

The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

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REMEMBER!

THAT person who is endowed with a good memory is surely blessed. Among the many benefits that the Lord bestows upon us this is one that we seldom mention. Perhaps only those who have lost all memory of the past can really appreciate this priceless boon. It is memory which makes all of life to be a unit and which causes one to see the present in the instructive light of the past.

Memory enables one to dwell in the pleasant dream-land of yesterday and to take part again in experiences which were a source of pleasure or blessing. By a simple act of the mind one may be transferred in thought from the present to the days which have gone beyond recall. This trick of the mind enables one to enter once more into happenings that were a source of enjoyment.

The businessman, pressed with the demands of commercial life, may pause in his busy life and recall the pleasant, quiet childhood which was his. The mother, burdened over a wayward son or daughter, may turn her mind to the days of innocence and childish delight when the prodigal was carefree and happy. The one who is nearing the end of life and feels that he is making little contribution to society can reflect upon the days when concrete achievements were his.

The Christian, too, may sit back and recall the blessing of the Lord which were his portion in the experiences of yesterday. Some days stand out in the memory for they are reminders of special spiritual victories. The believer encounters no difficulty in bringing to mind these triumphs. Indeed there is a real danger that he is apt to dwell upon the feats of the past to such an extent that he is robbed of the blessings of the present. A good servant then becomes a tyrannical master.

The contemplation of the past, however, is not always a source of joy. Even for the Christian it may occasion heart sorrow. As he views the failures and fallings of the past, contrition must well up in his heart.

Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

It is blessedly true that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"; but still the Christian mourns his past folly and sees it as a teacher which memory places at his disposal.

The very remembrance of past growth in grace can be the cause of regret to the child of God as he contrasts it with present stagnation. Before those believers who now live upon a low spiritual plane, the memory of God's presence and power in better days rises up, wooing them back to Him. With the poet such a soul is forced to cry out:

What peaceful hours I once enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

Memory thus serves as the soul's surgeon, making deep wounds that the patient may be restored. Hence memory may act as a stepping stone to restoration.

Even in the present life, this is an awful faculty; that is, it commands our respect and fills us with wonder as we consider it. It becomes either the ladder to blessing or the trapdoor to dark despair.

More startling still is the consideration that memory is not erased in eternity. When we come to think of the exercise of this faculty in the after life, we must tread carefully and speak only where Scripture speaks. We are inclined to believe that there is a definite operation of memory even when we have passed beyond the arena of time and space.

In the account in Luke's gospel of the rich man and Lazarus there occurs a startling word which Abraham is said to have spoken to the rich man who was in hell — "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." All of the caverns of hell must have echoed and re-echoed with that one fateful word — REMEMBER! . . . REMEMBER! . . . REMEMBER! We shall not attempt to build some elaborate dogma upon this one word spoken in eternity but we can gain some suggestive thoughts from its consideration.

This rich man now remembered his misplaced emphasis in life. The wealth and pomp which once had been the source of joy now rose up to condemn him. The very remembrance of that for which he had lived must have caused his punishment to be even more severe as mem-

ory added fuel to the fires of hell. This will be true not of the rich man alone but will also be true of any and all who have set their affections upon *things* rather than upon the crucified Saviour. The very things that might have been good in themselves but which robbed the soul of God will then be seen as tormentors. The one who neglected his soul because of his concern for the esteem of men will have forfeited his soul and have only the lingering, haunting memory of any small esteem which was accorded him. The one who madly pursued his pleasures and laughed at the thought of eternity and judgment will find small consolation in the memory of those fleeting pleasures that vanished so quickly.

In a Christless eternity, men will be reminded, too, of the numerous occasions upon which they heard the gospel of grace and refused the Saviour. Their constant jesting about salvation and holy things may have once provoked the rude laughter of admiring companions but in eternity this jesting will be resurrected by memory to taunt the fool. Just one word will eloquently express the divine judgment — "REMEMBER!"

Reader, what thoughts arise in your heart as you read these words? Does your memory of past sins not haunt you even here? What, then, of the hereafter? Your present concern will be multiplied by infinity as the memory of your sins parades before your eyes and all hell shall echo with the condemning word.

Let us not pause here lest we despair of help. Just as the caverns of hell shall echo and re-echo with the tormenting call to remembrance, so, too, the lofty vaults of heaven will vibrate with another sound. Hell calls for memories that torture but heaven resounds with another note. Of those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ to take away their sins the Word declares — "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will *remember* their sin *no more*." Nor is that all! The Saviour who now sits enthroned in heaven once declared, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me, before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." We do not know how it can be possible for God to *forget* our sins but we can rejoice that He does and the voice that vibrates throughout heaven is one of acknowledgment rather than condemnation.

The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate

FOUNDER AND FIRST EDITOR—Dr. T. T. Shields
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Do you know this Saviour as your own? Have you acknowledged before Him that you have sinned and have you repented of that sin and trusted in His atoning death for you? If you have, the memory of your past may bother you now but in heaven your attention will be elsewhere as the Creator of the ends of the earth confesses you before the throne. May every unsaved soul be constrained to say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

ATTENTION: Pastors and Churches

SEMINARY QUARTETTE PLANS TOUR

During the month of May the quartette of Toronto Baptist Seminary plans to make a tour of Ontario and western Quebec. Accompanying the group will be Pastor Samuel Dempster who is in charge of the thriving new work in Kingston. Each night they will visit an evangelical Baptist church and hold a service of song, testimony and preaching. Any Baptist church that desires to have such a service should immediately contact the Seminary secretary, at 337 Jarvis St., Toronto 2. State several alternative dates in order that a suitable schedule may be organized.

Those who have heard the quartette have ex-

pressed the feeling that it is one of the finest in this area. Each of the young men has a testimony to give that will bring blessing to the souls of young and old. The four members of the group came from four different lands, — Mr. Keith Davies of England; Mr. James McCombe from Ireland; Mr. Kenneth Miller from the United States; and Mr. Samuel Pourret from France. The preacher, Pastor Dempster, also hails from the Emerald Isle.

The quartette stands ready to accept the invitation from any evangelical Baptist church that wishes to make use of its services.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

The Christian's Education

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

Delivered in Cooke's Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, July 21st, 1938

(Stenographically Reported)

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."—Romans 15:4.

IN EDUCATIONAL institutions the courses prescribed for the students who enroll are usually limited to a certain number of years. A student enters school or college with the expectation that within a given period he will be able to complete the course of study prescribed, and be graduated. But we who are Christians have been enrolled in a school that knows no recess or vacation: we are enlisted in an enterprise which is not limited even by the bounds of time. There is no end to the course to which we are called to address ourselves.

We are to be made partakers of the Infinite. Our minds are to be exercised with the truths of the Infinite. We are privileged to draw upon storehouses which, like the storehouses which Joseph filled, are so full that they cannot be estimated. You will remember that the Egyptians got past the stage of "numbering". We come together this evening that we may learn another lesson on the way, in order that we may be a little wiser following our evening meditation than we ever were before. The life of the Christian is a life of continual progress. There ought to be no standing still, but continual enlargement and increase.

We are engaged in the study of but one Subject. The great desideratum is that we should know God better. Not that we should know the things of His universe, useful as that may be; nor that we should be acquainted with those who people this sphere in which we live, though that is desirable. The one great matter that should spur us on, that should be the supreme ambition of life for every one of us, is that we should know God better.

The Apostle Paul was no mean student of men or of affairs, or of all that is embraced within the realm of human learning. It was said of him indeed by some of his critics, "Much learning doth make thee mad." He was recognized by all as a man of great erudition, as a real scholar; and while they spoke with some contempt of certain of the disciples as "unlearned and ignorant men", no one ever laid such a charge against the Apostle Paul. He was not only the equal of his contemporaries and critics, but, by common consent, he was intellectually their superior. Yet you know how he laid all his talents and capacities open to the Spirit of God, laid them all at the feet of Christ. He declared that he had subordinated every interest in life — counting even those things which were gain to him to be loss — "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." In other words,

the Apostle Paul had dedicated his life to the one enterprise of getting to know God better — and God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

That is what we ought to do. We are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"; and grace and peace are to be multiplied to us "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." If we are to have more grace, we must have more knowledge. If we are to have a deeper peace, we must have a fuller knowledge of the things of God.

I.

The text which I have read to you tell us SOMETHING OF THE PROVISION WHICH A GRACIOUS FATHER HAS MADE FOR THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF HIS CHILDREN. There are parents, I suppose, whose own minds are unenlightened, who have no appreciation whatever of the importance of having the minds of their children fully instructed and trained. But most parents recognize that the training of the mind, the education of their children, is not less important, though secondary in order, to the matter of feeding and clothing them. A son well fed and clothed, whose mind is stagnant and uninformed, is neither a joy to his father nor useful to himself or anyone else: "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." We ought to aspire to be instructed Christians, and seek by every means in our power a fuller — I will not say religious, but biblically-spiritual education.

We are told here that the Lord has so ordered it that things were written "aforetime" for our learning. The Lord knew that we should have to learn things. It is quite true that the children of God are His children by a birth from above, being born of the Spirit they become children of God; but as babes we must then, and thereafter, continually learn. "There is no royal road to learning" even in respect to what we call secular knowledge; and it is equally true that there is no royal road to learning biblically.

There has come as a blight upon the professing church of our day, churches of the evangelical order, an idea that we can become wise biblically overnight, that there is a short cut by which we may become full-grown Christians. Indeed, there are some people, one might almost suppose, who lay claim to having been made complete from the beginning. As Adam needed not to grow from babyhood to manhood, but was created a man from the beginning, so there are people who seem to imagine that one can be instructed in spiritual matters suddenly,

quickly, by some short cut. I have seen all kinds of advertisements by which one may learn to speak French or German in a half dozen lessons. It is just a catchpenny. I have never met anyone who had learned proficiently by any such short cut.

We have to learn patience, and it is by patient continuance in well doing that we arrive at last at spiritual maturity. We must be willing to learn from primary to junior, and from junior to intermediate, and from intermediate to adult — “ever learning”, learning more day by day — and unlearning some things which we had supposed at one time to be true. Let that be accepted as a principle, that if we are to be worthy of our vocation, we must always be at school as Christians, and never turning aside from our course.

God has been careful to provide us with certain writings, I may venture to say with an authoritative and approved text-book. Frequently I have been under the necessity of dipping into books which were written for the instruction of Roman Catholics, and in the hope, too, perhaps that Protestants might also be led from their allegiance by the reading of them. I have noticed that all these books bear the imprimatur of the Church. When written, they are submitted to the bishop, archbishop, or the cardinal, as the case may be; and on the flyleaf is the stamp of the Church's approval. The Church says in effect, “Whatever you read in this book has the approval of the Church, and may be accepted as true.” There is very little of it that is true, notwithstanding their approval.

But the Lord has given to us — and indeed it would be very strange if He had not done so—certain Scriptures, or writings, that we may learn therefrom. The divine Father provided His children with a text-book, and it bears the stamp of His approval. What a blessing it is we have not to choose our own books in this respect! I think I once remarked somewhere that years ago, when I first of all began to enquire into that strange movement of unbelief which we now speak of as Modernism, that I found there was no substantial agreement even among the critics. I was too poor to buy all the books that were being written, and I longed to find some one book that would comprehend the whole problem, and that would answer all my questions, and with final authority settle all my doubts. I wondered that some scholar, or some council of scholars, had not thought it wise to get together and produce such a book.

I never found one written by human hands, but I discovered quite early in my Christian experience that the book for which I longed had really been written, and that my need had been anticipated; that the Lord Himself had provided us in His own word, our Bible, by anticipation, an answer to every problem. We have it in the Bible. And I say, it would have been strange if it had not been so. I have often felt that if the Bible could be forgotten, and every copy of it hidden, that some discerning mind would, by even a rational process, reach the conclusion, as astronomers by the application of the law of probability sweep the heavens with their telescopes and from calculation, assume that at a certain point a planet ought to be found, and then at last discover it when they have made a telescope strong enough to discern it — I say, if there were no Bible, one might rationally have reached the conclusion that there ought to have been one somewhere; and we might have wisely gone looking for it.

But we have it, one that is “able to make us wise unto salvation”, and that can so instruct us, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. So then the Scriptures are here named as being providentially, divinely, ordered, and the things therein contained divinely prescribed. The things that were written — and were written “aforetime” — were written for our learning. That is why the Bible was prepared. As though God were to say to you and me to-night, “Here is my Book. I have written it especially for you, that by a diligent study of it you may learn those things which I desire you to know.”

This is a marvellous text-book. Long before modern educators discovered, or formulated, or evolved — use what word you will — the principles of present-day pedagogy, and how to find access to the human mind, the divine Teacher had written those very principles into the Book. The Bible does not concern itself, for beginners such as we are, very greatly with truth in the abstract, but gives us pictures of truth in the concrete, truth illustrated, truth exemplified.

That is why so large a part of the Bible is taken up with the stories of the lives of men and women, simple narratives of how they lived, what they believed, what they did, how they prospered — or how they failed, and how they lived their lives in the sight of God. We are given here a great collection of inspired stories, inspired biographies — and they are written “for our learning”.

A little experience is worth a very great deal of theory. There are some things we can learn only by experience. I remember some years ago the Superintendent of the Beginners' Department of our School had had a day when she was greatly tried. She said to me, “What do you think about having a separate service for the beginners? They are so noisy in the church service.” I said, “I have not thought of it, and I do not know. There is only one way to settle a problem like that, and that is to try it. If it works, carry on; if it does not work go back to what you are doing now until you find some better course. Put your theory to the proof.”

You will remember that we began the service that Sunday morning without the little tots. I don't know how you felt about it: I felt lonely — as the house feels when the baby is off visiting. After a while I looked up toward the gallery — and they were there. Afterward I asked the superintendent, “What happened you?” “Do not ask me. They all went on strike. I tried to have a service, but they would not have it; they all began to clamor, ‘We want to go to church.’” That was the way to settle it, by experience. And we put up with a little disturbance here and there in order that we may have the youngest child in our service.

That was God's method. He did not give us a book on philosophy only. I think I can read some fairly hard stuff sometimes. I have a book at home now, written by a great Baptist scholar in England. I promised him I would read it, and give him an opinion. I would not dare say that I could not squeeze time to read it — but in the summertime I do not feel like it, and the book remains unread thus far. It has a most interesting title, “Philosophical Foundations”. It is a profound book, and I expect to enjoy it — and take it in small doses.

The Bible is not given to us after that order, with pages and pages, and chapters and chapters, of philo-

sophical truth in the abstract; but it gives us the story of men who had come to know God; and it tells us how they lived as men who knew God. For example, if you want to know what faith is, you do not ask for a laboured and extended dissertation on the subject: instinctively I would say, I must read the life of some man who was a believer, in whose life faith found its exemplification. If I were to ask you to name such an one, I think with practical unanimity you would immediately select the father of the faithful. "Abraham believed God." That is why the story of Abraham was written, that if you and I, in all the circumstances of life, would learn what it means to trust God, just to believe Him, we might turn to the story of Abraham, or of some other hero of faith who lived out in his life the principle of faith. Abraham's story was written "aforetime . . . for our learning."

Or if one would learn what it means to live righteously before God, and to live in all the circumstances of life with the fear of God before one's eyes; and if you want an answer to the question, whether it pays to walk in paths of righteousness, whether it pays to be true, and honest, and straightforward, if you would know that, you would turn to the story of Joseph, or some other worthy of the Old Testament, or of the New, and, reading his life-story, find the parallel to your own — and always remember it is there for a purpose: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

I could call the roll: Moses for his meekness — the man who carried on in the face of all kinds of criticism and ingratitude on the part of those whom he tried to serve, and who never allowed these things to turn him aside, but endured "as seeing him who is invisible". One could not come from a reading of the story of Moses' life without saying, "It makes little difference what people say of us if we have God's approval." So of Joshua and Caleb, for their long patience; Gideon, for his courage; and Samson, for his strength; David, for his habit of always enquiring of the Lord. There are stories in the Book of the lives of men whose experiences parallel yours and mine, and the biographies are given us "for our learning", that we may learn as Christians how to behave ourselves under given circumstances.

I wish we might learn to use our Bibles. I grant you that very often we may find guidance from a sentence-text, but I think there is no situation in life in which you or I may be placed, no set of circumstances however unusual and however apparently modern, they may be, the counterpart of which may not be found in the Word of God itself.

I remember, for instance, a business meeting in a church years ago when I had not had very much experience in trying to direct church affairs. Someone was to be elected for office, and a half dozen men were nominated one after the other, men whose lives had commended them to the membership of the church, and who would have fulfilled the position ably and discharged the duties of the office faithfully. But one after another these good men made excuses. They said, "No, thank you"; "No, thank you"; "No, thank you." One after another went down. At last someone with no judgment at all got up and nominated the most impossible man in the church, a man who was a nuisance to everyone, a sort of religious porcupine — all quills. I had been praying all night — and I prayed harder then, that he might have the sense to say, "No, thank you" — but he did not!

He was quite ready. Then I read in the Book of a time when Israel was seeking someone to be their leader; they asked one man after another, and he said, "No." Then they asked the worst man they could find — and he accepted it! Then there was one man who got off at a safe distance, and in the hearing of the people, made a speech in the form of a parable, the parable of the trees.

"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

In effect the bramble said, "Put it right there. This head has been waiting for that crown for a long time." If I had had sense enough to read that passage in advance, things would have taken another course — I have read it many times since, make no mistake, and have recognized the bramble, and been on my guard.

I do not think there is a situation in life into which you or I may be plunged where a course of conduct may be required of us, passive or active, respecting which we may not be instructed out of the Word of God itself. You cannot find that in a concordance. I know of no religious theological thesaurus where you can get the idea, and then find the scripture to fit it. You must know your Bible — where these things were written "aforetime . . . for our learning." As we know the Scripture, are steeped in their teaching, we shall learn to avoid difficulties, what course to take in given circumstances.

I do not believe there is anything in national or international life that does not find the most appropriate word of direction in the Bible. I care not how wise politicians or statesmen may be, they have no wisdom comparable to the wisdom to be found in the Book; and if we would be wise we must study those things which are written "aforetime . . . for our learning."

Do not say of the historical portions of Scripture that they are but dry history. Read them, learn them, fasten them in your mind. If sometimes you come upon a portion that may seem not to have application to your present situation, do not pass it by and say it does not belong to you. Store it away in your mind against the day when some difficult situation will come like a flash of lightning: then you will be forearmed. Why? Because the Word of wisdom is with you.

Take passage on a railway coach in broad daylight, when the sun is shining, and presently you will see a man come along and turn the switch, and the light comes on. You say, "We do not need light: the sun is shining." But wait a while. The train moves on, and suddenly it is plunged into the blackness of a tunnel; and you say, "That man knew the road better than I did. He knew we would need light further on." When the Lord turns

on the light, do not tell Him that you do not need it: He knows what tunnels you will have to pass through, to what situation you will come; for He has ordered your life. And He has written for your learning, that He might fortify you for life's emergencies. You will be ready for them with some word from the Holy Book.

You can make application of that principle to yourselves. No matter where you are, what you have to do in your individual life, in your family life, in your business life, in your social relationships, in your distinctively religious activities — in all that you do, in each experience of life, you will find in the word of God, either precept, or principle, or promise, which exactly fits your case, which will have you from going over the precipice.

Driving along in your motor-car you sometimes see heavy fence-posts, solid looking things, with steel cables fastened to them, along some curve in the road. As you drive along leisurely you say, "Surely, surely, no motorist needs a fence like that to keep him on the road. That would be a poor way to drive." But I remember being in a situation once when I was very glad of those fence-posts, when the car skidded. If it had not been for the fence-posts we should have been in a bad way. The Lord has a way of putting a fence around life's curves, of lighting up the dark places of life, so that we shall not be without guidance and counsel when we need it: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

II.

"That we through patience". There is nothing you and I need to learn more than patience. We are naturally impatient. One of the last virtues to develop in a Christian is the virtue of patience. We are an impatient lot. That is no doubt due to the fact that our life is so brief. We have no time to wait. You will find that the younger people are, the more impatient they are. When there is not much road behind them, there is little patience. "Tribulation worketh patience." Most of us have a little tribulation now and again, do we not? We do not like it, but it has a very wholesome effect upon us, and teaches us how to be patient.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is a good deal easier to learn patience in a sick-room than at a picnic. It is hard to be patient when one is alert and eager for pleasure; but when he is shut up within narrow limits, and when he has to endure tribulation of some sort, he learns that the only way to endure at all, is to be patient. The dentist says, "Did that hurt?" I can never understand why they ask that question: I should suppose they would know! But in order that we may endure, they say, "I will not hurt you any more than I have to." What they really mean is, "Be patient." And if you want to "play the man", or woman, as the case may be, you nerve yourself and say, "I will not be a weakling, a cry-baby" — and after a while you find it comparatively easy to be patient. The pressure of life, the pressure of circumstances, teach us to be patient.

But how are we going to be patient? Through the Scriptures we learn patience. Again let me mention one or two characters: Abraham, and his long waiting; Joseph — no letter from home, no telephone or telegram,

out of sight with no communication for years, no word from home, and yet patiently waiting in the confidence that God would work out His will. Or two characters that are greatly similar in the Old Testament, Joshua and Caleb, who for forty years kept their faith alive in the midst of an unbelieving generation. Someone says, "That is all very well. It is easy for you, in your situation; you live in a Christian home; you have an easy time." Look at Joshua and Caleb. For forty years they bore the gibes of their fellows, but they never allowed their faith to wane. As we see how those men lived, with the light of eternity upon them, and learned patience, we can learn it too — "through patience and comfort of the scriptures."

III.

Do you ever need comfort? That does not mean a tender word of consolation only. It does mean that; but the Scriptures do afford us consolation, they exhort us to better things; and through "patience and comfort of the scriptures", as we study them, we may have hope. That is the end of it all. You and I ought to be hopeful people, full of hope. Pessimism of any sort is inconsistent with a Christian profession. How are you going to be full of hope? It is very difficult sometimes, but again you remember the story of the Apostle Paul on the ship of Alexandria, when the storm broke and the "old salts" were full of despair, and "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away," then there stood forth the preacher who was in chains and said, "I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." He brought them patience and comfort in the midst of the storm.

I am out of heart with ravens — "Quoth the raven, Never more." There are a great many ravens in the church, black creatures who are always saying, "Never more"; groaning and croaking. I like to hear the voices of summer when the flocks of birds sing, and even the crows cawing; but I do not like those croaking, groaning creatures. "We in this tabernacle do groan." There are some people who are never happy but when they are miserable. They like to nurse their grievances until the baby becomes as large as an elephant. They go around with a long face — and wonder that people are not attracted by their religion. As we study the Word, "through patience and comfort of the scriptures," we shall have hope. It is the most hopeful Book in the world. The Book closes with a picture of a city from which death, sorrow, tears, night itself, are driven away; and "the Lamb is the light thereof". And in the midst of our difficulties we shall be like the martyrs of old. "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley. We shall this day light a candle in England that shall never be put out." Let us have comfort in the Scriptures.

If you are cast down, and your soul is disquieted within you, turn to the Book, and there learn to abound in hope. Not just to say, "Oh well, while there is life there is hope." Is not that lovely! There is not much life in that! We should be "abundant" in hope, full of hope, always of good cheer. Let us ask God to help us; let us pray.

O Lord, we thank Thee for this divine treasury, so suited to meet the utmost and varied requirements of all Thy children. May we all find it so, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

ANAEMIC EVANGELICALISM

WHENEVER some scientist or prominent person makes an utterance to the effect that there might be a God, there are preachers and religious journalists who go into near hysteria in their excessive rapture. The scientist or person in question may be a downright infidel but still these religious enthusiasts (unfortunately sometimes evangelicals) are not deterred. From their pulpits and across the pages of their religious journals they blazon the news — "Dr. So and So has concluded that there might be a God!" Apparently Christians are expected to share in the enthusiasm and to applaud vigorously.

Very frankly we are not at all enthused over such nonsense. God existed long before the learned professor made his astounding discovery nor will He cease to exist because some more learned schoolman denies this fact. Nor can we generate any excitement because we hear news of some unbelieving theological professor who condescendingly admits that some tenet of the faith is true or "plausible". Let no one be deceived by these concessions, usually minor, of men who by their public utterances and writings have declared themselves to be the enemies of the faith. A very strange standard of values characterizes those evangelicals who applaud an unbeliever who acknowledges that God has spoken the truth! We second Paul who declared, "Let God be true but every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4). His Word remains, unchanging and true in all its parts, whether this be conceded by theological professors, scientists, or anyone else; hence, the concessions of fallible and changing men, however learned or illustrious, neither confirms nor moves us.

Accompanying this half-patronizing, evangelical attitude toward error covered with a very thin coat of orthodox whitewash is a contemptuous and superior attitude toward the old line "fundamentalists" who during the 1920's stood for the faith against the onslaughts of the enemies of the gospel. In some evangelical circles it has become fashionable to disparage and discount these men of God as being both contentious and "anti-intellectual". The critics are often those who would not have the courage to stand if the occasion demanded but who flatter themselves that they represent an enlightened brand of evangelicalism.

Several factors contribute to our writing in this vein. The most recent is the appearance in the April issue of *Christian Life* magazine of an article entitled, "Is Liberal Theology Changing?" In our humble opinion the article in question represents a perfect example of anaemic journalism. It is very surprising that it should appear in a magazine that is supposed to be an exhibit of first class evangelical journalism. If such a milk and water approach should characterize acceptable Christian magazines, we would much prefer to forsake propriety and adhere to our blunt and awkward expression of deep convictions.

The article is supposed to be a study of the currents in modern theological circles. After stating the obvious fact that the old-line liberalism no longer exists under its original name, the writer proceeds to demonstrate that the predominant "neo-orthodox" school has come closer to the orthodox position. Even Nels Ferre is

quoted to prove this, although there is only a passing reference to the fact that Ferre is a blatant infidel who has boasted of his *three* conversions — "the first to traditional Christianity; the second to honesty; and the third to Agape." (p. 75 of Major Voice in American Theology by D. W. Soper). Indeed the whole article betrays the fact that it is not a proper survey but is better described as an old fashioned whitewashing.

There is no endeavour to show that the same sceptical basis underlies the new modernism as formed the foundation of the old. Nor are evangelicals warned that the new modernism is infinitely more dangerous than the older variety because it employs evangelical terminology and because it purposely poses as being near the evangelical position. *Christian Life* magazine made no great, world-shattering discovery when it noted the similarity in terminology and the seeming nearness in thought; the neo-orthodox leaders have heralded this line for some time.

Let the editors of *Christian Life* and all Christians ponder these simple facts:

(1) The new modernists find no problem whatsoever in associating and co-operating with the old line deniers of the faith.—"Birds of a feather flock together."

(2) The new modernists have not changed their low view of the Bible despite their pious expressions about "the Word". Man, according to them, still sits in judgment upon the Bible to determine what parts are "Word-bearing".

(3) The new modernists are the implacable opponents of the old gospel and, while fraternizing with the old modernists, betray a hatred for an uncompromising evangelical.

(4) The new modernism has duplicated somewhat the evangelical terminology but has produced powerless churches.

Christian Life could have rendered a real service to the gospel by presenting all the facts and by warning very explicitly that this new gospel is not a new one but is a discarded one in new garb. The writer in *Christian Life* asks a rhetorical question—"Is this 'modern theology' then just a wolf in sheep's clothing? Are its devotees just liberals in disguise?" Since that magazine chose to evade its own question, we will dare to declare that both questions could be answered with an emphatic affirmative. Anyone who operates on any other assumption is destined for a rude awakening.

Accompanying this anaemic approach to a vital question is a supercilious attitude toward stalwarts of the faith in days gone by. The fundamentalists are spoken of as though they were obscurantists who can be dismissed with a flourish of the pen. One modernist is quoted as complaining that "it (fundamentalism) demanded that we sacrifice our intellectual integrity . . ." What conceit! The very persons who would belittle the Lord Jesus Christ are so much concerned for their "intellectual integrity"! *Christian Life* itself concludes that "apparently the shift has come with little or no help from fundamentalism". Why should anyone expect that believers will be interested in bringing some proud unbeliever to half way house? Concern for the souls of

men demands that we be engaged in procuring an all-out commitment (if we may use a favourite modern term). The Lord Jesus Christ requires that man lay down the arms of rebellion and submit to Him; He is not interested in a peaceful co-existence with error.

Christian Life says of its own series of articles on this subject that they are "currently being hailed by evangelical leaders for their incisiveness and significance." At the risk of being labelled as an obscurantist, we hail them as being significant of nothing less than a minimization of the deadly nature of modern error.

THE CRIMSON WORD

The Cross is associated with blood. Yes. We must not set up our refinement against Christ's agony. Let us warn our very souls against the shameful affectation of being more appalled by the blood than by the sin. A very wonderful thing this is that man should have become so refined as to shrink from blood and yet be able to speak of sin as if it shocked no feeling. Thus we deceive ourselves. We pretend to sink the sinner in the gentleman when we stand before the Cross. This may be the deepest depth of infatuation. On the other hand, we must not think of blood only, but of the blood of Christ. Nor of the blood of Christ only, but of "the precious blood of Christ," — the very word being twice qualified and thus raised out of common thought into regions of dignity and holiness. The last of Christ's miracles before the resurrection was to turn his own blood into wine. That blood lay beyond the reach of Roman spear. That blood did not fall up on the earth and waste itself in the dust. Corruptible gold could have bought corruptible redemption, but we have come by faith to know that we "are not redeemed with corruptible things."

When we sink into the humiliation which alone befits our sense of sin — when we abhor ourselves in dust and ashes — the thing above all other things that we do not want is an Example. After redemption we need it, but not before. To preach to me the fact and the doctrine of Christ's Example when I am stung through and through with experiences of my sin is simply to mock me. It is to oppose to me an infinite sneer. I then want a Saviour, not an Example. I want salvation, not rebuke. Do not say to me, "See in Christ an instance of self-sacrifice and loving obedience," but say to me, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Bring down your gospel to the pit of my helplessness. Tell angels of examples, but to the sinner preach a Saviour. And that Saviour must have in his hands the print of the nails and in his side the wound of the spear. I must see them and feel them by faith. The redness of his apparel must proclaim his quality. He must not come to me in the snow of his holiness, but in the crimson of his sacrifice. The shame of my sin can bear the sight of his blood. This would be ecstasy but for the humiliation and the sorrow of my soul. My contrition takes it out of the rank of romance and sets it at the head of facts. As the Cross is the one way to heaven, so conscious sin is the one way to the Cross. To the intellect it is foolishness, to pride it as a stumblingblock, but to broken-heartedness and self-helplessness it is the very power and love and glory of God.

—JOSEPH PARKER

B.C. Liberals Play Politics with Roman Church

IT IS pathetic to behold the scramble among the political parties in their mad endeavour to please the Roman Church. Each seeks to outdo the other in the hope that some votes may be obtained. In the light of this shameful disregard for principle, is it any wonder that some people throw up their hands in disgust, declaring that the political parties of this country care more for votes than they do for right. We cannot agree with those who, on supposed spiritual grounds, refuse to vote but we can understand anyone's aversion to the cheap political manoeuvres of our Canadian politicians.

British Columbia has been the scene of some lively discussions on the matter of the Roman Catholic separate schools. Until the present time, the province has rightly expected that, since the church needlessly duplicates the educational system, the church should pay the bill to erect and support her divisive and partisan institutions of learning. No reasonable person can object to such an arrangement for the Roman Church is at perfect liberty to erect her own schools *if she also supports them*. Any talk about this being undemocratic or tyrannical is sheer nonsense. We would suggest that these soap-box orators travel to Spain and there see Rome's version of democracy at work.

The news releases from Vancouver indicate that the provincial Liberal Party has jumped on the bandwagon to court the papal church. In *The Globe and Mail* of April 9, there appeared this account:

B.C. EXEMPTION SOUGHT

Liberals Would Ease Parish School's Burden

Vancouver, April 8 (CP).—British Columbia Liberals set a precedent when they voted to relieve some tax burdens from Roman Catholic schools at a provincial conference here this week-end.

The 477 delegates argued heatedly before passing the resolution asking the Government to exempt non-profit schools from land and improvement taxes. The convention made no move to grant such schools a portion of school taxes.

The issue of separate schools has been a controversial subject in B.C. for many years. Roman Catholics protest that they are forced to pay double taxation.

Bruce Brown, member of the legislature for Prince Rupert, said he was "satisfied that non-profit parochial schools fill a necessary function."

Mr. Brown, who helped frame the resolution, said he would hate to think what would happen if Catholic schools were forced to close.

"Thousands of students would be thrown out of our school system. It would cost us millions to create accommodation for them."

He said there are more than 80 non-profit parochial schools in the province. The Roman Catholic church operates schools for about 10,000 pupils. Under Vancouver's city charter, schools are exempt from lands and improvement taxes. "That helps 57 schools," Mr. Brown said, "but it doesn't help the rest in B.C."

We were pleased to learn that "the 477 delegates argued heatedly" before passing the resolution. The heat was probably squelched when the professional votegetters pleaded the ground of expediency and noted the increasing number of Roman Catholics in the province. As a result, the Roman Church has managed to insert the thin edge of the wedge which could eventually gain for her provincial support for the partisan educational system. If the government yields to this political demand for exemption from certain taxes, it implicitly recognizes the right of the Church to duplicate the educational system at the expense of all the taxpayers.

God's Willingness to Bless Saints and Sinners

A Prayer-Meeting Address by C. H. Spurgeon

WE HAVE been pleading with God. Prayer after prayer has knocked at heaven's gate, entreating for the conversion of souls, and the upbuilding of the church. I have no doubt that our prayer has been, in itself, acceptable with God, through Jesus Christ. It is in itself a form of worship to which our gracious God hath much respect. The golden vials of the elders before the throne are said to be full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. Prayer is typified by sweet incense, because God delights in it. He loves to see our desires for the accomplishment of his purposes. It is very pleasing to a father, as you who are parents can testify, to see his child in full sympathy with him, and anxious to help him in his work. Though he can do but little, and that little feebly and faultily, yet his eagerness to work with his father, and for his father, gives his father joy. Even thus does our heavenly Father take pleasure in us, and in our desires for his glory. "Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart," said the Lord to David, even when he did not accept what David proposed to do; and I believe there may be glory brought to God, not only by those prayers which are manifestly answered, but by those which for wise reasons the good Lord is pleased to lay on one side. We are nothing better than children even in prayer, and therefore it is not every request that is wise; but yet we are children, and therefore the cries which come from our hearts touch the heart of our great Father in heaven. Our desires that souls may be saved, and that the church may prosper, are so much in accordance with the mind of God that they must be a sweet savour unto him. Therefore, brethren, let us pray on as long as breath remains. If prayer pleaseth God, it should always please us.

There are two things, however, which sometimes puzzle us. One is, *to see a child of God anxious to bring others to Christ, and perseveringly using the ordained means, and yet success is not given him*, and men are not brought to Jesus; at least, they are not brought in such numbers as the eager worker desired and expected. Strange sight! Are we really more anxious to save souls, than God himself is? It would be a marvellous spectacle if it were actually the case! It certainly looks so. This is the appearance-upon the surface. Our earnest spirits long for the salvation of men. If we could save them, we would save them at once. If it were possible for us, when we speak, to convince and convert every sinner within hearing, it should be done. It looks for the moment as though we were more merciful than the All-merciful, more compassionate than He of whom it is written, "God is love"! Ah, my brethren, it only seems to be so: we humbly ask pardon for yielding to the illusion even for an instant! It is our ignorance of our own hearts which makes us think ourselves so supremely kind and loving. Somewhat of pride mingles with this fond conceit of our own goodness. I fear that, if we were weighed in the scales of the sanctuary, it would be found that we do not possess all that agonizing pity which we suppose ourselves to possess. Too often our compassion shows itself in spasms, and is not a matter of fixed principle. Our zeal comes and goes: but if we felt it as intensely as we think we do, or as intensely always as we do sometimes, then we might have more reason for our complaining and wonder-

ing. For the present, we may rather blush for ourselves than complain of our God. We have not yet done all that lies in our power, and therefore we have no ground upon which to complain of our God.

If we are disappointed about our success in Christ's work, what shall we say? Shall we not first look for the cause within ourselves? From observation and experience, I have learned to look very hopefully upon dissatisfaction and anguish when they are seen in Christian workers. It gives me no sorrow to see my brethren unhappy and miserable because others are not saved. It would be a far sadder thing to see them useless and yet contented. If ever I have been satisfied with what I have done for the Lord, I have invariably found my service to prove barren. Pangs go with birth, and anguish precedes success. So far as I am able to judge, it does not seem that the Lord can wisely bless people who are satisfied with themselves, and with their own efforts. It would not be safe to trust the conceited with any large measure of success: they might be injured for life by such honour. Certainly God himself would have small honour, for the individual would steal every bit of it, and wear it himself. When you get to feel, "I am not satisfied, for God is not blessing me as I long to be blessed, and therefore I fear something must be hindering the blessing"; then you are advancing towards a right condition — a condition favourable to success. The Lord is always willing to bless us up to the measure of our fitness to be blessed; and sometimes it is absolutely necessary that we should be distressed, broken-hearted, and brought to an agony of prayer, before we can hold the choice gift of the God of grace. I am sure it is so. We are straitened in ourselves. Our own unfitness turns aside the divine benediction. The Lord will have us know the value of the blessing before he gives it to us; and he will also have us know our own inability, apart from his Holy Spirit, to perform any good work, or bring forth any holy fruit. Our God takes care always to have security that, if he works a great work by us, we shall not appropriate the glory of it to ourselves. He brings us down lower and lower in our own esteem, until we feel that we are nothing at all, and then he condescends to use us. Some trumpets are so stuffed with self that God cannot blow through them. Some pitchers are too full of their own muddy water for God to pour the water of life into them. However much we may wish for a blessing, God will not set the seal of his blessing to work which is begun and carried on in the power of self.

Besides this, the Lord wants us to be more thoroughly in-sympathy with himself. He has two designs in making use of us in his service, not only to save souls, but also to bless us as the instruments of such salvation. There are always two edges to God's sword; so that, while he kills sin in the hearer, he strikes a blow at sin in the preacher also. God has a way of killing two birds with one stone; or, if I may use such an expression, of making two birds alive with one quickening word. He has a way of blessing the very channel through which the blessing comes, as well as the people who receive the blessing. It was grace to the Gentiles to be preached to; but Paul called it "grace" to be permitted to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Lord intends to edu-

cate us by non-success as well as by success, and therefore he causes us to sigh and cry until his Spirit puts forth his power.

It is a natural law in the spiritual world that joy is not born without sorrow. We must travail in birth before Christ will be formed in men's hearts. There is no reaping in joy without a previous sowing in tears. As Christ himself suffered to make us blest, so, in our measure, must we endure pain of heart in order to give men peace of mind. We must die that others may live. We must agonize that the tempted may rest. We must mourn that mourners may rejoice. It is a noble thing for a Christian man to act as a priest before the Lord; and, in a certain manner, to take upon himself the sins of the people, confessing them as though they were his own, and mourning over men's hardness of heart as though it were his own hardness of heart. We do well to take the sinner's place in prayer even as our Lord took that place in sacrifice. It is ours to lay ourselves before God, and cry out of the depths of our souls, as Moses did, "If thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Moses was now in a prepared state to see the nation saved. Some try to make out that Moses did not mean what he said, but he did mean it, and the Lord did not rebuke him for excess of zeal or unguardedness of speech. Remember that, for speaking unadvisedly with his lips on another occasion, Moses was shut out of the land of promise, yet for this language he received no check whatever, but prevailed with the Lord to turn away his anger from Israel. He felt in the compassion of his soul much more than could be justified by reasoning in cool blood, even as Paul did when he wrote, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." If you ever reach such a state of compassion, you will feel ready, if it were possible, as it were, to put your own soul in pawn for the souls of others; and you will express yourself in words which others may call fanatical. When it comes to that pass with you, the Lord will hear you. If you cannot live without a blessing, you shall not live without it. He who weeps for souls shall before long weep for joy. When we live men will live; when we are quickened to fulness of life the living waters shall flow out of us. Perhaps we have to reach a higher point of grace and love before we shall receive the fulness of the blessing. At any rate, I put the case very strongly, on purpose that you may see the wrongfulness of the supposition that the fault of our non-success lies with the Lord. It cannot be that God is less willing for men to be saved than we are; it cannot be that we have outrun love itself on its own ground. We cry, "Arm of the Lord, awake!" and he replies, "Awake, awake, O Zion!" The slumber is with us, and not with him. We must not think that the Lord has set a barrier in the way of our efforts, but we must be encouraged to feel that, if we love the souls of men, the Lord must love them more; and that, if we would do anything and everything in our power to secure their salvation, we may depend upon it that the Lord is not slack in grace.

A second matter equally causes a difficulty in people's minds, and that is, *to see sinners more willing to be saved than God is to save them.* I have often seen this to be the case *apparently.* Apparently, I say, for it could never be really so. According to the statement of the anxious, it is the case; but their statements are born of con-

fusion, and not of the truth. It cannot be that a sinner should be eager for reconciliation, and the Lord be hard to bring to terms. Did you ever hear of a flock of sheep in the Highlands travelling all over the hills, and roaming down the glens, trying to find their shepherd? Have you seen reports in the newspapers of the efforts made by lost sheep to discover their shepherd, when he has been buried in the snow, and needed to be dug out? You smile, but the parable is to the point. I have observed several singular facts in natural history, but I have never heard of anything so remarkable as sheep seeking out their shepherd, and tracking his wandering footsteps in the cloudy and dark day. Yet that is what we might expect if it be true that sinners seek after the Lord Jesus, and cannot find him. They say, "I have sought the Lord, and he has not been found of me; I have cried to him in prayer, and he has not regarded me. Alas, I have hungered and thirsted for Christ, but he is not willing that I should enjoy him!" What singular spectacles! A sheep seeking its straying shepherd! A piece of money searching for its mistress! A prodigal son rejoicing over his lost father! The supposition is altogether too absurd. Is it not? Can it be that, in this race of love, you, a poor, dead sinner, have outstripped the living Saviour? We sometimes sing—

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee,
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free";

and I believe it. If I were to see a needle running across a table all by itself, I should know that under the table a magnet was at work out of sight. When I see a sinner running after Christ, I feel certain that divine love is drawing him: the cords may be invisible, but we are quite sure that they are there. If you are seeking Christ, it is because he is seeking you. The desire for grace is caused by the very grace which we desire. You must not dare to charge the Lord Jesus with unwillingness to save, seeing he has laid down his life to prove his eagerness to redeem. No, it is not possible that there can be any backwardness with the Saviour: the backwardness lies with you. Get rid of the unbelieving and dishonouring notion that Jesus is unwilling to forgive, and at once throw yourself into his arms. He thirsts to bless men: it is his meat and his drink in this respect to do the will of him that sent him. You are being drawn by his loving hands: those warm desires for salvation are created in you by his Holy Spirit: believe this, and thus recognize the bond which unites you to the Lord; by faith that bond will become consciously stronger from day to day. Trust wholly in Jesus, and the work is done. Trust him simply; trust him solely; trust him without hesitation, and you are saved.

It is remarkable that very often the most common-places that we say in our preaching strike attention and convey blessing. An evangelist, some time ago, while he was explaining faith, took up a book, and handed it to a friend. "Now," said he to his friend, "suppose this to be salvation: I freely present it to you. Have you got it?" "Yes, I have it." "How did you get it? Did you buy it? Did you work for it? Did you make it?" "No, you gave it to me, and I took it." "I gave it to you, and you took it"; and that is how we receive salvation from the Lord. He gives it to us freely, and we take it by faith: that is all. Did the friend wash his hands, or put on kid-gloves, before he took the book? No. If he had done so, he would not more surely have received the book: his hand did very well just as it was. It is just so with the gift

of God. If a very poor man asks you to help him, and you offer him a shilling, he does not say, "Please, sir, I cannot accept your money, for I am not dressed in good enough clothes." He is not so foolish: he asks no questions, but gladly takes what is freely given. Even so, let us accept Christ as the gift of God. The worse we are, the more we need Jesus; and the more unprepared for Christ we seem, the more prepared we are for him, in the unquestionable sense that need is the best preparation for receiving charity. When the housewife looks out the linen for the laundry, she does not say, "This garment is too dirty to be washed." No, no. As she looks over the household linen, there may be a piece or two so little soiled that she questions whether she shall send them to be washed; but if one piece is worse than the rest, she is quite sure that it is fit to go, and she puts it without a question into the bag. Oh, my sinful friend, your sinfulness is the reason why you should go to Christ for cleansing! Did you ever know a man stop away from dinner because he was hungry? Did you ever say, "I must not drink because I am thirsty"? Do men say, "When I am not quite so thirsty, then I will drink; when I am not quite so faint, then I will eat"? Does any sick man say, "I am so ill that I shall not send for a doctor till I am better"? We do not talk in this fashion about other matters; then why do we talk so about our souls? Jesus Christ asks nothing of us except that we will receive him; and he presents himself to us freely. We say, "There is nothing freer than a gift", so there is nothing freer than the grace of God. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Jesus and his salvation are matters of pure gift; then why will you not have them? Do you say, "Oh, that we might receive them"? Do you still say that you are more willing to receive than God is to give, when God has already given, and you have not received? You know the message of the king who had invited many guests to his son's wedding-feast — "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." It was pitiful that everything should be prepared, and yet the guests should not come. My good sister, how would you feel if you had invited your friends to see you, and then, when everything was ready, you found that nobody came to partake of your feast? Should you not cry, "What am I to do? Here is everything ready, but no one to eat it!" One thing, however, would be clear, nobody could say that you were unwilling that they should come. All things are ready, and everything will be spoiled if there are no guests: the hostess longs to see every seat at the table filled. Jesus himself, that great provision of God, will be of no use if sinners do not come to him to be saved: the substitutionary sacrifice will be an eternal waste if men are not redeemed thereby: the provisions of atoning love will be a superfluity if the guilty do not come and partake of them. "My oxen and my fatlings are killed. Then, if nobody comes to the wedding, all my preparations will be in vain." The king must have guests for his feast, and therefore he said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." When this was done, and there was still room, he said to his servant, "Go out into the highways

and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." A mingled company sat down to the feast. You fancy that they appeared very odd and out of place. Poor people, picked from the streets, how would they appear at a royal table feasting upon dainties? Ah, you make a great mistake if you imagine that they looked to be a motley crew! The spectacle was magnificent: they were all dressed as ladies and gentlemen, for they had put on wedding-garments furnished by the giver of the banquet. As they sat at table they looked like courtiers, for they were all dressed in robes worthy of the great occasion. They hardly knew themselves, or one another. One of them would look across the table to a man who used to be his companion in poverty, and he would say, "Is that you?" And the other would reply, "It is and it is not, I have undergone a great change. I have put off my rags, and I am covered with beauty." If you come to Christ, the poorest of you shall be made to sit among princes. You, who are covered with leprosy and pollution, may come just as you are, and the Lord will welcome you, will heal you, and bid you be at home at his table, where fat things full of marrow prove the splendour of his love. Come to Jesus, and see if it be not so.

Some of you seem to me like the poor dogs that go about muzzled; if there is a bone you cannot get at it. It seems as if the devil had muzzled some of you, so that you dare not take the good things of the gospel to yourselves. O Lord, be pleased to take the muzzles off these poor dogs! Oh, that they could but get a taste of what the Lord has prepared for them that love him! You may have any and every gospel blessing if you dare to take it. Make a dash for it. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save you. Trust him, and he has saved you.

Do you say that you will not now believe, but will wait till your own heart is better, and you feel more inward encouragement? How foolish! You will wait in vain. Did you ever hear of the deaf man who waited to hear the ticking of a sun-dial? He was as wise a man as you are. Cease to look within, and begin to look up. Jesus saves all those who trust him to save them. End all questions and delays, and *be saved at once*.

An Appreciative Reader Writes . . .

Elberton, Ga., U.S.A.

Dear Dr. Cole:

I received your book, "Definitions of Doctrines" and words will not permit me to express my appreciation to you for the unfolding of the deep things of God. As Mr. Sebastian has said, "My heart has thrilled, my soul has rejoiced, all that is within me has blessed the Lord", as I have read the book. May our blessed Lord continue to use you for His glory is my prayer.

I find real strong meat on which my soul is fed — and some that I must keep chewing —

I've also read "The Bible Doctrine of Election" and enjoyed it so much.

I noticed you expected to publish two or three more volumes; sure would like to have these too, and any other books, booklets or any writings by you.

May I say again "thank you and may God bless you."

In Him,

THE PRODIGAL SON

A Sermon by Christmas Evans

This is the condensation of a message by the great Welsh Baptist preacher, Christmas Evans. In referring to it, Mr. Spurgeon correctly observed that even these notes are sufficient to enable the reader to "form some idea of how the glorious Welshman carried all before him."—Editor, "The Gospel Witness."

THE description of the prodigal shows how soon, how easily and completely, man, when competent to act, departs from God. Impressed by the portraiture, lo! I see him seeking a travelling-car to take away his goods and chattels. He finds horses and chariots, men and maid-servants, for he is about to leave his father's hearth, and bid him farewell. The elder brother was standing by, neatly dressed, with a staff in his hand; but the younger was very showily arrayed, had on a pair of yellow-topped boots, looked a grand gentleman, and held out one finger to bid his father "Good-bye". This is the description of one who has lost his reason, and follows his wicked inclinations. The "wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God", will not pray to him, or depend on his wisdom and love, but in his insanity will set up for himself.

While thus he was, as regards his father's house, dead and lost, "He went into a far country". Profligacy is indeed a far country, far from God, without faith, or the fear of God, or solemnity, or sacred song; a land where dead souls dwell, a land through which runs the broad road which leads to destruction. The ungodly "go astray from the womb", even before reading the heavenly book that tells of the far country, that describes how it was once drowned with water, and at another time how part of it was burned up with sulphurous fire from heaven. Besides, its climate is so fiercely hot that it destroys and burns up its produce; and sometimes so cold that it buries its population under mountains of frost and eternal snow. Its language was the language of hell, its customs were the lusts of Satan, who was its gigantic god. Its chief merchandise was in the exchange of the bodies and souls of men; these were the principal articles of commerce that passed through its ports, and it received from hell foolish and hurtful desires in their place. . . . The system of slave traffic flourished very richly there. The young man was insane to waste his substance in a land so scarce of provision, and so utterly barren of happiness. "His understanding was darkened." His mouth was a sepulchre, in which godliness and all holy things were buried. There was joined to the root of his tongue a bag, containing the poison of asps, so that he poisoned men by his tongue in his evil communications; and there was a flame at the point of his tongue, that set "the course of nature on fire", even with the fire of hell. His hands wrought mischief, and his feet were swift to shed blood. He was insane to direct his course to a land called "the far country", far from God, happiness, and heaven. It was so far that no one but himself has ever found the way back to his Father's house; but it was not so far but the Father could send famine and distress into it, and even run there to embrace the prodigal.

Has no one ever returned? Oh, yes; millions, millions! but not without the Father drawing them. In order to

open a new way from this far country, God sent his Son to assume the nature of its inhabitants, and by virtue of the sacrifice that he gave on the tree in this very country he opened a way through the evil that shut men out from their Father's house.

The young man "spent his substance in riotous living". He devoted the strength of his body, and all his mental faculties, and possessions, to enliven Vanity Fair — that is, he gave himself up to the vices of the age; drunkenness, uncleanness, fighting, and Sabbath desecration.

Then the law as a mighty famine, goes forth to lay hold of the sinner. When God would subdue a proud city, he does it by sending the sword, the famine, or the plague. The gospel has its sword, fire, and famine, which even Saul of Tarsus cannot withstand. The law raises the famine, and gradually increases it, until the sinner goes seeking through the far country for the bread of hope. He is described as setting out like a gentleman, then he becomes indigent, and seeks bread; but he had to know that the region of the law was a poor place in which to beg, because "it hath dominion over a man till he is dead." He could not sing for a living like some poor English in our towns; nor sell matches from door to door. The law was, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat." Every door was shut against him. He offered to work for a citizen of that country, that is, the preacher of the law as a covenant of works; but the law followed him, and no bread could be had for works of the law unless perfect; and the law would have written out his notice of removal to the House of Correction, in the parish of Sinai, where thousands of these wandering wretches have been sent, since the days of Cain, who was the first to die there. Now every hope of the bread of life was gone, he was almost distracted through his sin, seeing nothing but perdition in his heart, life, and conduct, while without any means of making an atonement for his sins. Lively conviction, produced by the Spirit of God brings a man into a state of utter despair. Beer and spirits cannot drown such convictions. There was a famine of every article necessary to support a godless life. Conviction of sin is likened to the pangs of childbirth — and why? Because the termination of it is a matter of either death or life. But he would break his hunger by the deeds of the law; he would, in other words, get a living by work. It was not to a citizen of the towns where he had been spending his money, and his life, he repaired, but to the cities of strict morality, where the Scribes and Pharisees, and rulers of the parish church, lived in the days of Christ. Though the city he visited feigned to be a godly place, yet it belonged to the "far country".

The certain citizen to whom he applied was a figure of the legal preacher, the swine are the figure of his disciples: they tread the pearl of great price under their feet, and slight the doctrines of grace, and the atoning

work of Christ, and the strength and life contained in them. Methinks I see him standing by the swine troughs! Others filled themselves, he could not. The husks would not do for him. He was a perfect picture of misery. An old shoe and stocking on his foot, an old cap on his head, like the turban of a Turk, recently picked from the dunghill, and a ragged one-armed coat on his back. While he stood there, death and starvation were depicted on his countenance. Nothing heard but the munching of the swine as they ate their food, when lo! a letter from his father, borne as with the wind, came into his bosom. His father told him he was still alive, and rich. When this letter came it brought to mind many familiar circumstances; and trembling, he feared to venture to open it, lest his father should be found to swear in his wrath, that he should never come back. Some have feared to read a chapter, or pray, lest some evidence should start up that they have been rejected, or have committed the unpardonable sin.

With tears he ventured to open it in the dark pass of death, when the sun of hope was setting, and there was no prospect of its ever rising again. At this juncture the gospel gave forth its commanding voice in demonstration of the Spirit and power, which brought to mind with irresistible force the thought that his Father was alive, and that there was bread at home, "enough and to spare". Now the sun of hope rose upon his soul, for by faith his Father's house drew nearer to him, with its amplitude of stores and open bounty. Faith in his Father wrought in his soul a feeble hope, and the fountains of repentance welled up in his mind, and streamed forth in the spirit of prayer. His faith in the bread and the sufficiency of it caused him to resolve that he would arise and begin his journey home. The entreaty of his Father leaped to his lips at every step he took. In his prayer he confessed his sin and unworthiness, and petitioned for the humblest place among the servants. He went from home a haughty, domineering gentleman; but he came back truly humbled. The gospel, by killing and making alive, taught him a valuable lesson. It is a poor sign when a man would come into the church as rich and great, not as a poor sinner out of the dust.

Now we behold him on his journey home, through faith in his Father's clemency and bounty. "When he was yet a great way off", he had no hope in himself, and was very much ashamed of his riven and tattered garments, and his unprotected feet. His feeling of his lost estate was very intense and heavy. But, lo! all the riches of the grace, power, and mercy resident in the Father come forth to meet his faith, hope, and flickering love. The eye of mercy saw him through the thick mist, the heart of mercy pitied him, the feet of power and might ran to meet him, the arms of mercy embraced him, and the face of a reconciled God bestowed the kiss of peace. They brought him in — not to the dining-room but to the robing-apartment.

Oh! what a touching sight to behold the God of all grace embracing the unworthy sinner, and he in the dust; his Father extending to him the blessing of forgiveness, without any upbraiding. Conviction having ended in restoration, the sinner has the blessings of redemption applied to his understanding and conscience. Lo! I see him in the chamber on his knees, his face bent to the earth, hateful in his own sight on account of his filth and his poverty; yet stung with pain by the fear of death. The Father named the blessings — the robe, the

ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf. They were provided by his royal bounty. The rotten-robe of the prodigal was not worth turning, washing, or mending; his shoes were good for nothing but to be cast away. You cannot save a man by reforming him; that is not what has to be done; he is too bad for reformation; he must be formed anew, clad in an entire change of raiment. The Father gave order for the robe. It corresponded to the requirements of the law, and was wrought out by the Son of God during his abode on earth. His holiness was the frame where it was worked. His love, obedience, and sufferings were the warp, woof, and substance of which it was spun and woven. It was "through righteousness". The robe was the "one obedience of Christ. In him were found beam, frame, material, weaver, and shuttle: and he finished it upon the cross. The order was not to put on the shoes first, but the robe. The gospel does not bring a man first to walk with God, or possess a filial spirit, and then justify him; but there is an appropriate order — first, the Father gives the robe; then he will have the ring put upon the hand, as a sign of filial union; and then will see the shoes placed on the feet of him who wears the robe. The voice of the Father is heard in the servants, and they urge those who believe, that they should be careful "to maintain good works", and "follow God as dear children".

Here are the four commands of the Father to the servants, that is to the ministers of the gospel, apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, to the end of the world. "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" — that is, explain and preach the glorious, divine, justifying righteousness of the Son of God, in comparison of which the righteousness of angels, and of Adam before the fall, at once lose all their beauty. As a robe there is none like it in heaven or earth. "Put a ring on his hand" and "shoes on his feet". Set forth the nature of adoption and Christian conversation, in demonstration of the Spirit, with an ardour that will impress the mind.

Now he comes forth from the dress-chamber to the royal dining-room. Oh, what grace! This is grace after grace, gift after gift, treasure after treasure, patrimony after patrimony. There was no need to hunt shops or stalls, for a ring, or shoes, or the fatted calf; they were all there, so plentiful were the provisions of the Father's house. Now the sinner is brought to taste the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and feeds on the flesh and blood of the Redeemer, and relishes joy in the Holy Ghost. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God", and in this peace as a robe, and in these shoes of the preparation of the gospel, we stand, "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God". "He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

The fourth royal command to the servants is, "Bring forth the fatted calf, and kill it," i.e., sacrifice it. Preach Christ as a fiery sacrifice to justice in the room and stead of prodigals, and also as a meat and drink-offering to starving souls. Only one calf, so there is but one sacrifice, once offered in the end of the world. It will remain to form a feast to welcome all the prodigals, and there is a fresh glory bestowed upon the sacrifice of the cross whenever a famishing sinner comes into the Church of God.

The Master of the feast was the Father; all was at his sole expense. He sent the famine, and ran to meet the wanderer, and gave the robe, ring, and shoes, and now sets the fatted calf on the festal board.

The feast itself contains all the blessings of the gospel, the soul being brought to the enjoyment of an interest in the death of the Son of God. One no less dignified, no less rich and powerful, than the Lord of Hosts made the feast. For whom? For prodigals. Where? "In this mountain". He did not say on this occasion, "Give him a little by himself and to himself"; but the feast was made for "all people", for the entire family, even for the angels. This is one of the heirs of eternal life, who has now been born again.

How did the Father, the Lord of Hosts, sustain his position as head of the feast, and while feasting with the prodigal? He rejoiced over him with singing, till the whole apartment exchanged glory and beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for heaviness, and the Father said, "Let us eat and be merry". A bountiful supply has been set before the prodigal, and the first morsels were swallowed with avidity and great relish; for they were sweeter than the honeycomb. Then looking in his Father's face, as tears streamed from his eyes, he said, "Father". "What now, my son?" "I do not deserve this feast." "There is no necessity, my son, all is of grace." "I remember my disobedience in the far country, Father." "It is all forgiven; eat, my son." "Oh, my Father, shall I remain with you for ever?" "Who said otherwise to thee, child? Did I promise thee less?" "But, Father, will you keep me here by the power of thy covenant, and maintain that covenant, and never let it be broken?" "Well, I will promise, and never alter what has gone out of my mouth." The saints fear backsliding very much, but the Lord has promised, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me, saith the Lord."

Did all rejoice? Yes, all but the elder brother; he would not come here. The Father, the servants, the whole catholic church, the angels in the room beyond the veil, all rejoiced, their minds feasting on the dainties of heavenly grace, and lost in admiration of the riches of divine mercy, and the memory of it was sweeter than the wine from Lebanon. How high did the joy run? How far extend? I assure you it was not weak, nor feeble, nor grovelling, nor silent, for the elder-brother heard far away beyond the house, "music and dancing"; two words to set forth the strength and elevation of the joy. The joy in the Holy Ghost was so great that it drove the fear of want and the fear of death far away. Then four harps were brought forth from the four corners of the earth, to be played upon. The great harp of the north began, and the musicians sang the joyful lay —

"Great God of wonders! all thy ways
Are matchless, God-like, and divine;
But the fair glories of thy grace
More God-like and unrivall'd shine;
Who is a pardoning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

Then the strings of the southern harp were touched —

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak.

"Yes, we will praise thee, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame;
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To thine adored name."

Then the sweet harp of Judah, the harp of the rising sun, sounded forth sweet and loud notes of joy because of pardon and peace to dying men —

"We were lost, but we are found,
Dead, but now alive are we;
We were sore in bondage bound,
But Jesus sets us free.

"Strangers, and he takes us in,
Naked, he becomes our dress,
Sick, and he from stain of sin
Cleanses with his righteousness.

"Therefore will we sing his praise
Who his lost ones hath restored,
Hearts and voices both shall raise
Hallelujahs to the Lord."

At the sight of the two parties sweetly reconciled to each other at the festal board, the minstrel of the western harp sounded forth his note —

"The wanderer no more will roam,
The lost one to the fold hath come,
— The prodigal is welcomed home;
O Lamb of God, in thee!

Though clothed with shame, by sin defiled,
The Father hath embraced his child;
And I am pardon'd reconciled,
O Lamb of God, in thee!

"It is the Father's joy to bless,
His love provides for me a dress —
A robe of spotless righteousness,
O Lamb of God, in thee!

"Now shall my famish'd soul be fed,
A feast of love for me is spread,
I feed upon the children's bread,
O Lamb of God in thee!"

Nothing is said of the end of this feast, more than of the end of the wedding-banquet, or of the return from the highway of the third servant who went out to compel the lame, and the halt, and the blind to come in. It is a feast that is spread over all the years of the Lord's redeemed. It is going on even now.

The elder son, the figure of the legalist, was ploughing rather sulphurous land that day on the brow of the hill called Sinai. The Father sent the servant to call him in, and to invite all such to leave their trust in works, and believe in Christ. When he saw the servant, he was pausing for a moment between the handles of the plough; for he was ploughing to earn bread by his own works. So he said, "What is going on to-day down yonder? What is all that stir within the walls?" "Oh, you are right in calling it a *stir*, for a stir it verily is, I assure you." "Well, lad, what is it? The sweet odours from the flues are spreading up here; the smell resembles food being cooked for Antinomians; tell me what is going on?" "Your brother is come home poor and wretched." "My brother? You mean that fellow that went away long since to the far country, and devoured his living with harlots." "Ay, the same, and your father has commanded you to come in and welcome him." "Me! I will never come. No, not even if my Father were to come to ask me. To think of my sitting down at a banquet with publicans and the scum of sinners! I shall mention

it to him. I certainly shall. He is a fine person to think of welcoming such a wretch, and to give him a fatted calf, when he never slew so much as a kid for me in return for my *self-righteous* works."

By this time the Father had come up to the elder brother. He began to abuse and blame him. The Father cut the matter short by calling him in, saying, "If you will not come in I cannot do better than carry on the feast without you." Election makes rejoicing necessary, and love makes it necessary, and the divine righteousness of Christ makes it necessary. "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again"; was afar off, and is made nigh; "and was lost and is found." And "they began to be merry" and of that joy there was no end.

A Letter from India . . .

Dear Mr. Cole:

I received with thanks the two books three weeks ago. Thank you very much for sending an autographed copy of "Definitions of Doctrines".

The pamphlet "The Bible Doctrine of Election" is superb, and thoroughly scriptural. This is the first time I have read a booklet on that glorious doctrine.

Now I am going through the 13th chapter of your Exposition of Hebrews. Without doubt yours is the clearest and most informing exposition of Hebrews I have ever read. Sometime ago I prepared some sermons based on your exposition. I preached those sermons in a Bible Conference, and as a result some souls were saved, and many a believer was confirmed in the faith.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 20 Second Quarter Lesson 4 April 22, 1956

JESUS TEACHES ON PRAYER

Lesson Text: Luke 18:1-14.

Golden Text: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." —Luke 18:

I. Holy Perseverance in Prayer: verses 1-8.

So important did our Lord regard the exercise of prayer that He frequently taught His disciples concerning the principles and practice of prayer (Matt. 6:5-15; 10:38; Luke 11:1-13). Moreover, He Himself set them an example of holy, believing, importunate prayer (Matt. 14:23; Luke 6:15; John 6:15). The Apostle Paul gave a prominent place in His Epistles to the Christian's duty in the matter of maintaining his prayer life (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2).

One of the great hindrances in prayer is the failure to continue steadfastly beseeching the Lord. There is a tendency to become faint and discouraged. Our Saviour would test our faith; sometimes He withholds the blessing because we are not sufficiently in earnest to wait for Him. A child may ask for something, then run away and play, forgetting all about his request, but if he really wants something, he will repeat his request over and over and not be satisfied until it is granted.

On this occasion our Saviour gave His teaching in the form of two parables, each of which is easily understood. It is well to remember that parables usually illustrate just one or two main truths, and we are not to force the application of all the details. For example, the present attitude and words of the unjust judge were commended by our Lord, but not his character. In his attitude to the woman he illustrated the attitude of the Father toward His children who seek Him diligently, but in his character he was the very opposite of our Heavenly Father.

The judge, although an unrighteous man, avenged the widow because of her importunity (Luke 11:5-8). His motive was not altogether praiseworthy, but if a selfish, unsympathetic judge, indifferent to the claims of God and man, answered the widow's continued cry, how much more will our Heavenly Father hear the prayer of His children, who will not be denied (Jas. 5:16)! The widow refused to give up her claim (Gen. 32:26). So should we continue to look to God in faith when we know His will. He keeps us waiting sometimes to test our sincerity, to develop our faith and to prepare our hearts to receive the blessing. Let us persevere till His time come!

Our Lord applied the parable of the unrighteous judge in a particular manner to the last days when faith would be scarce, and when His people would be hindered by their adversaries from gaining their just inheritance, and would cry to Him (Compare Rev. 6:10). That the parable had also a general application, however, is evident from verse 1. Christ tells us that the purpose of the parable was to encourage men to continue earnestly in prayer, never to grow weary, never to cease their vigilance (Acts 2:42; 1 Thess. 5:17).

II. Becoming Humility in Prayer: verses 9-14.

This parable was directed against the self-righteous Pharisees who trusted in themselves for their supposed superiority in religious matters and set all others at naught (Matt. 23:5-7, 14-28).

Those who trust in their own righteousness (Luke 10:29; 16:15), rather than in the righteousness of Christ, have no place in the kingdom of God (Rom 10:3; 2 Cor. 1:9), for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight (1 Kings 8:46; Isa. 58:6; 64:6). No one can be justified before God on the ground of his own supposed good works (Eph. 2:8-10), and if it were possible for any one to be saved by works, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die (Gal. 2:16-21).

The two men went into the temple to pray.

"Two went to pray? O rather say,
One went to brag, the other to pray:
One stands up close and treads on high,
Where the other dares not send his eye:
One nearer to God's Altar trod,
The other to the Altar's God."

The Pharisee took his stand in a prominent place in the temple (Matt. 6:5), and uttered words, but he did not really pray, for prayer is addressed to God, and the Pharisee spoke only to himself.

The Pharisee congratulated himself before God that he was a righteous man. But he was merely comparing himself with others (2 Cor. 10:12), and judging himself according to men's standards. He failed to judge himself before God according to the word of God, which is the supreme rule by which we are to test ourselves. His thanksgiving was not accompanied by humility.

The publican, deeply conscious of his sin, prayed a brief prayer from his heart, a cry for mercy which has been echoed by many thousands since that time: "God be merciful to me, the sinner." The Greek word here translated "be merciful" is used in reference to the mercy-seat. The publican trusted not in himself, but in the blood, as the ground of his approach (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22) Humbling himself before God; he was exalted, pardoned and justified (Rom. 3:24; 1 Pet. 5:6). Bid unsaved scholars pray this prayer. So must every one who would enter the kingdom come humbly, trusting in the shed blood of Christ.

Daily Bible Readings

April 16—Proud Pharisees Matt. 23:1-12
 April 17—Self-Righteous Pharisees Matt. 23:13-23
 April 18—Hypocrisy in Prayer Matt. 6:1-8
 April 19—Humility in Prayer Matt. 6:9-15
 April 20—Continue in Prayer Col. 4:1-6
 April 21—Pray without Ceasing 1 Thess. 5:14-25
 April 22—Pray with Patience Jas. 5:7-18

Suggested Hymns

We are but little children weak.
 Hushed was the evening hymn.
 Jesus, my Lord, to Thee I cry.
 Pass me not, O gentle Saviour.
 Lord, I hear of showers of blessing.
 I need Thee every hour.

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