes, even "the rose of Sharon," just a common flower,
but a flower notwithstanding. Why should we not be-
lieve the love that God has for us? Why should we not
accept what He says about us? We have detractors
enough; and it is well that we should learn to delight in
the loving and lovely expressions of our Beloved. It is
not modesty to refuse to believe it.

There is a significant phrase which occurs repeatedly
in John's gospel; and I dare say many read it, and read
it often without seeing the significance of it. It is com-
mon to speak of John as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."
But who said he was the disciple whom Jesus loved? Not
Peter, nor James, nor any of the apostles! Of course
they believed it to be true, that He loved them. But it
was John who took to himself that title, and again and
again repeats it, as though he would say, "Well, brethren,
you may say what you like about yourselves. As for me,
I revel in the assurance that I am the disciple whom Jesus
loves." And he was. You remember that when at the
Last Supper, our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, that
one of you shall betray me" they all began to ask, Lord
is it I? Matthew tells us that they "began every one of
them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?" But John has
another version. I rather think he had changed his posi-
tion. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of
his disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore
beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of
whom he spake." John got very close to his Master, and
leaned upon His bosom at supper, just as a lover assured
of the bridegroom's love, and while others said, "Lord,
is it I," "he then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him,
Lord, who is it?" Leaning upon His breast at supper,
being assured of His undying love, John seemed to say,

"Lord, I don't know who it is, but one thing I know, it is not I. Who is it?" If only we could believe the love that God has for us, if only we could believe how dear to His heart are those for whom He died, it would transform our lives. I am sure of it.

Said the spouse, "I am the rose of Sharon—just a humble flower; but I know that in Thine eyes a flower notwithstanding; and the lily of the valleys." A lily, too, pure and unsullied: "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I, say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The glory of Solomon was an external thing, in respect to his splendid royal robes. But the beauty of the lily is inherent. It is of its very nature: "Consider the lilies of the field"; "I am the rose of Sharon"—says this bride, whose heart has been completely captured—"and the lily of the valleys, I flourish among Thy refreshing springs."

Then the bridegroom answered, "Well have it so, if you will, but as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. You say, 'Only a lily'. Yes, but in comparison with all others, thou art as a lily among thorns."

Ought we not to revel in the distinguishing grace of God! See how He singles out His beloved! How He makes them His own, so that they no longer have a place among the thorns and thickets! "The rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." It was a lovely, and loving, exchange of endearing terms, was it not?

This is a holy colloquy between the lovers. The divine Bridegroom is addressed by His spouse. She seemed to say, "You say that I am a lily among thorns; very well; but, As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Let us turn over that text for a few minutes, and perhaps God, by His Spirit, may lead us all to a little deeper love for the Lord Jesus, and a greater determination to make full use of our high and holy privileges as the espoused of the Lord.

I.

In the view of this prospective bride HER BELOVED COMPARES WITH NO ONE ELSE. Others are but as the wild trees of the wood, without fruit, growing without planting, and without care in the forests around. "But my beloved is not like that, just one of many: he is the only one. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Is that what the Lord Jesus is to you? Somebody apart? Someone Who has no equal? Someone Who defies comparison with anyone?

I am rather impatient of these supposedly wise men who discourse about "comparative religions," and who even suggest that there is somebody else, or may be someone else, just as good as Jesus. No, no! that won't do. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick may have on the facade of his Riverside Church representations of many religious leaders, including Jesus, giving equality to all, but we cannot tolerate that. We cannot for a moment admit that Jesus has a second. Mr. Whitcombe telephoned me, and said, "I am publishing one of your sermons of long ago, on the text 'Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?'" I said, "It was preached so long ago that I don't remember its argument, but I should think it would deal with the absolute finality of Jesus Christ." No; we are not looking for another: "We know that the

Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we might know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ.

You may, if you like, study a kind of religious botany, and try to discover in the trees of the wood something akin to Him Who is so distinct and separate from all others; but in this place we will have none of that:

"None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good"

There is no one like Jesus. Of that we are perfectly sure.

I wish I had time to spend the evening with you in speaking only of the transcendence of Jesus, His transcendent loveliness, the marks of distinction and difference which make Him to excel all others. Yes, I know He was a Man. I know He was born into this world in Bethlehem of Judaea "in the days of Herod the king." I know that He was nursed by His mother as other babies are nursed. But there never was another babe like this One. There never was another who had a human mother, but no human father: "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Did we not read it this evening: "Grace is poured into thy lips"; "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth."

This Saviour of ours differs from all others as to His origin. They could not understand it when He said, "I came down from above. 'Ye are from beneath; I am from above'." No wonder they did not understand Him whose name is called "Wonderful!" No; He came from another world into this, for our redemption.

And how excellent He was even as a Man. We sang it to-night:

"At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
Oh, in what divers pains they met!
Oh, with what joy they went away!"

He healed them all.

How great was His sympathy, His understanding! He never misunderstood anyone. He knew what was in man, and although He was a Man, and the God-man, yet He touched them with a divine and healing sympathy:

"No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men,
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train"

You are getting older, are you not—even the youngest of you. Some day you will reach the end of the journey. You will pass the crest of the hill, and begin to descend into the valley of the shadows. But not this Man. He has been there, and has emerged; yes; He says: "I am he that liveth, I became dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore." Death has no more dominion over Him. He is the Conqueror of death and the grave. Do you not love Him? Are you not glad that He is interested in you? Are you not glad that He is your Saviour, and the Lover of your souls?

Oh, I could expatiate upon a hundred particulars to show you how different and superior, how superlatively transcendent is He above all the trees of the wood. A man discounts not only his heart, but his head, when he dares to suggest that there could be anyone else like Jesus, as he would should he suggest that there could

be another light equal to the sun. He is the one and only: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood:"

"How beauteous were the marks divine,
That in Thy meekness used to shine:
That lit Thy lonely pathway, trod
In wondrous love, O Son of God!

"Oh who like Thee, so calm, so bright,
So pure, so made to live in light—
Oh, who like Thee did ever go
So patient through this world of woe?

"Oh, who like Thee so humbly bore
The scorn, the scoffs of men before?
So meek, forgiving, Godlike, high,
So glorious in humility?"

It is not certain that the figure here is that of the apple with which we are familiar. Some think it may have been a citron tree. I only know that the word here translated "apple" is used to designate a number of cities which were remarkable for certain characteristics. But it is unimportant what particular kind of fruit it was. This tree offered a cooling shadow from the tropical heat.

Have you ever been in the tropics? Have you ever been under the blazing sun? How welcome a shady spot is, when you can get away from the burning, blazing heat! That is the figure here: "I sat down under his shadow; I found him a shade, and a shelter from the heat, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." What a delightful shadow He casts!

I have a lot of trees in my garden. They are tall oak trees. I don't know how tall they are, perhaps sixty or seventy feet. They rise like pillars in a temple, and their branches meet overhead in a delectable green canopy. A man came in one day to try to sell me some shrubs. Poor foolish man, I suppose he thought he was a salesman! "If I had my way," he said, "I would cut all those trees down." I said, "You have not your way, sir; nor are you going to have it."

I cannot grow many flowers in the shade of those trees; but when I go up from the city, only ten or fifteen minutes' drive from here, I can go out into my garden, and I seem to have got into another world, it is so delightfully cool and shady. I am sorry for those who are out on the burning highway. I sit down. I have some chairs out there, and I sit down under the shadow of my trees, with great delight. Talk about your summer resorts! Give me the wide shade of a generous tree. Let me sit down on a piece of real "sward," as we call it in England; and I can see the twinkling stars at night through the leaves, and a few sunbeams in the daytime; but under this shadow, I find comfort, relaxation, and rest.

That is the figure here. The spouse has come from the hot highways of life, where the sun pours down its merciless rays. Yonder there is a lovely bit of shade, and as she draws near, she finds it is an apple tree, different from all the trees of the wood, and so she sits down under its shadow, with great delight.

Do you know what it is just to do that?

You have heard the story of Carlyle and Tennyson, who were great friends, getting together in the study of one of them, that they might have an evening's converse together. They sat on either side of the fireplace, until the fire burned down, and there was nothing but hot embers left. All the evening long neither of them uttered a word. They only sat in each other's company with

silent understanding,—a bit of heart communion. It was not a case of gabble—gabble—gabble like a parrot. There are some people who are always talking. They cannot be silent. Well, I like to be silent sometimes, although my business is talking, and I have spent my life talking. Yet I do like to be where talking is not expected of me, and where I can sit down quietly, and be at rest.

So after the exchange of those lovely passages, and her Lover had told her what He thought of her, and she told Him what she thought of Him, I think they sat down in silence under His shadow with great delight.

That is real fellowship. Do you know what it is to sit alone with the Lord Jesus like that, not talking but silently musing? There is a verse in the Psalms which says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord." Frankly, I delight to be alone sometimes, to be quiet, to meditate upon the virtues, upon the lovelinesses, upon the grace, upon the majesty, of my divine Lord—only to sit under His shadow, with great delight. It is a delight to be where He is. The true Christian is not happy if he finds himself anywhere where Jesus is not. They want to be together.

I become almost impatient sometimes with those who ask whether there is any harm in this or that. "Why should I not spend a few evenings at the theatre?" "Why should I not find myself in the company of people, not Christians, but who are very nice people?" A woman who is profoundly in love, no matter how much company there is, is not very happy if one particular person is absent, is she? No; but as long as he is there, she is happy. And the reverse is true. He does not want to go where she is not, and where she is not welcome. They must stay together. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight."

I told a story to Mr. Thomas Spurgeon, the son of the great preacher one day, of how on one occasion he asked a friend to go into the woods with him. This friend excused himself. He said he did not feel like it. Spurgeon was insistent. At last the friend said, "I will go on one condition." "What is that?" "On condition that you do not talk 'good' to me."

Arthur Murcell, the famous lecturer, for he it was, relating the experience later—both were young men at that time, in their twenties—said, "A shadow crossed the face of the great preacher when I said that. Then it was broken by a smile. 'Well Murcell, if you will have it so, let it be so, I won't cast my pearls before—; but then put on your hat, and come along!'"

Murcell said they went out into the woods, and Spurgeon talked about the trees; he knew them all; they were his friends. He talked about the flowers, some in the shade, and some in the sunshine. He was familiar with the names and particulars of all of them. Moreover, he was the perfect gentleman. Murcell said, "I never knew him to be more considerate. He seemed to forget himself in trying to be pleasing to me. But it was not Spurgeon. A polite gentleman, but not Spurgeon the saint."

"Presently" Murcell said, "we sat down on a fallen tree, and I put my hand upon his knee, and said, 'Forgive me, friend, I ought not to have said what I did. Shall we talk together about the Beloved?'" "Thank you," said Spurgeon, "I shall be more comfortable."

"Then" Murcell said, "he began. I have heard him hold countless thousands spellbound in his grip, by his matchless eloquence; but I never heard him as I did that

day in the woods, when there were just two of us together. How he poured out his heart, magnifying his Master, in his adoration of the Son of God! We got right into the heavenlies."

When I was at his home, I talked with Mr. Thomas Spurgeon, and we talked about his father. I said, "Did you ever hear this story of your father?" and I related it to him. "No," he said, "I never did; but I am sure it is true. It is so transparently true. It is so exactly descriptive of my father." He "sat down under his shadow with great delight."

My wife and I went driving one sunny day recently. If I go driving for a little pleasure, I like to get off the highways, so as to convince myself that there is still a little country left, for then we are not always on the hard and hot city roads. In the distance I saw something that looked like an archway, where the trees met overhead, and there was no sun on the road. It was shady. I said to my wife, "It will be cooler there. I will drive through it slowly. Note the difference in temperature as we get into the shade." And so it was. It was like another world. We motored on, we did not stop; we drove slowly, and went on.

Not so the spouse in the "Song." She sat down under His shadow. She found, perhaps, a grassy mound beneath the shade of the tree, and there she sat, enjoying the cool, and the shade of her Beloved.

Why do we not spend more time under His shadow? Why are we content with merely visiting the Lord Jesus? That is not what He asks. He says, "Abide in me." Once John the Baptist's disciples came to Him, when John had pointed them to the Lamb of God, and said, "Master, where dwelleth thou?" Jesus did not give them His address: He never does. He said, "Come and see. If you want me, come with me, and I will show you where I live." Oh, to find the place where Jesus dwells, to abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

What is the shadow of the Lord Jesus? What is it? What sort of shade do we need? Something to hide us from the fierce blaze of the Sun of Divine Justice, that, unhindered, would devour the sinner? But Jesus stands between us and the wrath of God, and under His shadow we may abide until the calamities are overpast. Then we may come out when the storm is over, and the clear light shineth.

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty Rock
Within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness,
A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat,
And the burden of the day.

"I take, O Cross, Thy shadow
As my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine
Than the sunshine of His face:
Content to let the world go by
To know no gain nor loss—
My sinful self am only shame
My glory all The Cross."

That to most of you here, profoundly true as it is, is yet a mere commonplace. You know, we all know, how we must hide ourselves in Him until the wrath is past.

"Under His shadow with great delight." I should like to talk to you about that, but I must not. I must be content to throw you back upon your own experience.

My question to you is: Do you know anything about that special delight of being consciously in the presence of the Lover of our soul. Do you know what it is to trust Him, to sit down under His shadow?

A minister was visiting this city some years ago now. He said to me, "Will you take me to such a place?"—and he named the place. "There is a certain house there I want to see." I drove him to the street, and he pointed to a certain window. He said, "Do you see that window? The room behind that window to me, is the most wonderful spot in the world." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because there I courted my wife, and there at long last she said, 'Yes,' to me. I never forget that spot, and as often as I come to Toronto, I go to that street, and look at that house, and look at that window, and think of those happy days of long ago."

You remember Tennyson speaks of that:

"A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

"He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight."

Then Tennyson goes on to speak of his lost friend:

"So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not."

How dark this world would be if we were not able to look to Jesus! So ought we to find every spot where our Beloved is not.

Now just a word—I have heard some facetiously remark about "Dr. Shields' long sermons." Well, be thankful that I stop when I do, because when I stop I have only just begun. I am looking forward to getting to heaven some time where "time shall be no more." Then I can preach just as long as I like; and that is what I am going to do. I am going to have a great time sitting down beside the tree of life that yieldeth its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This spouse said, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Of course it was. If he had given her an olive, and she had never before learned to like them, it would still be sweet. Some of my fellow English people cannot learn to eat olives. How often we have English friends at our house, but they pass the olives by! "Oh, no; no!" Well, I venture to say if he had offered her even an olive she would have liked it.

You remember how Ruth sat down, in the shade with the reapers in the field of Boaz, who had told her to be there; and she was there. As his reapers gathered for their noon-day meal, Boaz took a piece of parched corn, such as they were eating, and with his own hand he gave it to Ruth, the Moabitess, and he handed her a cup containing vinegar—not like our vinegar, I am sure—which they drank. When she got home she told her mother-in-law about it "With whom do you suppose I had luncheon to-day?" I am sure she said something like that. "With whom did you break bread to-day, my daughter?" She said, "With my lord, Boaz, the master of the harvest. He told me to be sure to gather with his maidens, and I did, and then, in the presence of them all, he singled me out.

He passed me a piece of parched corn, and handed me something to drink. They all saw, and, I think knew something was a-stir." "Yes," said her mother-in-law, "I know something too. Sit still my daughter until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day."

"His fruit was sweet to my taste." What fruits there are? A few months ago I travelled around the world, without stepping upon the deck of a ship. I was in many tropical countries, and I sat at many dining tables, and I saw and smelled, and tasted—only tasted—many culinary concoctions. I could not manage many of them. When I was in India I lived on dry toast and marmalade, and tea with a little sugar, but no milk. I was afraid of the milk; I was afraid of the butter; I was afraid of everything in that country. After a while I got to Siam, and I was really hungry. In Siam they had some delicious fruit. Did you ever eat pomelo? or pompelmouse, as it is also called? It is like a large grape-fruit, only sweeter. I almost lived on them in Siam. And they had delicious bananas. I never ate so many in my life. I felt those fruits were safe. One had but to take off the skins, and the fruit within would be wholesome and good. I got along very well in Thailand, or Siam, because there was plenty of fruit. I did not care for their meats, smothered with grease indescribable. I kept to the fruit. After my sojourn in India I assure you fruit was "sweet to my taste". In those oriental countries, in the tropics, sometimes one is dependent on fruit for food. Sometimes there is not much else that you can have.

Perhaps the spouse was hungry, and she found her hunger satisfied, and her palate pleased, for "His fruit was sweet to (her) taste." Certain I am that coming to Christ is like Siam after India.

Oh, what fruits we have from Him, Who said, "I am the true vine." Were you ever at Hampton Court, the palace that Cardinal Wolsey built for himself, and later thought it more prudent that he should give it to Henry VIII. than to keep it, because he would rather have his head than his palace, and he knew that he could not keep both. So he gave the palace to Henry VIII.

At Hampton Court there is a famous vine. You cannot buy the grapes. The vine is hundreds of years old, and its roots go down right under the Thames, nourished from sources unknown, and untouched by other growths. Some grapes, when they begin to form, are cut out by the bunches by the gardeners, and instead of leaving the whole big bunch, they leave perhaps half a bunch, culling it here and there. Then the grapes enlarge until they are like plums. And they are all for the royal table. They go to the palace.

"I am the true vine." If you want to eat of that fruit, somehow or another you must find your way to the palace. His fruit will be sweet to your taste.

Then the spouse continues,—but read it for yourself. Not always out there under the shadow of the tree! But "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." The King was in residence. The royal standard flew from the mast; and the one whom He loved above all others, sat at the table with Him.

That is what we are going to do to-night when we come to the Lord's Supper — just sit at the Table with Jesus Christ.

Are there any here who do not know Him? Any here who have not discovered the incomparable — yes, I think that is the word, the incomparable glories of the Only

Begotten! Do you know Him? If you do, you will never forget Him:

"For, ah, the Master is so fair,
So sweet His smile on banished men,
That they who meet Him unaware
Can never rest on earth again!

"And they who see Him risen, afar,—
On God's right hand to welcome them
Forgetful stand of home and land,
Desiring fair Jerusalem."

Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee. That is all we can say. We have no language, no superlatives that we can employ; we can only say, as did Peter, Lord Thou knowest that we love Thee. Help us to rejoice in Thy love to us, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

STUDENTS PREACH THE WORD

Students of Toronto Baptist Seminary are hard at work in various places preaching the Word as the following letters indicate. Mr. Etienne Huser, our student-professor of French, writes from the North:

"IT IS more blessed to give than to receive." After seven months of taking in, it has been a great joy to give out to some very needy ones. Here in Sudbury and district we have found numerous opportunities to sow the good seed in virgin ground. And though it seems that Satan is always watching for an occasion to take away the precious grain, we have rejoiced in seeing here and there some tender plant force its way in that field which during centuries has been kept barren by ignorance, superstition and fear.

All means God has put to our disposal have been used to reach hungry French-Canadians. Of course, Rome has tried to put an end to our efforts in many different ways. When a Roman priest learned that some Baptists were going around distributing what he called "harmful literature" among his people, he forbade his parishioners to accept those little blue books called New Testaments, and told them that if they had already accepted one, they ought to hurry to destroy it. Yesterday, however, as we were visiting one of his "faithful", we saw that all he had succeeded in doing was to stimulate her desire to know more of God's truth. The husband of another lady, frightened by the priest's threatenings, threw her copy of the Word of God into the stove. This did not stop her longings for more light, and she asked us for another Testament. So, in spite of *Monsieur le curé* that Book which is supposed to pervert the minds of its readers is bringing to many souls the peace which he never wrought through his sacraments and ceremonies in any human heart.

We have also been encouraged in our open-air meetings. Large numbers stand around as we proclaim to them God's counsel, and a few have asked us for personal interviews where they may learn more about what God says in His Word. There are naturally always some who look for an argument, and thus, two weeks ago, we had quite a discussion after the meeting had been dismissed. Two arrogant young fellows thought they were very smart in asserting that our Bible had been invented just a few years ago by some able Protestant leader. And to prove their case, they asked me for my New Testament. They opened it at its first page, and triumphantly pointed with their fingers the date which they saw there. "You see, it was written in 1916," they said. It was not possible to convince them that it was nothing

else but the date when this particular edition I had was printed. "Let's go to the priest and see what he says," they proposed. We went, though I knew it would be in vain. He would not try to argue the case before a group of his people. When we arrived, one priest said that he had spent all day in the confessional and was too tired to discuss with us. Another with whom I had quite a talk last year, just came out of his room at that time. When he saw me, he gave me a very "nice" look, took me by the arm, put me out of the house, and said: "You ignorant fellow, you'd better go to France and preach there rather than to bother us." Very Christlike, indeed!

Last Sunday night we started again our French open-air meetings. A very attentive group of people was listening, nobody tried to disturb the meeting, and as one of the results of that meeting we received the very next day a request for a New Testament. When I delivered it to the man who had written for it, he told me that it was not for himself, but that one of the men who was working for him and who had been listening to our messages the night before had asked him to get one for him. But he continued in telling me that if we had one to spare, he would be very glad to receive one for himself. So we left him two New Testaments and pray that God may himself speak through His Word to those benighted souls.

These are only a few of the experiences we had during the last week. We praise God for each door he opened to the preaching of His Message of Life. We rejoice also in the assurance that the future has yet greater opportunities in store, and pray that He may give us grace to use them to the utmost.

Preaching in Northern Quebec

From Malartic, North-western Quebec, Miss June Armstrong, R.N., writes of her summer's work as follows:

The work in Malartic is carried on by Rev. and Mrs. Yvon Hurtubise. There are both English and French members in the church, which fact calls for French and English services and prayer meetings. Our Open-Air Meetings are also bilingual, but thus far have only held forth at these in English. Perhaps next year I shall attempt to speak in French. Our *Réunions en plein air* are well attended, and encourage us greatly. Far from there being any attempt to stop these meetings, the people are sitting and standing about each Saturday evening, waiting for us to gather. Many are regular listeners, and quite attentive to the Gospel. Some have requested New Testaments and others have questioned us eagerly at the close of the meetings.

My work has consisted chiefly in visitation from house to house. Since most of the people are French and Roman Catholic, this has been difficult and not very encouraging. However, as I find my French improving, I find also that as one talks to these people, there are many quite interested who at first do not wish to discuss the Bible or the Gospel. Have only encountered a few who are really seeking, and it has been a joy to explain the way of salvation to them and be able point out things in the Bible that refute the teachings they are receiving.

Our Daily Vacation Bible School this summer was very well attended, with an average attendance of seventy-five. There was a fine response among the children of the district, with a truck load of about twenty-five coming in each day from one of the outlying mines to swell our number. It was a hectic two weeks we spent with this

group, but also very pleasurable and satisfying, teaching them the things of the Bible.

From a Recent Graduate

A note from one of last year's graduates, Pastor Bert Oatley-Willis of Essex, enquires what sort of canned fruits, etc., would be most acceptable for the Seminary kitchen. This sounds like a most appetizing suggestion coming from a church situated in the garden of Ontario, though we venture to hope that other districts will also take note! We are replying in detail, though in general the answer is: "All sorts, and lots of them!" We are happy also to read the following:

"I had the joy of baptizing eight believers last Sunday and three more will be following the Lord in the waters of baptism to-morrow."

A REPLY TO K. OF C. ADVERTISEMENTS

"Why Millions Do NOT Call the Pope 'Holy' Father"

A SERIES of advertisements designed to "sell" Roman Catholicism has been sponsored by the Knights of Columbus in popular magazines in the United States and Canada for the past year or more. So far as our observation allows us to form an opinion of them, we would put them on par with another series of cleverly illustrated advertisements paid for by large brewing interests purporting to prove that alcoholic beverages "belong" to American life and are an integral part of American homes and hospitality. There is a suaveness, joined to a speciousness, in both sets of propaganda that smacks of the Romish art of casuistry, which might be briefly described as the way to tell a lie for the glory of the Roman Church without being detected. For the instructed person the streamlined attempts to soften and smooth a Medieval absolutism into the appearance of something reasonable, liberty-loving and Bible-believing is a ludicrous fiasco. We have often wondered why the priests who dictate these advertisements, and leave the laymen to pay for them, dare to fly in the face of the truth and contradict the evidence of history at every turn. We suppose the answer is that the advertisements are not written for those who know the truth. Convinced Romanists are willing to smile at the contradictions if their cause is advanced, and, in any case, Romanism bristles with inconsistencies. We have wondered, for instance, what French-Canadian Roman Catholics would think of the Romish claim that "the Bible is a Protestant book!" Hundreds of French-Canadians have told us that the Bible is a forbidden book, that it is a Protestant Book, fit only to be burned because of its filth! On the other hand, Rome knows that Protestants who are acquainted with its doctrines and practices are beyond the reach of its specious propaganda. But in betwixt and between are a great many people who know little or nothing of either Romanism or Protestantism, and who are inclined to believe whatever they may read in print, especially when it is stated in simple terms and asserted with the utmost assurance. This is the genius of advertising, if we mistake not.

The propaganda line pursued by the Knights of Columbus under the direction of the Hierarchy is cleverly done, and all who know the high costs of advertising know that vast sums of money have been invested in this venture. Of this we do not complain; on this continent the press is free and speech is unhindered. But in one most important respect, the Romanist advertisements have signally failed: they are not in accordance with the facts.

They tell half truths, evade issues, make brazen assertions that have no evidence to support them, and twist and distort the truth of history and of the Word of God beyond recognition. In the business world to advertise under false pretences is a crime; untruthful advertising never fails to become a boomerang on its sponsor, and we are certain that in the end the Knights of Columbus propaganda will cause great embarrassment to those responsible for it.

It is always difficult to answer a lie, and it is even more difficult to nail down a half lie. Evasions and distortions of the facts, especially in the realm of religion are hard to deal with. A falsehood may be uttered with one breath, but it may take volumes to correct it. We are sometimes inclined to think that for informed people the lying propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church does not need to be answered and for the uninstructed it is useless to try to answer it. Yet there is an important place for the discussion of the insolent claims of Rome, and there are many persons who are sincerely desirous of knowing the truth about this system. We cannot allow these arrogant claims to be made unchallenged. It is with this conviction that Dr. J. B. Rowell of Victoria, B.C., has issued a valuable little book entitled *Why Millions Do NOT Call the Pope "Holy Father"*. In it he has packed a vast amount of information designed to expose the deceitful fallacies blazoned in the pages of magazines through the efforts of the papal Knights of Columbus. Part of this material has already been published in these pages, and hence our readers will know its worth, while other parts of it have been published in *The Sunday School Times*. After reading this able discussion of the arrogant claims of papal infallibility, one is compelled to ask how Roman Catholics dare to put forward such utterly absurd pretensions for the occupant of the pontifical chair in Rome.

It is impossible adequately to review a book so richly documented as this one, for Dr. Rowell's mind is almost as encyclopaedic as his library, which, when we saw it some ten years ago, was piled from floor to ceiling with books of all sorts in all languages on Roman Catholicism by Roman Catholics. Certainly the priests are answered out of their own mouths in this *Reply* and we earnestly hope that it will have the large circulation that it deserves. It is being sold at the very modest price of 40c a copy, or three for one dollar, and may be obtained from Evangelical Publishers, 366 Bay Street, Toronto, or, we presume, directly from the author at 2056 Hampshire Road, Victoria, B.C.

—W.S.W.

MORE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN QUEBEC

TUESDAY morning's paper carries the report that four street preachers have been jailed in Val d'Or, Quebec, for preaching on the street corner. This is the second incident of the sort to be reported from that part of Quebec this summer. We note that the technical charge was that of refusing to move on when ordered to do so by the police, but all who have followed the tactics of Romanist Quebec will know that the real cause of the arrest and sentence is that of daring to preach the Gospel. This is another link in a long chain of evidence that demonstrates that in French and Romanist Quebec there is no liberty of speech except for those who bow to the dictates of the priests.

—W.S.W.

A LIBERATED FRENCH-CANADIAN REJOICES

French Christians and other Gospel workers in Sudbury District have been made glad recently by the coming into their fellowship of a man who had been reached in a remote region of Northern Ontario and whom the Lord saved by His great grace through the ministry of His Word and the monthly French paper *La Voix De L'Evangile*. Mr. Paquin's testimony was so delightful that we asked him to write it out that we might have it as a lasting memorial of God's wondrous work. Since THE GOSPEL WITNESS readers have shared faithfully in prayerful and financial support of this work of sending God's Word to such needy French-Canadians, we felt we must share this simple word to the praise of the Saviour's name.

The translation of Mr. Paquin's testimony follows.
J. R. Boyd

FIFTH child in a family of six, I was brought up in one of the peaceful communities of the Trois-Rivières District, located on the northern shore of the St. Lawrence River, half way between Montreal and the old city of Quebec. It is a flourishing village, more than a century old, very proud of its ancestral traditions, where all kinds of Roman Catholic orders swarm.

It was there that I received my religious training and a rather elementary education. I was surrounded by relatives who believed firmly in the infallibility of the pope, and in the pseudo-truth that "outside of the Roman Catholic Church there is no salvation", and who, in order to conform themselves to the teaching of this church, practised devotion to all the saints and especially to the Virgin Mary. They taught their children that they had to obey the commandments of the Church, which Jesus Christ or His representative, the Pope, have delivered to mankind.

The years passed quickly. After having lived for a while in Montreal, I settled in Northern Ontario. It was then that the great plague of modern civilization, the depression, reigned in our country as absolute master, followed by its sad procession of evils of all kinds and their miserable consequences.

Fiery trials were awaiting me. I spent hours of painful anguish in the place of extremity. I had given up all religious practices. I had lost all confidence in what the Church of Rome so persistently teaches. Oh, my soul was longing for some moral and spiritual help, which it needed so greatly in this bitter hour. I felt that I was sadly giving way. I was downcast, tired of everything, discouraged. I meditated, trying to get a glimpse of some ray of light in the midst of the terrible darkness in which my soul was moving.

But suddenly . . . was it only a delusion? What did I see? I looked. Thoughtfully I searched the road before me. In the distance I could see a gleam. The little light, trembling and almost imperceptible at first, seemed to come nearer; it became stronger, firmer. And suddenly, as lightning, a thought came to my mind and I recognized the Christ of the Gospel, my Saviour and God. My heart opened to the voice of the Master, never again to be separated from the Gospel. "I am the light of the world," said Jesus. "Come to me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, who can describe the happiness I experienced at that moment. I had been spiritually blind, and behold, now I found light, life, and truth through the Gospel. Are there any riches more to be desired? Oh Lord, my God, when in thy Word I contemplate the magnificence of thy works of mercy towards poor, frail and sinful mankind, I am astounded before

such goodness and condescension shown to us, and I repeat the Psalmist's words: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"

For a long time I had hoped that one day I would be able to do some research, for someone had pointed out to me numerous alterations which the Church of Rome had made to the precepts and teachings of Christ. In the Catholic Church we already had what was given to us as the "Gospel" incorporated in the Mass Book. It was supposed to be the substance of the complete record as given by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In my endeavour to dispel my fears and doubts, I undertook to compare the New Testament with this so-called Gospel, which bore the approbation of the Catholic bishop. To my great amazement I discovered that what we had been led to accept as the complete testimony of the four evangelists was just a mutilated collection of extracts from their writings; that in arranging these extracts the church had deliberately left out much of what the Holy Spirit had inspired, because it forbade many of the practices which Roman leaders were determined to follow. It was then that I awakened to the fact that the Catholic clergy were forced to hide the Bible from the people and to disguise their real designs by saying that they had it as a sacred trust. They could not afford to allow honest men and women to see how drastically they had mutilated the Word of God. I discovered that this butchery had been exercised not only on the four Gospels, but that what our Catholic books gave us as the Epistles was a meager and insignificant collection of fragments clipped carefully from portions which this church can use for their own advantage. These are the conclusions to which I was forced. I was compelled to recognize that my church, which I believed to be of saintly and divine institution, as I had been taught, had not been safeguarded from error. What sadness, what disillusionment, what regret to find out these facts, to establish undeniably that forsaking pure Christianity, through the centuries the Church had come to err so far from the luminous way of Jesus Christ. I repeat it, those revelations fill my heart with sorrow. But for the sake of Christ and His Gospel, I resolved from that day on to follow only Him Who said: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Can any have a grander assurance than this? Jesus Who somewhere else tells us that He is the truth asserts this fact.

Our readers will not be surprised after having read those lines, to see me go from one experience to another. I am anxious to live them again for my own edification, and also, if I have the opportunity to do it, to assist those whom the Lord will send on my way to accomplish His eternal purposes.

I have not the intention and much less the knowledge necessary to undertake a learned dissertation, but for the benefit of those who have not yet tasted it, I would like to tell of the immense spiritual riches which through a constant and practical study can be found in the Gospel. It was certainly in the plans of God that the apostles not only preached to the world what they learned from the lips of the Master, but that they would put down by writing what they had experienced and received through their intimate relationship with Him. For the Lord, our God, Who knows very well what we are made of, would not leave the divine teaching of Christ to the short memory of man. Too soon it would have been disfigured beyond

recognition. For the fact that He has so preserved it, I shall praise our God forever, and may all else that has breath join in His praises. I would like that all who read these lines may hear the same voice, which once told Augustine: "Take and read!" May it echo through all my country: "Take and read!" For where can one find words more divine, truth more striking and infallible, as necessary to my soul as the light to my eyes and the air to my lungs? I need that revelation which comes from above, which brings to us truth, life, joy, and grace. This is the hidden treasure I found. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Yes, I found the unique and peerless Good. And it was through a daily reading that I found it in the Gospel. Let my fellow-countrymen believe in the efficiency of the useless sacrifice of the mass. For my part, I prefer to believe in the much greater good accomplished by the teaching and the living of the Word of God. May the God of all grace grant me His daily help that I may always walk with Him there where He guides, enlightened more and more by His infinite wisdom.

In closing I would like to mention that on July 2nd, 1950, I had the joy and privilege to confess publicly my faith in Jesus Christ, my only Saviour, and in His Gospel in receiving the scriptural baptism among a goodly number of serious believers gathered in Grace Baptist Church of Lavigne. A careful observer would have noticed that a very kind, brotherly welcome was extended to the newcomer. And there is no doubt that a happy remembrance will be kept of this memorable event, and I take this opportunity to express here my sincere thanks to those who were present at that happy occasion.

A WORD OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Though it is not the custom of THE GOSPEL WITNESS to accept paid advertising, in view of the personal nature of the following announcement, we may perhaps be pardoned for reprinting it as it appeared in the Toronto dailies of recent date:

WHITCOMBE—Rev. and Mrs. W. S. Whitcombe are happy to announce the birth of their son, Mark Boyd, at Women's College Hospital, Toronto, Tuesday, August 1, 1950. A brother for Margaret and Beth Adele.

The thankful parents wish to take this opportunity of expressing their gratitude for the many good wishes and congratulatory messages they have received on this happy occasion. —W.S.W.

BOOKS AND BOOKLETS By DR. T. T. SHIELDS

"Other Little Ships"	\$2.00
Beautifully bound in blue cloth with gilt letters, 280 pages.	
"The Plot That Failed"	2.00
Special Illustrated Number of Sept. 2825
"Russellism or Rutherfordism", 71 pages25
"The Papacy in the Light of Scripture", 26 pages25
"The Oxford Group Analyzed"05
"Does Killed in Action Mean Gone to Heaven?"05
"The Christian Attitude Toward Amusements"05
"The God of All Comfort"05

The Gospel Witness

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2 - Canada

READING THE BIBLE

IN ONE of his letters John Newton remarks: "I know not a better rule of reading the Scripture, than to read it through from beginning to end; and when we have finished it once to begin it again. We shall meet with many passages which we can make little improvement of, but not so many in the second reading as in the first, and fewer in the third than in the second: provided we pray to Him who has the keys to open our understandings, and to anoint our eyes with His spiritual ointment. The course of reading today will prepare some light for what we shall read tomorrow, and throw a further light upon what we read yesterday. Experience only can prove the advantage of this method, if steadily persevered in. To make a few efforts and then give over, is like taking a few steps and then standing still, which would do little towards completing a long journey. But though a person walked slowly and but a little way in a day, if he walked every day, and with his face always in the same direction, year after year, he might in time encompass the globe. By thus travelling patiently and steadily through the Scripture, and repeating our progress, we should increase in knowledge to the end of life. The Old and New Testaments, the doctrines, precepts, and promises, the history, the examples, admonitions and warnings, etc., would mutually illustrate and strengthen each other and nothing that is written for our instruction would be overlooked. Happy should I be, could I fully follow the advice I am now offering to you. I wish you may profit by my experience. Alas! how much time have I lost and wasted, which, had I been wise, I should have devoted to reading and studying the Bible! but my evil heart obstructs the dictates of my judgment. I often feel a reluctance to read this Book of books, and a disposition to hew out broken cisterns which afford me no water, while the fountain of living waters is close within my reach."

A LETTER FROM AN APPRECIATIVE READER

WE HAVE read a good many papers and magazines, some of them with great profit, others with great interest, but like many of our readers, we have yet to write our first note of thanks to the editors. However, as an editor, we are grateful that not all our readers are as slow to express their appreciation as we have been. Last week the following note came to our desk which we venture to reprint here as expressing sentiments of many others who do not write us, though they do pay their yearly subscription and in many cases send us an over-and-above gift to help meet our ever mounting cost of publication. Of many such letters, we print this note from one of our oldest subscribers:

"I still enjoy reading THE GOSPEL WITNESS and am interested in every item. I have just begun the twenty-fifth year and I find it is by far the most profitable of many papers that I have read."

May we use this opportunity to suggest that a very practical and useful way of helping THE GOSPEL WITNESS is to pass it on to your friends and to urge interested ones to subscribe for themselves. —W.S.W.

We run carelessly to the precipice, after we have put something before us to prevent us seeing it.

—BLAISE PASCAL

DR. LEO LEHMANN

WE HAVE learned with deepest sorrow the news of the homegoing of Dr. Leo H. Lehmann, Director of Christ's Mission and Editor of *The Converted Catholic*. On a number of occasions our readers have had the opportunity of reading Dr. Lehmann's masterly discussion of Romanism in these pages, and he has often spoken in Jarvis Street Church. He was a man of fine mind, who understood the ecclesiastical system of the papacy as few men in our day understand it, for he had been a Roman priest and had studied the history and doctrines of Rome both as a Roman Catholic and as a Protestant. Best of all he was warmly evangelical and did not fail to point those under the delusion of this system to Christ as well as away from Rome's errors. When he first assumed the work of Christ's Mission and of *The Converted Catholic*, the Editor of this paper, Dr. Shields, did his utmost to introduce him to a wider circle of friends and we have continued to rejoice in his increasing usefulness in the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Lehmann was a trophy of the grace of God, who in His sovereign will plucked this brand from the burning in order to use him as a witness to his former associates within the darkness of the Roman system. We give thanks for his fruitful labours and pray that others may be raised up to carry on his great task. —W.S.W.

ROBERT HALDANE IN GENEVA

GENEVA is for ever associated with the great name of Calvin, whose massive theology is not unlike the majestic Alps which tower above the city. But in the days of Robert Haldane, Geneva had long discarded the faith of her fathers, and a deep darkness shrouded the once radiant fount of Protestant truth. Infidel philosophers like Gibbon and Voltaire found a congenial home in her neighbourhood. Her noble School of Theology was corrupted by an insidious Unitarianism. The Bible was entirely set aside as a text-book; Plato and Seneca taking the place of Christ and Paul. During the whole four years' course the only use made of the sacred volume was in the teaching of Hebrew, when a few Psalms and chapters were read. The students were thus profoundly ignorant of Gospel Truth, and readily imbibed the new theology of that day, which magnified the natural goodness of man and denied our Lord's Divinity. In 1816 Robert Haldane was strongly moved to visit the Continent. His eyes had been gladdened by a work of **grace in his own land**, and he longed to see the light spreading to the still darkened lands of Europe. The peace had opened doors long closed, and at the end of the year he set out accompanied by his like-minded wife. He expected to be absent six weeks. Three years, the three greatest years of his life, were to elapse before he returned. In Paris he found a spiritual gloom that could be felt, and small wonder, for not long before diligent search had been made, and in all the capital not a single copy of the Scriptures could be discovered! Here he sought vainly for an opening for the Gospel and then went on to Geneva. As he passed through its ancient gates he prayed fervently for Divine leading, for he knew not one person within it. At first all things seemed unfavourable. Day after day he laboured to find a door of utterance, and he was on the point of departure when suddenly the whole situation changed.

How often has it been found that what we call a trivial

incident is really a finely wrought link in the golden chain of Providence. An old Pastor has promised to conduct a short excursion beyond the walls, but prevented by sickness, he sent in his place a young man, a student of Divinity. Mr. Haldane at once began to speak of the Gospel, and to his great joy, as the youth listened, his wonder awoke. He returned with Mr. Haldane to his chambers, and continued with him till late at night, hearing strange things. Next morning he appeared with another student, equally curious. So astonished were these young men by what they heard that they could speak of naught else to their fellows. A very strange teacher had come to Geneva, they said, a man of one book, and this book, the Bible, was indeed a great book, well worth the perusal of Divinity students! They had been amazed to find that problems which perplexed them were solved in a moment by some passage from this wonderful volume, for the man who made so much of it was "a living concordance," and could at once turn to the very text that was needed! "He knew the Bible like Calvin!" These reports so roused the interest of others that soon Mr. Haldane was besieged by inquirers, and it was in the endeavour to satisfy these seekers that his famous Home Bible College, as it might be called, came into being.

It was arranged that about thirty students should meet with him about thrice a week, and spend two evening hours, from six to eight, in the study of the Holy Scriptures. They were seated around a long table on which were placed copies of the Bible in French, German, English, and other languages, besides the original Hebrew and Greek. Mr. Haldane's method was simplicity itself. At first they were full of questions, and every difficulty, every sophistry was at once brought to the test of Scripture. He spent no time in argument, but, opening his well-worn Bible, pointed to some pertinent text, saying, "Look here,—how readest thou? What thinkest thou?" and as he did so light would dart from the Book and perplexities vanish like ice in a burning sun.

Having thus cleared the ground, he proceeded to sow the Divine seed. He commenced a systematic study of the Epistle to the Romans. Here they were at once confronted with a terrible truth which flatly contradicted their accepted teaching, the truth of man's depravity, his impotence, his utter sinfulness. Gathering all the force of Scripture on this great fundamental, he earnestly pressed home the truth until the awakened conscience gave full assent to it. Then what he had hoped and prayed for came to pass. A very beautiful thing happened. The merely intellectual thirst for knowledge changed into a deep spiritual concern. The Theological Class became a class of anxious inquirers! How eagerly now did they follow the exposition of the great Epistle as their teacher passed on to the grand disclosure of the Grace of God in the Gospel!

It was the great hour of Haldane's life, and he knew it! As a spiritual strategist he had come to Geneva. He knew the value of a student won for Christ. He saw not only these young men before him. He saw the thousands who would come under their influence. Could he but bring these men to Christ this upper room in Geneva might be the spring of Pentecostal reviving to Europe. A deep solemnity came into his utterance. The young men felt, as they listened, that a prophet charged with a great mission was among them. And to

the praise of the God of all grace and to his own unspeakable joy, he succeeded. One by one, sitting around that table, before the open Book, they surrendered to Jesus Christ! When Haldane passed on to the great chapters on sanctification and the Christian life, his class had become a band of men whose hearts God had touched.

Such a striking work could not be accomplished without arousing the wrath of the professors and clergy of Geneva. A bitter persecution followed, but God preserved the precious life He had created in a wonderful way. When Haldane passed on to Mantauban to win further victories for the Gospel, He sent another teacher to continue the work. Henry Drummond, well named, a talented and wealthy young Englishman, a devoted servant of Jesus Christ, was on a voyage to the Holy Land, when a Heaven-sent storm compelled his ship to seek refuge in the port of Genoa. Here he had heard of the student Revival, changed his plans and came on to Geneva, arriving just two days before Mr. Haldane's departure.

The persecution itself was made the instrument of a larger blessing. It ultimately scattered the students throughout Europe, and thus realized Haldane's primal intention. Henry Pyt became the missionary of the Bearn and the Pyrenees. Merle d'Aunigne, driven from his native city, went to Berlin, became a notable preacher, and the famous historian of the Reformation. Dr. Gaussen, the author of *Theopneustia*, and Dr. Caesar Milan exercised large influence in our own and other lands. Charles Rieu went to Denmark, where he finished his course after a brief but fruitful ministry. Felix Neff, the Apostle of the High Alps, though not a student of Haldane, traced his inspiration to the same source. Christopher Burckhardt died at Aleppo. These are but a few of the noble names in that honoured band. In after days it was found that the seed of many a rich harvest was sown in that sacred upper room in Geneva. In the town itself a living Church arose, and Geneva became again as in Calvin's day, the Fount of Evangelical Truth.—*Old Time Revivals.*

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Third Quarter Lesson 8 August 20, 1950

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

THE BLESSING OF GOD

Lesson Text: Zephaniah 3:8-20.

Golden Text: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."—Zeph. 3:17.

I. The Message to the Remnant: verses 8-13.

Zephaniah prophesied concerning the judgment of God which would be visited upon Judah (Chap. 1) and also upon Judah's enemies (Chap. 2). Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was doomed to utter destruction (2:13-15).

Great as was the denunciation upon these neighbouring peoples, it was against Judah and Jerusalem that the Lord's wrath was to be poured out in full fury, inasmuch as they had been privileged to see manifestations of His wisdom, power and grace (Deut. 4:7, 8, 32-35). They were the ones whom He desired to discipline and then bless for their good and for His glory.

The stern denunciation of Judah was thus renewed. They were especially blameworthy in that they had not profited

from the punishment meted out to other peoples, but had continued in their rebellious course (vv. 5-7; 2 Chron. 36:14-16). The princes, judges and prophets had not fulfilled their obligation to lead the people in the ways of the Lord but had been foremost in treachery, deceit, violence and sacrilege (vv. 2-4; Jer. 23:32; Ezek. 22:23-28).

Although Judah as a whole had departed from the ways of the Lord, the faithful remnant still walked according to His commandments (Isa. 10:20-22; Mal. 3:16). To them the prophet conveyed the Lord's message of encouragement, bidding them look beyond the present distress to the time when the Lord's glory should be made manifest. God has His believing remnant in every age and in every place; He never leaves Himself without a witness. It is a privilege to be among those who in the time of testing quietly and patiently wait until the Lord shows His hand (Isa. 30:18-21; Hab. 2:3).

The judgments being poured out upon the Israelites were declared to be disciplinary, that His people might be chastened. The Lord Himself would intervene on their behalf, pouring out His wrath upon their enemies (Joel 3:2; Zeph. 1:18; 2:8-15; Zech. 12:2, 3; 14:1-3).

In that future day the people as a whole, not merely the faithful few, would worship the Lord with one language and with one consent (Acts 1:14; 2:1; Rom. 15:5, 6). Confusion of tongues began at Babel when people in pride desired to build a tower reaching to heaven (Gen. 11:1-6). As diversity of language was the result of sin, so would unity of speech correspond to future cleansing (Isa. 19:18; Zech. 14:9). The Jews would then worship God with pure language, or pure lips, the literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated "language" in verse 9. They would also serve God with one consent, meaning "with one shoulder" or "with one back", the figure being that of a yoke easily borne by two when they assume a burden shoulder to shoulder (Numb. 13:23; Matt. 11:29, 30).

The Lord's suppliants, literally "burners of incense" (Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4), would return from Egypt to their own land. The primary reference is probably to the Jews, transported by Pharaoh-Necho to Egypt and Ethiopia, who returned to Palestine under Cyrus (2 Kings 23:29-35).

No longer would God's people be ashamed, for their sins would all be forgiven (Isa. 12:1; 54:4). Humility would take the place of pride. The faithful remnant, although afflicted, despised and few, would continue to trust the Lord (Deut. 4:27-31; Isa. 25:9; Zech. 11:11). Nor would their confidence be misplaced, for they would be protected from want and fear (Psa. 23:1; 34:22; Isa. 54:7; Zeph. 2:7).

II. The Message of Restoration: verses 14-20.

The prophet was given a vision of the people of God, restored to His favour, blessed with His presence and rejoicing

in His forgiveness. No longer would the Jews need chastisement for their sins, and no longer would their hearts be faint because of the encroachments of the enemy (Isa. 35:3; Heb. 12:12).

God Himself, the mighty One, would be in the midst of them (Isa. 12:6; Rev. 21:3, 22), and would have full fellowship with His own redeemed ones. The marriage covenant, broken by sin, would be renewed (Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:19, 20), and the Divine Bridegroom would find joy, rest and satisfaction in the love of His bride (Song of Sol. 2:1-4). All sorrow and reproach would be lifted from the hearts of the people (Isa. 14:3; 25:8) as they would be gathered together to worship the Lord (Isa. 11:11, 12). Instead of being a reproach among the nations, the Lord's people would be given fame and praise throughout the whole earth (Mal. 3:12). They would be redeemed from captivity (Deut. 33:29; Zeph. 2:7).

In a measure these prophecies were fulfilled when the Jews were brought back from captivity and restored under Ezra and Zerubbabel. In a spiritual sense, the unsaved who put their trust in the Lord will find forgiveness, victory, blessing and joy as they walk in fellowship with Him and as He walks with them. But it would seem as though these prophecies look toward a future day when the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming will bring full restoration and blessing to His people.

For Younger Classes:

The Lord desires that all should experience joy (v. 14). Show scholars the true sources of joy in the Lord, illustrating by Scripture narratives which describe the joy which follows physical and spiritual healing (Isa. 35:6; Acts 3:1-11; 8:26-39). There is joy in the companionship of the Lord (John 20:20) and of those who love Him. Joy comes as a result of obedience to the Lord's commands (Acts 8:39). Joy helps us to be strong (Psa. 114:14, 15), and it does not depend upon circumstances. We can be joyful in heart in the midst of sorrow (Phil. 4:4).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Aug. 14—New Blessing	Psa. 118
Aug. 15—New Comfort	Isa. 12
Aug. 16—New Joy	Isa. 14:1-8
Aug. 17—New Mercy	Isa. 30:15-21
Aug. 18—New Safety	Jer. 32:36-44
Aug. 19—New Knowledge	Ezek. 39:22-29
Aug. 20—New Covenant	Heb. 8

SUGGESTED HYMNS

When the heart made pure. There shall be showers of blessing. Free from the law. The King of love my Shepherd is. Like a river glorious. Abide with me.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS,
130 Gerrard Street East,
Toronto 2, Ontario, Canada

ORDER FORM

Enclosed find \$..... to be applied as follows:—

- A subscription to *The Gospel Witness* \$3.00
- Renewal of subscription to *The Gospel Witness* .. \$3.00
- The Priest, The Woman and The Confessional* \$1.00
- The Plot That Failed* \$2.00
- Other Little Ships* \$2.00

NAME

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PROVINCE

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