**THE FUNDAMENTALS: A TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH**

**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 4. THE SCIENCE OF CONVERSION**

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**1. THE CASE STATED**

The penetration of scientific investigation into the erstwhile unknown regions of things is one of the wonders of the age. All departments of creation are yielding up their secrets to the searching eye of science.

The causes of things are being sought after, not only in the natural world, but in all realms as well, so that things may be brought more certainly and directly under the human will. The unseen operations by which powerful results are produced are forced to yield and tell their secrets. New powers are discovered in all realms of investigation and subdued as never before to the service of man. Practically everything is reduced to science, and men are learning the how and the wherefore of things physical, mental and spiritual. The better these things are understood, the more completely are we the masters of the world for whose subjection man was commissioned.

Now our inquiry is whether the conversion of the human soul - the divinely wrought new birth - lies within the range of scientific investigation. Can the operations of the Divine forces and the divinely appointed means for the conversion of a soul be made to yield to scientific research, so that we can produce results with the same degree of certainty as does the chemist in his laboratory? Do the laws of cause and effect operate in the spiritual realm as in the natural world, and can we apply spiritual means and causes with the same degree of certainty as in physical things? Can we get out of the realm of the uncertain and the vague in working with human souls and operate with absolute assurance of adequate and satisfactory results?

In this greatest of all works, and which is practically committed to man, has God left us to absolute uncertainties as to results? Is it not true that if the divinely ordained means be properly used the results can be obtained with the same scientific certainty as in other things, and results also which are in no sense spurious but the actual effect of efficient and properly applied causes? Are not the promises of God absolute, and do not many incidents in the work and history of the Church demonstrate that the conversion of souls was the direct result of God-appointed and man-applied means thereto, operated by purely scientific methods, although the workers had no thought of science in their work? Are we not bound to obey God's laws in all scientific operations in the physical world, and must we not scientifically obey His laws in the higher realm of His domain?

**2. THE CASE DIAGNOSED**

A careful diagnosis of the case under consideration may help us towards a scientific answer to our investigation. To know the patient, and especially to know precisely the nature of the disease, is of prime importance in the successful treatment of it. Otherwise, all treatment is mere guess-work.

Our subject in this inquiry is a degenerate human soul. Degenerate meaning an inherent unrighteousness and an innate corruption that has affected every fiber and faculty of the human soul. This total depravity does not mean that man is actually and practically as mean as he is capable of being, but it means that the total man is depraved in all of his parts, and that he is born in that condition.

This native degeneracy is of a twofold nature: First, it is a legal condemnation descending to every human soul from a justly condemned ancestry who represented and stood for the whole race in the government of God under the covenant of works first made with man. Second, it is a complete moral corruption of the whole soul so that all the faculties of the soul are affected in such a way as to make them incapable of right action, so that every imagination of the heart is only evil continually. This morally degenerate man, in the adult stage, is also guilty of manifold actual sins, confirming his condemnation and making his moral nature all the more depraved. In addition to this already depraved condition, this degenerate man has no desire for a better life; his perverted natural taste refuses it, and he is even unwilling to consider anything better. He actually loves his depraved condition and revels in the things that develop still more the baser principles in him. Moreover, his intellect is so blunted that he is incapable of apprehending spiritual truths and his eyes are so stigmatized that he cannot see the light.

Such then is the character of the unconverted man, the subject now under consideration. And it is very evident, that while we may be able with the aid of Divine revelation and human observation and experience to diagnose the case correctly, the remedy is found in a higher realm, though it may be applied in part through human agencies.

**3. THE DIVINE PROPOSITION**

In view of this apparently hopeless case, what is the Divine proposition regarding it? What does the Divine plan contemplate? It is quite evident that the ultimate goal of the Divine proposition is to get rid of sin. But to get rid of the sin we must get rid of the sinner, otherwise sin remains.

In getting rid of the sinner two things are possible, either by judgment to destroy the sinner and with him also the sin, or by Divine grace to convert the sinner and thus remove the sin. Both methods are used in the Divine government, but conversion is what now concerns us. The Divine proposition is not to destroy the sinner, but to save him by making out of him a totally new man - to transform him from a child of sin into a real child of God. Not merely a son of God, but an actually born child, so that by birth he becomes an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ to a heavenly inheritance.

That the Divine power is sufficient for such an achievement is not to be questioned for a moment. But does the work fall within the range of scientific investigation and are the methods to be used strictly scientific? Is the Divine method in applying complete salvation to this awfully degenerate soul really scientific? Is it supposable that God is less scientific in this the very greatest. of all His works than He is in the lesser things in His government? Does He work by one set of laws in the natural world, and by different laws, or no laws at all, in the higher spiritual realm?

But if God is scientific - if the conversion of the human soul is accomplished by scientific methods - it follows that the work is best done when done by God's methods, if indeed it can be done at all in any other way. And if God's method is scientific, has He adequately revealed to us His method so that it can be certainly and successfully used by us as His workers? And if this revelation is made to us we dare not depart from God's method, whatever other methods may be suggested. For, if we depart from the methods God has given and by which God Himself works, our work will be a failure entirely or the results will be inadequate and spurious.

**4. THE MEANS DISCOVERED**

God's proposition being stated and His methods being scientific, we must next discover the means by which the work is to be accomplished. Let it be remembered that in all things pertaining to man in both temporal and spiritual matters God works by means, and usually through human agencies.

But in the work of converting the human soul it is evident that the means are twofold. First, those means applied direct on the part of God to the soul from within; and second, those means applied from without through the senses by human agencies and instrumentalities. It is a fact, however, that even the means used directly on the part of God are at least in part applied through human agencies; so that the conversion of adult souls, so far as we are able to see, is ordinarily through human instrumentalities.

Hence the means by which the human soul is converted, or born into the family of God, are:

1. The Divine Spirit, which is the alone Divine Agent, and without which no soul, of infant or adult, can ever pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. This Divine Spirit operates how and where He pleases and with or without means and agencies.
2. The Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, reaching and quickening men's souls through the reasoning and emotional faculties. The Word is effectual only as accompanied by the quickening power of the Spirit, while at the same time it may be variously applied externally.
3. The benign influence of Christians, demonstrating the reality and power and blessedness of the new life in the soul of the converted man.
4. Real prayer, by which the regenerate soul brings the unregenerate to the very feet of the Divine Saviour and insistently implores the Divine grace.
5. An absolute faith on the part of the human agent. This faith is an absolute confidence in the ability of God and in His purpose to accomplish the work through the means then being used, whenever the conditions thereto are complied with. There can be no true faith when the available means are not used and the known conditions not complied with.

**5. THE MEANS APPLIED**

Here is where the science of conversion is especially manifest. Everything in nature must be done in God's way, and God's way is always scientific, and all things are best done when we adhere most closely to God's methods. The conversion of the human soul is no exception to this rule. We can convert men most successfully when we adhere strictly to the Divine science of the work. Our failures are no doubt largely due to our not complying with God's ways of doing the work.

We adhere strictly to God's laws in growing our crops. The seed is first placed where the dormant life powers are aroused and the seed caused to germinate. Afterwards follow the blade, the stalk and the mature fruit. No human power or wisdom can change this law of germination and growth. So the human soul being spiritually dead is incapable of doing anything towards an awakening to a new life; and being also unable even to will to do such a thing, it is quite evident that the very first thing essential is the direct application of the lifegiving power of the Divine Spirit to the dormant soul. This life-giving touch prepares the soul for the effectual application of all the other appointed means by which the soul is brought into the realities and fullness of the new life. But ordinarily, if not always, the application of the life-giving Spirit through human agencies is in answer to prayer somehow and somewhere. May it not be true that every soul born into the kingdom of God is in answer to the supplication of some earnest Christian whose heart is as large as humanity and whose prayer touches every lost soul of man.

Hence prayer is scientifically the first means and the prime force to be applied by the true Christian in producing the conversion of a human soul. It is perfectly certain that nothing can be effectively done until the Spirit is applied, and the Spirit is ordinarily given in answer to prayer - that is, the quickening Spirit that arouses the soul and prepares it for the effectual application of other divinely appointed means. We question whether the Spirit is ever given without prayer where prayer is available, as in all other things human agencies are required when available.

Second to the Spirit's work, and along with it, is the application of the Word by which the soul of the hearer is reached through the intellect, the reasoning faculties being aroused, and through them the appeal of the Gospel is forced into the newly awakened conscience. Here all the powers of eloquence and reason and persuasion come into full play and are made effectual in turning the eyes of the awakened soul to the cross.

Next, the awakened soul now becomes co-operative with the Divine Spirit, and with the Word and with other external means, and the result is belief in the Word on the part of the aroused soul, and through the receiving of the Word there follows an actual, personal, living faith in the Christ set forth in the Gospel, followed by outward confession, obedience and Christian service.

Hence the scientific order of the application of the means for the conversion of a soul is:

* The prayer of the Church and the Christian worker for the application of the quickening Spirit on the part of God.
* The preaching of the Word and the use of other external means.
* The responsive and cooperative and receptive act of the sinner, now made willing by the Spirit of God.
* And the wholly personal act of faith in Christ on the part of the sinner by which he actually receives by his own volition the Saviour as set before him, confesses Him and becomes obedient to Him as his Lord and Master.

**6. THE CONDITIONS IMPOSED**

In all scientific operations there are conditions that must be complied with, otherwise the results are either spurious or disastrous. This accounts for the vast number of spurious conversions and lapses in the churches. Unscrupulous and ignorant men seeking after a display of numbers use all sorts of devices in all sorts of ways to produce apparent conversions. Just as well might the chemist go into his laboratory and throw together any and all sorts of chemicals and expect correct and scientific results. Correct results might accidentally follow, but the almost inevitable results would be poisons and explosions. Is not the same true in the unscriptural and unscientific methods used by many who pose as expert conversionists in so many of the pseudo revivals now so much in vogue?

The conditions imposed for the true conversion of souls are both philosophic and scientific, and at the same time supremely gracious and benevolent, ever looking to the highest good of all concerned, both to the soul that is being saved and the worker through whom the results are accomplished.

These conditions are imposed by God Himself. Hence He becomes responsible for the results when the conditions are really fulfilled on our part. The results may not always be as we may calculate or desire, but they will always correspond to the means as used.

These conditions are twofold. On the part of the Christian worker in applying God's means for the salvation of men in God's ways. The danger here is in applying all sorts of human means in any way whatever so as to obtain apparent results. Often we blame God directly or indirectly for the poverty and character of the results, when as a matter of fact we have never complied with God's conditions, which are always natural, reasonable and scientific.

Second, on the part of the sinner these conditions apply, because although he is spiritually dead, he is intellectually alive and morally a free agent, and hence responsible for his conduct, including his unbelief and his rejection of Christ as his Saviour. He is responsible for the opportunities placed before him, and consequently he is responsible for the conditions God has imposed for the salvation of his soul. No man, in any Gospel land at least, can truthfully and conscientiously claim that he has fully met God's conditions for his salvation and that God has rejected him, or that the results have not been adequate and scientific. On the other hand, no Christian worker has a right to the God-promised results until he has met the God-imposed conditions. A partial use of means, used in an indifferent way for only a limited time, is not scientific and is not meeting God's conditions. This is true not only in the work of actual soul-saving, but in the Christian life as well.

**7. THE RESULTS OBTAINED**

The results obtained in the conversion of a human soul are equally scientific with the means used thereto.

The primary result is a new man. Not an old man made over, but a new man, possessed of a new life and endowed with new and enlarged possibilities. A man with a new vision both of this life and of the eternal future. A man inspired with a new hope, the flukes of which are struck into the very throne of God and which is a positive and inalienable title to an inheritance in heaven. A man with a positive personal faith in Christ. A faith that makes Christ his personal possession with all that Christ is and all that He has and all that He has done. A man whose whole life is reversed from the service of sin and self to the kind and willing service of Christ as his new Master.

That such a man is the scientific result of the means that have been applied goes without argument. It is only in harmony with the great laws of God that govern His kingdom from the combination of the most minute chemical atoms to the swing of the spheres in His boundless universe. First of all, life produces life of its own kind. Hence the life-giving touch of the Divine Spirit imparts life of its own kind to the dormant soul and it becomes the living son of God. This result is as manifestly scientific as can be found in all nature. The immortal soul already exists endowed with all the possibilities of a finite being, but the eternal life is the scientific result of the life-giving touch of the Spirit of God. It is in fact impossible that the result be otherwise.

Another result is the effect produced upon the will of the convert. His will is renewed and is now in harmony with the Divine will, and this is produced by the action of the Divine will upon the will of the sinner. Here again the Divine begets its likeness in the changed will of the converted soul. A natural and scientific result.

Again, through the enlightening and persuading power of the Gospel the sinner is led to see the error of his way and the condition of his soul, and repentance of sins and faith in Christ are the result. The man is outwardly converted and his whole life and service reversed. These are again the scientific results of the means used according to the Divine order of things. That these results do not always follow the preaching of the Word may be largely due to the fact that the means have been used amiss for the mere gratification of the lust of the worker, or that other necessary means have been neglected, especially prayer. And the reason why so many conversions are not genuine is due to the fact that they are merely external conversions, the result of exciting rant called preaching the Gospel, while prayer for the internal work of the Spirit has been totally ignored.

In the whole process of conversion it is a fundamental principle that like begets like, and means produce results according to purely scientific laws, and if the results are not scientific they are spurious, external and temporary. A beautiful and pointed illustration is found in the conversion of the congregation at the house of Cornelius. The means were used - though unwittingly on the part of men - in the scientific order. Prayer, the Holy Spirit, the preached Word; and the results were conversion, confession and Christian service.