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A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

Psalm 109, v. 4.

"But I give myself unto prayer."

WHEN the alluring world invites
My soul its good to share:
I'll seek thy gracious favour, Lord,
'I'll give myself to prayer.'

When urged by Satan to presume,
When tempted to despair,
When lured into a treacherous calm,
'I'll give myself to prayer.'

When dark'ning clouds obscure my path,
When pressed with worldly care,
When friends forsake, and sins prevail,
'I'll give myself to prayer.'

When flesh and heart shall fail me, still
I'll to my God repair;
Yea, even in 'the vale of death,'
'I'll give myself to prayer.'

Nova Scotia Church History.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Baptists of Nova Scotia.

PERIOD II.

From A. D. 1784 to A. D. 1800.

LETTER VII.

VARIOUS METHODS OF CONVERSION.—THOMAS H. CHIPMAN'S EARLY EXPERIENCE.—HIS MINISTRY IN ANNAPOLIS.—HARRIS HARDING'S CONVERSION.—HIS ITINERATING LABOURS.—EXTRACTS FROM HIS LETTERS.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Every true christian has "passed from death unto life." He is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." The manner in which this change is effected varies exceedingly. In some, especially those who have been favoured with religious advantages from earliest childhood, the renewing process is often gentle and gradual; the individual begins to feel personally interested in the truth which he has all along known and received, and slowly grows up into a child of God, sometimes without being able to mention any time or place when and where the first impressions were produced. Others are struck with terror at the sight of their sins, and undergo great mental agony, driving them to the verge of despair. They experience a long "law-work," as it used to be called, groping in darkness after God—a darkness illuminated only by lightning-flashes of wrath, bringing to view the "fiery indignation" they have deserved. The deliverance from this dreadful state is commonly sudden, and is marked by "joy unspeakable and full of glory." In some instances the internal conflict is connected with a long and anxious strife between faith and scepticism. There is a third class of converts, whose convictions and deliverance are almost simultaneous, that is, a very short interval occurs between them. They are smitten down by the divine power, without previous preparation or warning, endure great distress, and after a brief struggle obtain a sense of pardoning mercy, always diffusing peace, and not unfrequently filling the soul with ecstatic gladness. In the recent revival in Ireland numerous instances of this kind have been witnessed. There are other varieties, which need not be particularised. "But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing unto every man severally as he will."

Ecclesiastical history shows us that the conversion of those men of God who have been eminently serviceable in his cause, and have left their mark on the times, has been generally distinguished by such experiences, as those noted in the second and third classes above-mentioned. The cases of the Apostle Paul, of Augustine of Hippo, and of Martin Luther may be referred to in confirmation of the statement. When God is about to perform a great work he prepares the instruments for it by a peculiar process, which infallibly secures the desired result. They are divinely educated for the positions and the duties assigned them.

All this may be affirmed of the founders of the Baptist Denomination in Nova Scotia. It will be instructive to observe the dealings

of God with them preparatory to their labours.

I have repeatedly mentioned the name of Thomas Handley Chipman. He had been engaged in the work several years at the commencement of the period now before us. The subjoined account of his conversion is extracted from a Memoir which appeared in the Baptist Missionary Magazine for October, 1831. The materials for the account were furnished by Harris Harding. I may previously observe that Mr. Chipman was born in Rhode Island, U. S., Jan. 17, 1756, and that the family settled in Cornwallis a few years afterwards.

"His impressions were received under the ministry of the Rev. Henry Alline. After labouring some months under deep and pungent distress, and striving to the utmost to commend himself to God, and to obtain acceptance, at least in part, by improving his heart and reforming his life, he was led to such a discovery of the entire depravity of his nature, that he was ready to conclude it must be impossible for him to be saved. In this state of mind he retired one morning to a sequestered place to which he had been accustomed to withdraw for prayer. When he had knelt down to call once more for mercy he perceived the enmity of his heart rising against God, and was overwhelmed with the awful apprehension that he would be immediately struck dead and sent to hell. He dared not open his mouth in prayer, but arose in the utmost anguish of soul. After walking in great distress for some time, his mind became a little more calm, and he again prostrated himself to pray; but the raging enmity of his heart, filling him with violent opposition against the sovereign power and authority of Jehovah, who would not, (as he thought) save him while he saved others, again presented itself, and drove him from his knees. He walked and wrung his hands in bitterness of Spirit, concluding that his case must be utterly hopeless, as he could not offer even one supplication for mercy. At length, almost in a state of entire despair, and seeing nothing before him but the prospect of eternal banishment from the divine presence, which he knew that he justly deserved, he fell on his knees the third time, when he suddenly felt a perfect calmness and submission to the will of God; all his former opposition to the divine sovereignty and his anxiety about his own salvation left him. He could then pray with freedom, and praise with joyfulness. He could cheerfully commit himself into the hand of God, to be disposed of according to his good pleasure, and entertained no fear but that Jesus would be his Saviour and righteousness, and would conduct him in safety to heaven. Although he did not suppose that he was then converted, yet he doubted not that he would be, and, losing sight of himself, rejoiced in the contemplation of the glories of the divine character, as manifested in the gospel salvation.

"In this happy frame of mind he continued for several days; but, beginning to inquire what was become of his distress, and whether he had been 'born again' or not, he was assailed with distressing fears that he had been deceiving himself, and that he was resting short of a saving interest in Christ.

His joy was now turned into mourning. For two or three months he remained generally in a state of anxiety and dejection. He could not recall his former convictions and fear of punishment; nor could he wholly divest himself of the hope that he had obtained; and yet he seemed confident, that he was still in 'the gall of bitterness,' and had only 'the hope of the hypocrite.' At intervals he would begin to enjoy the consolations of the gospel; but no sooner was his mind turned from the contemplation of the fulness and loveliness of Christ to an examination of his own state, than he would sink into his accustomed despondency. At length, as he was meditating one day with sadness on his condition, his mind was strongly impressed with the words of Job, (chap. xiii. 15.) 'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' All his doubts were immediately removed, and he was enabled to adopt this language, which seemed exactly suited to his case, with such confident reliance upon Christ, that his mind was filled with joy and peace in believing."

The brethren soon perceived that Mr. Chip-

man possessed gifts for the ministry. His own warm heart dictated the service of the Lord as his appropriate life-work. After his settlement in Upper Granville, he laboured abundantly throughout the whole county of Annapolis. For some years he was the only minister in his connexion in that County. Though the church over which he presided was composed of Congregationalists and Baptists, there can be no doubt that he administered baptism during all that time in the primitive manner, and in no other. I am happy to be able to state, on the best authority that he escaped the contagion of the "New Dispensation" madness. His preaching consisted of "words of truth and soberness," and in the management of church affairs he followed the divine rule as closely as the constitution of the society at that time would allow.

Harris Harding comes next, under notice. He was born at Horton, Oct. 10, 1761, and was converted under Henry Alline's ministry when he was in his twenty-second year. From some allusions to that event in letters written several years afterwards it may be inferred that he experienced much anxiety and distress ere he found peace in Christ. Writing to his friends in Cornwallis, Aug. 23, 1791, he says:—"My soul has wept and prayed in secret places for Cornwallis. There it was my soul first heard the voice of the Bridegroom. There it was my worthless name was written in the records of the everlasting gospel. And there, O my soul, have I 'anointed the pillar,' and left my eternal vows, and sworn by the mighty God of Jacob, that if he would be with me in the way that I go, and bless me, and return me again there, to my father's house in peace, the Lord should be my God. You are his witnesses, my dear, dear brothers and sisters, of what he has done for my soul, when my life drew near the grave, my iniquities overwhelmed me, I sunk in a place where there was no water, and my soul failed for thirst. Then it was I first heard the joyful sound, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.'" In another letter, addressed to "Asa Dewey, at Cornwallis," dated the 25th of the same month, he refers to the fact that it was in his house he first enjoyed the love of God. Thus he writes:—"Dear brother and sister, you felt many groans for my redemption, and often wept over my sinking soul before Jesus appeared for my help. But glory to the Lamb that was slain!—although my feet had well nigh slipped he has now set them on the rock that never can be moved. Although the star appeared before, yet it was under your roof where the sun arose upon my soul. I shall never forget it. I believe it is recorded in the book of life."

Ardent, affectionate, full of zeal, and largely endowed with the gift of utterance, he entered forthwith on the ministerial life, and was busily engaged for several years in itinerating efforts. He visited repeatedly all the places in which Mr. Alline had preached. His correspondence during that period, which has been in part preserved, enables us to trace his movements. It is probable that he laboured chiefly, for three or four years, in Horton and Cornwallis. We find him at Chester in 1788; in Annapolis County in 1789; at Onslow and Amherst, in 1790; at Liverpool, Shelburne, Barrington, Argyle, and Yarmouth, in 1791. He remained at the last-mentioned place and its neighbourhood till the Spring of 1792, and witnessed a great revival. Thomas Handley Chipman was sent for to organise the converts into a church which was formed upon the same plan as his own, of a union of Congregationalists and Baptists. Perhaps it was at that time that these two brethren were compelled to remain in the woods all night, without food, or any shelter but such as the trees afforded them. They had reached Beaver River, but it was too late in the evening to attempt crossing it, so that they were under the necessity of remaining where they were till the next morning. Mr. Harding was accustomed to relate this incident with great feeling, telling how happy they were in their communings on spiritual subjects; and how, in his affectionate care for his companion he took off his own coat and threw it on him while he slept on the ground.

Impartiality requires me to state that in the first years of his ministry Mr. Harding

was not so clear and settled in his religious sentiments as was to be desired. In fact, at that time, there was much more good feeling than accurate thinking among pious people in this province. Mr. Harding partook also of Henry Alline's indifference to christian ordinances. The Church at Horton were so dissatisfied that a vote was recorded, Sept. 13, 1787, to the effect that they could not "fellowship him as a preacher of the gospel of Christ." Many years passed away before he came upon Baptist ground. Meanwhile, the Lord blessed and honoured him.

From a collection of letters in the possession of brother Bennet of Windsor, who has kindly placed the whole in my hands for the purposes of this history, I take the following extracts, arranging them in the order in which they were written. You will observe the fervour of the good man's style and manner, and the peculiar use which he makes of the language of the writers of the Old Testament.

Horton, April 7, 1788. To Jacob Brown, Falmouth. "Some of the saints I have heard blowing their trumpets of salvation, and crying, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' In Cornwallis, the power of God shakes the whole place. Numbers are pricked in their hearts, crying, 'save, or I perish.' Mr. Lockwood, I think, has found the Lord God of Elijah. One or two more have found a hope, but, I fear, not a Christ."

Chester, July 24, 1788. To the same. He addresses him as his "dear, dear brother in the slaughtered Lamb."—"The kingdom of God has come to Chester; to one soul in particular, I believe, who was one of the most abandoned wretches in the place, but now feels little else but heavenly joys continually. He was converted before I came. Jesus meets with us. The christians rejoice, and some sinners tremble."

Annapolis, May 14, 1789. To Thaddeus Harris, Cornwallis:—"to be communicated."—"I know it rejoices your souls to hear of the prosperity of Zion. Therefore I could not refrain from letting you know that the mighty God of Jeshurun has girded his sword upon his thigh, and is riding in the flaming chariot of Israel like a glorious conqueror. His majesty and power are seen among the inhabitants of Annapolis. Some have felt his dying groans reach their despairing souls of late. Some of the great in the world's esteem bow, and I can but believe melt down before the everlasting gospel of a despised Jesus. Col. Delaney's daughter and some others at the lower end of Annapolis are under distress of soul. I must stay a little longer, for my Lord is bringing them home, I think. O bear me on your minds to Jesus, that I may have strength of soul to sound the trumpet of salvation. * * I feel, I feel my soul strengthened by the Lord God of Elijah, and am determined to know nothing but Christ here. Amen. * * I am, dear pilgrims, yours eternally in the righteousness of Christ."

Liverpool, July 9, 1791. To Mr. Edward DeWolfe, Horton. "The christians in Chester seemed to awake, and sinners to be moved in some degree. I found God with me almost every time I spoke. I stayed but a few days and then in my Master's name, I can say, I set out for Liverpool, with high expectations of seeing the place filled with the glorious presence of God. While the vessel was sailing into the harbour, I was so overcome with a sense of the gospel that I could hardly walk the deck. * * As the people were then gathering for meeting, I soon had an opportunity of declaring my Master's message to a large assembly. I think I had not spoken but a few minutes before numbers rejoiced, and cried so loud that my voice could not be heard; while the most of the old christians stood by, wondering, or silently weeping, and looking on. * * I soon found my dear Lord had something else for me to do in Liverpool than speak peace and rejoice with every one; and after I had insisted on their saying 'Shibboleth' before they passed over, some were immediately offended; others without trouble quitted their religion and turned to the world. I think there are six or seven, among near thirty who professed, that are savingly converted."

Further extracts in my next

Yours truly,

March 29, 1860.

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