

Instant Conversion

We have instant coffee and tea. These two beverages have become the trade mark of the American way of life. And it cannot be denied that it was the American brand of fundamentalism that introduced "instant Christianity" to evangelical churches. The American genius of wanting to get things done with speed and ease has infected evangelical Christianity.

Today, all is made to depend on the initial faith act. A "decision" is made for Christ and afterwards everything seems to be automatic. The conversion "experience" is considered the all and all thing to be studied and testified to.

What happened to evangelistic preaching as a result? It has become lopsided. In order to make converts we are forced to play down difficulties and the realities of the gospel and to play up the peace of mind and worldly success enjoyed by those who "accept" Christ.

Come to Christ and you will be happy and everything will work out for the good. Your problems will be solved. A rose-coloured view of life is given. The important moment of conversion is given a place out of proportion.

The one portion of the Biblical message is made into the whole. Nothing seems to take place between conversion and the gate of heaven. The toughness of the gospel is soft peddled. The cross is no longer rough and blood stained.

Look at the average evangelistic programs. They are studded with brief presentations on "what Christ means to me" by luminaries from the realms of sports, politics, big business or beauty pageants. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these sincere presentations are notable for their simplicity, and winsomeness rather than their in depth grasp of the Biblical message.

The celebrities are engaged for these appearances because of their identity as a famous person aligned with the Christian cause.

The late Dr. A.W. Tozer, editor of The Alliance Witness, pastor and evangelist, defines this "instant Christianity" as "the kind found almost everywhere in gospel circles and which is born of the notion that we may discharge our total obligation to our own souls by one act of faith, or at most by two, and be relieved thereafter of all anxiety about our spiritual condition."

Happiness is – to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. So true! There is nothing more satisfying than to know Him! A true Christian has met God. He knows Him personally. He has responded to the preaching of the Gospel of Him who saves from the wrath to come. He knows that he has eternal life, but for him his conversion is a

beginning and not the end. It is time to tell that if you refuse to repent and believe on Christ you will most surely perish – and that Christianity is a journey but not a bed which to lie in while waiting for the second coming of the Lord.

John Bunyan's classic "The Pilgrims' Progress" describes this journey of faith so well. As the pilgrims finally came near their destination they felt a mixture of joy and trembling and reflecting on their journey they sang:

"What danger is the pilgrim in!
How many are his foes!
How many ways there are to sin
No living mortal knows.
Some in the ditch are spoil'd, yea, can
Lie tumbling in the mire:
Some, though they shun the frying-pan,
Do leap into the fire."

"Instant Christianity" does not fully realize that faith is a journey. It fails to understand the true nature of the Christian life, which is not static but dynamic and expanding. And this is where the Biblical emphasis lies.

Conversion for the early Christians was not a destination but it was a beginning of a pilgrimage. They knew that they were espousing an unpopular cause that could cost them their livelihood and even their very lives.

They had received a different attitude of heart and a new out look on life that inspired them to follow the Lord and to take up the cross joyfully and to follow Him whithersoever He went.

Conversion changes man radically. You have become "a new creature" who knows that "old things are passed away" and that "all things are become new." A converted man has changed citizenship. He has been delivered from the power of darkness and is now a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Conversion is to let go of the old way of life completely and to place yourself in the service of the Lord realistically courageously and joyfully. You become gripped by Jesus Christ. A Christian is no longer His own but He belongs to the Lord. He may lose his last penny in the service for the Lord, yet he goes on working for His Master. He shrugs off the scorn as he knows that his Lord was scorned for him. He is happy when he has his times of ease but does not hesitate to climb the hill called Difficulty.

"The hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend;
Come, pluck up heart, let's neither faint nor fear:
For I perceive the way to life lies here:
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,

Than wrong, tough easy, where the end is woe."

Is the evangelical Christian faith of today the same as that of the first century? I wonder.
Yet. I think I know.

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November, 1972