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Religious.

THE CARE OF CONVERTS.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE N. S. ASSOCIATION HELD AT NORTH SYDNEY, JULY 1ST, 3RD AND 4TH, 1871. TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

(By Rev. W. B. Boggs.)

Dear Brethren,—The subject which we present this year for our consideration is the *care of converts*. By this we mean the duty of instructing, training, and watching over those who are brought into our churches. We wish to show the importance of keeping what we gain—of caring well for the harvest which Divine grace at times gives us.

It is a recognized principle in worldly concerns that to *secure* is as important as to *acquire*; that to *gain* a position is not enough, it must also be *maintained*. Our churches gain many members whom they do not keep. Their names may be retained and their nominal adherence, but their influence and their assistance are not secured. It is a sad fact that many who profess conversion, and unite with our churches, soon after fall into indifference and neglect of duty, and instead of adding strength and influence to the church, become a reproach and hindrance. Our statistics do not represent our actual strength. A church containing fifty members, god-fearing men and women, holy and consistent in their lives, inspired with the spirit of the gospel, awake to the claims of Christ, and actively engaged in His service, is a *strong* church, and its mighty influence must be felt. But there are churches, with a nominal membership of hundreds, which are weak and unsuccessful. The reason is, that many of the members whom they gain, are not encouraged, and guided, and trained in Christian work. They are not carefully watched over, and their spiritual life nourished by the older members.

There would seem to be an idea in the minds of some, that the *one grand object* to be sought by the ministry and the churches is *simply the conversion* of souls, and their ingathering into the church. As soon as this is done, they are to a certain extent left out of sight. They are supposed to be safe, and therefore to need but little further attention. Judging from expressions which are frequently used we would conclude that this view is entertained by many. The addition of members is frequently spoken of as if it were the only sign of Church prosperity; and the truest evidence of a minister's usefulness seems to be, in the opinion of such, the rapid increase of his church. But internal life and health; the godly deportment, and Christian activity of those who have been gathered in, is true prosperity.

Probably the most perilous period of the Christian life is during the first few months succeeding conversion. It is then that fierce assaults are made by the enemy of souls to crush the buds of piety, so that there shall be no fruit; to nullify the profession so that its influence shall be lost. It is then that reaction is frequently experienced, the natural recoil from deep emotions and excited feelings. Deep feeling seldom lasts in its intensity and fervor, but gradually gives place to more subdued emotion. The novelty of the new and happy state passes away to a certain extent. And this is the most critical time in the Christian's career. The danger is that the rebound may be too far; that from the height of rapturous emotion, the mind may sink to the depths of indifference and inaction.

This then is the point where the earnest and persevering efforts of the ministry and the church should be specially employed. The object should be, to help those who have recently experienced the new life, to *retain* their interest in spiritual things, to *continue* in the enjoyment of religion, and to *go forward* to higher attainments.

And this is desirable, not only for the church and the cause of religion, but also for the converts themselves. While the church would gain much by the growth in grace of all who become members thereof, they would themselves also reap inestimable advantages. Solitude for the happiness, and spiritual welfare, of those who profess to be disciples of Christ, should lead to the exercise of a loving watchcare over them, and to the employment of means calculated to help them in overcoming the world, and living the life of the true Christian.

But how may this be done?

By *closely following up their conversion* with instruction, encouragement, guidance, and warning. We all admit the wisdom of following up good impressions. Many efforts are lost and much labor is oftentimes thrown away by the neglect of this. Now conversion is but the starting point of the Christian life. It should be regarded as the foundation, upon which a superstructure of holy deportment and Christian effort is to be built. The evidence of conversion may be perfectly satisfactory; the profession may be fair and promising; and yet for want of care and culture of the tender plant, there may be no growth, and no fruit.

This desirable result may be in part secured by *seeking to impress upon the converts the grave responsibility of the Christian profession*. They should be led to realize how solemn and important was the step which they have taken—how binding the vows which they have made—how high and responsible the position to which they have been raised. They should be shown that they are the sons and daughters of the Lord—that they have pledged themselves to be disciples of the great Redeemer—that they have come out from the world, and have entered the highest and holiest Society on earth. Probably much of the backsliding, inconsistency, and indifference which disfigure the lives of some who have professed faith in Christ, is the result of failing to realize the solemnity of the Christian profession. Let this great

truth then be kept before the recent converts, that they have voluntarily dedicated themselves to the Lord and to His service for time and eternity. And then we may expect to hear them say "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Again, the object in view may be attained by *rendering the services of religion as interesting and attractive as possible*. Not by toning down the doctrines, or relaxing the strict requirements of God's word, nor by doing away with the solemnity and holiness that become God's house and His service, but by throwing as much holy animation, and interesting truth into that service as possible: by endeavouring to show them that the services of religion need not be dull and irksome, but when rightly engaged in are full of interest and holy delight. The hearts of young converts are warm with the glow of their first love, and they feel sensibly the coldness of dull and formal services. They may be chilled and discouraged by lifeless exercises. Efforts should be made to awaken in them a thirst for religious knowledge, and then to satisfy that desire.

Another way to secure their growth and advancement is to *set them to work*. Spiritual idleness brings languor and disease. Let every convert have something definite to do and to think about in the church. It is unnecessary to point out ways in which this may be done. Active wide-awake minds, earnestly desiring the welfare of the church, will easily devise ways in which all the energies of the members may be employed. Those converts who immediately engage in the service of the Master become shining lights in the church, while those who have nothing particular to do, and are allowed to remain in this position, fall asleep spiritually and are lost to the church.

Another way of caring for the converts is to *keep up, as far as possible, an acquaintance with them personally*; thus being able to detect the first symptoms of spiritual decline, and to apply the remedy in time. They would also feel that they were regarded as of some importance in the church, and, being taken notice of, and their assistance sought, by the pastor, and older members, they would feel encouraged to engage with them in Christian work.

In these and other ways, it is eminently desirable, to make the most of all our acquisitions, and utilize all the church's resources.

Dear Brethren, we commend this subject to your prayerful attention, believing that when the church shall secure the ends herein suggested, she will more fully answer to the inspired description "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

DIGEST OF LETTERS TO EASTERN ASSOCIATION.

Amherst.—The spirit of harmony happily dwells among the members. No revival during the year. Nett gain 2. The benevolent contributions both to the objects of the Association and raised during the year very commendable. Three Sabbath Schools in operation, comprising 180 scholars, \$115 thus expended the last year.

Amherst Shore.—For a long time without a Pastor. Prayer, Conference Meetings and Sabbath School somewhat well sustained. No increase to membership.

Antigonish.—Church in a healthy state. Fruit of revival of previous year seen in increased attendance and interest of Sabbath School. Pastoral labor half the time. Social meetings, including a young peoples' meeting, well sustained. Benevolence of church, fair. Increase of church 3.

Brookfield.—Have reason to rejoice over a powerful revival of religion during the year, and to mourn over internal difficulties and their effects. Increase 36. Three Sabbath Schools, containing 83 scholars. Forty-one members of the church in the School, 260 volumes in Library.

Cape Canso.—No marked revival. Gain 2. Have lost during the year a very valuable member. Have a Sabbath School and Bible Class, 17 members of church in School. This church is the former spiritual home of Sister Norris. As a consequence, \$293 contributed during the year for Missions, and Sister Norris specially commended by that church to the prayers, sympathy and support of the denomination.

Cow Bay.—Pastoral labor part of time. The last year, in part at least, one of prosperity. A commodious and beautiful new Chapel dedicated the first Sabbath of 1871. The field promising, and the Harvest may be expected to be gathered in proportion to labor expended. This young mission church sends \$27 00 to Association, and has raised during the year \$600. Eleven members of church in Sabbath School. Increase to church membership 10.

Diligent River.—Pastoral labor one eighth, now one quarter of time. Large congregations and some hopeful conversions, conference and prayer meetings kept up, and a Summer Sabbath School. Members of church in Sabbath School one. Loss in church membership three.

Goose River.—Without regular pastoral labor; the loss felt very much. Thank ul that the church is at present in prosperous state; a more than usual interest in cause of Christ felt in the place. Social meetings good, 15 church members in Sabbath School, \$10 expended therein during the year. \$22.25 benevolent monies sent to Association, by a membership of 89. Numerical increase during the year 11.

Goshen.—Pastoral labor one-sixth of time, 3 baptized during the year. Letter indicates the church to be in a healthy state. Eleven members in Sabbath School. Increase of church 4.

Grand Mira.—"Faint yet pursuing." Cannot report any marked prosperity or declension during the last Associational year. Favored with occasional preaching and feel it refreshing. Endeavor to keep up a Sabbath service.

Great Village.—Still without a Pastor. Prayer and conference meetings kept up. Sabbath School regularly and well sustained. Loss in church membership 3.

Greenville.—Nothing special to communicate. Have met with an almost irreparable loss in the death of one of the standard-bearers. Yet have been graciously favoured with some additions in point of numbers and strength. Pastoral labor one-fourth of time. Interest in preaching and social services good. Sabbath School highly encouraging. Increase of church 6.

Guysboro and Manchester.—Without a permanent pastorate. The cause low; forty-nine of our church members removed or absent. Many of our members poor in this world. Loss in our church, aggregate 4. No Sabbath School reported.

Port Hawkesbury.—Nothing special to report, but that the church has

enjoyed the services of the Pastor, and that through his labors five hopeful converts have been added to the church. This church, with a membership of 41, sends \$30 to the Association, and appropriated during the last year \$390.65. No Sabbath School statistics.

Indian Harbor.—Are still favoured with untiring pastoral labor a part of the time. No extensive revival of religion, but manifest tokens of divine grace. Some seem cold and indifferent, but others manifest a growing desire to live holy lives, and earnestly contend for the faith. Conference, communion season, and prayer meetings comforting and soul-cheering, and maintained with energy. Two Sabbath Schools. Decrease of membership 4.

Little River, Cumberland County.—Letter evinces good Pastoral training and precious fruits of late revival. The interest of church much livelier and spirit better than for some years. Stated meetings regularly kept up and congregations good, three prayer meetings during the week. Both Sabbath Schools promising. 40 church members therein. 200 vols. in library. \$37 expended. Increase of church 1.

Lower Economy and Fies Islands.—Pastor with us quarter of the time. No marked revival, though two have been baptized. A good degree of union and devotional feeling manifested in church. Feel need of union of the Spirit. Sabbath prayer meetings well attended, also a Summer Sabbath School. In consequence of deaths, membership of church same as last year.

Lower Stewiacke.—Pastor half-time. Not so encouraging news to tell as in some past seasons. No accession to church during year, although not without unmistakable evidences that God has not forgotten us. One Sabbath School not so large as formerly, but very interesting. The other fully equal to the past attendance and interest. 29 in the Bible Classes, 15 professors in the schools, 290 vols. in library. Decrease in church 1.

Maccom.—Pastor half year. Congregations good, one new station occupied. The church very scattered. Cause not very prosperous, \$20 expended in Sabbath School. Decrease in church membership 7.

Margaret, C. B..—Feel deeply the loss of our former pastor and his partner. Some signs among us of a spiritual drought. Our Sabbath School and other exercises have lost much of their interest. Pray for us. Decrease of church 8.

Mira Bay, C. B..—The year with us has been one of seed-sowing, harvesting and sifting. Trust have been divinely directed in the painful duty of discipline, and that the result will therefore be to the glory of God and good of his church. Church and social meetings are sustained with some interest, yet feel the need of more quickening grace to overcome prevailing carelessness and worldly-mindedness. Our pastor with us half his time. \$40 sent to Association, \$311 appropriated during year. Four Sabbath Schools, 225 vols. in libraries. \$36 expended during year. Church has had an increase of 11, and decrease of 32. Nett loss 21.

Mount Pleasant and Centerville.—This church received into the Association only last year. Pastoral labor quarter time. A good degree of interest and much of the presence of the Lord felt with them. Are building a house of worship. Two Sabbath Schools. One baptized during year. Decrease of church 1.

Parsons Village.—Pastor quarter time. Increased interest in the church. Two added by baptism, others expected. Social meetings good. One Sabbath School.

Portauquique and Economy.—Pastoral labor quarter, now half time. Very much strengthened and encouraged thereby. Two baptized and others appear anxious. Prayer and Conference meetings well attended. Two promising Sabbath Schools. Church decrease 2.

Pugwash.—Occasional visits from a minister through whose instrumentality six have been added by baptism. Membership has, however, greatly decreased through removals. Prayer meetings regularly held on the Sabbath, but few living near enough to attend. Prayer often goes up for revival. Sabbath School reported. Have lost 28 (?) by dismission. Decrease 83.

River Philip and Glencille.—Pastor quarter time, need half, but his time taken up elsewhere. Cannot report same revival intelligence as last year, yet have enjoyed some refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Our church scattered. Are praying for another revival; for there is yet a large field to secure for Jesus. Two Union Sabbath Schools. Four baptized. Increase 4.

Sand Point.—Nothing of interest to communicate. No pastor, no preaching of late. Need help from the Board. Will help all we can to lessen the expenses of the Board. No church statistics, monies, or Sabbath School reported.

St. Ann's, C. B..—Occasional labors of pastor, also of a Licentiate Brother. No special revival, yet not without some mercy-drops. Four added after baptism. This is a hard field, but our trust is in the Lord. Meeting-house not raised, but are gathering materials. Sabbath School not in operation through absence of Superintendent. Increase of church 3.

St. Mary's First.—During the year have been happily preserved from disorder and disunion; but there is great need of spiritual-mindedness amongst us, also of having zeal. Dear brother, pray for us that we may not love but be less conformed to the world, and more conformed to the mind and will of God our Saviour. Have a hopeful Sabbath School.

St. Mary's 2nd.—Church somewhat revived of late. A good degree of union existing. Prospects seem to give promise of more spiritual prosperity than for some time past. An interesting Sabbath School. Pray for us that as a church we may raise the standard of piety higher by more holy life and practice. Increase 1.

South Bar, C. B..—Our growth not very rapid since recent organization, still believe there has been real progress. Father Richardson continues with us and breaks the bread of life. Are also favored with other pastoral labor. This young church is small and poor, but sends up \$17.50 to the Association. Has an interesting Sabbath School, engaged on series of Lessons prescribed by Baptist Teacher and Christian Messenger. Statistics of church last year should have been 15 instead of 21. Present number 23. Increase 8.

Sydney, C. B..—Two added by baptism. Can report some church-life, though not the special prosperity and increase of last year. Sabbath and weekly services, on the whole, well sustained. This church numbering 66, not one of whom is rich, had appropriated \$566.50 during year, and forwards \$141.40 to Association. Sabbath School adopted January 1871, the Lessons of Baptist Teacher.

Tracadie.—Without preaching for some time, and like sheep not having a shepherd. Still, our prayer and conference meetings are kept up. Thankful to our Heavenly Father that he remembers his church and people. This poor African church sends \$4 00 to Association, and reports a Sabbath School. Decrease 5.

Lyuro.—During past year the Gospel has been regularly and faithfully preached, the ordinances regularly observed, and prayer and conference meetings well sustained. But doubtless Christ has a few, perhaps many things against us, and our light has burned too dimly. We send \$175 to Association and have appropriated \$1000 during the year. Two Sabbath Schools interestingly sustained, a third one part of the time. These Schools have an average attendance of 160 scholars, with 28 Teachers, 71 in Bible Class, 70 church members, 385 vols. in library, \$116 expended. Increase in church-membership 3.

Upper Londonderry.—Without a pastor, have to lament our coldness and indifference. Pray for us. We send \$26.00. We have two Sabbath Schools. Church decrease 2.

Upper Stewiacke.—Had hoped to be in a position to report something more encouraging. During the year the good seed of the kingdom evidently sown, but how much on good ground know not.

We have not untidely prayed for the revival of God's work as we should. Although cannot report any increase, God has blessed us with peace, harmony and christian union. We have two union Sabbath Schools, with 80 Bible Classes. This church of 29 members sends \$50 for Foreign Missions. Church decrease 2.

West Bay, C. B..—One added after baptism. The church has uniformly held on in the way of the Lord. The Saviour enables us to trust and pray. Some are inquiring. The held around us is inviting and calls loudly for Missionary labor. No Sabbath School as yet, on account of our scattered state. Meeting-house finished outside. Church decrease 6. (by dismission.)

Westbrook.—Pastor, a portion of time. Owing to removal of some leading members, our prayer and conference meetings few; hope this will not long exist. Sabbath School mentioned. Church statistics as last year.

Westchester.—Without pastor, and have had but one sermon for nearly a year. We are in a dull state, but are trying to keep up our meeting and to hold on our way. Hope you will not forget us in your prayers and missionary services.

There are some waiting to receive baptism. This church with a reported membership of 19 sends \$7.00 to Association; also reports a Sabbath School. E. C. SPINNEY. A. CHIFMAN.

Great Mercies.

BY REV. G. H. SPURGEON.

If the ungrateful man were asked to count up his great mercies, he would mention two or three things, and fancy that he had completed the catalogue. The most of us, in our ordinary moods, would not require a ream of letter-paper to write out what we carelessly conceive to be a comprehensive and extended list. Now, this comes of our forgetfulness and shallow understanding, and will, perhaps, never be remedied till all our faculties are perfectly developed and sanctified, as they will be in the land of the perfected. When