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## EDITORIAL

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*Our Book Review Department.*—Not a few of our readers testify that our book reviews, under the able direction of our Book Editor, Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson, are becoming increasingly valuable. Our subscribers are greatly interested in good religious books; and the REVIEW is trying to direct their attention to the best books by giving in each issue discussions of current religious books. For example, in this number are to be found reviews of sixty-five books by twenty-four leaders in the Southern Presbyterian Church.

In a letter to the Editor-in-Chief, Rev. Charles G. Gunn, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bluefield, W. Va., suggests that the faculties of our theological seminaries and Assembly's Training School unite, in co-operation with the Committee of Religious Education, in mailing out to our ministers and church workers each month a MONTHLY BULLETIN OF BOOKS, wherein are given reviews and discussions of the best current religious books.

In reply to Mr. Gunn's suggestion we desire to call attention to the fact that in the UNION SEMINARY REVIEW we already have such a book bulletin—issued not monthly, but quarterly, which, we think, is often enough. At present our Book Review Staff is composed of the faculties of our four theological seminaries and the Assembly's Training School, and in addition thirty-two of our leading ministers and educators. Let each one of our ministers, who desires to keep abreast of current religious thought, subscribe to the REVIEW, \$1.50 a year—and Mr. Gunn's problem will be solved. Mail

## THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH.

*Illustrated from the Acts of the Apostles.*

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Southern Presbyterian Church.*

This is a most vital theme. Prayer is a venerable institution, as old and universal as the human spirit. We read away back in the beginning of the race: "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." At the same time prayer is a virile institution, as new and unique as the needs of yesterday and today.

I would not attempt to define prayer. I might illustrate it by saying that it is the trolley which connects the car with the power which surges through the wires overhead. As long as that connection is maintained unbroken there is nothing that can prevent the onward movement of the car. It is only as that connection is broken or interfered with that the movement is stayed.

All around and above us is the great surging power of God. Prayer is our means of contact with that power. There is nothing on earth that can stay the progress of the church or individual that keeps unbroken that connection with God in prayer.

The church is God's institution here upon the earth. It is here to do His work. It can do it only as it keeps unbroken communion with Him in prayer. Can there be then any more important thing for us to consider than: The Place of Prayer in the Church. It is my purpose to try to illustrate this by the place of prayer in the New Testament Church as we find the record in the Book of Acts.

There are six vital divisions in the Book of Acts and to group these is to have the map of the Book before one's mind. For the sake of ease of memory let us call these: Pentecost—

Persecution—the persecutor turned Preacher—Peter opening doors of the church to the Gentiles—Paul and Barnabas separated to the Mission work of the Church—Paul and Silas taking the Gospel into Europe by way of Philippi. These six things express in a broad way every feature of the Church's life, Spiritual power, obstacles, individual conversion, extension, enlarging work and Missions. And in each of them you will find that prayer plays a large part. Shall we look at them in order?

First, Pentecost: 1:13-14 and 2:1-4. Pentecost spells spiritual power. It is the birthday of the Christian Church. It was born in prayer. Consider the situation: Christ was gone. To a handful of disciples He had said: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Who are they to whom this is said? Fishermen; tax collectors; zealots and undistinguished men. What was their task? To be His witness unto the Jews, who had neglected Christ; unto the Greeks, the philosophers of the world and unto the Romans, powerful and idolatrous—"antagonistic Jew; sophisticated Greek; idolatrous Roman". What chance of success had they? Humanly speaking, none. But His instruction to them had been to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endowed with power (*dunamis*—"dynamite") from on high. In obedience to these instructions we are told that they came together in that upper chamber—the eleven, "and these all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with the brethren". And what happened? 2:1-4, and what was the result? 2:41-42-47. The spiritual dynamite which brought such results was in answer to prayer.

Negatively stated: No prayer, no power, no spread of the gospel, Christ's Mission a failure. Positively stated: prayer; power; conversion. Is this unique? Once and no more? Might it not be every day if the Church had learned to "tarry"?

Is the world any more indifferent? Is iniquity any more abounding? Are the odds against the Church any greater than in the days of persecuting Jews, scoffing Greeks and idolatrous Romans? The Church has forgotten how to "tarry". Plan-

ning is more to us than praying. We organize rather than agonize. We polish up the mechanism instead of praying up the membership. We will never have results until we learn to pray—for it is prayer that releases the dynamite that brings spiritual power.

Second, Persecution: 4:1-31. No individual, no church will amount to anything that does not have to face some difficulty. What Jacks says of the individual is true of the Church: "It is when his circumstances are easiest that he gives the poorest account of himself, and the best when he is fighting against odds."

The church in Jerusalem was having a good time. Three thousand converted—the Lord adding to them day by day those that were being saved—praising God, having power with the people. "Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth" were being forgotten. The Church had been sheltered as we shelter the tiny flame from the wind until it is well caught and then the fiercer the wind the more fiercely does it burn. So now God stirred them up by persecution—scattered them abroad and "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word".

Oh Church of America, safe, protected, self-satisfied, wrapped up in your comfortable and luxurious surroundings, it might be well for thee if God would stir you up by the fires of persecution. But how did the persecutions begin and how did the Church meet them?

They began just after Peter and John, going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, had given healing to the lame man at the beautiful gate of the Temple, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. As a result of this miracle of healing they were arrested, imprisoned, threatened, and charged: "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus". But they took the matter to God in prayer with one accord—"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together (the dynamite of God was there); and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." The boldness that came with prayer.

Arrested again and beaten, they went their way rejoicing

that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for His name. And every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ. When Stephen was stoned he called upon the name of the Lord, saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit—and lay not this sin to their charge." So their difficulties and persecutions were met in the spirit of prayer; there was softness and tenderness of heart, sweetness of spirit; and instead of despondency and failure there was success glorious and shining. So would it be in the Church today if we met our difficulties in the same spirit.

A little later on there came another crisis. Peter has stood as the bold spokesman of the little apostolic band. Herod has already killed James and now he lays hold on Peter (12:3-4). Four quaternions of soldiers—chains—iron gates—between Peter and liberty! What chance has he? There is no arguing against quaternions of soldiers augmented by chains and an iron gate, padlocked, barred, and bolted, right across your path. You can neither coax or cow it into yielding. But there is a silent dynamite that can break chains and open iron gates, though none may hear. The writer of Acts has a keen sense of contrasts: 12:4-5. "But"—"Prayer". Peter lay sleeping between two soldiers bound with chains, whilst the keepers before the door kept the prisoner. He expected that his next visitor would be the headsman; and while he waited for the executioners there came an angel—his chains fell off his hands and he was led by the angel past the first guard, past the second guard and through the iron gate that led to liberty, which appeared to open of its own accord.

It did look like it. I visited once a great factory—the machines were marvelous. As you watched the needles move in and out and saw the pattern grow it really looked as though the thing was bewitched. They seemed to be doing it of their own accord. But my guide said, "Would you like to see the power house"? and he took me away from the busy looms to another building altogether, and there I saw the huge engines that drove everything. Neither looms nor needles work of their own accord, nor do iron gates.

A few minutes after the gates opened and the angel vanished,

Peter came to the house of Mary the Mother of Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And then Peter understood by what power the iron gates had opened, just as I understood, when I saw the engine room, how the great looms worked. The prayer meeting may not be artistic; just as there is little in the power room of a factory that appeals to the aesthetic sense. But when angels visit prisons and iron gates swing open of their own accord there must be a driving force at work somewhere. And Peter discovered it only when he suddenly broke in upon a midnight prayer meeting. Whatever iron bars or gates may be wound about an imprisoned individual or church, they will yield to the dynamite of prayer.

Third, Saul the Savage Persecutor becomes Paul the Saving Preacher: 9:1-30. Next to the resurrection of Jesus, the great outstanding miracle of the New Testament is that this man with all his inherited traditions, violent as a persecutor of the followers of Jesus (9:1-2), should as a preacher become equally as earnest in championing the cause of Jesus of Nazareth and count it an honor that men should mete out to him exactly the same treatment that he had been meting out to Jesus' followers. How account for the change! Vision and Prayer. I think an impression was made on his mind at the time of the death of Stephen (7:59-60), though he was consenting to his death. And now that he has seen the light from heaven and has heard the voice and wonders what he must do, God sends a man to him, saying, "For behold he prayeth". Then had the church rest when this man was changed from antagonist to supporter. Then began that marvelous career which ended only when he laid down his life for his Master in the Imperial City of Rome. Yes, in answer to prayer the Gospel has the power to change the individual life and empower it for the mightiest and most strenuous service. And one of the greatest and most significant things, as well as the most promising, that can be said of any man is: "Behold, he prayeth."

Fourth, The opening of the Church to the Gentile World: 10:1-48. Here we see the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile—that wall which had stood since the days when God called Abraham and made him

father of His covenanted people, 2,000 years before. A wall so high that if a Gentile ever got into the Church he must come through the gate of a Jewish proselyte. That wall was broken down in answer to prayer: The prayers of two men, widely separated from one another and who had no idea whither their prayers were leading or how they would bring them together. The one was Peter in Joppa on a housetop praying, with no idea whatever in his mind that the Gentile could come into the church on an equal basis with the Jew. But when a man is really praying he is apt to have his eyes opened to a good many things. May even find that God has some disagreeable things for him to do.

Then comes Peter's vision of the sheet filled with all kinds of beasts let down from heaven three times (10:9-16). Peter is much perplexed. There is a knock at the gate downstairs: men from Caesarea have come who tell of the visit of the angel to Cornelius, Gentile Centurion, announcing God's recognition of his alms and prayers and bidding him send to Joppa for Peter. Though Peter still does not understand—he goes—meets Cornelius and his household—preaches unto them Jesus—they all believed and were baptized. Thus the middle wall of partition 2,000 years old goes down with a crash and Peter sees that in the Kingdom of God there is no longer Jew or Gentile, but the Divine Spirit of God makes all one in Christ Jesus.

See how God works at both ends of the line; preparing Peter—preparing Cornelius. If you ever feel an impulse to speak to a man for Christ—go—you may be sure that the Holy Spirit has gone before and prepared the way for you. Prayer opens the door and breaks down walls.

Fifth. But the church has a larger work to do than just around its doors. There is an organized missionary work that needs to be done and men must be selected to man it. What the work is to be and the men who are to man it is made a matter of prayer, and to that little church at Antioch came the Holy Spirit, saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (13:2 and 3). The Holy

Spirit picked out the two best men they had: Barnabas and Paul.

The modern Church often wants to keep its best at home and thinks that anybody will do to send abroad—any kind of a second fiddle can go to the coal fields; to Korea; China or Africa. But it was the sending out of their best that brought back to that Church at Antioch a benediction that they could hardly overestimate. The Holy Spirit wants the Church always to put her very best on the altar. When she does that, then to the church will come so great a blessing that the cup of the church shall run over. We ourselves are not happy in our Christian living and the church does not prosper and spread abroad because we give to it only the fag end of our time, any spare change we may have—instead of our first and best. We have not made it a matter of prayer.

Sixth. Then comes the last vital event of the Book: The crossing of Paul into Europe, or the carrying of the Gospel into the great foreign field. 16:9-34.

The story is very familiar: Paul at Troas; vision of "the man of Macedonia"; conclusion of the apostle; divine call; swift departure from Asia and the crossing over to Philippi. What a gigantic task for the little company to go invading Europe with no sword, shield, spear or bow. But they have something more powerful—the prayers of the church behind them, the beckoning vision before them and the dynamite of God within them. And they will succeed.

The first place this little band went when they reached Philippi was down by the riverside, where they heard a little company was accustomed to meet for prayer. That was the divine arsenal more powerful than shot or shell. And there was a conversion there that day; Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened that she hearkened to the things spoken by Paul. And there will always be conversions wherever the word is spoken in an atmosphere of prayer. Where there are no conversions you may be sure that the preacher's hands are not upheld in prayer.

The next we hear of the little missionary band, its two leaders, Paul and Silas, are in jail because they opposed unjust and unlawful gains on the part of the authorities. But were they



discouraged and beaten? Not a bit of it. They still had some of the dynamite of God in their bosoms—and at the midnight hour Paul and Silas sang and prayed, and when that dynamite was unloosed the old prison walls were shaken, doors were opened and stocks were loosed and souls were saved.

Ah, when will the church learn that more important for her missions than dollars and cents are the prayers of the church, which release the dynamite of God under which heathen systems heavy with age will tumble to pieces.

So we find that every step of that early church, begun in prayer, was taken and continued in prayer. And it is not to be wondered at that it soon spread through all the regions round about. The church of today will be a powerful church—a prevailing church, a conquering church, a missionary church as it is a praying church, and not otherwise.

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## THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF STONEWALL JACKSON.

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 Seminary, Louisville, Ky.*

We cannot understand the religious character of Stonewall Jackson without considering his heredity, training and profession.

By birth he comes from the sturdy, stout Scotch-Irish strain, as tough and enduring mettle as the human race in its history has yet developed. Of Lowland Scotch extraction, his ancestors settled in the Province of Ulster in the North of Ireland; from which the American immigrant sailed in 1748, settling in the mountain fastnesses of the Alleghany wilderness in old Virginia. The family prospered in the new world. "Judge, senators and soldiers upheld the honor of the name and proved the worth of the ancestral stock." A letter in the possession of General Jackson's nephew, Thomas Jackson Arnold, of Beverly,