

The Day-Dawn In The Soul.

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Morning begins with the swing of the earth into the first glimmering rays of light from the sun. Spiritual light begins with the first approaches of the soul to Jesus Christ. All true converts are alike in two respects; they were once in the darkness of depravity and unbelief; their day-dawn began with the penitent turning of the heart to the Saviour. The Holy Spirit drew them and they moved Christward. Conversions have been very numerous lately, but now two persons have had exactly the same experience. With one person the first step was into an inquiry room. With another person it was the re-opening of an inquiry room. With another person it was the re-opening of a long-neglected Bible, or a betaking himself to honest prayer. A third began with a resolution of total abstinence from the deceiver, for Jesus Christ cannot dwell in a soul that is drowned in drink. With thousands the first step is the banishment of some besetting sin; and as the sin went out the light broke in. No seeker after salvation ever finds peace until he has renounced his favorite sins, and done it in order to obey Christ. Obedience to Jesus Christ is the test of conversion.

Some people are consciously converted suddenly. They can fix the hour and the place and all the attendant circumstances of their new birth. They can point to the very arrow of truth that pierced the heart, and to the precise sermon, or prayer, or conscientious act that brought the healing balm. With the majority of Christians I feel quite confident that their experience in conversion is literally like the day-break: A faint gleam of thoughtfulness grew into earnestness, grew into penitence, and enlarged into a fuller, deeper sense of the soul's need of Christ; then as the soul came on towards Jesus, the ruddier hues of hope appeared, and some flushes of joy kindled up; and the soul discovers that the night of unbelief has ended and the day-dawn has begun. "I have come to the conclusion," said a very intelligent Christian lady to her pastor, "that it is best for me that I have never yet been able to fix the exact time of my conversion; I am afraid that I should trust too much to it if I could. Now I trust to nothing but continued faith and to living in happy fellowship with my Saviour."

Too many new converts are apt to think that the dawn is enough, that they have reached a certain desired point and need only to remain there. As well might our globe pause in its diurnal motion when a faint streak of morning light is reached, instead of rolling on into the perfect day. Conversion is not a point of termination; it is a point of new departure. It is a start, not a journey. No one has a right to say, "Now I trust that I am converted; the work is done; I am saved, and I need only to join the church and ride on towards heaven." This wretched mistake has dwarfed many a church member for life. They never out-grow their babyhood. Infancy is very beautiful in its place; but it must not last too long. I am charmed with the bright prattle of our little two-year-old grandson, who is playing with his toys and "choo-choo railroad cars" in yonder nursery; but that same lively prattle ten years hence would not be so pleasant. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child," said the great apostle, "but now I have put away childish things." The first timid, brief and rather incoherent prayer of a new convert in a social meeting is very delightful. It is music to a pastor's ears, and perhaps to the ears of angels likewise. Yet we should not be satisfied to hear the same prayer from him after ten years of sound Christian experience. Even Paul, a quarter of a century after his new birth into Christ, declares that he was still reaching forth unto the things that were before, and pressing toward the goal. The path of the Christian is like unto a shining light "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

A rough old fisherman, who stammered in his speech, used to pray often in the weekly meeting, and one expression was always introduced into his fervent, homely prayers: "O Lord—lead us—more and more—into the love of Jesus—for never was love like that." The nearer the old fisherman drew towards it the brighter and warmer it became; and now he stands—with certain other fishermen from Galilee—in the noonday glory of his everlasting King.—Evangelist.

Anchorage.

BY H. T. MILLER.

I was walking on the beach one summer's day with a friend, and I picked up a specimen of marine vegetation, a little tree about eighteen inches long. Its roots had entwined about a stone the size of a pigeon's egg, and as I carried the tree, I carried the stone. "Look," said my friend, "all it asks of the stone is an anchorage, for all its nourishment comes from the water."

All things need anchorage, every tree, and every stem of grain must have anchorage, or there comes no harvest. But man has drifted away from holy moorings and is tossed upon a sea of trouble. "Our iniquities like the wind have taken us away," Isa. 64:6. An ignorant sea passenger may think that they may cast anchor at any time, but this is not so. The master is as careful to find a good bed for his anchor as a mother is to find a good bed for her child.

It is requisite first to run to a safe refuge and then to cast anchor. What are the essentials of a good refuge? It must be near, the water must not be too deep, there must be shelter from all winds, and a friendly beach to land on when supplies run short. Look at the order, refuge first, anchorage afterwards. This is the way it is set forth in the sixth chapter of Hebrews: "That we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." Take heart, drifting one. Other refuges are not always near, but Christ is nearer than home and mother. You can call upon the Lord just where you are, as you are, by yourself, for yourself, "Lord help me."

In a shelter from stormy weather the water must not be too deep. It was only when the sounding line in the ship that Paul sailed in gave the depth of fifteen fathoms that those on board cast out four anchors and wished for day. In the mystery of Christ's great work there is plenty of easy holding ground not too deep. We may take hold on Christ, for Christ takes hold on us, and his hold on us is stronger than our hold on him. A safe refuge must afford shelter from all winds. What a defence is Christ! A Christian asked a brother one day how it fared with him? He said: "Jesus is behind me, Jesus is before me, Jesus is on either side, and I am in the middle."

Harbors of refuge are not sought unless supplies can be obtained. God's refuge for the soul is ever full. There is bread, bread enough and to spare. Do you not see the signal? "O sirs," said an old divine, "consider, I beseech you, to get well to heaven is a business and not a play, it is a matter to be inquired after, and prayed for, and learned with all diligence and care. Believe it, sirs, the call of God will convert you, or confound you, for you cannot resist his grace at cheap and easy rates."

Do you not see the signal flying? This anchorage is an outer anchorage, a haven of hope, related to, and in correspondence with, an inner refuge. How frequent the interchange of signals! How constant the calls, "Come up, come in."

"Haven of hope, where patient pilgrims wait
The signal from the inner harbor given,
The last sad tear is dropped at heaven's gate,
Lord Alleluia greet the saved in heaven."

—New York Observer.

The Work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ. There must be such evidence provided to substantiate Christ's claims that he shall be recognized and acknowledge more and more throughout the earth and entering the heart of every man, influences all men to perceive the worth of Christ. Even the man of the world, like Napoleon, is obliged to confess Christ to be more than man and the infidel like Rousseau, can but admire him. This influence, of course, is especially strong upon the Christian. His heart is open to it; he is deeply moved by it. Loving Christ as he does, he feels through the Spirit's inward testimony that Christ is all he claims to be, and he trusts him absolutely. He knows that Christ is his Saviour, and needs no further evidence to satisfy him.

The Holy Spirit brings conviction to the world. There is every reason to believe that, in the course of his life, every human being is visited at some time by the Spirit and shown his needs. Conscience varies in its activity, and undoubtedly grows dull from neglect, but even then at times the Spirit stirs its smouldering fires to unwonted activity.

The Holy Spirit reveals truth to the Christian. It was very striking that Christ would add that he had many things to say to his disciples which they were unable to bear and which must be left to the coming Comforter to reveal. Here is plainly taught what Bernard has well called "The Progress or Doctrine." John Robinson was unquestionably right when he said that more light should break forth from God's Word. It is not to be understood that the new discoveries in doctrine shall upset or contradict what has been previously learned. It is meant, however, that men cannot know all the truth at once. The Integral Calculus cannot be taught before the multiplication table. In consequence of these peculiarities of human nature, Christ could not teach his disciples all he desired. The Spirit was obliged to take up the work, and through the succeeding ages Christ has been steadily revealing more and more truth to man.—Selected.

Christian Heroism and its Reward.

It is nearly two generations since a boat's crew left their ship to reach the Hervey Islands. One of the passengers upon that boat desired to land, but the boat's crew feared to do so, as the cannibals were gathered together on the shore; but holding up the Bible in his hand he said: "Live or die, put me ashore." They would not go near the land; he plunged into the surf and held high the book. The cannibals did not kill him, but he won their favor, and lived among them, and, for aught I know, he died among them.

Thirty years afterward another ship reached the same Hervey Islands, bringing literally a cargo of Bibles. They were all wanted, and were taken with the greatest eagerness, and paid for by these people. This was the result of the labors of that heroic young man who said: "Live or die, put me ashore." I was preaching to my people some time ago on behalf of the Bible Society. I mentioned the circumstance in illustration of the fact that it is not so long, after all, between the sowing and the reaping. When I came down from the pulpit and was standing in the middle aisle, there came up to me a tall, manly-looking gentleman, a man that looked as if he might be a descendant of the old Vikings, and said: "You will excuse me for coming up to speak to you and introducing myself; I am Captain" so and so—I need not give you his name—I am in command of Her Majesty's frigate so and so, "and I take the liberty of coming to speak to you in reference to what you said about these islands. I was there with my ship; I saw these people, and I saw the circulation of the Bibles among them, and I never saw such Christianity in all my life as among the people of these islands." Said he: "They remind me of those people of whom you read in the Acts of the Apostles."—Dr. John Hall.

Sweetening The Bitter Things.

What a fine series of life lessons for the Christian is presented by the journeyings of the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land! Almost every scene illustrates some practical truth or spiritual experience. For example, the Israelites, soon after leaving the Red Sea, and after a weary march over torrid sands, come upon a fountain in the desert. They rush forward eagerly for a refreshing draught. But also! the first taste is a taste of disappointment; for the waters are so bitter that neither man nor beast can drink them. At once the murmuring multitude give to the unpalatable waters the name of "Marah," which signifies the waters of bitterness. There is a still more terrible bitterness of disappointment in their hearts. They forget all about their deliverance from their land of bondage and the waves of the Red Sea, and think only of their present troubles. With a mixture of ingratitude and despair they crowd about their leader and cry out, "What shall we drink?"

Now, this exciting scene beside the fountain of Marah finds parallel in many a chapter of a life experience; and we read of such in the lives of others. Abraham Lincoln was keenly disappointed because he did not win a certain office under President Taylor, and afterwards when he was not elected to the United States Senate; but then he might have missed the most exalted station that any American has won in this century. Young Frederick W. Robertson was disappointed because he did not get a commission in the British army; but God had a better place for him in the army of Jesus Christ, as the most brilliant preacher in the Church of England. In our own humble experiences we have had some tastes of the water of Marah. We had set our hearts on some favorite plan or project. Perhaps we are going on a long-coveted tour, and had made all our arrangements. But the day appointed for our departure finds us on a bed of severe sickness; and the medicines we swallow are not as bitter as the disappointment. Selfishness murmurs and chafes under the trial. But presently we begin to discover that the sick-bed lay right on the direct road to Canaan. We begin to talk with our own hearts, and to think over our past lives. We make a fresh covenant with God that if he will restore us to health we will use it for him and be more fruitful Christians. We take up one precious promise after another, and drop it into the fountain of trial, and lo! the bitter waters begin to taste sweeter to us. Prayer becomes sweeter, and Christ's presence sweeter, and something whispers to us, "After all, is not this better for me than the journey to Europe or to California? Is it not good for me that I have been shut in here with my Saviour?"—Presbyterian Journal.

According to the official reports of the Japanese government, the island empire contains 62,500 teachers.