

What Is Conversion?

By REV. H. W. POPE
Superintendent of Men
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TEXT—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."



Let us consider first some things which are not conversion, but which are often mistaken for it. To improve one's life is not conversion. It is a common opinion that if one will drop all bad habits and cultivate good ones, read the Bible and go to church, he can make himself a Christian in a short time. This is a mistake. The Christian life is not simply an improvement of the old life, but a different kind of a life altogether, namely, a life of obedience to Christ. Suppose you had a sour apple tree which you wished to convert into a sweet apple tree. What would you do? Would you dig about it and prune it and scrape the bark? No, indeed. A hundred years of such improvement would not make the tree bear sweet apples, but the introduction of a graft from a sweet apple tree would do it very quickly. Even so a lifetime spent in improving one's habits does not make one a Christian, but the entrance of Jesus Christ into the heart by the surrender of the will, will do it in a moment. People do not become Christians by improving their life, but by accepting Jesus Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:12.)

What Is Conversion?
The word convert means to "turn about." As applied to spiritual things, it means a turning of the soul unto God. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The real essence of sin is this, that the sinner is determined to have his own way. It may not be the worst way in the world. It may not be an immoral way, or a vicious way, but it is his way and not God's way, which he ought to follow. The only course for the sinner to pursue is to turn about, to abandon his way, and to accept God's way. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him." Conversion, then, is a turning of the soul unto God, a surrender of the will to the divine will, an acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master. When the sinner, realizing the folly of further resistance, finally surrenders his will to the Lord Jesus, then occurs a great change. God forgives his sins, and so changes his heart that henceforth he loves God's way better than his own way. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you—And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek. 36:26, 27). The sinner no longer has a controversy with God. The great question of life is settled, and henceforth his aim is to know and do the will of God.

Influences Leading to Conversion.
The Word of God is a very effective agency. It is like a mirror in which the sinner sees himself as he really is. That is why Christ bids us preach the gospel to every creature because there is life in it. "The Word of God is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." One can hardly read the Bible continuously and not be made to realize that he is a sinner and need a Savior.

On one occasion a man said to me: "From the preaching which I heard in my boyhood I was led to suppose that when one became a Christian, it was necessary for him to go through some extraordinary process called a change of heart, or regeneration. This book which you have loaned me, teaches that what is required is simply a change of purpose. Now will you please tell me which is right and which is wrong?" I replied: "They are both right; you could not change your heart if you should try; you could not make it love what it naturally hated, could you?" "No, I suppose not," he said. "But you could change your purpose, could you not? You could decide henceforth to obey the Lord Jesus?" "Certainly," he replied. "Well," said I, "if you will change your purpose and accept Christ as your Savior, God will change your heart and cause you to love what once you hated, and to hate what once you loved." "Is that all there is to it?" said he. "Certainly," I replied. He lost no time in accepting Christ and God gave him a new heart.

"Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." If you say, "I want more time to think about it," I answer, "What will you gain by waiting? What have you gained by waiting already? No, friend, what you need is not time, but decision. You know that you are a sinner, and that Christ is the only one who can save you. The simple question is, 'Will you accept him as your Savior?' God expects you to do it, commands you to do it, and if it is ever done, you are the one who must do it."

Setting a Turkey.
In nearly all cases it will be best to allow the turkey hen to hatch out her second laying of eggs. The weather is usually warm and settled, and she will raise them with very little trouble.

Singer Is Lamer.
The singing hen is the lamer and if there is not song among your flock something is wrong and you should immediately ascertain what it is and remedy it.

RICH MENS CHILDREN

By GERALDNE DONNER
Author of "THE PIONEER"
"TOMORROW'S TANGLE," etc.

Illustrations by
DOM J. LAVIN

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SYNOPSIS.

Bill Cannon, the bonanza king, and his daughter, Rose, who had passed up Mrs. Cornelius Ryan's bill at San Francisco to accompany her father, arrive at Antelope. Dominick Ryan calls on his mother to beg a ball invitation for his wife, and is refused. The determined old lady refuses to recognize her daughter-in-law. Dominick had been trapped into a marriage with Bernice Pearson, a stenographer, several years his senior. She squanders his money, they have frequent quarrels, and he slips away. Cannon and his daughter are snowed in at Antelope. Dominick Ryan is rescued from storm in unconscious condition and brought to Antelope hotel. Antelope is cut off by storm. Rose Cannon nurses Dominick back to life. Two weeks later Bernice discovers in a paper where she is and writes letter trying to smooth over difficulties between them. Dominick at last is able to join fellow snowbound prisoners in hotel parlor. He loses temper over talk of Buford, an actor. After three weeks, and of imprisonment is seen. Telegrams and mail arrive. Dominick gets letter from wife. Tells Rose he doesn't love wife, and never did. Storming people begin to depart. Rose and Dominick embrace, father sees them and demands an explanation. Rose's brother Gene is manager of hotel ranch, and is to get it if he stays sober a year.

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

At dinner that evening Gene was very talkative. He told of his life on the ranch, of its methodical monotony, of its seclusion, for he saw little of his neighbors and seldom went in to the town. Rose listened with eager interest, and the old man with a sulky, glowering attention. At intervals he shot a piercing look at his boy, eying him sidewise with a cogitating intensity of observation. His remarks were few, but Gene was so loquacious that there was little opportunity for another voice to be heard. He prattled on like a happy child, recounting the minutest details of his life after the fashion of those who live much alone.

In the light of the crystal lamp that spread a ruffled shade of yellow silk over the center of the table, he was seen to be quite unlike his father or sister. His jet-black hair and uniformly pale skin resembled his mother's, but his face in its full, rounded contours, slightly turned-up nose, and eyebrows as thick as strips of fur, had a heaviness hers had lacked. Some people thought him good-looking, and there was a sort of unusual, Latin picturesqueness in the combination of his curly black hair, which he wore rising up in a bulwark of waves from his forehead, his white skin, and the small, dark mustache, delicate as an eyebrow, that shaded his upper lip. It was one of his father's grievances against him that he would have made a pretty girl, and that his soft, affectionate character would have been quite charming in a woman. Now, listening to him, it seemed to the older man as if it were just the kind of talk one might expect from Gene. The father had difficulty in suppressing a snort of derision when he heard the young man recounting to Rose his troubles with his Chinese cook.

Before dinner was over Gene excused himself on the plea that he was going to the theater.

"I'm such a hayseed now," he said as he rose, "that I don't want to miss a thing. Haven't seen a play for six months and I'm just crazy to see anything. 'Monte Christo,' 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' 'East Lynne.' I'm not particular, anything'll suit me."

"Don't you go over to San Luis?" growled his father sulkily. "They have plays there sometimes, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, but I'm keeping out of harm's way. The boys in San Luis don't understand and I'm not going to put myself in the way of temptation. You know, father, I want that ranch."

He turned a laughing glance on his father; and the old man, with a sheepishly-discomfited expression, grunted an unintelligible reply and bent over his plate.

He did not raise his head till Gene had left the room, when, looking up, he leaned back in his chair and said with a plaintive sigh:

"What a damned fool that boy is!"

Rose was up in arms at once.

"Why, papa, how can you say that! Especially when you see how he's improved. It's wonderful. He's another man. You can tell in a minute he's not been drinking, he takes such an interest in everything and is so full of work and plans."

"Is he?" said her father dryly.

"Maybe so, but that don't prevent him from being a damned fool."

"You're unjust to Gene. Why do you think he's a fool?"

"Just because he happens to be one. You might as well ask me why I think the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. That's what it does, and when I say it does, I'm not criticizing or complaining, I'm only stating the plain facts."

Rose made a murmur of protest and he went on.

"You're queer cattle, you women! I suppose a feller could live in the world a hundred years and not understand you. There's Della Ryan, for example, the brainiest woman I know, could give most men cards and spades and beat 'em hands down. Last night at Rocky Bar they were telling me that she's written to the operator there and told him she'll get him a position here in the Atlantic and Pacific Cable Company, in which she's a large stockholder, that'll double his salary and give him a chance he'd never have got in this world. She wants to pay off a mortgage on a ranch Perley has in the Sacramento Valley and she's sent Mrs. Perley a check for five hundred dollars. She's offered Willoughby a first-rate job on the Red Calumet group of mines near Sonora in which Con had a controlling interest, and she's written to the doctor to come down and become one of the house physicians of the St. Filomena Hospital, which she practically runs. She's ready to do all this because of what they did for Dominick, and yet she, his own mother, won't give the boy a cent and keeps him on starva-

tion wages, just because she wants to spite his wife."

He looked at his daughter across the table with narrowed eyes. "What have you got to say for yourself after that, young woman?" he demanded.

Rose had evidently nothing to say. She raised her eyebrows and shook her head by way of reply. Her face, in the flood of lamplight, looked pale and tired. She was evidently distraught and depressed; a very different-looking Rose from the girl he had taken away with him four weeks earlier.

He regarded her for an anxiously-contemplative moment and then said: "What's the matter? Seems to me you look sorter peaked."

"I'm just queried with a surprised start. 'Why, I'm quite well.' 'Well, you were before you went up to the mines?' 'A color came into her cheeks and she lowered her eyes:'

"I'm a little tired, I think, and that always makes me look pale. It was a hard sort of trip, all those hours in the sleigh, and that hotel at Rocky Bar was a dreadful place. I couldn't sleep. There was a cow somewhere near—it sounded as if it were in the next room—and the roosters all began to crow in the middle of the night. I'll be all right to-morrow."

Her father drew his coffee-cup toward him and dropped in a lump of sugar. No word had passed between him and his daughter as to the scene he had witnessed two days before in the parlor of Perley's Hotel. She was ignorant of the fact that he had seen it and he intended that she should remain ignorant of it. But the next morning he had had an interview with Dominick Ryan, in which the young man, confronted with angry questions and goaded past reserve by shame and pain, had confessed the misery of his marriage and the love that in an unguarded moment had slipped beyond his control.

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"No, looks like the old man. Good deal like him in character, too. Con Ryan was the best feller in the world, but not hard enough, not enough grit. His wife had it though, had enough for both. If it hadn't been for her, Con would never have amounted to anything—too soft and good-natured, and the boy's like him."

"How?" She raised her head and looked directly at him, her lips slightly parted.

"Soft, too, just the same way, soft-hearted. An easy mark for any one with a hard-luck story and not too many scruples. Why did he marry that woman? I don't know anything about it, but I'd like to bet she saw the stuff he was made of and cried and teased and nagged till she got him to do it."

"I don't see that he could have done anything else."

"That's a woman's—a young girl's view. That's the view Dominick himself probably took. It's the sort of idea you might expect him to have, something ornamental and impractical, that's all right to keep in the cupboard and take out and dust, but that don't do for every-day use. That sort of thing is all very well for a girl, but it doesn't do for a man. It's not for this world and our times. Maybe it was all right when a feller went round in armor, fighting for unknown daisies, but it won't go in California to-day. The woman was a working woman, she wasn't any green girl. She earned her living in an office full of men, and I guess there wasn't much she didn't know. She saw through Dominick and gathered him in. It's all very well to be chivalrous, but you don't want to be a confounded fool."

"Are you a 'confounded fool' when you're doing what you think right?"

"It depends on what you think right, honey. If it's going to break up your life, cut you off from your kind, make an outcast of you for your own folks, and a poverty-stricken outcast at that, you're a confounded fool to think it's right. You oughtn't to let yourself think so. That kind of a moral attitude is a luxury. Women can cultivate it because they don't have to get out in the world and fight. They keep indoors and get taken care of, and the queer ideas they have don't hurt anybody. But men—"

He stopped, realizing that perhaps he was talking too frankly. He had long known that Rose harbored these Utopian theories on duty and honor, which he thought very nice and pretty for her and which went gracefully with her character as a sheltered, cherished, and unworldly maiden. It was his desire to see what effect the conversation was having on her that made him deal so unceremoniously with ideals of conduct which were all very well for Bill Cannon's daughter but were ruinous for Dominick Ryan.

"If you live in the world you've got to cut your cloth by its measure," he continued. "Look at that poor devil, tied to a woman that's not going to let him go if she can help it, that he doesn't care for—"

"How do you know he doesn't care for her?" The interruption came in a tone of startled surprise and Rose stared at him, her eyes wide with it.

For a moment the old man was at a loss. He would have told any lie rather than have let her guess his knowledge of the situation and the information given him by Dominick. He realized that his zeal had made him imprudently garrulous, and, gazing at her with a slightly stupid expression, said in a low tone of self-justification:

"Well, that's my idea. I guessed it. I've heard one thing and another here and there and I've come to the conclusion that there's no love lost between them. It's the natural outcome of the situation, anyway."

"Yes, perhaps," she murmured. She placed her elbow on the table and pressed the tips of her fingers against her cheek. Her hand and arm, revealed by her loose lace sleeve, looked as if cut out of ivory.

"And then," went on her father remorselessly, "the results of being a confounded fool don't stop right there. That's one of the worst things of allowing yourself the luxury of foolishness. They go on—roll right along like a wheel started on a down-hill grade. Some day that boy'll meet the right woman—the one he really wants, the one that belongs to him. He'll be able to stand it all right till then. And then he'll realize just what he's done and what he's up against, and things may happen."

The smoke wreaths were thick in front of his face, and peering through them he saw the young girl move her fingers from her cheek to her forehead, where she gently rubbed them up and down.

"Isn't that about the size of it?" he queried, when she did not answer.

"Yes, maybe," she said in a voice that sounded muffled.

"It'll be a pretty tough proposition and it's bound to happen. A decent feller like that is just the man to fall in love. And he'd be good to a woman, he'd make her happy. He's a good husband lost for some nice girl."

Rose's fingers ceased moving across her forehead. Her hand rested there, shading her eyes. For a moment the old man—his vision precipitated into the half-understood wretchedness of Dominick Ryan's position—forgot her, and he said in a husky voice of feeling:

"By God, I'm sorry for the poor boy!"

His daughter rose suddenly with a rustling of crushed silks. The sound brought him back in an instant and he leaned over the arm of his chair, his cigar in his left hand, his right waving the smoke wreaths from before his face. Rose's hand, pressing her crumpled napkin on the table, shone pink in the lamplight, her shoulder gleamed white through its lace covering, but her face was averted.

"Going up now?" he asked, leaning still farther over the chair-arm to see her beyond the lamp's wide shade.

She appeared not to hear and moved toward the door.

"Going to bed already, Rosey?" he asked in a louder key.

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Rose had evidently nothing to say. She raised her eyebrows and shook her head by way of reply. Her face, in the flood of lamplight, looked pale and tired. She was evidently distraught and depressed; a very different-looking Rose from the girl he had taken away with him four weeks earlier.

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"No, looks like the old man. Good deal like him in character, too. Con Ryan was the best feller in the world, but not hard enough, not enough grit. His wife had it though, had enough for both. If it hadn't been for her, Con would never have amounted to anything—too soft and good-natured, and the boy's like him."

"How?" She raised her head and looked directly at him, her lips slightly parted.

"Soft, too, just the same way, soft-hearted. An easy mark for any one with a hard-luck story and not too many scruples. Why did he marry that woman? I don't know anything about it, but I'd like to bet she saw the stuff he was made of and cried and teased and nagged till she got him to do it."

"I don't see that he could have done anything else."

"That's a woman's—a young girl's view. That's the view Dominick himself probably took. It's the sort of idea you might expect him to have, something ornamental and impractical, that's all right to keep in the cupboard and take out and dust, but that don't do for every-day use. That sort of thing is all very well for a girl, but it doesn't do for a man. It's not for this world and our times. Maybe it was all right when a feller went round in armor, fighting for unknown daisies, but it won't go in California to-day. The woman was a working woman, she wasn't any green girl. She earned her living in an office full of men, and I guess there wasn't much she didn't know. She saw through Dominick and gathered him in. It's all very well to be chivalrous, but you don't want to be a confounded