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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE POPE'S "DEFINITION" OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE ASSUMPTION

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, October 29th, 1950
(Electrically Recorded)

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."—1 Tim. 2:5.

FOR something like twelve months, I am not sure of the exact dates, the Roman Catholic world has been observing what they are pleased to call a "holy year." To a church so holy I should have supposed that every year was holy. What does it mean? I think it is a means of advertising the church and its works. I noticed that they were selling in Rome "holy year" cigarettes, and I suppose holy year whiskey besides. I do not know. I dare say it is very much like the departmental stores. They have bargain days, and dollar days. As far as I have observed it is always a dollar day when one goes into a store to buy anything. But they call it dollar day, and anniversary sales, and what not, and through it all they usually sell the same goods at the same prices.

The "holy year" is to be climaxed by the "definition"—mark that word—the definition and proclamation by the pope of the Doctrine of the Assumption. It is amazing really how ignorant many people are of what the Roman Catholic church is, and what it is doing. Many Protestant ministers seem not to know anything about Roman Catholicism. The newspapers of the world have been full of it for a long time now; it has been advertised the world over, and it is expected that some half a million people will assemble in the great square at the vatican. A couple of years ago I saw a quarter of a million young girls in their teens in that square, who had come that they might see the pope. It is a stupendous event—five hundred thousand people—including five to six hundred bishops and archbishops from all parts of the world, and at least thirty cardinals, the latter to meet in a secret consistory on the 30th of October, when the pope will

privately communicate to them his purpose. I say, whether you agree with it or not, a religious event on such a stupendous scale must be challenging to thoughtful people, and it is worth our while to take account of it.

I do not think anybody can regard the Roman Catholic church lightly, and much less, with contempt. It is a colossal institution, an institution, beyond doubt, of superhuman origin. I do not think you can say that the Roman Catholic Church is purely a man-made affair. I do not believe it is. I do not think its long history can be explained on that ground. Superhuman in its origin, it is equally superhuman in its maintenance.

What Is the Roman Catholic Church?

What is this institution? It claims to be the one and only church of Christ. Its head claims to be the one and only authorized head of the church. It claims to be above all, not churches merely, but above all governments, above all presidents and governors and kings. The pope claims to be the vice-gerent of God upon earth. Well now it is either that, or its opposite, one or the other. There is no neutral ground here; we must either accept the tremendous claims of the Roman Catholic church for what they are, or else recognize, as I say, that they are the very opposite.

The Worship of Mary

The worship of Mary is universal among Roman Catholics. The practice, the principle of it, is rooted in pagan idolatry. The Romans had their Juno, the Greeks their Venus, the Egyptians their Isis, and the Sidonians their

Astarte. They were worshippers of women. I read to you tonight what the prophet Jeremiah had to say about that: "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven." Mary is not the first goddess to be called "queen of heaven," and Romanism basically is essentially pagan. It is not Christian at all. There is not in Roman Catholicism a Christian element; it is the opposite of everything that is Christian. Mary, I say, is worshipped. Some time ago there was a congress held in Ottawa, the Marian Congress. I was there, and I saw the floats, and the cars, the circus procession. That is what it was, all arranged to impress the ignorant, and the centre of attraction was a wooden image to "our blessed lady." I have been in Athens several times, and I have been moved as I have stood on Mars Hill and looked over that ancient city, to see the shrines still standing, marvellous architectural creations, devoted and dedicated to heathen gods and goddesses. When the apostle Paul came to Athens his spirit was moved within him as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. If you had been in Ottawa, the capital city of this country, a couple of years ago, at the time of the Marian Congress, if you had any spiritual sensibilities at all, you too would have been moved, your spirit stirred within you, to see the capital of the Dominion of Canada wholly given to the grossest idolatry, never surpassed in Greece or in Rome, or anywhere else, right here in Canada. And these congresses were held all over the world, approved by the pope, and their promoters specially commended, in order that the virtues and claims of "our blessed lady," as they call her, might be the more generally recognized.

What Says the Scripture About Mary and Christ?

What have the Scriptures to say about this matter; what have they to say about Mary in relation to her Divine Son? The first word we have is an account of His being lost in the temple, and when Mary found Him she said, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And you remember, young as He was, His answer: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or in the things of my Father. Not Mary's business, but about His Father's business. The next mention of their relationship you will find in the account of the marriage feast at Cana. When they ran short of wine Mary said to Him, "They have no wine." He answered: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The next is a more extended passage, where they came to Him and said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." What did He say? He answered them saying, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He accorded no pre-eminence whatever to His mother—He treated her with the same respect which he offered to all women, but no more, nor did He recognize the human relationship. The fourth case was when Mary stood before the cross. Jesus saw her, and John was there, and He said to her in respect to John, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother! And from that hour (John) took her unto his own home." There was no indication that Mary was exalted above others in His estimation.

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

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Only One Other Mention of Mary

The only other reference to Mary in the Scriptures is in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, where she is mentioned among those who waited for the coming of the Holy Ghost, who tarried in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. It is also worthy of note that, of the ten appearances which our Lord made to His disciples, during the forty days in which He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, of not one single occasion is it recorded that He showed Himself particularly to Mary. She saw Him with the other women, but He did not differentiate between them. Throughout the rest of the New Testament, in all the Epistles, as well as the rest of the Acts of the Apostles, right to the end, Mary is not mentioned even once. Certainly she was not worshipped by the early church. We have the record of the activities of the apostolic church, of their worship, and of their evangelizing the people round about, in the Acts of the Apostles, but Mary does not appear, nor is she even mentioned. She is not mentioned in one of Paul's epistles, nor Peter's, the first pope if you please! He was remiss, wasn't he? But the first pope wrote two epistles, and he does not even mention "our blessed lady;" and John wrote three epistles, and he does not even mention the mother of Jesus, whom he had taken to his own home. Nor in Jude or Revelation is there the slightest allusion to her. We conclude, therefore, that there is no Scriptural warrant whatsoever for ascribing pre-eminence to Mary.

The Apostles Refused to Accept Worship

We go further than that. The apostles strenuously objected to receiving worship themselves. They never accepted such worship as is offered the pope, but when at Lystra, after the healing of the lame man, they brought out garlands, and would have worshipped them as gods come down from heaven, the apostles ran to them and said, "No, no, we have come for the express purpose to teach you to turn from idols to serve the living and true

God." They refused to accept worship. Twice in the Book of Revelation, when John would have fallen at the feet of the angel and have done him honour, he said, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." That is all. No one but God is worthy to be worshipped."

The Roman Catholic Significance of "Definition"

Before telling you what this Doctrine of the Assumption really means, I would like to spend a moment or two in defining or explaining the significance of the word "definition" on Roman Catholic lips. It has a very specific meaning, and with your indulgence, I shall read just a paragraph or so from their own authority:

"The Vatican Council solemnly taught the doctrine of Papal infallibility in the following terms: "The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is to say, when in the exercise of his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians he, in virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, defines that a doctrine on faith or morals is to be held by the whole Church, by the assistance of God promised to him in the person of Blessed Peter, has that infallibility with which it was the will of Our Divine Redeemer that His Church should be furnished in defining a doctrine on faith or morals."

Only Two "Definitions" in One Hundred Years

For a period of a hundred years there have been only two occasions in which the pope has "defined" a doctrine. Let me mention them: The first was the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. I am amazed to discover how few people understand what that means. They think it has something to do with the conception of Jesus in the womb of the virgin. Nothing of the kind. The doctrine of the immaculate conception is to the effect that Mary herself was immaculately conceived, and by that means she was preserved from all contact with original sin, was born without sin, and never did sin. They ascribe to her such moral perfection as excludes entirely the possibility of sin.

Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception "Defined" in 1854

That doctrine had been held by Roman Catholics for centuries, and it had been freely taught in the church, and multitudes of people believed it. But it had never been officially defined, and therefore, it was not an article of faith binding upon the faithful. One could believe it or not, if he were a Romanist, as he pleased, but it was not a mortal sin to refuse to believe it, because it had never yet been authoritatively defined, and added to the body of "The Faith" which the church holds. But in 1854 the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was authoritatively defined and proclaimed, and thenceforth it became an article of faith which every one of the faithful must receive, whether they understand it or not, since it is binding upon them, and according to their authorities, it would be "impious and blasphemous" for anyone to call in question a doctrine that had thus officially been defined.

Immaculate Conception Unsupported by Scripture

And yet, my dear friends, in respect to that doctrine there is not a shred of Scripture to support it. Nowhere is it said that Mary was sinless. She did not believe it herself, because at the annunciation when the angel Gabriel told her that she was to become the mother of our Lord, she broke out into that hymn of praise, which is

SOW THIS MESSAGE BROADCAST

On November first the Pope of Rome proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary. We have been subjected to a wholesale barrage of newspaper articles and photographs of the "doings" in Rome, for the papacy knows how to exploit the press and it possesses one of the cleverest propaganda departments in the modern world. But the power of the press is by no means a monopoly of the Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. This issue contains a masterly discussion of this revoltingly superstitious and anti-scriptural dogma. Protestants whose souls loathe the abominations of Rome should warn uninstructed Protestants and enlighten their Roman Catholic friends, and this they may do by sowing this issue broadcast. Make use of the mails, give copies to friends and acquaintances; send us lists of names for distribution. The cost of single copies is ten cents but in quantities they can be supplied somewhat more cheaply. The simplest way, perhaps, is to send us lists of names and addresses with ten cents per copy to cover the cost of printing, addressing, and mailing. Help us distribute the message of this issue!

called "The Magnificat:" "My soul," she said, "doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." But if she was a sinless woman she did not need a Saviour. She knew better than all the Roman theologians when she called God her Saviour. There was no Scriptural warrant for it, but it was defined and proclaimed as an Article of Faith, a doctrine which must be accepted by the faithful.

Papal Infallibility "Defined" 1870

The next definition was at the Vatican Council in 1870, when the infallibility of the pope, which definition I have just read to you, was passed. The popes had been obeyed by the faithful for centuries, and I suppose the great majority of Romanists had believed, tacitly at least, in the infallibility of the popes, but they were not compelled to believe it; it was not sacrilege or blasphemy to admit that the popes might make mistakes, but in 1870 the infallibility of the pope was defined. Not that he is infallible in everything—that is not the meaning of papal infallibility, but when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, in his office as the supreme authority in the church. For example, a judge that sits on the bench may walk down the streets of Toronto, or he may drive, and he obeys the traffic laws, and every other kind of law; but when he walks into the court and takes his place on the bench, and the crier announces his coming, everybody stands, and in that court "His Lordship" is supreme, and lawyers and everybody else must do as they are told. His word is law; he is the incarnation of law for the time being.

Well now when the pope thus speaks in his official capacity, as the supreme head of the church, they call him, what he says is final, it must never be questioned. It is forever settled when thus a doctrine has been defined and proclaimed.

A Great Controversy Over "Definition" of Papal Infallibility

There was a tremendous controversy in Britain in 1870 at the time of the meeting of the Vatican Council, and the definition of papal infallibility. I have volumes on it on my shelves. Gladstone was in it; Cardinal Manning was in it; many men were in it. Pius IX was the pope who called the council, and he was the first one whose infallibility was officially defined.

Because that is true the Roman Catholic Church does not indulge in that kind of thing very freely, it exercises great care. Let me read this to you:

"It must be a decision by the supreme teaching authority in the church. The pope, as successor of St. Peter, has definitive authority, in the exercise of which he speaks neither as a private individual, nor as a mere theologian, nor as Bishop of the Diocese of Rome, nor as Metropolitan of the Roman Province, nor as Primate of Italy, nor as Patriarch of the Western Church, nor as head of any Roman Congregation, but as supreme pastor of the whole Church."

Perhaps you do not know it, but if you have been baptized, whether baptized by a Romanist or not, but baptized in any way whatsoever, you are a chattel of the Roman Catholic Church. They own you, and the pope is your supreme pastor, and you are in rebellion against him if you are a Protestant. You are a "heretic", and for your disobedience to the supreme sovereign pontiff, the church, even up to this day, by her present-day theologians claims the right to punish your heresy with death. They would do it if they could, and it is only because they have not the power that they do not do it.

Doctrine of Assumption Becomes an Article of Faith

This "definition" of the assumption of the body of Mary into heaven will make the doctrine of the assumption an article of faith. I repeat, it has been believed by many, but hitherto it has not been "defined", and it is still optional, but after next Wednesday, when once it has been defined and proclaimed by the pope, it becomes an article of faith which all "the faithful" throughout the world, on pain of eternal loss, are compelled to receive and obey. Henceforth to refuse to believe the newly defined Article of Faith will be to be guilty of heresy.

The Meaning of the Assumption

What is this doctrine of the assumption? It is just this, that the body of Mary, the mother of Jesus, was assumed—that is an archaic use of the word, not usually used in such a connotation to-day—up into heaven. You remember how Peter quoted from the Psalms on the Day of Pentecost in respect to the Lord Jesus: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Then he went on to say that that could not apply to David because David was buried and his sepulchre is with us to this day, and he did see corruption. Hence this was a prophetic word which applied to Jesus Christ, that His body would never decompose, it should not see corruption. So He was not left in the grave, but He was raised from the grave, and in due time ascended into heaven. The doctrine of the assumption teaches that, as the doctrine of what they allege to be a fact of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary preserved her soul from contact with original sin, so the assumption of her body into heaven, before it saw corruption, preserved the body which bore the Lord Jesus from corruption.

Is There Scriptural Warrant?

Now what foundation is there for that? I need not tell you surely that there is not a shred of evidence in the Scripture of any such thing. I have told you of the only mention there is in the Bible of Mary. It is on Wednesday to be defined, and when once it is defined every Romanist will have to believe the body of Mary was taken up into heaven.

What Is the Legendary Foundation?

Now, if there be no historic and no scriptural foundation, upon what legendary foundation does this story rest? Well, there is a legend to the effect that the apostles assembled about the deathbed of Mary. They were all present except Thomas. You will remember that Thomas had a way of being absent on great occasions. Thomas was not with them when Jesus came—he came a week later. But it is alleged that they all gathered around, and Thomas was not there. Mary died and was buried, and Thomas arrived later. Somebody fancied they heard the angels singing. It is not hard to imagine things like that you know. I do not know how my mind works when I am asleep, but it works, and I see all sorts of impossible things. Oh yes, you can make yourself believe that you hear the angels singing. Did you ever wake up at night and think you heard something? "What is that?" Sure enough, it is a footstep on the stairs. Did you ever hear it? Why he is coming upstairs, and he will be at the door in just a minute. You listen and listen, until by and by you actually hear the stairs creak, and the burglar is there! These imaginations of ours play strange tricks upon us sometimes! However, Thomas arrived late, and he insisted that the tomb should be opened. They opened the tomb, and the body of Mary was not there, and so they took it for granted that the angels had come and carried her body away to heaven!

Not Known for Over 300 Years

But the interesting thing about it is that nobody knew anything about that for three hundred years. It was not until more than three hundred years, not until the early part of the fifth century in fact, that they began to talk about it. That is a long time, isn't it? over three hundred years after the event.

Roman Catholic Writers Admit There Is No Scriptural Authority

And their own authorities admit that there is absolutely no Scriptural warrant for the doctrine of the assumption. They also admit, strangely enough—I have quoted from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the Fourth Volume, an authoritative work, written by Roman Catholics—that there is not a vestige of historical warrant for it either. It cannot be proved from Scripture; it cannot be proved from history, but it is a nice idea, a very nice idea! I have heard people say about infant baptism, "Well, maybe it is not Scriptural, but it is rather a pretty ordinance, don't you think? Rather nice." That isn't the question. The question is whether it has any Divine warrant or not, whether God commanded it, or whether men invented it. They admit there is no warrant for the assumption in Scripture or in history, but it has been quite generally believed since the seventh century.

Mariolatry Increasing

Thus the practice of Mariolatry, the worship of Mary, has continued to increase, and the Roman church has become more and more idolatrous as the years have passed. They go so far as to tell us that nobody knows where Mary died, whether she died in Jerusalem or in Ephesus, but according to legend it is likely that she died in one of these two places, some of their historians favour Ephesus, and some favour Jerusalem. But nobody knows where she was buried. Oh, it is true that some people have shown the shrine of Mary in Jerusalem, they are

supposed to know, but as a matter of historic fact, nobody knows where Mary was buried. And they do not know when she died. There are differences of opinion as to whether it was three years after the ascension of Christ or fifteen years, or somewhere between the three and fifteen, but anyway nobody knows. That is a fine foundation isn't it for a dogma which you must believe on pain of eternal damnation? Absolutely nothing to support it! And yet five hundred thousand people will gather to hear this fable "defined" and proclaimed!

Why Is It Now "Defined"?

How did it come about? I have a paper here containing a quotation from *The Manchester Guardian*. This is what it says:

"Rome, August 14th, 1950.

It is said in Vatican circles that during the last three centuries 118 cardinals, 2,523 patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, 82,000 priests, monks and nuns, and eight million Catholics have asked continually for this dogma to be proclaimed."

How interesting that is! You "cook up" something that you think would be nice to believe, and then get a lot of people to ask that it be "defined" as a dogma. It is not true, but that does not make any difference. Cardinal McGuigan joined the procession. I suppose he looked for some distinction, and he requested that the pope should define the doctrine of the assumption. And at last the pope has consented, but before doing so, he has taken about four years to consider it, and he addressed a letter to all the Roman Catholic bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and all the rest of them throughout the world, and asked them what they thought about it. The great majority thought it was a good idea, and they had better define it, and so after next Wednesday the Romanists will have an additional article to be believed. That is how it has come about.

The English Archbishops

The English Archbishops—I do not know whether there are any Anglicans here, I hope there are—protested against this definition. They protested on grounds that I should not agree with—that the church was thus raising an additional barrier to union with the English church. I should think there were barriers enough already, and it would not make any difference how many more they erect. But, however, this is what the Archbishops said. I quote from the statement of the Archbishops issued from Lambeth Palace:

"It was announced in Rome on Monday that the pope intends to proclaim in St. Peter's on November 1st, that the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven is henceforth an article of faith.

"This will mean that the Roman Catholic Church now regards this doctrine as a necessary part of the Christian revelation, and will henceforth require all its members to believe it to be true. We must at once state publicly that the Church of England does not and cannot hold this doctrine to be a necessary part of the Catholic faith, belief in which may be required of members of the Church."

Use of the Word "Catholic"

Of course you will distinguish between the use of the word "catholic" by Romanists and the use of the word "catholic" by Anglicans. For instance we recite the Apostles' Creed and say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic church." I do, I believe in the Holy Catholic church, but

the catholic church means the church universal. Rome—it is a contradiction in terms—talks about *Roman Catholic*, and arrogates to herself the right to call herself the only catholic church. So "catholic" needs an adjective to define it: The Anglican church is well within its rights, so should we be, if we were to speak of the word "catholic", because we believe that all believers, genuinely born again and members of the body of Christ, by whatever name they are called, be they Anglicans or Baptists or Presbyterians, or what not, or even Roman Catholics, if that be really true of them that they believe on the Lord Jesus and have been born again—they are members of the Holy Catholic church, that is the church universal—not the Roman Catholic, but the church universal. I say that, because that is the sense in which the archbishops use that term here. The Archbishops continue:

"The Church of England renders honour and reverence to the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is not the smallest evidence in the Scriptures or in the teaching of the early Church of belief in the doctrine of her bodily assumption.

"The Church of England refuses to regard as requisite for a saving faith any doctrines or opinions which are not plainly contained in the Scriptures."

I should think any Baptist could subscribe to that, couldn't you? We do not accept anything as a doctrine that is not plainly taught in the word of God.

A Roman Apologist Replies

A Roman apologist replies to the Archbishops in these terms:

"Neither the appeal to Scriptures nor the appeal to the primitive Church have proved effective principles of unity. On the contrary, they are fissiparous, (that means divisive) and the recent Protestant gathering at Amsterdam (I was there at the time) was an eloquent demonstration of the immense variety of doctrine and practice, often directly contradictory, which all claimed the same distinguished pedigree from the Scriptures and the early Church."

That was not true. The greater part of the leaders of the World Council of Churches do not believe the Bible, and they say so. If they believed the Bible there would be a basis of unity. It is further said by this writer in *The Reformer*:

"There is complete agreement among Protestants, who believe the Bible and the historic interpretations given us by our Lord, His Apostles, and the first Christians on the fundamentals. Our differences are about non-essentials. This is more than can be said for the dictatorial demands of Rome for uniformity.

And it is true. I know many Anglicans with whom I have far more fellowship than with some Baptists. Don't you? I have said again and again that I would rather have fellowship with an unbaptized Anglican (unbaptized according to my interpretation of the Scripture) than I would with a baptized pagan, like Harry Emerson Fosdick, for instance, and some other Baptists too. We can unite on the basis of the Word of God, and we go with each other as far as we can, and differ only on the non-essentials.

Allege That Protestants Envious of Roman Catholic Authority

I have here a very interesting cutting. I think it is most illuminating. It is a London dispatch, and it appeared in *The Toronto Globe and Mail* of October 16th. It refers to what the Archbishops have said, which I have

just read, and then there is a reply by the Rev. J. C. Heenan, superior of the Catholic Missionary Society at Westminster Cathedral:

"The proposed dogma, which will become an article of faith for Roman Catholics Nov. 1st, has been criticized by the archbishops of Canterbury and York, the first and second ranking British Protestant clerics.

"They have claimed that the doctrine fostered disunion of the Christian churches.

"Dr. Heenan declared he did not think 'the definition of the dogma was the real reason why the archbishops had attacked the authority of the Catholic Church.'"

Now notice this will you. That was not the reason. because it would make for disunion. This was the reason. He added:

The Essence of Romanist Religious Authoritarianism

"The reason, in my view, is this: There could scarcely be a more obvious mark of the authority of the Catholic Church than that when this doctrine is defined nearly 400,000,000 throughout the world will immediately and gladly give their obedience. This is the day when religious authority outside the Catholic Church is almost finished and I believe that behind this criticism there is a deep envy."

We are envious of the Roman Catholic church's authority, that it can say to four hundred million people, "Believe what we tell you or be damned"! Well, I would be damned before I would believe it. Envious indeed of their authority!

My dear friends, what does it all amount to? It means this, that it is contrary to Scripture to teach that there is more than one mediator. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

A Happy Memory

I cherish the memory of a very happy evening some years ago when a man came to me in company with his pastor. The pastor addressed me at the close of the service, I do not remember where it was, and he said, "This is one of my deacons." The minister was a Baptist minister. The deacon shook hands with me, and he said, "I have met you before, sir." I said, "Have you? I do not remember." "Yes," he said, "I have reason to remember meeting you. Years ago a friend asked me to go and hear you. When the service was over he insisted that I should go to the front and allow him to introduce me to you, and I did. My friend said, 'This gentleman is a Roman Catholic,' and," he said, "you greeted me cordially and said one thing: 'I am glad to meet you. Remember there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' That is all you said, but that text rang like a bell in my memory. 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'" He said, "I saw that I did not need the priest, and I did not need Mary, and I did not need the intercession of any of the saints. I needed no one but Jesus, and I came to Him, and found eternal life. Later I was baptized, and now for many years I have been a deacon of a Baptist church."

Only One Mediator

We do not need another mediator, do we? I heard a story of a man in Ireland. He asked the priest why he should go to confession. "Why, to have your sins forgiven." He said, "Do you ever confess?" "Yes, I confess to another priest." "And does the bishop ever confess?" He said, "Yes, he has a father confessor, either

another priest or a bishop, as the case may be." "Does the bishop ever confess?" "Oh yes, the bishop has to confess too. He may confess to his chaplain, or perhaps to a cardinal." "O a cardinal! And does the cardinal ever confess?" "Yes, the cardinal confesses, too." "To whom does he confess?" "To his chaplain or another priest." "And then what?" "Then they all confess to Mary, and Mary intercedes with Christ." "Well then," said the Irishman, "begorrah, I think I will take the short cut and go straight to Him myself." He was right.

A Caricature of God

I object to it because it involves a caricature of God. Roman Catholicism is a religion of fear. God is represented as a terrible God, and even Jesus Christ as one who waits to execute vengeance upon His enemies, and the only way to get His mercy is for His mother to intercede with Him. What a libel upon Jesus Christ! What a blasphemous libel that is! No, no, we do not need these intermediaries, we may come directly to Christ Himself.

Then they go on to teach the necessity of continual sacrifices in the sacrifice of the mass, where, as a matter of fact, there is only one sacrifice already offered.

The Difference Between Romanism and Protestantism

What is the difference between Romanism and Protestantism? Cannot you see it? Protestantism knows no authority outside of the inspired Word of God. When the Bible speaks that is the end of all argument. The Roman Catholic church tells us, "We know it is not in the Scripture, it is not in history; that does not make any difference. The church will so decree, and you will bow to the authority of the sovereign pontiff, or you will go to hell." The church is the supreme authority. The church uses the Scripture as it suits its convenience. It likes to say that the Scripture says that Peter was given pre-eminence among the apostles. That is another subject, and it is not true.

Where Protestantism Stands

Where do we stand as Protestants? A very simple position. Our question is, "What saith the Scriptures?" And if you can show it to us in the Scripture we have no argument against it, nothing then but to receive it, believe it, and obey it. "I delivered unto you," said Paul, "that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. In that fifteenth Chapter of First Corinthians he marshals his evidence—how he was seen of five hundred brethren at once, and of all the apostles—seen of Cephas, "And last of all," he said, "he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." There is your evidence—He died, He was buried, He rose again. Then the apostle Paul bases everything upon that great fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ which validated His death, and all the virtues which flow from his death, and all his teaching, and if Christ be raised, then just as Peter said, "God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ." Only one God, only one mediator, only one Name, for "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Let us, dear friends, abide by the Book, and give God thanks continually that He has given to us this Word of light. He will show us the path of life to that

place where in His presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures forever more. Let us pray.

O Lord Thou didst, we read in Thy word, set a little child in the midst, and say, "Except ye be converted and become as this little child ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Thou didst make the way of life so simple that not one of us need stumble. We thank Thee that we are freed, nay that we have been preserved from the complexities of all these intricate and labyrinthine theological discussions, but just believing in Thee Lord Jesus. There are many here this evening who have believed in Thee, and they rejoice in Thy salvation. Bless us every one, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

A CORRECTION

We publish below a letter received from a valued subscriber in Alberta, and our reply. As we have said in our reply, we greatly appreciate the letter, and find great encouragement in knowing that some of our readers read carefully and critically.

Following are the letters:

Dr. T. T. Shields, Alberta
Toronto, Ont. October 18th, 1950

Dear Sir and Brother:

I take THE GOSPEL WITNESS and value it, and almost always greatly enjoy your sermons. You do exalt our Lord Jesus Christ, and honour the sacred Word. But surely it was a slip, and I think a serious slip, when in October 5 issue, on page 7, you say: "There is a real redeemed Man seated on the throne of the heavens . . ." I am sure you do not teach that He needed to be redeemed!

Yours in Him

October 25th, 1950

Dear

I thank you for your letter of October 18th calling attention to a slip in THE GOSPEL WITNESS: "There is a real redeemed Man, the Federal Head of a new race, the second Adam, Who is a quickening Spirit, seated on the Throne of the heavens, and He is there as your Representative and mine." The word 'redeemed' should not have been there. The sense intended is, however, conveyed in the last few words: 'He is there as your Representative and mine'. Certainly He was the Redeemer, and needed no redemption.

I am obliged to you for calling my attention to this slip. For nearly thirty years at least one sermon has been published weekly, and sometimes more than one. It is a bit of a task, and it is refreshing to know that we have some readers who read very carefully, and weigh every word. I look at the volumes of the twenty-nine years, and wonder sometimes how it has been managed. They have in them a great deal of what Spurgeon once called, speaking of his own sermons, 'preserved tongue'.

I shall correct the slip in the next issue of THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

With renewed thanks for your very kind criticism, I am,

Gratefully Yours,

"T. T. SHIELDS"

ONE IN TEN

There were ten lepers healed, and only one turned back to give thanks, but it is to be noticed that our Lord did not recall His gift from the other nine because of their lack of gratitude.

When we begin to lessen our acts of kindness and helpfulness because we think that those who receive them do not properly appreciate what is done for them, it is time to question our own motives.

THE FAITH OF MOSES

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

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

(Stenographically Reported)

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."—Hebrews 11:24-27.

THE BIBLE is given to us to be a guide-book. The divine purpose in its writing is indicated in John's Gospel: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The Bible was never given to be used as a textbook in science or philosophy; it was never designed to be a textbook in history: it is given to us to point the way from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from death to life, from hell to heaven, from the prince of the power of the air to Him Who is Lord of all. And the Bible, after all, is a very simple Book. It is the profoundest of all volumes. We can never hope to exhaust its fulness of wisdom. And yet, for those who will be instructed in its precepts, and be guided by its principles, and comforted by its promises, it speaks in the language of a little child. Nothing could possibly be simpler than the Word of God. Indeed, we are never able to understand it until we become as little children. Our Lord Jesus said, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." So the Bible proposes to make the way of salvation so plain and so simple that we may all understand it and find the way of life.

One of the great words of the Bible is that which we find in our text this evening—Faith. The chapter I read to you tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please him." That is the *sine qua non*, that is the irreducible minimum, that is the thing without which we cannot be saved—whatever else we may have or have not, we must have faith or we cannot please God. And if we do not please Him, then we cannot be saved.

This chapter is written especially to tell us how we may have faith, and what faith is. The writer does not deal in philosophical abstractions. He does not weary you with intellectual subtleties. He states as simply and plainly as possible that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And lest that should not be sufficiently clear, the whole chapter is taken up with illustrations of what it means to believe God. The roll is called of those who have trusted God in the past, and their life-story is brought before us one after the other. And the outstanding characteristic of their life-story is illustrative of some aspect of this essential grace of faith. That principle is followed in the plan of redemption. God does not tell us what it is to

be righteous, what it is to be a sinner, in any abstract way. He sets forth His Son as an example of righteousness, as an incarnation of the principle of righteousness; and He says, "If you would know what it is to be righteous, measure yourself by Jesus Christ." Nothing is simpler than that. One comes along and says, "I am just as good as your church members. My life will bear inspection. I think my character will compare favourably with most of the religious professors I know." Well, the Bible does not argue with you on that point. The Bible simply says, "There is only one measure, there is only one standard: measure yourself by Jesus Christ. And if you are not equal to His stature, then you will never get to glory: Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Thus the principle of the incarnation is carried through the Old and the New Testaments; and these profound principles of truth are wrapped up in human life so that we may study that principle in operation and learn what it is to believe God.

Here before us we have the life-story of Moses. We are told that the explanation of his wonderful career, and of his unending influence upon the world of the past and of the present, and that his place in history, in time and in eternity, is explained by the fact that he believed God. "By faith"—that is the explanation, that is what differentiated Moses from other men of his time.

Now let us look at this old-fashioned and familiar text that we may receive some spiritual profit from it ourselves.

I.

First of all, just look at WHAT FAITH REFUSES. There is the negative side of it: "By faith Moses . . . refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." And you would say, perhaps, that he was a very foolish man for making such a choice. But I remind you that this choice was made "when he was come to years." Faith is here described as the exercise of a mature man. Moses was not a child; he was a full-grown man. It was "when he was come to years" he made this choice. And further, we are told that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." He was a man of trained and disciplined intellect. He was a man of vast learning. His natural intellectual capacity and power had been developed to the utmost. And when Moses, the mighty man, the man of massive intellect, the man who even on the natural plane stood head and shoulders above all his contemporaries, this giant among the sons of men, his powers trained and developed to the highest point—when he surveyed the possibilities of life, "when he was come to years", there were some things he refused.

Let no one say that faith belongs to our intellectual nonage, that only the immature mind, only the uninstructed, only the uninformed, only the undisciplined, only those who are intellectually inferior, believe God. That is the devil's lie. He has been saying that from the beginning. But a man is never so truly a man, never so worthy of his high destiny, never so nearly approximates the divine plan and purpose, as when, with the consent of all the powers of his intellect, he bows before God and believes God. Turn your back upon that sophistry at once. If you would learn to think, if you would learn to push back the boundaries of time and trace all things that are back of the beginning, and be wise with the wisdom of

the Eternal, then learn to believe God. Moses "when he was come to years" exercised faith in God.

Now, what did his faith do for him? *It led him to refuse to be called something he was not*; it implanted within him a passion for reality, a love of the truth; it led him to a rejection, a repudiation of the seeming and the unreal and the artificial. Legally, he might have been called a son of the royal house, he might have passed among his fellows as an Egyptian prince with all the privileges and preferments involved in that exalted position. But because he believed God, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter". He wanted to live his life openly; he wanted to walk in the light of truth; he confessed a love for the realities of life; he wanted to be called what he was, and he wanted to be what he was called. He hated the sham, the mere trappings, the externals of life, and desired to live before Him to whose eyes all things are naked and opened. Oh, what men will do in order to be called something. The notorious Dr. Cook fabricated a most interesting story. Why? In order that he might be called the discoverer of the North Pole. It mattered nothing to him that he had not discovered it, if only the world might regard him as the man who had succeeded where all others had failed. He was quite content to be called the great discoverer. When God took His Spirit from Saul, and when Samuel had pronounced the divine sentence upon him, when he had been informed that the kingdom should pass from him into the hands of another, you remember how Saul said, "Honour me before the people. Let me hear them still say, God save the King. Let them call me what God knows I am not." There never was a day when men and women were so anxious to be called by honourable titles. I know we have done away with it in this country, but we shall be manufacturing some new ones to take its place after a while. Universities fling around their honorary degrees, and in this democratic country everybody is a doctor or a professor or wears some title of distinction. We must have some kind of a title. We want to be called something, it does not make any difference whether we are entitled to it or not. I remember a friend whom I knew some years ago who had a passion for academic degrees. I said to him one day, "My dear fellow, if you had diplomas enough to paper the walls of your study, it would not take you anywhere. It is not what universities say you are, it is what the people discover you to be that will in the end determine your place in life." But we are naturally artificial. You ask a man if he is saved, and he says, "Certainly, sir, I am a Christian. I am a member of the church." He joined the church in order to be called a Christian. He may not be a Christian, but if he is only called a Christian, if he can only get the name and title of somebody's son, then he is satisfied. Another man who really believes God will brush aside all these outer decorations, these artificialities, and will go to the heart of things, and say, "Let me be true to the core, and let me be called by what I am." Moses refused everything that was artificial. He had a passion for the truth.

I want to appeal to you this evening on that score. The question I ask of you is not, are you called a Christian? are you called a good man by your neighbour? are you called rich? are you called influential? It is not what people say about you. The thing I ask you to face in the name of the Lord is, what are you before Him? have you that beginning of faith which will lead you to refuse to

accept half-way measures, which will lead you to say I will not join the ranks of mere nominal professors of religion, I want the real thing, I will not be called what I am not. Do you remember what John said? "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." When God calls a man His son, he is a son indeed. Moses' faith then led him to refuse the artificial, the unreal.

II.

NOW, WHAT DID HIS FAITH LEAD HIM TO CHOOSE? "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Moses desired to be enrolled among the people of God. Actually, he desired to be numbered among those upon whom God's favour rested, who belonged to Him. Surely that was a more honourable title—to be classed among the people of God—than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. What is it we desire this evening? Is it to be numbered among the people of God? Not primarily a church member, not primarily a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or an Anglican—not to be called by some religious name primarily. The first and essential thing in the view of the man who really believes God is that we shall be one with the people who are God's people. It may be that some of you here may feel that that is not a particularly attractive sort of life. And therein lies the wonder of the text.

Who were the people of God? They were a nation of slaves; they were not their own masters; they were hewers of wood and drawers of water. Their special work as a nation seemed to be the making of bricks; the most menial sort of labour was assigned to them, and they wrought under the whips of the taskmasters. They were a down-trodden, despised, persecuted people. Yet this man who might have been a prince said, "I would rather be reckoned with those people who are outcasts from society if only I may be numbered with the people of God, than I would share all the glory and honour of the Egyptian court."

Now, my friend, the first question for us in this connection is this, How can I become God's man, God's woman? I want Him to be my Saviour, to be my Lord. I want to be rightly related to him, no matter what my human relationships may be, no matter what it may cost me. I want, first of all, to have this soul of mine related happily, savingly to Him, Who is my Lord and my God. No other kind of religion is worth having, my friend. The religion of the formalist, of the ceremonialist, of the worldling who wants to find some religious sanction for a self-indulgent, self-willed, worldly life—as God helps me, my voice shall never be raised to increase the number of people of that sort. But to belong to God, to know that wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are still in touch with Him—the supreme value of life consists in that relationship. And because of that, he was quite willing to endure the affliction as an incident. The man who went yonder, in the days of the Klondike rage, enduring all kinds of hardships, did not go because he loved the hardships. He was determined to have gold. And if the long and lonely path with all the rigours of life in that northern country were necessary to the possession of gold, then he would brave it all, but he would have gold. That is what it means. I will be right with God, no matter what it costs. I will suffer anything, but I will be

right with Him. That is what Moses meant. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

There are pleasures in sin. There were delights in the Egyptian court. It is folly to say that people do not enjoy themselves until they become Christians. They enjoy themselves as long as they themselves are enjoyable. But the "old man" soon wears out, you know. There is a kind of pleasure in the worldling's life. There is a joy of achievement in business. I can understand the man who comes home from his office feeling that he has really accomplished something to-day. Not merely that he has obtained wealth—that is but incidental to him. But he has set before him a certain goal, and he has made several steps in the direction of the realization of his ambition. And I can understand how he comes home with elastic step and in joyous mood, saying, "This has been a day well spent." I sympathize with the man of science who with microscope or telescope wrests from nature some secret which hitherto has eluded all human investigators, until at last he cries, "I have found it." He is a happy man. Then, too, even the ordinary superficial enjoyments of life have their place. You cannot live on ice cream, but it is rather nice on a hot day. There are a lot of little things that minister a kind of pleasure while they last. I frankly confess when I have seen a company of people, cultured, polite in their manner, amid pleasant surroundings, exchanging the fruit of their thinking in conversation, enjoying perhaps a musical evening, and pursuits in which people may engage who are not Christians—I can understand they have a certain kind of pleasure. And I should be denying the facts of human experience if I should say there are no pleasures in Egypt. I fancy that Moses found temptation in Pharaoh's court, among the wise men of that great empire, able to take his place with the greatest of them—I fancy it was a temptation to him, and his withdrawal was a real act of sacrifice and self-denial. But he said, "I will have none of it." But, my friend, the pleasures of sin, the pleasures of a life divorced from God, are evanescent, are fleeting. The pleasures of sin are for a season, and a very short season at that. A man has made his money, and has invested his whole life in it, and he has amassed a great fortune. But suddenly the crepe is on the door, for a higher voice has said, "Thou fool, this might thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" But Moses had a faith which led him out into the future, and he said, "The day is coming when all the glory of Egypt will fail, when all its pleasures will wither as an autumn leaf, they will pass, the winter will come. But I am going to set my heart upon a life that will endure, and upon riches that will not pass away; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Look now at Faith's estimates. Do you know that true faith makes a man wonderfully wise? You have been amazed sometimes at the sagacity of a man of business. He seems to see around a half dozen corners and knows how the markets are going to rise and fall. He makes a profitable investment, while all his neighbours round about become poor. Why? Because he had that indefinable something, that business instinct which enabled him to weigh up the values of the business world. And he made his choice on the right side, and he got rich while other people became poor. Now let nobody suppose that

faith is a kind of leap into the dark, that the believer is one who does not know anything, that the believer is one who knows less than other folks. Let me tell you a secret. He is one who knows a little bit more; he is one who has got on the inside of things; he is one who sees farther than other people; he is one who has learned to weigh up the possibilities of life in a just balance. Moses did that. "When he was come to years" he saw the Egyptian court with all its splendour, with all its worldly pomp and power. He saw on the other hand this nation of slaves, down-trodden, oppressed, despised by all the people of their day. And when he weighed the two together, he said, "The reproach of Christ, the very worst that a servant of God can experience in this life is infinitely to be preferred before the very best this fleeting world can give;" he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Moses was not acting blindly. He was acting wisely. He was a good business man. Isn't that just what Jesus said? "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." I wonder if any of you have put your money in some stock companies that were guaranteed to make you rich. I think there were a lot of people who did that not long ago. I remember boarding years ago with an old man who had a few thousand dollars—it was not very much. But if anybody would come along and offer him ten per cent interest he would lend anything. He did not ask for security. He used to lend his money and get six per cent for six months and then lose his principal. Now that is the devil's trick. He is a great promoter. He is always offering stock in the affairs of Egypt, guaranteed. And when this man measured things up, he said, "No, thank you. I am not going to take any stock in Egypt at all. And the very best that you can offer me is not to be compared with the worst I shall get on the other side." And faith teaches us that no matter how dark you may paint the Christian life—and it has its sombre side;—it does mean affliction for the people of God; it does mean something to stand for Christ in this day as any other day; it does mean self-denial; it does mean the cross with blood on it; it does mean self-crucifixion; it does mean separation from the world; it does mean sometimes making bricks without straw; it does mean the whip of the task-masters of the world; it does mean the scorn and contempt of the men of this generation who think they are very wise. And you young people, people will laugh at you, especially in school. Some little professor who has passed an examination of some sort, who could not even tell you the books of the Bible, or if he could, does not know what they contain, but is quite competent to pronounce judgment, he will laugh at you if you say you believe the Bible—but faith teaches us that no matter how dark you may paint the Christian life, the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt; and the poorest of all my Master's gifts, to those who follow Him, are infinitely to be preferred before the very best that the world, the flesh and the devil have to offer.

What was the "greater riches"? Society? We hear one saying, "If I were to take that stand, I should not receive any more invitations to certain circles. I should no longer be welcome among certain people." No, per-

haps not. From the day that Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, I suppose he ceased to be welcomed at the court of Pharaoh. But he had another companion, and I think if you had talked with Moses, he would have said this: "In my judgment, the companionship of a good conscience toward God is better company than all the princes of Egypt. Let me have a good conscience. Let me lay my head upon the pillow at night with a good conscience. Let me be sure that I am right with God, and I will choose that society before any society that earth has to offer." And there is a joy in it. There is a comfort in it. Although you may not feel very comfortable if you look at the man beside you, he may frown at you; and you may not be as happy as you would like to be in the office where you work, there is a solace, a consolation, in feeling that you can always look up into the face of God with a good conscience; that is greater riches than all the society that earth can give—the favour of God is more to be desired than the favour of any earthly court. How simple it all is! It is a great thing that a man has done a task worthily, to be appreciated by his fellows, and to be recognized, too, as well as appreciated, to have his good deeds acknowledged. I do not think we can be wholly careless of human opinion. I do not believe that a rightly constituted man can be indifferent to the opinion of his fellows. He prefers to be well thought of. Don't you? I frankly say I do. I have no pleasure in making enemies, in having people say unkind things about me, whether they are true or untrue. It is well to desire the good opinion of our fellows. But he has not learned to live truly and worthily who has not learned to subordinate even the judgments of good men, the opinions of good people, the estimation of the saints—he has not learned, I say, to live truly and worthily who has not learned to subordinate all these things to the "Well doñe" of his God. And that was the secret of Moses' life. Greater riches—"I would rather have God say, 'My servant Moses', I would rather have that written", I think Moses would have told you, "than for all the world to say, He is the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He lived for the approval of his God.

III.

Just this word and I have done. WHAT HE ENDURED: "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." I can fancy some wise men from among the Egyptians coming to Moses and saying to him, "Moses, have you estimated the wealth of the court?" "Yes, I have seen all that." "Have you been inside?" "O, yes, I have worn the robes of a prince for years. I was called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I have tasted all the pleasures of the Egyptian court. Yes, I have estimated that side of it." "Well then, Moses, have you thought of what it will mean to identify yourself with those poor people? They have no prestige, they have no nationality, they are not a nation, they are not self-governed—they are merely slaves of the greatest power in the world. And if you identify yourself with them, you will be submerged. Can't you see this, Moses?" I think Moses would have said, "Yes. I see it all. But I see something more than that." "Well, what do you see?" He would have said, "I can see One high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. And some day He is going to deliver these people out of the hand of Pharaoh and out of the house of bondage. He is going to make them a nation. He is going to carry them through the wilderness and into the promised land. He is going to

build in that land a temple, and He is going to fulfil to them the promises He made to their fathers. And then I can see down into the dim and distant future that a Prophet will the Lord their God raise up unto them, a Greater than I, but one whose forerunner I count it the highest honour to be. And some day He will rend the heavens and come down, and He will stand among men and say, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Like Abraham, Moses rejoiced to see Christ's day: he saw it and was glad. Indeed, I think he looked forward not only to the first coming, but to the second coming of Christ, and anticipated the day when the cross being passed and the crown in prospect, He should come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And Moses said, "I see Him Who is invisible, and I put the world under my feet and live for that day." Don't you see it? By faith Moses did it all because he believed that God would do what He said He would do. I am sorry for people who cannot see the Invisible. I asked a friend some years ago about a certain preacher, whom at that time I had never heard. He was one of the world's greatest preachers. I said, "What is the characteristic of his preaching?" "Oh," he said, "I never hear him but he makes me feel what a beautiful thing it is to be a Christian." I wish I could make you feel not only what a beautiful thing it is, but what a profitable thing it is, what a worthy vocation, what a glorious calling, to be God's man, to be God's woman, to be God's boy, to be God's girl, to endure all these passing, transient, evanescent things, "as seeing him who is invisible." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Oh, that God may make us wise unto salvation, that we may be done with sin.

"Through faith he kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood." For Moses learned that this vista that opened to the view of faith was possible only through the blood. And it is only through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ Who died in the sinner's room and stead, that all our folly and all our sin can be put behind us and buried in the grave of Jesus Christ, and that we can rise to walk in newness of life.

May God help us every one thus to make choice of Jesus Christ to-night. How many will here and now make choice of Him? How many of you who have made this choice have found it just as profitable as I have tried to say it is to-night, just as profitable as the Bible declares it to be? How many of you have found in the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt?

SPURGEON ON THE CRAVING FOR A TIME-TABLE OF THE FUTURE

"I conceive that among religious people of a certain sort, the abortive explanations of prophecy by certain doctors gratify a craving which in irreligious people finds its food in novels and romances. People have a panting to know the future; and certain divines pander to this depraved taste by prophesying for them and letting them know what is coming by-and-by. I do not know the future, and I shall not pretend to know. But I do preach this, because I know it, that Christ will come, for he says so in a hundred passages."

"LOOK TO YOUR HEART"

Content not yourselves with being in a state of grace, but be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others. If you did this for your own sakes, it would not be lost labour; but I am speaking to you upon the public account, that you would do it for the sake of the church. When your minds are in a holy, heavenly frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it. Your prayers, and praises, and doctrine will be sweet and heavenly to them. They will likely feel when you have been much with God: that which is most on your heart, is like to be most in their ears. I confess I must speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused; and so I can oft observe also in the best of my hearers, that when I have grown cold in preaching, they have grown cold too; and the next prayers which I have heard from them have been too like my preaching. We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we forbear taking food ourselves, we shall famish them; it will soon be visible in their leanness, and dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our own love decline, we are not like to raise up theirs. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our preaching: if the matter show it not, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are like to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we abound in faith, and love, and zeal, how would it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations, and how would it appear in the increase of the same graces in them. O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home, and be much with God. If it be not your daily business to study your own hearts, and to subdue corruption, and to walk with God—if you make not this a work to which you constantly attend, all will go wrong, and you will starve your hearers; or, if you have an affected fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it from on high. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty, to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you. For your people's sakes, therefore, look to your hearts.

—RICHARD BAXTER. *The Reformed Pastor*

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The Gospel Witness

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THE SLAUGHTER OF PROTESTANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA

BY DR. CLYDE W. TAYLOR

Dr. Taylor presented this message last August 13 at Calvary Baptist Church, New York City. He is Executive Secretary of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, with headquarters in Washington, D.C.

(From *The Converted Catholic Magazine*, November, 1950)

PERSECUTION seems to be the natural topic of the day in most sections of the globe. God has spared us from it in America. We do not know what it is to pay with our lives for our faith in Christ; but in many parts of the world they do. We are told by Peter that it is not a strange thing to be persecuted for Christ's sake—it is the normal state of affairs.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, God has described this age. We do not know what day and hour it is on God's calendar and clock. We do know this, however, that this passage in Matthew 24 certainly describes the atmosphere and environment in which we live today and in which we are supposed to do foreign mission work.

Refer again to Matthew 24:6-11 and you will note that God has said nation will rise against nation—there will be famines, earthquakes and pestilences—there shall be killing, hatred, and betrayal one of the other. These afflictions will just be the beginning, for with them will come persecution and a demand that we lay down our lives for the cause of Christ.

We see today that the world is divided into two great diametrically opposed camps,—both, according to their convenience, using the same techniques. One is atheistic, and the other is theistic. That is the main difference, for they are both political—seeking world domination and control. They seek to dominate the thinking, beliefs and religious capacity of men and women. One is Communism and the other is Roman Catholicism.

Most of you have lived only in America—in the United States. But if you had been in Quebec, Latin America, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Rumania, or Bulgaria in pre-war days, you would know something of true Roman Catholicism. We do not know too much about it in America and the reason we are so sensitive about this whole matter is because the Catholics do not know it here, either. In fact, the Catholics are far less informed of the practices of their own church than are the Protestants. Roman Catholicism, as we see it here, is not true Roman Catholicism. It is Catholicism adapted to the Protestant majority; the same type as exists in England, Holland, Canada (outside of Quebec), Australia, and New Zealand. Thus, many are not capable of judging the accuracy of the things I wish to discuss.

Today in America we are called upon to back the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the fight against Communism. The Lord knows we hate Communism. We have seen its effect on China and in Korea. Are we supposed to join forces with an organization that, in America, fights Communism with us, and in other lands slaughters our people?

It appears strange that Communism has taken possession of no Protestant land in Europe, but only the Greek and Roman Catholic countries. So far, there isn't a single Protestant country in Europe that has fallen under the heel of Communism. So it would appear that Catholicism offers very little defense against Communism. We must remember certain basic concepts of the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has a perfect right to have these concepts, but it is our duty to know them.

In the first place, every Roman Catholic, if loyal to his church, believes *his* is the only true faith—no other should exist. They prohibit and impede all other faiths in every way possible. They believe Church and State should be united, with the Church supreme, directing the State, but supported by the State. This is what the Roman Catholics are striving for in America to-day. Success is theirs in Latin America and in other countries where the Church actually is the political power as well as the religious system of the country. They believe that the Church not only can, but *must* make all moral, ethical and spiritual decisions for all its people. A Catholic to-day has only to obey the commands of the Church, practise

its precepts, attend services, pay his dues (tithes and contributions), and confess his sins. The Church makes itself responsible for the results.

The Roman Catholic Church confidently believes the day will come when it will rule the world in a Church-State. In their program, they have one thing in common with the Communist regime—they are in no hurry! Communism's leaders say 500 years are needed to reach a true Communist State, and the Roman Catholic Church has been working toward its goal about 1600 years, and yet the Catholics never lose sight of where they are going! As we study history we note that they have had some strange bed-fellows down through the years. Some of us still remember the Concordat signed with Hitler; the blessing of Mussolini in what was termed the "Rape of Ethiopia" and many other things. All such things are permissible as long as they kept their end and purpose in view.

Roman Catholic Strategy

In the Roman Catholic Church the plan is always the same; the difference is in the degree of intensity and the circumstances and methods they have to follow. We can observe their action in Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Argen-

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

—Matthew 24:6-11.

tina, Quebec; Spain, Portugal, Italy or Colombia. But let us pick Colombia. For months I have worked documenting atrocities committed in Colombia and the problem that now confronts the Church of Christ in that country. The facts I give you can be documented to satisfy anyone. The Government of Colombia has already had reports of all these things.

In Colombia, there are a few things that characterize the program of the Roman Catholic Church:

1) *They are going to control the thinking of the people, and so they must control the reading matter.* This can be done in two ways—keep them illiterate; and if that cannot be done, do not let them have access to a Bible. On mission fields you don't find born-again Roman Catholic Christians. Bible reading is prohibited in these foreign lands. All over Colombia there have been unprecedented sales of Bibles, New Testaments and portions of the Scriptures. We could not import them fast enough. Today, Colombia (100% Catholic) has restricted the importation of books, supposedly to "balance the economy." Actually this is a plot to keep the Scriptures out so that people cannot read them! One man who was running a Bible Society down there reported that ninety cases of Bibles remained in Customs for nine months, because the government would not release them.

2) *They control the politics of the country as far as possible.* There are two political parties in Colombia—the Roman Catholic and the Liberal party. Both are Catholic. Protestants form a small Liberal minority. The political trouble is not between Protestants and Catholics but between the Catholics. Catholics are murdering Catholics. There are two kinds: the Conservative Catholic "loves" his church and will obey it to the letter; the other Catholic respects his church but uses his reason. Therefore, he is not considered a good Catholic. Therein lies the political division of Colombia. "Liberals" in Colombia are not as liberal as our own Democratic Party. It is not Communism versus the Church, but rather obedience to the Church or disobedience to it.

In 1946 the Roman Catholic party regained power. Trouble started shortly after they "took over." They began liquidating their enemies. They proclaimed a state of siege. Last November Congress was permanently adjourned; the Supreme Court was told it was not needed; State Assemblies were suspended. And so the Roman Catholic Church is in power!

3) *They prohibit as far as possible all non-Roman Catholic work.* Although "freedom of religion" is permitted in Latin America, a program of annoying and disturbing the work of others was begun to offset the work of the Protestants. The Roman Catholic Church immediately used its Party to keep Protestant missionaries out of the country. It is next to impossible to get a missionary there, because the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in the hands of the Roman Catholic Party. They use the prestige of their Church to obtain money from abroad to run their government, though inside reports state that the government of Colombia is almost bankrupt, for a great portion of the country is "in arms." Even now, there is a delegation in this country seeking a loan of many millions of dollars to finance their program of killing Liberals and slaughtering Protestants.

When the military group takes over following disorganization in the civil government, there is a tendency for authority to become localized. In Colombia it is not the local Mayor or Police Inspector who becomes the local

authority, *but the priest*, in every case. He is the political boss! He countermands the orders of civil officials and sees to it that his orders are carried out.

Now what is the political situation there to-day? It is not, basically a fight between Catholics and Protestants, but a fight between Catholics. Some Protestants have been killed because they were Liberals; yet most Protestant murders were not political.

Religious Not Political Struggle

Up until the fall of 1949, never had we seen such a great opportunity for the Gospel in Colombia. People were turning to Christ in large numbers. Last October there were 335 missionaries there and hundreds of native workers. They were all busy. Now, after eight months of Roman Catholic dictatorship, this is the picture:

The Municipal Police and some of the National Police, plus what is known as the *Chusma*, lead in acts of violence. This latter group, composed mostly of bandits let out of prison (for the most part Conservative criminals who have been turned loose with specific orders to murder and plunder), are formed into terroristic bands. The *Chusma* boast that they are "liquidating" enemies at the rate of a thousand a week. (This was reported in *Time* magazine recently. No one knows how many people have died. In one day alone sixty bodies floated by one point of the Magdalena River.)

What is the result of all this? Well, we have lost at least forty chapels. Twenty have been burned; five confiscated; eight bombed. If they do not "get" them the first time, they try two or three times, as shown in the April issue of *Time*. The chapel illustrated has since been bombed twice more. But do not think for a moment that putting such a picture in the American press will stop or call off the fanaticism down there! And referring to this same Chapel, in order to finish the job, they bombed the missionary's home and the school next door, and fired three shots at the missionary's head. The first week of August the chapel in Campo Hermosco, Tolima, the twenty-fifth chapel to be burned, was completely destroyed. When a new one was started, the local terrorist band moved into it and is using it for housing.

What about these congregations? There is always some persecution. I had a letter recently, an official résumé of all Colombia. The letter said hundreds of villages and towns in Colombia have their houses boarded up—the towns look like ghost mining towns of our West. People have fled in fear of their lives from these vandals that roam the country attacking all but those faithful to the Roman Catholic Church. Schools have been closed by Roman Catholic authorities in opposition to the directions of the civil authorities. In the province of Magdalena, the Minister of Education assured a mission board that their Bible Institute would be kept open, but the Bishop of Magdalena and the Vice General of Guaiquer ordered the Mayor to close that school, and today it is closed in spite of civil authorities. Literally hundreds of Evangelical schools are similarly closed.

I have tried to find out how many Protestant preachers have been killed. It is not a case of trying to find out *whether they have been killed* but to find out *where they are*, because they are hiding out in the tops of those mountains in Colombia, out of reach of the roving bands that are still hunting for them. When they get caught,

they are either murdered or made to renounce their faith. Many have done so rather than die. In the little Indian town of Pitalito during Sunday School one morning, the mayor of the town rounded up the whole congregation, collected all their hymn books and their Bibles, and all those in attendance were lined up in front of the chapel, while their books and Bibles were burned before their eyes. There is not an instance of a chapel's being burned where the books and Bibles were not taken out first, if possible, and burned. Then these bands have searched all houses in the village, from the rafters down, in search of Bibles.

Is that political persecution? It does not sound like it to me! In the case of Pitalito, those in the Sunday School were taken to the parochial house to see the local priest, made to sit down, and those that could write were forced to write out a document which said, in effect, "I hereby renounce my faith," etc., sign their names, and if they could not write, they were to mark an "X." Did they do this? Well, they are still holding Protestant meetings but out in the woods now! *What would you have done?*

There was an old lady of eighty-seven years and everyone for miles around knew she was a Protestant. She has been one ever since she was a girl, one of the earliest converts. The terrorists approached her with pointed guns, and announced: "If you don't renounce your faith, you are going to die—we will murder you right now." *What would you do?* She did not renounce her faith!

If you are a good Catholic in Colombia you tip your hat when the bells toll. Two men in the town of Llanito down in Nariño refused to do this. They were taken out in the Public Square and given the Water Treatment with a fire hose, just as the Communists have been doing with the Koreans and Chinese! Are we supposed, as Christians, to fight Communism together?

What can be done to stop this persecution? I have told you what some of our missionaries are doing just to stay alive. A lot of them have died. High is the price they are paying. One missionary wrote me from Manizales. Later I saw documentary proof from there. This missionary family of father, mother and two older children had been baptized on Sunday in Manizales. They lived across one of the enormous gullies on an adjoining mountain top. That week, about Wednesday, three men came to their house saying, "We have come to search your house." What could this unarmed family do? Their house was searched, and Bibles, New Testaments, hymn books and Gospel leaflets were found. These were brought out and the men asked, "Are these yours?" "Yes," the missionary replied.

"Do you believe this?"

"Yes, we certainly do."

So they killed the father, then and there, in front of the whole family; murdered him in cold blood. The rest broke into tears immediately. And the men commanded: "Stop your crying—get over there and bury this man. If he is not buried by noon, we'll be back and you will join him."

So the mother and oldest boy got busy, dug the grave and buried their father and husband, then fled to Manizales to report. *So you may have to pay a price!*

What would you do if such a thing happened in America? Some of the proof of these things can be observed in Washington, D.C. I am not an alarmist; but if

Christians only had their eyes open and valued their freedom, they would still see that by preaching the Gospel and by revival in America, we can stop the trend that is rapidly taking our freedoms away from us. It is only three steps away from where we are to Colombia, because the Conservative Party in Colombia is still a minority party—about one-third of the entire population. It only takes a minority. There are only three to five million Communists in Russia. If we just sleep a little longer, we will lose our freedom here too!

Evangelicals carry on in spite of all this; they meet out in the coffee patches, in the jungles. You cannot stop Evangelicals! When persecution starts, every single hypocrite, every back-slider, slips away in silence, and you have left only the true Christians that say, "*Come what may, I'll die for Christ.*"

In Mosoco, for example, up in the mountains a hundred miles from civilization, among the Indians, the mayor and about eight policemen went through and said, "We are looking for the Evangelical leader in this area. We hear there is one." Everybody knew who he was. He was a young man about twenty-three years old who ran the local store. He was on his job when they walked in. They went through his store and said, "Where is your money?"

He said, "Over in the house."

He called his mother and she grabbed the bag and started to run. He said, "Don't run, Mother, they'll murder you! Bring it here." And so she came back into the store with the bag of change. He handed over all he owned to the soldiers and the mayor of the town. Then they went through his store, took out his Bibles and New Testaments and burned them, and invited the townspeople in to help themselves to anything they wanted, "for free." They took the youthful Evangelical leader out to the plaza and put three bullets through him, declaring, "Now that will teach you Evangelicals what to do about following your religion."

Do you think that congregation disbanded? Of course not! It meets up in the mountains, but there are none of them living in the town, for they do not dare to go home.

"My Word Will Not Return Void"

What is the attitude of the people in Colombia? This was the only Republic in Latin America that had 40 years without a war or revolution; a delightful place that in forty years had decreased its illiteracy by about 30 per cent. It had built roads, improved its highways. It had one of the finest networks of air lines in South America, all under a liberal regime. Now, the government has changed, and liberty-loving people are seeing all of this going on. It is not an uncommon thing for the political rabble to round up the wives of the Liberals and their daughters and ravish them in the public market place.

In a country like Colombia it is unbelievable. The educated, cultured people (and there are plenty of them) are aghast. And what do you suppose they are thinking of the Roman Catholic Church these days? They are buying and borrowing every Bible and New Testament they can lay their hands on in Colombia—and if God ever gives another chance in Colombia, a harvest such as has never been seen will result.

We are seeing some unusual things, even now. Enemies can never win by persecution unless they resort to liquidation. The Catholics cannot win this fight in

Colombia unless they kill every last Protestant; because as long as there is one left, he will preach and witness. And sometimes final witness is in death.

In a little town in Valle, a man lived and worked his little coffee patch. He preached on Sundays, held a prayer meeting and visited his neighbours, preaching and teaching the Gospel. One day, about twenty men captured him and took him out to the local cemetery. They stood him up in an open grave and filled in the dirt until his head stuck out of the ground. And they said, "All right, now you are going to do two things—you are going to recant your political belief (he was a Liberal) and turn conservative, and you are going to renounce your Protestantism."

The man said, "I don't object to turning conservative—politics is a minor matter—but I will never give up Jesus Christ."

So they said, "You'd better start praying because you're going to die," and he did.

He bowed his head and prayed for those twenty men standing around that grave: "God, you've called me to preach the Gospel and if I can win more souls by dying than by living, I'm ready to die, Lord." Then one of the men was so angry he shot him right through the head.

Within three weeks, fifteen of those twenty men had hunted out the local Evangelical congregation in the woods and joined it. Fifteen out of twenty are now hearing the Gospel. At that rate, the Catholics are not going to win very fast. What, then, is the need of the hour?

The following has taken place in Colombia since November 1, 1949:

Chapels Burned

Chapels were burned in almost every case by the national or local police, generally with the public approval or presence of the local Roman Catholic priest, as follows:

In the DEPARTMENT (state) OF EL VALLE: 1) Andinapolis, 2) Betania, 3) Dovio, 4) Ceilan, 5) La Tulia, 6) Primavera, 7) Restrepo, 8) Sabaletas, 9) Santa Maria, 10) Naranjal, 11) Coloradas (and school building), 12) El Castillo, 13) El Pinal, 14) San Francisco (and school).

DEPARTMENT OF CAUCA: 15) Caldono (and school), 16) Inza, 17) Las Aguaras, 18) Taqueyo (and school building).

DEPARTMENT OF BOYACA: 19) Santa Ana, 20) Betel (and all neighboring houses):

DEPARTMENT OF SANTANDER: 21) Enciso (mission building housing chapel and school building).

DEPARTMENT OF ANTIOQUIA: 22) Zaragosa (including whole mission).

DEPARTMENT OF NARINO: 23) Zion.

This list is known to be incomplete; reports in the last few days advise of another chapel burned in Tolima and two national preachers murdered.

Chapels Confiscated

1. Canada (Narino) by local priest who operates a school in property. Took local cemetery, where for ten years evangelicals have buried dead; burials of Protestants now prohibited.

2. Cornejo (Santander del Norte) Roman Catholics using it for mass.

3. La Donjuana (San del N.) Chapel taken by priest, held mass, later wrecked by police.

4. Obando (Valle) in hands of secret police.

5. Salazar (San. del N.) in hands of local priest (missionary compelled to flee).

Chapels Bombed or Damaged

1. Dabeiba (Ant.), Dynamited twice, (mayor and priest present).

2. Genova (Caldas), Dynamited twice, attempted to burn it.

3. La Meseta (Cauca), Partially burned.

4. Llanitos (Valle), Partially destroyed.

5. Piedecuesta (Sant.), Interior wrecked, Bibles burned.

6. Yopal (Boyaca), Shot up building, broke in the roof.

7. Cunday (Tolima), Interior completely wrecked.

8. Dagua (Valle), Dynamited and Bibles burned.

Missions Closed by Force

1. La Aguada (Casanare), Church school and mission closed by Prefect, possessions of fleeing missionary confiscated.

2. Fonseca (Magdalena), Closed by mayor under order of local Roman Catholic Bishop and Apostolic Vicar of the Goajira, in spite of contrary orders by civil authorities.

Cemeteries Desecrated

Cemeteries are not "political," yet the following Protestant cemeteries have either been seized or violated in these places: 1) Cunday (Tol.), 2) El Canada (Nar.), 3) Santa Barbara (Ant.).

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL "FRENCH WEEK-END"

STUDENTS of Toronto Baptist Seminary, or rather the French enthusiasts among them, enjoyed another successful *week-end français* held this year at Bobcaygeon. Fourteen of us persevered for two whole days in speaking, reading, singing, praying and preaching in the French language, and at the end of that period, as one of the students remarked, it seemed strange to come back to English again. All of us noted a large improvement in our facility in *la belle langue*, and this progress was made "without tears," though it did require persistent labour. An interested friend asked the writer if there were any system of penalties instituted for those who spoke English during our stay at the lodge. The answer is that the genuine desire of all to gain a mastery of this tongue in order to use it as an instrument with which to proclaim the Gospel, was alone sufficient to insure that little English was heard during the week-end. Of course there was some excuse for a few words as an aside in the kitchen, where the students washed their own dishes in order to obtain a better price in the board bill. Our programmes were carefully planned on the basis of past experiences in similar gatherings over a number of years in our French Department, and they all centred about the French Bible, French Hymns and preaching in that same tongue. The presence of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bauman, played no small part in the success of our week-end and some of us had a strong suspicion that these friends rather enjoyed talking French with us. Altogether it was a time of profit not only from the linguistic standpoint but also from the spiritual. We thought of other

students who had enjoyed such seasons with us in past years and who are now preaching and teaching in French both in France and in French Canada, and we prayed for them and for those of our present student body who look forward to taking up this great missionary challenge. The expenses of this week-end were underwritten by Mr. Wm. Reucassel, to whom all our students are profoundly grateful for his unsolicited generosity in this matter, and they are convinced that the investment thus made will bring increasingly large dividends in the preaching of the Gospel in French Canada.

The week-end began happily with the evening service in the Bobcaygeon Church, of which a recent graduate, Rev. Elton Britton, is pastor. The students sang in French and gave testimonies in English. —W.S.W.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Fourth Quarter Lesson 7 November 12, 1950

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

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 1.

Golden Text: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—Psalm 50:15.

INTRODUCTION:

The events recorded in the Book of Nehemiah followed those mentioned in Ezra by about 10 years. The name "Nehemiah" occurs among the leaders who returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; 7:7), but this is probably another man. A third man by that name assisted in building the walls (Neh. 3:16).

Nehemiah, the historian and Jewish patriot, came to Jerusalem about 502 B.C. By a decree of the Persian Empire he assumed the title of Governor or Tirshatha (Persian word for 'Governor': Neh. 8:9; 10:1) or Pehah (Hebrew word for 'Governor' used in the Hebrew of Neh. 5:14, 18; 12:26). This office he held for about 20 years. As an administrator he was honourable and unselfish (Neh. 5:14-19). After a brief visit to the province of Babylon, which was then under the domination of the Persians, he returned to Palestine, only to find that the Jews had departed grievously from the ways of the Lord (Neh. 13:6). Courageously he carried out necessary reforms. The Book was probably written by Nehemiah himself with the aid of official records. The Book may be divided into two parts:

- I. Repairing the City's Walls—chapp. 1-8.
- II. Repairing the People's Morals—chapp. 9-13.

EXPOSITION:

In the Providence of God Nehemiah had evidently not returned to his native land with the other groups of Jews under Zerubbabel and under Ezra, but had remained in Babylon. Wise and capable, he held the honoured position of cup-bearer in the court of Artaxerxes the King (Neh. 1:11; 2:1). In December of the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes, as Nehemiah waited upon the king in his winter residence at Susa (Esth. 1:2; Dan. 8:2), a brother or perhaps a relative visited him (Neh. 7:2). From this man Hanani and certain Jews who accompanied him, Nehemiah learned of the desolate and ruined condition of Jerusalem, and of the affliction of the exiles who had returned. Ezra's commission had extended only to the repair of the temple and private buildings, but the walls and gates still lay in ruins, as when they had been besieged and destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Chron. 36:19; Neh. 2:13).

Now Nehemiah himself was living in ease and luxury at the palace. The position of cup-bearer was bestowed only upon highly favoured, trusted individuals, since his duties gave him frequent and close access to the personal presence of the monarch. But the news of his people's sad plight stirred Nehemiah to deep mourning (Ezra 9:1-4). Although separated from them by place and station, he unselfishly and lovingly took their burden upon himself (Gen. 42:1, 2,

25). Does this not remind us of our Saviour? Although occupying the throne of glory in the presence of His Father, the thought of the world's need gave Him no rest, as it were, but compelled by love, He came to earth to deliver those who were groaning under the curse and ruin of sin (Exod. 3:7-10; Rom. 5:6-8; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-16). And when He was on earth, He was ever moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes bowed down with grief and woe (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; 15:32).

Nehemiah found no comfort but in fasting and praying for his people. He withdrew from the social pleasures of the court that he might spend the time in intercession. True prayer arises from a sense of need. The need is first known, then felt, and then presented to our heavenly Father (Matt. 6:8, 32).

Study the prayer of Nehemiah as a pattern prayer. It commences with ascription of praise to God, Who is the all-powerful One and the covenant-keeping Father (Deut. 7:9, 21; 2 Chron. 6:14, 15; Dan. 9:4). He is faithful to His Word and merciful to those who are in need and will come to Him with hearts full of love and obedience (Exod. 20:5, 6).

The prayer of Nehemiah was earnest and prolonged; he besought the Lord day and night on behalf of his people (Acts 20:31). He prayed without ceasing; even as he faithfully performed his regular duties, his heart was uplifted to God (Gen. 32:26; Lk. 18:1-8; Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17).

Nehemiah was willing to take upon himself not merely the burden of his people's need, but also the load of their sin. Personally he had not departed from the Lord, but he confessed the nation's sins, as though they were his own (Exod. 32:30-32; Neh. 9:5-15; 10:1; Dan. 9:3-7). Our Saviour, holy and undefiled, stooped to take upon Himself the sin of the whole world (Isa. 53:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22-24; 1 John 2:2).

Nehemiah urged the very words of God's own promises to His people as the basis of his prayer (Lev. 26:39-42; Deut. 4:29-31; 30:2-4; 2 Chron. 6:36-39). The Lord delights to have us plead before Him the promises as we say, "Do as thou hast said" (2 Sam. 7:25). We need no other plea, for our Lord will ever be true to that which has gone forth from His lips.

Moreover, the Governor reminded the Father that these were His own people, the people whom He had redeemed from Egypt (Psa. 106:7-11; 107:1-8) and had protected throughout the generations (Deut. 4:33-40; 8:1-7). Therefore, it was with confidence that Nehemiah held them up before the Lord. Our Saviour, Who has already shown His love for sinful and needy men by dying on their behalf, will listen to us as we plead their desperate plight (John 3:16). He is Himself the great Intercessor (John 17; Rom. 8:26, 34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1, 2).

The motive in prayer must be pure. Nehemiah declared that he and his companions did not desire their own glory, but sought rather the honour of the name of the Lord (Matt. 26:39; John 12:28). They were not ambitious to spread abroad the fame of their own names, but they feared the name of the Lord (Psa. 25:14; 61:5).

Petition is but one element of prayer. Prayer consists also of adoration, thanksgiving, confession and humiliation. After preparing his own heart by this communion with the Lord, Nehemiah gave voice to one brief, simple request: "Prosper . . . thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." True prayer is not elaborate, but direct, forceful and definite (Lk. 11:9, 10; Jas. 1:5, 6). It may consist of one word, or a few words, or perhaps it may be merely a sigh or a groan (Matt. 8:25; 9:27; Lk. 18:13).

Nehemiah not only prayed in a general way for the distressed Jews of Jerusalem, but he also addressed a particular petition on their behalf. He prayed that the Lord would prosper him on that particular day and on that particular occasion. God heard and answered Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 2:8).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

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| Nov. 6—Prayer and Godly Concern | Gen. 18:22-33; Rom. 9:1-3; Lk. 19:41; 22:44. |
| Nov. 7—Prayer and Our Only Source of Help | Psa. 40. |
| Nov. 8—Prayer and Confession of Sin | Psa. 51. |
| Nov. 9—Prayer and the Promises of God | 1 Kings 8:22-53; Gen. 32:9-12. |
| Nov. 10—Prayer and Perseverance | Lk. 18:1-8. |
| Nov. 11—Prayer and True Revival | 2 Chron. 7:14; Psa. 85. |
| Nov. 12—Prayer and Its Answer | Dan. 9:1-23. |