

The Resources of Grace.

WE know quite as much about the Apostle Paul as about any man who ever lived—not about the external events of his career perhaps—though even here the sources are ample, but about his disposition, his purposes, his ideas. He has poured forth his inner life in a series of self-revealing letters that are without an exact parallel in literature.

In the light of this knowledge of the man we must estimate the story of his conversion, which we study in our Sunday School lesson this week. If he was an impressionable, sentimental and unstable character we shall appraise the record accordingly. But the unconscious self-revelation of the Apostle gives us a very different portrait. He knew the nature and worth of evidence, and was little likely to be moved by what did not satisfy his judgment. His ideals and purposes and his conceptions of Christianity underwent a swift revolution from which there was no change in the course of a long life, which subjected him to every test. And the hatred that he felt for Jesus and His followers was transmuted into an affection for Him that is the key to his character—the dominant note of the rest of his life. The genuineness of Paul's conversion is attested by a kind and weight of evidence that makes cavil or skepticism about it irrational.

Many lessons may be drawn from the narrative, but to our mind few of them are more significant to the thought of our day than the simple fact of this man's spiritual transformation. We do not say that we are to expect that all conversions, or perhaps a large proportionate number of them, will conform to the type of Paul's; but his conversion affords a measure of the power of the Gospel. The force that unfolds the petals of an oak blossom is not measured by that phenomenon, but when we see the acorn thrusting asunder the rock into the bosom of which it has fallen we appreciate the infinite reserves or vital power. The grace of God manifested in such an experience as Paul's gives us a new impression of the resources of the Gospel.

Perhaps many of us would not lead such weak and halting Christian lives if we had a more vivid impression of the power of God's grace. Everywhere the tendency is strong to classify Christian experience with the results of education and culture, and to regard it as the outcome of the operation of natural forces. The conversion of Paul brings us face to face with the supernatural in Christian experience. And it is our privilege to believe that the power which transformed his nature working a moral miracle as stupendous as any physical miracle, works in every redeemed heart.

And this faith in the power of divine grace to transform human souls, that appear incorrigible, lies very near the heart of aggressive Christian service. If we believe that the only resources for transforming human character are education, environment and heredity, we shall hold a very different relation to the preaching of the Gospel and to all missionary activity from the one we shall sustain if we believe in the supernatural power of the Gospel. Then we shall recognize that there is an incalculable divine element in Christianity, which may at any time overlap all our forecasts and, reversing every human expectation, turn the hearts of men to God.

A woman of high literary attainments recently said, as she returned from church with an aching heart:

"After working with books all the week I go to church fairly hungry for something nourishing; for while good literature furnishes mental food, there is no soul food that compares with the old Gospel plainly preached. This is what I want, but what do I get? Quotations from Browning, quotations from Lowell, quotations from Thoreau ad nauseam. Metaphors and similes are crowded upon each other, poetical questions are discussed. The published views of mushy room writers are delated upon, and a few moral platitudes bind the whole together."

Mother

By Rev. A. S. Gumbart, D. D.

Mother! How much is summed up in this single word. What memories it awakens. There is no word in human vocabularies the mere mention of which so mellow the heart. A mother's power for good or evil is utterly beyond our power to calculate. A mother's heart is the holy of holies to which the earnest loving soul of motherhood brings the welfare of the child. Here the blood of self-sacrifice is sprinkled upon the golden altar of devotion; here earnest, tearful prayer, life fragrant incense arises to God for the child even before it is born. Her cherubim spread out their wings in comfort over the soul often troubled concerning the misfortunes and the sins of the child that is bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. The seed sown by a mother's devotion in the hearts of her children will bear fruit long after the mother herself shall have passed away. As a rose after it has withered and died still fills the room with fragrance, so the memory of a mother's devotion fills the heart with sweetness and the life with strength when mother herself has folded her weary hands in the last sleep. A faithful motherhood—how much it speaks of silent heart-aches and secret tears, of sleepless nights, of uncomplaining sacrifice, of hopes urged into fruitfulness by daily devotion to the family! The mother's reward is not always found in this life; but we may hope that somehow it will find its reward in the life to come. If some angel could write for us the history of the world's motherhood, what a pathetic, heroic, noble record it would be!

Prayer

By Rev. O. P. Gifford D.D.

The Bible is an art gallery whose walls are hung with pictures of men at prayer. Men in all ages, under all conditions, have prayed. The body is bound to the earth by the force of gravity, mind goes out to mind in thought, heart goes out to heart in love, the soul goes up to God in prayer. There would be no mental life without exchange of thought, there can be no spiritual life without prayer. Prayer is the soul's gravitation toward God, prayer is the soul's exchange of thought and life with God.

Men doubting the force of gravity would not build but burrow; men shrinking from exchange of thought soon cease to think; men neglecting prayer burrow in the animal life, and become bankrupt in soul.

In prayer we do not so much seek to yoke God's will to the chariot of our purpose, as to find what God's will is concerning us and get strength to do it. We do not so much seek to get favors from God as to get God Himself. We seek electricity that we may use it for light and power; we seek God that He may use us, making us the light of the world, His power in the earth. We bring our needs to Him that He may satisfy them or show us how needless they are; we bring ourselves to Him that He may fill us with Himself.

When the sun rises even the foolish virgins need no oil. When the Sun of Righteousness arises and shines through the east window of prayer, we cast our empty lamps behind us to be forgotten. With sufficient grace the thorn in the flesh becomes a nail driven in a sure place on which to hang the wreath of victory. Holding the golden chains that bind the round earth about the feet of God, our hands are empty of our own needs, but so full of God that we know not our own needs with which we came to pray.

The Awakening of China

In this great SOUL AGE, the Spirit can do more in one year than it formerly accomplished in ages. Humanity has now stepped up on to a new plane, the NEW FOURTH GREAT CYCLE (January 1, 1901) and all are now more receptive to the Vibrations of the HOLY SPIRIT than ever before.

In every part of the world the souls of men are waking up into a consciousness of their relation to the great God, the Loving Father of ALL, and

are now listening to the Message of His Son, The Master. This is especially true throughout the Orient, which from now on will surely and speedily become Christianized.

In China, Japan and India the outlook for Christianity was never so good. Those in authority in those countries who only several years ago bitterly opposed and fought the Christian Missionaries are now looking up to these missionaries of the Christ for Light, Guidance and Direction.

The hand of God has at last grasped China, and that country, with its great and wonderful resources, is to come into the vibrations of the New Era and become a highly progressive and prosperous country. Many souls in China aspire to live in the highest and are looking to CHRISTIAN AMERICA for help, and to that end are rapidly taking up "Americanism," which is only another name for Christian Ideas. The Chinese leaders in the government, social and commercial spheres are beginning to learn the English Language, and there is now a great and growing demand for English education. This great change has come about in two years.

The Rev. W. A. T. Martin, a Presbyterian missionary from China, addressed a large congregation in the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church at 155th street and Amsterdam avenue, New York City, and, among other things, he said that the outlook was never so hopeful for Christianity in the Orient as at present, and he sketched the efforts of missionaries to convert China and the many obstacles they have encountered. Since the troubles of two years ago, however, he said the Empress Dowager is a changed woman. She is learning English and exhibits a better spirit in dealing with foreigners.

Mr. Martin will soon start for China to take charge of a new university.

The mystic adepts who work for spreading the English Language and "Americanism" in all parts of the world say that it has been revealed to them that in time China is to be an English-speaking Christian country under the Stars and Stripes. This is to come about in a natural and divine way through Christian Love and not by conquest.

Many American educational schools, institutes and universities will be founded and given to China with Christian Americans behind them as Christian Dollars to establish and support them.

The Secret of Good Health

By George Matheson, D. D., LL. D.

"I wish, above all things, that thou mayest be in health as thy soul prospereth."—John 3: 2.

There is a very strong connection between the health of the body and the health of the soul. One side of the connection is universally recognized; we all feel that the body has an influence on the mind. But we are less prone to recognize the other side—that the mind has an influence on the health of the body. Yet it is this latter connection that St. John specially emphasizes. He would seem to suggest that the larger number of our physical troubles have their root in something mental, just as the larger number of our mental troubles have their root in something physical. I believe he is right in this. I think the majority of outward ailments originate in the thoughts. How did you catch cold yesterday? "By standing in a draught," you say. But you stood in the same draught the day before and got no hurt. "Ah, but," you say, "I was predisposed to cold yesterday; before coming out I got a letter which chilled me." There it is! the draught came not from the street corner, but from the anxious moment. There are times when we pass through the fiery furnace, unburned—it is in moments of mental enthusiasm. Men tell us that the dread of the pestilence exposes us to its contagion. Why? Because fear is the mind's paralysis. You would be equally liable to that pestilence if you were in dread of another. If there is a cloud over the mind, it can rest on one valley as easily as on another. The dread of life is as liable to the pestilence as the dread of death. If I would pass scathless by, I must pass by on the uplands. I must be free, not from any special fear, but from fear itself.

Lord, let me take Thy prescription for perpetual youth! I desire to have the eye undimmed and the natural strength unabated; place me on Mount Nebo, show me the Promised Land!