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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"Art Thou He That Should Come?"

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, on a Sunday Evening.

(Stenographically Reported)

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
"And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?
"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
"The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.
"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."—Matthew, 11:2-6.

Prayer before the Sermon

We have come, O Lord our God, to worship Thee, We remind ourselves, as we bow in Thy presence, of Thy dreadful holiness. Our God is a consuming fire. Therefore we would come reverently. We would come before Thee in the way of Thine appointment. We have read that no man can see the face of God and live. We thank Thee for Him Whom Thou hast appointed to be our Mediator; Who has veiled the light of Thy glory in our human flesh; and who, by concealing some of its dreadfulness, has revealed Thine infinite grace. We thank Thee that many of us know that God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We bless Thee for His word: He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

We come, therefore, with boldness to Thy throne, because it is a throne of grace. We bow at the mercy seat. We make mention of that which is our confidence, even the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God. We rejoice that for His sake Thou dost receive even sinful men—and such are we, all of us. We rejoice that—

There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.

Many of us in this congregation this evening have experienced the power of that cleansing blood. We desire that tonight Jesus Christ may be magnified. He is the only God we know. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him. Therefore we worship Thee as the One Whom Jesus Christ has revealed to our wondering eyes.

How much we all need Thee this evening! The maturest saint, the one who has had the longest experience of Thy faithfulness, needs a divine visitation. Forbid that we should ever count that we have apprehended. Help us to forget the things that are behind, and to press on to that which awaits the appropriation of faith.

It may be there are some who, in the heat of the day, are still bearing the burden, some who are perhaps weary with the journey. We pray that all such may get a new view of Christ. Thou dost appear to Thy disciples ever in some new form. Thou art ever unfolding some new glory to our view. We beseech Thee to come to us this evening, that Jesus Christ may be nearer and dearer to every one of us.

We commend to Thee those who are still in darkness, those who have heard of Jesus Christ, but who have never seen Him, who have never been touched by His saving grace and quickened into newness of life. May the life-giving word, by the power of the Holy Ghost, effect their salvation this evening!

Graciously draw near to all assemblies of the saints, we pray Thee. Be present in the midst of Thy people wherever the gospel of Thy saving grace is proclaimed, whether it be in the great congregation, or in the remote country places where there are but few, or if it be that the word is spoken simply by the wayside to one weary traveller—Oh, may the miracle of Jacob's well be repeated! May the blessing of Heaven attend the proclamation of the truth of the gospel everywhere throughout the world.

Make us in this place peculiarly aware of Thy nearness. Come to us as we open Thy word. May our hearts burn within us as we shall be conscious of the presence of Another Whom we do not see, and Who opens to us the Scripture. Take this service and use it, for the glory of Thy great name, in the salvation of men, and in the edification of such as believe; for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

The text presents a very interesting and instructive study in human temperament, and affords an illuminating illustration of the varying moods to which even the godly are subject. Why did John the Baptist ask so strange a question of the One Whom he himself introduced to men as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"?

Did John send his disciples for his disciples' sake? Knowing their master's worth, and his unfailing fidelity to truth, were these disciples a little perplexed when they heard of Jesus as the Messiah? Did they wonder why One possessed of such authority should permit one so worthy as John to languish in prison? If that be the explanation, then the text reflects a doubtful mind on the part of John's disciples; while, in respect to John himself, it shows that he was convinced that the disciples had but to meet with Jesus, and feel the power of His personality, to find in His presence the answer to all their questioning.

The resolution expressed in one of our hymns in simple language is profoundly wise:—

"All my doubts I give to Jesus!
I've His gracious promise heard—
I shall never be confounded—
I am trusting in that word."

Did John send his disciples to Jesus Christ simply that they might see Him, and hear Him, and find all their doubts dissolved in the light of truth? Is there not rather a probability that John was himself perplexed? And how great a man he was! You remember how our Lord said, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see, A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

But did John have his doubts? Had he his changing moods as we have? Did clouds sometimes obscure the sun from him? And did he examine again the old foundations? Had he, as we so often must, to go back in the primary class and learn the alphabet of Christian experience over again?

Ah, you must not forget that John heard "in the prison" the works of Christ; and a man's understanding of anything will be largely coloured by the circumstances under which he hears it. I think it was Mr. Spurgeon who once said that there was no use to try to get people converted who had cold feet. I have often felt it difficult to preach in a heavy atmosphere.

John heard "in the prison" the works of Christ, and John was accustomed to the spaciousness of the wilderness, and to the flavour of wild honey. When he was shut within the prison, and his life was contracted and shut away from the birds, and the bees, and the sun, and the stars, I do not wonder if he was a little depressed.

Were you ever cast down? Did you ever feel out of sorts with your circumstances, and with other people—and perhaps even with yourself? It may be that John was troubled by his companionship. It is a poor business to keep company with yourself sometimes. It is often the worst company you can have. He turned over these problems in his mind, and asked over again questions that he long ago supposed had been for ever settled. He sent two of his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

I shall not be dogmatic as to which of these two interpretations is the correct one: it means that either, John

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and

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

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himself was of a doubtful mind, or his disciples were. In any case, John had the discernment to send them to the Lord Jesus for a message for himself or for themselves. The proper person to whom all the difficulties of life should be brought is the Lord of glory, Who is Himself the Sum of eternal wisdom.

The fact is, dear friends, we are all in prison. I know very well that our spirits have been liberated, but even free spirits sometimes fail to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that even they become "entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Even the godliest become imprisoned by their circumstances, and not infrequently by their own varying temper and their vacillating disposition. We find ourselves cribbed, cabined, and confined. Doubts assail us. We begin to ask ourselves questions like this: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

I:

When certain people asked John who he was, he refused to give his name—not because he was ashamed of it, but because it was not worth mentioning. He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. I am just a nameless voice; put that down to my account." And in this he was a voice crying in the wilderness, and it was THE VOICE OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE. We are all asking this question: Has He arrived? Have we received the ultimate answer to all life's questions? Have we reached finality? Is there anything better beyond? Art thou he that should come? Have we passed through the last door? Or are there other doors yet to open before us? Are we still to be looking for another?

People are always looking for another, always hoping for a better day. We are saved by hope; and even natural men, who know nothing of divine grace or spiritual illumination, cherish a kind of instinctive Messianic hope. I know it is different from that hope that is grounded upon a supernatural revelation of the divine purpose and promise: it is a hope that differs both in kind and degree, but it is a hope. I mean that even the children of darkness lie down beneath the stars with some hope of

the morning, and that even where there is a fearful looking for of judgment they have a faint, subdued, and perhaps unformulated, inarticulate, hope that somehow, from somewhere, someone will appear who will either avert or mitigate the threatened calamity; and that perhaps after all, life holds something better than that which is now experienced.

Everybody, I say, cherishes such a hope. In all stages, of development, and degrees of civilization, in all modes and phases of life, the individual and the race, owe whatever progress is made to an instinctive hope of a happier day which someone will usher in. Everybody looks for a golden age of some sort. There is a sense in which we are all millennialists. Some cherish a false hope, and it is for their enlightenment particularly I speak; and also for the further confirmation of those who have looked by faith into the face of Jesus Christ.

Thus, too, *whatever enters into human life with the promise of alleviation of its ills, must be prepared to meet the challenge of the question: Who are you? Are you the last word? Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*

Anybody who has outlived the first enthusiasm of youth, who has come to the experience of maturity with its multiplied responsibilities, will have learned to look forward in the hope that somehow we are going to get out of the tangle into something better. When we were children the excitement of the hour was sufficient, the pleasure of the day seemed to be adequate. If we asked for anything at all, we asked for a repetition of that which we had already experienced. But when you have gone along through life a little while, and you find that that element to which the wise man referred again and again, "vanity and vexation of spirit," is so almost invariably the residue of the experiences of life, you ask yourself, And is this all? Was I born for this? Is there no higher plane of life than this? Is there no nobler pursuit to which my powers may be directed than that which now engages all my thought?

Looking to all the prophets who promise us some better thing, we ask them to present their credentials, and enquire of them, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

The prophet of sensuous delight to whose paradise the senses are the only gates must answer this challenge. We are living in hard times, and yet there are countless thousands who find the means and the time for various sorts of sensuous—I do not say sensual—enjoyment, much of which is legitimate. It is quite legitimate to listen to fine music. It is quite legitimate to find some kind of elevation of the mind by looking at a great picture. It is perfectly legitimate when your work is done to lie under the trees and listen to the voice of the birds, and the leaves, and the wind about you, and to say, "What a lovely world this is!" It is legitimate; but when we look in that direction we must ask ourselves the question, Is this the last thing?

You remember Byron's *Childe Harold*?—

"Long-absent Harold reappears at last;
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had alter'd him
In soul and aspect as in age: years steal
Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim."

When the man has drunk it to the dregs he says, "And is that all?" He turns to the prophet who promised him

paradise by that road and says, "Is there nobody but you to guide me? Art thou he that should come, or must I look for another?"

Thus also is the prophet of the mind, the word which inspires to intellectual pursuits and achievements, tested at last. There is a delight of the mind. It is possible, even mentally, to keep under the body, and to find pleasure in the exercise of one's mental powers. That prophet introduces us perhaps to a worthier world, and to a vaster realm, and takes us on a longer journey; but when we have made the journey and stand at last on the brink of the bridgeless gulf, we have to ask, "And is mind all? Is it a fact that a man has within himself power to open all doors that may be opened? And have I now reached the end of everything?"

Poor Edison has made the world rich materially. He has been a benefactor who has brought material comfort to countless millions; and has made life on the material plane a hundredfold pleasanter than it was before. But he who taught us how to use electricity and many other things, and who has—I had almost said, modestly boasted, for a man may modestly boast—of his powers of concentration, who has wrested from Nature many of the secrets of her wealth must soon come to the end of the earthly road? And what then? Is there any other light than that of electricity? "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Nor can *the prophet of emotional bliss be exempt*. Love promises much, and many of its promises are fulfilled; but when Love's garden has fully bloomed, and no summer blight has fallen to mar its beauty, when from the "unsunned spaces" Death breathes upon the flowers, and autumn's moaning, and winter's silence, in turn, usurp the throne of summer, golden, bright, and glad, we turn from our frost-bound graves to cry, "O Love, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Is there no higher satisfaction, no more abiding pleasure, than that which thou hast furnished?"

Nor is it surprising that the challenge is issued to *the prophet of religion*. Disappointment works disillusionment. Chronic suspicion sometimes is wrought in one who has been the victim of frequent betrayals. When every word has been broken, one wonders whether there is any word that will abide; and we learn experimentally at last that finality can never be reached in the direction of falsity.

And how many religions there are! How full of promise they are! I am not speaking of Christianity now; I am speaking of religion in its generic sense, in its wider meaning, and I say that every representative of every form of religion must be prepared to hear, and if he can, to meet that challenge, "Are you the last? Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Let me go farther and say—and I say it with all reverence—that *Jesus Christ Himself must meet and answer this question*. Blessed be His Holy name, He is not afraid of it. It was a good question; it was a legitimate question: "What shall we say of Him? Is He in the prophetic succession?" He asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man am?" To which they replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then He said to them in effect: "Is that as far as you have gone? Whom say ye that I am?"

I know it is said, "The government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Coun-

seller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Wonderful! But shall we have someone yet who will be more wonderful? Dare we hope for a wiser and more authoritative counsellor? The key to the house of David is upon His shoulder, that He may open or shut. Will anyone else come who can shut doors which He has opened? or open doors which He has shut, and upon which He has written, "No admittance"? Is there any paradise to which Jesus Christ cannot admit us? In the city are twelve gates: "on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates . . . And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was one pearl"—but has He the key to all the gates? Is there any paradise anywhere, of any sort, to which someone else may admit us, but for which Jesus Christ has no key?

Let me ask it for myself again, like John in the prison, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? What say ye? Shall we find here full scope for the exercise of the affections? Is there room here for the most daring adventures of the intellect? Is there depth enough and height enough for reason to prove itself? Is there space enough for imagination to fly in? Is there any thought, or any emotion, or any possible adventure of the human soul, anywhere, for which our Lord fails to supply an opportunity? Is there a wiser counsellor than He? Is there a higher wisdom than His? Is He of God made unto us wisdom, the Last, the Final, the Absolute, the Sum of all wisdom? Is He the Supreme Court of the universe, or must I look for another? When I have had His decision, can I appeal my case and go to someone else?

I heard a professor say once—as though it were a new thing under the sun, he said it with a very solemn air; he said it as though it were a great discovery; he said it as though he expected his hearers to be filled with awe at the tremendous suggestion; addressing a graduating class, he said, "Young ladies and gentlemen, this is an age of quest!" He described this age as a sort of animated interrogation point. I admit that it is crooked enough to be almost anything!

But the poor man seemed to suppose that the asking of questions was a new thing under the sun! But any mother or grandmother could have told him that that was the first thing the baby tried to do! Indeed, even before he could talk, he tried to pull open every door and drawer in the house. We were born asking questions—and have never got over it. Some people are so clever they are going on, and on, and on, and on. I do not know what they are going to find by and by. But here is ONE Who opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens—so it is said.

But what say you? When you have examined His keys, and turned over one key after another, like your own, and say, "I have not a key for that door; I will have to look for another," dare you presume to open doors which He has locked, or to enter any door without His permission? How many of you who are Christians can answer me this question: Is Jesus Christ final? Is He the last word? Our Evolutionary friends tell us that we may look for another. They tell us that Jesus Christ may be left behind, that some millions of years hence—I am not sure whether it is millions or billions—we may hope that this race of ours will produce a fairer than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that? This question is an epitome of all philosophies. There is nothing that is not related

to this: Is this One Who professes to be the Lord of light and of life the last one? When we come to Christ, have we arrived? Or are we just marking a stage in our upward progress?

II.

Let me tell you that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST STANDS READY ALWAYS TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION. I believe that whether this question was put for the disciples' sake, or for John's sake, it was an honest enquiry. There is a phrase from Tennyson that has become almost hackneyed because it has been so frequently referred to, yet I quote it here—

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

I believe that is true. There is a vast difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is negative: unbelief is positive. Doubt says, "I do not know." Unbelief says, "I do know." Unbelief is always antagonistic to the truth; doubt presents an open mind.

There are many honest doubters. There are many people, like John, who are not independent of their moods, nor independent of their bodies either. It is not difficult to be gloomy when one has the tooth-ache. You must not be too hard on the man who asks questions when he is down in the dumps. You must not judge John by what he says in the prison. But whether it is his question, asked for himself, or vicariously propounded for the benefit of his disciples, it was an honest enquiry: they wanted to know whether Jesus Christ was the one who had been promised, the desire of all nations—whether in Him the hearts of men could rest as having found the final disclosure of Deity.

The Lord Jesus will receive anybody sympathetically who comes with his honest doubts to Him. If you are a seeker after truth, I beg of you to come to Him. The verse which we sometimes sing is a mirror of human experience—

"Just as I am—though tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fightings and fears within, without,
'O Lamb of God, I come!'"

Come with all your doubts. If you come, Jesus Christ will answer them. But you must not expect a discussion of mere abstractions. There was never anyone who could answer questions like Jesus Christ.

There are two verses I like to put together. They show how unlike Jesus Christ is to all other teachers. I once had a mathematical master. Certain people who see me trying to work out a problem in mathematics usually smile. It may be my fault, but I think it was partly the fault of my teacher, because he was a man of impatience. If anyone asked him a question he thundered at him, holding him up to ridicule and contempt, saying, "You ought to have known that ten years ago." By and by we were afraid to ask questions. A brother told me last night that he had read an article in which the writer asked, "Are little children grown up? Ought their questions to be answered as though they were intelligent enquirers asking after the truth?" I wish I had had a teacher like that.

But here is my first verse, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally"—but that is not what comforts me so much. I know He can answer my question, but—"and upbraideth not." He does not scold us. He does not complain because you are such a dull scholar. And the other verse I like to put beside that is, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn

of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The Embodiment of infinite wisdom will be infinitely patient with His dull scholars; and if you come asking Him, saying, "I really want to know whether the Bible is true," if you come in that spirit, the Bible will soon answer your questions.

I know the Modernists speak of us as though our minds were static. And of course those of us who believe the Bible, believe it because we never did ask questions! Do not believe it. The Bible is not afraid of questions; and He Who is the Inspirer and the Unifier of the Bible, of Whom the Bible speaks from Genesis to Revelation; will answer your question—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

But how will He answer? Teachers might well make the Master their model. He said, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed he is, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Blessed is the man who can accept that programme and say, "If that is what the Lord Jesus does I will look for no one else."

That is how He answers: "The blind receive their sight." His miracles of physical healing were parables, illustrations, of His moral and spiritual ministry. How true it is that the blind receive their sight! We know nothing apart from Jesus Christ. I have a theory of my own. I will mention it to you, and you can turn it over in your minds as much as you like. I believe that inasmuch as Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, and that in Him all things consist, or hold together, it is as impossible to understand God in nature without the Spirit of God as it is to understand God in this Book. In other words, I do not believe a man can be a true scientist without divine illumination. He can receive only the letter of what God has written in nature's book, but he cannot read the inner meaning. He will never be able to "consider the lilies," or to "behold the fowls of the air." He can only see them, but he will not know them until God teaches him.

"The blind receive their sight." Christ opens another realm; He introduces us to another world; He gives life a new perspective. There was a time when nothing was known about this continent, until Columbus—or someone else; it is a little difficult to say to whom the honour is due—opened the door into another hemisphere. Our Lord opens the door, not only into another world, but into world upon world. He opens up all eternity. "The blind receive their sight."

He enlarges the scope of our action. "The lame walk." That does not mean merely physically. I think it was Dr. A. T. Pierson who said of the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, that Dr. Gordon was accustomed to take long walks with his Master, and one day they walked so far the Master would not allow him to come back again. "The lame walk." They march triumphantly at last through the gates into the city, because Jesus Christ teaches them how to walk.

"The lepers are cleansed." The springs of life are purified. Every polluting and corrupting influence, coming under the dominion of Jesus Christ, is purified and removed. He is the light of the world, the Sun that gathers everything up into Himself, and makes it holy as He is holy.

"And the deaf hear." Kelvin brought two hemispheres together with a cable; Bell bridged long distances with the telephone; Marconi taught us to speak to the whole world through the quivering ether. But all that only assisted and extended our auditory powers. Jesus Christ opened another realm of harmony, and taught us to hear the music of the Skies, the harmony of Heaven. He brought us, by His grace, into tune with God, so that we can hear the angels singing, and anticipate the sweetness of the song of Moses and the Lamb.

"And the dead are raised up." I have seen dead men quickened into newness of life. Go to India, Africa, the Isles of the Sea; go where Paton ministered to those who were cannibals and see them made alive, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Though a mother would bury her dead out of her sight, Jesus Christ gives back the son to his mother: dead in sins, He awakes to holiness. Lazarus comes back to his weeping sisters. It is still true, I say, that the dead are raised. The flowers bloom in the wilderness: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

"And the poor have the gospel preached to them." The poor may dream of coming wealth. Some-day the postman may bring news of a fortune. He comes, and the letter is opened—"not today. I shall have to look for another." I told you once that when I was a little boy I used to ask my mother for extravagant things. If they were legitimate, she always promised that I should have them, but always with this provision: they were to be mine when her ship came home! Did you ever hear that? I have been waiting for that ship to come home ever since! I hope it will yet come into port. Ship after ship had come in, but I had always been looking for another, until I found Jesus Christ. "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

If we could wake up to-morrow morning and read that the men of fabulous wealth had pooled all their resources to cancel the nations' debts to start the world in business again, everybody would be cheerful. I can see the business men slapping each other on the back, saying, "Is not that great—all debts paid? We have clean sheets now, and are ready to start again."

Some man says, "That is too big a conception for me, but I wish somebody would pay my rent and some other things I owe, and give me a new sheet. I should be happy if that were true." Wonder of wonders, the poor who have nothing in this world at all, have this inheritance. We are all poor, we are all bankrupt, if we only knew it; but we have the glorious gospel preached to us, that Jesus Christ died for sinners, that His blood was shed to pay our debts, and that He has purchased us to Himself, and that there is laid up for us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." We are saved for time and for eternity.

"Go and tell John that, and ask him if he is satisfied with that programme." Are you? I think it is enough. The Lord be praised, He Who is God's last word is come, and in the person of Jesus Christ we have all that infinite grace could give us; for "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Let us pray: Lord, Thou hast come to make us rich. Help us to come in our poverty, and to receive Thee. Bless any of doubtful mind here this evening. Help us all to come, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

HOW TO BE HAPPY

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."
—Phil. 4:4.

A Sermon by Rev. W. S. Whitcombe, M.A.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto,
Sunday Morning, August 13, 1950.

THE sum of this Epistle," says Bengel, the great expositor, "is, 'I rejoice, rejoice-ye'." Like a good teacher, the Apostle Paul is not afraid to repeat his lesson. Three times in this brief letter to the Philippian believers he commands them to rejoice, besides other indirect exhortations to the same effect. It is evident from what he says that the friends whom he addresses were troubled about the outcome of his trial, fearing that the verdict would be contrary. But the prisoner of the Lord is full of courageous confidence that he will be released; even as he contemplates the possibility of the worst, he dares to look upon death at the hand of the Roman executioner in this spirit: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me" (2:17, 18). When he has to tell them that their messenger, his companion in labour and fellowsoldier, was nigh unto death, he bids them rejoice as his concluding word: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (3:1). And like some other preachers who have still another point after their final point, the Apostle adds another exhortation in the words of our text: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, 'Rejoice.'"

Triumphant Certainty in Affliction

It is no mere passing mood that Paul expressed thus with such emphasis, for, from what he says here, it would appear that he had now been in Rome some time and the course of his trial had already dragged its weary way through the law's delays, for long months. Even John the Baptist appears to have fallen into a dark and sombre mood in the terrible fortress where he was to feel the headsman's axe, for he sent his disciples to ask the Lord, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3). But Paul in this epistle undertakes to impart his good cheer to his overly anxious friends outside the prison walls. This was characteristic of his outlook on life, for he had learned to rejoice in tribulations also. In one of his other epistles he wrote those words of triumphant certainty in the midst of affliction: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It was his never-failing confidence that Christ always led him in triumph. How often that note of victorious assurance is sounded in the writings of this great man! Even the tramp of the sentry and the thick walls of his Roman prison but served him as a reminder of the angel guard that God had set over His saints, and he writes to assure his friends that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord.

But this spirit is not only characteristic of this Epistle and of the Apostle Paul, it runs throughout the whole Bible and is at the very heart of its message. I know that Christians are often regarded as persons that are sorrowful if not sour; that the Bible is a dull, sombre Book, as dark in its outlook as the black leather it is usually bound in. Preachers are popularly supposed to

be killjoys. You remember Macaulay's gibe at the Puritans: that they objected to the sport of bear baiting, not so much because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators! And we who inherit the rich fruits of Puritanism must also expect to fall heir to the censures that were hurled at them. The world suspects that we church people are opposed to drinking and to gambling and other worldly amusements as much because of the supposed pleasure that they give as because of their inherent sinfulness. That is a caricature of Christianity, when it is not a deliberate slander, for the burden of this Holy Book is Good News to inform the wretched sons of want of a never-failing source of the fulness of joy and of pleasures for evermore.

Good Tidings

I would remind you that the word Gospel is simply the old English word for Good News. When our Saviour was born the heavenly hosts swept near the earth and allowed the startled ears of humankind to hear for a moment the sounds of joy unspeakable and full of glory that are never silent in the courts of heaven. The angel announced to the shepherds who kept watch over their flock by night: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10, 11). Once before in the dawn of history when God spoke the sevenfold creative word, the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. Even in the early days of God's revelation of His gracious purposes, the sweet singer of Israel knew the blessedness of fellowship with God and wrote that "In thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. 16:11). How those magnificent hymns of inspired praise, where deep calleth unto deep, tell of the believer's joy in His God and Saviour. Time after time the psalmist calls upon his fellow-worshippers to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to sing aloud unto the Lord, to raise the glad sound of the harp and the instrument of ten strings: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted" (Ps. 89:15). We think of that well-known prayer in the Ninetieth Psalm: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."

The same note is not absent from the prophets. We read in Isaiah the promise: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation (Is. 12:3). Even the prophet that foresaw a fearful vision of judgment which was to fall upon the men of his day, could by faith look beyond the frowning providence of God and trust Him for His grace: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:17, 18).

"They Began To Be Merry"

When we come to the New Testament we read in that superb short story told by the greatest of all teachers,

the parable of the Prodigal Son, that when the poor, hungry and foolish son returned from the far country in all his poverty and want, the Father, seeing him a great way off, ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And not only did the gracious, bountiful Father bring forth the best robe and a ring and shoes, but he also said: "Let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." It was the Elder Brother that took exception to the sound of music and dancing, but in the Father's house there was joy unrestrained. The point of this parable is like unto the two companion pieces that Our Lord told at the same time, which He summed up by saying to the proud and self-righteous Pharisees: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). We rejoice over Pentecostal blessings when thousands turn to Christ, but in the presence of the angels there is joy when one sinner repents, and that must mean that God Himself rejoices over one sinner. Indeed, the Apostle Paul dares to call him "the blessed God", that is, not merely the One whom men worship and to whom they ascribe blessing and honour and glory, or who is the source of all blessing and goodness known to men, but it also means that God is in Himself the Happy God: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2).

The Reality of Sin and Suffering

Notwithstanding the eternal purposes of God's sovereign grace to bless His children with joy unspeakable and full of glory, we shall not need to be persuaded of the grim reality of the charger whereon that wicked woman laid the head of John the Baptist, nor of Roman dungeons such as held the Apostle Paul, nor of dens like that wherein the saintly Bunyan laid himself down to dream his immortal dream of *The Pilgrim's Progress* from this world to that which is to come. There was a cross, on the place of a skull to which the spotless Son of God was nailed; to the thoughtless multitude that once sought to follow Him without being ready to pay the price, He uttered the warning: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

For all true followers of Christ, the Cross is not simply an ornament, nor even the symbol of world-wide dominion, it is an instrument of death. Under the old dispensation the Psalmist wrote that "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," even though he added, "but the Lord will deliver him out of them all." And in the New Testament we read that "They that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

This inspired Book recognizes that the road to the better exacts a full look at the worst. It faithfully records the world's travailings and groanings; it looks sin full in the face at its worst and in spite of the fearful sight, proclaims a full and free redemption. I must confess that I find Pollyanna somewhat annoying; I mean those people who are so set upon making the best out of everything, that they steadfastly refuse to see the worst. A pessimist has been described as a man who has had the misfortune to live too long with an optimist! The believer is a genuine optimist because seeing and knowing the worst of his own sin and the world's wrongs, he nonetheless has confidence in the saving purpose of

God in Christ to put away sin and to make a clean new world wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Rejoicing in Tribulation Also

It is only true joy that is capable of rejoicing in tribulations also. The world and the flesh well know how to rejoice in the good things of life: in health and strength, wealth and prosperity, in troops of friends and in plaudits of the multitude. There is no need to exhort any of us to be glad when we find ourselves in such circumstances. There are times when the admonition of our text seems unnecessary, and other times when it seems impossible. We would do well to examine ourselves as to the real source of our joy. Is it to be found in the things we possess? Do we, like some ancient philosophers, make the pursuit of pleasure the chief end of living, the measure of the worth of all things? If so we need the reminder of the Preacher who long ago discovered that "All is vanity and vexation of spirit. . . Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14). Riches make themselves wings; the exuberant health of to-day may be changed into racking pain and sorrow tomorrow; death lays its hands on our dearest treasures. The pleasures that this world offers, even when they are perfectly innocent, are evanescent. They are vanity, that is emptiness, like a child pursuing the wind and grasping the empty air only to find its little hands full of nothing. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin, but it adds that they last but for a season, and that is another way of saying that they are not true pleasures. The sweets of disobedience turn in the end to bitter wormwood and gall.

If we know our own hearts, we find them resting in Christ, rejoicing in Him as the fairest among ten thousand, as the one who is altogether lovely. The language of our souls is expressed in the well-known words of the hymn we sang:

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

What Is the Source of Our Joy?

And yet having so said in all sincerity and truth, do not our hearts in spite of themselves tend to cling to the things of earth? Christ is our only joy we say, yet on the street outside the church our car is parked waiting to take us home to a good dinner that is even now cooking in the oven or is already prepared in the refrigerator. We have a roof over our heads, some provision for the future, reasonable security in our place of employment. We can scarcely be said to be, any of us, in the circumstances of the poor prisoner who wrote our text. He was stripped of all adventitious aids to happiness, he was thrust down to the very bed rock of existence. Whatever joy he found was not found in things of this life but in the great eternal realities, in the things which do not pass away and in God who remainest. We do well to pray that we may not be led into temptation and yet sometimes God in His wisdom chooses to deal with His people as He dealt with His servant Job. First of all, you remember, a messenger

came to tell him that all his servants were slain, and while he was yet speaking still another came with the heavy news that his cattle were carried away, and finally there came another also to tell him that his sons were slain. And Job himself, stripped of all his prosperity, was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown and sat down among the ashes with a potsherd to scrape himself withal, to long for death which cometh not.

Supposing that to-morrow your doctor reported to you that he had detected in your body the workings of a disease for which medical science as yet had found no remedy, and he warned you that you had only a limited time to live. Could you then say as the saint of old said: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15). I say we ought to ask ourselves if our happiness will leave us should we be called upon to say as did the man of old: "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." (Job 3:25). Is our joy pagan or is it Christian? Is it natural or supernatural? Is it in the things of time which pass away or is it in Christ who endureth?

"In the Lord"

Our text not only exhorts us to "Rejoice", but to "Rejoice IN THE LORD." That is the only source of true, lasting joy. All else belongs to the realm of the things that shall be shaken, God alone abideth forever. He is the Blessed God and is the only source of un-failing joy. A few moments ago, I quoted some Old Testament allusions to joy. Let me now quote the rest of those passages and point out to you the source whence these blessings spring. We read, for instance, in the Psalms: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted" (Ps. 89:14).

What is the joyful sound? Is it the good news of sins forgiven and of the hope of glory? Certainly these great blessings are included and much more also. The "joyful sound" of which the Psalmist speaks is deeper and more basic than even these unspeakably great blessings. It is this: what God is in Himself. The "habitation" of God's throne is the foundation of His righteous government and holy power, it is His very nature, for He is a God that delighteth in mercy and whose truth endureth to all generations. "In thy name," adds the inspired hymn singer, "shall they rejoice all the day long." The name of God in the Bible is His signature, if I may so speak. It is all that He is worth because it represents all that He is. It is His reputation because it reveals to men His nature, what He is. And it is in His Holy Name that the saints of all ages can rejoice, as in the New Testament it is said that "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Or look again at that other verse that I quoted from Isaiah, whom Augustine called the Fifth Evangelist because the principles of the Gospel are so clear and apparent in his prophecy. "Therefore," he says, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." In a dry land water is a necessity of life, and a springing fountain is an untold blessing. But to what does the prophet's "therefore" refer? Why and how may we with joy draw water from the wells of salvation? Read

the context: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." And then follows our verse with its "Therefore": "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is. 12:1-3). Here again the same fundamental truth that we found in the Psalms is expressed: The source of salvation is in God and what He is. He is holy and just, angry with sinners every day, and yet a merciful and gracious God who has devised means that his banished be not expelled from him. This prophecy states the New Testament truth that "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9).

Not a Passing Mood

Christian joy is not a passing mood, an empty wish, nor a light-headed sentiment that changes with changing circumstances. It is a rational, righteous, and holy conviction based upon the very being and nature of God Who is light and Who is love, and Who in Christ Jesus has demonstrated His justice and His mercy so that He is faithful and yet just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We grasp the bed rock of ultimate reality when we by faith lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who died the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

Somewhere I read a story about Martin Luther. Though I have not been able to find it anywhere in his writings or even in his *Table Talk*, it has a homespun roughness about it that gives it an authentic ring. One day, so the story runs, when the great Reformer was passing through some time of heavy trial, he went about the house so full of gloom that he cast a spell of darkness upon all that were in it. As he sat at his desk with his head buried in his hands, brooding over his difficulties, he was startled to see his wife standing in the doorway of his study all dressed in mourning robes of darkest hue. He looked up and said with dismay, "Who is dead?" And that remarkable woman replied, "Why, I thought from your sorrowful countenance that God was dead!" Rebuked for the littleness of his faith, Luther rose up and cast off his mood of despair, laying fresh hold on his favourite text: "If God be for us who can be against us?"

How May We Make It Our Own?

But how may we lay hold upon this joy and make it our own? I answer just as simply as we answer the enquiring sinner: Just take it! Our text is emphasized and repeated in the Epistle to the Philippians not only because its message was needed but also because it was within the reach of every believer. The river of His pleasure is flowing full and free, and the invitation that is for the sinner is also for the saint: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . . And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:1, and 17). Our joy is "in the Lord" and that means that it is abounding and full, and that we may buy it "without money and without price".

How Paul Fulfilled His Command

Let us see how the Apostle Paul fulfilled his own command to rejoice. How can he be filled with joy as he faces death in a Roman prison? He writes to his fearful friends that "the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel". What happens to him, he says, matters not, so long as "Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20, 21). In the following chapter he reminds his readers that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. The things that were once gain, he now regarded as refuse that he might win Christ, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (3:9). In that same context he writes of his concentration on Christ: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13f). We do too many things, all of them good it may be, but tending to distract us from the one thing that matters most. We are Marthas, cumbered with much serving, rather than Marys, who are found at the feet of Christ.

And all this is but another way of saying that we must rejoice IN THE LORD. Not in possessions, not in life, not in our own righteousness, not in our desires and ambitions, but in the Lord, and then it shall be a rejoicing that changes not but endures alway. We are apt to see the command "Rejoice" and to fail to see that it says, "Rejoice in the Lord". Let us fix our eyes upon the Lord and then we shall find it possible to "Rejoice alway". Like Peter on the stormy sea, if we let our eyes wander from the Master's face but for a moment we shall see the wind and the waves and perforce cry out in agony, "Master, I perish!"

A Command

If my saintly old professor of Greek were to comment on this text, I know what he would say, for I have often heard him say it about many similar words in the Book: "It is not an invitation, nor an exhortation, it is a command!" And that simple observation is very profound. It is as much a command to rejoice as it is to believe. It is as much an obligation for the believer to be filled with joy as it is to obey the Ten Commandments. A sour-visaged, sad and sorrowing Christian is a poor advertisement for his Master. We may well remind ourselves that God's commands are God's enablings. When he says, "Rejoice," he places at our disposal the rivers of his pleasure and bids us find in His presence fulness of joy and at His right hand pleasures evermore.

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee
Wh'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad, when Thy gracious smile we see;
Blest, when our faith can hold Thee fast.

O Jesus, ever with us stay;
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.

Trajan, it is said, rent his clothes to bind up his soldiers' wounds. Christ poured out his blood to heal his saints' wounds, and tears his flesh to bind them up.

—GURNALL

NO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN QUEBEC

FOR the second time within a week two different groups of four persons, eight in all, have been arrested in the town of Val d'Or in Quebec for having dared to preach the Gospel on the street corner. Thus does our neighbouring French and Roman Catholic province flaunt its denial of religious liberty in the face of Canada and the world. A few weeks ago another group of street preachers was roughly manhandled by an organized band of gangsters and then the unresisting preachers were arrested for having disturbed the peace! A few months ago we reported in these pages the incident in Shawinigan Falls, Quebec, when the meeting place of the Christian Brethren was wrecked by another organized group of Roman Catholic fanatics. In each of these cases the Roman Catholic spokesmen place the entire blame for the disorders on the Protestants who had "provoked" the attacks. The Protestants were the cause of the trouble, it was asserted, since they had invaded a territory that was Roman Catholic and had dared to preach the Word of God in French! The fact that in one case the preaching was done in the open air, and in the other case inside a hired hall, in no wise lessened the alleged offense of having "provoked" the disorders.

We should also like to emphasize the fact that in each case the opposition did not arise from spontaneous action on the part of a resentful populace, but was evidently the result of a careful laid plain executed by highly organized groups. Roman priests did not appear in public, but no one doubts that as in all Catholic Action societies, they were the responsible directors of the public violence against the Protestant preachers. We have already quoted from several articles which have appeared in the clerical press of Quebec and now we add to that documentation the following excerpt from an editorial in *Le Devoir* of Montreal. The leading editorial in that paper from which the following translation is taken is all the more remarkable in that the Roman Catholic press of Quebec passes over in almost complete silence all the various incidents to which we have referred. Aroused, however, by the publicity accorded in the English-language press of Canada, they feel compelled to make some reply as will be seen here.

A Roman Catholic Comment Translated from *Le Devoir*

Judging by what has happened, there is reason to ask if we are not faced with a systematic campaign to set Protestants against Catholics. We should like to believe in the sincerity and evangelistic zeal of these Baptist street-preachers, but the least that can be said, is that their proselytism contains an element that is clearly provocative.

Baptists have the admitted right to preach their doctrine and to attempt to make converts among Catholics. But there is their way of doing it!

They ought to remember that they are not dealing with a primitive population in a backward region. Abitibi is a new country, but its pioneers are recruited from every part of the province and they have always given proof of a progressive spirit. It ought also to be remembered that the preaching of the Baptists is not addressed to pagans who have never heard Christ spoken of, but to Catholics convinced of the certainty of their doctrine. Conversions, if there are to be any, can only come after long discussions on the interpretation of the Gospel, and not after harangues on the street . . .

Baptists have the right to carry on the work of proselytism in Quebec. They can erect church buildings, which will remain almost empty, but where no one will disturb them. They may give radio addresses, even if the French sermons are not of the sort that will interest many listen-

ers. They may distribute tracts and circulars at the risk of seeing the greater part of them end up in the waste paper basket.

If they decide to try the methods of peddlers, they ought not to be surprised, however, at the welcome which awaits **colporteurs who are importunate and insulting**. That has nothing to do with religious freedom. It is simply a question of instinctive defense on the part of people who only wish them to hold their tongues. We do not think that Protestants differ from Catholics on this point.

The Sheep "Provoke" the Wolf

The burden of the clerical journal's editorial is clear: The fault is not with the attackers but with the attacked; it is the innocent sheep that provokes the hungry wolf to pursue it; it is not the Roman Catholic mobs who burn chapels and attack street preachers who are to blame, it is the peaceful Protestant evangelists who incite the attackers and compel civil authorities, acting under priests' order, to arrest them. Such is the line of reasoning of this paper which assures us in the same article that "religious freedom is not at stake!" Such was the reasoning of the imperial Roman authorities of the ancient world when they cast the early believers to the lions. With the pagan persecutors it was not a question of religion at all, much less of religious liberty, but of obstinate disobedience to a civil edict on the part of a troublesome minority who were determined to run counter to the great mass of public opinion and who sought to convert heathen to the Gospel of Christ. We wonder what Roman Catholic writers would think, if they took the trouble to compare their own intolerant utterances against Protestants with similar arrogant statements, made by the persecutors of ancient pagan Rome against the first martyrs. The inflexible but unenlightened defenders of a state church who cast John Bunyan into Bedford jail for twelve long years declared that it was not a question of religious persecution on their part but of obstinate perversity on his part. All he had to do at any moment to gain his liberty was to promise to refrain from preaching in unauthorized assemblies—to them a matter of little difficulty, but to the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* a matter of eternal importance which he dare not do in the sight of God.

Quebec's Repressive Laws

But we return to the argument of *Le Devoir*, which speaks for the Roman Church in its most conciliating mood. First of all we note its assertion that "Baptists have the admitted right to preach their doctrine and to make converts among Catholics. But there is their way of doing it." Somewhere or another we have heard similar statements made about agreement with principles but criticism of methods, and we must say that it is not above the suspicion of containing some ulterior motive where more is meant than meets the eye! Be that as it may, the assertion of our Roman Catholic contemporary that Protestants have the right to preach in Quebec in French is a piece of theory which has no counterpart in actual practise. The wrecked Shawinigan Falls chapel is mute evidence of the falsity of *Le Devoir's* gratuitous assertion, as are the arrests of the street preachers mentioned above. Several years ago, at least one Quebec municipality passed a by-law under the terms of which distribution of the Word of God, even without note or comment, was forbidden. When several missionaries were arrested for street preaching one of the best lawyers in Quebec was engaged to defend

them and he was paid largely by money raised through appeals made in these columns. He cited in court the local by-law which forbade public meetings without the previous permission of the chief of police and asked the French Roman Catholic magistrate, seated under a large crucifix, if he understood the terms of the law to include the Roman Catholic *curé* when he wished to hold a public *corpus christi* parade. The magistrate quickly replied, with evident horror at the very thought of restricting the Roman Church, that the text of law did not mean that a Roman priest would be required to seek permission for his public manifestations. The magistrate's admission was an unconscious confession that the intention of those who framed the law was to make it applicable to non-Romanist activities while allowing the priests free to do as they pleased. That sort of thing is not freedom, whatever *Le Devoir* may say.

Is Quebec Pagan?

The article we have quoted above professes to be deeply wounded by the suggestion that the people of Quebec are backward in any way. They are not pagans, it cries in horror, but Christians. Conversions, it says, can only come after long discussions on the interpretation of the Gospel (*L'Évangile*). It is indeed touching to see a Roman Catholic paper so interested as to tell Protestants how they ought to proceed with their work of evangelization. It reminds us of the unasked for lectures on proper methods delivered by the Hotelman's Association to Temperance forces. We are well aware that French-Canadians are an industrious, sociable and decent folk. We confess that we like them and certainly we bear neither their language nor their race illwill. But that does not alter the fact that they are without a knowledge of the way of salvation as it is revealed in the Word of God. Those who saw Rome's Pagan Circus at Ottawa a few years ago, conducted under the name of a Marian Congress, can have no doubt of the essential paganism of this system. Christ is put in a secondary place, the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice is overshadowed by the multiplicity of the so-called sacrifice of the mass where priests command the Saviour to become incarnate on their altars, where they then blasphemously dare to say that they sacrifice Him afresh! Charms, amulets, invocation of heavenly beings, superstitions of all sorts, abound in the Roman Church just as they abounded in the various heathen religions whence Rome absorbed them in the course of its struggle for world domination. But the most evident mark of Rome's anti-Christian tendency is that it is a church without a Bible! It is true that educated French-Canadians who demand the Bible may purchase a translation that bears the official *imprimatur*, but in Northern Quebec, of which we now speak, the average French-speaking Roman Catholic says flatly that the Bible is a forbidden book. Many of them have told us that their priests have commanded them to burn copies of the Word of God, without note or comment, on the grounds that it was said to be a "filthy book". Can a church that keeps the Word of God from its people be said to be truly Christian?

Le Devoir informs us that conversions can only come after long discussion as to the interpretation of the Gospel (*L'Évangile*), which is the usual French word for the four Gospels or even for the New Testament. But the fact of the matter is, as every Roman Catholic in Quebec knows, the masses of the people do not possess the Word of God because they have been warned against

it by their priests. It is to introduce them to the Bible that the street corner preachers proclaim its message.

Rough Treatment Promised Evangelists

We note that *Le Devoir* warns Protestant evangelists that they must expect rough treatment when they undertake to preach the Gospel in Quebec. We are well aware of the truth of their warning, as these pages bear witness, and we thank God for the young people who have taken up the challenge and for the courage of the French-Canadian believers whom God has given them. We are firmly convinced that these things will fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel as surely as did the persecution of the early Christians work for the advancement of the saving truth of Christ in the days of the Apostles.

As to the latest episode in Quebec when four street preachers were arrested on a charge of failing to obey police orders to move on, we are informed that only four persons were listening when they were taken in charge by the police. There was no disorder and no apparent motive for the police order except the intention to put an end to all preaching of the Gospel. Such abuse of police authority constitutes an arbitrary abuse of power to abridge the British liberty of free speech. We are convinced that there are unmistakable grounds here for a civil action for false arrest.—W.S.W.

SPANISH OMELET

(From *The Washington Post*)

That the enemy of your enemy is your friend is the theory which gives plausibility to the Senate resolution to lend \$100,000,000 to Franco's Spain. But it is a theory entertained only by primitive minds, and is utterly at variance with logic, or common-sense. Worse, in the present case the illusion is terribly harmful, for the vote will alienate many of our true friends, and will erode our moral standing all over free Europe.

A wing of the Catholic Church has never ceased to plug financial aid for Franco, though Vatican-Madrid relations are not exactly cordial. For the last year or so cotton interests, thinking of business with Franco, have joined the backers. Then the military, worrying over beachheads in Europe, have never hidden their views about the need for a friendly Spain, though the anticommunism of Franco surely requires no activation along the route of bribery. Finally, sparking the whole campaign, a Spain lobby has been subjecting members of Congress to tremendous pressure, concentrating of late upon the Republicans, and indulging in much the same tactics as the China lobby practices.

But the sinister aspect of the vote is the harm that will be done in Western Europe to the American standing. A week or so ago much disquiet was expressed in the Senate over the success of Soviet propaganda against America. The theme song is America's alleged antidemocracy. In this respect the vote on the loan to Spain was as good as an appropriation of many times the loan to the publicity chest of Moscow. It will be played up as proof of the mockery of the democratic pretensions of America; surely that is patent enough. This is a heavy price to pay for bribing the enemy of your enemy to be your friend.

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"The Antichrist—His Portrait and History" By Baron Forcelli50
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"Blakeney's Popery in Its Social Aspect", 312 pages	1.00

The Gospel Witness
130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2 - Canada

TORONTO'S R.C. MORNING PAPER

TORONTO possesses but one morning newspaper, which bears the names of the two publications a millionaire's money purchased to form *The Globe and Mail*. Almost the only resemblance to either of its fore-runners this paper still retains is to be found in the time-honoured quotation from Junius which still adorns the masthead of its editorial page: "The subject who is truly loyal to the Chief Magistrate will neither advise nor submit to arbitrary measures." The kind of lip service the modern, streamlined millionaire *Globe and Mail* renders to the principle of Junius, while its heart is far from it, is well demonstrated in the editorial from that paper reprinted below.

We ask our readers to compare the argument of the Toronto daily with that of the overtly clerical organ of the French-Canadian Roman Catholic Hierarchy in Quebec as quoted in the preceding article. They both give utterance to the same line of official Romanist propaganda, which is that those who attempt by peaceful meetings on the street to set forth their views are guilty of provocation and are therefore to be blamed. As we have said elsewhere, that sort of fallacious reasoning has always been the strong argument of persecutors in all ages and places. *The Globe and Mail* in this matter makes itself a mouthpiece for the official line of Roman Catholic defense of intolerance in Quebec. As long as our Toronto daily is thus willing to have its editorials on religious freedom dictated in the Chancellery of Cardinal-Archbishop McGuigan there will be no need of an official Roman Catholic daily in Toronto to match the ecclesiastical fulminations of *Le Devoir* in Montreal, of *Le Droit* in Ottawa or *L'Action Catholique* in Quebec City. *The Globe and Mail* is much more valuable and useful to the Hierarchy under Mr. George McCullagh's presidency than is the plodding and dull official *Canadian Register*.

We have nothing but kindly feelings toward our morning contemporary for it has just been our joy to eat a very good dessert concocted from a recipe found on the Homemaker's Page. The distaff side of our household says that this is the best part of the paper and we are strongly inclined to agree since eating the excellent dessert made therefrom (Recipe sent on request). We respectfully suggest to Mr. McCullagh that he would do well to allow Madame Homemaker to write his editorials and, if he is prepared to be responsible for the legal action resulting therefrom, to set his Roman Catholic editorialist to writing the recipes, which may be less poisonous than is his warped and perverted sense of religious freedom.—W.S.W.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL EDITORIAL

Riots and brawls in Northern Quebec towns, resulting from street meetings of some youthful Baptist evangelists, have been noted several times in the news recently. The pattern of these affairs is strikingly similar to instances which occurred two or three years ago in the same district. The fact that several of the same people are involved suggests that they learned little from their earlier experiences of the weakness of the technique they are pursuing. Efforts at persuasion which end up in a free-for-all would seem to be at fault in some particular.

These episodes have been portrayed as religious persecution; and it is quite probable that some measure of intolerance is involved. But the claim of persecution would have much greater plausibility if the victims were not so ready to put themselves in a provocative situation. Several of them have been arrested for violation of the law, or for

defiance of the police. Somehow sympathy comes hard for martyrdom so eagerly sought.

Religious freedom is one of the most precious possessions of any society. But like other freedoms, it imposes obligations and responsibilities equal to the importance of the privilege. The most important of these is the recognition of the right of others to their own beliefs, mistaken or erroneous though we may believe them to be. Unless a mutual respect is accorded, efforts at persuasion are bound to fail. The cause of any particular form of Christian teaching is not to be furthered by methods which anger others, or which involve disrespect of the law.

There is nothing admirable in notoriety-seeking or in conduct disruptive of the public peace. This is not an expression of the privilege of religious freedom, and the sooner the tactics leading to these disturbances are discontinued the better. No good purpose is being served, and the day when Canadian religious and racial unity will be achieved is being put back many years by such unwise conduct.

ANOTHER VOLUME OF SPURGEON SERMONS

CHARLES H. SPURGEON, *Volume II of Great Pulpit Masters*, Published by Fleming, H. Revell Co., N.Y.
Price in U.S.A. \$2.25.

IT WILL not be necessary to review Spurgeon's sermons in these pages, if indeed it were possible to do so anywhere else. Certainly there is no need of giving this Pulpit Master what publishers call a "puff", to urge subscribers to this paper to read his incomparable messages, for they would scarcely be regular readers of this paper if they did not admire the Prince of Preachers, and if they were not already numbered among his admirers, we fancy that they would soon be added to them or cease to subscribe to this publication. We therefore simply announce, with deep satisfaction, that the well-known publishing house of Fleming Revell has brought out a volume of sixteen unabridged sermons by Spurgeon. Only two of them are to be found in the sixty-three volume *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, while the others were delivered in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Hence they are addressed chiefly to believers, though Spurgeon did not differentiate as sharply as some preachers do in our day, between evangelistic sermons and those for the deepening of spiritual life. His preaching of the Gospel was of the sort that saints profited by it, since he always sought to expound the great doctrines of grace, while his messages addressed to believers were so simple and direct, and at the same time so Scriptural, that they never failed to point the Way to Christ.

There is no tonic for a preacher like reading the messages of this great servant of God who was so signally used in his day and generation, and whose influence is still mighty through the printed page as the publication within the past year of three other volumes from his pen attest. (*Sermons on the Second Coming*, and two volumes of *Sermon Notes*.)

We trust there will be many more published, and not only published but sold, and read, for they are not only models of the art of homiletics, textbooks of theology and sources of illustrations, but they are also food for the soul and fountains of inspiration for those who love Spurgeon's Saviour. They make a preacher want to preach, even while they make him feel he could never preach as Spurgeon did.

The Introduction by Dr. Andrew W. Blackwood of

Princeton has the virtue of being brief, and yet it forms an excellent introduction to the life and work of the great preacher for those who have not read Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, that entrancing story of how God saved Charles Haddon Spurgeon and thrust him forth as a labourer into His great harvest field. We heartily agree with Dr. Blackwood when he says that "... many a young minister can learn much by living with the written sermons of the London divine. So can hosts of laymen and women." For that reason from the first we made it a rule in Toronto Baptist Seminary that the study of sermons, and especially of Spurgeon's sermons, should form an important part of our course.

In lieu of a review of this volume, we venture to reprint below an excerpt from Spurgeon that is given as sort of a frontispiece to one of the sermons contained in it.

—W.S.W.

HOW THE SAVIOUR WELCOMES SINNERS

We are told that in stormy weather it is not unusual for small birds to be blown out of sight of land on to the sea. They are often seen by voyagers out of their reckoning and far from the coast, hovering over the masts on weary wings as if they wanted to alight and rest themselves, but fearing to do so. A traveller tells us that, on one occasion, a little lark, which followed the ship for a considerable distance, was at last compelled through sheer weariness to alight. He was so worn out as to be easily caught. The warmth of the hand was so agreeable to him that he sat down on it, burying his little cold feet in his feathers, and looking about with his bright eye not in the least afraid, and as if feeling assured that he had been cast among good kind people whom he had no occasion to be backward in trusting. A touching picture of the soul who is aroused by the Spirit of God and blown out of its own reckoning by the winds of conviction; and the warm reception which the weary little bird received at the hands of passengers conveys but a faint idea of that welcome which will greet the worn-out, sin-sick souls who will commit themselves into the hands of the only Saviour.

—CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

GRACE

Man must be emptied of self before he can be filled with grace. We must be stripped of our rags before we can be clothed with righteousness; we must be unclothed, that we may be clothed upon; wounded, that we may be healed; killed, that we may be made alive; buried in disgrace, that we may rise in grace. These words are as true of the soul as the body—"Sown in corruption, that we may be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, that we may be raised in glory; sown in weakness, that we may be raised in power." To borrow an illustration from the surgeon's art, the ill-set bone must be broken again, that it may be set aright. I would press this truth on your attention, because a soul filled with self has no room for God; and, like the inn of Bethlehem, given to lodge meaner guests, a heart full of pride has no chamber, within which Christ may be born "in us the hope of glory".

—DR. THOMAS GUTHRIE.

OLD TIME REVIVALS

A NUMBER of very favourable comments have been received on the series of articles entitled "Old Time Revivals" which we have printed in these pages during the last few months. Rev. John Shearer, M.A., of Glasgow, Scotland, the author of the book from which these interesting accounts have been taken has written us the following letter which we are happy to share with those who have profited by his work:

Glasgow, July 7, 1950.

Dear Mr. Whitcombe:

You may freely use my book on Revivals in THE GOSPEL WITNESS. Many thanks for sending it so regularly. It is greatly needed.

God has blessed our witness against Modernism greatly. Failing sight has compelled me to resign my office as Principal of our Evangelical Baptist Fellowship Bible College. I can barely see what I now write and reading is largely debarred. Dr. Henry Curr, a strong Evangelical succeeds me in September. We shall greatly value your prayers for us.

I enclose booklets and will be grateful for a notice in THE GOSPEL WITNESS. I fear that *Old Time Revivals* is now out of print but we have a quantity of booklets in two parts: *The Story of Revival*, Part One and Part Two.

May our gracious God greatly cheer Dr. Shields and yourself in your fine work for Him.

Yours in Him we love,

JOHN SHEARER.

The above-mentioned booklets may be obtained from the author at 38 Queen's Drive, Glasgow S2, Scotland. Part One is marked at the price of 4d, by post, and contains the following articles, several of which have been printed in these pages: The Fount of Revival, Luther and the Reformation, A Great Day at the Kirk of Shotts, Wesley and the Great Awakening, The Birth of the Bible Society.

Part Two contains the following: Athanasius *contra* Mundum, The "Wark" at Cambuslang, The American Reival of 1857, Praying Hyde in India. The price marked on Part Two is 5d. by post.

THE REVIVAL IN DUNDEE

AFTER ten months' labour in Larbert and Dunipace, Robert M'Cheyne was called to Dundee, and here in the *quoad sacra* parish of St. Peter's he found his great life-work. He was appalled at first by its heathenism. He mourned its "idolatry and hardness of heart," and the feeble influence of the surviving church. But with the fortitude of faith he set himself to his task. Very soon he established a weekly prayer meeting on the Thursday evening, and here he read to his people or told them the story of God's marvellous work in past Revivals. Once again, as so often before or since, the seed of the great harvest was sown in the prayer meeting.

He devoted himself to his pastoral duties, and often, after several hours of visitation, he would again meet the gathered families under some friendly roof and declare the Word of Life. Preaching to him was an unceasing delight. It was the unfolding of the beauty and glory of Him he loved. He carefully prepared his message. One of his oft-quoted sayings is: "Beaten oil—beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary." Like Bunyan, he was "ever in the Word." Asked one day if he was ever afraid of running short of sermons, he replied: "No; I am just an interpreter of Scriptures

in my sermons, and when the Bible runs dry, then I shall."

He loved to make his appeals to the careless "on the back of some massy truth." God's Word was in his hands like a hammer, and yet none ever preached with greater sweetness or tenderness.

But M'Cheyne was himself his greatest sermon, and here is the secret of his success. He walked with God in the beauty of holiness. Our Lord's presence seemed to envelope him, diffusing a Heavenly aroma. His very manner, his bearing as of a man standing in God's presence, was often the means of awakening indifferent sinners, so that men who could not remember a word he said found themselves with an unforgettable impression that God had drawn very near to them.

From the beginning God set His seal to his ministry. Callers of an unusual type appeared at the manse—men and women in trembling anxiety of soul! Like the physician's house in an epidemic, his home was marked, and became the resort of sin-sick souls. Men gathered from all parts of the town and district to his ministry. That surest sign of coming Revival, an enlarging prayer meeting, was now appearing, when a strange thing happened.

This instrument of Revival, so delicately fashioned, so perfectly adapted, was suddenly, in the eyes of men, laid aside by the Great Master Builder, and another uplifted. Never robust, and unsparing in his labours, M'Cheyne broke down under the strain of his strenuous pastorate. Serious heart trouble developed, and he was compelled to leave the scene of his delightful duties and seek rest and renewal, first in Edinburgh, and later in a pilgrimage of enquiry amongst the Jews in the Holy Land.

It may be that men were regarding too fondly the instrument, and forgetting the Hand of Sovereign Grace that wielded it. But M'Cheyne was not really set aside. God had used his preaching most markedly. Now He would use His prayer! During all this period of isolation his heart bore the burden of Dundee, and, like Ephras, he "laboured fervently in prayers." Sore sickness fell upon him in the East, and he lay at the gates of death. But still he agonized for his flock, and it was one day, while thus he travailed on the brink of Eternity in far-off Bouja, that the great shower began to fall in Dundee.

William C. Burns, already used so mightily in the Kilsyth Revival, was further honoured in opening the flood-gate of blessing in Dundee. He took M'Cheyne's place in his absence, and it was on a visit to Kilsyth that the memorable awakening took place there, on July 23, 1839. On his return to Dundee at the Thursday evening prayer meeting on August 10, he spoke of the wonders he had just witnessed, and invited those to remain "who felt the need of an outpouring of the Spirit to convert them." About a hundred waited, and, as he addressed them, suddenly that infinitely tender Spirit whose incoming in power can never be mistaken, came upon the people, and the whole assembly was bathed in tears. From that moment the work went on increasing in might. The Church was opened and densely crowded night after night for four months. The Word of God proclaimed by Mr. Burns and like-minded ministers had piercing effect. The most tender presentation of Christ produced the bitterest agony of soul so that strong men cried out for mercy in the midst of the congregation.

The whole city was moved, for Christ again was centred amid an adoring people. Whole families were affected at once, and were found mourning apart as in the prediction of Zechariah. A great spirit of reverence came upon the community, and sin was greatly restrained.

Renewed in strength, Mr. M'Cheyne returned to his flock while the showers were yet falling. No slightest tinge of jealousy disturbed his fellowship with Mr. Burns. Each had learned a great humility at the Master's feet, and co-operated in pure disinterested love. He has described his first service after his return—the church crowded to the doors, the pulpit stairs filled on one side with the aged, on the other with little children; the wonderful singing, so sweet, so tender and affecting, the intense hearing of the Word, the manifest hunger for the Bread of Life; and then the strange convoy homeward, when the people thronged about him in the street, pressing upon him, as upon his Master in Galilee, constraining him to stop and pray and speak again and yet again on his way to the manse!

During these days of Heaven upon earth, a multitude passed from death to life. They were very largely from amongst the poor and working classes. The rich, he laments, were almost untroubled. Then gradually, the flood subsided and flowed quietly on, a brimming river within its banks. The work stood, for it was maintained by an unceasing prayer. For a time no less than thirty-nine prayer meetings were held weekly in connection with his church, and of these five were carried on wholly by children. He loved the children dearly, and had himself the free joyousness of an innocent child. The work amongst these little ones was remarkably deep and abiding, as is witnessed by his tract, "Another Lily Gathered." These lambs of the flock were lovingly welcomed, and at the Lord's Table their bright young faces, radiant with a Heavenly joy, gave a fresh sweetness to the feast of love.

Robert M'Cheyne had now three years to live. He was haunted by the conviction that his career would be short. During those last years a deep solemnity and a great yearning love marked his utterance. He preached verily as a dying man to dying men, watching for their souls as one who must shortly give an account. The sense of a fast approaching end saved him from the snare of popularity. "Oh, for closest communion with God," he cried, "till soul and body—head, face and heart—shine with Divine brilliancy! But oh! for a holy ignorance of our shining!"

His labours increased and extended, and the memory of his evangelistic tours lingers in many parts of Scotland to this day. The end came on March 25th, 1843. The typhus fever, raging in his parish, suddenly seized his enfeebled frame, and, after a very brief illness, he succumbed. In his delirium he was ever in spirit with his beloved flock, praying, preaching and directing them Heavenward. He died with his hand uplifted in the act of benediction.

After his death a letter was opened addressed to him by one who heard his last sermon. It read as follows: "I hope you will pardon a stranger for addressing to you a few lines. I heard you preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said as your manner of speaking, that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness

that I never saw before. You also said something in your prayer that struck me very much. It was, 'Thou knowest that we love Thee.' Oh, sir, what would I give that I might say to my blessed Saviour, 'Thou knowest that I love Thee.'"—"Old Time Revivals."

CHRIST BEGINS WHERE OTHERS END

With all this wealth of life, inventions, machineries, libraries, schools, opportunities of all kinds, with all these unreckonable riches of civilization, we are still conscious of a gnawing and intolerable want. Civilization has increased the pungency of that necessity. If civilization had done less we might have thought it could have done more, and we might have been tempted to wait for it. We might have said, "Give civilization time, and she will find the healing plant, she will bring up the golden store that will drive all poverty away, she will fetch the sage from far-off lands that will solve every problem, illuminate every mystery, unloosen every chain; give her time, and she will find the balm to lull my brain to rest and give me the freedom that comes of profound and renewing sleep." Civilization has exhausted itself. There is nothing more possible to civilization except in matter of degree. You cannot put your finger down upon one thing and say, "Civilization has not attempted this yet." It may not have gone to the full length which it is possible to overtake, but civilization has refined our houses, given us education, dispelled many prejudices, gathered around us riches of all kinds: civilization has put pictures upon our walls, songs into our mouths, filled our houses with musical instruments, made everything beautiful and rich, and yet we have covered up a worm that dieth not with most charming flowers, with most beautiful coverings of all imaginable kinds. The one thing our civilization has not touched in us is our sin. We have seen pictures and have gone home to lay our head upon thorns. We have heard music, an eloquent lie, and have fallen down on bruised knees to utter a sobbing cry for pardon.

So Jesus Christ still keeps his place in civilization. He begins where others end. Where they cry from exhaustion he puts on his strength. Where the mystery bewilders and blinds them, he dispels it by many a shaft of light. He is the propitiation for my sins, he stands between me and God, and O, mystery of love, he stands between me and myself; for he too is Judge, and the sentence of life and death is upon his lips. He knows my days — he comforts me with many a promise. He knows my sin — he says he came to reply to its agony and to destroy its power. He knows my weariness, and he promises me rest in his own great heart, and let this be said about him — which can be said of no other man — he met the world's want, in words if not in realities. Say what we will about realities, this man mentioned the very thing we need most. He says, "You want life?" Yes, that is true. "You want rest?" Yes, above all things we want rest. "You feel hunger?" Yes, a gnawing hunger. "You are athirst?" Yes, aflame, afire with thirst. "Then," saith he, "I have mentioned your necessities: I will address myself to their direct and immediate and complete supply." As a poetical conception, taking that limited view only, the Carpenter's Son stands above kings and crowned ones of every name and suggests what they had not ventured to dream.

—JOSEPH PARKER.

A FEW WORDS ON READING THE BIBLE

The following brief message is translated from *Les Adieux (Farewell Messages)* of Adolphé Monod, a great French evangelical pastor who, as he lay on his dying bed racked with pain, was in the habit of gathering some friends around him each Sunday and sharing with them his sweet meditations of the Lord and his glowing testimonies of the on-goings of God upon his soul. The following message was delivered on November 11, 1855.

IT HAS been my custom on these occasions to address some word of Christian exhortation to the friends who have so kindly gathered about me. To-day my suffering deprives me of that consolation, and I must confine my efforts to tell you of a fact of Christian experience which may lead you to a blessed reflection on the value of the Word of God. I speak in all simplicity of an experience that came to me this week. During one of the nights in which I suffered much and slept little, toward the end of the night at half past four, I went to bed in the hope of obtaining some rest, while I asked the young man who was sitting up with me, one of those who have had the goodness to devote themselves to me in this way, to read me a chapter of the Word of God. He offered to read me the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. I accepted his offer, asking him, in order to grasp the connection of ideas, to begin at the sixth or even at the fifth chapter. We read one after the other the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth chapters, and I no longer thought of sleep, for my attention, my interest, my admiration were aroused by the heavenly language of Saint Paul, I mean rather of the Holy Spirit speaking through Saint Paul. Then we read the ninth and following chapters right to the end of the book, with equally sustained interest; and finally we read the first four chapters in order to leave nothing out, and thus we went through the entire Epistle. Almost two hours were thus passed, and I thought of nothing but of reading the Word of God and profiting by it. The Lord in his goodness provided for the bodily rest that I lacked. I cannot tell you how I was struck in reading the Epistle to the Romans in its entirety, by the seal of divinity, of truth, of holiness, of charity, and by power which is imprinted on each page and on each word. We felt, my young friend and I, without at first communicating our thoughts, that we had been hearing a voice from heaven, that independently of those testimonies which attest the inspiration and the divine authority of the Scripture, it bears its own witness to itself with complete efficiency, just as Jesus Christ bore witness to Himself by his works. We also felt how useful it is to read the Scripture as a whole, and how we lose much by taking only portions of it, fragments, detached verses. A book can only be understood by reading it as a whole. That led us to see that there are two ways of studying the Word of God which ought to be followed: the one, a study of the whole to produce the blessed impression that we had just enjoyed, and the other a detailed study, in order to understand each verse and each word. But the principal impression was a feeling of humility. We said, one to the other: "What, have we had a treasure like this at hand and have we neglected to draw upon it? We have spent two hours in heaven, we have found ourselves transported not only into the company of the best of men, of the inspired and privileged organs of the Holy Spirit, but of the elect angels and the company of Jesus Christ." We resolved, placing our resolution under the care of Him who alone can

protect the resolutions of His children, to give ourselves with new ardour to the study of Scripture, to sacrifice to it, if need be, a host of instructive and useful reading, which are not comparable to the Word of God, and to live with this Word as we wish to live with God Himself, because the reading of this inspired Word of the Spirit of God is like a conversation with God. I recommend to you, my dear friends, the Word of God constantly and profoundly studied and meditated. It will lift us up above all else; it will be the strength of our life, the joy of our heart and our powerful consolation in life and in death, through Jesus Christ. I ask it for you as for me. Amen.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS — AND THEIR ELDERS

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!

How skillfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labour or of skill
I would be busy too:
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play
Let my first years be past,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.

—ISAAC WATTS.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Third Quarter Lesson 9 August 27, 1950

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

THE DECREE OF CYRUS

Lesson Text: Ezra 1.

Golden Text: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."—Jer. 29:10.

INTRODUCTION:

For several weeks we have been studying the messages of prophets who prophesied either before the period of the captivity of Israel, which commenced in 721 B.C., or before the captivity of Judah in 586 B.C. Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets of the exile. Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the leaders of the captives as they returned to rebuild Jerusalem about 536 B.C. The history of these events is recorded by Ezra and Nehemiah. For that reason we are studying Ezra first so as to understand the historical background, then Haggai and Zechariah, afterwards Nehemiah, who tells of later events, and finally Malachi, the last of the Old Testament books.

The Book of Ezra follows 2 Chronicles in order (Compare 2 Chron. 36:22, 23 with Ezra 1:1; 2). The events described in his history cover about 80 years, from the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C., to the settlement of the returning captives about 456 B.C. Assyria, by whom Israel had been subjugated, and Babylon, to whom Judah was enslaved, had both lost power, being defeated by the Medes and Persians. The Persian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great and strengthened by Darius, reached its greatest extent in the reign of Artaxerxes or Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:5, 6; Esth. 1:1).

Ezra himself, a faithful priest and leader of the Jewish people, appears to have enjoyed high favour at the Persian court. He was a ready scribe, a man of education and piety (Ezra 7:1-10). From Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, he received letters, money and supplies which enabled him to lead a large party of Jews back to their homeland about 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:11). He carried out many necessary reforms. Ezra narrates also the history of the return of the first party of exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua.

The Book of Ezra may be divided into three sections:

- I. The First Return of Exiles (Chapp. 1-6).
- II. The Second Return of Exiles (Chapp. 7, 8).
- III. The Reforms of Ezra (Chapp. 9, 10).

EXPOSITION:

I. The Decree Expounded: verses 1-4.

Daniel, the prophet of the Lord, had influence in the Persian court, as he had had with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (Dan. 1:17-21). To him God revealed His Divine purpose to free His people from the yoke of their captors, as well as the time of their liberation (Jer. 25:9-14; 27:22; 29:10; Dan. 9:1, 2). Daniel would also know that God had foretold through Isaiah, some two hundred years previously, that the name of the monarch destined to deliver the Israelites would be Cyrus (Isa. 44:28; 45:1, 13). It is probable that Daniel, knowing that the time for the fulfilment of God's purpose was drawing near, had communicated these matters to Cyrus (Dan. 1:21; 6:28; 10:1).

The great lesson of this chapter is that God carries out His sovereign designs (Acts 15:18; Rom. 8:28). The Israelites, disciplined and enslaved because of their disobedience to God, had fulfilled their time of exile, and God in mercy was about to restore them to their own land, as He had promised (Jer. 33:10-14). But only a minority returned, and there was no general national repentance. Thus, with the exception of a brief period, they remained a subject people until the year 1948. Every word of the Lord will ultimately be fulfilled in His own time and manner (Matt. 5:18).

God is sovereign in the instruments through whom His will is to be accomplished (1 Sam. 26:19; 1 Kings 11:14, 23). The heathen king, Cyrus, whether or not he was influenced by Daniel or had political designs of his own in connection with the Jews, was used by God to fulfil His own purpose; it was God who stirred him up to write the decree (Isa. 44:28; 25:1).

The wording of the decree is definite, decisive and exact (Ezra 6:1-12; 7:11-26). Cyrus was ready also to implement his permissive legislation.

II. The Decree Executed: verses 5-11.

In spite of the fact that King Cyrus had given permission for all Jewish exiles to go back to their homeland, only about 50,000 availed themselves of the privilege (Ezra 2:64, 65). It is sad to think that the majority apparently preferred to remain in the heathen land with its wild pleasures, its idolatry and its sin. Many had been called, but only a few chosen (Matt. 20:16). The invitations of the Lord may be spurned by many, but blessed are they who listen to His voice (Rev. 3:20).

It is noteworthy that many of those returning were leaders, priests and Levites, for they set an example for the people, and they were ready to guide the affairs of the restored community (Ezra 2:68-70). Zerubbabel, whose Persian name was "Sheshbazzar" (v.8), had been born in exile, but was recognized as the prince of Judah (v. 11; Ezra 3:8; 5:16).

Cyrus counted out the treasures which had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon when Jerusalem was captured (2 Chron. 36:7; Dan. 1:1, 2) and handed them over to Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:14; 6:5; Jer. 27:19-22). This incident illustrates the grace of God, which causes those whose hearts have been touched, to yield their all to the Saviour (Lk. 19:8).

FOR YOUNGER CLASSES:

The events of this chapter may be told effectively in your own words. Impress upon the scholars the fact that the Lord has a plan for every life and for every nation, and that He will carry out His purposes. Illustrate by reference to the Israelites in bondage to Egypt and their liberation accomplished by God through His servant Moses (Exod. 1:15).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Aug. 21—The King's Decree Foretold 2 Chron. 36:14-23.
- Aug. 22—The King's Name Foretold Isa. 44:21-28.
- Aug. 23—The King's Power Foretold Isa. 45:1-8.
- Aug. 24—The People's Return Foretold Jer. 27:19-22.
- Aug. 25—The People's Liberation Foretold Jer. 25:8-14.
- Aug. 26—The Lord's Visitation Foretold Jer. 29:10-14.
- Aug. 27—The Prophet's Prayer for Judah Dan. 9:1-19.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

O God of Bethel. I am not skilled to understand. Begone, unbelief. 'Twas Jesus my Saviour. Come, ye that love the Lord. Encamped along the hills of night.

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