

## THOMAS TODHUNTER SHIELDS, JR. “THE CANADIAN SPURGEON”

by  
Jeffrey P. Straub<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

No name stands out in Canadian Baptist history quite like the name Thomas Todhunter Shields, Jr. (1873–1955), the long-time pastor of the Jarvis Street Baptist Church of Toronto, one of Canada’s most historic churches. More than sixty-four years after his death, one can hardly separate the name of Shields from the grand old church at the corner of Jarvis and Gerrard Streets. The church celebrated its two hundredth anniversary in “the City of Spires”<sup>2</sup> last year, where the shadow of Shields that hung over the church during forty-five of those two hundred years continues. At least three of the legacies he helped to erect continue to the present. First, there is the stately gothic style edifice, raised from the ashes of a terrible fire that occurred in the mid-afternoon March 4, 1938, collapsing the steeple and decimating the auditorium of the 1875 building. Shields’s fingerprints are all over the rebuilt structure which reconstruction he oversaw.<sup>3</sup> The second abiding memorial is *The Gospel Witness*, which he began in 1922 during the conflict with theological liberalism then dominating Canadian Baptist life. Initially it was a church paper sent out to interested friends. In time it became an alternative to the denomination’s paper, *The Canadian Baptist*. The final testament to Shields is the Toronto Baptist Seminary, still housed on church property, which began in 1927 in response to conflict with McMaster University over liberalism. Shields believed that there was a need to train gospel ministers without the fear of them becoming tainted with theological error. Thomas Todhunter Shields and Jarvis Street Baptist Church are inseparably linked, and Shields’s memory is still felt in its stately halls.

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Straub has taught historical theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Plymouth, MN, for the past 15 years. An earlier version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society at Tyndale College and Seminary (Toronto, Ontario, April 13, 2019). Thanks to Paul Wilson and Gordon Heath of the Society who made helpful comments that have improved this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce Bell, *Toronto: A Pictorial Celebration* (New York: Sterling, 2005), 46.

<sup>3</sup>“Restored Church Model of Elegant Architecture,” *Toronto Daily Star* (hereafter *TDS*), June 3, 1939, 8. “Dr. Shields, the dynamic pastor, . . . supervised every item of the reconstruction.”

There have been a number of titles ascribed to Shields during and since his long career. Perhaps the most common title was that of “The Battling Baptist,” by a writer who described T. T. later in life due to his controversial nature.<sup>4</sup> The title captured a side to T. T. that is hard to dismiss. During much of his Jarvis Street ministry, Shields was involved in disputes with an assortment of individuals—friend and foe alike. At the end of the 1910s, he was fighting worldliness in his church. There was also a question of the role and nature of the music in the service. Music had become so dominant, he complained, that the time allotment for the preaching was reduced. By the time T. T. entered the pulpit, similar churches were hearing the benediction. Shields put his foot down, forcing a vote of confidence in his ministry and assuming control over the music program. He required his long-time, popular associate, B. W. Merrill, to resign because he had sided with the opponents of Shields in the dispute. On the heels of the conflict, Shields preached a sermon on Christian amusements, which was seen by some as T. T. throwing down the gauntlet against his adversaries within the church. Jarvis Street was a “well-heeled” church and the attack was taken by wealthy members quite personally. The church split, with three hundred forty members leaving eventually beginning Central Baptist Church of Toronto.<sup>5</sup>

Soon T. T. and Jarvis Street were involved in a battle over theological liberalism in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. Shields was removed from the Board at McMaster University, the denomination’s school, and the church expelled from the convention in 1928. The break with the convention was hardly the last of T. T.’s battles. He sparred with the Ontario premier Mitchell Hepburn and the Canadian Prime minister William MacKenzie Lyon King over the preferential status given to Roman Catholicism by the provincial and federal governments.<sup>6</sup> T. T. also struggled with members of his own faction, the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec, over his leadership. As publisher of the *Gospel Witness*, which later became *The Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate*, Shields spoke publicly against things from Catholicism to Russellism to worldliness. Finally, Shields was separated from some of his closest confederates, men

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<sup>4</sup>Gerald Anglin, “The Battling Baptist,” *MacLean’s*, Jun 15, 1949, 15, 50–52.

<sup>5</sup>For details on this, see Jeffrey P. Straub, “T. T. Shields Against the World,” a paper delivered at the Eighth International Conference on Baptist Studies, Baylor University (July 21, 2018). For a summary of accusations against Shields at the time, including his alleged dictatorial ways, see “To Carry Case to Convention,” *Globe and Mail* (hereafter *GM*), Oct 15, 1921, 14. On the new church, see “Another Church Comes into Being,” *GM*, Sep 30, 1922, 23. The new church chose its name in June and began advertising in July.

<sup>6</sup>See Doug Adams, “Fighting Fire with Fire: T. T. Shields and His Confrontations with Premier Mitchell Hepburn and Prime Minister William Mackenzie King,” in *Baptists and Public Life in Canada*, ed. Gordon L. Heath and Paul R. Wilson, McMaster General Studies Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 52–104.

with whom he worked and who had graduated from or worked at the seminary.<sup>7</sup> It seems that T. T. had trouble with just about everyone and the title “The Battling Baptist” is understandable as one overviews Shields’s later life. Indeed, T. T. was a man of controversy.

However, there is another moniker that came to be applied to Shields earlier in his ministry—a title that has been all but lost as Shields became the consummate controversialist. Early in his Jarvis Street ministry, he became known as “the Canadian Spurgeon.” The longest serving pastor during the church’s grand history was compared at home and abroad to the great English Baptist champion of orthodoxy, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892).<sup>8</sup> The significance of this label for T. T. is necessary to understand the man adequately. His early ministry was marked by a powerful pulpit presence that drew the attention of Ontario Baptists and landed him an invitation to pastor one of the most prestigious churches in Canada. As Shields matured, his controversial side eclipsed this earlier impression. Today he is little known for his Spurgeonic qualities, a fact that has to some extent skewed the historical record of this important figure. While he became “the Battling Baptist” later in life, the focus of this essay is on the early years and the qualities Shields manifested that brought him to Jarvis Street in the first place and made him a household name in Canada.

This label was not given to Shields by contemporary historians looking back at the prominent Canadian Baptist, noting certain similarities.<sup>9</sup> In point of fact, this early sobriquet is all but lost in the historical record today because of his later activities. Still, it was a commonly used moniker for Shields during his own lifetime. Moreover, it is not a reflection that marks a mere coincidence of history because the two men had similar ministries. Though they did not know each other and their lives overlapped by less than twenty years (Shields was newly converted when Spurgeon died), Shields admired the great English Baptist from afar and saw in him a pattern for ministry that could be emulated. He even aspired as a lad to ascend Spurgeon’s pulpit one day as pastor

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<sup>7</sup>Paul R. Wilson, “Torn Asunder: T. T. Shields, W. Gordon Brown, and the Schisms at Toronto Baptist Seminary and with the Union of Regular Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec, 1948–1949,” *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 19 (2017–2018): 34–80.

<sup>8</sup>While this paper is primarily about T. T. Shields, important Spurgeon sources for consultation include *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon*, comp. by his wife and private secretary (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 4 vols.; Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (UK: Mentor, 2013); and Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992).

<sup>9</sup>Shields’s biographer, Les Tarr, briefly addresses this idea when he notes that Chicago pastor R. E. Neighbor called T. T. “the Spurgeon of the American Pulpit” (*Shields of Canada* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967], 151). Cf. George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Grenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), 106.

of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.<sup>10</sup> Shields likely chose Spurgeon as a ministerial pattern and sought to follow his model of ministry.

Curiously, there are several possible sources for the origin of this title—"the Spurgeon of Canada"—but it is difficult to be sure who first ascribed it. The association of Shields with Spurgeon dates possibly to the days of William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923), founder (1886) and long-time editor of the *British Weekly*, who may have made the association early. Or, the title may have first been used by Amzi Clarence Dixon (1854–1925), an American fundamentalist who pastored Metropolitan Tabernacle from 1911–1919 and for whom Shields had occasion to speak on several of his trans-Atlantic visits during the First World War.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the case, the moniker stuck and Shields was marked by this title across North America as well as in the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup> The appellation was certainly well deserved on several levels. Originally, it seems that the epithet was assigned to Shields because of his powerful pulpit ministry. His sermonic force often left a deep

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<sup>10</sup>One writer recounts a story of an aged pastor speaking of T. T.'s ambitions, which seemed to include one day becoming pastor of the great British church (Arnold Dallimore, *T. T. Shields: Baptist Fundamentalist* [Leamington, ON: n.p., c. 1997], 14).

<sup>11</sup>H. C. Slade, "Declaration of Policy and Program," *Gospel Witness and Protestant Advocate* (hereafter *GW & A*), Apr 21, 1955, 1.

<sup>12</sup>The flyleaf of Les Tarr's biography, *Shields of Canada*, suggests that Nicoll often called Shields by this sobriquet. Evidence for its wide acceptance is suggested from the following sampling of references. *Toronto Telegram* May 9, 1921 (quoted in Adams, *Fighting Fire with Fire*, 56); cf. Bethan Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1983), 51. A third possibility was that J. A. Hutton, successor to Nicoll as editor of the *British Weekly* from 1925 through 1946, first gave Shields this nickname (H. C. Slade, "Introduction" to T. T. Shields, *The Doctrines of Grace* [n.p.: n.d.]). T. T. was thus widely known in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Cf. *The Arizona Daily Star*, Feb 2, 1928, 7 ("the Spurgeon of North America"); *The Los Angeles Times*, Apr 28, 1928, 6; *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, Jun 21, 1930, 7; *The Kent and Sussex Courier* (England), Aug 25, 1933, 5; *Portadown Times* (Northern Ireland), Oct 5, 1934, 2; *The Scotsman* (Scotland), Oct 20, 1934, 2; *The Daily Argus-Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD), Nov 12, 1940, 12; *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept 29, 1945, 5. More recently, see T. T. Shields, "C. H. Spurgeon: The Man and His Ministry," *The Sword and the Trowel* 1 (2007), 26, a condensation of Shields's message delivered on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Spurgeon's birth in 1834. Coincidentally, within the pages of *The Gospel Witness* (hereafter *GW*) the nickname occurs on numerous occasions, not from the pen of Shields as editor but through the writings of others that appeared within the *GW*. On one of Shields's many absences from his editorial duties, a substitute editor had the *GW* republish a short essay on Shields in which an English pastor discussed the suitability of comparing the two great preachers. Though there were many things in which they differed—"no two men could be more dissimilar.... Yet there must be a similarity, for the Christian *public* seldom misses its way" (Henry Oakley, "T. T. Shields: 'The Canadian Spurgeon,'" *GW*, Sept 28, 1933, 5). Also, see a letter from a radio listener in Brantford, "Radio Acknowledgements," *GW*, Jan 4, 1934, 10, and numerous other occurrences including references in countries as far removed from Canada as Australia. Cf. "Introducing Carl McIntire and Dr. T. T. Shields to Australia," *Evangelical Action of Melbourne, Australia*, quoted in *GW*, Dec 29, 1949, 13.

impression, in a Spurgeonic manner, on the minds of the hearers. L. E. Maxwell, founder of the Prairie Bible Institute, remembered the deep impression made by a Shields sermon, "For Jonathan's Sake,"<sup>13</sup> more than twenty years after its utterance. It may well have been the greatest sermon Maxwell ever heard.<sup>14</sup> Shields's preaching will be discussed below. Others also drew this conclusion with respect to his preaching. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones had occasion to be preaching in Toronto after the death of Shields's first wife. Shields heard him preach the gospel at a church he considered liberal. T. T. invited Lloyd-Jones to preach at the more conservative Jarvis Street, which Lloyd-Jones declined. The two men arranged to meet for lunch the next day at which time Lloyd-Jones intended to admonish T. T. on his dogmatic demeanor:

Dr. Shields, you used to be known as the Canadian Spurgeon, and you were. You are an outstanding man, in intellect, in preaching gift, in every other respect, but over the McMaster University business in the early twenties you suddenly changed and became negatory and denunciatory. I feel this has ruined your ministry. Why don't you come back! Drop all this, preach the gospel to people positively and win them!<sup>15</sup>

#### UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION

That the title "the Canadian Spurgeon," alternately "the Spurgeon of Canada," or "the Spurgeon of North America," was applied to Shields is beyond doubt. As one studies the life of Shields, there are a number of striking similarities between the famed British Baptist minister and the well-known Canadian pastor. The initial resemblance, which is surely the origin of the title, was their pulpit ability. Both men had broad and significant preaching ministries that began early in their careers. In fact, it was these early coincidences that also made their connection a logical one. Both men were sons of the manse whose godly heritages prepared them for a life of Christian ministry. In Spurgeon's case, his father and grandfather were non-Conformist ministers. Spurgeon, as a lad, spent a good bit of time in his paternal grandfather's home and had access to his rather substantial Puritan library. He drank deeply from the wells of that old theology including

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<sup>13</sup>In T. T. Shields, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Toronto: The Gospel Witness, 1972), 140–54.

<sup>14</sup>L. E. Maxwell, *Prairie Overcomer*, Feb 1975, 106.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years, 1899–1939* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 273. George Rawlyk, citing the title, called Shields a "brilliant preacher" in his "A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Whidden, T. T. Shields, Christian Education and McMaster University," in *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988), 56.

the important Bunyan story, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which he claimed to have read more than one hundred times.<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Todhunter Shields, Jr.<sup>17</sup> was born in Bristol, England, on November 1, 1873, to parents Maria Davis and Thomas Todhunter Shields, Sr., the third of five children and the second son. To better understand T. T. Shields, one should appreciate his godly heritage. Among his Christian ancestors was a father who started his ministry as an Anglican minister, then became a Primitive Methodist preacher, and finally a Baptist pastor. Thomas's grandfather on his mother's side, T. T.'s great, great grandfather was Thomas Todhunter, M.A., also an Anglican clergyman. In these two men, T. T. had a heritage that was deep, evangelical, and godly.

Thomas Todhunter was at one point Vicar of Dacre in Cumberland, England. On several occasions, T. T. republished sermons, more than one hundred and sixty years old, from this forbearer, from handwritten notes then in his possession. The sermons are of standard evangelical fare, demonstrating a strong commitment to the Scriptures. The first published, "The Hiding Place of the Blood," was a comparison between the Exodus experience of Israel, the Passover sacrifice, and the work of Christ. Todhunter described a true believer not merely as one who acknowledged the existence of Jesus; rather, by "a believer I mean one who believes the gospel upon its proper evidence, and derives comfort from it; one who believes that the blood of Christ is as able to

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<sup>16</sup>Cited by his son Thomas Spurgeon in the editor's introduction, C. H. Spurgeon, *Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress* (Chicago: Revell, 1903), 5.

<sup>17</sup>Five major studies of T. T. Shields exist. Two were written by men who knew him and were graduates of the seminary during the Shields era. Les Tarr's *Shields of Canada* is the oldest and most sympathetic. He had access to materials no longer available today. Arnold Dallimore is an interesting personal reflection which did not have the advantage of access to the material in the Jarvis Street Baptist Church (JSBC) archives. The study, at times critical of Shields, lacks documentation, making it difficult to assess his conclusions. The other three essays are academic. John D. E. Dozios examined Shields as a fundamentalist in the 1960s in his B.D. thesis for McMaster, "Dr. Thomas Todhunter Shields (1873–1955): In the Stream of Fundamentalism" (B.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1963). He had access to McMaster archival material through the Canadian Baptist Historical Society and interviewed people who knew Shields, like Toronto Baptist Seminary graduate Morley Hall, but he did not have access to the JSBC archives. Without this material it was hard for Dozios to get an even-handed view of T. T. Mark Parent's "The Christology of T. T. Shields: The Irony of Fundamentalism" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1991) was the first serious researcher to gain significant access to the archives. However, his conclusions show a lack of understanding of the evangelical views in which Shields was operating. Doug Adams's "The War of the World: The Militant Fundamentalism of Dr. Thomas Todhunter Shields and the Paradox of Modernity," (Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, 2015) is the most recent and detailed study. There is much good research in the study. The focus of Adams is on Shields the controversialist. Other shorter studies of Shields which include significant material about Shields are included in the following footnotes. The discussion here is on Shields as pastor and his work specifically at the church. Therefore, some of the larger details of his life and history will necessarily be brief or omitted.

justify a sinner before God, as the Israelites believed that the blood of the Paschal lamb was sufficient to screen them from the angel's sword"<sup>18</sup> T. T. published six other sermons of similar content from Todhunter and reprinted "The Hiding Place" two additional times.<sup>19</sup>

T. T.'s father was also a minister. Thomas Shields, Sr. (1836–1902) was born at Leeds, in the county of Yorkshire, England, to Christopher and Margaret Todhunter. Margaret Todhunter (b. 1804) had married Christopher Shields, four years her junior, on January 8, 1833, at Middleham, Yorkshire.<sup>20</sup> Thomas, their third child, was christened in St. Peter's Church on April 6, 1836, in the regular Anglican tradition. Few details are known about Thomas's upbringing. His early education was at a private school. He later attended Maiden Kirk School and finally Roundhay Institute of Yorkshire. T. T.'s father became an Anglican minister and an author.<sup>21</sup> There were five children born into the Shields family, including sons James Irwin (1872–1944) and Ernest Edgar (1878–1952). There were also two sisters, neither of which married: Margaret M (b. 1867) and Ethel Marian (b. 1879).<sup>22</sup>

Thomas emigrated from England in the late 1880s, when Tod was still a teenager. Shields Sr. went through a significant theological transformation, first becoming a Primitive Methodist and then embracing Baptist sentiments. Upon his arrival in Canada, he received believer's baptism at the hand of Stuart S. Bates of College Street Church in Toronto. Thereafter, Thomas was recommended by the Baptist Home Mission Board to assume the pastorate of the Baptist church at Plattsville near Woodstock in late 1888. Shortly thereafter he was ordained into the Baptist ministry, May 2, 1889.<sup>23</sup> This was at least Thomas's

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas Todhunter, "The Hiding Place of the Blood," dated Apr 10, 1760 at Crathorn, in *GW*, Mar 22, 1928, 11.

<sup>19</sup>"What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life" *GW*, Apr 12, 1928; "The Price of Our Redemption," *GW*, Oct 18, 1928; "Man's Guilt and God's Grace," *GW*, May 9, 1929; idem, "Proofs of the Believer's Election," *GW*, Sep 19, 1929; idem, "Christ Crucified," *GW*, Oct 31, 1929; idem, "The Old Man and the New," *GW*, Oct 16, 1930. "The Hiding Place of the Blood" was reprinted in *GW* Apr 18, 1946 and Dec 30, 1948. Whether Shields possessed additional manuscripts is unclear. Also, the current status of these manuscripts is uncertain as they cannot be located in the JSBC archives.

<sup>20</sup>It seems that Thomas Todhunter was the maternal grandfather to Thomas, T. T.'s father. The details for T. T.'s grandparents' wedding may be found at Yorkshire, Archbishop of York Marriage licences [*sic*] index, 1613–1839. Transcription available online at <https://search.findmypast.com/record?id=gbprs%2for%2fyork%2fm%2f00148704%2f1>, accessed Nov 2, 2017.

<sup>21</sup>*Battles and Victories or Wars of the Lord* (Bath and London: Primitive Methodist Bookroom, 1870); cf. Dallimore, *Shields*, 6. The date of Thomas's shift to Primitive Methodism is unclear, but it must have occurred before the publication of this book in 1870.

<sup>22</sup>See the 1881 Census England, Wales and Scotland, Parish of Trevechin, County Monmouthshire, Wales. Folio 98, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>*The Canadian Baptist* [hereafter *CB*], Dec 3, 1888. For the ordination

second ordination. He had been set apart for ministry among the Primitive Methodists in May 1865.<sup>24</sup> The church at Plattsville was a small congregation with sixty-four members when Thomas arrived. After a couple of years, in February 1892, he moved to the Baptist church at Tiverton, a congregation three times as large as the Plattsville church. He remained at Tiverton two years.

Thomas continued to serve Baptist churches in southern Ontario for the next ten years. In March 1894, he was called to the church at Vittoria. His ministry there met with modest success. There were 151 members in 1894, but by 1896 the church had grown to 189 members. Perhaps anticipating future prospects, Thomas had occasion to preach at Jarvis Street in October 1897. He remained at Vittoria until March 1898 when he was called to the Baptist church at Leamington, in Ontario's southern tip. Thomas's ministry would be relatively short but the fruit of his labors good. There were 145 members in 1898 and 153 the following year with nine baptisms. Shortly thereafter, Thomas laid aside his pastoral labors when he was diagnosed with tongue cancer, January 1902.<sup>25</sup> He moved to the Hamilton-Wentworth area to live with Tod. He died October 1, 1902 and was buried in the Hamilton cemetery. Tod's mother survived her husband's another twenty years, dying July 1922.<sup>26</sup>

In considering Thomas, several particulars are important related to his better-known son. Though the father's Canadian ministry was less than fifteen years, he made a name for himself in his new denomination and set an example for his sons, Tod and Edgar, who both followed their father into the ministry. Notice of Thomas's death in the *Canadian Baptist Yearbook* 1902 likened him to the legendary John Bunyan, "with all the strength, flexibility and imagination of that old Puritan." He was "a man of sterling character" who "stood supreme as a preacher of the gospel of Christ." Though he had acquitted himself well in his former denomination, he was driven "by the strength of his

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announcement, see *The Canadian Baptist Yearbook*, 1889, 153. Curiously, the *CBYB* lists the date of his ordination at April 30, while *The Canadian Baptist* lists it as May 2 (cf. "Plattsville Ordination," *CB*, May 16, 1889).

<sup>24</sup>The date was May 4–6 at Bristol. Shields was among four men examined and admitted to the Methodist ministry after passing "through a very searching and thorough literary examination the previous day" (May 5). They "related their Christian experience and call to ministry in the presence of a large congregation. We were pleased to hear our brethren express their views so clearly on the grand doctrines of our holy religion, and declare so distinctly their attachment to the connexion, and their determination to serve it faithfully." C. T. Harris delivered a ministerial charge. "Connexional Intelligence," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1865, 434, 435.

<sup>25</sup>Death record, see Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Series: *MS935*, Reel 109.

<sup>26</sup>The graves of his brother Edgar, his wife, and their two sisters are also at the cemetery, although in a different section. For Edgar's obituary, see "Rev. Edgar Shields," *GW&PA*, May 8, 1952, 6.

convictions" to change the banner under which he labored.<sup>27</sup> In these manifestations of a good and godly character, he certainly modeled for his sons what the life of a faithful minister of the gospel looked like, even in difficult circumstances. He was long remembered among the Ontario Baptists as "our greatest allegorist, the John Bunyan of Canadian Baptists."<sup>28</sup>

What theological sources T. T. had access to as a lad are difficult to ascertain but clearly his father's attention to detail plus his precise mastery of the English language and his allegorical skills, which earned him the nickname of the "Canadian Bunyan," had a great influence on the younger Shields.<sup>29</sup> Young Tod considered his father to be his theological mentor: "He was my pastor and my theological professor, and I think that all I ever learned I learned from him."<sup>30</sup> The story was told of Tod being placed beneath the father's pulpit while the elder Shields preached. Tod learned his homiletical skills from his father in a way similar to how Spurgeon must have gained his own skills. This can be surmised because neither man had what would be called a formal academic education; neither went to their denomination's educational institutions. The reasons that neither man attended school are varied.

Spurgeon considered formal training. He told of having an appointment with Dr. Joseph Angus, principal of Stepney College, scheduled in the home of Mr. McMillan, a publisher. A hapless maid put the two men in different rooms and both waited for the other to arrive without realizing that the other individual was elsewhere in the home. Spurgeon finally rang the bell, but too late it seems, for Dr. Angus, assuming that Spurgeon was not coming, left and took a train back to London. Spurgeon took this as the providential hand of God indicating that he should not seek to further his formal education.<sup>31</sup>

Tod was thrust into ministry out of necessity. He began his public speaking rather modestly by teaching a Sunday school class of high school girls about his own age in his father's church. In time he was addressing youth meetings and nearby churches. During his father's ministry at Tiverton, Ontario, Tod preached his first formal sermon in January 1894. This first preaching opportunity came when Thomas became ill. Tod stepped into the pulpit to replace him. He preached for three consecutive Sundays to the delight and praise of his father who

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<sup>27</sup>The obituary is found in *The Baptist Year Book for Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and the North-West Territories*, 1902, 19–20.

<sup>28</sup>*CB*, Apr 21, 1910, 8.

<sup>29</sup>The best available source on Shields's early life is Adams, "Shields." Adams grew up under the influences of T. T. His father Geoffrey taught at the seminary from 1954 to 2005. He also was given significant access to the JSBC archives, which he mined extensively for fragments of information on Shields's childhood. While living, Shields was reluctant to speak much of his youth (see esp. 37ff).

<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Dallimore, *Shields*, 10.

<sup>31</sup>Spurgeon recounted these events in his *Autobiography*, 1:241ff.

saw the providential hand of God in the illness by leading T. T. into ministry. From Thomas, Tod learned rhetoric and the art of writing out his sermons, a practice which he pressed upon own his students in later years.<sup>32</sup>

Of perhaps greater significance of Thomas's life was the formative role he played in the spiritual and pastoral development of his sons, Tod and Edgar. While Tod had no formal education, as a son of the manse, he well knew the rigors of pastoral ministry from the inside. He would have seen his father's meticulous sermon preparation and, as a young pastor, he sought his father's counsel on multiple occasions regarding his own preaching.

Thomas's writing desk, which currently resides in the Jarvis Street archives reveals the relationship between son and father.<sup>33</sup> The desk contains a few handwritten letters from Tod in which he seeks his father's counsel on a planned sermon under preparation. What did the elder Shields think of the outline and the structure of the sermon? Was it doctrinally sound? Homiletically? Moreover, the desk contains over a thousand of Thomas's handwritten sermon manuscripts, stored neatly in hand-made tin boxes, labeled, dated, and sequentially numbered through his Canadian career.<sup>34</sup> He took his pastoral charge very seriously and had an organized, systematic approach to sermon preparation. This rigor he no doubt passed on to his well-known son who sat at the feet of a man whose gifts were evident to all who knew him. Tod once remembered his father's instruction to avoid "biblical helps beyond a concordance and a good Bible dictionary for the first four or five years of ministry."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, "Do not tell people how little you know. Your sermons will be too long. Tell them only what you know and that will insure their brevity."<sup>36</sup> T. T. did not enter into his pastoral ministry unprepared. Like Paul with Timothy, T. T. was well-instructed by his father "in the faith" and in life.<sup>37</sup>

There can be no doubt about the virtues of growing up in the home of Thomas T. Shields, Sr. Thomas's brethren remembered him "as a preacher of no small merit,...a man of quiet, modest and somewhat retiring character,...exemplified in private life those virtues and

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<sup>32</sup>On Shields's early preaching, see Tarr, *Shields of Canada*, 29–31.

<sup>33</sup>The desk was apparently donated to the church in the early 1990s. It has remained little examined for twenty-five years until I was able to look through it in the summer of 2017.

<sup>34</sup>The desk also includes a few earlier sermons from Thomas's Methodist days.

<sup>35</sup>"The Prophetic Research Conference in Philadelphia, Jan 5th to 8th," *GW*, Jan 1, 1948, 8.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>See autographed, signed letter (ASL) of Tod to his parents and sisters, from Hamilton, May 10, 1901. Also, ASL from Tod to his father, October 8, 1901. These various ASLs referred to are located in Thomas's writing desk.

graces he so insistently proclaimed from the pulpit.”<sup>38</sup> C. J. Cameron of the Home Mission Board was asked for his opinion on T. T. when he assumed the pastorate at Jarvis Street. Concerning his preparation for gospel ministry, Cameron stated that “no finer training for ministry could one desire than to sit at the feet of this Prince of Preachers (speaking of Thomas), and this priceless privilege his son enjoyed.”<sup>39</sup> Like Spurgeon before him, Shields entered into pastoral ministry with a godly heritage and a unique ministerial training.

### THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS

Spurgeon and Shields indeed shared a godly heritage. But they shared still more common ground. They also held a passion for the Gospel and a particular theological outlook. Both men were committed Calvinists who despite a strong view of divine sovereignty were fervent soul winners. Spurgeon’s evangelistic sermons were well known in his day as he often invited his hearers to embrace the Gospel he preached. The specter of hyper-Calvinism still hung over the British Baptist world at the time of Spurgeon’s ascendancy to the New Park Street pulpit. As a young man who had not been raised among the Particular Baptists—his father and grandfather were Congregational non-Conformists—no one was quite sure where Spurgeon stood on the indiscriminate preaching of the gospel. Soon Spurgeon made it clear that he was an uncompromising Fullerite.<sup>40</sup> He proclaimed the Gospel and invited sinners to come to Jesus without hesitation.<sup>41</sup>

T. T. was equally committed to the Gospel and its proclamation while vigorously defending the doctrines of grace. Like his father before him, who during his Methodist days did itinerate work in and around Bath, T. T. would often hold evangelistic meetings in his churches.<sup>42</sup> He even took a hiatus from pastoral ministry to do evangelistic work

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<sup>38</sup> *CBYB* 1902, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in “Rev. T. T. Shields,” *CB*, April 21, 1910.

<sup>40</sup> A Fullerite was a man whose theological sensibilities were similar to those of British Baptist Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). Fuller was embroiled in the Baptist debate on the effects of *hyper-Calvinism*. His most important contribution in this regard was *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785). For a recent study of Fuller, see Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor and Theologian* (Nashville: B&H, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed account of Spurgeon’s conflict with hyper-Calvinism, see Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon vs. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> The *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1864 until 1888, when Thomas emigrated to Canada, are filled with references to various itinerate campaigns and camp meetings in which he participated. Occasionally a sermon elicited a comment about its effect. “As he spoke of the power of Christ over sin, death, and hell, and His gifts to men of life, liberty, light inheritance, and heirship, an electric thrill seemed to pass through the immense crowd, who caught up his points with a quick, responsive fervor and gave relief to their intense feeling in loud shouts of spiritual gladness” (“The Conference Religious Services,” *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1883, 508).

among the Baptists of Ontario. As the pastor at Jarvis Street that went through a split in the early 1920s, Shields addressed the issue by a vigorous evangelistic campaign that saw the church pews filled with new auditors and the churches coffers hardly diminished from that pre-split levels.<sup>43</sup> Both Baptist leaders—CHS and T. T.—were solid preachers of the Gospel; they were evangelistic through and through.

Both men also held obvious doctrinal similarities, which exceeded their Baptist denominational resemblances, as both men affirmed the doctrines of grace without apology.<sup>44</sup> They were also strong defenders of orthodoxy as they understood it. Fundamentalism as a movement had not been identified in the mid-1880s when Spurgeon engaged fellow British Baptists in a debate on the “downgrade” then taking place among the churches. But by his posture of vocal opposition, he made it clear that he would not soft pedal the truth as he understood it for the sake of denominational unity. His vocal opposition to the error within the Baptist Union resulted in his church’s eventual removal from the Union for his strident dissent.<sup>45</sup>

In a similar fashion, T. T. witnessed and participated in the growing discord in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec over a similar theological drift. In 1910, Elmore Harris, pastor of the Walmer Road Baptist Church of Toronto, another prominent city church, raised his voice against liberalism at McMaster, particularly over the views of I. G. Matthews. Shields was just beginning his Toronto ministry. Pastoring now in the city, he had a front row seat to the conflict as it heated up and he soon joined the dissenters, eventually becoming the leader of the opposition to liberal encroachments among the Baptists. Coincidentally, though he was a board member of the university and had recently had an honorary degree conferred upon him, he found it necessary to object to the planned conferral of the same degree on noted American Baptist liberal William H. P. Faunce, long-time president of Brown University.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Shields surveyed the post-split status of the church in *The Plot that Failed*, 335–40.

<sup>44</sup>Spurgeon’s Calvinism is well-known but may be seen in his *Autobiography*, 1:167–78, and throughout his published sermons. As for Shields’s Calvinism, a perusal of T. T. Shields, *The Doctrines of Grace* will suffice to see his robust appreciation of this theology.

<sup>45</sup>On Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy, as it came to be known, see Ian Randall, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Pastors’ College and the Downgrade Controversy,” in *Discipline and Diversity: Papers Read at the 2005 Summer Meeting and the 2006 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 366–76, or Mark Hopkins, “Spurgeon’s Opponents in the Downgrade Controversy,” *Baptist Quarterly* 32 (1988): 274–94.

<sup>46</sup>Details of the protest may be found in the newspapers of the day (“Senate Will Consider Protest of Dr. Shields,” *TDS*, Dec 3, 1923, 3; “Varsity Head Predicts Split in the Baptists,” *TDS*, Dec 4, 1923, 1; “Shields Throws Down the Gauntlet to Faunce,” *TDS*, Dec 6, 1923, 3; also “Modernism Turns Colleges into Places of Infidelity,” *TDS*, Dec 15, 1923, 11).

The conflict within the Convention did not subside in the mid-1920s but rather intensified. For the next five years after the Faunce degree, Shields raised his voice, recruited allies, and wrote essays about the theology being taught at McMaster in his new paper, *The Gospel Witness*. He expressed objections about progressive liberalism in Canada at convention meetings and as a board member of McMaster until he was finally forced off the board and drummed out of the convention along with the Jarvis Street Church in a way not unlike the Metropolitan Tabernacle was removed from the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Neither man, Spurgeon nor Shields, was afraid of controversy when the controversy was deemed necessary.

Additional similarities between Spurgeon and Shields could be multiplied significantly. Because of concerns within their denominations, both men, British by nationality (yet another common connection), started schools in which to train Gospel ministers. Spurgeon's Pastor's College and Shields's Toronto Baptist Seminary abide to this day as testaments to the burden that these great pastors had for an educated, orthodox ministry despite their own lack of formal training. They also started gospel papers through which they alerted their constituencies of their ever-increasing ministries and spoke out on theological issues of the day—nationally and denominationally. Both men had international ministries through travel and preaching and through the printed word with their sermons literally spanning the globe.

#### POWERFUL EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

Despite this interesting list of similarities between two prominent pastors (both of whom pastored the largest churches in their respective denominations), it was powerful preaching that seems the most likely explanation of the comparison between Shields and the great English Baptist. Spurgeon's sermons were read around the world. Stories abound of individuals who were converted through the reading of a Spurgeon sermon.<sup>47</sup> The sermons were printed as part of *The Penney Pulpit* and continued well after Spurgeon's death in 1892. In point of fact, weekly sermons continued until the exigencies of the Great War forced their discontinuance over a paper shortage.<sup>48</sup> Even so, the massive set of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, combined with *The New Park Street Pulpit* contain sixty-three volumes of sermons spanning 1855 through to his death in 1892. More recently B&H has been publishing the *Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon*, which will add an additional ten percent to the whole by publishing for the first time sermons and

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<sup>47</sup>For a record of the sermon publication ministry of Spurgeon, consult Charles Ray, *A Marvelous Ministry: The Story of C. H. Spurgeon's Sermons, 1855–1905* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1905).

<sup>48</sup>At first the printed sermons of Spurgeon consisted of his Sunday morning messages from the Tabernacle. After his death, sermons from other occasions such as the evening services from the Tabernacle made their way into print.

outlines from Spurgeon's early years (1851–1854). These combined volumes will include about four thousand sermons and are a treasure trove of theological instruction.

Shields also had a powerful preaching ministry from his earliest days. The younger Shields was well placed to consider a life in the gospel ministry. He had seen that ministry modeled and watched his father serve God on two continents, among two denominational groups. His father lived out what it meant to be true to the Bible, moving from Anglicanism into Methodism and then into Baptist sensibilities. Like Thomas before him, T. T. sought to be true to the clear teaching of the Word of God.

One of the most significant events in Thomas's ministry came while he was at his first Ontario Baptist pastorate. He had accepted the charge of the small Baptist work at Plattsville, twenty-five miles northeast of Woodstock. During this pastorate Thomas had the occasion to have a pastor named McDonald preach in the small church. That sermon resulted in the conversion of his son Tod on February 18, 1891. He was not yet eighteen years old.

Soon the young man began to assume his father's mantle. His first sermons were delivered at Tiverton January 7, 14, 21, 1894 when Thomas became ill.<sup>49</sup> These initial efforts must have seen some success. By October of 1894, T. T. accepted his first pastoral charge to a small village church in the town of Florence, Ontario. The Florence church was in the Western Association and reported a membership of 47 for the year. The following year that number rose to 66.<sup>50</sup>

In 1895, T. T. moved to his second charge, the church at Dutton, Ontario in October. This assembly was larger, with a membership of 86. At the July 26, 1896, business meeting, the church voted to write to Rev. J. P. McEwen, Superintendent of the Home Mission Board, concerning the advisability of ordaining their young pastor. Apparently, McEwen endorsed the decision so the church voted to proceed with the ordination on September 21, 1897. The ordination proper occurred two days later. As might be expected, Thomas came from Vittoria to participate, preaching the ordination sermon with McEwen offering the ordination prayer.<sup>51</sup> T. T. left immediately to go to his next pastoral charge at Delhi.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Tarr refers to a diary of Thomas's that he had access to when he wrote *Shields of Canada* (Tarr, *Shields*, 30). Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this diary are unknown at this time, if it still exists.

<sup>50</sup>The numerical data on T. T.'s various churches is taken from the respective years of *CBYB*.

<sup>51</sup>Details of the ordination are recorded in "Ordination," *CB*, 1897, 617.

<sup>52</sup>The church reported sixteen baptisms for the year 1896 and T. T. was listed as a "student" in the *CBYB* of that year (*CBYB*, 1896, 178). The following year no baptisms were reported and the church membership was recorded at seventy-two. T. T. was still listed as a student (*CBYB*, 1897, 203).

Something of the significance of Shields's early preaching comes to light at this point in his life. In what can be viewed as truly remarkable, T. T. Shields's first published sermon appeared in the pages of the *Canadian Baptist* (*CB*) scarcely four months after his ordination and just two months after his twenty-fifth birthday. The presence of the published sermon is remarkable for several reasons. First, pastoral sermons in the pages of the *CB* were at best occasional and then generally from prominent men, mostly Baptists. Presbyterian Theodore Cuyler and Baptists A. H. Strong, E. J. Stobo, Jr. and B. D. Thomas had sermons or addresses printed periodically, as did C. H. Spurgeon.<sup>53</sup> T. T.'s father's preaching also appeared periodically.<sup>54</sup> But a sermon from a pastoral novice, and a youthful one at that, was a very rare occurrence.<sup>55</sup> For a twenty-five-year-old rookie without a formal education to have a sermon worth publishing in a national paper is high praise in and of itself. From this point on, Shields's sermons appear in the *CB* occasionally.

Second, it is remarkable because a printed sermon would have required either a carefully written manuscript or a stenographer to transcribe the delivered sermon. During his later years, many of Shields's sermons were stenographically recorded. T. T.'s first sermon most likely was manuscripted, according to his father's example and his early custom. Third, sometimes sermons were published "by request" while most published sermons seem to have been at the discretion of the publisher.<sup>56</sup> Shields's sermon came at no such invitation, apparently. So either the publisher chose this sermon or it was recommended to him by someone else. In any case, a published sermon by a ministerial novice was exceptional. The most plausible explanation for this would have been the sermon itself.

T. T. took as his text Matthew 28:18–19. After emphasizing the authority of the designer of the Church, Shields noted that the disciples were given a work to do—go and make disciples. "We are not left in ignorance as to the *extent of our work*." Second, the need for the church

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<sup>53</sup>E. J. Stobo, Jr., "Thomas the Doubter," *CB*, Feb 24, 1898, 2, and B. D. Thomas, "Spiritual Childhood," *CB*, Apr 7, 1898. Both men were recognized denominational leaders.

<sup>54</sup>Thomas Shields, "Following Afar: A Character Sketch," *CB*, Jan 20, 1898, 2, and T. Shields, "The Law of Prayer the Law of Nature," *CB*, Apr 7, 1898. Usually T. T. and his father are distinguished in the *CB* by "Thomas" and "T. T. Shields." In this case, it is simply "T. Shields" which could be either man but seems more likely Thomas rather than his lesser known son.

<sup>55</sup>I cannot say that this sort of thing never occurred in the *CB* before or since the sermon of Shields. What I can say for certain that in examining thirty years of the *CB* in preparation for this essay, nothing similar was observed. Moreover, sermons by "regular" pastors, were for the most part, rare.

<sup>56</sup>See the untitled sermon by Charles A. Eaton, preached at Bloor Street Baptist ten days after the publication of the Shields sermon in *CB*, Feb 10, 1898, 2–3; also Andrew Murdoch, "Memorial Sermon," *CB*, Jul 21, 1898, 2–3. Both were published "by request."

was power in the building of the Church: *human* power because the Church is something men and not angels were to build, *spiritual* power, because the Holy Spirit has to energize the work, and finally *financial* power, with money to carry out the Lord's work at home and abroad. This brought Shields to his third point and the heart of his sermon—the Lord's Almighty *Therefore*. "Let us to-day remember our Lord's almighty 'Therefore.' If men and women are needed, do not try to supply this lack committing spiritual work to ungodly hands."<sup>57</sup>

Shields's ministry at Delhi was brief. In November 1900, with the help of the Home Mission Board,<sup>58</sup> he moved to the Baptist church at Wentworth. In less than a year and a half, the church became self-supporting. During his three-year ministry, the congregation grew from a membership of 125 to 400.<sup>59</sup>

At this point in Shields's development, his gifts as an evangelist became apparent.<sup>60</sup> The church at Wentworth had grown significantly under his ministry. His gifts as a preacher were also developing.<sup>61</sup> In 1903, he left Hamilton and spent a year in itinerant work, with significant success.

As an evangelist, Bro. Shields possesses unique gifts. Rapidly and correctly he diagnoses the case in personal work and having discovered the peculiar phase of soul-sickness that distresses the patient, then makes the proper prescription from the *Materia Medica*—the Word of God. Unusual familiarity with the Bible gives him rare facility in adapting and applying the truth. In directing a soul to Christ, he is sympathetic in manner, clear in expression, and tactful in method.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>"Christ's Almighty 'Therefore' and Its Teaching," *CB*, Jan 6, 1898, 2–3. It is clear that this sermon is the son's as it was preached at Delhi, where Shields, Jr. had recently been called as pastor.

<sup>58</sup>Shields's early relationship with the Home Mission Board eventually led to a thirteen-year stint as a vice-chairman, encouraging church planting in Canada (see "The Days of His Years," Memorial Issue, *GW&PA*, Apr 14, 1955, 2. His ministry at Wentworth was featured in the *CB* in 1902. It was noted for several things. First was its significant growth. Second, in 1902, the Home Mission Board was running a deficit. They asked supported churches to reduce their expectation for funds from the Board. In response, Wentworth cancelled the entire \$250 obligation. The Sunday School had grown to two hundred and prayer meetings regularly had more than one hundred in attendance (C. J. Cameron, "Wentworth Street Baptist Church, Hamilton," *CB*, Jun 26, 1902, 5).

<sup>59</sup>C. J. Cameron quoted in "Rev. T. T. Shields," *CB*, Apr 21, 1910, 8.

<sup>60</sup>Shields held a three-week campaign, starting May, in Kincardine, where his brother Edgar was the pastor. Thirty-nine professions of faith were recorded. Eighteen or nineteen were Sunday School scholars, the fruit reaped being the result of cultivation proceeding his visit (E. E. S., "Kincardine," *CB*, Jun 5, 1902, 9).

<sup>61</sup>Shields was not yet thirty years old and had been preaching but eight years. A sermon from the services at Wentworth, January 12, 1902, was published in the *CB* indicating the impression that his preaching was making among Ontario Baptists (T. T. Shields, "Wireless Telegraphy," Home Mission Sunday School Number, *CB*, Jun 26, 1902, 2–3).

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

Shields continued his evangelistic ministry at his next pastorate. The Adelaide Street Baptist Church of London, Ontario extended a call to Shields to become their pastor in September 1904. It was a pulpit from which Shields's growing influence in the denomination could be both observed and felt and another Shields sermon published. The church experienced his evangelistic ministry and soon the London church needed a new building to contain the record crowds which regularly sought to attend the meetings. The new building, which seated eight hundred, was completed by February 1906. Robert Stuart MacArthur, prominent pastor of Calvary Baptist of New York, helped to inaugurate the new facility. The demand for seating again exceeded the supply and a balcony was added with four hundred additional seats. It was reported that often one thousand four hundred people were accommodated in the enlarged edifice.

During Shields's London days, his prominence among Canadian Baptists was increasing. In 1908, he brought a message, "Our Future as Baptists,"<sup>63</sup> before the Convention alongside the preaching of Southern Baptist Seminary President E. Y. Mullins. The Adelaide Street church was a growing congregation and his denominational star was on the rise.<sup>64</sup> It was during this ministry that a third sermon of Shields appeared in *CB*.<sup>65</sup> Preaching from Jeremiah 12:5, Shields sought to encourage his congregation that victory over sin was possible. Without victory in small things, victory in larger things would be well-nigh impossible.

The London church would not be able to retain the services of its gifted pastor beyond the early days of 1910. After a visit to Toronto to a meeting of the Home Mission Board, Shields was asked to fill the pulpit at the premier congregation among Canadian Baptists, the Jarvis Street Baptist Church, home to such honored names as Robert Alexander Fyfe, John Harvard Castle, and Benjamin D. Thomas.<sup>66</sup> By this time, Shields was noticed by Baptist leaders on both sides of the border. He had an appointment to preach in Chicago, and upon returning to London another request came that he fill the pulpit at the Hanson Street Church of New York City. The request conflicted with his agreed upon date for filling the pulpit at Jarvis Street, so it was arranged for him to preach in Toronto about one month later.

The sermon of that day, "The Immeasurable Cross," was carried in the *Canadian Baptist*. It was quintessential Shields and evangelistic to the core. Taking Ezekiel 43:13, "And these are the measures of the altar

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<sup>63</sup>Tarr, *Shields*, 46.

<sup>64</sup>Cameron, quoted in *CB*, Apr 21, 1910.

<sup>65</sup>"The Swelling Jordan," *CB*, Feb 9, 1905, 2–3.

<sup>66</sup>For a recent history of this church, see *Set for the Defense of the Gospel: A Bicentennial History of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, 1818–2018*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Toronto: Jarvis Street Baptist Church, 2018).

after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and a hand breadth," he followed the sage advice of taking a text and making a bee-line to the Cross.<sup>67</sup>

The focus of the sermon was the immeasurableness of the atonement. His conclusion was that

nowhere but at the Cross, whose measures are after the cubits of a cubit and a hand breadth, can we know how much God loves the world. Who of us can resist the attraction of a love like that, measured by the hand breadth of the Hand which holds all oceans in its hollow? Who of us, how great soever our sins, shall fear to trust an atonement measured by twelve hand breadths of the Hand that meted out heaven with the span?<sup>68</sup>

The sermon was well received by the Toronto church and the message was followed by a meal with its former pastor, B. D. Thomas, who suggested to Shields that the day was a harbinger of things to come.<sup>69</sup> Plans were laid by the church leadership to send a delegation to London to consult with Shields about coming to Toronto. He was called to be pastor at a salary of \$4000 per annum with four weeks of vacation. The church received a letter of acceptance on April 13 from Shields. His ministry began on May 15, and on May 25, he and Mrs. Shields were received into the membership by letter from Adelaide Street. Thus began a forty-five year journey that ended at his death.

During these early years at Jarvis Street, Shields made a name for himself through his wider ministry. He travelled to England to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on several occasions and had prominent Baptist leaders into his pulpit. A. C. Dixon, of the Tabernacle, filled in for Shields while he was at Dixon's church in London. The notable Philadelphia pastor Russell H. Conwell, of the Temple Baptist Church, founder of Temple University and author of the popular lecture "Acres of Diamonds," also preached. Shields was informed that Temple University intended to confer an honorary Doctor of Divinity at the June 1917 commencement. Shields, who already had Conwell scheduled for a meeting at JSBC in April, hoped to dissuade Conwell from carrying out the planned conferral. However, when Conwell took the platform at the church, in the presence of about two thousand people, he announced on behalf of the University that Shields had been awarded the D.D. Some at McMaster were embarrassed that an American school had beaten them to the high recognition of Shields, so in the following year McMaster also awarded an honorary degree. It was quite the thing

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<sup>67</sup>This counsel is often attributed to C. H. Spurgeon, but apparently the famed preacher never gave it. See Christian George, noted Spurgeon scholar and former curator of the Spurgeon library, "Six Things Spurgeon Did Not Say," The Spurgeon Center blog, available online at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/6-quotes-spurgeon-didnt-say>, accessed December 13, 2017.

<sup>68</sup>T. T. Shields, "The Immeasurable Cross," a sermon preached at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, March 6, 1910, *CB*, Mar 24, 1910.

<sup>69</sup>Tarr, *Shields of Canada*, 49.

for a man who possessed no formal theological education to be honored by two leading Baptist schools with honorary degrees, demonstrating Shields's significant contributions to Baptist life in his day. He was in his mid-40s when both degrees were awarded and had been at Jarvis Street less than ten years.<sup>70</sup>

Also, during his early years at Jarvis Street, the *CB* began to run homiletical essays by T. T. The series appeared under the title "The Altar Fire." Whether these were specially written pieces for the *CB* (which seems more likely due to their brevity) or whether they were sermonettes of some sort, they still show the expanding influence of Shields among his brethren.<sup>71</sup> It doesn't seem likely that the title "The Canadian Spurgeon" was yet applied to T. T., for his rising prominence would surely have elicited it, if it had been in circulation. Another full sermon appeared later in 1911, his fifth full message and second from Jarvis Street.<sup>72</sup> Yet another was printed in 1914.<sup>73</sup>

An examination of the *Canadian Baptist* through the early years of Shields's public ministry in Toronto presents a man on the rise among his brethren. Yet, there is no reference that I could find to the title "The Canadian Spurgeon," not even in the notice in the *CB* in April 1917 when Shields was unexpectedly awarded the D.D. from Temple University. The editor concedes the appropriateness as "most fitting in view of Dr. Shields' ability as a preacher and in view of the church which he so ably serves."<sup>74</sup> This would have been a good time to point out the nickname if it was in use. Exactly when this title begins is difficult to determine at this point.<sup>75</sup>

Having examined the early life and ministry of T. T. Shields, it seems pretty clear why he was compared to Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Both men were British and sons of the manse who learned their pastoral trade from their deep, godly heritage rather than from formal classroom education. Spurgeon's heritage was non-Conformity while Shields's was Anglican-Methodist. Both lacked formal theological education, led the most prominent Baptist pulpits in their respective countries and carried out unprecedented international ministries through travel and the printed word which circulated long after their deaths. Both published weekly newspapers with information about their

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<sup>70</sup>Shields recounts his relationship with Conwell and the giving of both degrees in *The Plot that Failed*, 59–70.

<sup>71</sup>T. T. S., "Unused Paths to the Shining Light," *CB*, Dec 15, 1910, 3; "A Fire Out from Before the Lord," *CB*, Dec 29, 1910; "His Eyes Were as a Flame of Fire," *CB*, Jan 12, 1911, 2; et al.

<sup>72</sup>"About the Minister," *CB*, Dec 7, 1911, 2–4.

<sup>73</sup>"Faith Unshipwrecked," *CB*, Mar 26, 1914, 2–3.

<sup>74</sup>"Personals," *CB*, Apr 19, 1917, 2.

<sup>75</sup>The evidence of the title's usage that I have found comes from the late 1920s through to the 1940s. Just how early it may have been used is at this point impossible to determine.

ministries, often with one of their sermons. More importantly, these newspapers supplied a platform to express their judgments on the religious circumstances in which they found themselves. Both, though formally untrained, started schools for the preparation of ministers. These schools left a marked impact on their countries and around the world as the graduates populated churches at home and mission fields abroad. Finally, both led well-known and public oppositions to theological drift within their Baptist associations and both men and their churches were excluded from those conventions for their outspoken criticism.

That T. T. Shields would be called the “Spurgeon of Canada,” at least during his early years, should be no surprise to anyone familiar with his life. As a boy, he aspired to walk in the shadow of the great preacher, even of one day preaching as pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. While Shields never attained that goal, he did on several occasions preach in the famed pulpit. Twice during the Great War (1915 and 1918), he journeyed to London and preached at the Tabernacle during the ministry of A. C. Dixon. He was invited to London in 1919 for yet another visit and a rumor circulated in Toronto that he might be called to fill the pulpit that Dixon had recently vacated.<sup>76</sup> Shields also preached at the 100<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of Spurgeon’s birth in 1934. Shields clearly admired and respected the great Baptist pulpiter. It does not seem a stretch to suggest that his ministry was so similar to Spurgeon’s because Shields saw in Spurgeon a worthy model to follow.

In his later years, the focus of Shields’s public persona was altered due to the exigencies of the day as he saw them. Like his well-known predecessor,<sup>77</sup> T. T. became “Mr. Valiant for the Truth” in opposing

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<sup>76</sup>“Toronto Preacher May Go to Big London Pulpit,” *GM*, Jul 23, 1919, 8. There is uncertainty whether or not Shields was ever seriously considered for the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In an email from London, an assistant to Peter Masters passed on Dr. Masters’s view that no such invitation was ever forthcoming, though who knows what someone might have suggested to Shields when he was actually speaking at the Tabernacle (email from Hannah Wyncoll to the author, December 4, 2017). However, on at least two occasions, Shields suggested that the pulpit of the Tabernacle was a possibility. See “Tempted to Run Away,” *GW&PA*, Sep 25, 1947, 6, and “The Great Contention,” *GW&PA*, Jul 16, 1953, 12. “I was solicited by the Deacons of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle, London, and had only to say the word and I could have crossed the Atlantic and relieved myself of all this trouble.” There are three possible choices with this discrepancy: (1) Shields was lying to make himself look good. (2) He misremembered or misinterpreted comments of perhaps twenty-five to thirty years previous. Or (3) such a conversation took place, perhaps off the record and in an unofficial way to solicit his potential interest. Sadly, at least one biographer seems to believe that Shields lied, mainly because he did not mention the invitation for more than twenty-five years (Dallimore, *Shields*, 33). Others think that he was considered at some point as a potential pastor for the Tabernacle (Adams, “Shields,” 156).

<sup>77</sup>In assessing this aspect of Spurgeon, Lewis Drummond declared, “‘Mr. Valiant for the Truth’ stood firm on the great verities of the Christian faith, putting his life and ministry in the balance, defending the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.... Spurgeon put everything on the line. He should always be seen, therefore, as

error wherever he saw it. Shields surpassed Spurgeon in longevity, the former living into his eighties, while the later died before he turned sixty. The end of Shields’s days saw him battling on many fronts. He may have rightly earned the sobriquet “The Battling Baptist” in his later years, but there can be little doubt that his early ministry was marked by the same sorts of qualities that made Charles Haddon Spurgeon England’s greatest preacher. Thomas Todhunter Shields left the same kind of mark in Canada. In many ways the men were different, but in many ways the men bore a striking resemblance.

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the symbol of a true defender of the faith” (*Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, 768–69).