

**RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
EXEMPLIFIED IN
THE LIVES OF
ILLUSTRIOUS CHRISTIANS**

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Religious Experience Exemplified in the Lives of Illustrious Christians by James Mudge

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JAMES MUDGE

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Religious Experience

*Exemplified in the Lives of
Illustrious Christians*

BY
JAMES MUDGE



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Introduction

OF great significance is the fact that the most precious part of the Christian Scriptures is a biography, the life of the Master; and next to that comes the life and letters of St. Paul. It is also a fact that the influences most potent in every life are the lives of others. Vast is the force of example. Compared with it abstract reasonings or philosophical discussions have little weight. Hence the importance of a book like this, which presents in vivid concrete forms the best religious experiences of a select number of the best minds.

Those whose experiences are here set forth were all people of eminence, whose achievements in the world have been very marked, and whose words, therefore, carry the more weight in that they must be supposed to know what they are talking about. They were all not only good, but good for something, and give the lie to the frequent sneer, born of ignorance and prejudice, that people who are extremely pious are not practical or efficient or philanthropic.

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The subjects of the following sketches were of the most diverse opinions and the most varied callings, as well as of quite opposite temperaments. This should by no means be overlooked. God makes His saints out of all kinds of materials, and on no one pattern. The sixteen here described belonged to ten or eleven denominations. Three were Methodist Episcopalians, three were of the Church of England, two Congregationalists, one was a Protestant Episcopalian, one a Baptist, one a Unitarian, one an English Presbyterian, one a Scotch Presbyterian, one an American Presbyterian, one belonged to the Salvation Army, and one might be called a Lutheran, since he was thus brought up. Among them are ministers, evangelists, educators, bishops, together with one statesman, one soldier, one merchant, one missionary, and one general philanthropist. All are taken from the Protestant Churches of the nineteenth century, and hence appeal to us more directly, more forcibly than could the saints of the Roman Catholic communion, or those produced by Protestantism in previous centuries.

Amid the differences which will be

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noted, or inferred, as to intellectual views, denominational affiliations, secular vocations, and external circumstances, there is a significant sameness at one point. All have a passionate devotion to the will divine and account that religion finds its highest development or attainment, its chief manifestation, in oneness with God's good pleasure. All agree on this. And all have hearts glowing with love to Jesus. The essentials of true religion, after all, are few and simple. Minor matters may well be laid aside in the interest of greater concentration on the one thing needful, the welcoming of the will of God in whatever shape it presents itself from moment to moment. He who has learned to do this promptly and heartily has mastered the secret of the highest, happiest life.

JAMES MUDGE.

Malden, Massachusetts.

Religious Experience

Wilbur Fisk

WILBUR FISK (1792-1839)—born at Brattleboro, Vt., converted in his eleventh year, graduated at Brown in 1815, first principal of Wesleyan Academy (1825), first president of Wesleyan University (1831), elected bishop of the Canada Conference in 1828, and of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1836, but declining both because he felt that his call was educational rather than administrative—was a man of intrinsic greatness, of the highest style of Christian character, of rare pulpit eloquence, full of grace, dignity, and power, the idol of the whole Church, South as well as North. But his life would have been altogether different from what it was, except for that which came to him at Wellfleet Camp Meeting, August 13, 1819.

He was then pastor at Charlestown, Mass. His mind had been deeply wrought upon in regard to the subject of holiness

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before going to the camp. Much was said about it there, and a sermon by Timothy Merritt on the baptism of the Holy Spirit strongly arrested his attention. He sought earnestly, with much prayer and no little struggle amounting to anguish, for fullness of love and victory over all sin. It was in Father Taylor's tent, Thursday morning, that deliverance came. Souls were being converted. "We rose to sing," writes Mr. Fisk: "I looked up to God, thanked Him for hearing prayer, and cried, 'Lord, why not hear prayer for my soul?' My strength began to fail me while I looked in faith. 'Come, Lord, and come now. Thou wilt come. Heaven opens, my Savior smiles. O glory to God! Help me, my brethren, to praise the Lord.' The scene that was now open to my view I can never describe. I could say, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee above everything.' I was humbled in the dust that God should so bless such an undeserving soul."

The Rev. Jotham Horton, who was present, writes: "The habits of philosophical investigation, which Mr. Fisk's previous education had induced, made him exceedingly careful, lest the fruits of im-