

gone, surrounded by weeping and praying ministers and relatives, becoming at length the centre of interest to everybody, so that the first question in the morning on the street was likely to be, "Did Willie J—get religion last night?"—I saw that noble boy under this erroneous doctrine of conversion wrestle and suffer thus, with a heart already surrendered and consecrated to Christ as far as genuine faith and willingness could make it so, seeking vainly for a religion which he already had, and finally at the end of the revival, abandoning that religion in despair.

This case illustrates vividly what a stumbling-block to many sincere seekers of Christ is the popular idea of conversion which has grown out of revivalism. The great development of emotional experience in revivalism, and the indiscriminating use of Scripture texts which relate to the feelings, has engendered a false and wide-spread notion that conversion consists in a more or less sudden transit from misery to rapture, rather than in that resolute, well-considered change of will, born of the Holy Ghost, but taking effect in a free, deliberate and determined choice to follow Christ, the power of which comes from God, and the effort of which comes from the persevering will itself.

This notion was to me the stumbling block of my youth. It deterred me for years from making a confession of Christ, years that I shall ever deplore as the baleful curse of sin whose crippling effect I expect to feel for life. Again and again I have found others suffering from the same error; and I hardly ever prepare a confirmation

class without having to remove this stumbling-block from the path of some.

On the other hand it lulls asleep the vigilance both of the convert and the Church. Let emotional experience and self-satisfaction become the test of religion, and let the effort of both minister and people be to promote perpetual or weekly raptures, it must work manifold evil.

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When the season, the revival is over, the Church must surrender her raptures for a time; with the ceasing of the raptures and feelings, which were the mainspring, the zeal of the Church slackens, its brotherly activities slacken, its fraternizations of rich and poor, its repentances and self-examinations, its vigilant watch of the penitents and care of the converts, its diligent use of public worship and the closet, its sober and persevering employment of all the means of grace. Why not? Is not the outpouring gone, the summer past, the harvest ended? Wait for another season. * * * *

The vice of the system of Revivalism, as popularly used, is in the mistake about conversion. Let us have Revivalism without the error. Let us teach that what constitutes one a Christian is not an emotional experience, but the answer or petition to God of a good conscience: that the baptismal vows made or ratified in sincerity and truth are the substance of conversion; and that the whole circle of Christian life is included in their range. Then let us use every power God bestows on His Church to bring the unconverted *into*, and the converted *up* to those vows.