

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

Inconsistency.

I pray, "Thy will be done!"
I strive to do;
I talk about the narrow way:
The broad pursue.

"As I forgive, forgive me, Lord,"
This is my cry:
While in my heart unpardoned wrong
Unburied lie.

I call myself a friend to Him,
The Crucified;
I lead a life of selfish ease;
He toiled and died.

When I should bear the heavy cross,
I lay it down:
Yet eagerly I long to grasp
The promised crown.

My good resolves, like blighted buds,
Drop from Life's tree:
The fruit that should my garden grace,
I do not see.

And still, with noiseless tread, the years
Glide swiftly by,
And near, and nearer do they bring
My time to die.

What record will these fleeting years
Bear up to Him,
Who dwells in glory mid the saints
And seraphim?

Is it of high and holy aims,
By weakness crost?
Of strivings after better things
Too quickly lost?

Of struggles 'gainst the tempter's wiles
When oft assailed,
These conflicts where my sinful heart
Has basely failed?

Alas! and is it yet too late
The prize to win?
Must I still yield myself to be
A slave to sin?

I lay my heavy burden down
At Jesus' cross;
The gain and honor of the world,
I count as dross.

"Thy will be done!"—again I pray,
O Father, hear!
Thou knowest all my weakness,—yet,
I do not fear.

—Congregationalist.

Religious.

The Training of Converts.

(Concluded.)

They need instruction in the Christian life. Upon this they have just entered, but of the laws by which it is regulated, they know but little. They are unacquainted with its varied experiences, and have not become familiarized with its conflicts, and struggles. They therefore need to know its principles, its motives, and habits. If they are allowed to remain in ignorance of these, then their Christian life will be dwarfed and unhealthy. If they are allowed to go wrong here, and now, they will be wrong always; but if we can now give them clear ideas of the principles involved, they will in all probability be kept right, and have a vigorous and rapid development. If they are now taught that by regenerating grace they are not what they were, that "old things have passed away and all things have become new," that they are "no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God," that they "are dead to the world, and that their lives are hid with Christ in God," then their growth will be healthy, because, it will have its root in the nutritious soil of entire consecration to Christ, they will feel they "are bought with a price and must therefore glorify God in their bodies and spirits which are His." If we can now persuade them that the new life pre-supposes a new and different character, both internal and external, that they have put off concerning their former conversation, the old man, who is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts;

have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and have put on the new man, who, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; if we can now convince them that religion is a growth, the unfolding of a germinal principle implanted by regeneration, "having its fruit unto holiness, the end everlasting life," that there is "first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear," then we shall be much more certain of securing their "growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If we now impress them with the radical distinction between "him who loveth and serveth God, and him who loveth and serveth him not," that the former must not "be conformed to the world, but must be transformed by the renewing of his mind, that he may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God," we shall take the most effective method of guarding them against the seductive influence of "the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things." They must be taught wherein consists the difference between the Christian, and all other men; that difference must be explained to them, and understood by them, or else the attainment of a high Christian life will not be possible nor can their real strength as Christians ever be brought out and made available to the various phases of its experience expounded. They must know what its difficulties, trials and peculiar temptation are or they will not be prepared for them. They must be taught the difference between the impulse of passion, and the stability of principle,—the uncertainty and unreliability of the former, and perfect safety of the latter—to build upon the latter and not give themselves up to the uncertain guidance of the former. As they are now upon the threshold of their religious life it is the time when we must inculcate right views of that life—when we must educate it so that they may "add to their faith virtue and to their virtue knowledge, and to their knowledge, temperance, and to their temperance patience, godliness, and to their godliness brotherly kindness; and to their brotherly kindness charity; for, if these things be in them and to them and abound, they shall be neither barren or unfruitful in the work of the Lord."

They need training in the methods of Christian work. These converts are enthusiastic; they are ready, because willing, to engage in all kinds of Christian labor. They do not need exhortations to activity. They want employment, and many of them long for an opportunity to be useful in the church and a blessing to their fellow-men. They have talents that may be used, means and abilities that may be made of inestimable value to the cause of Christ. Every one of them has the qualification to do something, and many of them may do much, but while they have the means to do and the energy to impel, yet they, in a very great degree, are deficient in the intelligence necessary to direct. Many, who have been for years members of our churches, having ability and possessing some valuable qualifications, have "buried their talent in the earth," or kept it "laid away in a napkin," who, had they been brought out, their qualifications ascertained, and an effort made to incite them to activity, might today be "shining lights," pillars of our churches and blessings to mankind. We cannot afford, brethren, to allow any of the qualifications possessed by those added us during the year to remain unemployed; but unless we look after them and, ascertaining the ability of each, set him at work in the vineyard, our churches will receive but a small amount of real strength from the revival in which they have so generally shared. But we must do more than assign to each his appropriate work. In order to render each most effective—the working forces of our churches must be harmonized.—As many a convert has never been of the least utility to the church, because never sought out and instructed where and how to work, so there are others who have in the exuberance of their zeal and overflowing of their first love, gone enthusiastically to work for Christ, who, instead of rendering any valuable aid, have rather injured the cause they meant to benefit, because they were not taught how to work, and did not labor in harmony with their co-workers. Their zeal which spent its

force in comparatively useless efforts, might have been made the means of accomplishing much, had a wise head, an experienced heart, and a steady hand, fully comprehending their qualifications for usefulness, looked out the right department for them to labor in, harmonized their labors with those of the entire body, and kindly instructed them in the most effective modes of Christian activity. Convinced that something must be done in order to develop the ability of our members, especially our young members, we have resorted to various plans, prominent among them, Young People's Associations. These have accomplished much, and may be made much more effective, but we shall never succeed in bringing out our entire working force, employing all for Christ, and using our numerous and varied resources to the best advantage, until every church led by her pastor, who shall be assisted by competent advisers, shall take the general superintendence of this work, and ascertaining the capabilities of each convert, assign him his appropriate place, instruct him in his work, and keep him in harmony with all his fellow-laborers.

They need instruction in their duties as church members. It is a painful fact that there are many connected with our churches who do not appear to comprehend their duties, or to feel their responsibility as church members. They do not recognize their brotherly relation "to the household of faith"; they do not feel themselves bound to sustain their pastor in his work, "to obey those who have the rule over them in the Lord, and admonish them, and esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake." They do not regard themselves as bound by vows the most solemn, and obligations the most inviolable, to comply with the provisions of the covenant to which they on being received gave their cheerful assent. They do not watch over their brethren, kindly "admonish one another" for their faults, give liberally of their "substance and of the first fruits of their increase for the cause of Christ," sustain their pastor by their prayers, and contribute cheerfully to his support, recognize and adequately respect him in his high office as a minister of the Lord Jesus, especially in his official relation to them as their spiritual overseer and guide. To whatever other cause or causes we may attribute this, no one will deny that it has arisen in a great measure from our neglect or unwarranted hesitancy to instruct persons on connecting themselves with our churches, in the special obligations assumed and peculiar duties growing out of their new and important relation. Some have assumed, perhaps, that the special obligations of any one becoming a member of the church, are now so generally known and so correctly understood that no instruction is necessary. But this is a mistake. Every one, on first connecting himself with the church, is comparatively ignorant of the nature of the duties the new relation upon which he has entered has brought with it. He knows, that as a matter of course, there are new duties, but he does not understand them, he requires to have them both explained and enforced, they must be clearly set forth and earnestly insisted upon, or else he will live in neglect of them, and the cause will suffer in consequence of his neglect. The converts we have received will follow in the steps of those they find in the churches; they will determine their course, if left to themselves, by the example in this respect that those who have preceded them may set, and if they are left without proper and timely instruction in this matter they will be like them, only they will recognize their duties with less distinctness. The complaint is common that our members do not understand their duties, and have no just appreciation of what is required of them, but this cause of complaint can only be removed by every pastor giving faithful elucidations of their duties, urging those duties upon them by all justifiable means, and then every church sustaining the teachings of its pastor by the enforcement of a kind but firm discipline, requiring of all its members their prompt discharge. If this be not done, these thousands who have recently been admitted to membership must remain in comparative ignorance of what is required of them, or if not in "comparative ignorance," they will be indifferent to their obligations and care nothing about their faithful perform-

ance. They must be taught that professing religion means much more than "belonging to church," that it imposes certain obligations that must be inviolably kept, and certain duties that cannot be ignored without criminality.

They need instruction in our denominational doctrines. Some of them no doubt examined the principles for which we contend, were satisfied they were true, and therefore they united with us from convictions of duty. They became Baptists because they could not be anything else without disregarding their convictions, but many were largely influenced by family connections and social affiliations; they gave those points on which we differ from our Christian brethren of other names, no special investigation, hence at best they have but slight convictions of their correctness.—They assumed that they were correct, but did not consult "the law and the testimony," in order to know for themselves and not depend merely upon the assertion of another. Hence many of them give but meagre and unsatisfactory reasons why they are Baptists and not Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Methodists. They know nothing of our denominational history and position, they do not understand the relation we sustain to the Pseudo-baptist world; they are ignorant of the value of our distinctive principles, and of the nature and importance of our special mission, as Baptists, to restore the ordinances to their primitive place and purity, and to bring back the visible church of Christ to those principles upon which He originally founded it. It is, therefore, indispensable that they have our denominational position intelligently defined, in order that they may clearly understand and be able to defend it whenever and wherever assailed. Is it not to be feared that we are giving too little attention to denominational training? that we are in danger of losing, in some degree, our denominational distinctiveness, and that our members generally have but very indefinite conceptions of our position and distinctive doctrines? Already we are beginning to suffer from this cause, and as God has increased us by the addition of thousands, we must suffer to a much greater extent if now, when we may so easily indoctrinate them, we allow them to remain without thorough information and ample training in all things by which we are distinguished from our fellow Christians. Never was there greater demand for this than now; never had we so much to gain by it as now, and certainly never before so much to forfeit as the penalty of our neglect. Our principles are conceded by our opponents; there is a growing conviction in their ranks of our conformity to the New Testament model and teachings; the tendency of thought among them is increasing in our favor; therefore for us to fail now is to neglect one of the grandest opportunities God in his providence has ever accorded to us. Our centuries of battling for the right, of struggle and persecution, of secular oppression, and ecclesiastical exclusion are now passed; an open door is before us, and if we now make intelligent and thorough Baptists of them we may, and certainly they will live to see more glorious victories, and rejoice in more extensive and decided conquests than our eyes have yet beheld; but this will not be if we are remiss in our duty; on the contrary, there will be declension, and we shall forfeit what we have won, as the penalty of our faithlessness in not discharging the obligations of our special mission.

It is our duty to instruct them. They naturally look to us for guidance. They expect us to be their examples in both word and doctrine. As their seniors in the Divine life, and their presumed superiors in the extent, diversity, and richness, of our Christian experience, acquaintance with the doctrines and knowledge of the duties of religion, they will look to us for instruction and they have a right to demand it. Their tuition is in our hands. They will be to a very great extent what we, by the religious culture we place them under, endeavor to make them; God has delegated this momentous responsibility to us, and if we fail, and they in consequence of our dereliction, are ignorant of Bible doctrines; of the nature of the Christian work; of their duties as church-members, and of our denominational position, we will be held accountable for this ignorance, and its results. If their talents are undeveloped, if the means