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PAUL THE MISSIONARY

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*“But we preach Christ crucified,
unto the Jews a stumbling block,
and unto the Greeks foolishness.”*

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¹Berkhof, L. 2009. *Paul the Missionary* (v). Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Bellingham, WA

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PAUL'S PREPARATION FOR HIS GREAT TASK

One of the greatest names of Christianity is the name of Paul. On hearing it we think of a man greater than Augustine, of a preacher worthy to be compared with Bernard of Clairvaux, of a reformer with broader views and wider sympathies than Luther, of a thinker more acute than Calvin, and of an earnest lover of souls surpassing Whitefield. He was a man greatly loved and passionately hated, destined to shape the entire course of Christianity. With the majority of truly great men he shared the misfortune of being very much misunderstood. While thousands upon thousands honored him as the greatest exponent of the teachings of Christ, many others regarded him as the first, as the arch-corruptor of the simple gospel of our Lord.

We certainly need not apologize for choosing Paul as the subject of our lectures—would not feel inclined to do so, even if it had been treated before—, because it is a subject so vast that it cannot easily be exhausted, a subject of perennial interest. Paul was a great man in every way and, what is of greater importance for us at present, he was a missionary; and as we survey that long line of witnesses that testified to the love of God in Christ among the gentiles and that laid down their lives a sacrifice to the cause, we find that one man towers above them all,—Paul, the missionary of the cross.

What a missive intellect was his! Think of the epistles he has written, the most precious heritage he bequeathed to coming generations! How rich the contents, how broad the sympathies, how deep the thoughts that find expression there,—thoughts that jostle each other, truths too deep for utterance. Did any other missionary ever write such letters?—He was characterized by deep spirituality. Comparing our insight into spiritual truth with his, we realize

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our insignificance, we become painfully conscious of our shallowness.

Paul lived in close communion with his Lord, breathing the pure air of the mountaintops; he had a clear conception of his unity with Christ. Hence he rejoiced: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

Paul's influence in the world has been incalculable. Has any pioneer ever carried the gospel into so many lands and with such telling effect? He brought the message of redeeming grace into various provinces of Asia Minor, into Macedonia and Greece, Italy and Spain; he led many out of the darkness of sin into that light that brings life and understanding and everlasting bliss; he founded many Christian churches that were monument to his unceasing toil.

Who can measure the effect of his epistles on thousands and thousands of men and women that read and studied them?—They have been instrumental in leading many erring souls to the cross of Christ, in guiding sinners that seemed hopelessly lost, that were adrift on the storm-tossed sea of life, into the haven of safety and peace. They have in many cases dispelled the doubts that entered as a disturbing element into the life of God's children, and attuned the souls of the redeemed to songs of thanksgiving and of joy, even at the hour of death.

Many missionaries received their inspiration from Paul. This was the case during the lifetime of the great apostle, and it has been so ever since. Paul the Missionary,—no doubt, the subject has been treated before. But what Scriptural subject has not. It is a part of their beauty that they are always new and are never exhausted.

Today we shall speak to you on:

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Using the term preparation in a very broad sense, we may say that every task in life, whether it be in the world of commerce and industry or in the sphere of science and art, requires some sort of preparation. We do not mean to assert that a person choosing a certain occupation or profession in life must always designedly follow a certain course to fit himself for his work; all we maintain is that he must in some way be prepared for life's task, if he is going to perform it to good advantage. It is not absolutely necessary that one, in order to become a good tiller of the soil, should for a time labor under the direction of some practical agriculturist or should take a course in an agricultural college. It may be that his previous course of life: the conditions under which he lived, the environment in which he moved, and the labor that he performed has, all unconscious to him, qualified him for his new task. It is even possible that his natural endowments are of such a character that without any preparation on his part, whether conscious or unconscious, he becomes a good agriculturist. Yet even in that case, we must maintain that he was prepared for his work,—prepared by God, Who says: "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." Is. 54:16. One may become quite an artistic painter without having studied the proper mixture of colors, the effect of light and shade, and the transforming power of true perspective. But this is possible only, if he is a born artist, endued by nature with all the qualifications required for artistic work. There have been good practical missionaries who never took a special course in the missionary studies, nor even enjoyed any sort of liberal education. But they all had the necessary natural endowments for the work, and were therefore prepared for it in a special way by the great Lord of the harvest.

Thus we are led to distinguish between an undesigned and a conscious preparation for one's task, between a preparation in which one is rather passive and another in

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which one is active, between a preparation that does not result from one's choice and another in which one's will is the controlling factor. Now it is certain that in every occupation and profession the man who has designedly prepared himself for his task, the thoroughly educated, the trained man will have the advantage, provided all other things are equal. At the same time we may rest assured that one's conscious preparation for a given task will not fit him for it, unless he have the natural qualifications, be equipped for it by a higher hand.

In speaking of Paul's preparation for the great task of his life, we use this word in its most general sense, including his endowment with great natural ability by God, his unconscious preparation for the work he was destined to perform and his deliberate training for it. We should guard against the mistake, however, of identifying Paul's education, strictly so-called, with his conscious preparation for his missionary career. The former includes more than the latter, f. i. his home training, his early schooling and his introduction into rabbinic lore by Gamaliel. All this forms part of his undesigned preparation for the work he was destined to perform in life. Whatever there was of conscious preparation in the life of the great apostle for his missionary labors must be looked for after his conversion, that momentous fact that changed the whole course of his life. After these preliminary remarks we shall consider some of the most important formative factors in the life of that missionary *par excellence*, and see what each one contributed to the final result.

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It seems best that we take our starting-point in what the apostle says in Galatians 1:15–17, and to follow, at least in part the lines indicated there. We read in those verses: "But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to

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Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”

Here we find that Paul, looking back on his life previous to his conversion, says that God separated him from his mother’s womb to his great work. There is quite a difference among interpreters as to the real meaning of these words. According to some they express the idea that Paul was regenerated by the Spirit of God and thus in possession of true spiritual life, even before he was born, though before his conversion this life only found expression in his mistaken zeal for the law of God, and in the pangs of conscience that constantly reminded him of his error. But the phrase “from my mother’s womb” will not bear that interpretation. The preposition, as Winer says, “points out the time from which his destination is to be reckoned”, and that is the time of his birth. Others take them to mean that God had chosen Paul from eternity to preach the gospel among the gentiles. Now we have no reasons to doubt that Paul was predestined for his work; nor that the act of God here named was the realization of an eternal purpose; but this idea does not find expression in these words of the apostle, What he means to say, is “that God destined him from birth to his vocation, no matter how wayward and unlikely had been the career of his youth.” Eadie, Comm. in loco.

To the apostle’s mind this was evident from the fact that God had historically been setting him aside for the great work of his life. He was not conscious of this before his conversion and his calling to bring the message of peace to the gentiles; but as he in after life looked back on his early career, he clearly saw that from the moment of his birth the hand of God had been shaping his destiny, had guided his course and had prepared him for his vocation. The question naturally arises: Wherein did Paul see the evidences of this divine preparation?

In the first place he saw it in the fact that he was born from Jewish parents. It was a distinct advantage for the

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apostle to be a Jew. He himself realized this and appreciated it. In Rom. 3:1 he asks: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" And in the 2nd verse he answers: "Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Hear him sing the praises of his kinsmen in Rom. 9:4, 5, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as according to the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever." What advantage was it to Paul that he was a Jew?—That he as a child of the covenant, a child of the promise, became thoroughly acquainted with the oracles of God. Among the Jews it was one of the first requirements that they should teach their children religiously, and they certainly were diligent in meeting this demand of the law. The author of Proverbs says: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." 22:6. We find an echo of this in the language of the Talmud: "If we do not keep our children to religion, when they are young, we shall certainly not be able to do so in later years." The program of Jewish education, as we find it in the Pirke Aboth also testifies to the fact that the Jews were very solicitous for the religious instruction of their children. It runs thus: "At five years old, Scripture; at ten, Mishnah; at thirteen, the Commandments; at fifteen, Talmud; at eighteen, the Bridal (marriage) ect. The synagogues of the Jews were at the same time their schools for primary instruction. The boys would attend these schools especially from their sixth or seventh until their thirteenth year. Their text-book was the Old Testament with special emphasis on the Pentateuch, and the oral traditions that were laid down in the Mishnah. Considerable knowledge of Scripture was acquired in these years, many of the most important passages being learnt by heart. The instruction was not purely theoretical, but decidedly practical, the strict observance of the law being its most obvious aim. The great majority of Jewish boys received no further education; only the brighter scholars and those destined for the special study of the law visited a so-called

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“house of study”, a college of the scribes. These were found in several cities, but were most numerous at Jerusalem, the great seat of Jewish learning. Each of the great masters, so it seems, had his own “house of study”. In these institutions the education was professional rather than general. The law and the Talmud were made the objects of minute and painstaking study. By means of concrete cases the students were taught the proper application of the law; and by prolonged disputations on difficult questions they became skilful dialecticians.

Saul, the bright Jewish lad of Tarsus, after receiving the usual primary education, was also privileged to attend one of these schools for higher instruction at Jerusalem. His teacher was the greatest rabbi of his age, the celebrated Gamaliel I, the grandson of Hillel, a man honored by all the people. He was a strict Jew, yet not a fanatic, but liberal and open-minded. This is evident from his studies in Greek literature and from several humane enactments that were fathered by him. Thus he laid it down that the poor heathen should have the same rights as the poor Jews in gathering gleanings after the harvest, and that the Jews on meeting the heathen should extend to them the customary greeting. “Peace be with you, even on their feast days, when they were mostly engaged in worshipping their idols.” Paul was a worthy disciple of a great master, How valuable this education had been for him he realized, when some twenty years later he wrote his epistle to the Galatians. To be sure, it had no more the same significance for him that he once ascribed to it. There was a time, when it opened up for him the way to greatness among his people, when it seemed to insure him a place of honor among the worthies of Israel,— a beautiful vista for the youthful Pharisee, burning with zeal for the law of God. But this bright, this lustrous future was one of the things that Paul counted loss for the sake of Christ. Yet he realized that his education at the feet of Gamaliel did not lose its value. He saw it in another light, a light that enhanced its significance. It was invaluable for Paul the missionary. First of all it gave him an intimate acquaintance with the Old Testament, that revelation of God

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on which all further revelation would be founded. Secondly it introduced him to rabbinic lore and made him familiar with the rabbinic methods of interpretation. For polemical purposes this was a great asset. Thirdly it made him a skilled dialectician, well qualified to present the truth of God in a clear-cut way and to support it by various kinds of arguments. And fourthly it gave him a certain broad-mindedness, it made him more or less charitable to those who were not of faith and who even worshipped idols. It is true that his persecutions seemingly contradict this; but let us not forget that they were the result of youthful ardor, and that there was something in Paul that testified against his violent course.

In the second place Paul saw that God had been setting him aside from the time of his birth, in the fact that he had been born and bred at Tarsus,—and was moreover by birth a Roman citizen. Tarsus was one of the most important cities of Asia Minor, the capital of Cilicia, according to tradition built by one of the great Assyrian kings. Twelve miles to the south of the city the restless waves of the Mediterranean beat the rocky shores; while twelve miles to the north the snow-capped peaks of the Taurus mountains were seen. The swift and clear river Cydnus, flowing through the city, connected it with the sea; and the famous “Cilician Gates”, the best pass through the mountains, offered it the most direct road to the northern provinces of Asia Minor. Thus it soon became the terminal of the trade route from the provinces of Cappadocia and Lycaonia. Vessels coming up the river carried the merchandise brought from these provinces to distant lands. Thus Tarsus became a great commercial center. It was also a center of Greek learning, since one of the three great universities of that time was located there. According to Strabo this university was in some respects more important than those of Athens and Alexandria. There was a time, when philosophers ruled Tarsus. The air was pregnant with philosophical ideas. It was an intellectual atmosphere indeed in which Paul was born and bred. But intellectual superiority does not always guarantee purity of morals. In many an ancient city great

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learning and religiosity went hand in hand with the most shocking immorality and unchastity. This condition also prevailed in Tarsus, the city of Paul. Its population was of a mixed character, especially since the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when a large colony of Jews was planted there. In the Roman period the civil constitution of this city was of the timocratic type: only they who possessed a certain fortune could obtain the privilege of citizenship. Seeing that Paul was one of its citizens, Acts 21:39, we may infer from this that his parents did not belong to the lower strata of society, but were at least in comfortable circumstances.

Such was the city of Paul, such the atmosphere in which he was reared,—a son of the Western Diaspora. We do not know, whether the apostle in his early years visited any of the Greek schools in Tarsus, but we may rest assured that, since he passed the most impressionable time of his life in that intellectual, that immoral, that rather cosmopolitan city, it had great influence in moulding his character. When a certain class of people migrate to a foreign country, they may like the Jews maintain their own schools, but they will never succeed in making the influence of their daily environment of non-effect. Moreover we know from history that the character of the Jews in the Western Diaspora was different from that of the Palastinian Jews, and also from that of the Jews that belonged to the Eastern Diaspora. There is a certain truth in the saying that a Jew is a Jew, wherever he goes; yet history teaches us that where the Jews were not socially isolated, but commingled with the gentiles, their life took on a different hue and lost a great deal of its stringency. In foreign lands many Mosaic and rabbinic institutions and requirements lost their meaning, obedience to some of the legal precepts was simply an impossibility, the Greek language replaced the sacred Hebrew, Jews and gentiles together listened to the law and the prophets in the synagogues, a spirit of tolerance prevailed,—the Pharisees abroad were not like the Pharisees at home.

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Does it seem likely that Paul would escape these influences? Most assuredly not. It is not improbable that he and his parents preferred the more liberal school of Gamaliel, because they conceived an aversion to the narrow exclusivism of the other schools. Undoubtedly the environment of his youth influenced his life in many ways. It gave him a rather intimate acquaintance with the gentile world. He saw the life of those that were strangers to the revelation of God in its external glitter, but also in the depth of its abasement. It introduced him to the views of the Greek philosophers in a very effective way, for in Tarsus their philosophy was not merely taught in a rather abstract way, but was lived; it found embodiment in the life of the people. It made him familiar with the Greek language. This was, of course the language of the native population of Tarsus, but it was also universally used by the Jews of the Western Diaspora. This knowledge served Paul in good stead; it enabled him to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman empire, and to write those precious epistles that are a monument to his fame and a source of inspiration to the Church of all ages. It served in the case of Paul to take away a great deal of the barrier between the Jew and the gentile. The distance that separated them was reduced to a minimum by his acquaintance with the language, the ideas and the customs of the Greek world, and by the greater tolerance that distinguished him from his brethren in Palestine. This made it easier for Paul to be a missionary to the gentiles than it would have been for Peter or James. Very likely he also learnt to understand in his home-city that there was no necessary causal connection between knowledge and virtue, between the wisdom of the world and true religion.

Besides being a citizen of Tarsus Paul was a Roman citizen. To the chief captain that delivered him out of the hands of the furious Jews he says that he was free born. We are not told in Scripture, nor can we say with any degree of certainty just how his ancestors received this privilege. Their Tarsian citizenship did not imply it, for Tarsus was an *urbs libera*, and not a *municipium* or KOLONIA. They may have

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bought it like the chief captain at Jerusalem, or may have received it by manumission or in compensation for some public voluntary service. For our purpose it matters little how they acquired this privilege. We know that Paul had it, and that it was a matter of great significance for him. It gave him a certain well-defined, generally recognized and greatly valued legal status, "and placed him", as Ramsay says, "amid the aristocracy of any provincial town." It guaranteed him the protection of the emperor wherever he went in the great Roman empire. From the Acts of the Apostles we know that Paul made good use of this prerogative, though he did it only in cases of extreme necessity, possibly to avoid as much as could be the mention of anything that might offend the Jews.

When Paul looked back on his previous career, he clearly saw that God turned even his career as a persecutor to advantage in preparing him for his great task. Let us never think that it had no formative value for him. In his early days Paul was a persecutor of the Church of God. We first meet him in connection with Stephen's death. Perhaps he had been instrumental in taking him captive; he heard his eloquent plea, a stinging rebuke for the Jews; he saw his face radiant with glory; and his ear too caught the dying martyr's prayer: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 7:60. And I am inclined to think that his heart condemned the wicked act, that the sensitive Paul, the disciple of the tolerant Gamaliel, involuntarily sympathized with the meek and faithful martyr, and that the still small voice within bid him desist. But the youthful ardent Pharisee got the better of him in that moment, and he felt himself called to defend the honor of his nation and of his religion. The more the voice of conscience condemned him, the fiercer he persecuted the innocent confessors of Jesus. It was an attempt to drown that voice, to suppress the better element of his nature. Many a Christian fell victim to this misplaced zeal. Jerusalem did not offer a field large enough for his operations; on Damascus he fastened his eye. On the way thither, however, he learnt to understand how hard it was to kick against the pricks.—Can we suppose that he ever

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forgot these persecutions?—No, they left a scar that could not be effaced,—a sad memory of past transgressions. And this influenced him in a two-fold way. In the first place it created within him the undying desire to atone for his past as far as could be. Action worked reaction also in his case. The fierce and in a way conscientious persecutor became a zealous and faithful apostle of Jesus Christ. The gratitude to God that filled his heart for delivering him from the abysmal depths of sin filled him with an eager desire to advance the cause that he had once sought to retard and to crush. He knew no higher aim in life than to work for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to the glory of God; than to suffer with and for the sake of Him Who gave His life a ransom for many,—a ransom too for the erring Paul; than, if need be, to lay down his life a consecrated sacrifice on the altar of obedience to his heavenly Lord.—And in the second place it was instrumental in qualifying him, as nothing else would do, to become a most effective preacher of the gospel of redemption. Did he not, being redeemed from such a past, become one of the greatest living examples of God's pardoning grace?—From miry depths he had been raised to the mountaintops; he, "the greatest of sinners", had been saved by the grace of God. What a consolation for others! Paul certainly realized the formative value that his early persecutions had for him. We find many evidences of this in his missionary career. Listen especially to what he says in 1 Tim. 1:12–16: "And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord. Who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

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All the elements in Paul's preparation for his great missionary task to which we have now called attention formed integral parts of his separation by God from his mother's womb to his work among the gentiles. Now the apostle does not merely say in Galatians that God separated him from his mother's womb, but also, "and called me by His grace." A call came to Paul, a call of God, a call that did not result from his own works, however deserving they may have been in his own estimation at that time, but that was mediated by the grace of God. It was the call out of darkness to light, out of the slavery of sin to the blessed service of Jesus Christ, the efficacious call of the Spirit of God to the heart of a wayward sinner. Paul refers to his conversion in these words, the most important event in all his life. That great crisis was not only of momentous significance for the erring zealot himself, but was of stupendous importance for the Church of Jesus Christ. It certainly cannot be accidental that there is no other event, except the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to which so much space is devoted in the New Testament. We are in possession of three complete records of Paul's conversion, viz. in the chapters 9, 22 and 26 of the Acts of the Apostles.

Behold, the persecutor is on his way to Damascus! He has completed a laudible task in the Holy City. "He made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." He scattered the little flock that served its Lord in simplicity of heart, in spirit and truth. True, there had been some pangs of conscience, but it was, as he thought, the voice of the tempter that would make him unfaithful. He did not doubt that he was doing the will of God; his heart burned with holy zeal, it was a source of great satisfaction that his superiors were pleased with his work; bright prospects were opening up before him. Intoxicated with his splendid success at Jerusalem he, yet "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or

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women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” “For Jehovah and His temple against the Nazarene” was his slogan, as he sped on and on. There was still a small voice that spoke words of warning and of reproof, that sought his attention, but in the heat of persecution he did not heed, but suppressed it. His course could not be wrong. He has now come within sight of Damascus, the beautiful. It is noon; the sun sends her brilliant scorching rays straight to earth; the atmosphere is charged with heat. How welcome to the weary dust-laden travelers is the foliage of fig and apricot and pomegranate; how refreshing the very sight of the silvery Abana that winds along the side of the way! They rejoice to know that they are now near the end of their journey, with prospects of glory before them, when lo—— suddenly there shines upon them a light from above, a light surpassing that of the noon-day-sun; a voice is heard, understood only by the leader of that little band: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” and the persecuter falls blinded to the ground. In a faltering tone he asks: “Who art thou, Lord?” and is terrified to hear: “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” In that moment, when Paul lost his natural sight, his spiritual eyes were opened, and many things did he see. He saw that Jesus was not dead but living, and immediately the thought stood out clearly before his mind that he had risen from the dead. The consciousness of this great fact was the starting-point of his spiritual development, a point of departure quite different from that of the other apostles. They began with the knowledge of Jesus, the Son of Man; he with a vision of Christ, proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. It was an overpowering revelation for the Jewish zealot. In the light of it he learnt to understand the real character of the warfare in which he was engaged. It was a war against that God Whom he thought he was serving, against God’s Anointed, Who instead of being in the grave, as he imagined, was enthroned on high, clothed with glory divine. A stunning blow it was indeed for the fiery Pharisee to find the God Who he thought was smiling on his undertaking as his adversary! In that light Paul discovered the abyss that

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yawned at his feet. He must have come to a sudden realization of the terrible fate that would have been his, if God had permitted him to continue in his way, and must have shuddered at the very thought of it. In that light he understood that his religion had been vain, that it did not bear the stamp of God's approval, and was but a self-righteous and self-satisfied striving after honor with God and man. He felt that what he considered the path of sacred duty did not lead him in the way of salvation, and that the occasional promptings of his conscience were but the voice of God, speaking deep down in his heart. In that light Paul found himself undone, and the question rose to his lips: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" He is now ready to renounce himself and to take upon him the cross of Christ, to follow no more the inclination of his own sinful heart, but the guidance of his heavenly Lord,—to lay down himself a living consecrated sacrifice on the altar of Jesus Christ. He was ready to speak, as his Saviour once spoke in bitter agony, "Thy will be done."

We cannot overrate the importance of Paul's conversion in the preparation for his work. Without it he would never have been a true missionary. His gifts and talents, his education, and the favorable circumstances in which he moved from his earliest years, would never have qualified him to be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, if he had not experienced this inward change of heart. His light would have been darkness, his wisdom folly, his talents instruments of satan, his guidance deception. What he needed was a transformation of all his powers and talents, for who is not himself filled with the love of Christ cannot inspire others; who is not himself illuminated by the Spirit of God cannot enlighten others; who is not imbued with power from on high cannot stand in the unequal struggle with the powers of darkness. In connection with his conversion Paul received the Holy Ghost, and was called to be the apostle of the gentiles, a call that was repeated at Jerusalem, and that was finally ratified at Antioch in Syria.

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We should beware of thinking, however, that Paul was now immediately prepared to go out, in order to preach Christ among the gentiles. Since he now understood what was to be the great task of his life, it was necessary that he should prepare himself for it more designedly. And this is just what he did. In this connection there are two facts that we must take in consideration, viz. in the first place his visit to Arabia, and in the second place his preliminary labors at Tarsus and Antioch of Syria. A veil of uncertainty covers that period of Paul's life that was spent in Arabia. Luke does not even make mention of it in the Acts of the Apostles. Moreover interpreters are not at one as to just what district the apostle means, when he speaks of Arabia. According to the Arabic translator he refers to that part of Perea that bordered on the Dead Sea. Others maintain that the name was applied, not only to Arabia proper, but also to the whole trans-Jordanic region as far north as Damascus. In that case the apostle in Gal. 1:17 does not refer to any distant journey. But the difficulty is that it is uncertain, whether the name Arabia will really bear those interpretations. Moreover on either one of them we would have to assume that Paul employed the name in two different senses in the same Epistle, referring to some district east of Jordan in the first, and to Arabia proper in the fourth chapter. We prefer to think that in both cases he has reference to Arabia Felix, that land of hallowed associations, where rugged Sinai stood forth in silent majesty.

Now the question involuntarily arises: For what purpose did Paul repair to Arabia?—Is it true what some of the fathers say: "He rushed to Arabia to preach"? Taking all things in consideration this seems rather unlikely. Let us not forget that a stupendous change took place in Paul's life, when he was converted. He was at once introduced to a world of thought that was altogether new to him. He saw God and Christ and the way of salvation and himself and the world in a light in which he had never before seen them. His intellectual life was thrown into confusion. And now the first thing that Paul had need of, was to find his bearings, to acquire more knowledge of the way that up this time had

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been abhorrent to him, and to study the relation in which this new way stood to the old. He was called to preach Christ to the gentiles, but he realized that he was not yet prepared for it. He needed more knowledge of the way in Christ, a more intimate acquaintance with the doctrine of salvation by grace. And to receive it he did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did he go to Jerusalem to the apostles, but into Arabia, there to receive instruction at first hand. Certainly Arabia offered him a place fit for meditation and for silent communion with God. It was of all localities the best in which he might adjust himself to the new world- and live-view to which he was introduced. How suitable the place for further instruction regarding the relation of the old to the new dispensation. Paul in Arabia, a disciple of God in Christ. It was, therefore, in the birthplace of the old covenant that he pondered on its transient character. It was in the place, where Moses spoke to God as a man with his friend, where Elijah heard the voice of God, as he stood in the cave, that Paul now sought a new revelation of the Most High. And God did reveal himself to His chosen vessel. Hence he says in Gal. 1:12: "For I neither received it (the gospel that he preached) of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." In Arabia Paul learnt to understand that the dispensation of the law was not the earliest, since that of the promise preceded it. The law was but temporary, on account of transgression, while the promise found its fulfilment in Christ. This was one great stride forward in the knowledge of the truth. Since circumcision was already connected with the promise, it is rather unlikely that he immediately realized that it too was abrogated in Christ. We have no evidence that Paul disclaimed circumcision in the earliest years of his apostleship. Nor did the other apostles understand that it was done away in Christ. The question was not debated and settled until about fifteen years after His conversion.

By the time that he went out on his first missionary journey, however, the great apostle of the gentiles had learnt that circumcision also belonged to the passing shadows of the Old Testament. He learnt this, so it seems,

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through his preliminary labors at Tarsus and especially at Antioch. In that gentile city on the banks of the Orontes, that “crown of the east”, Barnabas and Paul found a great number of Greeks who, through the preaching of the scattered disciples, had accepted Christ by faith. The grace of the Lord worked mightily among them. What the ambassadors of Christ there beheld, was clearly the work of God’s Spirit. Yet they who believed were not of the circumcision. They had not received that Jewish rite. Evidently then the way through Jewry was not the only way to Christ. During his labors at Antioch Paul saw ever clearer that the old barriers had been broken down, that the shadows, that all the shadows had fled, and that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor gentile, but a new creature;—and now he was prepared to proclaim to all the world the riches of God’s grace in that Christ, Whom he had seen enthroned in heaven; Whom he had persecuted, but now worshipped.

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THE STRATEGIC ELEMENT IN PAUL'S WORK

One of the most stupendous facts of history, a fact that baffled many scholars, is the rapid spread of Christianity in the first centuries of our Christian era. It was small and weak in its beginning, without any external glory and physical force, and yet it rolled on like an avalanche conquering one country after another. Small wonder indeed that a great number of contemporaries looked on, and that many later generations glance back at the spectacle with little understanding and with great amazement. Let us for a moment think of the facts, in order that we may grasp the historical situation in which Christianity took its rise, and may realize that what God did through the simple gospel of Jesus Christ was little short of the miraculous. It may serve to encourage those that are now following the banner of the cross, engaged in spiritual warfare, as they battle with unbelief and superstition and seek to win the world for Christ.

The Roman empire was a vast imposing edifice, branching out into the various countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. It was mighty in its unity, dominated by a single personality,—a deified emperor at Rome. All power, military, legislative, judicial and executive, was concentrated in his hands. He was supreme not only in civil, but also in religious matters, the pontifex maximus, the earthly director of the great ritual machinery of the state religion. And while the Hebrews had a genius for religion, and the Greeks for beauty, the Romans had a genius for law that enabled them to enjoy permanently the fruit of their continual conquests, thus satisfying their love of power. The deification of the emperor was one of the cornerstones of the great empire. It greatly enhanced the authority of the rulers and gave stability to their realm. To advocate any other than the state religion could only be regarded as high treason in the

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Roman empire, and would therefore necessarily lead to conflict.

In that great and mighty empire Christ was born, not in imperial Rome itself, but in a small village of a distant little country. To all appearances he was a man like other men, even without form and comeliness. There was none of the stateliness of the aristocrat, none of the glitter and military bearing of the warrior, none of the splendid apparel of kings or emperors. He was a carpenter's son, accustomed to a rustic life, living in daily association with the Galilean peasants. And as he visited the cities and villages and hamlets of Galilee, he preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was a gospel not only for the Jews, but for all the world. Yet he limited himself in his work almost exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Before he departed from this world he entrusted the fortunes of his Kingdom to a mere handful of his trusted followers, men that had not enjoyed the privilege of a liberal education and that had been chosen from the lower ranks of society. It was their task to be His witnesses unto the ends of the earth. They were to propagate in the Roman empire a universal religion. In faithful obedience to their heavenly Lord they performed this task, but, as could be expected, there were difficulties on all sides. The Jews condemned the new religion and persecuted its professors, because it disregarded the prerogatives that were their boast. And the Romans, when once they understood its claims, and realized that it was advocated as the only true religion, as the religion not of a select few, but of all the world, of all nations and of all classes of men, had to encounter it in a life and death struggle. Victory to Christ meant defeat to the state religion of the Roman empire, which was its main support. If it lost its hold on the masses, the authority of the emperors would be undermined, and the government would lose its stability.

And yet, though the beginning of the new religion was inauspicious, though it was often sorely pressed, and though Jews and gentiles united in persecuting those "that were of the way", seeking to exterminate the new cult, it

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proved victorious in the unequal struggle, and after three hundred years a Christian emperor was seated on the imperial throne. How can we account for this truly marvelous fact?—Gibbon found its explanation in five different facts, viz. the zeal of the early Christians in propagating their religion, their belief in future rewards and punishments, the convincing power of miracles, the austere (pure) morals of the Christians, and the compact church organisation of the new community. But he certainly left out the most important cause in his attempt to account for the rapid spread of the Christian religion. His causes themselves need explanation. Lecky shows deeper insight, when he finds the main cause for the success of early Christianity in its intrinsic excellency, and in its remarkable adaptation to the wants of the times in the old Roman empire. The Christian religion is a religion adapted to all nations and races and classes; it changes the entire life of man, elevating the woman, ameliorating the condition of the poor, and binding hearts together in holy love. Subsidiary to this great primary cause were other secondary causes, such as: the testimony of prophecies and miracles, the unity and order of the Roman empire, and the spread of the Greek language in the time of Christ. Negatively the decay of the Roman empire too was favorable to the acceptance of the gospel. We shall not enlarge on these causes in this lecture, but rather direct our attention to another. The seed to be sown was of the greatest value; the soil was ready for its acceptance; and—this is the point we wish to emphasize—the seed was wisely distributed. We see this clearly in the case of that first missionary to the gentiles,—the apostle Paul.

* * *

We are to speak on the strategic element in the work of Paul. Strategy and tactics are two closely related military terms that are not always clearly distinguished. The soundest distinction seems to be that made by general Lewal, who says: Strategy is the conceptive and directing element in war, while tactics are the executive element;

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strategy is the science of combinations, tactics that of their execution. The part of strategy is “the conception of a plan of campaign and its modification as the war progresses: the choice of the objective, the selection of a base and of lines of communication, the recognition of the value and possibilities of strategical points, and the direction and combination of the components of the army.” Along with many other sciences the science of strategy found its greatest development in the nineteenth century, but strategy has been an important factor in warfare from the earliest times.

Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, as we find it narrated in the first twelve chapters of his book, was certainly characterized by strategy. In three separate well directed campaigns the land was taken. In the first place the central part of the land was attacked, where the rather peaceful Hivites and Perizzites dwelt. Jericho and Ai were taken and destroyed, while the cities of the Gibeonites escaped a similar fate only through the strategy of their inhabitants. In the second place the host of the Israel, strong in the Lord, faced the confederacy of Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem. The enemies could not stand before the victorious army of Israel, and soon fled in wild confusion toward the passes of Upper- and Nether-Beth-Horon, pursued and slain by their conquerors. This put Joshua in possession of the South country. Finally the victorious Israelites turned to the allied forces of the Northern enemy that were led by Jabin, the king of Hazor. They utterly routed them and captured many of their cities. Thus we find that the enemies of the North and of the South were first effectively separated, and then severally routed by Joshua. And by means of this three-fold campaign Israel had in a general way taken possession of the land, though many of the enemies still remained, especially in the cities. The Israelites now had several points of vantage from which they could gradually continue their work of conquest. If the strategic element had been wanting in this campaign, it would have terminated neither so quickly nor so successfully. Valor and bravery has won many battles, but strategy has won more.

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Strategy has a legitimate and important place, not only in natural warfare, but also in the spiritual conquest of the world. In this relation too its importance has been emphasized in the last half a century far more than in previous ages. Now that ever larger fields are opening up the necessity of statesmanship and generalship in the work of missions is increasingly felt. But we should not think that the element of strategy was absent from the work of missionaries in former centuries. We believe it can be pointed out in the labors of the earliest messengers of the cross. In this respect the study of Paul's work is instructive, as it is in every other. There are some who object to this element in the missionary work of to-day. They hold that human calculations thus assume too great proportions in the work of God's Kingdom. Right here a consideration of Paul's work may serve to clarify our vision. The question may be asked, whether human strategy should be the final determining factor for a missionary in choosing his fields of labor and his points of attack. A careful examination of Paul's work will answer that question.

Let us start out with the question, whether there was a strategic element in the work of Paul, because some may doubt this. Did the apostle have some definite plan in his work among the gentiles or did he labor in a haphazard way like so many do in life? Did he simply cast himself on the turbulent waves of the surging sea of humanity to have them bear him whither they would: to a sandy reef,—to a rockbound shore,—or to a fertile land of promise? Did he follow the example of hundreds and thousands around him in simply following the path of least resistance?—Rev. F. B. Meyer says in his little work on Paul that the apostle really had no plan, that his way was determined and prepared for him from eternity by God, and that he needed but to discover its course. Now it goes without saying that the entire life and work of Paul was but a part of the execution of the eternal council of God. It does not admit of honest doubt that God mapped out the whole course of his life for him. Moreover it is clear that the lines along which he proceeded in his work were not always those of his own choosing. There was at

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times a conflict between the designs of the apostle and the providential guidance of God. Therefore we think it more correct to speak of the strategic element in the work of Paul than to speak of Paul's strategy. But this does not imply that Paul did no planning, that he did not scan the almost boundless field that lay before him, and did not choose his objective, the places that he would visit with the greatest care, and did not determine beforehand along what routes he would travel. He certainly made his plans, in which he aimed at a most fruitful ministry. This was the course dictated by common sense. If any man in the short course of his life wishes to accomplish some great task, it is the part of wisdom to plan one's work carefully, choosing the proper means to reach the desired end.

We have clear evidence both from the Acts of the Apostles and from the epistles of Paul that he did considerable planning in his work, as he went from place to place, preaching the gospel of the cross. He was guided in all his work by a few general principles; and it was in harmony with these that he fixed his mind on certain countries and cities as his proper field of labor. In Acts 16:6, 7 we read: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." It was the apostle's plan at this time to preach the gospel in Asia and Bithynia, but the Spirit of God, that was his infallible guide, did not permit him to do this. The very fact, however, that he and his co-laborers were prohibited from entering these fields, is proof positive that they had some definite intention. According to Acts 18:21 the apostle in bidding the Ephesians farewell promises them to return unto them again, God willing. It is clear therefore that he had his mind fixed on a subsequent visit already at this time. And in the 21st verse of the 19th chapter we read that Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying: "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Thus we find that even as early as the year 54 A. D. the great

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missionary general had his eye on Rome, the capital of the empire. It is not unlikely that he, as soon as he entered Europe, about the year 51 A. D., had in mind the line from Jerusalem to Rome, from the center of the Jewish theocracy, that was a symbol of the Old Testament religion, to the great center of the world, a course that would be symbolical of the great change that was brought about, when the dispensation of the Spirit was ushered in.

To the Romans he writes in the year 58 that he oftentimes purposed to come unto them, but was hindered up to that time. At the same time he already indicated his desire to go beyond the metropolis to Spain, "to the boundary of the West", as Clement of Rome calls it. In 1 Cor. 16:5-8 we read: "Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." According to 2 Cor. 1:15, 16 the plan laid down in the preceding words was not the original one. His intention had been to visit Corinth first and to pass into Macedonia afterwards. For some reason or other he changed his plans, and this gave some in the congregation of Corinth a reason for slander. They insinuated that the apostle was an inconstant, vacillating, irresolute person, unworthy of their confidence.

We receive an inkling of the principles that governed Paul in determining his course from such passages as the following: Acts 16:11, 12: "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samotracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, *which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony*, and were in that city abiding certain days." Rom. 15:20; "Yea so have I striven to preach the gospel, *not where Christ was named*, lest I should build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand." It would

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seem that the evidence adduced certainly warrants us in stating that Paul unquestionably did some planning in his missionary labors, and that he selected strategic points in the great field that lay before him. It was indeed the only sensible way in which to proceed, where the whole world was waiting for the gospel, the laborers were few and life short.

It is quite another question, whether Paul's plans were always carried out. It is patent to us all that this was not the case. Paul's entire life, as the life of every man, was a living commentary on the word of Solomon: "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." How clearly we see this exemplified in the missionary career of the great apostle to the gentiles. Truly, there was strategy in the labors of Paul, but it was not all the fruit of his own thinking. There is clear evidence, so to speak, of a higher, a divine strategy. God had His wise and all-comprehensive plan for the spiritual conquest of the world,—His plan too for that limited but very important part that Paul was to take in carrying out his design. Now it was Paul's concern, and it is the duty of every missionary, to discover God's design, to fathom as far as may be His divine purposes and to carry them out. To be sure, this is not always easy; it is often one of the most difficult tasks we have in life; but it is absolutely necessary. And therefore it is incumbent on us that we apply ourselves to it with unceasing diligence. In order to discover God's ways, it was necessary for Paul, as it is imperative for us all, that we in the first place study the present in the light of the past. If a great master-builder begins the erection of some magnificent edifice, but dies before its completion, his successor in the work will find the lines along which he must labor indicated in the partly completed building. So it is with all that are co-laborers with Christ in the rearing of that spiritual temple of which Christ is the chief cornerstone. By what has been done in the past their course of procedure is indicated. In the light of what has been accomplished in former ages the laborers of today can discern the lines along which they must proceed. And this will, of course be the easier for them, the more that

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spiritual temple nears its completion. In the second place it was incumbent on Paul, as it is on us at the present time, that he should note carefully the provident guidance of God in all his work. Again we say, it is not always easy to discover the ways of God.

“God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And ride upon the storm.”

“Deep in unfathomable mines

Of never failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs,

And works is sovereign will.”

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.”

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust Him for His grace;

Behind a frowning Providence

He hides a smiling face.”

“His purposes will ripen fast,

Unfolding every hour;

The bud may have a bitter taste,

But sweet will be the flower.”

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“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

We feel that there is in the work in God’s Kingdom, as there is in the whole life of man, a wonderful interpenetration of divine and human causes. As intelligent beings we are and should be continually planning. As moral responsible creatures it should be our constant endeavor to direct our course in harmony with the will of God. But being finite and fallible beings, whose vision is obscured by sin, we do not always hit upon the right course. Oftentimes our plans and God’s do not coincide, and it becomes necessary that God override our thoughts and actions, leading us in ways that we had not thought of, or nullifying the effects of our self-willed procedure. This is just what Paul often experienced in the course of his work. The highest strategy in all such cases was to follow, where God led the way. Let us look at his travels once more to see how the Spirit of God, that infallible guide in all the work that is to be done in the Lord’s vineyard, directed his course. On doing this we soon find that God often in devious ways and by various means changes the line of Paul’s activities.

After Paul and his companions left the island Cyprus they journeyed to Pamphylia, evidently to evangelize that country. The first place they reached was Perga, where for one reason or another they did not bring the message that was entrusted to their care, but hastened on to Antioch in Pisidia, the first place in Asia Minor, where they preached the gospel. Was this in harmony with their original plan? This seems rather doubtful in view of the fact that, when they were on their homeward journey, they did preach in the place they now left unevangelized. It seems likely to us that they intended to labor in Perga first of all on reaching the continent, but that for some reason they changed their plan. Probably too this was one of the causes, why John

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Mark left them at this place and did not accompany them into the interior. But what was it that led to this supposed change of plan?—It may be, as some judge, that they arrived there during the hot season, and that the population of the cities there was accustomed then, just as it is now, to seek higher and cooler places during that period of the year. If we accept the south Galatian theory, the theory that the churches of Galatia were those organized in the Roman province of that name, the suggestion of Ramsay is certainly very plausible that Paul, who was subject to physical weakness, suffered from an attack of malaria in the unhealthy lowlands of Pamphylia, and was therefore compelled to seek the purer atmosphere of the inland plateau. This would also explain those words of difficult interpretation that we find in Gal. 4:13: “For you know that on account of weakness of my flesh I preached the gospel to you the first time.”

Oftentimes Paul was thwarted in his endeavors by persecutions. We notice this especially in his first and second missionary journeys. From Antioch in Pisidia he flees to Iconium, from Iconium to Lystre, where he is stoned and whence he, restored as by a miracle, hastens to Derbe. God’s hand was guiding him through persecutions from place to place. On his second missionary journey he had a similar experience. At Philippi he was incarcerated and after his release requested to depart from the city. In Thessalonica he was once more persecuted and compelled to repair to Berea. Thus he was led along ways that must often have seemed mysterious to him in working out the eternal purpose of God.

There was still another way in which God directed his servant. It was not only sickness and persecution that served this purpose. On the second missionary journey Paul was anxious to preach the word in Asia, but this was forbidden; he assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not. We are not told by what means the Spirit of God checked him in his career. It may be that He gave him direct revelations pointing to different fields of labor

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than the ones on which he had determined. It is also possible, however, that he led him to encounter insurmountable difficulties and thus guided his steps in another direction. He was guided West,—ever West, until at last he came to Troas, the site of ancient Troy.

In this city he received a new intimation of the divine will, and on this occasion by means of a direct revelation from God. In a vision Paul saw the Macedonian man, and across the seas he heard the urgent call of the millions of Europe: “Come over and help us!” Thus he was led away from what he at first undoubtedly considered his proper field of labor. And now it seems that he, soon after the Lord had enlarged his vision and had guided him into Europe, cast his eye on that great bustling city, built on seven hills, that center of commerce and industry,—Rome, the so-called eternal city, Rome. But now he moved too fast for the Spirit that was directing his ways. Time and again he was hindered from visiting that cosmopolitan city on the banks of the Tiber, and from preaching the gospel to the throngs that gathered there from the East and from the West. Finally, however, when he had visited all the important centers of the East, he journeyed to the West, though not according to his desire as a free man that could move about at will in the performance of his great task, but as a prisoner bound in chains. The foregoing makes it perfectly clear that in choosing his field of labor Paul’s wisdom was subjected to the wisdom of God. And the outcome abundantly justified the course of his labors. There were indeed showers of blessings, wherever he labored: many were turned from darkness to light, from rank idolatry to the pure service of the only true God, and from the bondage of sin to the spiritual liberty of the children of God; life in the homes and in the community was raised to a higher level; the songs of revelry were replaced by psalms of thanksgiving and praise; and churches were founded from place to place as monuments to the glory of God.

But now the question arises, whether we can point out in any way the strategic significance of Paul’s course of

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action, and of the places in which he labored. Deissmann says in his work on Paul p. 38: "If anyone, not being a specialist in geography, wished to characterize this Mediterranean world, which is the world of St. Paul, by a single concrete formule, he might call it the world of the olive-tree etc." It is very remarkable that nearly all the important places in the history of Paul lie within the olive-zone, so that the world of Paul may indeed be called the world of the olive. In itself this may seem a rather insignificant fact in connection with the subject that we are now treating; aside from the explanation it offers for the frequent reference that Paul makes in his epistles to the olive-tree, it would appear to have little meaning. Nevertheless it indicates a fact that we may well bear in mind, viz. that there was a certain uniformity in the climate of the countries in which the great apostle labored. This certainly explains to some extent, how it was possible that Paul who, according to several indications in his letters, was not a strong and robust man, could labor in so many lands without great physical discomfiture. He might have gone into countries, where it would not have been possible for him to work for any length of time. Had he done this, the progress of the gospel would have been retarded considerably.

Again the principal scene of Paul's activity is found in a belt along the Northern shore of the Mediterranean sea. This sea is called the *Mare Internum*, and rightly so, for it is in reality a great inland sea, a sea surrounded by three continents, having Asia to the North and to the East, Europe to the North and Africa to the South. On the one hand it separated these continents, but on the other hand it also formed a great highway connecting them. Taking it in connection with the lands that surrounded it, we may say that it was a real center of spiritual influence, a center which, being enlightened itself, would send its rays to every part of the world. I like to picture the Mediterranean of that time to myself as dotted with white sails, with vessels that like doves of peace bring the message of salvation to every land.

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Once more, the world of Paul was the world of the Western Diaspora. This too had great significance in connection with the work of the apostle. No other part of the world was so well prepared to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the lands in which the Western Dispersion was found. On the one hand the Jews that lived there were less fanatic, less legalistic than their brethren in Palestine. Being away from Jerusalem, comparatively free from the domination of the untra-legalistic scribes, and dwelling among the gentiles, their religious temper had been toned down and they had embraced more liberal, more tolerant views. Through their separation from the temple and their far more simple service of God in the synagogues, they had gradually been weaned from the shadowy ceremonies of the Old Testament, and prepared for the more spiritual service of God under the new dispensation. On the other hand the gentiles in whose midst these Jews of the Diaspora made their abode, through them came in touch with the Word of God, and were to some extent introduced to the truth as it is revealed in the Old Testament. Hence they were not entirely strangers to the oracles of God, and they could very well appreciate the argument from prophecy, so often employed by Paul. Truly, this world had been providentially prepared to receive the good seed, and on scattering it there one might look for a plentiful harvest.

But Paul did not work in all the lands around the Mediterranean sea; he had to make a choice out of the many countries that encircled it. And the apostle chose the lands that lay nearest at hand and were at the same time the most inhabited parts of Asia and Europe. He did not go the sparsely settled north coast of Africa, nor to the northern parts of Europe, but to the thickly populated countries of Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece and Italy. Starting out from Asia, he was led on and on until he crossed the sea to Europe and finally reached the imperial city. And in this way the prophecy of Noah found fulfilment: "God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem."

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But we find the strategic element in the work of Paul, not only in his choice of the district, but also in his selection of the cities in which he labored most abundantly. There are especially three particulars to which we would call attention in this connection, since they give us an insight into the main facts that determined his course.

In the first place it was a matter of principle with the apostle not to preach the gospel, where others had already brought the glad tidings of salvation, Rom. 15:20. We should undoubtedly consider this principle of Paul in connection with his consciousness of being an apostle. The special task of the apostles was to lay foundations, and not to build on foundations that were already laid. This was the work of evangelists and pastors. We find that throughout the Word of God the work of the apostles is connected with the foundations. Scripture tells in more than one place that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles, Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. When John, the lonely seer on Patmos, saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, he found that the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The fact that Paul understood that it was his special duty to lay foundations was, so it seems, one of the reasons that long deterred him from going to Rome, where others had already sown the seed of the gospel. At least, after he laid down the principles we stated in Rom. 15:20, 21, he says in the 22nd verse: "For which cause also I have been hindered from coming to you." The great work of Paul was to organize congregations and to appoint the necessary elders to rule these churches. He would launch the little vessel of Christianity and then leave it to others to guide it on in its course. This is not saying that he paid no more attention to the congregations he had organized. History teaches us quite the contrary. He maintained a general supervision of the whole field that he had cultivated. Daily he thought of all the congregations.

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In the second place Paul generally selected cities, where a synagogue of the Jews was found. It was not accidental that Paul always preached in the synagogues first. This was in harmony with the general principle by which it seems Paul was guided, to offer the free gift of salvation first to the Jews, and only after they had rejected it, to go unto the gentiles with the glad tidings of grace in Jesus Christ. We find clear evidence of this in his labors at Antioch in Pisidia, where the Jews waxed indignant on hearing the preaching of Paul, while the gentiles had a desire for further instruction. On seeing this Paul makes bold to say: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles." Acts 13:46. But why should Paul address the Jews first, and only after their rejection of the truth turn to the gentiles? This was demanded by the general economy of God's work, and it was also the most fitting way of approach to the gentiles. Through the Jews that were acquainted with the truth, as it had been revealed in the Old Testament, and that were at the same time in close touch with the gentiles round about them, he sought to approach those that were still afar off. Moreover the synagogues offered the best opportunity to Paul and his colaborers for bringing their message to the masses, since both Jews and gentiles gathered there. In every place there were many proselytes who had not bound themselves to keep the whole law of Moses. These were probably the so-called devout men and women of whom Luke speaks in the Acts of the Apostles. They especially proved ready to receive the gospel message. The synagogues became centers of great blessings. They were as so many torches lit up in a desert land. When I think of that long line of synagogues from Jerusalem to Rome, each shining with the light of the new day, it seems to me that they bear some resemblance to the festal signals that, starting at Jerusalem, were lit from mountain to mountaintop to announce to the Jews in far-off Babylon on the Euphrates that the feast of the new moon had arrived.

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Lastly the places in which Paul labored were, with but few exceptions, centrally located and of great importance. Of course, they were not all of equal prominence. Take a glance at Pisidian Antioch. It was the center of a Roman *regio* or region, an administrative and military center of a larger territory. People were continually coming and going. Small wonder therefore that the result of Paul's work in that city was "that the Word of the Lord was published throughout the whole region." Acts 13:49. Or consider Ephesus, one of the most busy ports of the Mediterranean, the capital of Asia, where people of all countries met, a stronghold of idolatry and sorcery, within easy reach of the cities of the Lycus valley, such as Laodicea, Colosse and Hierapolis. Ephesus meant Asia to Paul, for while he labored there for a period of about three years, Acts 20:31, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Or think of Corinth, the worldly wise, the profligate Corinth, the commercial and political metropolis of Greece, where East and West constantly met, and from where vessels went forth to the uttermost parts of the world. Corinth offered Paul an almost unlimited opportunity. As Ephesus meant Asia to him, so Corinth meant Achaia. Hence he addresses his second epistle to the Corinthians to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." 2 Cor. 1:1. Need we point to the significance of Rome, that veritable microcosmos, with its ever changing, ever shifting population, that stronghold of idolatry, where the emperor sat as a God upon his throne, where all nations were represented, where people came and people went in endless progression, where religion and immorality went hand in hand, and the deepest poverty existed alongside of the greatest, even effeminating luxury,—of Rome, where the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the empire met?—Paul understood the strategic significance of his stay at Rome, though it was as a prisoner. He writes from his prison at Rome to the Philippians: "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are

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manifest in all the palace, and in all other places. And many of the brethren, waying confident in my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and of strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached: and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

All the cities of Paul, or nearly all, were great centers of trade. They were on the most important highways connecting the East and the West. It is a striking fact, as Deissmann observes, who went over all the routes of the great apostle, that to-day all these cities can be reached either by boat or train or by both. This testifies to the importance of those cities. Thus the highway of commerce was made the highway of the gospel of Jesus Christ, on which the messengers of peace sped on, until at last the banner of the cross was planted on the hills of Rome. Glorious achievement of divine and human strategy, of a life that allowed itself to be guided by a wisdom from on high! That guiding Spirit of God is still with us. Let us willingly follow where he leads; let us be thankful for his guidance; let us rejoice with the poet:

“He leadeth me! oh! blessed thought,
Oh! words with heavenly comfort fraught;
Whate’er I do, where’er I be,
Still ’t is God’s hand that leadeth me.”
“Sometimes ’mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden’s bowers bloom.
By waters still, o’er troubled sea,
Still ’t is His hand that leadeth me.”

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“Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine—
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 't is my God that leadeth me.”
“And when my task on earth is done,
When, by Thy grace, the victory's won.
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since God through Jordan leadeth me.”

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PAUL

THE MISSIONARY PREACHER

There is to-day a wide-spread conviction in evangelical circles that the pulpit is deteriorating, and is no more the living force that it was, when the mighty voices of Luther and Zwingli, of Calvin and Knox, of Wesley and Whitefield, of Jonathan Edwards and Thomas Chalmers were heard. Many a preacher of the present time forgets to deliver the message that was entrusted to him by his King. Instead of the heavenly manna, in place of the water of life, the God-given nourishment for hungry and thirsty souls, he offers a substitute which he considers just as good, a substitute of human invention. Instead of bread he offers stones that terribly derange the digestive organs of the spiritual man. Guided by works in which the results of higher criticism are set forth in popular form, such as George Adam Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, and many others like it, he brings the "assured results" of the most recent historical investigation of the Bible to the hungry flock that is waiting for spiritual food.

The Darwinian doctrine of evolution is often proclaimed from the pulpit as the embodiment of the highest wisdom. There is no fall and no redemption, no sin and no conversion in the traditional sense. From the state of the brute and from that of the innocent simplicity of Adam, who was still devoid of all moral character at the beginning of his earthly career, man has ever been ascending, of course with many slips and failures, and is ascending still. As he rises in the scale of development, his imperfections naturally disappear.—Again many of the pulpits of the present time have been transformed into chairs of Sociology. Social betterment is the way to salvation. Place a man in a congenial environment, let him have a good sanitary dwelling, provide him with good clothes, give him plenty to eat and to drink, furnish the proper amusements etc., and

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he will naturally turn to the right;—a good moral, yea even spiritual life will be the outcome.—Many scientific man of the present day, conscious of their wonderful achievements in the realm of nature, have become intoxicated with a sense of their own greatness, and the cult of humanity is the natural result. Says Babbitt in his *Literature and the American College*, p. 34. “Men have always dreamed of the Golden Age, but it is only with the triumphs of modern science that they have begun to put the Golden Age in the future instead of in the past. The great line that separated the new era from the old is, as Renan remarks, the idea of humanity and the cult of its collective achievements. With the decay of the traditional faith this cult of humanity is coming more and more to be our real religion.” Similarly Leuba comes to the conclusion that the “religion of Humanity” is the religion of the future, *A Psychological Study of Religion*, p. 314 ff. The gospel of humanity is now heard from several pulpits; it is a gospel that is man-centered, that has man as its startingpoint and man as its goal, a gospel that must lead in the end to the adoration, not of God, but of man.

This deterioration of the pulpit is a fact of solemn significance. Principal Forsyth says in the opening sentence of his work on *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*: “It is perhaps an overbold beginning, but I will venture to say that with its preaching Christianity stands or falls. This is surely so at least in those sections of Christendom which rest less upon the Church than upon the Bible. Wherever the Bible has the primacy which is given it in Protestantism, there preaching is the most distinctive feature of worship.” As we have seen in the preceding lecture Christianity aims at conquest. But her warfare is not carnal but spiritual. Hence the great means to the end it has in view is not the sword, but the preaching of the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. The moment the Church forgets this important truth she will go down before the victorious forces of darkness, and to the prince of this world will be the spoils.

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A decline in the unadulterated preaching of the Word of God would be doubly injurious in gentile lands. If the trumpet of those that are in the vanguard give an uncertain sound, who will prepare for the battle?—And if none prepare for it, how can any victory be won for Christ?—When I attended the Student Volunteer in Rochester, N. Y. in December 1909 and Januari 1910 the subject of the opening address by Mr. George Sherwood Eddy was: “Is our Christianity worth propagating?” This question, he said, needed not to be asked regarding Christianity in general, but was not superfluous in regard to our Christianity. That question asked at a large missionary gathering is one of the signs of the times. It is an earnest call to every missionary to examine closely the message he brings to a perishing world. It was not necessary to ask that question with respect to the Christianity of Paul. He was one of the greatest and most faithful heralds of the cross. And the seed he bore and scattered in gentile lands, we feel sure, was well worth sowing, was pregnant with promise for the future. His Christianity was indeed worth propagating! All the world has been filled with the fruit of his labors, and therefore has reason to be grateful to that undaunted hero who through good and bad report and in spite of almost insuperable difficulties spread the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence it is certainly well worth while that we study Paul the missionary preacher and profit by his noble example. What sort of man was this great herald of the cross? What were the main characteristics of his preaching? What was the great central theme of his message? Such questions demand consideration in this lecture.

* * *

The better we are acquainted with Paul himself, the better we shall understand his method of preaching. Therefore we need not apologize for taking a brief glance at Paul the man. Little can be said regarding the personal appearance of the great apostle to the gentiles. In the Acts of Paul and Thekla, written in the third century A. D. he is represented as “short, bald, bow-legged, with meeting eye-

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brows, hooked nose, full of grace.” John of Antioch, writing in the sixth century, preserved the tradition that he was in person “round-shouldered, with a sprinkling of grey in his head and beard, with an aquiline nose, greyish eyes, meeting eye-brows, with a mixture of pale and red in his complexion and an ample beard. With a genial expression of countenance, he was sensible, easily accessible, sweet and inspired with the Holy Spirit.” His opponents at Corinth said of him, 2 Cor. 10:10: “His letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. He himself writes to the Corinthians: “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,” 1 Cor. 2:3. And in both the second epistle to the Corinthians and that to the Galatians he refers to some physical infirmity that was a source of suffering to him and that might even make him despicable, 2 Cor. 12:7–9; Gal. 4:13–15. If besides this we take in consideration that the people of Lystra took Barnabas for Jupiter, the great god, and Paul for Hermes, the messenger of the supreme God, it seems reasonable to infer that he was of inferior stature, even though the main reason, why they relegated him to that inferior position was found in the fact that he was the chief speaker. The old tradition that Paul was not a man of magnificent physique may very well be true. This makes it all the more marvelous, however, that his labors had such great results. Paul himself, we know, saw in his bodily weakness a sign of divine wisdom. This follows from his statement in 2 Cor. 4:7: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” And in the twelfth chapter of that same epistle he tells us that God had given him a thorn in the flesh that he should not be exalted above measure. The Lord spoke unto him: “My grace is sufficient for thee; and my strength is made perfect in weakness,” 2 Cor. 12:9. And Paul realized that, though weak in himself, he was mighty in the Lord his God.

As to his character and temperament Paul was a man of great contrasts. Yet these contrasts do not involve contradictions. Man’s life is always a complex that has its

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unity in his personality. The traits that we discover in Paul find their explanation partly in his natural endowments and partly in what he became through the grace of God; partly in his personal inclinations and partly in his profound sense of duty.—In the first place Paul was strong in weakness. It sounds paradoxical indeed, yet it is true. He bore with him wherever he went a weak, an ailing body; at the same time he had an almost unlimited capacity for work in the Kingdom of God. Deissmann says in his *St. Paul* that one now going over the routes of Paul in present day conveyances, witnessing the difficulties with which the peasant has to contend, as he plods on over the old beaten ways; and visiting some of the ancient inns that are to-day very much what they were nineteen centuries ago, offering small and questionable comforts to the weary travellers,— does not understand, how Paul endured all the hardships of his travels, coupled with persecutions, and still did so much for the advancement of God's Kingdom, p. 65. We understand this only, when we bear in mind that Paul received strength in weakness. When he ceased to place any reliance on his own strength, then the power of Christ became manifest in him, and bore him as on the wings of an eagle over rivers and seas, over mountains and valleys.

Paul was a man of great humility, who at the same time did not hesitate to utter expressions that testified to the greatest self-confidence. It is Paul that says with a sense of his own insignificance and utter unworthiness: "I am the least of the apostles", 1 Cor. 15:9; and who speaks of himself as the chiefest of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15, 16. But it is also Paul that makes the statement: "For I suppose I am not a with behind the very chiefest apostles, 2 Cor. 11:5; and who says: I labored more abundantly than they all", 1 Cor. 15:9. How is it possible that a man should utter such seemingly contradictory statements? Is it not unlawful pride that he places himself on a line with the other apostles? We think not; it is simply a recognition of the great love of God that had been manifested in him who had persecuted the Church. When Paul looked back on his past life, he had a deep sense of his guilt and realized that he was really

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unworthy to be an apostle. But as he thought of his later career, he understood that the love of God towards him, the greatest of sinners, had been so great that it had made him the equal of the other apostles; and that the grace of God had operated through him in such an abundant measure that his work surpassed that of his co-laborers. Notice how the one expression quoted above is modified by thoughts of the grace of God: “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Again Paul was very tender-hearted, but at the same time he often uses expressions that seem rather harsh. Tenderness! the expressions of it are manifold in the epistles of the great apostle. Who does not discern the great sympathetic affection, the well-nigh inexpressible benevolence, the tenderness almost past understanding that finds expression in the words: I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen.” But it is that same tender-hearted apostle who in the heat of his indignation and under a sense of duty cries out: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?—This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish! having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Gal. 3:1–3. And again: “I would they were even cut off which trouble you”, Gal. 5:12. Paul was a man greatly loved and passionately hated, a great organizer, an infatigable worker, possessed of rare insight into human nature,—in a word, a great instrument for the important work in the Kingdom of God.

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In speaking of Paul as a preacher we cannot build our conclusions simply on the few speeches that are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. We must also take account of his epistles in which the apostle is really preaching to the congregations entrusted to his care. Let us first glance at the formal side of his preaching!

In the first place we wish to emphasize the fact that Paul was not a mere theorizer, but a very practical preacher. There are some to whose minds the name of Paul is associated with the idea of abstract thought. They have a special liking for the concrete representations of our Lord, who to a very great extent taught the multitude in parables; but they do not delight in following Paul through thesis and antithesis, through labored arguments and rather wide digressions to his conclusions, however important these may be. Now it goes without saying that Paul's mode of treating a subject is often more or less dialectical. Yet his was not the dialectic of the philosophical schools or of the rabbi's. His was less abstruse, more spontaneous and directly touching the realities of life. There is a great deal of truth in the remark of Deissmann that Paul's treatment of the truth is often more intuitive and contemplative than speculative. But whatever his method may be in presenting the theoretical side of the truth, he never loses sight of the practical bearings of what he teaches. His congregations are never listening to mere theories. Every speech of the great apostle in the Acts of the Apostles bears witness to this fact. And in nearly all of his epistles, which are interspersed with practical remarks and exhortations, we find after the doctrinal presentation of the truth, one or more chapters relating to the practical bearing of that particular truth on life. One who listens to Paul with an earnest and prayerful heart will not only find that he is enriched intellectually, but will also experience increased zeal in the Kingdom of God. The truth is brought home to the congregations and results in a life of consecration to God and of constant and faithful service.

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This first characteristic of Paul's preaching is necessarily closely related to another, viz. that he in his preaching always adapted himself to the needs of his hearers. This is saying that it was practical, not only in a general way, but in a particular sense. The question has often been hotly debated, whether we find any accommodation in the teachings of the Lord and in those of Paul. To this question we may answer both no and yes. There is no accommodation such as Semler assumed. Neither Jesus nor Paul accommodated himself to the false notions of their contemporaries. But we notice in both a certain ethical and negative accommodation. Says Cellerier in his *Hermeneutics*, p. 275: "The use of parables, proverbs and allegories was a prudent adaptation to the state of knowledge among the people, just as every wise instructor suits his lessons to the capacities of his hearers, by giving milk to babes and meat to full-grown men. This discreet method of instruction was observed by Christ and his apostles." Listen to what Paul himself says respecting this point in 1 Cor. 9:19–22: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."—In diagnosing the diseases of his hearers Paul does not generalize, does not simply describe the alarming character of sin in general, but that of the particular sins most prevalent in a certain community. He tells the Corinthians that there are among them sinful divisions, incest, lack of brotherly love etc. He reminds the Galatians that by their deflection they are making void the work of Christ. He reproves the idleness, the disorderliness and the vain babblings of the Thessalonians. And then to cure the evil, he does not prescribe some patent medicine that is supposed to be good for a great variety of diseases, but some specific for

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each individual case. His presentation of the truth is always in harmony with local conditions; so are the practical exhortations that follow it. A comparison of the three missionary speeches of Paul recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is fruitful in this respect, viz. those to the people of Antioch in Pisidia, to the idolatrous worshippers at Lystra, and to the inquisitive and philosophical Athenians. At Antioch Paul spoke to an assembly consisting primarily of Jews; in Lystra to a gathering of simple superstitious people that were strangers to the true religion; and at Athens to a multitude that had come under the influence of the Stoic and of the Epicurean philosophies. Carefully adjusting his words to his hearers and to the condition in which he finds them, the apostle addresses the synagogue at Antioch very much as Stephen spoke to the indignant multitude at Jerusalem, reminding the Jews in a historical way of their invaluable privileges, of their great guilt in crucifying God's anointed One, and of the fulfilment of the promises in Christ; and offering them salvation through faith, instead of through the works of the law. At Lystra his method of approach is different. He there encounters a people that is not acquainted with the Old Testament, a comparatively simple folk, steeped in idolatry, and about to bring sacrifices to the missionaries that wrought a miracle among them. Paul takes this fact as his startingpoint and, barring every reminiscence of Old Testament history, exhorts them to turn from idolatry to the living God, Who created heaven and earth, Who in times past, it is true, left the gentiles to walk in their own ways, yet always clearly evincing His goodness in giving rain and fruitful seasons. He thus presents God to them as the beneficent One to Whom they owe everything, and Who is therefore the only worthy object of adoration. In Athens Paul's point of contact is in general the same, viz. superstition and idolatry. The first part of his address is quite similar to that at Lystra. There is no reference to Old Testament history, but all the more to God, the Creator of all life. But over against the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers he points out that God is also the sustainer of life, that He is not an empty God, Who has need of man, that He directs the life of mankind—which He

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created as an unity—and that therefore man finds the purpose of his existence not in sensual pleasure, nor in Stoical indifference, but in seeking God and living in His communion. There is accommodation, most assuredly, but it is a wise and legitimate accommodation, an accommodation that should characterize the work of every missionary that bears the precious seed of the gospel into the gentile world. If we desire a fruitful ministry, we must find the proper point of contact in the life of those among whom we labor, should regulate our teaching according to their capacity, and adjust the presentation of the truth to their various needs. When Paul writes to the Corinthians he first combats the divisions and the other sins that had arisen among them, and then gives careful answers to the questions that had arisen in their midst. In preparing his epistle to the Galatians he does not mince words in reproving them for their deflection. And in the second epistle to the Thessalonians he presents very definite arguments against the speedy coming of Christ, the expectation of which had caused many to lead idle lives.

When we study the epistles of Paul, it soon becomes evident to us in the third place that he proves his statements primarily from Scripture. And it is perfectly natural that this should be so, for, although he was the apostle of the gentiles, there were several Jews and proselytes in every congregation he addressed. It is indeed very likely that the majority of his converts were more or less acquainted with the Old Testament. And for the Jews there could be no stronger evidence than the proof from Scripture. If they could be convinced that the prophets were fulfilled in Christ, in his life and in his suffering and death,—then they would be quite prepared to accept the doctrine of the cross. Another favorite method of Paul to prove his doctrines is the analogical. “Analogies from nature,” says Deissmann, “are used to illustrate the relation of the earthly to the heavenly body, 1 Cor. 15:35 ff., analogies from agricultural and military life to illustrate the right of the apostles to the means of subsistence, 1 Cor. 9:7. Analogies from legal life, in which St. Paul as a city resident was strongly interested, are special

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favourites with him, e.g., an outsider cannot add a clause to a testament, Gal. 3:15; the heir who is not yet of age is under the authority of the guardian and the steward for as long as the father hath appointed, Gal. 4:1 etc.”

We notice from Paul’s preaching fourthly that he was a bold and fearless preacher. He was in no sense what we call a temporizer. There are to-day many so-called preachers of the gospel who are continually anxiously asking themselves, whether what they say will not offend their hearers, and who carefully avoid whatever might give offence, even if the truth must suffer for it. They are men-servants rather than servants of God. They bend every effort to give the people what they want, and rarely think of supplying what they need. But in doing this they forget that their position is a responsible one, that they are placed as watchmen over the house of God, to urge men on in the way of righteousness and to rebuke them for their sins. Behold Paul, as he stands over against Elymas and utters those scathing words: “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord! And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” Notice him, as he rebukes even Peter: “If thou, being a Jew, lives after the manner of gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the gentiles to live as do the Jews?” Listen to him, as he addresses the Corinthians: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as man? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”—And again: “Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.”—And once more: “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded. Nay, ye do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.” 1 Cor. 3:3, 4; 4:18; 6:7, 8. These examples might easily be multiplied from the other writings of Paul. He was decidedly no man-servant. Neither did he allow outward

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circumstances to intimidate him. Whether laboring in the presence of hostile Jews, as at Iconium, Thessalonica and Corinth; or in the midst of fanatic idolators, as at Ephesus; whether he stands before the furious mob at Jerusalem, or before the Jewish Sanhedrin; whether he is called upon to give an account of himself before Felix, Festus and Agrippa at Cesarea or before Ceasar himself in imperial Rome,—he is undaunted in his course, and speaks the word with boldness.

Finally we call your attention to the fact that the apostle always spoke with great conviction. Paul's trumpet never gave an uncertain sound. Its note was full and clear. There were no anxious questionings on his part, whether his preaching was at variance or in harmony with the dicta of science; nor whether his utterances could bear the test of higher criticism. He was fully, absolutely convinced that what he said was the truth, and that any deviation from it was the work of satan. Having this conviction he says to the Galatians: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:9, 10. The same chapter also indicates the source of that positive assurance that characterizes his speaking. He believed with all his heart that the word he spoke was received of Christ himself. He says in Gal. 1:11, 12: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul felt sure that the Spirit of God was speaking in him and through him to the churches. Hence he was no uncertain guide, leading now in one direction and then in another; he followed a straight course, and thereby gained the confidence of all that entrusted themselves to his care. And now it is true that we do not share all the privileges that Paul, the apostle, enjoyed; yet even we to-day can speak with the same conviction, and thus be a power of God for the salvation of many, if we but feel that the Spirit of God is

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stirring the very depths of our heart, and feel certain that what we bring is the Word of God. Doubt in this respect will introduce an element of uncertainty into our preaching, an element that will make it powerless for the conversion of men.

Now the question arises: What were in the main the contents of Paul's preaching? In the first place we desire to remark in a sort of preliminary way that his preaching was very full. He proclaimed indeed the full council of God. No other Scriptural author offers us such an all-sided, such a comprehensive, so complete a representation of the truth. It is well nigh impossible to mention any doctrine that is not found in Paul in some form or other. He speaks of God as the Creator and Ruler of the world, and of man's relation to Him. Heaven and hell and earth, angels and devils and men, yea even the brute creation falls within his horizon. He touches on the origin of man, his fall in sin, his redemption by Christ, his life in the Spirit and his eternal destiny. He treats of predestination and election, regeneration and calling, faith and conversion, justification and sanctification, the perseverance of saints and everlasting glory. Of course, Paul dealt with his congregations in an educational way. He did not immediately present to them all the fulness of the truth there is in Christ. He began by preaching the gospel after a simple fashion, first feeding them with milk and not with meat, since they were not yet able to bear it. At the same time he did not rest satisfied at that point. It was his continual endeavor to lead them on to perfection, that they might all come "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ", Eph. 4:13-15. And in this respect also he is certainly an example

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worthy of imitation for all those that labor in the work of the Lord.

We cannot delay to discuss all the elements in Paul's preaching. It seems preferable to direct our attention to the central and controlling element in it, because there are many in the present day who are shifting the emphasis, in our opinion, greatly to the detriment of the gospel cause. When we compare the preaching of Paul with that of our Lord, we notice a striking difference in the central theme. At Jerusalem in the long discourses preserved in the fourth gospel the Lord speaks primarily of Himself as the source of salvation for sinners. He is the manna of heaven, the fountain of spiritual water, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the true liberator, the vine in which believers have life etc. But in the Galilean ministry, the record of which we find especially in the Synoptics, the central theme in the discourses of Christ is the Kingdom of God. In his parables and otherwise he describes the nature of that Kingdom, pictures the character of its subjects, points out the conditions on which one can enter into it, defines the righteousness that prevails in it, and describes the enemies that are seeking to stay its course. Now if we turn from Christ to Paul, we find that the idea of the kingdom of God has retired into the background. It does not occupy so large a place in the preaching of Paul as it did in that of Christ. The emphasis is differently placed. And this is so not only in the preaching of Paul, but also in that of the other apostles. However the change that took place was not brought about in an arbitrary way; it resulted very naturally from the new dispensation of the Spirit.

When the Lord and His disciples proceeded to the Mount of Olives, he said unto them: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Acts 1:8. In what sense the apostles understood this commission is evident from the fact that Peter, emphasized the necessity of appointing one in the place of Judas to be with them a

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witness of *the resurrection of Christ*, Acts 1:21, 22. And if we study the speeches of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, we notice that the element of the resurrection is made specially prominent. Notice particularly the following passages: Acts 2:32: "This Jesus *hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*" 3:15: "And killed the Prince of life, *whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*" 10:40, 41: "*Him God raised up* the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, *but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead;*" etc. Cf. also 13:30 and 17:31. It seems to us that the facts in the case warrant the conclusion that the resurrection of Christ is the great central theme of the preaching of the apostles. For Paul this fact was specially prominent, since it was the starting-point of his spiritual development. The other disciples knew Jesus intimately in the days of his flesh. They saw, first of all, Jesus of Nazareth in his weakness and humanity, and were only gradually led up to the point, where they saw in him Christ in His power, the very Son of God. But the first real vision that Paul had of Him was that of Christ in his majesty, seated at the right hand of God, the risen Christ, enthroned on high. Christ risen from the dead, this was the stage which the earlier apostles finally reached in their vision of Christ; that was the point from which Paul started, and from which he looked back on the facts that gradually led up to it, and forward to the issues in which it would result.

Now the question awaits a further answer, how this change of emphasis came about. Was it something arbitrary on the part of the apostles? Many at the present time seem to think so, because they are beginning to accentuate ever more the idea of the Kingdom of God, and would even make it the central theme in the message of salvation. Or did this change necessarily result from the nature of the new economy of redemption, and from the progress of God's revelation? We may confidently assert that this change was not brought about in an arbitrary way, but necessarily resulted from the new dispensation, ushered in by the death

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and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the preaching, of Christ himself we already have the transition to the characteristic preaching of the apostles. In harmony with the final phase of the revelation of God under the old dispensation, he placed special emphasis on the coming and near approach of the Kingdom of God. At the same time he advanced beyond the previous preaching of the Kingdom by laying more stress on its spiritual character and on the moral requirements for entering into it; and in connecting participation in that Kingdom with a belief in Him as the Messiah sent from God. One's relation to Jesus the Christ would determine one's relation to the Kingdom. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36. At Jerusalem especially, in the midst of Scribes and Pharisees, who had a more intimate acquaintance with the Old Testament Scriptures, He directed attention to himself. Yet He merely intimated that He was the Messiah, though He gradually led his disciples up to a belief in Him as the Promised One. Many things, however, remained obscure even to them, and their questionings increased, as they saw their beloved Master descend along the path of humiliation and suffering into the very abode of death. The sign of Jonah had not yet been given; the supreme proof that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, still remained hidden in the darkness of death. It was furnished when Christ arose. Hence the jubilant note of Paul regarding Christ in Rom. 1:4: "Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Hence also the confession of every saint of God:

"Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,

Unworthy though I be,

For me a blood-bought free reward,

A golden harp for me:"

"T is strung and tuned for endless years,

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And formed by power divine,

To sound in God the Father's ears,

No other name but Thine."

From the time of the resurrection, that found its complement in the ascension, it was understood that the Kingdom of God was to be world-wide in its scope, would come by a spiritual process that had its determining principle in Christ, and would only reach its perfection in the day of Christ's return. Hence it was natural that all thought should now center on Christ and his resurrection from the dead, in connection with His final coming. The following passage shows how important the resurrection of Christ was to the apostle's mind: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." 1 Cor. 15:14-18.

The resurrection of Christ was the central element of Paul's preaching, but it was not the whole of it. Yet it had a determining influence. Standing on the high point of vantage offered by the resurrection, Paul looked back on the past and also surveyed the future. Looking back his eye fell on the cross, that had been an offence to him and an unsolved mystery to the other apostles, and he beheld it transfigured, radiant with glory. That death on the cross, he realized now, had not been an ordinary death, nor the death of a criminal. It was the death of one higher than man, of a sinless one, of one who had in no way deserved death. And in pondering on this fact, it dawned on the apostle, that the death of Christ had been vicarious, and that it contained the secret of man's redemption from sin. Says Ropes in his work on *The Apostolic Age* p. 144: "Thus from the conviction, Jesus is the Messiah, which we may suppose,

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flashed upon him in his vision before the walls of Damascus with self-evidencing certainty, Paul was enabled by his own experience to proceed, first, to the further proposition that through the death of Jesus Christ the salvation of the world is accomplished, and secondly, to the proposition that if men believe that Jesus is Christ and Lord, God forgives their sins and they are saved.” From that time on the cross became the special glory of the apostle. He saw in it the divine means to save the world. We get an idea of Paul’s view of the cross from some of the most celebrated passages in his epistles, viz. 1 Cor. 1:17, 18: “For Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God;” 23, 24: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; Gal. 6:14: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Jesus Christ and He crucified is the only way that leads to God. From Sinai, where the law of God was promulgated, over Calvary, the Mount of crucifixion, to Sion, the perfection of beauty,—is the way to everlasting bliss.

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“When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”
“Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.”



Paul also looked forward from the resurrection of Christ. He saw in it the living principle of a new creation, the principle of the Kingdom to come. The resurrection of Christ is, according to Paul, the foundation of our Christian life. Christ was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification. As believers die with Christ, they also arise with him in newness of life. And the resurrection of Christ assures us not only of the principle of that new life that is in Christ, but also of that life in its perfection. “For ye died”, says the apostle, “and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Col. 3:3. Even more than that, God who raised us up with Christ has even now made us to sit with him in heavenly places, Eph. 2:6. The resurrection of Christ is also the earnest of our bodily resurrection. It warrants not only the deliverance of our souls—which would be but a partial redemption—but also that of our bodies. Would it be possible, now that Christ is risen from the dead, that our mortal frames should remain a prey of death? Impossible! “But now Christ is risen from the dead”, says Paul, “and become the first-fruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” 1 Cor. 15:20–22. Cf. also Rom. 8:11. And the life-bringing Spirit of God that quickens our souls and bodies shall in that way bring in the Kingdom of God. Then the seed of the resurrection shall have born its fruit, the bud shall have opened into a beautiful flower. And after the resurrection of the dead “cometh the end, when He (Christ) shall deliver the Kingdom of God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.”

Paul’s greatest concern was to point out the way of salvation in Christ Jesus, the way opened up by the death and the resurrection of the Lord of glory. His was a gospel according to the Word of God, a gospel not of human design but of divine origin, a gospel that yielded a rich harvest in the past, and will forever be justified by its fruits. Let it be our greatest concern to preach that gospel. Then we shall be workmen that are not put to shame.

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VICTORY

THROUGH GRACE

We are all more or less acquainted with the vision of Constantine the great. This Roman emperor was a convert to Christianity and became the protector of the Christian religion. He tolerated, it is true, the pagan religions in his empire, but favored the Christian Church in every way. He showed his leanings toward Christianity first in connection with his battles with the heathen Maxentius, who had usurped the government of Italy and Africa and was a cruel and dissolute tyrant, hated by both heathen and Christian. Against him the Romans called for the aid of Constantine. Willingly this great genius rallied his forces, crossed the Alps and defeated his rival in the vicinity of Rome. Now Eusebius tells us that just before the decisive battle, while the emperor was praying to the true God for light and help, he at the critical time saw, together with his army, in clear daylight towards evening, a shining cross in the heavens above the sun, with the inscription: By this sign shalt thou conquer. Encouraged by this heavenly sign the hosts of Constantine went forth to battle and won a victory that turned the tide of events. Maxentius himself found a disgraceful death in the waters of the Tiber. This was a great victory, a victory that had not only political, but also religious significance, a victory of Christianity over heathendom. The sign of the cross that had up to this time been the sign of ignominy and shame, now became the badge of honor. It was stamped on the imperial coin, and on the standards, helmets and shields of the soldiers. Henceforth it led them in their battles wherever they went and filled them with the spirit of victory.

This sign of Constantine has been variously estimated. Some explain it as a real miracle, implying a personal appearance of Christ; others regard it as a pious fraud, as a deliberate falsehood on the part of the historians; still others

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interpret it as a natural phenomenon, as a cross-like formation of the clouds, combined with an optical illusion; while finally there are also such as consider it to have been the contents of a prophetic dream. We are not now interested in the interpretation of this sign. There is, it seems to us, no reason to doubt that the tradition respecting it has some historical foundation, though it is impossible to determine just how much. At the same time the difference in the accounts of Eusebius, Lactantius, Rufinus and a couple of others make it almost certain that the account is not free from literary embellishments.

What we desire to emphasize at present is that the sigh of Constantine had great symbolical and representative significance. The sign of the cross has always stood out in sublime majesty before the praying multitudes of Jehovah's warriors; and the words, "In this sign thou shalt conquer" have been brandished in their hearts with live coals taken from the altar of God. The cross of Christ—it points on the one hand to the retributive justice of God, revealed in the death of Christ; it represents on the other hand the grace of God, His love to guilty sinners. Its voice is to all the forces that follow, where the banner of Jesus Christ leads: "In this sign thou shalt conquer!" Victory through Grace!

The great truths of God often find embodiment in men or things. In Abraham's life we have a concrete expression of the truth, that the just shall live by faith. The whole life of Joseph was a living commentary on the all-wise providence of God. David, the sweet singer of Israel, exemplified the truth that the path to glory is one of humiliation and suffering. Could the great truth of our utter dependence on God in all things, and on the operation of the Spirit of God in our hearts, if we would find salvation, obtain a more concrete expression than it had in the life of Augustine?—Could the duty and bliss of self-denial be impressed on our minds in a more forcible manner than by the career of Francis of Assisi?—Was not the life of count Zinzendorf a living expression of the blessedness of a life in communion with God and of service in His Kingdom?—So also in the

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rich and varied life of Paul we find the living embodiment of many sublime truths. When we think of Paul, we are reminded of the great fact that Christ gave his life for sinners; we think of that great central doctrine of justification by faith; and before our mind the fact stands out in bold relief that in the great spiritual conquest of the world victory is only through grace.

* * *

Victory through grace! The word victory is one of the most charming words in our vocabulary,—a word to charm with indeed. When mighty armies march out to war, it is the prospect of victory that gives them courage. They would hardly be the lion-hearted men they often are, if they knew from the start that their cause was doomed. On hearing the martial strains that speak of victory they set out high-spirited, impatient to face the forces of the enemy. And when amid the din and roar of the battle they see their comrades on the battlements of the enemy and hear their shout of victory, it gives them new courage and strength, so that they sweep on like a hurricane irresistible, driving everything before them. And when on their return the songs of victory resound, all the land is filled with rejoicing. The flag has been defended, the honor of the nation has been saved, the enemy has been routed and new conquests have been made. Processions are then held, public banquets are given, statues are erected, and the praises of the heroes are sung in the loftiest strains of poetry and music. The real value of the victory, however, always depends on the character of the struggle that leads up to it. When Israel won the victory over the Canaanites, it meant a victory of the Semites over the descendents of Ham, it meant spiritual conquest for the Kingdom of God. The nations that had filled the measure of their iniquity were replaced by a priestly, a holy nation, chosen to be the peculiar people of God. Idolatry had to make way, though it was but imperfectly, for the pure religion of Jehovah, the God of Israel. The vile immorality of the aborigines made place for the austere morals of a nation whose life was regulated by

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the law of God. The darkness of heathendom was dispelled by the lights of God's revelation.

The victory of Cyrus over the Babylonian empire was of the very greatest significance. Its results were of far-reaching importance. The Semites who had so long had the upper hand in the history of the world, now gradually yielded to the indomitable power of the Aryan peoples. The fall of Babylon marked the end of those nations that up to that time had an overbearing influence. The center of interest now gradually shifted to Europe. The old sensual religions were replaced by newer cults. It was a stride in the direction of monotheism.

The conquests of Alexander the great, who in his short but brilliant career won victory after victory, were of great consequence intellectually, commercially and religiously. Along with the knowledge of the Greek language Greek ideas spread throughout the civilized world of his time. Commercial centers were established everywhere and proved specially attractive for the Jews. Thus the knowledge of the only true God was diffused, and the soil was gradually prepared for the precious seed of Christianity. The victory of Constantine, already referred to, was a victory of Christianity over the Roman cult. It meant the fall of the old state religion, the mainstay of the empire.

The victory of the Netherlands over Spain, after a prolonged struggle of eighty years, and of the United Colonies over Great Britain secured them independence and freedom of religion.

All the victories we now named were of great inherent worth; they were pregnant with blessings for the future. But in the course of history other wars have been carried on, and other victories have been won, victories that did not issue in beneficent results, but that were fraught with dire consequences. Many wars were waged for selfish purposes, to satisfy the personal ambition of some Caesar or Napoleon, and resulted in great despotism and in oppression of the people. Speaking of the Roman empire

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Morris says in his work on *Civilization* I p. 246: "Military success abroad was followed by the overthrow of the liberties of the people at home. Military leaders became despotic emperors, and ruled, in almost an exact sense, as generals of the state." The long continued fight of France against England made the French king despotic and culminated in the reign of Louis XIV, who said: "I am the State."

There is a warfare, however, that is far more significant than any material one. The spiritual is in every respect higher than the material. Spiritual warfare has the pre-eminence over every other. In this warfare there are two very distinct phases, the personal and the communal, the former aiming at victory over one's natural self, over the old man, over the evil propensities of one's heart, over one's evil thoughts and volitions and actions; the latter having for its objective the conquest of the world for Christ. These two are inseparably connected. The former is the necessary prerequisite of the latter; the latter is the natural consequence of the former. If anyone desires to take part in that spiritual war that aims at winning the world for Christ, he must first of all win the victory in his own personal life, for it is impossible that one who is himself in slavery should be an apostle of liberty; it cannot be that one who himself lives in the darkness of sin should be a fit instrument to bear the gospel into the night of heathendom; we cannot expect that one who is himself in the power of Satan should destroy the shackles of others and be a mighty hero of the cross. Blessed is the man who wins this personal victory, curbing his passions, conquering sin, crucifying the old man, and living to the glory of God. It is a victory of the greatest significance for him personally, a victory big with promise for the Kingdom of God.

This personal victory won in the hearts of many men and women naturally leads on to the spiritual conquest of the world. One who has conquered sin in his own life does not rest satisfied there; this is contrary to the nature of the new life that is born in his heart. In the first place that life is a life

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that is subject to Jesus Christ, the King whom God Himself has anointed; and the King said: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is His desire that they who have themselves been enriched with the knowledge of Jesus Christ shall spread the glad tidings of salvation, and bring the word of forgiving grace and of everlasting life to every man. Obedience to their heavenly Master prompts the soldiers of the cross to go to distant lands.—In the second place, they who won the personal victory obey the laws of the new life that is born within them, when they put on the whole armour of God and go forth into the world to battle with the powers of darkness. That life longs for perfection, but in order to be perfected it must have a pure atmosphere in which to breathe. The more that life advances in holiness, the more it will feel the oppressive influence of sin round about it. Thus the desire awakens and gradually becomes an irresistible impulse to conquer sin in the life of the world.—In the third place the life of a Christian brings him to a sense of a communal responsibility, makes him realize that he is responsible not only for his own sins, but also for those of his fellow-men, and thus naturally induces him to battle against sin in general.—In the fourth place, that life is a communal life, conscious of the fact that it is but a very small part of the great body of believers, and that even the vast company of those that now believe is but an insignificant portion of that innumerable host that forms the mystical body of Christ. It must be complemented, therefore, and enriched by the life of fellow-christians. And in going out to battle against the power of sin in the life of others believers merely follow the impulse of their new life to seek those that will ultimately form a part of Christ's spiritual body.—And in the fifth place, that life is a life full of compassion. It is thankful for the grace it has received, and is filled with an earnest desire to save others from the abysmal depths of sin. The thought of the many millions that dwell in darkness and that die away daily and yearly without any knowledge of the Saviour, is one of the motives that leads believers to a life of selfdenial and of continual

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struggle with the powers of evil. Like their Master they go out seeking sinners,—perishing sinners.

There is no more important warfare than that aiming at the spiritual conquest of the world. The victories won in it surpass in greatness, in true inherent value, and in eternal significance every material victory that the world ever witnessed. Can the victories won at Waterloo, at Gettysburg and at Sedan be compared with the winning of a single tribe for Christ?—They all fade into insignificance, when looked at in that light. What does this winning of the nations for Christ mean?—What does it mean for those peoples? What does it mean for Christ and for His Church?—To the heathen nations it means—to express it in a single word—life. When the gospel of Jesus Christ is brought to those that still live on in the ignorance of sin, the darkness that surrounds them is gradually dispelled, and the glorious light of the sun of righteousness enlightens their hearts and illuminates their lives. And that light, that knowledge of Jesus Christ brings life, wherever it shines. Life in the true full sense of that word. What they who live without Christ imagine to be life is but a continual dying and issues in eternal death. It is a shadowy life, in which are mirrored the dire consequences of sin, and that knows nothing of the cheerfulness of standing in close communion with God. It is a life without true love, a life without hope. O how the character of that life changes, when the love of Christ is manifested in it!

Victory in heathen lands means first of all, therefore, that the gentiles are brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But since the gospel is the instrument of God's Spirit to change the entire life of man, it has an elevating influence on him in every way. He who is in Jesus Christ becomes a new creature, a new creature in every respect. It changes the heart of man, the very center of his spiritual nature, so that a change of intellect and of the will necessarily follows.

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Wherever the message of salvation is brought schools are opened for the instruction of those that up to that time lived in ignorance of God, of themselves, of Christ and the way of salvation, of the laws that govern their own lives and which they must obey, if they avoid misery and be truly happy, of that righteousness that should be the controlling principle in their social life, and of their duties to their Creator. Through the influence of Christianity their intellectual horizon is widened, the air is clarified and they are made to see more and better than they did before.

The moral life, both of the individual and of the community is raised to a higher level. The use of intoxicating liquor ceases, where the gospel of temperance is brought, and this, of course, results in a cleaner and happier life. Among heathen nations are generally found gross immorality and its adjuncts of brutality and crime, with an aftermath of shame and vice. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel too of purity, and where it is faithfully preached the people learn to see the degraded and debasing character of an immoral life. Immorality succumbs to the influence of the gospel, and a purer nobler life is the inevitable outcome. They who formerly associated immoral practices with their religious rites feel that these are inconsistent with the service of the only true God. When the gospel of spiritual equality in Jesus Christ is brought, the degradation of woman is at an end. The female child is no longer killed at birth, because it is but a burden to the parents; the daughter is no more disposed of in marriage at will by the father; the wife is no longer regarded as a slave by her husband; he ceases to call her his "dull thorn", to speak of her in a derogatory manner, and to demand of her that she remain at a safe distance from him, when he appears with her on the street. When the gospel of chastity and love is brought, family life is restored to its pristine beauty. Then concubinage finds its funeral pyre, then polygamy loses its attraction, and marriage becomes once more union of love between one man and one woman. Then divorce ceases to be the natural thing that it is in some countries, being condemned by the Word of God and

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disapproved by public opinion. Then child marriage is restricted and its attendant evils are gradually eliminated; and the children receive far more attention than they formerly did. According as the parents learn to understand their responsible position, they no more leave their children to work out their own salvation, but provide for them and carefully train them for their task in life. When man is made acquainted with his true royalty, when he learns to understand that he is created in the image of God and is destined to live forever in communion with his Maker, when the gospel of freedom is preached, he instinctively feels that it is inconsistent with the real character of man, as he is related to God, to carry on traffic in human beings, and the death-knell of slavery is sounded. In Christ is neither bond nor free. To the same influence, of course, cannibalism and the offering of human sacrifices must yield. Then the sick are no longer left to the tender mercies of unscrupulous medicine-men, who torture their patient rather than heal them, who increase their misery rather than alleviate their pain. Medical science comes to their aid and seeks to do for them in a perfectly natural way, what Christ did for the sick and afflicted of his time in a miraculous manner. Then the poor are no more left destitute, to perish from want of the necessaries of life, but Christian charity lends a helping hand, providing lodging and clothing and food and the conveniences of life. The spirit of ministering love moves like an angel among the poor and afflicted, bringing help and comfort and good cheer.

Where the religion of Christ enters, there the people are weaned from worshipping nature and the powers that are manifest in it; there they bow down no more to sun, moon and stars, they no more worship seas and rivers, stones and trees, serpents and bullocks, but are led up from nature to nature's God. There the power of superstition is broken and nations, recognizing the providential rule of God, entrust themselves to His guidance and protection. Indolence makes place for activity and the wilderness is made to blossom as the rose. What a glorious victory results from this spiritual conquest! How much it means for the gentile

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nations! How much for Christ and his Church I The winning of one nation after another for the Saviour is the gradual completion of the Church," which is His (Christ's) body and the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1:23. And the more the ranks of believers are swelled, the more the glory of Christ shines forth to all the world. Paul realized that to preach Christ among the gentiles, is to set forth among them the unsearchable riches of Him that gave His life for sinners, is "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God. Who created all things in Christ Jesus; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." The Church is a revelation, therefore, of God's wisdom and glory to the angels in heaven. And every victory achieved increases the ranks of the soldiers of the cross; instead of the few that fall come the many that receive new life. Every victory inspires with new courage, and, as the shouts of triumph resound on every hand, the warriors of Christ march on with gallant tread, conquering and ever to conquer, until at last the final battle is fought, the final victory is won. And what a gathering it will then be round about the great white throne, out of every generation and tongue and people and nation, singing the song of the Lamb, and making the very heavens resound with the shouts of victory.

In every war and in every battle it is of the greatest importance to know on what the victory depends. To know this is to know on what one must place his reliance, is to know what move to make and how to attack the enemy. We can cite a Scriptural example to illustrate this truth. When David fled before the face of his son Absalom, the sagacious Ahithophel counseled the latter to let him take twelve thousand men, wherewith he might follow David and overcome the king, while he was weary and weak-handed. This was good sound advice; Absalom's victory depended on one quick move. But he was blind to the fact and preferred to follow the counsel of Hushai and to gather all Israel, before he proceeded to pursue his father. This gave

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David an opportunity to reach a place of safety and to prepare himself for a battle. The result was that Absalom was slain. When the Etruscan king of Clusium marched on Rome with an army, drove the defenders within the walls and would have sacked the town, Horatius Cocles saw that the sole hope of the city lay in the defense of the wooden bridge across the Tiber that furnished the only approach to the city. Hence he, assisted by two of his comrades, defended the bridge until it was broken away, and then, casting himself into the river, swam to the other side. Thus he became the saviour of the city.

Now we naturally ask: On what does victory ultimately depend in the spiritual warfare carried on by the Church of God? When we study the history of the Christian Church, we find that many have had a wrong conception of the means that would lead to spiritual victory. Charlemagne seemed to think that spiritual victory could be gained by the sword. The Saxons were the most dangerous and the most defiant of all his enemies, and he thought it necessary to subdue and christianize or to kill them. In seeking to carry out his purpose, he drove great masses of men and women to the river at the point of the sword, and placed them before the alternatives, to be baptized or to die. Many yielded to save their lives and were christianized in an external way. But as soon as occasion offered they again fell away, renounced their confession and practiced their religious rites as of old. Spiritual victory does not depend on the sword.

In the days of the Reformation Rome seemed fully convinced that its ultimate victory would depend on all sorts of external contrivances. True and faithful followers of Jesus Christ were tortured and made to suffer excruciating pains in the dark and ghastly chambers of the inquisition, to make them renounce their heretical opinions and return to the bosom of the Church. Many were burned at the stake, were hung as gallow-birds, or were beheaded on the scaffold. Thousands too were massacred in a pitiless way. They were killed for the greater glory of God; but the real victory in all

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these cases was on the side of the vanquished. Spiritual victory does not depend on rack or stake, on gallows or scaffold.

There are some, and the church of Rome is prominent among them, who hold that victory ultimately depends on the work of man. This is in perfect harmony with the conception Rome has of the church, but it is inconsistent with the Protestant idea. If everyone who merely assents to the doctrine of the church, participates in her ritual and partakes of her sacraments, is a member of the church, then the work of man may be quite sufficient to build it up. But if the Church of Christ is the community of believers, true believers, the work of man will not suffice to swell her ranks. We find this forcibly illustrated in the case of the drunkard whom Spurgeon found in the gutter. Staggering to his feet, but falling again, as soon as he had arisen, he said to the great preacher: "Spurgeon, you—you have—converted me," whereupon Spurgeon answered: "I readily believe that, for if God had converted you, you would not now be wallowing in the dust." Many speak of making converts, but they forget that real converts are not of man's making.

Others hold that spiritual victory is dependent on educational effort only. They proceed on the Socratic principle: "Knowledge is virtue," but have a far more superficial conception of this maxim than the great philosopher had. Teach men what is good and beautiful, and they will certainly follow and practice it in their lives. But they forget that the enlightened Greeks indulged in the vilest immorality, and that the golden age of Rome also witnessed the height of debauchery and sensuality. If we would win the world for Christ, it is not sufficient that we erect schools for the instruction of the people. This may even be a means of transforming them into greater sinners than they were before.

Still others expect the salvation of the world from all manner of social reform. We are to-day living in a social age,

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and the Church is in danger of losing sight of her true mission, and of bending her efforts entirely to the social betterment of the people. With many the presumption is, that if a man is placed in a wholesome environment, if he has a good sanitary dwelling, if he is provided with the necessary food and drink, and if he is allowed sufficient time for recreation,—then he will naturally turn to the right. A good moral and spiritual life will be the inevitable result. But he who is not blind to the lessons of history does not share these optimistic views. He knows that material civilization does not bring spiritual regeneration. It is not true what the philosopher Feuerbach said, that a man is what he eats. The most civilized people of the ancient world have also been the most sensual and immoral. No one will be inclined to deny that the French nation excels in good manners, in external polish and refinement; but it certainly does not excel morally and religiously. Paris is beautiful, but its moral corruption has also become a by-word among the nations. Spiritual victory can only be won by a spiritual process; it must be victory through grace.

Victory through grace! When we study the Word of God, we find that in one sense the grace of God is considered as the antithesis of the work of man; while in another the two are concomitants. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8, 9. Our personal salvation is the precious fruit, not of our own work, but of the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. At the same time this grace does not issue in a life of inactivity, but in a life of service. The grace of God that we receive finds expression in faith, and faith finds its necessary complement in the good works that are required of all believers. James says: “Faith, if it hath not the works, is dead, being alone; and again: “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.”

For his personal salvation, therefore, one is ultimately dependent on the grace of God. Yet, however true this may be, we should not misconstrue it. We owe a great deal also

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to those who brought us the message of salvation, to the instruments that were employed in winning us for Christ; but we must bear in mind that they too were instruments prepared by the grace of God and in every way subservient to it. In the spiritual conquest of the world the case is very similar. We cannot say that in spiritual warfare human effort is of no avail, that all the work done in gentile lands might just as well be left undone, that the missionaries labor in vain, “for how shall men call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” Rom. 10:14. It is absolutely necessary that the gospel be preached, that the gentiles be instructed in the way of the Lord, that they be educated for life’s task, and that every possible effort be made to reform their lives. But—and this is the point we wish to emphasize—all the work that is done will not lead to spiritual victory, if the grace of God do not operate in the hearts of those gentiles. Stronger still, no real mission work can be done without the grace of God. By grace and by grace only the victory is won.

The word grace is one of the most significant words in the Pauline epistles. It denotes the love of God toward guilty sinners, toward such as did not keep His law but rather trampled on His commandments; a love that finds its moving cause not in man, but in the good pleasure of God Himself. That this grace of God is the determining element in the spiritual conquest of the world, becomes perfectly evident, when we bear the following points in mind.

In the first place it was the grace of God that supplied the Saviour. Why did God send His only Son to save us from death? Was it because we were worthy of it? Was it the result of our good works?—Most assuredly not. In justice God might have left us without a ray of hope. But in love He wanted to save us from death even after we had shown ourselves unworthy of His blessings. He gave His Son for us in death, that we might live forever. Paul says of him that He hath called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which

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was given us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. 2 Tim. 1:9. In Christ the grace of God opens up the way that leads into the inner sanctuary, the way that leads to God Himself. There was a way leading to God revealed in the Old Testament by which the pious Israelite might enter into communion with God. It was the way of shadows and ceremonies, of priesthood and tabernacle, a symbolical way, that could not itself in reality lead to God, but that pointed beyond itself to the way that would be opened in Christ Jesus. And when He came, He spoke that majestic word: "I am the way and the truth and the life." This way is the most precious fruit of the grace of God.

In the second place it is the grace of God through which the workers in God's vineyard, the soldiers of the cross are called. Paul says: "By Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His Name," Rom. 1:5. And again he says in the epistle to the Galatians that God called him by His grace. The same holds true with respect to every worker in the Kingdom of Heaven. They are called of God to their responsible task. And it is this heavenly calling that makes them willing to deny themselves in many respects, to suffer hardship, if need be, and to battle with manifold difficulties. It is the call of God that gives them courage to forth into the darkness of heathendom to contend with the powers of evil, for they know that, when they are doing God's behest, He is on their side. Not only does God call the laborers to their work, He also qualifies them for their important task, and enables them to overcome sin in the lives of others and to solve the problems that confront them. The great apostle of the gentiles says: "By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God that was with me." That word of the great Paul is re-echoed in the heart of every true missionary: "By the grace of God I am what I am." And they too realize that, when they labor abundantly, it is the grace of God that brings the results. When difficulties are found in the missionaries way, and they often are many, it is again the

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grace of God that strengthens His servants. How would Paul have been able to stand all the abuse and the persecutions to which he was subject, if the grace of God had not been his continual strength?—When darkness prevails, when the storm-laden clouds gather thick and fast, when insurmountable difficulties seem to obstruct the way, then God speaks to the troubled heart of every missionary, as He spoke to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

In the third place it is the grace of God that opens the purses of those that support the missionary work. He whose heart is not touched by the love of God will not *give* for missions. It is true that many are found in the present day who support the work in heathen lands, while they themselves have experienced nothing of the grace of God. Some of them do it from purely humanitarian motives; others for commercial reasons. They were able to figure out that it was a good investment and would yield rich material returns. But it can hardly be said that they give for missions. The work cannot rely on them, but only on the liberality of such as have burning within their hearts the love of God, and feel constrained either to give themselves to the Lord and His work, or to support those that are battling against sin in heathen lands. Their purses have been opened by the grace of God. Once more we quote Paul: “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, for to their power, I bear record, yea and beyond their power they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministry of the saints.” Missionaries need never fear for their support, as long as there are hearts in which the grace of God is operative.

In the fourth place it is the grace of God that opens up the fields and that ensures the harvest. When Barnabas came at Antioch, he saw the grace of God and was glad, exhorting all that with a purpose of heart they would cleave

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unto the Lord. An important field had been opened, destined to become a great center of evangelization. Thus we often find that God in some way by His grace blazons the way for the messengers of peace. And when they sow the seed in obedience to their heavenly Lord, they may rest assured that the grace of God will make it fruitful unto life everlasting. Through grace those among whom they labor are made to believe; through grace they are justified. It is the grace of God that leads them on in the way of sanctification, and that at last gives them entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Whatever victory there is won, will be victory through grace.

We find, therefore, that in the spiritual conquest of the world we are dependent in every way on the grace of God. Now what must we do to win the victory for which our heart so much longs?—We must work, most assuredly; our missionaries must labor diligently. To them who languish no victory comes. Above all, however, we must pray for ever increasing grace. Pray for more grace in the hearts of those that are in the Church at home that they may go to gentile lands, or may freely give and abundantly support the work. Pray for an increase of God's grace for our missionaries that they may abound in love and wisdom and courage. Pray for abundant grace in the hearts of the gentiles that all the nations of earth may come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South to do homage to Christ as King. Then an ever increasing victory will be ours, and every day will bring us nearer to the final victory, when the grace of God will be magnified by the Hallelujahs of the millions great and small redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

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