

SPURIOUS RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENTS.¹

IT is believed all thoughtful Christians are alive to the fact that religious excitements, which consist of temporary movements of the emotions devoid of any saving operation of the Truth on the reason and conscience, are equally frequent and mischievous in America. This judgment not seldom expresses itself in very queer and inaccurate forms. Thus: good brethren write to the religious journals grateful accounts of a work of grace in their charges, and tell the editors that "they are happy to say, the work has been purely rational and quiet, and attended by not the slightest excitement." They forget that the efficacious (not possibly, tempestuous) movement of the feelings is just as essential a part of a true religious experience, as the illumination of the intellect by divine truth; for indeed, there is no such thing as the implantation of practical principle, or the right decisions of the will, without feeling. In estimating a work of divine grace as genuine, we should rather ask ourselves whether the right feelings are excited, and excited by divine cause. If so, we need not fear the most intense excitement. This misconception is parallel to the one uttered by public speakers, when they assure their hearers that, designing to show them the respect due to rational beings, and to use the honesty suitable to true patriots, "they shall make no appeal to their feelings, but address themselves only to their understandings." This is virtually impossible. On all practical subjects, truth is only influential as it stimulates some practical feeling. There is no logical appeal of the rhetorical nature which does not include and appeal to feeling. Does the orator proclaim, for instance, that waiving all appeals to passion, he will only address his hearers' intellects to prove what is for their interest, or "for their honor," or "for the good of their country"? What is he really doing except appealing to the emotions of desire for wealth, or love of applause, or patriotism?

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In the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 1884, I presented a discussion on the psychology of the feelings. I wish to recall a few of the fundamental positions there established. The function of *feeling* is as essential to the human spirit, and as ever present, as the function of cognition. The two are ever combined, as the heat-rays and the light-rays are intermingled in the sunbeams. But the consciousness intuitively recognizes the difference of the two functions, so that it is superfluous to define them. "Feeling is the temperature of thought." The same kind of feeling may differ in degree of intensity, as the heat-ray in the brilliant winter sunbeam differs from that in the fiery glare of the "dog days"; but the thermometer shows there is still caloric in the most wintry sunbeam, and even in the block of crystal ice. So a human spirit is never devoid of some degree of that feeling which the truth then engaging the intelligence tends to excite. No object is or can be inducement to volition unless it be apprehended by the soul as being both in the category of the true and of the good. But, that function of soul by which the object is taken as a good, is desire, an act of feeling. Whence it follows, that an element of feeling is as essential to every rational volition as an act of cognition. The truly different sorts of feelings were distinguished and classified. But this all important division of them was seen to be into the passions, and the active feelings; between those impressions upon the sensibility of the soul, caused from without, and in receiving which the soul is itself passive, and its spontaneity has no self-determining power (as pain, panic, sympathy) on the one hand, and on the other hand those subjective feelings which, while occasioned from without, are self-determined by the spontaneity from within and in which the soul is essentially active, (as desire, benevolence, ambition, etc.)

It may be asked here: Does the writer intend to rest the authority of his distinction between genuine and spurious religious experiences on a human psychology? By no means. The Scriptures are the only sure source of this discrimination. Its declarations, such as that sanctification is only by revealed truth, its anthropology, its doctrine of redemption, and its examples of saving conversions, give the faithful student full guidance as to the conduct of gospel work, and the separation of the stony-

ground hearers from the true. But it is claimed that the psychology outlined above is the psychology of the Bible. It is that theory of man's powers everywhere assumed and postulated in Scripture. It gives that theory of human action on which all the instances, the narratives, and the precepts of Scripture ground themselves. Hence these mental laws and facts are of use, not as the mistress, but as the hand-maid of Scripture, to explain and illustrate those cautions which the Bible gives us.

One inference is simple and clear. The excitement of mere sensibilities, however strong or frequent, can offer no evidence whatever of a sanctified state. The soul is passive in them; their efficient cause is objective. An instinctive susceptibility in the soul provides the only condition requisite for their rise when the outward cause is applied. Hence the excitement of these sensibilities is no more evidence of change or rectification in the free agency, than the shivering of the winter wayfarer's limbs when wet by the storms. Now the doctrine of Scripture is that man's spontaneity is, in his natural state, wholly disinclined and made opposite (yet freely) to godliness, so that he has no ability of will for any spiritual act pertaining to salvation. But it is promised that, in regeneration, God's people shall be willing in the day of his power. He so enlightens their minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renews their wills, that they are both persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ. The very spontaneity is revolutionized. Now the stimulation of merely passive sensibilities, in which the will has no causal part, can never be evidence of that saving change. No evidence of it appears, until the subjective desires and the will exhibit their change to the new direction. That fear, that selfish joy, that hope, that sympathy are excited, proves nothing. But when the soul freely exercises a "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," hatred of sin, desire of God's favor, love of his truth, zeal for his honor, this evinces the sanctifying revolution.

Shall we conclude then that the excitement of the passive sensibilities by the pastor is wholly useless? This class of feelings presents the occasion (not the cause) for the rise of the subjective and spontaneous emotions. This is all. It is this connection which so often misleads the mental analyst into a confusion of the two classes of feelings. The efficient cause may

be restrained from acting by the absence of the necessary occasion; this is true. But it is equally true, that the occasion, in the absence of the efficient cause, is powerless to leaving any effect. If the pastor aims to move the sensibilities merely for the purpose of gaining the attention of the soul to saving truth, and presents that truth faithfully the moment his impression is made, he does well. If he makes these sensibilities an end, instead of a means, he is mischievously abusing his people's souls.

People are ever prone to think that they are feeling religiously because they have feelings round about religion. Their sensibilities have been aroused in connection with death and eternity, for instance; so, as these are religious topics, they suppose they are growing quite religious. The simplest way to clear away these perilous illusions is, to ask What emotions, connected with religious topics as their occasions, are natural to the carnal man? These may be said to be, first, the emotions of taste, or the mental-æsthetic; second, the involuntary moral emotion of self-blame, or remorse; third, the natural self-interested emotions of fear and hope, and desire of future security and enjoyment; and fourth, the emotion of instinctive sympathy. The following conclusions concerning these feelings need only to be stated, in order to be admitted.

The æsthetic feeling may be as naturally stimulated by the features of sublimity and beauty of God's natural attributes, and of the gospel-story, as by a cataract, an ocean, a starlit sky, or a Shakespearean hero. Now it is most obvious that the movements of taste, in these latter cases, carry no moral imperative whatever. They have no more power to reform the will than strains of music or odors of flowers. Yet how many souls are deluded into supposing that they love God, duty, and gospel-truth, because these æsthetic sensibilities are stimulated in connection with such topics!

When the ethical reason pronounces its judgment of wrongfulness upon any action or principle, this may be attended by the feeling of moral reprehension. If it is one's own action which must be condemned, the feeling takes on the more pungent form of remorse. But this feeling is no function of the soul's spontaneity. Its rise is purely involuntary; its natural

effect is to be the penal retribution, and not the restrainer of sin.

How completely this feeling is disconnected with the correct regulation or reformation of the will, appears from this: that the transgressor's will is usually striving with all his might not to feel the remorse, or to forget it, while conscience makes him feel it in spite of himself. A Judas felt it most keenly while he rushed to self-destruction. It is the most prevalent emotion of hell, which gives us the crowning proof that it has no power to purify the heart. But many transgressors are persuaded that they exercise repentance because they feel remorse for conscious sins. Man's native selfishness is all-sufficient to make him desire the pleasurable, or natural good, and fear and shun the painful, or natural evil. Those desires and aversions, with the fears and hopes which expectation suggests, and the corresponding terrors and joys of anticipation, may be stimulated by any natural good or evil, more or less remote, the conception of which occupies the mental attention distinctly. Just as the thoughtless child dreads the lash that is expected in the next moment, and the more thoughtful person dreads the lash of next week or next month, just so naturally a carnal man, who is intellectually convinced of his immortality and identity, may dread the pains, or rejoice in the fancied pleasures, of another life. He may fear death, not only with the unreasoning instinct of the brute, but also with the rational dread (rational, though purely selfish) of its penal consequences. Selfishness, with awakened attention and mental conviction, suffices fully for all this. In all these feelings there is nothing one whit more characteristic of a new heart, or more controlling of the evil will, than in the wicked sensualist's dread of the colic which may follow his excess, or the determined outlaw's fear of the sheriff. Yet how many deluded souls fancy that, because they feel these selfish fears or joys in connection with death and judgment, they are becoming strongly religious. And unfortunately they are encouraged by multitudes of preachers of the gospel to make this fatal mistake. Turretin has distinguished the truth here by a single pair of phrases, as by a beam of sunlight. He says: Whereas the stony-ground believer embraces Christ solely *pro bono jucundo*, the gospel offers him mainly *pro bono honesto*. True faith desires

and embraces Christ chiefly as a Saviour from sin and pollution. The false believer embraces him only as a Saviour from suffering and punishment. Holy Scripture is always careful to represent Christ in the former light. His "name is Jesus because he saves his people from their sins." He gives himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. But preachers so prevalently paint the gospel as God's method of delivering sinners from penal pains and bestowing the enjoyment of a sensuous paradise, and the guilty selfishness of hearers is so exclusively exercised about selfish deliverance, that we apprehend most men are permitted to conceive of the gospel remedy solely as a *bonum jucundum*, a provision for simply procuring their selfish advantage. It is true that, if asked, Is not the gospel to make you good also? many of them might reply with a listless "Yes." They have a vague apprehension that their grasping the *bonum jucundum* is somehow conditioned on their becoming better; and they suppose they are willing to accept this uninteresting formality for the sake of the enjoyment that follows it, just as the epicure tolerates the tedious grace for the sake of the dainties which are to come after at the feast. But were one to tell this gourmand that the grace was the real chief-end of the feast, and the eating a subordinate incident thereto, he would be exceedingly amazed and incredulous. Such would also be the feeling of many subjects of modern revivals, if the Bible conception of redemption were forced on their minds. Hence, one great reform in our preaching must be to return to the scriptural presentation of the gospel in this particular. A grand reform is needed here. This grovelling, utilitarian conception of redemption must be banished. Men must be taught that the blessing is only for them "who hunger and thirst after righteousness," not for those who selfishly desire to grasp enjoyment only, and to shun pain. They must be made to see clearly that such a concern does not in the least differentiate them from reprobate souls in hell, or hardened felons on earth; not even from the thievish fox caught in a trap.

The fourth and the most deceptive natural feeling of the carnal man is instinctive sympathy. It will be necessary to state the nature and conditions of this feeling. First, it belongs to

the passive sensibilities, not to the spontaneous appetencies. It is purely instinctive, appearing as powerfully in animals as in men. Witness the excitement of a flock of birds over the cries of a single comrade, and the "stampede" of a herd of oxen. Next, it is even in man an unintelligent feeling in this sense: that if the emotion of another be merely seen and heard, sympathy is propagated, although the sympathizer understands nothing of the cause of the feeling he witnesses. We come upon a child, who is an utter stranger, weeping; we share the sympathetic saddening before he has had time to tell us what causes his tears. We enter a room where our friends are drowned in laughter. Before we have asked the question, "Friends, what is the jest?" we find ourselves smiling. We see two strangers afar off exchanging blows; we feel the excitement stimulating us to run thither, while ignorant of the quarrel. Sympathy is in its rise unintelligent and instinctive. The only condition requisite for it, is the beholding of the feeling in a fellow. Third, this law of feeling extends to all the emotions natural to man. We so often connect the word with the emotion of grief, that we overlook its applicability to other feelings, and we forget even its etymology: *παθος*, in Greek philosophy, did not mean grief only, but every exercise of feeling; so *συμπαθεῖν* is to share by spiritual contagion any *παθος* we witness in our fellows. We sympathize with merriment, joy, fear, anger, hope, benevolence, moral approbation, courage, panic, just as truly as with grief. Fourth, the nature of the emotion witnessed determines, without any volition of our own, the nature of the feeling injected into us. Sympathy with joy is a lesser joy. The glow is that of the secondary rainbow reflecting, but usually in a weaker degree, precisely the tints of the primary arch.

The reader is now prepared to admit these conclusions: that sympathy may infect men with a phase of religious emotion, as of any other; that the sympathetic emotions, though thus related as to their source, have no spiritual character whatever in themselves—for they are involuntary, they are unintelligent, they are passive effects on an instinctive sensibility, giving no expression to the will, and not regulating it nor regulated by it. The animal feels these sympathies as really as the man.

The reader should notice that these propositions are asserted

only of the simple sensibility, the immediate reflex of strong feeling witnessed. It is not denied that the capacity of sympathy is a social trait implanted by a wise Creator for practical purposes. It is the instrumental occasion of many useful results. Thus, upon the excitement of sympathy with grief follow the appetency to succor the sufferer, and the benevolent volition. The first is the occasion, not the cause, of the second. On our natural sympathy with the actions we witness, follows our impulse to imitate. But imitation is the great lever of education. So sympathy has been called the sacred "orator's right arm." Let us understand precisely what it could and cannot do in gaining lodgment for divine truth in the sinner's soul. This truth and this alone is the instrument of sanctification. To Presbyterians the demonstration of this is superfluous. It is impossible for the truth to work sanctification except as it is intelligently received into the mind. Light must reach the heart through the understanding, for the soul only feels healthily according as it sees. To the inattentive mind the truth being unheard, is as though it were not. Hence it is of prime importance to awaken the listless attention. Whatever innocently does this is therefore a useful preliminary instrument for applying the truth. This, sympathy aids to effect. The emotion of the orator arouses the slumbering attention of the sinner, and temporarily wins his ear for the sacred word. Another influence of awakened sympathy may also be conceded. By one application of the law of association, the warmth of a feeling existing in the mind is communicated temporarily to any object coexisting with it in the mind; though that object be in itself indifferent to that soul. The stone dropped into the heated furnace is not combustible, is no source of caloric; but by contact it imbibes some of the heat which flames there, and remains hot for a little time after it is drawn out. So the mind warmed with emotion, either original or sympathetic, is a furnace which gives some of its warmth to truth or concepts coexisting in it, otherwise cold and indifferent to it. But the warmth is merely temporary.

The whole use, then, of the sympathetic excitement is to catch the attention and warm it. But it is the truth thus lodged in the attention that must do the whole work of sanctification. Here is the all-important discrimination. Attention, sympa-

thetic warmth, are merely a preparation for casting in the seed of the Word. The preacher who satisfies himself with exciting the sympathies, and neglects to throw in at once the vital truth, is like the husbandman who digs and rakes the soil, and then idly expects the crop, though he has put in no living seed. The only result is a more rampant growth of weeds. How often do we see this mistake committed! The preacher either displays, in his own person, a high-wrought religious emotion, or stirs the natural sensibilities by painting in exciting and pictorial words and gestures, some natural feeling connected by its occasion with a religious topic, as a touching death or other bereavement; or he stimulates the selfish fears by painting the agonies of a lost soul, or the selfish desires and hopes by a sensuous description of the pleasures of heaven. Then, if sympathetic feeling is awakened, or the carnal passions of hope, fear and desire are moved, he acts as though his work were done. He permits and encourages the hearers to flatter themselves that they are religious, because they are feeling something round about religion. I repeat: if this stimulation of carnal and sympathetic feeling is not at once and wisely used, and used solely as a secondary means of fixing a warmed attention on didactic truth, which is the sole instrument of conversion and sanctification, then the preacher has mischievously abused the souls of his hearers. The first and most obvious mischief is the encouragement of a fatal deception and self-flattery. Unrenewed men are tacitly invited to regard themselves as either born again, or at least in a most encouraging progress towards that blessing; while in fact they have not felt a single feeling or principle which may not be the mere natural product of a dead heart. This delusion has slain its "tens of thousands."

The reader will remember the masterly exposition by Bishop Butler of the laws of habit as affecting the sensibilities and active powers. Its truth is too fully admitted to need argument. By this law of habit, the sensibilities are inevitably dulled by repeated impressions. By the same law, the appetencies and will are strengthened by voluntary exercise. Thus, if impressions on the sensibilities are followed by their legitimate exertion of the active powers, the soul as a whole, while it grows calmer and less excitable, grows stronger and more energetic in

its activities, and is confirmed in the paths of right action. But if the sensibilities are stimulated by objects which make no call, and offer no scope for right action, as by fictitious and unreal pictures of human passion, the soul is uselessly hackneyed and worn, and thus depraved. Here we find one of the fundamental objections to habitual novel reading. The excitement of the sympathies by warmly colored, but unreal, portraiture of passions, where there cannot possibly be any corresponding right action by the reader inasmuch as the agents and sufferers are imaginary, depraves the sensibilities without any retrieval of the soul's state in the corresponding cultivation of the active powers. The longer such reading is continued, the more does the young person become at once sentimental and unfeeling. The result is a selfish and morbid craving for excitement, coupled with a callous selfishness, dead to the claims of real charity and duty. The same objection lies against theatrical exhibitions, and for the same reason. Now this species of spurious religious excitement is obnoxious to the same charge. In its practical results it is fictitious. The merely sensational preacher is no more than a novelist or a comedian, with this circumstance, that he connects topics, popularly deemed religious, with his fictitious arts. He abuses and hackneys the souls of his hearers in the same general way, rendering them at once sentimental and hard, selfishly fond of excitement, but callous to conscience and duty.

Once more ; spiritual pride is as natural to man as breathing, or as sin. Its only corrective is sanctifying grace. Let the suggestion be once lodged in a heart not really humbled and cleansed by grace, that the man is reconciled to God, has "become good," is a favorite of God and heir of glory—that soul cannot fail to be swept away by the gales of spiritual pride. Let observation teach us here. Was there ever a deceived votary of a false religion, of Islam, of Buddhism, of Brahmanism, of Popery, who was not in reality puffed up by spiritual pride? It cannot be otherwise with a deceived votary of a Protestant creed. The circumstance that there is divine truth in this creed, which has no vital influence on his heart, is no safeguard. The only preventive of spiritual pride is the contrition which accompanies saving repentance. Here, also, is the explanation of the

fact, that the hearty votaries of those professedly Christian creeds which have more of Pelagianism than of gospel in them, are most bigoted and most hopelessly inaccessible to truth. Their adamant shield is spiritual pride, fostered by a spurious hope, and unchastened by sovereign grace. Of all such self-deceivers our Saviour has decided that "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom before them."

These plain facts and principles condemn nearly every feature of the modern new measure "revival." The preaching and other religious instructions are shaped with a main view to excite the carnal emotions and the instinctive sympathies, while no due care is taken to present saving, didactic truth to the understanding thus temporarily stimulated. As soon as some persons, professed Christians, or awakened "mourners," are infected with any lively passion, let it be however carnal and fleeting, a spectacular display is made of it, with confident laudations of it as unquestionably precious and saving, with the design of exciting the remainder of the crowd with the sympathetic contagion. Every adjunct of fiery declamation, animated singing, groans, tears, exclamations, noisy prayers, is added so as to shake the nerves and add the tumult of a hysterical animal excitement to the sympathetic wave. Every youth or impressible girl who is seen to tremble, or grow pale, or shed tears, is assured that he or she is under the workings of the Holy Spirit, and is driven by threats of vexing that awful and essential Agent of salvation to join the spectacular show, and add himself to the exciting pantomime. Meanwhile, most probably their minds are blank of every intelligent or conscientious view of the truth; they had been tittering or whispering a little while before, during the pretended didactic part of the exercises; they could give no intelligent account now of their own sudden excitement, and, in fact, it is no more akin to any spiritual, rational, or sanctifying cause, than the quiver of the nostrils of a horse at the sound of the bugle and the fox-hounds. But they join the mourners, and the manipulation proceeds. Of course, the sympathetic wave, called religious, reaches them more and more. As I have shown, it is the very nature of sympathy to assume the character of the emotion with which we sympathize. Thus this purely natural and instinctive sensibility takes on the form of *religious feeling*,

because it is sympathy with religious feeling in others. The subject calls it by religious names—awakening, conviction, repentance—while in reality it is only related to them as a man's shadow is to the living man. Meantime, the preachers talk to them as though the feelings were certainly genuine and spiritual. With this sympathetic current there may mingle sundry deep original feelings about the soul, to which, we have seen, the dead, carnal heart is fully competent by itself. These are fear, remorse, shame, desire of applause, craving for future, selfish, welfare, spiritual pride. Here we have the elements of every spurious grace. The "sorrow of the world that worketh death" is mistaken for saving repentance. By a natural law of the feelings, relaxation must follow high tension—the calm must succeed the storm. This quiet is confounded with "peace in believing." The selfish prospect of security produces great elation. This is supposed to be spiritual joy. When the soul is removed from the *stimuli* of the revival appliances, it of course sinks into the most painful vacuity, on which supervene restlessness and doubt. So, most naturally, it craves to renew the illusions, and has, for a time, a certain longing for and pleasure in the scenes, the measures, and the agents of its pleasing intoxication. These are mistaken for love for God's house, worship and people. Then the befooled soul goes on until it is betrayed into an erroneous profession of religion, and a dead church membership. He is now in the position in which the great enemy of souls would most desire to have him, and where his salvation is more difficult and improbable than anywhere else.

The most fearful part of these transactions is the unscriptural rashness of the professed guides of souls. They not only permit and encourage these perilous confusions of thought, but pass judgment on the exercises of their supposed converts with a haste and confidence which angels would shudder to indulge. Here, for instance, is a hurried, ignorant young person, no real pains having been taken to instruct his understanding in the nature of sin and redemption, or to test his apprehension of gospel truths. In his tempestuous excitement of fear and sympathy, he is told that he is unquestionably under the influence of God's Spirit. When he has been coaxed, or flattered, or wearied into

some random declaration that he thinks he loves his Saviour, joyful proclamation is made that here is another soul born to God, and the brethren are called on to rejoice over him. But no time has been allowed this supposed convert for self-examination; no care to discriminate between spiritual and carnal affections, or for the subsidence of the froth of animal and sympathetic excitements; no delay is allowed to see the fruits of holy living, the only test which Christ allows as sufficient for other than the omniscient judgment. Thus, over-zealous and heedless men, ignorant of the first principles of psychology, and unconscious of the ruinous effects they may be producing, sport with the very heart-strings of the spiritual life, and that in the most critical moments. It were a less criminal madness for a surgeon's raw apprentice to try experiments with his master's keen bistoury on the patient's jugular vein.

These abuses are the less excusable in any minister, because the Scriptures which he holds in his hands tell him plainly enough without the lights of philosophy, the wrongness of all these practices. No inspired apostle ever dared to pass a verdict upon the genuineness of a case of religious excitement with the rashness seen on these occasions. Christ has forewarned us that converts can only be known correctly by their fruits. Paul has sternly enjoined every workman upon the visible church, whose foundation is Christ, to "take heed how he buildeth thereupon." He has told us that the materials placed by us upon this structure may be genuine converts, as permanent as gold, silver, and costly stones; or worthless and pretended converts, comparable to "wood, hay and stubble;" that our work is to be all tried by the fire of God's judgments, in which our perishable additions will be burned up; and if we are ourselves saved, it will be as though we were saved by fire. The terrible results of self-deception and the deceitfulness of the heart are dwelt upon, and men are urged to self-examination.

The ulterior evils of these rash measures are immense. A standard and type of religious experience are propagated by them in America, as utterly unscriptural and false as those prevalent in Popish lands. So long as the subjects are susceptible of the sympathetic passion, they are taught to consider themselves in a high and certain state of grace. All just and scrip-

tural marks of a gracious state are overlooked and even despised. Is their conduct immoral, their temper bitter and unchristian, their minds utterly dark as to distinctive gospel truths? This makes no difference; they are still excited and "happified" in meetings; they sing and shout, and sway to and fro with religious feelings. Thus these worthless, sympathetic passions are trusted in as the sure signatures of the Spirit's work.

Of the man who passes through this process of false conversion, our Saviour's declaration is eminently true: "The last state of that man is worse than the first." The cases are not few which backslide early, and are again "converted," until the process has been repeated several times. These men are usually found most utterly hardened and profane, and hopelessly impervious to divine truth. Their souls are utterly seared by spurious fires of feeling. The state of those who remain undeceived, and in the communion of the church, is almost as hopeless. "Having a name to live, they are dead." Their misconception as to their own state is armor of proof against warning.

The results of these "revivals" are usually announced at once, with overweening confidence, as works of God's Spirit. A minister reports to his church paper that he has just shared in a glorious work at a given place, in which the Holy Ghost was present with power, and "forty souls were born into the kingdom." Now, the man of common sense will remember how confidently this same revivalist made similar reports last year, the year before, and perhaps many years previously. He was each time equally confident that it was the Spirit's work. But this man must know that in each previous case, time has already given stubborn refutation to his verdict upon the work. Four-fifths of those who, he was certain, were converted by God, have already gone back to the world, and declare that they were never converted at all. The means he has just used in his last revival are precisely the same used in his previous ones. The false fruits wore at first just the aspect which his last converts now wear. Is it not altogether probable that they are really of the same unstable character? But this minister declares positively that these are God's works. Now, the cool, critical world looks on and observes these hard facts. It asks, What sort of people are these special guardians and expounders of Christianity? Are

they romantic fools, who cannot be taught by clear experience, or are they conscious and intentional liars? The world is quite charitable, and probably adopts the former solution. And this solution, that the representatives of Christianity are men hopelessly and childishly overweening in their delusions, carries this corollary for the most of worldly men who adopt it: That Christianity itself is an unhealthy fanaticism, since it makes its chosen teachers such fanatics, unteachable by solid facts. Thus, the Christian ministry, who ought to be a class venerable in the eyes of men, are made contemptible. Civility restrains the expression of this estimate, but it none the less degrades the ministry in the eyes of intelligent men of the world, as a class who are excused from the charge of conscious imposture only on the theory of their being incurably silly and fanatical.

In the denominations which most practice the so-called "revival measures," abundance of facts obtrude themselves which are conclusive enough to open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. Instances may be found, where annual additions have been reported, such that, if the sums were taken, and only subjected to a fair deduction for deaths and removals, these churches should number hundreds, or even a thousand members, and should be in a splendid state of prosperity. But the same church-reports still set these churches down as containing fifty or seventy members. Others, which have been boasting these magnificent processes, are moribund, and some have been "revived" to death.

But the men who work this machinery, notwithstanding the fatal condemnation of the facts, are not blind! What are the causes of their perseverance in methods so worthless? One cause is, doubtless, an honest, but ignorant zeal. In the bustle and heat of this zeal, they overlook the unpleasant facts, and still go on, "supposing that they verily do God service." Another subtle and far-reaching cause is an erroneous, synergistic theology. The man who believes in the efficient coöperation of the sinner's will with the divine will, in the initial quickening of his soul, will, of course, seek to stimulate that human will to the saving acts by all the same expedients by which men seek to educe in their fellows carnal acts of will. Why not? Why should not the evangelist practice to evoke that act of will from

the man on which he believes the saving action of the Almighty pivots, by the same kind of arts the recruiting sergeant practices—the martial song, the thrilling fife and palpitating drum, the spectacular display of previous recruits in their shining new uniforms—until the young yeoman has “committed” himself by taking the “queen’s shilling”? That volition settles it that the queen is to make him her soldier. It must be the youth’s decision, but, when once made for a moment, it decides his state. Thus a synergistic theology fosters these “revival measures,” as they, in turn, incline towards a synergistic creed. Doubtless, many ministers are unconsciously swayed by the natural love of excitement. This is the same instinct which leads school-boys and clowns to run to witness a dog-fight, Spaniards to the cock-fight and the bull-fight, sporting men to the pugilist’s ring, and theatre-goers to the comedy. This natural instinct prompts many an evangelist, without his being distinctly aware of it, to prefer the stirring scenes of the spurious revival to the sober, quiet, laborious work of religious teaching. But it is obvious that this motive is as unworthy as it is natural.

Another motive which prompts men to persevere in these demonstrably futile methods is the desire to count large and immediate results. To this they are spurred by inconsiderate, but honest zeal, and by the partisan rivalries of their denominations. These unworthy motives they sanctify to themselves, and thus conceal from their own consciences the real complexion of them. No word is needed to show how unwise and unsuitable they are to the Christian minister. Here should be pointed out the intrinsic weakness of the current system of employing travelling revivalists in settled churches. No matter how orthodox the man may be, the very nature of his task lays a certain urgency and stress upon him, to show, somehow, immediate results before the close of his meeting. If he does not, the very ground of his vocation as a “revivalist” is gone. He has been sent for to do this one thing, to gratify the hopes, zeal and pride of the good people by, at least, a show of immediate fruits. If he fails in this, he will not be sent for. This is too strong a temptation for any mere mortal to endure without yielding. But the prime fact which decides all true results of gospel means is, that the Holy Ghost alone is the Agent of effectual calling; and

He is sovereign. His new-creating breath "bloweth where it listeth." His command to the sower of the word may be expressed in Solomon's words: "In the morning sow thy seed; and in the evening hold not thy hand; for *thou* knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that." The best minister on earth may be appointed by God's secret purpose to the sad mission given to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, and even to their Lord during his earthly course, "to stretch forth their hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Hence, this evangelist has put himself under an almost fatal temptation to resort to some illicit expedients which will produce, in appearance, immediate results. How few, even of the orthodox, escape that temptation!

An old and shrewd practitioner of these human means of religious excitements, was once asked by a man of the world, "if it were possible he could be blind to the futility of most of the pretended conversions?" The answer was: "Of course not; we are not fools." "Why then," said the man, "do you employ these measures?" The preacher answered: "Because a few are truly converted, and make stable, useful Christians; and the rest when they find out the shallowness of their experiences, are simply where they were before." The worldly-wise preacher's statement involved two capital errors. It assumed that the "revival measures" were the effective instruments of the conversion of the genuine few; and that without these expedients they would have remained out of Christ. This is utterly false. The solid conversion of those souls took place not by cause of, but in spite of, the human expedients. The work was the result of sober Christian example, and previous didactic teaching in gospel truths, and had there been no "revival measures" these souls would have come out for Christ, perhaps a little later, but more intelligently and decisively. The mistake as to the second class, "the stony ground believers," is far more tragical. *They are not left where they were before*; "the last state of these men is worse than the first." I will not repeat the explanation of the depraving influences sure to be exerted upon the heart; but I will add one still more disastrous result. These deceptive processes usually *end in making the subjects infidels*. Some who keep their names on the communion rolls are secret infidels;

nearly all who withdraw their names are open infidels, unless they are too unthinking and ignorant to reflect and draw inferences. First, every young person who has a spark of self-respect is mortified at being thrust into a false position, especially on so high and solemn a subject. Pride is wounded. He feels that he has been imposed on, and resents it. This wounded pride, unwilling to take the blame on itself, directs its anger against the agents of the mortifying cheat. But to despise the representatives of Christianity is practically very near to despising Christianity. The most earnest and clear-minded of these temporary converts has now what appears to him, with a terrible plausibility, the experimental argument to prove that evangelical religion is a deception. He says he knows he was honest and sincere in the novel exercises to which he was subjected, and in a sense he says truly. The religious teachers themselves assured him, in the name of God, that they were genuine works of grace. Did they not formally publish in the religious journals that it was the Holy Spirit's work? If these appointed teachers do not know, who can? Yet now this backslider says himself, "I have the stubborn proof of a long and sad experience, a prayerless and godless life, that there never was any real spiritual change in me." Who can be more earnest than he was? It is, then, the logical conclusion, that all supposed cases of regeneration are deceptive. "Many," he says, "have had the honesty like myself to come out of the church candidly, shoulder the mortification of their mistake, and avow the truth." Those who remain "professors" are to be accounted for in two ways. The larger part know in their hearts just as well as we do, that their exercises were always a cheat, but they prefer to *live a lie*, rather than make the humiliating avowal, and for these we feel only contempt. The minority remain honestly self-deceived by reason of impressible and enthusiastic temperaments. For these, if they are social and moral, and do not cant, we can feel most kindly, and respect their amiable delusion. It would be unkind to distrust it. This reasoning having led them to discredit entirely the work of the Holy Ghost, leads next to the denial of his personality. The backslider sinks to the ranks of a gross Socinian, or becomes a Deist or an Agnostic. Let the history of our virtual infidels be examined and their early reli-

gious life traced; here will be found the source and cause of their error. "Their name is Legion." He who inquires of the openly ungodly adults of our land, will be astounded to find how large a majority of them were once in the church. They conceal, as well as they can, what they regard as the "disgraceful episode" in their history. Their attitude is that of silent, but cold and impregnable skepticism, based, as they think, on the argument of actual experience. In fact, spurious revivals we honestly regard as the chief bane of our Protestantism. We believe that they are the chief cause, under the prime source, original sin, which has deteriorated the average standard of holy living, principles, and morality, and the church discipline of our religion, until it has nearly lost its practical power over the public conscience. Striking the average of the whole nominal membership of the Protestant churches, the outside world does not credit us for any higher standard than we are in the habit of ascribing to the Synagogue, and to American Popery. How far is the world wrong in its estimate? That denomination which shall sternly use its ecclesiastical authority, under Christ's law, to inhibit these human methods and to compel its teachers back to the scriptural and only real means, will earn the credit of being the defender of an endangered gospel.

One corollary from this discussion is: How perilous is it to entrust the care of souls to an ignorant zeal! None but an educated ministry can be expected, humanly speaking, to resist the seductions of the "revival measures," or to guard themselves from the plausible blunders we have analyzed above. And the church which entrusts the care of souls to lay-evangelists, self-appointed and irresponsible to the ecclesiastical government appointed by Christ, betrays its charge and duty.

No man is fit for the care of souls, except he is deeply imbued with scriptural piety and grace. He must have a faith firm as a rock, and humble as strong, with profound submission to the divine will, which will calm him amidst all delays and all discouragements that God will bless his own word in his own chosen time. He must have that self-abnegation which will make him willing to bear the evil repute of an unfruitful ministry, if the Lord so ordains, and unblenchingly refuse to resort

to any unauthorized means to escape this cross. He must have the moral courage to withstand that demand of ill-considered zeal in his brethren, parallel to the *ardor purus civium juvenium* in politics. He must have the unflagging diligence and love for souls which will make him persevere in preaching the gospel publicly, and from house to house, under the delay of fruit. Nothing can give these except large measures of grace and prayer.