

manner, alludes to such a thing as a penitent bench or a camp meeting, and also that they have not been mentioned in any period of the history of the church, until late in the 17th century. Finney, who is a warm advocate for the "anxious seat," as he terms what is here called the penitent bench, and whose work on revivals seems to be a text book with those who are engaged in them, states that it originated in New England, consequently it could not have been used before the time mentioned.

But the absence of a reference to them in the sacred writings may be considered merely as a negative proof of their unscripturality, I shall therefore consider some of the instances of conversion recorded in scripture, and shall affirm respecting them that they are totally different in their nature from those that are proffered at the penitent bench.

Scriptural conversion is produced by the conviction of the judgment and the reason,—penitent bench conversion, by the excitement of the passions, by a contagious sympathy of feeling, or at the utmost by an alarming of the conscience.

The Jews, on the day of Pentecost and following days, were convinced by the reasoning of Peter and the other apostles that the Jesus whom they had crucified was in reality the Christ, and through their judgment being satisfied and their reason convinced, they were led to accept him as their Saviour. The Eunuch, and Lydia, and the twelve Ephesian disciples, were converted by being plainly pointed to Jesus as the Prophet that should come into the world, without a single expression having been used calculated to terrify or alarm; while Paul and the Philippian jailor, whose conversions were brought about by miracles, had no fearful denunciations of divine wrath declared to them to awaken their consciences; but when the spirit had by his own operations convinced them of the need of salvation, then the messengers of Christ proclaimed peace to the returning penitents, through the blood of Jesus.

In all these instances, the judgment and the reason of the converted persons were fully satisfied, and no hot-bed instrumentality made use of to force them forward into christianity. But compare with the scriptural method of conversion that used by revivalists. A revival is intended to break out in any neighbourhood—preachers are called together from various places—sermons of an exciting character are preached—and while the congregation is under the influence of this excitement, notice is given that a prayer meeting will be immediately held; invitations are given to those who are desirous of going to heaven to manifest that desire by coming forth before the congregation and kneeling at the penitent bench. Who is not desirous of going there? The consequence therefore is that, under the impulse of the moment, some (generally young persons or females) go forward; sometimes however there is a backwardness manifested, when the initiatory step is taken by some prominent individual, and, the ice being once broken, it is easy afterwards to fill the benches. When all are arranged, prayers are offered in such a manner that one would suppose that heaven was about to be taken by storm, and advices given to the supposed penitents amidst the most extreme noise and confusion; when at length, under the influ-

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