

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES,
Vol. XI, No. 13.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 1866

WHOLE SERIES,
Vol. XXX, No. 13.

Religious.

CONVERSION.

BY PROF. G. HOY.

Many persons seem to labor under the impression that conversion is a mysterious process, altogether beyond the comprehension of human reason, and altogether beyond the reach of human interference. They imagine that God, by his own miraculous power, takes a sinful man and makes a Christian out of him, just as he would speak a new world into being, in some far-off region of space, by a fiat of his omnipotence. The wonderful instances of conversion which are often given in books and papers, and the more wonderful experiences which are sometimes related in our hearing by imaginative and uneducated persons, like "Awful Gardner," while they may be real in themselves, yet are fitted in some respects, to say the least, to exert a questionable influence upon the popular mind and heart. They divert men from the simple, childlike duties which lie right in their path, and lead them to look for some startling display of divine power—to wait for some miraculous interposition of Providence in their behalf. Now I may be wrong in my opinion, but it seems to me that there is no more mystery, no more miracle, in man's conversion than there is in any well defined, voluntary act of his life. The consequences may be more vital and far-reaching, but the process is no more complicated than that of a thousand acts in our every-day life upon which we do not bestow a thought. A circle is a very simple curve. Almost any school boy would undertake to describe one on the blackboard, without the slightest hesitation. But yet, if we examine the matter closely, we find that in striking a circle rapidly by the crayon, there must be at least four different muscles set in motion by a single volition, two acting together and in different directions at the same time, and all accelerating and retarding their motion by peculiar laws. The school boy does not stop to consider the physiological or psychological difficulties in the case; but he sees in his mind's eye the curve which he would form, and a single impulse of the will sends the pencil along the waving outline. It is his will which gives the impulse, but it is a higher will working in him and through him, which carries out the action. Just so are we to work out our salvation, remembering that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. The overwhelming thought in every case of voluntary action, whether it be the describing of a circle on a blackboard, or a turning from sin to holiness, is this, that the guidance of God's power is entrusted to us, is made subject to our will. It may seem strange to us that God should do this; but the fact that he has done it, we demonstrate to ourselves every step we take. God commands us to repent and be converted. Now we can repent and turn to him, or else he has demanded us to do an impossibility. We can forsake sin and do the works of Christian men and women, or else God's requirements are too difficult to be understood or obeyed. We are away from God and duty, we are straying farther and farther. Shall we wander on until our feet stumble on the dark mountains, or shall we return? A turning back is conversion, as its name implies. There must be a change of purpose, a stern resolve, the highest exercise of the will, or else there will be no turning back, no conversion. One implies the other. A truant child, some summer afternoon, leaves home and strolls over the fields and along the river. He loosens a boat which he finds from its fastenings, and floats down the stream. He does not realize, as he looks at the flowers on the margin, and listens to the songs of the birds in the meadows, where he is and whither he is tending; but at length he comes to himself. No matter what brings him to himself. It may be the coming of night; it may be the cry of wild beasts among the trees which begin to overhang the banks of the river; it may be the sound of a cateract growing more and more distinct and terrible in his ears; it may be the thought of home. It is of no consequence whether it be one or all of these.—There is just one thing for

him to do, and he does it. He turns his boat, and with the prow up the stream, he plies the oars like a man, and is saved. The duty of the child in the case supposed is the duty of every one who is conscious that the distance is widening between him and a heavenly home. The great difference between the converted and the unconverted man is here: the one is rowing up stream; the other is floating down. The Christian may make poor progress in his course,—his boat, like Virgil's, may oftentimes drift down with the current; but if he be a true Christian, his hand will always be on the oar, and the prow always turned toward the fountain head. The new convert should not expect his "experience," as it is called, will be like that of everybody else, or of anybody else. No two faces are alike in any audience; no two trees are alike in the woods; no two blades of grass in the field. So no two human minds are so constituted as to be affected in the same way, by the same truths. If our experience be genuine, it will be just such a one as is appropriate to us, and to nobody else. It matters not if you cannot tell just when you became a Christian, I do not suppose one Christian in twenty could do it. If we sow a handful of wheat in our garden, we could not tell, though we watched it ever so narrowly, the exact moment when it germinated. But when we see the waving grain in the autumn, we know it did germinate, and that is all we care for. The young disciple should not expect too much light at once. It will grow brighter with ever Christian duty he performs. The Christian life is a sort of mountain path; and the higher one climbs, the clearer the atmosphere; and the sooner he will see the morning sun. To the adventurous traveller who has ascended to the summit of Mont Blanc, the sun rises earlier and sets later, and the night is therefore shorter, than to the peasant who lives down in the valley at its base. So it is in the Christian life. Clearness of vision, and firmness of foot, and beauty of prospect, come only to those who have struggled up to the heights—to the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Conversion may be the work of a moment, but a saint is not made in an hour. Character, Christian character, is not an act, but a process; not a sudden creation, but a development. It grows and bears fruit like a tree, and like a tree it requires patient care and unwearied cultivation.—N. Y. Independent.

Dr. Lyman Beecher.

WHY HE WASN'T A FARMER.

H. B. S. Well, father, how did it happen that you did not become a farmer? I should like to know. Uncle Benton had not cleared a fifteen-acre lot, and I driven a plow over the whole three times. He always meant I should be his heir, and have the homestead, and be a farmer as he was. I wish you could see his old plow: it was a curious thing of his own making—clumsy, heavy, and patched with old hoes and pieces of iron to keep it from wearing out. That plow is the most horrible memorial of that time.

If that plow could tell the story of my feelings it would be a development. Uncle Lot, however, thought a great deal of it. One day I drove the ox-team so as to grab it with the wheel.

There, there, Lyman, you've run over that plow, and broke it all to pieces.

Why, Uncle Lot, I have n't touched the plow.

Well, I'd a great deal rather you had than to have gone so plaguy high it.

Now I am naturally quick, and that old plow was so slow—one turn round a little way, and then another—and the whole fifteen acres three times over, some of it steep as the roof of a house. I became impatiently sick of it. What should I do, then, but build castles in the air. First I knew I could do as good ahead, and the plow out, and Uncle Lot would say, "Whoo!" and come and give me a shake.

Not long after the job was finished, Uncle Benton and I were walking together over to Taker Hill, and I had got so used to driving that I fell in a brown study, and kept saying, "Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!" as if the oxen were along.

"Why, Lyman," said Uncle Lot, did you think you were driving the oxen?"

It was then, I believe, he gave up. Next day we were out behind the barn, picking up apples.

"Lyman," said he, "should you like to go to college?"

"I don't know, sir," said I. But the next day we were out picking apples again, and without his saying a word, I said, "Yes, sir, I should." So he drove over to New Haven, and talked with father, and they settled it between them. Uncle Lot was to clothe me—Aunt Benton could make nearly every thing—and father was to do the rest.

HIS RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

Being asked by his son Charles what religious training he had, he answered—

"We always had family prayers; and I heard the Bible read every morning. Aunt Benton became pious when I was about ten. I remember Parson Bray's coming to see her, and talking about 'inability.' I never heard Parson Bray preach a sermon I understood. They say everybody knows about God naturally. Alas! All such ideas are by teaching. One Sunday evening I was out playing. They kept Saturday evening, and children might play on Sunday evening, as soon as they could see three stars. But I was so impatient I did not wait for that. Bill H. saw me, and said, 'That's wicked; there ain't three stars.' Don't care, I don't care, I don't care. God says you must n't. Don't care, I don't care. He'll punish you. Well, if he does, I'll tell Aunt Benton. Well, He's bigger than Aunt Benton, and He'll put you in the fire and burn you forever and ever."

That took hold. I understood what fire was, and what forever was. What emotion I had thinking, No end! No end! It has been a sort of mainspring ever since. I had a good orthodox education, was religious-minded, conscientious, and had a settled fear of God, and terror of the day of judgment. Conscience, however, only troubled me about particular sins. I knew nothing about my heart. For instance, I got to pulling hair with Alex. Collins' one training day, and Granny Rossiter told Aunt Benton, "I'm afraid Lyman's been a fighting." I felt so ashamed, as if I had lost my character.

Curious now, this thing of personal identity. Here I am now, an old man, telling you this story about a little boy; and yet I feel that I am the same person now that I was then.

HIS RELIGIOUS AWAKENING.

One day, as we were sitting at home, mother looked out of the window, and saw a drunkard passing. "Poor man," said she, "I hope he'll receive his punishment in this life. He was under conviction once, and thought he had religion; but he's nothing but a poor drunkard now."

There was no perceptible effect from these words, only after she left the room, I felt a sudden impulse to pray. It was but a breath across the surface of my soul. I was not in the habit of prayer. I rose to pray, and had not spoken five words before I was under a deep conviction as ever I was in my life. The sinking of the shaft was instantaneous. I understood the law and my heart as well as I do now, or shall in the day of judgment. I believed, the commandment, name, sin revived, and I died quick as a flash of lightning.

Oh, I thought, it's all over with me; I'm gone. There's no hope for such a sinner. Despair followed the inward revelation of what I had read, but never felt. I had never had any feeling of love to God, and all my affections were selfish and worldly.

His trial was long and severe. Working at his heart without outside help he halted long, though he states that his was what he should now call a hopeful, promising case. Finally, however, he found Christ. Election and decrees became less a stumbling block. I came in by that door, I felt reconciled and resigned, yet with stirrings of darkness and discontent, and a severe conflict whether it would be right for me to preach whether it would be right for me to preach which extended around my ordinary year.

One reason I was so long in the dark was I was under the influence of the doctrines, and had no views of Christ. They

gave me other books to read beside the Bible—nothing I have done practicing long since. For cases like mine, Brainerd's Life is a most undesirable thing. It gave me a tinge for years. So Edwards on the Affections—a most overwhelming thing, and to common minds the most entangling. The impressions left by such books were not spiritual, but a state of permanent hypochondria—the horrors of a mind without guidance, motive, or ability to do anything. They are a bad generation of books, on the whole. Divine sovereignty does the whole in spite of them. I was converted in spite of such books.

For the Christian Messenger.

PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING IMMERSION, INDEPENDENT OF THE MEANING OF THE WORD.—Matt. iii. 5, 6, 16. John iii. 23. Acts viii. 38. Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12. Baptizo, the word used in the above passages, is the word used to designate the ordinance in every passage of the New Testament, and means one thing. Had the inspired penman wished to institute any other mode, as sprinkling or pouring, the corresponding words *raio* or *cheo* were at their disposal. Why did they not use them?

PASSAGES TEACHING BELIEVER'S IMMERSION.—Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16. Acts ii. 38. 41. viii. 13, 38, 37, 39, 41, 47, 48; xvi. 33; xlii. 16. Strange—I cannot find any mention of Infant Sprinkling in the whole Bible.

COUNTRY PARSON.

Trucade, Guysborough County.

Dear Messenger.

The missionary visit of the Rev. D. G. Shaw, at Trucade, commencing on November the first, has been a great blessing to the church and congregation. A few weeks previous to his coming our church was in a dark benighted state, when the Rev. M. A. Bigelow, from Antigonish, visited us, and Brother C. Kennedy, from Guysborough, and removed some obstacles out of the way, that had hindered the progress of Zion, and "set them to right that had suffered wrong, feeding the hungry with the sincere milk of the word, and restored one wanderer to the fold of God. Brother Shaw came since. During his stay among us he baptized 28, and restored to church fellowship 25. I feel gratified in stating to you that among the number baptized there was one blind woman about 56 years of age, who set by the wayside begging, and hearing that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, asked what it meant. She cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," and was brought by the hearing of the Gospel to the foot of the cross, and has had her eyes anointed with eye-salve, and went to the Pool of Siloam, and washed, and returned seeing, with the eye of faith, glorifying and praising God for his wonderful works, wrought in her by his Holy Spirit. One Catholic woman who had been brought up from her infancy in darkness, and devoted a great part of her early life under the training of the Mother Abbess in the Convent at Trucade. She has renounced the errors of Popery, and has come forward and openly professed faith in Christ, and was baptized. She now can testify to her friends what the Lord has done for her. I rejoice to say the good work is still progressing. Since Brother B. left there have been four more come forward and testified what the Lord has done for them; they are waiting, and are willing to show their Divine Lord in the ordinance of Baptism. One wanderer has been restored to the fold, and there are signs of more coming. Rev. Joseph Murray, from Guysborough, has visited us on the 27th and 28th ult., and preached four sermons, but did not baptize on account of the converts not being present. Dear Brother, I sincerely hope the Home Missionary Board will not regret Brother Shaw's appointment, counting on the joy manifested by the brethren and sisters of this Church in general in coming up to duty. I trust his labors have not been in vain in the Lord. May the Lord bless and revive his charous universally, until the desert shall blossom as the rose.

Yours in bonds of Christian love,
EDWARD H. JORDAN, Clerk.

Trucade, March 1st, 1866.