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THE PHILOSOPHY OF "GETTING RELIGION."

FIRST in order, let us ascertain what is meant by the phrase, "getting religion." All will concede that it is not a Scriptural phrase, but the term religion is. Etymologically, the word religion means, to rebind, to bind again. If the term be applied to persons, this meaning suggests several ideas: 1. A person to be bound again; 2. A person to whom he shall be bound again; 3. That the person to be bound has been loosed; 4. A bond. If we consider this word historically and theologically, all these thoughts find in it an authorized symbol. Under this view of the term, to say that a man "gets religion," conveys no definite conception. If then, we would arrive at the current meaning of the phrase, we must consult the *usus loquendi*—the usual mode of speaking, past or present. Inasmuch as words and phrases are the signs of ideas, and, because neither this phrase nor its synonym was used in apostolic times, we have evidence, *prima facie*, that the idea is of post-apostolic origin. Hence, on theological grounds, our jealousy of it may be justified.

The *usus loquendi*, then and now, assigns to the word religion a meaning which Webster thus expresses: "Theology, as a system of doctrines or principles, as well as practical piety; a system of faith and worship." The proper reception of the Christian doctrine, as a rule of life, binds a man to God in covenant relationship. The term, therefore, ordinarily relates to the system which a man receives under the idea of a *bond*. This is one of the thoughts growing out of the etymology of the term. But usage has made this the paramount idea.

Can it be, then, that to "get religion" is to possess one's self with the Christian system of truth? Surely not. Then there must be some idea involved by the term, as phrased, different both from its etymological and ordinary sense.

It is certain that this phrase is eminently peculiar to the literature of a special class of religionists; particularly those who adopt

the "anxious-seat" as an instrumentality to facilitate conversion. They evidently mean, by the phrase, a subjective or psychological experience—a sudden revulsion of the emotions from a more or less profound depression, through conviction of sin and fear of its consequences, to a high state of exultation and joy, on account of pardon. It must not be supposed that a psychological experience is peculiar to this class, although some, under the influence of this system, have denounced others as "head religionists;" for we must believe that every one who becomes reconciled to God has an experience peculiarly his own. But from the fact that, under this system, this experience is sought for by peculiar methods as the direct gift of the Holy Spirit, and as having a priceless value as the evidence of pardon, it becomes the paramount object of the sinner's seeking. And as this revulsion, by a singular use of the word, is called religion, naturally enough the obtainment of it is called "*getting* religion." With others, the objective point is not "*getting* religion," but getting themselves into harmony with religion, or the Christian system, knowing that if they can effect this, their emotions will take care of themselves. Hence, they do not need to coin a new phrase to express a new religious idea, but simply to use the Scriptural term, reconciliation.

INFLUENCE OF THEORIES.

Every theory determines its own methods and inspires its own literature. The literature of the theory now referred to, is characterized by such expressions as "experimental religion," "seed of grace," "grace of God in the heart," "grace of faith," "getting the power," "getting through," "soundly converted," "hopefully converted," "I *feel* to thank God," "I *feel* to do right," "I know that I am a child of God, because I *feel* it." The emotions are first, last, and all the time. They become the standard of truth, as well as duty. And if, under the law of affinities, the most abundant harvests of converts are not gathered from the emotional classes, there would be occasion to revise all our systems of mental philosophy.

Nor is it surprising that there should be a perplexing confusion of Scriptural terms, in order to adjust them to a system whose central thought places its advocates under the necessity of coining so many unscriptural words and phrases, in order to furnish it a lingual habitation and a name. The terms conversion, regeneration, change of

heart, born again, are modified by the phrase "getting religion," or made its synonyms; generally, the latter.

Were it not for the logical and theological connections of the idea of "getting religion," we might tolerate it as a comparatively inoffensive affair. But just here we hesitate. It is affirmed that it is the immediate—without means—direct work of the Holy Spirit; that saving faith is an inspiration by the Holy Spirit, as the writer recently heard in a discourse by a prominent minister.

The necessity for this position is laid in a theory of the fall of man—in the doctrine of total native depravity, as the hereditament from Adam of every human being; that this corruption of man's nature is such, that "he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength, to faith and calling upon God, . . . without the grace of God, by Christ, preventing [anticipating] us, that we may have a good will" (see M. E. Discipline, Arts. vii, viii); that man can not exercise saving faith when he hears the Gospel, because of natural inability inherited; that the Holy Spirit must directly impart the power. Hence, a distinguished writer in the *Methodist Quarterly*, of A. D. 1869, page 266, says, "The method of Methodism is *inspiration*, in distinction from *logic*."

The larger Catechism (questions and answers 25, 26, 27, and 67,) avows the same doctrine of original sin, with the necessity for Spirit impact, in order to predetermine man's will to the exercise of saving faith. In accordance with which, Dr. Rice, in Debate with Alexander Campbell, page 672, says: "Every thing has its nature. The lion, however young, has its nature. . . . Plant two trees in the same soil, and let them be watered by the same stream, and one will produce sweet fruit and the other bitter. They possess different natures." From these comparisons, we learn that man's nature since the fall differs from his nature before the fall, as a lion's from a lamb's nature, or as the nature of a peach-tree from that of a crab-apple tree. But man's nature before the fall was created by God, and was a human nature. He fails to tell who created his second nature, and of what kind it is. Its creator must have been God, man, or the devil. If God, then every creature of God is *not* good. If the devil, then one thing was made *without* the Word. If man, then why can he not new-create himself? That Dr. Rice understands his standards to teach that God's original creative power is exerted in regeneration, is clear from page 635: "Now, if God could originally create

man holy without words and arguments, who shall presume to assert that he can not create him anew, and restore his lost image?" This he said, in order to show the possibility of infant moral regeneration, which, but for the logical demands of a theory, no one need attempt to prove, since the Savior has said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." When Mr. Campbell charged that Dr. Rice's theory made every conversion a miracle, he was met by an emphatic denial. But the logic of a system will sometimes crop out through advocates who are not constrained by controversial considerations. Hence, in his "Early Years of Christianity," page 24, Dr. E. Pressensé declares that the Church, "born of a miracle; by a miracle lives. Founded upon the great miracle of redemption, it grows and is perpetuated by the ever-repeated miracle of conversion."

We would not be understood as disparaging the terms conversion, regeneration, born again, change of heart, being healed, new creation, in their Scriptural usage; nor the eminently Scriptural idea that the Holy Spirit is the efficient agent in regeneration; but we do most courageously object to any theory which requires such a set of exegetical laws as makes these beautiful figures mutually destructive, and arrays them all against every man's consciousness and the analogy of faith. For example, if the sinner is dead, in the strained sense put upon this figure, how can he, under another figure, be diseased and capable of cure? If he must be created anew, according to and in the manner this theory demands, how can he be born again?

RATIONAL VIEW.

That a revulsion of the emotions, called "getting religion," does occur, as is claimed, the writer sincerely believes. It is not a question of fact, but of the explanation of the fact. Those who question the fact, speak unwisely; for this would be to assume that many of the most estimable men are guilty of hypocrisy and downright falsehood—the only effect of which would be to shut the ear against reason, to turn the edge of argument before whetting, to clothe the claimants with a coat of mail more impenetrable than Greek or Roman warrior ever wore. If this revulsion is the effect of an immediate impact of the Holy Spirit, then we must concede all its logical and theological antecedents and consequents. If it can be accounted for without transcending the bounds of natural causes and natural

laws, then the opponent must cease to demand for the fact a solely supernatural explanation, or stand self-convicted of fanaticism.

Let no one deny our right to deal with this subject philosophically; for Rev. C. G. Finney, late President of Oberlin College, has defended it upon philosophic grounds. He, more than any other man, perhaps, was instrumental in promoting the great revivals which swept the country forty years ago. His staid, quondam Presbyterian brethren objected to certain "new measures" used by him to promote revivals; one of which was the anxious-seat. In his "Revival Lectures," page 253, he replies: "Of late, this measure has met with more opposition than any of the others. What is the great objection? I can not see it. The *design* of the anxious-seat is undoubtedly *philosophical*, and *according to the laws of mind*."

Singular how extremes meet. Mr. Finney swung off to an opposite extreme from the prevailing theories of conversion, and adopted the anxious-seat as a measure to facilitate conversion, because its *design* is *philosophical*, and *in accordance with the laws of mind*, while others held on to the old theories, and adopted it for the same purpose, disclaiming its *design*. Where consistency lies, the reader must pronounce. Chide us not, then, nor complain, if we attempt to ascertain these laws of mind, or the philosophy of "getting religion."

Let us look in upon a revival scene. The sermon culminates in an impassioned, rhetorical description of the sinfulness of sin, the terrors of judgment. The peroration flames and fumes with fire and brimstone. As the writer once heard, "Hell is uncapped, and the wails of the damned salute the sinner's ear;" he "is hair-hung and breeze-shaken over the gulf of damnation." The imaginative, no less than the moral, emotions are wrought up to a fearful pitch. The cry is heard, "What must we do?" "Come to the anxious-seat, and the Lord's people will pray for you, and the Lord will speak peace to your souls." They come. Preacher and people wait on them to instruct, admonish, exhort, or entreat, as each case may require, or as the psychological condition of each may seem to demand. "How do you feel?" If the sense of guilt does not seem deep enough, the effort is to "break him down, so that he can neither stand nor go;" or, in other words, to depress the emotions to the lowest possible point. This done, the effort begins to "get him through," or to secure a rebound of the emotions. For this purpose, the power of

prayer and song and encouraging exhortation is called into requisition. The penitent is addressed thus: "Do you not believe that God is able to save you?" "Is he not willing?" "Heaven, with all its glories, is yours, if you will only surrender your heart to the Lord." "If you will only give up all your sins; if you will only believe, the Lord will receive you, and give you the evidence of acceptance." "Ask, and you shall receive." "Seek, and you shall find." He repents, and prays, and weeps, and mourns. He asks, but does not receive. A flash comes over him; but it is a flash of withering skepticism. "Surely," he thinks, "if what I am told is true, I would obtain the blessing so long and earnestly sought for." Some one by his side, who came long since he did, rises with a glowing halleluiah upon his lips. This only perplexes him the more. He, after a long struggle, is still unblessed, while the joyful convert by his side has received the blessing after a very short struggle. The thought steals upon his mind, "Surely, God must be a respecter of persons; but if he is, the Bible is false, for it says the contrary." Discouraged, disheartened, and perplexed beyond measure, he sinks into a skeptical stolidity. His friends note it. They come about him with increased solicitude and intensified prayerfulness. One says to him: "This is a device of Satan to ruin you, when you were just escaping from his power;" "Don't give way to your doubts." "I was just so," says another; "I had a long struggle and a hard one to get religion, but I finally succeeded, and I was *so* happy." "Pray on, brother; we will pray for you, that you may yet prevail." "If you will only believe, God will speak peace to your soul." "Pray to the Lord to give you faith; to give you the victory over Satan." His doubts overcome, at least quieted, by the confidence he has in those who relate their experiences, and encouraged by their earnest exhortations, he plunges again into the struggle. Special attention is now given him, as a brand that must be plucked from the burning. He and others are animated for the struggle with the idea that it is a hand-to-hand conflict with Satan, who is striving, with more than usual persistency, to keep this soul under his dominion. Victory over an opposing foe is always sweet. Prayers go up, earnest, sincere, tearful, agonizing prayers. Songs are inspired with the hope of impending victory. Heaven is addressed: "Lord, send down the power." "Come down, and convert this poor sinner." "Drive back Satan to his own native hell, and give this soul release." "Lord, baptize him with the

Holy Spirit and fire." "Lord, pour light into this darkened soul." Meantime, the penitent is exhorted: "Now give up all to Christ." "Hold back nothing." "Turn away from all your sins." "Ask, and you shall receive." "Now, don't you believe?" "Just believe that you have the blessing, and you have it." "Just believe that God has pardoned you, and you are pardoned." "Just rise up, and shout glory to God, and it will be all right; you will feel happy." "Open your mouth, and the Lord will put a new song into it." Then the altar resounds with the chorus:

"O believe him, O believe him,
O believe him, just now.
He will save you, he will save you,
He will save you, just now!"

A heavenly smile begins to chase away the sadness which has hung like a pall over the penitent's countenance. Before he has had time to express a word, a score of happy voices lift the choral halleluiah, in which he joins with his shouts of joy. "His was a mighty work of grace." "The Lord was merciful." His conversion becomes the theme of sermon and song, to incite others to seek religion.

How fortunate for the poor penitent, when he was on the verge of infidelity, that his reasoning process was cut short and his judgment overborne by the solicitude of friends! Otherwise he might have deepened skepticism into confirmed infidelity, with the contradictions and inconsistencies of the system. The preacher had told him that the unregenerate can not exercise saving faith, without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit; yet all the while he was exhorted to believe—to believe just now. What? That Jesus is the Son of God? No. He believed that already. Believe that he was a sinner? No. What then? Why, "just believe that you are pardoned, and you are pardoned." Or, otherwise, a man must believe in order to be pardoned; still he can not, being unregenerate. Then, he is pardoned if he believes so. Then, of course, believing that he is pardoned, he will be happy, has the desired revulsion of the emotions, or has "gotten religion." Then, his feelings become the evidence of pardon; or he believes he is pardoned before he has the evidence, in order to obtain the evidence. But did he believe without evidence entirely? Surely not; for that is impossible. His faith must have rested upon the testimony of his advisers, or it was nothing but imagination, or both combined. Of the power of the imagination,

hear what Professor Haven, of Amherst, says in his "Mental Philosophy," page 153. This is a standard text-book in many of our institutions of learning :

"Errors of Imagination.—Undoubtedly there are errors, mistakes, prejudices, illusions of the imagination ; mistakes in judgment, in reasoning, in the affairs of practical life, the source of which is to be found in some undue influence, some wrong use of the imagination. We mistake its conceptions for realities. We dwell upon its pleasing visions till we forget the sober face of truth. We fancy pleasures, benefits, results, which will never be realized, or we look upon the dark and dreary side of things, till all nature wears the somber hue of our disordered fancy."

It would seem that Professor Haven must have had his eye upon the anxious-seat when he penned this paragraph.

While presenting the foregoing description of anxious-seat conversion, the thought occurred to the writer that he might be charged with an attempted caricature ; for, he is free to confess that, if he had not carefully noted the facts, it would be difficult to regard it as a representation of sober reality. But those who have frequented such scenes, will confess that he might have colored the picture even more highly, without violence to truth. He is not conscious of "having set down aught in malice."

With this procedure before us, we propose to deduce those mental and emotional laws which should be recognized in this process of "getting religion," and under the operation of which it is believed the fact may be rationally explained. In order to appreciate this psychological experience in its varied manifestations, it must be premised that the intensity of emotional activity depends largely upon the strength and development of the moral sense and the imagination ; that the intensity of emotional activity, caused under the influence of the imagination, is ordinarily greater than that produced under the influence of the moral sense. But if both the imagination and the moral sense are involved, as is generally, if not always, the case in religious excitements, we may expect an intensity of emotional activity correspondent to the united strength and development of both these faculties, only modified by the degree of precision and force with which the objects producing the excitement are presented to the mind, and also the nature of the objects ; for, if the objects be such as are not trivial, but directly connected with our highest interests for time and eternity, they would naturally command our most ear-

nest solicitude. Hence, we would most confidently expect, what is a notorious fact, that the results of revivals, conducted according to the anxious-seat method, should depend largely upon the rhetorical and emotional power of the minister. If he be a man of warm, impulsive nature, with a vivid imagination and good pulpit address, so that he can clothe his transcendently important themes with the chameleon changes of the sublime and the sorrowful, the terrific and the beautiful, the awful, grand, or pitiful; if he can touch every note in the diapason of human feeling, with the exquisiteness and the dash of a well-skilled orchestra,—then we may readily believe that great results will be achieved. Hence, in our time, an evangelist is regarded as little else than an expert revivalist. Let no one think, because the writer speaks thus, that he is opposed to revivals. Far from it. If procured and conducted in accordance with the Word of God, they are great instrumentalities for good. But it is the abuse of them, by pressing them into the service of a human system, that has well-nigh turned the world against them.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL LAWS.

I. We most readily imagine or believe that which is in accordance with our desires.

II. The facility of faith is variable in different persons, on account of constitutional peculiarities, and in the same person at different times, on account of associations, personal habits, or other causes.

III. Confidence in the veracious character of witnesses predisposes the mind to faith in their testimony.

IV. Imagination and faith exercise a controlling power over the emotions. We feel as we imagine or believe.

V. The imagination or belief of a falsehood affects the emotions in precisely the same manner and to the same degree as the truth upon any given subject, *provided* the falsehood appears to be truth.

VI. If the emotions be borne out of their normal condition to any extreme of intense activity, nature demands a revulsion, or a gradual subsidence, at the peril of insanity.

VII. Generally, if the emotions be intensely excited under the influence of the imagination or moral sense, or both combined, bodily agitations will appear, particularly in persons of a nervous temperament.

VIII. Generally, emotional excitement is contagious.

These laws of mental and emotional activity are not submitted as applicable only to religious revivals, but to mental and emotional activity under all circumstances. Without undertaking to prove or illustrate them, which would be a pleasant pastime, if space allowed, the writer appeals to the consciousness of every reader for their justification, confident, also, that the observation of every man will afford an abundance of facts from every-day life to fully illustrate them.

APPLICATION OF THE ABOVE LAWS.

Let us recur to the penitent whom we left, a little while since, filled with the new-born joy of "getting religion," that we may trace his psychological experience, to ascertain whether or not it was governed and explainable by these laws.

Why were his emotions so depressed, even to the very verge of an anguishing despair, till he could say, "The pains of hell get hold on me?" Was it because of an immediate impact of the Holy Spirit upon his spirit? Or, was it because he believed himself to be a sinner, exposed to the wrath of God? Because he saw, through faith in the Word of God, a hell yawning to receive him, and his imagination pictured the woefulness of its torments to his mind. Because he had begun to realize that he deserved it all, for sinning so long against a Holy God, whose matchless love, in the death of Christ, he had so long despised. Because, too, not only his own faith and imagination had shown him these things, but the faith and imagination of preacher and people had assisted his own vision. His faith and imagination being intensely active, his emotions were agonizingly depressed. (See Law IV.)

But, says the objector, if the Spirit of God had not been striving with him, he would not have felt this deep conviction. Grant it. But did the Spirit strive, by direct impact, or through intervening instrumentalities, in accordance with the laws of our mental and moral constitution? This is the point. If in the former manner, then his conviction had no moral character, for he must have been without will in the matter. If in the latter manner, then his own agency was involved; and conversion is not a miracle, but to be effected in a rational way, although none the less by a supernatural, efficient cause.

Why did the penitent's feelings rebound so suddenly? and why did they not rebound sooner? For, perhaps, he had been "seeking religion" for weeks—may be months. In favor of this revulsion several

principles conspired: 1. He earnestly desired and sought for the pardon of his sins. (See Law I.) 2. He had confidence in his religious advisers, who testified that God would pardon him, and gave their own experience in proof. (See Law III.) 3. Nature demands a rebound of the emotions when borne away to a given extreme. (See Law VI.) 4. Many around him were happy, having recently "gotten religion;" others were happy in the demonstrative joy of the new converts, and in the faith of their own salvation. (See Law VIII.) Why, then, should he not find the object of his seeking sooner? His faith and imagination combined to depress his emotions; why did they not, under these seemingly favorable circumstances, combine to exalt them to the acme of peace and joy? Here is the puzzle, if conversion, or "getting religion," is an effect of the direct, immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. Does not the Holy Spirit aim at and desire every sinner's conversion? Had not many already been converted, who came to the anxious-seat long since this penitent came? Why, then, is he not converted sooner? Perhaps this explanation may avail us: The Word of God testifies plainly against sin, showing us also its sinfulness and its punishment; also, of the love of God, and the death of Jesus for the sinner. The Holy Spirit had laid a broad foundation for the penitent's faith in regard to his lost condition without Christ. That same Word had deigned to assist his imagination by such representations of the fearful consequences of sin as were calculated to give activity to his imagination. We can readily understand how he was "pricked to the heart;" how he was prostrated under a sense of guilt and fearful apprehension. But in vain does the poor man search the Word of God for a promise of pardon connected with the anxious-seat. In vain does he search the Divine record for an example of conversion according to this method. The broad foundation where he rested his faith for conviction, is now wanting. He is dependent upon the testimony of men, that God will forgive his sins in this way. The fact that, in giving his experience, he may rest his faith upon some promise contained in the Scriptures, does not change the fact that the testimony of men is the real basis of his faith; for, if there is no promise of God connected with the anxious-seat, or if this method of conversion is unscriptural, then, of course, all promises construed with it are misapplied, and therefore cease to be the testimony of God, and become simply the testimony of men,—just as the Scripture quoted by Satan, when tempting the Savior, ceased to be

the Word of God, and, as then applied, became simply a positive falsehood. Perhaps the convert was like Thomas, constitutionally incredulous; not inclined to believe, ordinarily, without palpable evidence. Perhaps he may have become slow to believe the testimony of men, because his confidence had been violently shattered or weakened by human treachery and deception. Perhaps his own personal habits may have replaced a confiding disposition. (See Law II.) If any or all these things were true of him, it is easily explained why he did not "get religion" sooner. Still, the very fact that he "got religion" at all, indicates a preponderance of the favorable influences over the adverse. Now, the revulsion being at last secured, perhaps under a tremendous pressure of the imagination, combined with what strength of faith he was able to command, may be carried up to the most intense emotional excitement, producing bodily agitations of the most astonishing violence; or, the physical powers sometimes whelmed with the emotional flood, the man sinks into a semi-conscious state, when he is said to be in a trance. (See Law VII.) Then the mind is given up to the most delightful visions. This used to be regarded as evidence of an unusual display of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Seeing that similar revolutions of the feelings, as well as bodily agitations, sometimes take place where no one contends that the Holy Spirit has any thing to do with them, suppose it should turn out that the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with many of these supposed "sound conversions;" that there is a clear *non causa pro causa* committed,—then they would simply fall under and be explained by Law V. The belief or imagination of a falsehood upon any given subject will produce precisely the same emotional effect as the truth upon that subject, if the falsehood be accepted as truth. When Jacob saw the blood-stained coat of his son Joseph, he accepted it as evidence of his death. Doubtless his imagination painted fearful and heart-rending pictures of his son's fatal struggle with the wild beasts. He believed a lie. Joseph was not dead. But would his sorrow have been more pungent and agonizing if Joseph had actually been dead? Then, what a revulsion in his emotions when he afterward believed him to be alive, and next to the throne of Egypt! What a culmination of his joy, when the aged patriarch fell upon Joseph's neck and kissed him, amid the splendors of his royal estate!

The pious Catholic goes to confessional with a heavy heart; con-

fessing his sins, he receives the declaration of absolution from the priest, and departs a happy man. The pagan, too, distressed and agonized by a sense of guilt, offers his atoning sacrifice, and then rejoices with a joy unspeakable. Men under delusion may believe a lie, be happy, and yet be lost.

RESULTS OF THE SYSTEM.

The worst is not yet. According to Law VI, nature demands a subsidence of excessive emotional excitement, whether the emotion be pleasant or painful. The new convert naturally measures the evidence of his pardon by the nature and volume of his feelings. As the volume of joy diminishes and temptations crowd upon him, he begins to sing, in a doleful tone :

"'Tis a point I long to know—
Oft it causes anxious thought :
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

Sentiments about as unscriptural as the system which inspired them. What wonder that these doubts have ended so often in an incorrigible apostasy? *The Methodist*, one of the ablest papers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, declares that eighty out of every hundred of their converts fall away. So unstable were they, that another human expedient must be devised, not only unscriptural, but anti-scriptural and ruinous,—*take them on six months' trial*. Every theory works out through its appropriate forms.

Another class are made infidels because they can not "get religion." Failing to distinguish between religion and its abuse, they, like Gibbon, condemn it as a whole, because of their disgust with the abuse.

Another class are made hypocrites. Under the pressure of a public commitment, by going to the anxious-seat, they feign what they do not feel, or studiously conceal what, if revealed, would forfeit the good opinion of others. It is not averred, here, that there are more hypocrites among those who believe in the anxious-seat than among others, but that with a certain class there is a *direct tendency* in the system to produce hypocrisy ; while, under the simple Gospel, if men are hypocrites, they must be so despite the system.

There is still another more-pitiable class—those who, having been long under conviction and fruitless agony, failing to find relief, and concluding that they have committed the unpardonable sin, under

the operation of Law VI, become hopelessly insane. Asylum records will abundantly corroborate this statement:

Another fearful result is a wide-spread indifference to all religion. Apostasy is the rule; or those who remain steadfast are only as one to five, according to the New York *Methodist*. The last state of the apostate is, uniformly, worse than the first. It is always more difficult to stir his religious consciousness. What, then, must be the effect upon the eighty out of every hundred converts—to say nothing of the indurating influence of so much apostasy upon the public mind—but *indifference to all religion*? Of course, apostasy may and does occur under any system; but it is one thing to facilitate it by a system, and quite another thing to have it occur against a system.

A CORRUPTION OF THE GOSPEL.

President Finney admits it. On page 254, after contending that it is necessary to have a test for the sinner's faith, he further says:

"The Church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles, *baptism* answered this purpose. The Gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of the Lord, were called on to be *baptized*. It held the precise place that the anxious-seat does now, as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians."

Baptism is confessedly a Divine command. Who authorized its substitution, for any purpose, with the anxious-seat? That is a small matter, however, if it is only a "*mere form*," or if only "*something of the kind*" of the anxious-seat. In apostolic times "*the Gospel was preached, and those who were willing to be on the side of the Lord, were called on to be baptized.*" Now they are called to the anxious-seat. "*It held the precise place that the anxious-seat does now.*" Exactly. Hence a new Gospel. "He that believeth and cometh to the anxious-seat, shall be saved." "Repent and come to the anxious-seat, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "And he *commanded* them to come to the anxious-seat, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." "Arise and come to the anxious-seat, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." "The like figure whereunto even the anxious-seat doth also now save us." "Know you not that so many of you as have come to the anxious-seat, have put on Christ?" Is this a perversion of the Gospel, or another gospel? If the anxious-seat occupies the place of baptism, of course it is a com-

mand of God, and the promises which He attached to baptism, must be attached to it; hence, baptism is pushed out of its place in the plan of pardon. It becomes a mere "Church ordinance," to be changed at pleasure, as to its form and uses. (See Bishop Gilbert's "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles," page 251.)

SANCTIFICATION,

Otherwise Perfectionism, is simply anxious-seat conversion *in extenso*. It is a subjective, or psychological experience, produced in the same manner as "getting religion," and explainable by the same laws. It is less frequently enjoyed, however, because the people generally have less faith in the doctrine; hence, fewer persons attempt the experiment.

THE WAY OUT OF CONFUSION.

"Preach the Word." Show the people their sins and their consequences. The love of God in Christ manifested. If they believe, and are "pricked in the heart," or become convicted of sin, and cry out, "What must we do?" tell them, as of old, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Do not seek to work up the feelings by artificial means. Do not call into play the pride of character by public commitment, before the heart is ready. How often do we hear the preacher say, "Now, if you wish to go to heaven [who does not?], rise up." "If you wish the prayers of the Lord's people [who does not?], rise up." "Now, all who have voted that they wish to go to heaven, that they desire the prayers of the Lord's people, come to the anxious-seat." Ah, the trick! the trick!! thinks many a person who has voted, and instantly he is filled with disgust. People will endure, or even applaud, strategy; but not in religion.

Again: the religious sensibilities always shrink from public exposure, unless the will is won over. To have one's incipient religious experience displayed before the prurient gaze, or to be bandied about by the gossiping tongue, is exceedingly repulsive to a person whose sense of propriety is well developed. Many a sinner's thoughts have been drawn off in the attempted reconciliation of himself to this unscriptural procedure, when they ought to have been engaged in the work of reconciling himself to God. Let the struggle begin and go

forward to a final issue without ostentation, then it will be time for public commitment to Christianity. If the friendly counsel of proper persons may be given quietly, to lead the soul out of its entanglements, and break its sinful alliances, it is well. Reason, propriety, philosophy, and Scripture concur to demand this course.

If the subject is ignorant of Christ as the Savior, tell him first, as Paul did the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." As soon as he expresses a willingness to receive Christ, "speak to him the Word of the Lord," for his enlightenment as to the Lord's means of salvation, and through repentance he will soon find his way to baptism, and come again rejoicing through faith. (See Acts, xvi.) If he be a believing penitent, like Saul at Damascus, tell him to "arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord." In short, give to each, according to his condition, a portion of the Word suited to his case, in due season. Never mind your theories; speak the Word.

But, says the objector, must we rule out a psychological experience? Must we simply have a "head-religion," without any heart in it? No; by no means. Nor will there be the least danger, if we cling to the apostolic methods. The revulsion of the emotions from the pungency of conviction to the exhilaration of joy will always be secured, if the sinner really believes that he is pardoned, although he may believe a falsehood. (See Laws IV, V.) It matters not upon what kind of testimony his faith may rest. If, then, he be led to a hearty, intelligent submission to Christ, according to the Gospel plan, his belief that he is pardoned will rest, not upon the testimony of men, nor upon imagination, but upon the express promises of God, which can never fail. The Pentecostan converts began to be glad as soon as they learned from Peter that they could be saved. "They gladly received the Word," and were baptized the same day. But they were more joyful still, afterward, when they were able, through their faith and obedience, to appropriate the Divine promises. Then "they, continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, *praising* God, and having favor with all the people."