

The Pastor's Sermon and the People's Prayers.

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THE NEW Theology is defined as a "Transfer of Emphasis." A fresh phrase, like a new coin, is of more value as currency than as a keepsake. We use the words to point our plea. The time has come for a transfer of emphasis from the pulpit to the pew, from the sermon, an appeal from man to man, to prayer, an appeal from man to God. Schools, colleges, seminaries, are busy making preachers; churches seek preachers; the emphasis in most Protestant bodies is put upon the sermon; and the sermon gang is too often intellectual, too seldom spiritual. The time has come to change the emphasis and plead with men for more pleading with God.

The two great preachers of the early church—Peter and Paul—stand in striking contrast. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand gladly received the word. Paul preached on Mars' hill. "Some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this: Howbeit certain men clave unto him." Each was a messenger of Christ; each preached the truth. Peter adapted his message to a Jewish audience, quoting from Joel. Paul adapted his message to a Greek audience, taking the altar that marked their limit for this point of departure, quoting from Aratus and Cleanthen; the difference in result was marked, the cause is clear.

Peter had a praying band about him; for ten days the disciples continued in prayer. Paul stood alone. He was waiting for the brethren. The one had, the other lacked, power. All too often the modern pulpit is like Mars' Hill. The preacher waits for the brethren, his own spirit stirred within him; the result is mockery, delay; a small number cleaving to the preacher, a discouraged man turning from Athens to Corinth. When the preacher stands as Peter did, surrounded by a praying church, the result is a multitude of converts, steadfastness in church life, self-denial, and gladness. Peter's sermon was born of prayer. A praying church is blessed in many ways. A praying people cannot quarrel; strife, malice, backbiting—open springs that feed church quarrels—are dried up by the south wind of prayer. A church on its knees looking to Christ, overlooks much. He that studies the stars has no time to criticize his fellows; the telescope that walls in the planet, walls out men. A praying people do not oppose the pastor; molten metal easily takes the shape of the mould set for it; hearts united in prayer conform to the pastor's plans, fill up, and give value to his purposes.

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees,

And the—

Pastor trembles when he sees
The saints but seldom on their knees.

For well he knows, like bits of unmelted metal, they will spoil the pattern and ruin the mould.

The pastor who works in an atmosphere of prayer chooses vital texts; plant trees not posts, is a forester, not a lumberman. North winds strip the leaves from sapless trees, weaves a winding sheet of snow for the dead earth, hushes the brook to silence and denies life to corn. South wind changes all this. At his coming, the trees put on their beautiful garments; the earth blossoms and fruits; the brooks take up their forgotten songs, and life abounds. It is a question of atmosphere. The same man who in a prayerless church, is cool, reserved, intellectual, becomes, in a prayerful church, sympathetic, confidential, spiritual. The people control the pastor by the atmosphere they throw about him. A critical audience congeals the stream of thought that flows from the pulpit, though it be a hot spring; a spiritual audience, like the Gull Stream, melts the veriest iceberg that drifts down into it. The consumers decide the kind of goods to be made; the market, not the mill, is master.

Converts are multiplied in a praying church. Temperature, as well as seed and soil, enters into the question of harvests. There may be good seed and good soil, but if the church thermometer indicates a nearness to zero there will be no gathered sheaves; the soil stiffens; the seed sleeps when the temperature is low. Converts take on the type of the church in which they are born. Paul was but a father in the gospel. Mother church moulds the offspring. Laodicea has Laodicean Christians; Ephesus, Ephesian Christians. The articles and the tropics give wide variations to all forms of life. The church that conquered the Roman Empire was a praying church; the sermons that overwhelmed Judaism, as Vesuvius overwhelmed Pompeii, poured forth from the heart of a praying church.

Charles H. Spurgeon said: "As for me, I beg a special interest in your prayers, that I may be sustained in the tremendous work to which I am called. A minister must be upheld by his people's prayers or what can he do? When a diver is on the sea-bottom, he depends upon the pumps above, which send him down air. Pump away, brethren, while I am seeking the Lord's lost money among the timbers of this old wreck. I feel the fresh air coming in at every stroke of your prayer pump; but if you stop your application, I shall perish."

Paul said long ago to the Ephesians, "Praying always for me;" and to the Thessalonians, "Pray for us;" feeling that utterance and the free course of God's words alike depended upon praying churches.

The heart of the church throbs in the pulse of the pastor. If that beat strong and high, he is mighty; if that be feeble he is weak. Pray for your pastor, at the family altar, in the conference meeting, in the great congregation; pray for him as he studies that he may be guided in the choice and treatment of portions of God's word; pray for him while he preaches, that the word may be in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Let not the pulpit rest upon the church as the electric lamp does upon the wire pole, but rather let it be wired to the dynamo of spiritual power by a praying church. Thus shall pastor and people become indeed "the light of the world."—Zion's Advocate.

Glimpses.

A long, barren waste of sand and scrubby pine trees, with here and there a little pond or stream, and at less frequent intervals, an unpainted, unhome-like house. Nothing beautiful or attractive; nothing to draw the eye or hold the mind away from the paper or book which we, sitting in the railway car, are pretending to read. "Commonplace? monotonous? uninteresting!" we yawn indifferently.

But all at once flashes into the monotony a bit of meaning. The sea! Yonder it lies, fair and sparkling in the morning sunlight, with a dot of white here and there, far off or nearer, where

"the stately ships go by
To their haven under the hill."

Just for a moment we see it, as the trees and hills stand back. Then the view is lost, and we are whirled on in the wearisome monotony of the nearer commonplace.

Yet that one glimpse has helped. What does it mean that in almost everybody there is one chord that vibrates at the sound of the sea's deep voice? What is that instinct that makes it almost impossible not to arise and follow at the beckoning of the breakers' white-tipped fingers? Is it heredity? Does the spirit of our sea-king ancestors yet linger in us, their far-away descendants? We have seen the ocean! It has spoken to us one brief word; it has flashed one glance of recognition and fellowship into our eyes. Now, bays and sands and pine barrens do your worst! In the memory of the sublime that we have seen it will be easy to forget you; or if we cannot forget there is for us that harder but still possible thing—we can endure you. That single glimpse has helped us for the whole day's journey.

And then the thought presses home. Glimpses. Is not the greater part of life made up of just glimpses? Are not our feelings and understandings only now and then—a momentary rift in the clouds, a momentary lull in the discords, a momentary glimmer of meaning; and then the old commonplaces again—darkness, dumbness, doubt?

Sometimes we catch a glimpse of the wide-stretching ocean of his love. Just a glimpse. We are not near enough to go down into its waters and bathe in them to the washing away of every stain and the satisfaction of every desire; only near enough to see the possibility of this, and to wish that we might. And then we are whirled along into the pine barrens, and only the glimpse remains. A blessed memory, indeed. Earth would be poor and dark without even these occasional visions. And we thank God for the memory; but we sigh even as we thank him. O, what would it be to walk always on the shore of that glorious sea! to be buried in continual baptism beneath its waves? Why must we have the pine barrens and the sands and the bogs at all?

And sometimes we come near enough to look on the ocean of his power. The floods lift up their hands. They shout aloud in their strength. They are like giants in their play. Before their mighty rush we stand amazed, awed; humbled, yet, withal, strangely exalted and exhilarated. It is the Lord! Truly there is no god like unto our God! Is anything too hard for him? And then the hurrying wheels bear us on, and the vision is gone. Only a glimpse and a memory! O, what if that glimpse could be a perpetual seeing! what if God's people could always dwell within the sound of those mighty breakers, and within sight of those mighty waves which declare his strength! If the church of God is able to venture so much—to hope, believe, achieve so much—because of these occasional glimpses of the power of her Lord, who could measure the length and breadth and height and depth of her venturings and hopes and beliefs and achievements, if her tabernacle were pitched upon the very stand where the unobstructed sight of the ocean of that power should be ever in her eyes?

Must it be thus—glimpses only? Is this all that he meant when he said, "I am with you always?" Ought the sand barrens to hide the ocean? Perhaps, after all, it may be that the reason we see the sands and the pines so much more is that we really love them more. If we really love the ocean we will see it! We will push our way to it from the farthest inland; we will turn from the beckoning fingers of the forest and stop our ears to the lulling songs of the brook, and hasten on until at last we come out upon its broad white beaches. We must if we are of the ocean-born children of men. We cannot be content with an occasional glimpse. It is part of our very life to be near it and in and on it.

It may be that we are quite content to abide away from that other ocean that is in our thought. We love it, we are delighted to see it, now and then; we may occasionally make excursions to it, at no little pains and cost. Yet we do not care to live within sight of its waves or within sound of its breakers. And if the glimpse is all we crave, the glimpse is all that we can have. Having, always means hungering first.

And yet what is the best and largest experience that we can have here but a glimpse—just one far-off, hurried, not wholly satisfying glimpse? Like the vision of the child who looks with dim, vague wonder and fear upon the ocean, seen for the first time. It will not always be so. By and by we shall come up from our wanderings into his presence. "We shall see him as he is!" Can you think what that will mean? If the glimpse has been so blessed, what will the seeing be? If to draw near fills the soul with such joy, what will it be to abide near? "Mother," said a child, looking into the starlit skies one evening, "Mother if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be?"—J. W. K. in Christian Advocate.

More Faith and Push in Approved Methods of Work

There are those who are constantly observing and studying how other people do things and who think that something after the same order is just what is needed in their church organization. They, however, forget to overlook the fact that the same conditions of success do not exist in both cases. The plan which suits the genius, training and habit of one church will not work equally well in another.

Thus viewed, it is the part of wisdom for the members of a church to put greater faith in the lines of action and methods of operation which are the result of her experience and the outgrowth of her history and peculiar form of Christian life. The effort to introduce new machinery, or to engraft upon the body a foreign mode of doing things, tends to weaken and to divide her energies, to awaken antagonisms, and usually ends more in harm than in benefit. A better course to pursue is to infuse greater zeal and force into existing methods with which people are familiar and under which their spiritual life has been developed. Novelty is the panacea, generally, of the discontented, the restless, the adventurous and the ambitious. Give us something new; we are tired of the old. Many fall in with this requisition, because, as they imagine, it favors of progressiveness and shows that they are not behind the age. Nothing hurts some people so much as to be charged with belonging to a past generation. Conservatism is regarded as a sin. Progress is the rallying cry. Well, progress in the right direction and along well-approved paths is a good thing, and is just what the church needs; but mere change is not progressive. Innovations are neither real nor abiding gains. They often retard. Progress lies in going forward where we are, and pushing on Christian work according to ways which have been defined and sanctioned by experience, which accord with church polity and order and which harmonize with the peculiar circumstances of the people. It is not progress to mix Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, or to introduce the methods of Prelacy where Independence prevails, or to inject Lutheranism into Methodism. But it is progress to push Presbyterianism along Presbyterian lines and according to Presbyterian usages, and Methodism in the way which experience has demonstrated to be in harmony with her doctrinal and ecclesiastical structure.

For years our church has been discussing new theories and modes of work and has been seeking to advance her interests in a multiplicity of agencies. She has all kinds of societies for developing her activities. Some of them have worked well in some places and in some hands, and in others not so well. But is there not a growing danger of rolling the individual responsibility upon these various organizations, or upon the few who manage them? Do they not impose too heavy a burden upon the same zealous workers who must be the brain and heart, and purse in each and all of them? Is there not danger also of their losing the church impress and spirit, or of getting away from the culture the sympathy and the force which are developed through activities in which the pastor and people jointly share, and which are adjusted according to the prescribed regulations of our church order?

Whatever one's opinion upon these points, we surely have enough of societies and officers and distributed work and novel device for catching the popular ear. What we especially need now is to do our work in our several relations and stations as members of the church, and put more prayer, zeal and devotion into her various channels of activity. We must have more confidence in her organization, doctrine and instrumentalities, which will lead us to seek, in richer measure, God's blessing upon her, and which will enlist, to a larger extent, our powers, our time and our means. There is a mighty adaptation in the truth which she teaches, in the polity which she upholds and in the agencies which she employs for the salvation of souls, for the training of believers and for the evangelization of the world, and her full activity and power are to be evoked and developed, not by additional machinery, but by an in-