

countenanced, could not be genuine. I would rather be permitted to indulge the hope that they were what they are represented; but I do not hesitate to say that their claim to be so considered must rest on evidence very different from what is furnished by such wild and unscriptural demonstrations. From facts abundantly furnished by the past history of those Churches which delight in these things, I feel warranted to affirm that they afford no evidence of the presence and power of that Divine Agent by whom alone a true conversion can be effected. Both in the United States and in the western part of this Province, they were common thirty or forty years ago, and the fact—proven in such a way as to leave no room for doubt—is that they did not yield such fruit as to warrant the belief that they were from God. In many places, they are still a yearly occurrence. In other places, they occur about once in two or three years. And I believe it now admits of positive proof that, just in proportion to their frequency, has a loose standard of morals prevailed; or I might even say that those who have been oftenest overwhelmed by such wild deluges of feeling have, by their subsequent walk and conversation, given the greatest cause to doubt whether they possessed any religion at all. I am aware that many will be startled by such a statement as I have now made, and wonderingly inquire—“If these things be not the work of the Spirit of God, what can they be?” Now I think such a question is easily answered. Speaking from experience I can most confidently declare that, in my opinion, they are exhibitions of mere natural feeling. After a pretty careful study of the subject, I have come to the conclusion that they can be explained by natural causes. I do not say that I can give a philosophical account of the “laws” themselves. I believe they are, as yet, very imperfectly understood. I have witnessed, for example, the experiments of the Biologist, and though I do not feel able to give a satisfactory explanation of the feats by which such persons usually astonish spectators, I am free to acknowledge my belief that there are questions still unanswered that deserve the attention of the Physiologist, or the Professor of Mental Science. “Animal Magnetism,” though still wrapped in mystery, is not a mere delusion: and I am firmly convinced that many of the wonderful conversions (as they are called) that are represented as taking place so frequently in the congregations already referred to await the same kind of explanation as the feats of the Biologist. In proof of this, permit me to state one fact. In one of the congregations that I know in this Province there occurred some years ago what they called a “great revival”—resulting according to their account in the conversion of more than one hundred persons. All these made a profession of religion and were enrolled as members of the Church. But alas! in the course of a year or two the larger portion of them gave evidence of the absence of vital godliness. To use the language of the people themselves—“They went back again into the world.” Shortly before the arrival of the great revivalist minister to whom these aforesaid conversions were attributed—one of those adventurers who now and then appear to astonish the natives of our Province had been in the same settlement where the revival took place *lecturing on Biology*. He had been very successful—had a great many under his influence—and many of these, before the mesmeric effects had passed off, had gone to the religious meetings and were announced as converts. Now I hold that had these same persons been suddenly brought into contact with a company of fanatical Mohamedans they could have, just as easily, been carried forward and led to profess the religion of the “False Prophet.”

Again, there is another principle of our nature which I have reason to believe has hitherto had much to do with revivals in this Province, as well as in other places, viz., “sympathy.” I do not pretend to give a philosophical explanation of the effects of this “law” of our nature, more than the other. But, that it is a powerful auxiliary in many pretended revivals, no intelligent person will doubt. Why, sir, I could find a person in some of the congregations that are accustomed to periodical revivals, that could do more with a groan, in the way of getting up a revival, than the ablest minister in Halifax could do, with one of his best sermons.

I suppose there are people who will receive such remarks as these either with invincible scepticism, or with the curl of pitying contempt for my weakness—and still others who will pretend to be shocked at my impiety. But let them not be too hasty, or too uncharitable. I am just as much a believer in revivals as any of