

The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa

Vol. 29, No. 32

130 Gerrard St. E., TORONTO, NOVEMBER 30, 1950 -

Whole Number 1488

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

Antichrist Is Already Here

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 26th, 1950
(Electrically Recorded)

“Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”—I. John 2:18, 19.

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”—I. John 4:3.

“Whosoever transgresseth (goeth beyond, goeth ahead, or advanceth), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God.”—II. John 9.

THE word antichrist occurs only in the Epistles of John, the first Epistle of John, the second Chapter, the fourth Chapter and the third verse, and the second Epistle of John, the seventh and ninth verses.

I have somewhere read that it was a matter of constant regret to Mark Twain, (I suppose the most celebrated of all American-humourists) that his reputation as a humourist prevented people from ever taking what he said seriously; they laughed at everything he said, because they thought they ought to, and they laughed very often when there was nothing to laugh at, fearing that if they did not so respond to the great humourist's words, they would be looked upon as somewhat defective in their own sense of humour. There is a principle there. Keep it in your minds.

The prophetic Scriptures have long been a favourite hunting ground for those seeking religious novelties and sensations. Occasions of cataclysmic events in world affairs have always stimulated interest in prophetic study. That is not surprising. When the world seems to be turned upside down people begin to ask, “Is this the end?” Though they have had but little interest in the word of God before, then they turn and say, “Is there anything there that would explain it?”

Many Authors Echo Each Other

We have been surfeited with oracular pronouncements of the fulfilment of prophecy by so called “great Bible teachers”. A couple of years ago I asked one of our young men to go to a certain evangelical book shop, and I said, “Bring me every book there is in the place on the Second Coming, whether it be fifty or a hundred I do not care—bring them all; I want to see them all.” I suppose he must have brought me fifty or sixty volumes, I am not sure of the number. I opened them, and did not need to go very far to sample them. About half of them might just as well have been parrot cages, each occupied by a parrot saying “Pretty Polly,” and whatever else it was taught to say. These writers, one after another, said exactly the same thing. They had read Darby, they had read Scofield, they had read some others of the same school, and then they wrote a book, and said over again what these other men had said. I thought it was a pity to waste so much good paper, when paper was costly, and so much good labour. There wasn't anything new in them at all.

It is no wonder, therefore, that we have been treated to disquisitions on every aspect of the Second Advent. You have read about it, haven't you? So-and-so, some

"dynamic" great Bible teacher is going to speak on the Rapture, and the Great Tribulation, and on the future of the Jews, and especially about Antichrist. Well, that is not surprising.

In Pre-Christian Times

There have always been many antichrists, some more conspicuous than others. In pre-Christian times even the Hebrews anticipated, from the prophecies of Daniel and Ezekiel and others, the coming of some super-evil personality. Among others they wondered whether Antiochus Epiphames was he, or not.

Nominees For Character of Antichrist

In the throes of early persecutions the Christians wondered sometimes if Nero could possibly be the Antichrist, for they did not know how soon Christ might come. In later centuries others were nominated. The Reformers, with practical unanimity, saw the Antichrist in the Papacy, while curiously enough, the Papacy saw the Antichrist in Luther and the Reformation. In still later times there were some who saw the Antichrist in Napoleon the first, and even so careful an expositor as Henry Gratten Guinness, a man of generally acknowledged scholarship, thought the Antichrist might be Napoleon the third, and that the Franco Prussian war of 1870 might be Armageddon. It wasn't even a back-yard skirmish, compared with what we have become accustomed to in our day.

One night a year or so ago I couldn't sleep, and I went into my study to get a book to put me to sleep. I suppose I ought to have had sense enough to read one of my own sermons. I remember asking a doctor once, "Do you ever have any difficulty in putting people to sleep?" He said, "Very often." I said, "Come over and hear me Sunday morning and see how I do it. It will do you good." However, I found a book, I do not know how I got it — somebody must have sent it to me. I had never read it, but I picked it out of the shelf, and it had some such title as this—I do not know the exact title, but it was something like "Current Events in the Light of Scripture". At the time I read the book—I didn't read it all, I glanced in it — Mussolini had passed from the scene, but the book was of a date a few years earlier, and was all about Mussolini, written by a Toronto minister. Mussolini was undoubtedly the Antichrist! He went on to discourse on the greatness of Mussolini (the "sawdust Caesar", as he turned out to be), and beyond any doubt he was Antichrist. As I turned the Chapters I saw that each Chapter closed with a statement to this effect: And so we see Scripture being fulfilled before our eyes. As I read I had a picture in my own mind that I had seen in the newspaper of the body of Mussolini strung up by the heels in a gas station, hanging like the carcass of a pig in a slaughter house. The Antichrist? A great man, wasn't he?

There have been those who were quite sure the Kaiser of the First War was the Antichrist, and then that was ended, and he went to sawing wood in Doorn. Not a very dignified occupation for the Antichrist. Then after a while Hitler came on the scene, and of course Hitler was bound to be the Antichrist. Mussolini, and I suppose Stalin, they all have been nominated for the supreme infamy.

The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

Published every Thursday for the propagation of the Evangelical principles of the Protestant Reformation and in defence of the faith once delivered to the Saints.

\$3.00 Per Year. Postpaid to any address. 10c Per Single Copy.

Editor

T. T. SHIELDS

Associate Editors

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

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

S. S. Lesson and Exchanges

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

Address Correspondence:

THE GOSPEL WITNESS

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2, Canada
Telephone RAndolph 7415

Registered Cable Address: Jarwitsem, Canada

Intelligent People May Become Prejudiced

I say therefore it is not surprising if people of intelligence are tempted to regard the prophetic Scriptures as the happy hunting ground of fanatics and religious charlatans. It is to be expected of religious sensation-mongers, that they would caricature the Bible until it is looked upon as a book of pixy characters or cross-word puzzles; until people regard it with anything but respect. Now that is exactly what the devil designs to do — to make the word of Scripture like the words of Mark Twain, something that nobody of sense will take seriously, because these "great Bible teachers" have oracularly thundered forth their pronouncements of the fulfilment of prophecy, when no such fulfilment has come to pass. The same man who wrote that book about the Current Events in the Light of Scripture, preaching about that passage in Isaiah where it is said they shall come as doves to the windows, told his hearers that they had just perfected a new kind of aeroplane that could stop anywhere, so the Jews were going to be transported from all parts of the earth, and great apartment buildings would be built in Jerusalem, and the aeroplanes would come down and light on the window sills, like doves to the window. Why they would light on the window sill instead of the door sill I do not know.

Perhaps you will say, "You ought not to speak of that." I am bound to speak of such "handling the word of God deceitfully"; for it makes the inspired word of God, Who cannot lie, utterly ridiculous. God endowed us with certain intelligence, and we are admonished to search the Scriptures, to find out whether these things are so.

An Anti-Scripture Spirit

Now as there is an anti-Christian spirit that would turn people away from Christ, so there is an anti-Scripture spirit. You see it everywhere; it is the same spirit of antichrist, which would discredit the divinely

inspired revelation of God through and in Jesus Christ. Therefore, I conceive it to be a duty to endeavour to dissipate any such opinions of the undependability of the prophetic Scriptures. Remember please how fully, how completely the Old Testament prophecies relative to the first advent of our Lord were fulfilled. He Himself said that "the Scriptures cannot be broken". He did this and that "that the scripture might be fulfilled", and when Peter drew his sword, mistakenly, in defence of his Lord, Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into his place. . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And Jesus declined the legions, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled—fulfilled in His life, fulfilled in His death and resurrection. And my dear friends, as surely as every Scripture relative to Christ's first advent was completely fulfilled, so every jot and tittle of the prophetic Scripture relating to His second coming must be fulfilled.

Learn to Say "I Don't Know"

Please do not assume that I am going to speak as an oracle. I am no oracle. Long since I learned to say about certain parts of the word of God, when asked "What does that mean?" "I do not know." And if you do not know, but you are determined to invent some kind of explanation of an abstruse passage, you will lead yourself and others into the mire. Be honest and courageous enough to acknowledge that, in the nature of the case, these finite minds must sometimes say of the word of the Infinite, "I do not know." Only as God is pleased to reveal it to us can we understand it.

Prophecy Not Intended to Produce Clairvoyants

Personally I do not believe that the Scripture was given to us to make clairvoyants of us all, to make us wise beyond our day and generation, so that we can interpret all kinds of events.

Prophecy Understood in the Light of Its Own Fulfilment

I remember this — I have called your attention to the principle before — that the apostles had a very great advantage in the enjoyment of the personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke to them in parables, then He met with them privately and expounded the parable. They asked Him what it meant, and there must have been something, perhaps in the inflection of His voice, the expression of His countenance, His gestures, which added much to the understanding of what He said. He was a great Teacher, a most explicit Teacher. "The common people heard Him gladly," and most of them understood Him. But there were some things that even the disciples did not understand. When He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," that was a prophecy. His enemies brought that as an accusation against Him; they did not know what He meant, and His disciples did not know what He meant. He talked about his resurrection; He talked first about His death, and they didn't understand that until they saw Him nailed to the cross. They didn't understand His resurrection either, but the Scripture says that "When Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that

they had done these things unto him." They had heard it, but they did not know what it meant, but when He was risen from the dead, in the light of His resurrection, they said, "Now we understand," and the record says, "They believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." But they did not understand those prophetic utterances until they remembered them in the light of their own fulfilment. I have a conviction that the prophecies of Scripture are given to us for the strengthening of our faith in the times of trial, just as the ordinary fore-warnings of Scripture, of what will befall us as Christians, the rough roads we shall meet, the troubles we shall get into—"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" I have found comfort in that sometimes, when I have heard of people hissing through their teeth, "Dr. Shields is a liar." I say, "Well they said that of my Lord, I cannot expect to fare any better." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." We do not understand that until we see these things fulfilled.

All Scripture Understood Experimentally

I remember years ago in the beginning of my Christian experience, when I used to read such passages as that in the tenth of Matthew, for example, about a man hating his father and mother, and his own life also, or else he could not be Christ's disciple, I thought, such conditions belonged to those early twilight hours of the Christian era, and I said to myself, "We have outgrown that; we haven't to part company with father or mother, wife or children, and hate your own life also in order to be true to Christ." I have lived to see many a man utterly ruined by his wife, because he hadn't strength enough to stand alone for God, and therefore went with his wife with the world and in the world's ways. I have seen godly men, I have seen them in this church in years gone by — splendid men they were, I loved them all, but their families had not their father's spiritual quality, and it was a case of bringing up father. I have seen children take their parents away from the truth. Why? They hadn't learned that principle. I didn't know that we had to learn it until I had to pass through it, and then I found out. But a man cannot be true to Christ, he simply cannot be true to the Gospel, until by God's grace he has actually before God laid down his life. Anything I get back is all to the good, but I must not complain if it costs me the last drop of my blood. And until you are ready for that you cannot be true to Christ. But the scriptures laying down these principles can be understood only in the light of the experiences they were designed to illuminate.

I wonder if I may just go as far as this tonight. This, as I said, will be but an introductory address, but I promise you that as the other addresses follow they will follow the argument, they will follow in such a way as to present the events referred to in chronological and logical sequence. Perhaps it will help you if I just outline my thesis. Some of you will not agree with me. Very well, it will not hurt you to hear some things you do not agree with; it will do you good.

The Pre-Millennial View in Briefest Outline

There are several views of this matter of the Antichrist. The popular pre-millennial expectation is to this effect:—The Lord may come any moment; He may come tonight, according to that "any moment" theory, as it is sometimes called, and when He comes He will come suddenly, and some of that school say He will come secretly, and the church will be raptured. Somebody says, "Dr. Shields doesn't believe in the rapture." Of course I do. "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . . For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." That is the classic rapture passage. I do not see anything secret about it myself. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Surely there can be nothing secret about that. Our pre-millennial friends, in order to confine themselves to two comings instead of making it into three, say that He will come secretly for His church, and nobody will know anything about it, before He comes openly when "every eye shall see him".

The Missing Ones

I have read several papers, imaginatively written, and printed supposedly the day after the rapture, giving an account of all the missing ones. But they didn't go far enough. Society generally was dislocated because every true believer was caught away secretly during the night; the husband missed his wife in the morning; the wife missed her husband, and so on. It didn't say what would happen to the train if the engineer was caught away while he was driving it, or to the aeroplane, if the pilot were carried away to heaven, and the plane was left to look after itself. All that by the way.

The Church and the Holy Spirit Allegedly Hinder

According to this view, the church, and the Holy Spirit present in the church together constitute the hindrance to the development of Antichrist. So long as the church, and the Holy Spirit resident within, remains, then the Antichrist will not be revealed. "He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." (Or will hinder.) So our pre-millennial friends say, "The hinderer is the church, and the Holy Spirit." That prevents the development of the man of sin, the son of perdition. But after the church has been caught away, the salt of the earth has been removed, the light of the world has been extinguished, the Antichrist is to be revealed—some great political personage. Here is what Sir Robert Anderson had to say about him: "A scholar, a statesman, a man, of unflinching courage and irrepressible enterprise, full of resources and ready to look in the face a rival or a foe"; "a general and a diplomatist." Baron Porcelli, quoting Sir Robert Anderson, says, "Wherein lies the sin of such an one as that? I do not see anything wrong with that. Why didn't he go farther, for instance, why not add an actor, an author, a sportsman, an artist, a musician, a philosopher, an astronomer, a scientist, a barrister-at-law, an LL.D. and K.C.B.?" What a picture of the Antichrist! Sir Robert Anderson, you know, was the head of Scotland Yard. He ought to have been a

good detective. I hope he was a better detective than he was an expositor of Scripture.

But anyway, Antichrist will then be revealed, and then he will make a covenant with the Jews. He is going to reign for seven years, and in the midst of the seven years he is going to break his covenant. Then will come the great tribulation. At the end of the seven years Christ will come and destroy Antichrist! and then there is to be the thousand years, the millennium, and at the end of that another revival of evil, and then the final judgment.

Brethren, I have read everything that I could read on this subject for the last fifty years; I have done my utmost to try to find some credibility in this theory, but I find it necessary absolutely to reject it.

The Antichrist is here already. I am convinced myself that the Papacy, hoary with age, is the Antichrist of Scripture. I do not ask you to accept my assumption; I only ask you, if you will, to join me in an examination of Scripture and of history. Mr. Slade told me he had somewhere stumbled upon it in Spurgeon, that Mr. Spurgeon, referring to the description of the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians said,

"It has been usually thought that this passage alludes to the great apostacy of the Church of Rome; and certainly if there were a hue and cry raised for the culprit here described, one might well arrest that apostacy upon suspicion."

Theories of Probability

Philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, and astronomers speak of probabilities — they have a principle of probability — as in mathematics the ratio of the chances favouring an event to the total number of chances for and against it. It is too much for me; I haven't a sufficiently trained and mathematical mind to follow them, although I have read it. But on certain hypotheses they look in parts of the heavens for hitherto undiscovered stellar worlds, and according to their theory of probability, there ought to be a star here, or there ought to be something else there. They enlarge their lenses, and they search the heavens, until at last by demonstration prove their hypothesis to be true. Now we have to make certain assumptions to prove anything. We can not accept an hypothesis as an established fact — it is only a point at which to begin. Let us assume that a certain thing may be so, then let us pursue it and ascertain by indubitable and factual evidence whether it be so or not. Bring it all to the test of logical arrangement of facts, as the case may be.

Reasonable to Assume Scripture Has Something to Say About Papacy

On the basis of available evidence, it seems to me it is not unreasonable to assume that the Scripture would be likely to have something to say about the Papacy.

I will tell you why: Viewing the scope of Christian history there are no two continuing facts which occupy so large a place as that of the existence and progress of a Christian witness, of a New Testament church somewhere, somehow; and for the greater part of the Christian era, side by side with it, there is the record of an idolatrous, blasphemous, religio-political system, known as the Papacy. It fills the earth; you cannot go anywhere and escape it. It is no use to make light of it. I have often said to you that the Roman Catholic Church is not, and cannot be, a merely human organization. By

no logical process in the world can you account for its continued existence, the perpetuity of its program, of its authoritarianism, its world-wide spread, its influence upon the peoples of the earth, not only the rank and file, but kings and rulers and governments. It would be difficult to find a government on earth today that is not being directly or indirectly influenced by the Papacy. There is not one that I know of. The Papacy has its agents, its fifth columnists, sometimes openly, oftentimes disguised, everywhere. And if indeed you are at all familiar with the history of Europe, and the philosophy of that history, if you have examined it, you will find that for a thousand years, and more, there has not been a war in Europe that the Vatican did not have a hand in some way or another. It is the chief war-maker of the earth—mischief maker number one. There is not a government that is not afraid of it anywhere. Certainly we haven't any governments in Canada that are not afraid of it. Here in Toronto a fraction over fifteen percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Two of our papers are under the thumb of the hierarchy, and the other one has a very intimate nodding acquaintance with it. It is the most powerful influence in the city of Toronto today, and has only fifteen percent of the people; it is the most powerful influence in Canada today; the most powerful influence in the United States. It was responsible for the last war, and the war before. Well, I cannot go into that, except to say that it would be passing strange if this evil religious colossus, filling so large a place in human history, should be entirely ignored and unnamed in the word of God. And yet I remember one of these "great Bible teachers", so called, telling a company of business men, "It is no use looking for the Antichrist; nobody will see him until the church has been taken out of the way." If the Satanic origin and support of the Papacy were not amenable to proof, it would still have to be admitted that it bears a filial resemblance to the father of lies.

Not a New Interpretation

Is this some new interpretation to call the Papacy Antichrist? No, it is not a new interpretation. More than a hundred and fifty years before the Reformation Wycliffe identified the Papacy as Antichrist, and spoke in condemnation of the theory that would teach people that Antichrist was someone yet to arise, and so divert attention from the arch enemy. Practically all the Reformers so regarded the Papacy. Prior to the Reformation even Savonarola was hanged and burned for calling the pope Antichrist.

The Scripture Must Be Examined First — Then History

In due course, when we have first examined the Scripture, I propose to bring you exact quotations from the Reformers and others, from their writings; and then we shall compare the Biblical portrayal of Antichrist with the history of the Papacy, and see whether or not it be true.

Antichrist a Vice-Christ

Let it be enough now to state that the Antichrist is really a vice-Christ. If you examine the Scriptures you will find that he is not so much represented as one who is openly and avowedly the opponent of Christ, although he is that, but he is a vice-Christ, a representative of

Christ, the vice-gerent of Christ. That is exactly what the pope calls himself, by the way.

How to Learn the Meaning of a Word /

How do you find out the meaning of a word? This word is confined to John's epistles, but the principle of the antichrist, and the portrayal of the antichrist is not confined to John's epistles, it is in Daniel, it is in the Gospels, it is in the epistles. It is of course in that classic passage in the second of Thessalonians, and then very especially it is in the Book of Revelation. There are two ways of finding out the meaning of a word. Take for example the word "baptism". What does it mean? Look in your dictionary, and they will tell you that it means to sprinkle, it means to pour, it means to dip, to immerse. Why do they say that? Because that word has been used to describe all three processes, but etymologically it does not mean that at all — it means to dip, or immerse, nothing else. But it is not enough that you look into a dictionary to find out what a word is said to mean there after it has been in use for centuries — what you must do is to study the word in its context, and see what the author intended. If you read the word "baptism" in some Baptist periodical you would never dream that it meant sprinkling, it would mean immersion; and if you read that word in a paedobaptist periodical or book you would never think that it meant immersion, you would think that it meant affusion or else sprinkling, one or the other. And so, to understand what these things mean, we must read the Scriptures, and see how the word is used. I have never referred to this that I haven't had a sheaf of letters, kindly sometimes, and sometimes not so kindly, rebuking my alleged ignorance, and expressing surprise that I seem not to know the antichrist is a political and military dictator, and that he is an atheist. The Bible doesn't say so; there is nothing in the Bible to suggest it. Mr. Whitcombe read tonight, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Now listen: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Who are these people that were called antichrist? They were people that had been in the assemblies of the saints, professing Christian people, who apostatized from the faith, and went out. Antichrist, as I shall show you in the course of our study, is distinctively, pre-eminently, primarily a religious system or personality, or, almost certainly, both.

Let Us Be Jealous For the Honour of Christ

Why do I speak like this? Well, my dear friends, I am jealous for the honour of my Lord; I cannot allow anyone to take His place; I cannot be silent when a man who does the devil's work throughout the world dares to say, "I am the only authorized representative of Jesus Christ." I tell the pope that he is a liar and a blasphemer of the highest order,—or the lowest. How the multitudes are deceived! "We define and declare and pronounce that it is indispensable to the salvation of every human soul that he be subject to the Roman pontiff." When people are told that there is no salvation outside of the Roman Catholic church, when they are told that, short of submission to the pope, there is no salvation, don't you

think our voice ought to be raised? Don't you think we ought to join with Peter and say, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

A Great Missionary Appeal

There are people who are moved by a missionary appeal. O yes, let us send the Gospel to the blacks in Africa by all means, and to the Chinese by all means; but let me remind you that the four hundred millions of people who know nothing of Christ, save as the pope represents him, need missionaries too; they need enlightenment. I received a post card from a South American missionary, the ugliest thing I ever saw. It was a picture of a crucifix, a dead Christ, an ugly human form upon a cross. He said, "That is the only Christ South America knows—a dead Christ upon a cross." Not a living Saviour, such as you and I rejoice in.

Church Standards Identify Papacy As Antichrist

My dear friends, let us pray much about these matters. I said at the outset that Modernism had weakened the testimony of the church in respect to all moral matters, and it has, too in respect to the Protestant testimony against the church of Rome. The Westminster confession of faith, the standard of the Presbyterian church, calls the Papacy the antichrist; the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England is to the same effect, and for many, many years Protestantism gave its testimony against this arch fiend, who usurps the place of the one and only Saviour. Now we must not say anything against it! Our church leaders, like a former Moderator of the United Church, say, "We must recognize that the Roman Church is part of the Christian church, and that we cannot do without it." It is not part of the Christian church, there is nothing Christian about it—it is the Devil's own. While you have people in Protestant pulpits apologizing for this arch enemy of the truth what can we do? Why, we can only risk unpopularity, and the censure of many, and even if we have to stand all alone bear our testimony against it. Frankly I say to you, I should have to do it. If, in so preaching, you were all to get up and walk out, I should have to say, "So much the worse for them." That is what we are coming to in our day. May the Lord give us a passion for the truth. Let us study the word of God for ourselves, and find out what the word of God says.

The Papacy a Super-Human Institution

I go back to what I said just now—the Roman Catholic church is a super-human institution, and I tell you it is one of two things, there is no middle course—it is either what it says it is, and comes from God, and represents God, or it is the opposite of what it says it is, and comes from the devil, and represents the devil. It cannot take a neutral position, it is impossible. It is one or the other. If it is of God, we ought all to belong to it; if it is of Satan we ought all to oppose it.

Well, we stand, do we not, for the faith once for all delivered to the saints? We have one Saviour, and we need no other; we have one Mediator, and we need no other; we have the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, and we do not need the pontifical pronouncements of a church that calls itself infallible in order to understand this Book. Thank God we may know for ourselves. I

commend the practice of its diligent study to you all. Meantime, I wonder if there should be a Roman Catholic friend here tonight. Do not think I am your enemy, I am your friend. It is because I love you that I would have your eyes opened; I would tell you of the one and only Saviour, and relieve you of all false expectations. Many Roman Catholics all through this country have turned away from the church—they have in France, they have everywhere. They are waiting for the Gospel, and we ought to give it to them. A man gave me ten dollars one day, and he said, "This is for the work." I said, "Where did you get it?" He said, "I was coming on the train from Montreal, and I talked with a French Canadian, a Roman Catholic. He said to me, 'Do you know Dr. Shields?' I said, 'Yes, I know him very well.' He said, 'I am a French-Canadian Roman Catholic. Will you give him this ten dollars from me for the work in which he is engaged? He is the best friend we Roman Catholics have in Canada today.'" And he was a Roman Catholic. Let us pray much for them, and for all who work among them; for those for whose support you contributed in France, in Switzerland and in Belgium this evening. They are all working among Roman Catholics, and among people who are nominally Roman Catholics, but who are virtually atheists, who have turned away from the church. That is what this French Bible Mission is—little Baptist churches that stand for the Book, their ministers preaching the Gospel of the grace of God to all who will hear. May the Lord bless us every one for His Name's sake. Let us pray.

We thank Thee O Lord that we have such a Saviour, and that we need no other. We pray Thee to bless our meditation, and may it sharpen our interest in the study of this great matter. If there is an unconverted man or woman here this evening we pray that he may be enlightened of the Holy Spirit to see that he needs no Saviour but Jesus, and having Him he can be saved eternally. Amen.

ROBBING GOD

In the old days when the Pope reigned supreme everybody paid plenty for masses. The begging friars brought in their share. Commercial priests counted the daily offerings. From these extortions our countrymen are now delivered by the Gospel. You would think they would be grateful for their emancipation and give generously for the support of the ministry of the Gospel and the relief of impoverished Christians. Instead, they rob Christ. When the members of a Christian congregation permit their pastor to struggle along in penury, they are worse than the heathen. —MARTIN LUTHER

BOOKS AND BOOKLETS By DR. T. T. SHIELDS

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

The Gospel Witness

130 Gerrard Street East, Toronto 2 - Canada

THE FINALITY OF THE GOSPEL

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, on a Sunday Evening.
(Stenographically Reported)

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

"Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

"As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for-if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

"For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."—Gal. 1:6-12.

IT IS quite generally contended in our day that the gospel as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul, and as preached and believed by countless multitudes since his day, is not suited to the requirements of our modern life, that the gospel must be changed, modified in some way, and improved upon. We are told by some that we need another interpretation of Christ than that which is given to us in the writings of the Apostle Paul.

It is no new thing for men to depart from the gospel. There have always been found those who troubled the saints of God. It was so in Paul's day. Even those who enjoyed the high privilege of his personal ministry were not wholly immune to attacks from without—nor were they exempt from the temptations which come from within. Paul wrote to these Galatian Christians because there were some who were "troubling" them, by perverting the gospel of Christ, and seeking to turn them aside to "another gospel", which, he said, was "not another".

The garden of the Lord is very much like any other garden in this respect that everything that grows in it has its natural enemies. There is a parasite for every plant, a blight for every bloom; and the gardener must always be on the alert to protect his plants and his flowers from the enemies which would destroy alike their beauty and their fruitfulness. Even the plants which our heavenly Father hath planted in the garden of the Lord are subject to attacks from those who would trouble the saints of God. Ever does the devil sow tares among the wheat. Therefore is it necessary continually to remind God's people of first principles, and over and over again to proclaim the things which must surely be believed.

I.

I begin my exposition this evening with the remark that here this inspired apostle AFFIRMS THE FINALITY OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL. It is not a temporary revelation. It is not, like the law, to serve for a time and then pass away. It is a word that is to abide, that is final: it is God's last word to men.

You will observe *there are some who pervert the gospel*. They do not wholly deny it. Those who troubled the Galatian Christians did not deny the gospel: they proposed to add something to it. They taught that even those who had believed in Christ, and had received salva-

tion from Him, must also keep the law of Moses. Paul here speaks of that as a perversion of the gospel.

There are comparatively few who are so bold as wholly to deny the authority of the Christian revelation. There are not many who would go so far as utterly to repudiate Christ, and all that is associated with Him. Not thus does the devil destroy the testimony of the gospel. He is content rather to pervert it, to dilute it, to modify it, to mix his poison with it, so that only those who have special spiritual discernment are able to distinguish between the precious and the vile. But here is one—and surely it is refreshing in these days to be able to company with such a man—here is a man who is certain that the last word has been spoken, that the gospel is the last word. So sure is he of its finality that he admonishes those to whom he writes to give no heed to anyone who should preach another gospel than this.

There are people who are afraid to be dogmatic. They are afraid to affirm that two and two make four. They are afraid to affirm their belief in the authority of the Bible, in the efficacy of the blood of Christ, in the finality of the Christian revelation. If you ask them a question they will say, "Of course, that will largely depend upon the content of the terms you employ." If you ask them if they believe in evolution, they will answer, "That, of course, depends upon what you understand by 'evolution'." When asked whether they believe in the inspiration of the Bible, they reply, "That, of course, will depend upon what you mean by inspiration." You can never get "yes" or "no" from them on any subject. They are so diplomatic that they seem never to know their own minds.

What a relief to find one who believes a word has been said that cannot be amended, that cannot be annulled; and who admonishes us that if anyone comes to us with a message that is contrary thereto to refuse to give him ear!

He goes farther than that and says, "Though . . . an angel preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, give no credence to his message." He names *not men only, but the highest order of being next to Deity Himself*. He says that even if an angel could, by any means, contradict the gospel of Christ, we should refuse to receive his message.

How we are troubled sometimes by great names! How

often have I heard men of distinction in various realms of thought quoted as being in opposition to the gospel—men of vast learning allegedly, men who speak with authority on many subjects, but who have undertaken to set us right in respect to that which is revealed in this Book! What does our text mean but to admonish us that we are to listen to no professor, to no doctor of philosophy, or of divinity, to no man of science, to no human creature—nor to any spiritual intelligence, even an angel himself, if his testimony is not in agreement with this Word.

Do not be afraid of being called narrow and fanatical. Hold fast to the truth which is in Christ in spite of all gainsayers.

I think it is not without significance that the apostle speaks of an angel *as coming from heaven*. You may read in the paper that The Reverend Doctor So-and-So, from somewhere of importance, is going to preach in a certain pulpit. In the announcement you are told that he is a graduate of this university, and the other university, and that he has written many learned books—they do not tell you how many people read them. But he is a very clever man, and therefore when you go to hear such an erudite gentleman you are expected to accept without question whatever he may say.

Paul anticipates all that kind of nonsense, for he virtually says that though an angel should come from heaven—and I think they know a few things up yonder—though an angel from heaven should say anything contrary to this gospel, we are to refuse to believe it; for Paul's word, spoken by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is God's last word.

And lest there should be any mistake about it Paul says *he has no right to amend the gospel himself*. How many men spend their later years writing books to oppose their first utterances! How many there are who are preaching the tenets of Modernism to-day who were out-and-out evangelicals twenty years ago! Of a book the man wrote twenty-five years ago you say, "That is sound to the core." But read his book just off the press and you will discover that he denies nearly everything he wrote in the first. The Apostle admonishes the Galatians, saying that should he for any reason at all bring them any other message than that which he had already delivered to them in the name of the Lord, they must refuse to believe what even he might say; for he insists that neither man nor angel may alter the divine ultimatum already delivered; that no possible combination of circumstances, nor new light from any quarter, can invalidate the gospel which he has preached.

What a tremendous claim is here made! Surely language could not more clearly express an assertion of divine inspiration and authority, and therefore of absolute finality.

Do you not think that men who preach the gospel thus delivered to the saints should be dogmatic? Ought they not to be as ambassadors delivering the message of the King? And, in doing so, declare that they have no right to change a jot or tittle of that which is written?

But to make the matter surer still, this inspired apostle pronounces a curse upon any man or angel, and even upon himself, should he dare to alter the gospel committed to the saints. Is that not strong language? "Let him be accursed." He repeats it: "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you

than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Observe, not only if any man, but if any man or angel, no matter who he is who should dare to change the revelation of God in Christ, "let him be accursed."

That would be considered a very unbrotherly thing to say now. Were we to speak after that fashion in modern assemblies we should be almost voted out of the fellowship of men who are called intellectually progressive. Well, so be it. We accept the verdict and our fate; for we are determined to abide by the gospel of the grace of God. For mark you, if the gospel deals with matters of such grave importance as the eternal destiny of the soul, then surely we ought to insist that the word delivered from heaven shall be allowed to stand, and that any man who will change that testimony must incur the condemnation of Heaven.

I was about three hundred miles east, the other side of Ottawa, some time ago, and as we were motoring home we lost our way. It was a foolish thing to do, I know, but we did. We asked the traffic officer to direct us—and he misdirected us. But when we found we were on the wrong road we turned right-about-face and went in the other direction. You must not assume that because a man wears a clerical garb he can tell you the way to heaven. Many men thus arrayed have no qualification whatever to direct you. You and they must come to that which is written, to this divinely-authoritative guide-book, and abide by the testimony of God's Word.

II.

Further, THE APOSTLE PAUL ASSIGNS CERTAIN REASONS FOR THE AFFIRMATION OF THE FINALITY OF THE GOSPEL. Let no one suppose that faith puts a premium upon ignorance. It does not. Faith is the issue of a spiritual intelligence. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" They must hear and understand; for only as men hear and understand can they believe. God gave us intelligence. He made us above the brute creation. He Himself said, "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." God never intended that men should be driven with bit and bridle, that they should act without intelligence, that they should be mere puppets, blindly obeying another's will. The gospel does not impose even a divine command upon the will of men without assigning a reason for its being obeyed. The true believer is a truly intelligent man. Faith is born, not of ignorance, but of full knowledge. We believe because we know whom we have believed. I believe a man when by some means I have come to know him, when I have proved his trustworthiness. So does the believer receive the gospel, because it is eminently—yes, pre-eminently—reasonable. A man does not stultify his intellect or subject any function of the mind to any sort of humiliation, or expose it to the danger of becoming atrophied by submitting it to belief in the Word of God, to an acceptance of divine revelation.

We are not asked to accept a book that has been dug up from the earth, or dropped from heaven by a parachute. It is clearly understood that the Bible is a human book in so far as its writing is concerned. It is said of the Old Testament that it was written by men of flesh and blood: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And that is equally true of the New Testament: it was not written by angels; it was

not written in heaven; it was written upon earth. We are not asked to accept something wrapped up in a package, and presented to us as coming from nobody knows where.

Paul did not ask the Galatian Christians to bow to the gospel on any such terms as that. Nor are you asked to believe the gospel simply because it is called the gospel, while setting aside our reasoning powers.

Let us see why Paul insists that the gospel is final. Hear what he says: "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached to me is not after man." That is to say, *the unique character of the message, the fact that there is nothing like it anywhere, that it sets before men standards to which natural men are strangers, that it introduces principles that do not belong to the realm of human thought, stamps it as being of divine origin!* Saith Paul, "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man." It is not after man in principle; it is not an indigene; it is not a product of the earth. It is a religious exotic; it comes from some other world than ours. Examine it, consider its incomparable qualities, that it is unique; and ask yourself the question, "Whence cometh it?"

We may apply that principle to the gospel, and to this inspired Book. Why is it that the Bible, at this day, is the best seller in all the world? Why is it that no man or company of men has ever been able to produce another such immortal book and that may be translated into hundreds of different languages without loss of interest or power? Why does the Bible still retain its power, its unique authority over the lives of men?

I confess, I believe this gospel because I know that it is not after man. When the critics can produce something like it; when they can agree among themselves for even twelve months together; when they can pool all their intellectual resources and produce a composite comparable in unity and indestructibility to the Pentateuch which they say was produced by many minds, when they produce a book of such manifest immortality, which can generate such a moral and spiritual dynamic, their opinion will be entitled to some respect. But until that time we must say of this Book, and the gospel it contains, that it is not after man: there is nothing like it.

Observe, too: "I neither received it of man." This apostle *received the gospel through no human intermediary.* He declares—and you must either accept what he says for what it is worth, as a statement of truth, or reject it utterly; there is no half-way course—he declares that he received the gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ". He tells us that he received this, not from man; and he explains in this chapter that there were great apostles who were in the faith before him, Peter, James, John, and others, but that he kept out of their way: "I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me." Paul declares that he received his message from Heaven itself, and not from any man. That is how the gospel came, the New Testament as well as the Old. The writers of the Old Testament are said to have spoken as "they were moved by the Holy Ghost", and this New Testament writer claims for his gospel a full divine inspiration. He says he did not receive it from man.

"Neither was I taught it." I think he means by that, not merely that he did not have a human teacher, but that

it did not grow out of the experiences of life. Sometimes we say, "Experience is the best teacher." There are people who could not learn anything at school, who have learned much since they left school. Paul says he was not taught it. It is as though he said, "This gospel which I proclaim is not the product of any other man's thinking, —nor of my own. It has not been born out of my own experience; nor have I learned it from the circumstances of life, nor from the testimony of history."

How did it come? "By the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul declares that Jesus of Nazareth is not dead but alive, for a dead man could communicate nothing. Jesus Christ had died long before, but He was raised again; and He communicated with Paul, and communicated Himself to Paul. Hence the apostle declares that all that he has written he received as a special revelation from the risen and enthroned Saviour, communicated to him from heaven. Knowing that Jesus Christ is God, that "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist", he knew that God could never change His mind, hence he was assured that his gospel was the final gospel: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Surely no stronger claim to absolute, divine, authority could possibly be made than that which the Apostle Paul makes in behalf of that which he himself had written. He declares himself to have been in some way an amanuensis not in any way suggesting that divine Intelligence had superimposed His thought upon him, but that in perfect harmony with the exercise of his own mental powers the Holy Ghost had so filled and flooded him, and had so illumined his understanding, that he was enabled, as God's mouthpiece, to receive and record a revelation of the heart of God to a sinful world. Let us abide by this gospel!

III.

A word or two more—for the most important part of a sermon, as I have so often said to you, is its application. There are many sermons which may have truth enough in them to save the soul, but they are hung up before their hearers as pictures in an art-gallery, as though the preacher said, "There they are. Look at them. Take it or leave it, as you like." Nathan preached most acceptably to David in the form of a parable. David was ready to make application of it to somebody else—but the prophetic preacher pointed to him and said, "Thou art the man." The sermon was very good, but it was the application that brought David to repentance. So must we ever be careful, not only to express the truth of God, not only clearly to apprehend the content of the word of God; but we are to "receive the truth in the love of it", and make application of it to ourselves.

I say that Paul here implicitly assigns A FURTHER REASON still for the finality of the gospel, and it is that it proves itself to be indispensable to the human soul. In effect he says, "You know what I was, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. You know that I persecuted the church of God. You know that on natural grounds my mind had no affinity for the gospel, for I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. I was biased against the gospel.

I was set against its precepts and principles. There was no agreement within with the truth thus revealed from without. Yet it entered my life; it effected a radical change; it changed my nature; it revolutionized my whole intellectual outlook; it affected all the relationships of life; it gave life a new direction, a new purpose, a new aim, so that I became an entirely different man, and the churches said, "That he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me."

In effect Paul says, "I am myself an example of the radical change which the gospel will make—must make—in the life of any man who receives it. It turns him right-about-face, upside-down, inside-out, and makes him a new creature; makes all of life new to him. Who but God," he argued, "could do that?"

Consider that for a moment. We are not to understand that the gospel is delivered to us as something that requires no exercise of mind on our part. It is not given to us as a bottle of medicine with directions on the outside telling us how to take it. It is not presented to us as something wrapped up in a parcel on which is written, "Take it and ask no questions." Let it be for ever settled in your minds, God does not require us to submit to an anonymous message. When He sent Moses to Pharaoh He signed His name to the ultimatum. He always stamps His word with a signature which neither men nor demons can counterfeit.

What is the gospel? Paul here defines the gospel as "the grace of Christ". That is a wonderfully significant phrase. The gospel communicates the grace of Christ, and that grace of Christ is indispensable to your spiritual life. By the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the gospel believers are "made partakers of the divine nature". We must have "the grace of Christ" in the gospel in order to live. I know critics say that our minds are "static", that we do not think, that we do not reason,—that we are rather stupid, in fact, and of course utterly uneducated—because we do not accept the vagaries of their so-called scholarship. Not at all! True scholarship is never at variance with fact. I venture to say that some of us have read as much as our critics, and have thought and reasoned much more. If we reject their conclusions it is not because we are ignorant of their premises, but because we know them so well as to be convinced of their fallacy.

I was once a little nervous in the face of the attacks of these vain-glorious boasters of their own invincibility; but the more I know of their unbelieving philosophy the more convinced I am of its superficiality and essential untruth, and that the gospel brings every power of the human intellect into exercise; and the citadel of the heart, which includes all the powers of intellect, and affections, and will, is surrendered only when an enlightened intelligence recognizes the Besieger as the rightful Sovereign of the soul. The gospel requires a man, in order to its acceptance, to become a whole man; for it is the gospel that makes the man who receives it to become a whole man. The Lord Jesus Christ announced His programme when He said to the man at Bethesda's pool, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The gospel does not stultify a man's mind: it calls into exercise every power of his God-breathed being, and makes him to grow up into Christ in all things.

We may find some analogies to the principles, here

enunciated and implied in the physical world about us. Of course, I know we have progressed in material matters beyond our fathers; and people who think but superficially persuade themselves that we live in a different world. On that point we need not argue. We admit your contention: the world is different, as I think I can show you.

Consider some of the simplest elements of life, water, for example. The beasts of the field drink it, and live thereby, though they have no power chemically to analyse its content. I suppose the majority of people who use water every day they live—and I expect we ought to use more of it—could not tell you of what it is composed. They could not analyse it; they never saw the inside of a chemical laboratory—but that does not prevent the weary traveller from stooping down to a brook and refreshing himself thereby.

Men, from the beginning, have used water for the maintenance of life. They have used it for purposes of cleansing. They have used it to carry their burdens. "There go the ships" borne upon the bosom of this fundamental element, without which nothing could live anywhere. Yes; we have water—what then? If you lived to be ten times the age of Methuselah I have little doubt you could find some new use for water every day.

I do not know how much the ancients knew about the science of hydraulics. Perhaps more than we suppose. But what did they know about the indirect uses of water power? Doubtless if anyone had said, even seventy-five years ago, that the day would come when water would be used for lighting purposes, some wise scientist would have said, "Nonsense! Water will not burn. You cannot make a lamp that will use water instead of oil." But this church is lighted by water. The electricity is generated by water. The water was in the world ages and ages before men knew how to use it. They drank it, swam in it, moved upon the face of it; but they did not know for a long, long time that water could be used to produce light.

We have heard the music of the brooks in the woods; but our organ is driven indirectly by water. There is no water in the basement, but there is yonder at Niagara. Its mighty thunders whisper in the sweet strains of this organ under Mr. Penney's fingers. Who would have believed that you could send water on a wire hundreds of miles? Our forefathers would have said, "You are beside yourself. You must put water in a pipe." It is the same water, but its power is communicated by wire. Water was once used only to extinguish fire: now it is used as well to kindle it!

I have not heard of any physician in Toronto telling his patient, that if he wants to live he must see that water is eliminated from his diet; that he must not drink it; nor use it in any way. Nor have I heard of any man's trying to find a substitute for that which came pure from the hand of God as an element indispensable to life.

So of the gospel. Its height, and depth, and length, and breadth: and all that it promises to bring to us of the riches of divine grace in the ages to come, the greatest mind has never even imagined; but, fundamentally, it is final. It is to the soul the Water of Life without which nobody can live. And I say it without apology, he is the fool of all fools who proposes to substitute for the life of the soul something else than that which God Himself has prescribed.

Take another example, *the air we breathe*. We all use it. You would not be here if you did not! You breathe, and you correspond with the vital energies about you, and receive into yourself, into that marvellous chemical laboratory, your own physical frame, vitalizing elements from without. The lungs take hold of them, they pass into the bloodstream, and assist in the operation of the whole physical economy, and thus enable you to live. You do not know the science of it—nor does the ablest physician understand it perfectly. But we do know as a matter of common sense and universal human experience that we cannot live without air.

But was the air given to us just to breathe? It was given for that, but who ever supposed that it was designed to be a medium for carrying messages across the sea; and, sometimes, perhaps, to countless thousands or millions who hear one human voice at one time through the medium of the air? But the air that carries radio messages now to remote places is in its chemical constitution the same air that Adam breathed, when God, by His almighty fiat commanded all things into being.

But we have learned to make other uses of the air. Have you ever seen the erection of a building in New York, on that rock called Manhattan Island? They use quantities of dynamite in preparation. But how do they bore the rocks for their dynamite or powder? By air! But you do not need to go to New York! They use it to tear up streets in Toronto—they do tear up streets here sometimes, and sometimes they do it at night, and their sound is not exactly a mother's lullaby! There was a day when that sort of work was done by brawny workmen with pick and crowbar; but not now. What do they use? Just air. Air? Yes; exactly the same kind as you use in your lungs. They compress it, and make the very air we breathe do things that would have staggered Goliath.

I read some time ago about some man's leaving Toronto back in nineteen hundred and fifteen, and going to Vancouver, leaving his property without an occupant. The garage door had never been opened since, and a maple tree more than twenty feet high had grown in front of it. At last the man died, and his household effects and garage had to be sold. The tree was chopped down to get the garage door open—and they found inside a nineteen-twelve model Cadillac car in fairly good condition. And three of the four tires still contained sufficient air, after many years, to support the weight of that car which would weigh one or two tons, perhaps more. While people slept by night and worked by day the compressed air in those tires, the same kind of air you have in your lungs, supported the weight of the car during those years. The rubber, which came from a tree in Africa or somewhere, had been formed into tires, the air put in—and it held. To how many uses have we learned to put the air, the vital energy which sustains our physical beings!

Have you a garden? Have you a farm? You do not use the tools which Abraham used. You do not plow as men did a hundred years ago. You use different implements. But in spite of all that, the earth brings forth its fruits to-day for man and beast by the operation of precisely the same principles of assimilation and growth which obtained in the garden of Eden. The chemistry of the earth, the necessity for dew and rain and sunshine in order to growth and fruitfulness are fundamentally the same.

What is the gospel? "The grace of Christ." What is that? It is all that God is. Wrapped up in this revelation are the principles which, in the moral and spiritual world, are essential to life. Enunciated in this gospel are principles through the acceptance of which there are communicated to us those divine energies which make it possible for a man to live in the presence of God, and to do His holy will. Wrapped up in this gospel are the principles upon which, and by the operation of which alone, the moral equilibrium of the universe is maintained. "Christ died for our sins"—and Paul said the Lord told him that—"according to the scriptures; . . . he was buried, and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"; and He ascended into heaven and released a Power, a divine Energy, from the heavenlies that can be so communicated to human life as to transform the vilest sinner into a saint; and make the man at last what God said he would make him, a man in His own image and likeness.

Nothing but the gospel can do that. Away with these substitutes! Sin, human nature, the rulers of this world's darkness, the deadly enmity of the devil, the quickening and sustaining power of divine grace was fundamentally the same. Hold fast by the gospel. Do not accept anything that is said to be "just as good". There is nothing "just as good". "I am not ashamed"—I give it as my testimony—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power (the dynamite, and the dynamo) of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Let us pray:

We beseech Thee, O Lord, let Thy blessing attend the testimony of Thy word. Save us from the folly of departing therefrom. May we be cleansed in the precious blood! May we drink of the Water of Life! May we breathe the very Air of heaven—even the breath of the Spirit! May souls dead in trespasses and sins be quickened, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

Would you, if you could, reach forth your hand and take back one single sorrow, gloomy then, but gorgeous now, that made Christ to you what He is? Is it not the power of Jesus in heaven, and to all eternity will it not be His glory, that He was the Sufferer, and that He bore suffering in such a way that He vanquished suffering? And is He not the Lord over all by reason of that? Now you are His followers; and will you follow Christ, and will you desire to be worthy of His leadership, by slinking away from suffering? Do not seek it; but if it comes, remember that no sorrow comes but with His knowledge. If He does not draw the golden bow that sends the silver arrow to your heart, He knows it is sent, and sees it fall. You are never in trouble that He does not know it. And what is trouble but that very influence that brings you nearer to the heart of God than prayers or hymns? I think sorrows bring us closer to God than joys, usually; but sorrows, to be of use, must be borne, as Christ's were, victoriously, carrying with them intimations and sacred prophecies to the heart of Hope, not only that we shall not be overborne by them, but that by them we shall be strengthened and ennobled and enlarged.

—HENRY WARD BEECHER

"The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers"

An Important Book Review by the Editor

This article reviews *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by Le Roy Edwin Froom

THE PROPHETIC FAITH OF OUR FATHERS
IN FOUR VOLUMES, \$5.00 per volume. Published by *The Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington 12, D.C.*

Before attempting a review of the second volume of this important work, we reproduce the publisher's announcement respecting the whole series. Here it is as taken from the jacket, of Vol. II:

Brings the Sweep of Centuries Into View.

Volume I—Early Church Positions on Prophecy, and Later Dark Ages Repudiation.

Volume II—Pre-Reformation and Reformation Restoration, and Second Departure.

Volume III—Colonial American and Nineteenth-Century Old World Awakening.

Volume IV—New-World Recovery and Consummation of Prophetic Interpretation.

This Impressive Set

- Reveals the Origin of each Major Interpretation.
- Uncovers the Chain of Evidence Link by Link.
- Breaks the Age-long Conspiracy of Silence.
- Produces the Long-lost Prophetic Witnesses
- Introduces the Men Who Spearheaded Each Advance.
- Presents the Evidence of Manuscripts, Writings, Coins, and Medallions.
- Discloses the Ancient Foundations of the Faith.
- Uncovers the Hidden Sophisms of Interpretative Error.
- Exposes the Motive Behind each Perversion.
- Shows All Major Fulfillments Recognized Contemporarily.
- Reduces Prophetic Interpretation to a Science.
- Visualizes the Story Through Graphic Illustrations.
- Tabulates the Testimony of the Centuries.
- Documents Each Statement in the Recital.
- Establishes the Abiding Principles of Exposition.
- A Ready Reference Work on Prophetic Interpretation.

As To Volumes I. and IV. (From the Jacket)

"The entire *Prophetic Faith* set of four volumes forms a progressive and logical sequence covering the centuries, but each volume is, in a sense, an independent segment and a complete entity. They have not, therefore, been published in serial order. Volumes II and III are already available. Here is information on the others.

"Volume I (Early Church Positions on Prophecy, and Later Dark Ages Repudiation) lays the foundation for the entire set, beginning with the Jewish expositions on Daniel in the centuries just prior to the Christian Era. It covers the fascinating period of the early church, rich with exposition, past the loss of those early positions under the impact of the great Latin departures. Then, after an eclipse of several centuries, prophetic interpretation is revived with increasing force and clarity in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, which are thoroughly covered. Great advances are made both within the Roman Church, and outside, among the Waldenses, who form the climax of Volume I.

"Volume IV (The Nineteenth Century Recovery and Consummation of Prophetic Interpretation) is the climax of the set, completing the survey.

"All volumes are uniform in type, binding, and appearance."

This Review Deals with Vol. II of the Prophetic Faith Set

Of This Volume the Publishers Say:

"This key volume of the Prophetic Faith set covers the Old World prophetic exposition from the Renaissance to the French Revolution. Replete with illustrations—historical scenes, facsimiles of title pages and extracts, reproductions of coins and medals, portraits of the prophetic spokesmen, and a progressive series of charts and tables—it covers a period filled with human interest and vital import. Scholarly in form, intriguing in style, and fully documented, it is not only a handbook of facts and a history of vital developments, but also a human interest portrayal of the leading characters in the drama of prophetic interpretation—all framed in a biographical setting. It will have a special appeal for the trained mind, and crystallizes the research of thirteen years in the archives of Europe and America.

"Completely annotated; exactly verified; fully indexed; 864 pages."

(The fact that this work is published by a Seventh Day Adventist Publishing Company does not invalidate the authoritative, historical, and completely documented facts set forth.—T.T.S.)

Packed With Factual Material

We confess that this Volume is a very difficult one to review. It is so packed with factual material that one scarcely knows where to begin. Perhaps, before going into details, it may be profitable to attempt to describe the impression made upon the reviewer's mind.

The Busy Preachers' Handicap

Preachers who are charged with the responsibility of a pastorate, especially when many other interests and institutions have grown up about the church, are likely to find their time very fully occupied. They must be diligent students, meticulously careful in their research and presentation of the truth as they see it. And when some large and important subject, like that of Eschatology, of necessity having its roots in the prophetic scriptures, challenges attention, and imperatively demands treatment, the hard-pressed preacher is likely to find himself in a difficult position. He may have a well-stocked and judiciously selected library, so that hidden away in scores and perhaps hundreds of volumes, the material for an authoritative foundation for his study may be found. But how can he find time to wade through all these volumes and assemble the historical facts which will give force to his message? If he is a faithful man he will put his scriptural study of the matter first. But even that is likely to require prolonged and painstaking research.

One of Two Things

The average minister, therefore, is likely to do one of two things: either set the subject aside as being too large for him even to hope to master it; or otherwise to treat the subject too superficially to make its presentation of any value.

Vol. II. A Preachers' Hod-Carrier

Volume II, of *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, as of course, in the larger sense, the whole set, has assembled the historical data for him. This reviewer has on more than one occasion remarked that if certain unquestionably devout, earnest, and sincere, preachers had furnished their minds more liberally with a knowledge of history, they would not be so oracular in their pronouncements in the sphere of the interpretation of prophecy.

We know of no department of theological study which furnishes more illustrations of the proverbial saying that, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread"; than in the field of the interpretation of prophecy; and that applies to published works as well as to oral speech.

An Illumination of Parrot-Cages

Two or three years ago I sent one of my young men to an Evangelical book shop with instructions to comb their shelves, and bring me every book that had anything to say about The Second Coming. He must have returned with fifty or sixty volumes. At least half of them were like so many parrot cages, in which the authors were parroting the opinions of others who had written on the same subject. Our only criticism of the authors of these books is that they had the presumption even to attempt to write on such a subject. If they would diligently study Volume II of *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, it would humble them in the dust; and would lead them to charge themselves as Elihu charged Job, with multiplying words without knowledge.

Review of Volume II.

Following the Introduction, the book deals with "Revival of interpretation in Italy and Bohemia". It shows how thinkers were disillusioned by the break in Papal continuity dealing with "the Babylonian Captivity (1309-1377) at Avignon". It shows how that ushered in a new epoch in Papal decadence. It was "the Papacy's Dark Century".

It goes on to show how an "increasing Chorus declares Papacy is Antichrist". It deals with Dante's portrayal of the Papacy as Antichrist in *The Divine Comedy*.

From Dante he proceeds to FRANCESCO PETRARCH (1304-1374) who also identifies the Papacy as Antichrist.

JOHN MILICZ (d. 1374) of Bohemia, is quoted at length to the same effect.

MATTHIAS of JANOW (d. 1394) "the Wycliff of the Bohemian Church" similarly interpreted the prophetic scriptures in respect to the Papacy as Antichrist, and declared that a future Antichrist is the devil's trick, in these words:

"Lest—says he—the abomination of desolation, (Matt. 24:15) should be plainly manifest to men, he has invented the fiction of another abomination still to come, that the church, plunged still deeper in error, may pay homage

to the fearful abomination which is present, while she pictures to herself another which is still in the future. It is a common, everyday fact, that Antichrists go forth in endless numbers, and still they are looking forward for some other and future Antichrist."

John Wycliff

Then JOHN WYCLIFF (c. 1324-1384) "The Morning Star," of the Reformation, appeared before the dawn of the Reformation.

It is impossible to review the Lollard influence in propagating similar interpretations, but it was very great.

Huss and Savonarola

The bitter persecutions which preceded the Reformation, and which claimed such victims as HUSS and SAVONAROLA, were mainly directed against those who called the Papacy the Antichrist.

Christopher Columbus

It will be surprising to many to learn that CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS was actuated by religious motives, and narrowly escaped a martyr's end.

There is a section devoted to Jewish expositors.

A Two-Fold Recovery

Then there is a section, chapter II, entitled, "The Reformation Born of a Two-fold Discovery". The Reformers fought with two great weapons, big guns, if you like, "First the re-discovery of Christ and His Salvation; and second, the Discovery of the Identity of Antichrist and His subversions". Thus justification by faith, and the Papacy as Antichrist were the two great weapons with which the Reformers so breached the walls of the Papacy that:

Half of Europe Sundered From Roman Communion

"This Protestant movement, initiated by Luther, split western Christendom into two halves—finally severing Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, England, and Scotland from the communion of Rome; and seriously affecting other countries like France and Austria. Yet during the period of the Counter Reformation much Protestant territory was lost again, and Rome riveted her fetters more strongly than ever upon her own adherents."

We cannot even name the Reformers who with practical unanimity identified the Papacy as Antichrist. But here are a few of the great names:

Part of A Reformation Honour Roll

PHILIP MELANCTON (1497-1560); ANDREAS OSIANDER (1498-1552); FRANCOIS LAMBERT OF AVIGNON (1487-1530); NICOLAUS VON AMSDORF (1483-1565); VIRGIL SOLIS (1514-1562, or 1567); MATTIAS FLACIUS (1520-1575); ALFONSUS CONRADUS (16th century); ANDREAS MUSCULUS (1514-1581); NIKOLAUS SELNECKER (1530-1592); GEORG NIGRINUS (1530-1602); DAVID CHYTRAEUS (1530-1600); HULDREICH ZWINGLI (1484-1531); LEO JUDA (1482-1542); JOHANN OECOLAMPADIUS (1482-1531).

Time would fail us to give the full list of names of distinguished Reformers who saw Antichrist in the Papacy.

There is a section, chapter 16, entitled:

"English Martyrs Nerved for Stake by Prophecies":

This list includes WILLIAM TYNDALE (1484-1536); ROBERT BARNES (d. 1540); GEORGE JOYE (d. 1553); NICHOLAS RIDLEY (c. 1500-1555); HUGH LATIMER (c. 1490-1555); and so on, chapter after chapter.

Extensive Quotations

These chapters contain extensive quotations thoroughly documented from the writings of all these Reformers and martyrs, including THOMAS CRAMNER (1489-1556). Chapter 18 shows how,

"Anglican Leaders Continue the Prophetic Emphasis".

Calvin, Ussher and Farel

Chapter 19 shows that JOHN CALVIN was clear regarding Antichrist; also JAMES USSHER (1581-1656). FAREL, contemporary with Calvin, and one of the figures in the Reformation Monument at Geneva, entertained the same view of the Papacy.

The Assembly of the Church in Scotland named the Papacy as the prophesied Antichrist.

Knox and Napier

LORD NAPIER (1550-1617) supported JOHN KNOX in declaring the Papacy to be Antichrist:

The Counter-Reformation

Chapter 21 records "Rome's Counter Attack on Protestant Interpretations". There is the story of the Catholic Counter Reformation.

Jesuits Propagate Futurism

Chapter 22 records how "Jesuits introduced Futurist Counter Interpretations". A quotation from *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* charges—

"To the 'reformers' particularly the Apocalypse was an inexhaustible quarry where to dig for invectives that they might hurl them against the Roman hierarchy. The seven hills of Rome, the scarlet robes of the cardinals, and the unfortunate abuses of the papal court made the application easy and tempting".

RIBERIA, of Salamanca, Spain, and BELLARMINE, of Rome, put forth the Futurist interpretation—(pages 486 onward).

Particulars of FRANCISCO RIBERA (1537-1591) are given; and of ROBERT BELLARMINE (1542-1621) "Italian cardinal and ablest and most renowned of all Jesuit controversialists."

Futurism Limits Antichrist to Single Lifetime

This new Futurism insisted that the length of Antichrist's exploits must harmonize with the life period of one man, which, of course, exclude the Papacy.

The Volume thereafter shows how "the seventeenth century begins with battle."

The French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon are dealt with.

Whetting the Appetite

It is impossible to go farther with any detailed review of this great work. We hope we have said enough to whet the appetite of those who really desire to know what devout men of great scholarship, who sealed their testimony with their lives, believed respecting the place of the Papacy in any just interpretation of Biblical Eschatology in the light of Christian History.

We venture to urge our readers, particularly our ministerial readers, to procure this set of books.

Whether anywhere in later volumes there is a tincture of Seventh Day Adventism, we do not know, but even if there is, as we have before said, it cannot diminish the value of this volume as a compendium of prophetic interpretation.

If Necessary Sell Your Car to Buy Them

We remember to have read somewhere years ago, the advice of Mr. Spurgeon to young preachers; to the effect that if they could not easily afford to procure Matthew Henry's Commentary, they would be well advised to sell their coat to buy it. We will go even farther, in respect to these volumes, particularly Volume II, and say to all our ministerial friends, "If you cannot otherwise afford to buy these books, it will pay you to sell your car to buy them."

At all events, this reviewer would not part with Volume II if he could not replace it, for very much more than one hundred dollars. Indeed, we are inclined to say that could we not replace it, no one could buy it.

Every Preacher Should Have These Books

We wish that these volumes could be placed on the book shelf of every preacher of every Denomination on the entire American Continent, and, indeed, wherever the English language is spoken. We cannot too highly commend these volumes.

But we had almost forgotten: let it be said, the books are well bound, printed on good paper, and in excellent type, we should say about eleven point type.

Volume II, in fact, is a good-sized historical library in itself. Therefore, my brethren, hurry up and buy these books.

Let Not Prejudice Prevent Study

The difficulty with many of our premillennial friends is that they will not read other than their own side of the question. We would conjure them to lay prejudice aside, and buy these books; and if any one of our readers is disposed to produce another book from the premillennial point of view, we would beg him not to do so until he has read Volume II of *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*.

Where These Books Obtainable

For Canadian Readers: These books may be obtained from Toronto Baptist Seminary Book Room, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto 2, Canada.

LIFE A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON SCRIPTURE

Life is a better commentary on the practical sides of the Bible than anything else. And you do not need so much to turn and ask what the Greek is in this passage; you want to know what the English is. You do not need so much to ask what is the construction, as to go out and take your book in your hand and see if these things are so. Men should study the Word of God in its practical applications, just as the young medical student studies. He takes his text-book. There is the description of morbid conditions of bone, or muscle, or skin, and he goes into the hospital, he reads what is said, and he compares the facts with the text; and so he learns. And this is the true way to study the Word of God on practical sides. Look into life and see whether its sayings are true.

—HENRY WARD BEECHER

A PEN PORTRAIT OF THE PASTOR AND EDITOR

SOME time ago we received the following letter from Mr. P. J. Jones, a former Treasurer of Jarvis Street Church, whose retirement from business on account of indifferent health is usefully employed in reading good things, if we may judge by the following letter and the accompanying article.

We gladly accede to Mr. Jones' request that Dr. Punshon's pen picture be published, for we heartily agree with his suggestion that it "may do good and may renew the sense of obligation to many a reader, to Dr. Shields, under God".—W.S.W.

Dear Mr. Whitcombe—

Perhaps some time when there is space, the printing of these extracts from Dr. Punshon's lecture on Bunyan may do good and may renew the sense of obligation of many a reader, to Dr. Shields, under God. The gracious figure of the Pastor rose before me as I read it, and from my own soul a tearful rush of praise and thanksgiving was evoked! May it so bless others.

Sincerely,
P. J. JONES

Dr. Punshon on Bunyan

A brave good man, who loved life well, but who loved good better: and who, when a thing was put before him, and when Timidity whispered, "Is it safe?" and Expediency hinted, "Is it politic?" and Vanity suggested, "Will it be popular?" took counsel of his own true heart and simply enquired, "Is it right?" There is no feat more noticeable than the devout earnestness with which he studied the Divine Word and the reverence which he cherished for it throughout the whole of his life—

"Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise."

One great want of our times is a commanding ministry—a ministry of a piety at once sober and earnest and of mightiest moral power. Give us these men! "full of faith and the Holy Ghost", who will proclaim old truths with new energy, not cumbering them with massive drapery; nor hiding them 'neath piles of rubbish. Give us these men! Men of sound speech, who will preach the truth as it is in Jesus, not with faltering tongue and averted eye, as if the mind blushed at its own credulity—not distilling into it an essence so subtle, and so speedily decomposed, that a chemical analysis alone can detect the faint odour which tells it has been there,—but who will preach it apostlewise, that is, "first of all", at once a principle shrined in the heart and a motive mighty in the life—the source of all morals and inspiration of all charity—the sanctifier of every relationship, and the sweetener of every toil. Give us these men! Men of dauntless courage, from whom god-fear has banished man-fear—who will stand unblenched before the pride of birth, and the pride of rank, and the pride of office, and the pride of intellect, and the pride of money, and will rebuke their conventional hypocrisies, and demolish their false confidences, and sweep away their refuge of lies. Give us these men! Men of tenderest sympathy, who dare despise none, however vile and crafty, because, the "one blood" appeals for relationship in its sluggish or fevered flow; who deal not in fierce reproofs nor haughty bearing because their own souls have just been brought out of prison; by whom the sleeper will not be harshly eluded and who will mourn over the wanderer

"my brother, ah! my brother!" Give us these men! Men of zeal untiring, whose hearts of constancy quail not, although dull men sneer, and proud men scorn, and timid men blush, and wicked men revile: who, though atrophy wastes the world, and paralysis has settled in the church, and hazard and hardship are "valiant for the truth upon the earth".

"And think
What others only dreamed about, and do
What others did but think, and glory in
What others dared but do."

Give us these men! in whom Paul would find congenial reasoners; whom the fervent Peter would greet with a welcome sparkle in the eye: to whom the gentle John would be attracted as to twin souls, which beat like his own—all lovingly. Give us these men! and you need speak no more of the faded greatness and prostrate might of the pulpit; the true God-Witness shall be re-installed in their ancient moral sovereignty, and "by manifestation of the truth, shall commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"

—W. M. PUNSHON—Lecture on John Bunyan

A SERIES OF STUDIES ON THE PAPACY AS THE ANTICHRIST

LAST Sunday evening's address, published in this issue, was a very simple introduction to the study of the scriptural and historical significance of Antichrist.

In the whole series there may be ten or twelve addresses, but they will not be delivered consecutively. They may later be put together, chapter by chapter, in a book. The Sunday evening congregation must, occasionally, come up to get air. We all need a change of menu occasionally. We can only promise that the series (D.V.) will be completed, first by a study of the scriptures, and also by a study of the history of the Papacy in the light of Holy Scripture.

Jarvis Street Pulpit is not given to speculative interpretations of prophecy such as those which nominate, successively the Kaiser, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, for the supreme infamy of Antichrist. These addresses will be soundly exegetical respecting what the Bible teaches about Antichrist; and what indubitably authenticated history establishes.

In this issue of the paper we publish a review by the Editor of a very important set of books, four volumes, entitled: *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*. We could wish that every reader of THE GOSPEL WITNESS had a set, and would diligently study it, especially Volume II.

We are receiving inquiries from many parts of the world respecting the general subject of Eschatology, with its central doctrine of The Second Advent, and related events. The requests are so general that we are already investigating to see what we can do. Certainly this series on the Papacy as Antichrist will appear in book or booklet form, according to the number of addresses which will be given.

We should appreciate it if our readers would try to interest their friends in this series. THE GOSPEL WITNESS will send the entire series, week by week, as they appear, for \$1.00. If the—let us say—twelve addresses should stretch over four months, or more, for \$1.00 the complete series will be sent, with all other addresses that may be given periodically between times.

Please order your series at once. It will help us to know how many extra copies to print.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 15 Fourth Quarter Lesson 11 December 10, 1950

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

CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 9:24-38.

Golden Text: "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly."
—Neh. 9:33.

I. The Sin and Rebellion of the People: verses 24-30.

The Word of God is compared to a mirror, for it brings to light all imperfections (Jas. 1:23). As the Jews of that Restoration period listened obediently to the Word of God, read and expounded by Ezra, Nehemiah and the leaders who were assisting him, they were convinced of their sin in failing to keep the feasts commanded by Jehovah (2 Kings 22:11; 23:21; Rom. 3:20). Conforming to the law in this regard brought joy and gladness. (Neh. 8:17). Moreover, it afforded further opportunity for the reading of the law (Neh. 8:18).

The children of Israel were by this time bowed before the Lord in humility, grief and contrition, for a glimpse of the holiness of God, as revealed in His Word, produced an overwhelming sense of their own iniquity and unworthiness to stand before Him (Neh. 9:1). Day by day they confessed their sins, and day after day they worshipped God, honouring Him in proportion as they despised themselves (Job 42:1-6; Ezra 9:5-9).

The priests, Levites and other religious leaders stood upon the stairs, lifting their voices in praise to God for His greatness and in confession. They rehearsed before Him and in the presence of the Jews the history of His dealing with the people in the past, as a warning against sin and as an encouragement to righteousness. It is well to learn the lessons of history, that we may be saved from the pitfalls of the past. (Eccl. 3:15; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 4:1-11). This was not the first occasion, nor was it the last, when the history of Israel was rehearsed in the ears of the people (Deut. 1, 2; Psa. 105-107; Acts 7).

Briefly the Levites told the story of the creation, the call of Abraham, the redemption from Egypt, the wilderness journey, the giving of the law and the establishment of the people in their own land (Neh. 9:6-23). Once in the land of Canaan God gave them complete victory over their enemies in the land (v. 22), and He gave them exceptional prosperity (vv. 23-25). At first the Jews had been grateful to God, finding delight in His great goodness (Deut. 8:7-10). Nevertheless in their prosperity they became self-sufficient and proud (Deut. 8:11-14), then disobedient and rebellious in heart, no longer willing to submit to His authority in their lives (1 Kings 14:9). When rebuked by the prophets who proclaimed the word of the Lord, instead of yielding, they repudiated the messages and slew the messengers (1 Kings 18:4; 19:10; Isa. 29:21; Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:52). Becoming bolder and bolder in their high-handed iniquity, they frequently provoked the Most High (Heb. 3:7-15).

It was part of the Divine appointment that for disciplinary reasons, for their own good, the Lord's people should be stopped in their mad career and brought to punishment (Deut. 6:23, 24; 8:16; 10:13; Jer. 24:5-7; 32:39; Heb. 2:1-3). God withdrew the protecting hedges, leaving the people subject to the darts of the foe, until they were brought down to the depths of distress (Deut. 8:3-5). Then they would cry unto the Lord in a spirit of repentance and faith, renewing their covenant with Him. God would then deliver them and give them rest. In time they would forget Him, turn their backs upon Him, and the same cycle of events would recur (Judg. 2:11-19). Since the Israelites in the past would not humble themselves before God, these leaders desired to do so; and whereas their forefathers would not listen to His commandments, these Jews were anxious to express their willingness to obey Him in all things.

II. The Patience and Mercy of God: verses 31-38.

God's dealings with His people in the past had revealed to them His nature as a gracious and merciful God (Exod. 34:6, 7; Psa. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:15; Joel 2:13); gracious in

bestowing upon them blessings which they did not deserve, and merciful in withholding from them judgments which they did deserve. For His own name's sake (Ezek. 20:9; 36:21) He had not forsaken them (Jer. 4:27; 5:10, 18; 30:11). Our God is patient and long-suffering toward those who trust in Him.

Inasmuch as God had proven Himself to be a great, mighty, covenant-keeping (Deut. 7:9) and merciful God (Psa. 116:5), the Jews were encouraged to pray that He would look upon them in their distress (2 Chron. 16:9). Howbeit, these calamities had befallen them because of their own sin. They had only themselves to blame; they were without excuse (Rom. 1:20; 2:1; 3:4, 19), since the Lord is just and righteous in all His actions (Ezra 9:15). Men are prone to rebel against God in times of distress when they do not recognize that He is holy, just, all-wise and all-loving. We must learn to consider all the events of our lives in the light of our relationship with God.

These leaders confessed the national sins of the past. Only when sin is acknowledged and confessed is there any just ground for forgiveness. (Psa. 32:5; 51:2-4; 1 John 1:9).

Recognizing that the distress which they were experiencing was the result of the lack of repentance and true service on the part of the leaders of the past (2 Kings 22:13), Ezra, Nehemiah and their colleagues desired to enter into a covenant with God, reaffirming their allegiance to Him as His servants (2 Kings 23:3; Ezra 10:3). This covenant was sealed in the presence of Nehemiah the governor, the princes, the Levites and the chiefs of the people, and heartily ratified by those among the people who had remained faithful and separate from the heathen of the land (Neh. 10).

Revival would surely come to our churches and our land, if God's people would confess their sins, repent, separate themselves from evil and renew their covenant to serve Him (2 Chron. 7:14).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Dec. 4—Confession Brings Forgiveness 1 John 1:5-10;
Jas. 5:16.
Dec. 5—Confession Must Be Complete Psa. 32.
Dec. 6—Confession and God's Promises Lev. 26:40-45;
Gen. 32:9-12.
Dec. 7—Repentance Necessary to Salvation Lk. 13:1-9;
Acts 17:30.
Dec. 8—Repentance on Earth Brings Joy in Heaven
Lk. 15:1-10.
Dec. 9—Repentance Wrought in Us by the Word
Lk. 16:19-31.
Dec. 10—Confession and Repentance Bring Gladness,
and Joy Lk. 15:11-32.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Now in a song of grateful praise. To God be the glory.
All the way my Saviour leads me. God will take care of you.
O God, our help in ages past. O Jesus, I have promised.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES

What if the harp, in order to make itself blessed, should sell, first, its lowest bass string, and then its next one, and then its next string, and then its next, and its next, until finally every string of the harp is sold? Then, when all the heaps of music are piled up before it, and it wants to play, it is mute. It has sold the very things out of which music must needs come. And men that will be rich give up sensibility, affection, faith, manhood, coining them all, emptying themselves; and when they get possession of their wealth, what is there left for them to enjoy it with? Their marrow is gone. There is no string in the harp on which joy can play. And there is no spectacle that at once is so melancholy in the one side, and that so vindicates divine justice on the other, as to see the old corrugated wretch who has spent his whole life in the violation of faith and trust, and who has made himself rich at last, in the midst of his bounty, creaking, wretched, despairing, bitter, hateful and hating, and dying as a viper dies that stings itself.

—HENRY WARD BEECHER