

cannot save the church from over-excitement; over-excitement cannot save her from formality. The consciousness of redemption in the human heart—the gospel itself, in short—can and must save her, if she is ever saved, from both.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TO HIS REMOVAL TO HARRISON, IN 1824.

THE Free-will Baptist denomination may be regarded as having had its origin in the great religious awakening that occurred under the labors of Wesley and Whitefield. The last sermon ever delivered by the latter, (in 1770,) was blessed to the conversion of a sail-maker, Benjamin Randall, the acknowledged founder of the denomination. At first, he joined "the Standing Order," as the Congregationalists were then called in New England; but owing to a difference of opinion in regard to baptism, he soon after joined the Calvinistic Baptists, among whom he was licensed as a preacher. Possessed of strong practical common sense, and a judgment unwarped by the theological training of those times, it was, of course, impossible for him to adopt the high toned Calvinism then prevailing in the two denominations with which he had been, thus far, associated. Besides, it was, altogether uncongenial with his heart, warmed by the "brotherly love" of a life-giving gospel, to refuse to commune with acknowledged Christians, simply from a difference of opinion in regard to baptism. Hence, in 1780, he was led to form a Free-Communion Baptist church, holding to the freedom of human will. Hence sprung the nick-name Free-will Baptists, and the denomination designated by it.

Soon after the foundation of the denomination, came those times in which the freedom of the State, then so lately achieved in our country, began to react upon the church, breaking down, to some extent, religious aristocracies, and detracting somewhat from the currency of the ideas upon which they were founded. Old men, who had been through the revolution, fought over their battles for independence and equality as they sat in their easy chairs, surrounded by their children and their grand-children. Irregulars in the church as well as in the State gained strength, and, at length, a recognition of their rights from the old establishments.

This reaction of the American Revolution upon the church is a subject of importance to all, and its peculiar influence upon us as a denomination is certainly not enough considered by ourselves. On other pages, if life be spared, we hope to give more attention to the topics here indicated.

The origin of the denomination being such, and in such times, it will readily appear to one, upon reflection, that it was at first peculiarly exposed to various hurtful eccentricities, and especially to the enthusiasm of the religious feelings. Of the truth of this remark, we have already given some painful examples. But these evils, having their origin mostly in the feelings, more speedily pass away than does the influence of false dogmas. The denomination owing its origin in so great a degree, as we have intimated, to the anti-nomianism then prevailing in the old denominations, it was but human to attribute that spiritual death to

wrong causes, for instance, to an educated and well paid ministry. Would that this *instance* were a mere supposition. Still further, it would be quite in accordance with what usually takes place in all religious secessions, if these false ideas took a stronger hold of the minds of the seceders, by reason of the arrogant bearing assumed by the conservatives toward those whom they regarded as erring brethren.

These remarks may seem, to some, quite out of the way in tracing the life of Mr. Phinney, but we can learn little as we ought to learn, of the spirit and usefulness of a man, unless we keep in mind the principal circumstances, in the midst of which he is compelled to act. We must remember that Mr. Phinney was constantly exposed to over-action, in the direction of that kind of religious excitement which owes its origin too little to the genuine convictions of the intellect, and furthermore, that he had constantly to contend against the influence of the false ideas already mentioned. Not only are these things necessary to a proper view of *his* life, but it may be worthy of remark, that he who would be very serviceable to any new denomination, especially as a preacher, needs to study well its origin, and to discern clearly the leading ideas it is struggling to develop and organize. It is only thus, that he can learn its peculiar exposures to evil, present deficiencies, and, what is still more important, how to remedy such deficiencies, without introducing something worse.

The following sketch of a Quarterly Meeting, which one of our oldest ministers, who was present,

relates, illustrates one point above named. The meeting occurred during that part of Mr. Phinney's life, of which we write in this chapter. It was held in a Congregationalist meeting house at L. On the morning appointed, the house was filled to overflowing; for Quarterly Meetings in those times attracted people from great distances, and great and good were their spiritual influences. Elder Z. Leach presided on this occasion. He entered the pulpit and invited some other preachers to take a place with him. One after another refused from mere embarrassment. Perhaps they had never been in a pulpit; for we must try to keep in mind the true state of things. Mr. Phinney accepted the invitation. As he started he began to sing. So did he sing, with the spirit and the understanding, that scarce one restrained his tears. So the meeting began. In the afternoon the minister, in whose church the meeting was held, was in the pulpit. When Elder Leach was about to enter it to open the afternoon session, the man of the pulpit would not suffer it. Elder Leach then took his stand on the lower part of the stairs leading to the pulpit. But the other, as if fully conscious of belonging to "the standing order," with his long cane, pushed the irregular away entirely from the pulpit and all pertaining to it. To this unchristian course it was well that those who had the charge of the meeting opposed a spirit so strikingly in contrast, that the cause of arrogance lost much, while that of reform gained not a little. The common people, who, for the most part, hear the truth gladly, were so disgusted

with their minister, that they soon permitted him to find a field of labor more congenial to his feelings.

It can but excite the sense of the ludicrous, to think of a minister, in such circumstances, posting himself in the pulpit, armed, not with the brotherly love and spiritual graces conferred by the gospel, but with a huge cane, to guard his sanctum from the contamination of the uninitiated; as though he would say, "True, my people have voted to let these fellows have the house for their Quarterly Meeting, but not the pulpit; this sacred spot is mine, and guard it I will." As straws are said to show which way the wind blows, so this apparently trifling incident may indicate the intolerance with which the fathers of the denomination had to contend. Since, despite many weaknesses and errors, we have at last, through God's blessings, won a respectable standing among our sister denominations, it may be well for us thus to glance at the past. It certainly will, if thus we may improve; if we may learn never to manifest an arrogant spirit toward beginners in such a religious course as their consciences may dictate, however different that may be from ours.

We may not pass without alluding in this connection to the pleasure we experienced in being permitted to witness, only a year or two ago, a very different scene from that above described. It occurred, too, near the same place. At a session of the Maine Western Yearly Meeting, a corresponding messenger from the Association of Congregationalists of the State was received. The object of the correspond-

ence thus begun is to promote brotherly love among Christians of different names. May it continue, till among all who profess to be followers of Christ, substance shall be more cared for than shadow.

When "Cochranism" was at its height, and had quite driven Mr. Phinney from his field of labor in the towns where it was raging, he went to Harrison, to commence there a series of meetings.\* His labors were blessed. The revival which followed resulted in the organization of the Harrison church, which yet remains. Already it has done good service in the Master's cause: long may it continue to win souls to Christ.

At the commencement of these meetings there was every prospect of good. Joseph Phinney, brother of Clement, resided there. He was not only impenitent, but very rude. After the first meeting, Joseph gathered his impenitent friends around him to put them on their guard against his brother. "Look out," said he, "or Clement will have you. I know him well. He will have a great revival here." How often the impenitent harden their hearts to resist the influence of the truth, and yet, when on their deathbeds, think they have a claim to be converted! But notwithstanding this preparation against the truth, the revival began; the people became deeply interested; scarce could they pursue their labor, although pressed by the cares of harvest. As the preacher went from house to house, and from field to field, to

\* This was in 1818.

converse with the people, he found many anxious in regard to their salvation.

Among these was Major Emerson, upon whom the impenitent relied much for their support in opposition to the revival. Joseph heard he was anxious, and had visited him to strengthen him. Mr. Emerson told him that he had determined to seek the Savior. Joseph was not sparing in his ridicule. When the preacher visited the penitent man he said to him, "Your brother will kill me; he gives me no peace." Most earnestly did Mr. Phinney pray that all obstacles to the revival might be removed; he prayed in faith; he believed what he asked would be granted. While he was thus pleading with God, Joseph was just leaving his horse, a mile distant from the place of prayer. God arrested him in his wicked career. He fell to the earth like the persecuting Paul. He cried for help. His wife assisted him to return to his house. As he lay prostrate he lifted up his voice in prayer. A messenger hastened with the glad tidings to the preacher, around whom a company of the anxious had gathered. When it was said to that company concerning the persecutor, "Behold he prayeth," they were overwhelmed as by the power of God.

Mr. Emerson and Joseph soon found peace; the revival rapidly advanced; in it Joseph was very useful. Six weeks after, when Mr. Phinney left, his brother, in absence of preachers, took the lead of the company of Christians there gathered. He eventually became a preacher.

At the meeting in which Joseph first publicly confessed Christ, Mr. Phinney had been setting forth various obstacles that hindered the progress of religion. He said, some professors of religion become pharisaical, they care more about the letter than the spirit; they prevent their children from attending meetings where the life and power of the gospel are manifested. As soon as the preacher took his seat, a lady arose, and in great excitement said, "I don't like to be twitted of my faults in public; strange that a preacher cannot come into the neighborhood, but that my neighbors must run to him each with a budget of rattle. I will not be treated so; my character shall be cleared up." "Dear," said Mr. Phinney, "who are you; I have been preaching about Pharisees; no one has said a word to me about any such here." The lady sent word to him afterwards to come and "clear up" her character, and Mr. Phinney's friends advised him to call and to re-assure her that he was not personal; but of course he had other employment on hand.

This was not the only time that he has been charged with personalities, as every preacher is liable to be who understands human character.

In 1820, in company with Elder Mark Fernald, of the Christian denomination, Mr. Phinney visited Kittery, in the western part of Maine, and a portion of N. H., Portsmouth and vicinity. He attended a large meeting of importance among the people just named. He relates that at this meeting he attempted to preach,

but made, as he considered, a perfect failure. A season of mortification followed, possibly repentance, for repentance is usually more needed than mortification at such seasons of a preacher's experience. The parents of the family he passed that night with were greatly backslidden. Early the next morning he betook himself to a retired grove for a season of prayer and humiliation. He resigned himself to the needed chastisement received the day before. As he returned happy in his soul, he met at the door a young lady, the daughter of his host. "Daughter," said he, addressing her, "do you love the Savior?" "I do not," said she. "You ought to; he has been very kind to you." This simple remark having nothing of cant in it as employed by him, had its effect upon her mind. At family worship that morning she yielded her heart to the Savior. She praised God; her parents were rebuked. In the fulness of her joy she hastened to one of the neighbors to tell some of her associates what had been done for her soul. As she rushed into their midst, she exclaimed, "The Savior is good! the Savior is good." The preacher, (who accompanied her,) gave his hearty "Amen, Amen." A season of prayer was commenced in that family. Soon two young ladies came to the door, being attracted, as they said, by some one shouting "Amen, Amen." Those who heard Mr. Phinney in those days will not find it difficult to believe that he might have been heard at a considerable distance on such an occasion. "Come in, come

in," said he; "the Savior is here forgiving sinners; come, join us."

This resulted in the conversion of three or four young persons besides the one with whom the work commenced. When the mind is enlightened, the work of salvation may be speedy. Neither weeks nor days of distress need pass, nor even hours; let the heart yield, and the work is done. So, too, in a single moment the grace of Christ may be rejected forever. Of this the following is a painful illustration:

A few days later, Mr. Phinney was preaching in the town of Rye, N. H. The audience was large and attentive. A man of more than sixty years entered the house and approached the pulpit; his throat was apparently cut from ear to ear, and the blood dripping therefrom. He gazed a moment, earnestly and wildly, upon the preacher, and then rushed from the church. The feeling of horror that pervaded all present, cannot be described. Mr. Phinney afterwards visited him, and received the following, in substance, from his own lips:

"Some thirty years since, I was awakened to a sense of the need of salvation through Christ. I sought the Savior of sinners and was happy. It was a pleasure to me to pray. Soon my mind came again under the influence of my former habits. I thought of wealth. The issue seemed to be presented distinctly to my mind: 'Will you be a genuine Christian, or will you be a rich man?' I chose wealth; the Spirit

of God left my heart; I was given over. I have wealth, but I have lost my soul; my life is a burthen to me; I would rather be in hell than suffer such torments on earth; I tried to take my life, but was prevented. I escaped from my friends to the church."

His wound did not prove mortal. He would not consent to have any one pray for him; he insisted that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost—that he was beyond the reach of hope. I have understood that he died in the same wretchedness. How truly it will be said to some, "Son, remember thou hadst thy good things on earth." Already they seem to feel the fires of hell in their own bosoms, and eternally, as they reflect upon their fool's choice, they will feel the gnawings of the worm that never dies. Reader, what choice have you made?

At Portsmouth, N. H., Mr. Phinney met the eccentric Lorenzo Dow. "Though many other preachers were present," says he, "as Dow was about to enter the pulpit, he selected me to take a place with him, doubtless because I was the shabbiest of all in my apparel." Similar poles do not always repel each other.

In this tour, also, he visited Hampton, where he preached in the Calvinistic Baptist church. "When I saw the people assembling," says he, "I felt depressed in spirits. I betook myself to a place of retirement, and asked God for a message. He gave me one, and I delivered it: the people gladly heard and were deeply affected; but much good was prevented by the devil, for he put it into the heart of a

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well known hypocrite to take on at a great rate, and pretend to praise God." A distinguished divine gives it as his opinion that the devil, for a similar purpose, put it into the heart of "a certain damsel" to follow Paul and others, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."\*

During this tour he preached almost entirely in churches not of his own denomination. In several places he witnessed the out-pouring of the Spirit. After an absence of many weeks, he returned home by way of Kennebunk, where he baptized several, who had been converted under his labors.

Mr. Phinney was a man of faith. When laboring once about this time, in Standish, he perceived that the good work was much hindered by a young man of leading influence among the youth. In secret retreats he prayed God to change this hinderance into a help. It was so. Many were converted and added to the church. "Next," says he, "I looked over into Raymond; I felt my heart moved for the church there in perils." It appears that a great declension had followed a great revival—a fact so often occurring that it should attract more attention than it does. The younger members of the church were in the habit of attending dancing parties, and the older did little if any better. Between two members there had been, not only a quarrel, but a blow on one part. Here he found Elders Jordan and Leach; he told them that

\* Acts xvi. 16—18.

he came to weep over the desolation of Zion. He visited from house to house. Saturday, at covenant meeting, many were in attendance; humble confessions were made by many, among whom were the two offenders alluded to. The next day, as Mr. Phinney undertook to preach, he could only weep; his swollen heart compelled him to take his seat. Tears, when they cannot be restrained, are not without their eloquence. The people began to weep for themselves.

Cyrus Latham, son-in-law to Elder Stinchfield, had just moved into a newly finished house. He proposed to have a conference meeting at his house next evening. His invitation was accepted. It was the custom of the young people to dedicate the new dwellings by a dancing party, which they called a "house warming." In mentioning the meeting for the following evening, Mr. Phinney could not pass over the coincidence. So, notwithstanding the solemnities of the meeting, he invited the young people, especially, to be present, as he was about to introduce a new kind of "house warming." His grave associates were shocked, and besought him to apologize, to retract, but in vain.

Next evening the house was, of course, crowded, but too many came from mere curiosity. The meeting was sluggish. Perhaps the over-excitement of the previous day had some influence in rendering it so. The meeting was dismissed in disappointment. Still, many seemed loth to leave. Mr. Phinney began to sing. The cry, "God, be merciful to me a

sinner;" was soon heard. The meetings were protracted; the church was healed, and many sinners converted. Some who had been backslidden many years, were reclaimed, and among those baptized, was one who had been awakened many years before, under his preaching in another part of the country. For their encouragement the faithful are permitted from time to time to meet cheering results of their efforts.

In 1822\* Mr. Phinney attended a Quarterly Meeting in South Parsonsfield, where he first met Elder Jonathan Woodman, who, though he has endured many years of hard and faithful service, is still firm at his post. Here, too, was Elder John Buzzell, the personal friend and faithful coadjutor of Benjamin Randall. He has done good service in writing the biography of his friend. In his palmy days he was a minister of great power, and many have, through his labors, been made savingly acquainted with Christ. Already he has lived to see generations pass away, and still, for the sake of others, our prayer is, "Late may he return to heaven."

This meeting was protracted, and a revival followed, as was usual after Quarterly Meetings in those times. God be praised that this feature seems to be again returning. Mr. Phinney was pleading at this meeting with sinners to accept the pardon procured by Christ. "In the war of the Revolution," said he, "a soldier deserted; he was pursued and apprehended,

\* Elder Woodman writes in reference to the Quarterly Meeting, "I am very sure it was in 1822."

convicted and sentenced to suffer death. Lady Washington heard of the unfortunate soldier; she plead with Washington to grant him a pardon, if possible. The soldier was led out to suffer his sad fate; he kneeled upon his coffin; the soldiers were just ready to fire upon him. At that moment the pardon came. The deserter was saved. With what joy did he accept the pardon! Sinners, you are guilty, and condemned. Already you kneel upon your coffins. Soon you will pass to the world of the lost. But the Savior has procured your pardon. O receive it!" Mr. Lord, a Calvinistic Baptist minister, being present, remarked, that he was an eye-witness of a scene in the Revolution similar to the one related. He spoke of the great rejoicing of all the spectators when the pardon came. A military man was present. All this was too much for him; he arose and said with much emotion, "I know I am guilty, condemned and just ready to suffer the penalty; the soldier rejoiced when the pardon came; the pardon has come to me, but my hard heart rejects it." He soon after, with others, accepted the pardon from Christ.

The next place we find Mr. Phinney is at Waterborough, at a session of the Quarterly Meeting. A revival succeeded it, and spread into adjacent towns. Mr. Phinney travelled around "Ossipee Mountain," as a high hill situated there is called, preaching at various points. He compared these journeyings to the siege laid to Jericho by the trumpeters of Joshua. He called on Elder Pelatiah Tingley, who was spending his last days with David Burroughs, his son-in-

law. The old gentleman was then slowly recovering from a severe illness. He insisted upon having one meeting at his house, so that he could once more hear the gospel preached. His wishes were complied with. At the close of Mr. Phinney's sermon, he exhorted all to seek the Savior. He said he felt the spirit of revival, and that, if like Simeon, he could see the Lord once more, he would be content to depart. Next morning, he insisted upon being placed once more upon his horse. No one could dissuade him, though feeble with disease and the weight of years. He went forth with Mr. Phinney once more into the Lord's vineyard. He witnessed once more the work of the Lord in the salvation of sinners. He seemed to renew his age. This, however, was his last effort; he was soon after called to his reward.

Elder Tingley was one of the oldest men in the denomination. He came over from the Congregationalists at an early day, and rendered very efficient service in those times, when all had yet to be systematized. Mr. Phinney takes great pleasure in telling of one of the old gentleman's prayers. It occurred in a time of great interest, by reason of peculiar responsibilities to be undertaken by a Yearly Meeting. It is as follows: "O Lord, teach us each to know thy will, and do it; teach us each to find our places, and keep them: Amen."

At an evening meeting, during this revival, a gentleman became very deeply convicted. Mr. Phinney exhorted him never to leave the house till he had found peace. His soul was soon happy in the love

of God; he exhorted two old professors of religion who had a strife, to remove that stumbling block out of the way of the impenitent. His exhortations were heeded.

In the midst of the revival came "Thanksgiving," an occasion often observed in a spirit very different from that possessed by those who instituted it. So now, the impenitent determined to make it tell against the cause of God. A ball was determined upon; but God's Spirit had taken deep hold of the public mind. Old men who braved it out, were compelled to attend the ball without their wives, and young men went in vain for their partners. Of course the ball was broken up. Some of the disappointed attended the meeting for the purpose of disturbing it, but they went away praying. When Christians feel their responsibilities, and look to God for help, they become acquainted with that power that overcometh the world.

In Waterborough, Elder Hobbs was pastor. He had just returned from the Legislature, of which he was a member. He was full of politics, and backslidden, as most ministers and professors of religion are, though unnecessarily, when they have passed a session in such bodies. Mr. Phinney felt it very important that he should be revived before the converts were left alone to his care. Soon the time came when the converts demanded baptism and admission to the church. The pastor's mind was so filled with something besides the Spirit of God, that he felt unprepared for these duties. But Mr. Phinney utterly

declined to attend to them for him. The consequence was, that the pastor, by prayer and humiliation, prepared to lead forth his flock.

Nothing, perhaps, to which we shall refer, presents the character of Mr. Phinney in a more favorable light than the trait brought out in the above incident. In the case given, he acted upon his well-settled principles in relation to the rights of others. He always exercises a care to check all such personal attachment to himself as will injure the usefulness of others. Of the hundreds converted under his labors he baptizes but few, where there is a pastor. Converts often insist upon being baptized by him because his labors have been blessed to their conversion. He says to them, "I am soon going away; your pastor is henceforth to be your spiritual guide; he ought to baptize you, especially if you regard it as a point of attachment." So he utterly refuses to marry those who apply to him, where there is a pastor. By these and other methods he strives to attach the hearts of the people to their ministers. Sometimes persons begin to whisper to him, "We wish our pastor was a man of revival spirit." He quickly perceives the strife to which such whisperings tend. He proceeds to explain the differences between the duties and labors of a pastor and those of an evangelist. "Your pastor," says he, "wears much longer than I could; my preaching is over in a very few weeks; my sermons are few, his are many." Every pastor feels himself strengthened and cheered by him. How different this from what sometimes takes place! Some,

whose labors are even blessed to the conversion of many, either from want of proper care, or a proper spirit, sow in every church they visit seeds of discord.

It would appear from a little attention to the subject, that the rights of pastors in many places might be treated with more respect than they are; but the fault alluded to, may be regarded as an evil incident to a state of transition: it will doubtless pass away in a few years. The pastoral office will soon be more fully appreciated among us.

From Waterborough he went to Limington; from there to Newfield. In the latter place, he labored in connection with Elder Samuel Burbank. All things here appeared at first forbidding, but still they prayed in faith. "The reformation cloud soon appeared, and a good work followed."