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# HOPE AND POWER OF THE CHURCH.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF

REV. DR. JAMES W. ALEXANDER.

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## NOTICE.

THE amount of good accomplished by a tract entitled "The Living God," sent out as an *extra* to the *Home and Foreign Record* last January, and by another entitled "Our Father's God," sent out in February, was acknowledged by so many ministerial and other brethren, in various parts of the country, that we feel encouraged to again attempt in the same way to gratify the yearnings which arise out of the solemn reflections natural to the close of one year and the commencement of another, which are suggested by the extraordinary appointments of the Church for this season, and which are forced upon earnest and praying people by the observation of what the Lord is doing in all the earth. Prophecy foretells us, says that most great and holy man, Jonathan Edwards, that "union in prayer" is "a becoming and happy thing, and that which would be acceptable to God, and attended with glorious success. It is a suitable thing, and well pleasing to God, for many people, in different parts of the world, by express agreement, to come into a visible union, in extraordinary, speedy, fervent, and constant prayer, for those great effusions of the Holy Spirit, which shall bring on that advancement of Christ's church and kingdom that God has so often promised shall be in the latter ages of the world." To supply fuel to the flame of holy emotion and supplication, and to fan it to a steady powerful heat, nothing issued from the American press during this century can be superior to the short tracts and printed sermons of Dr. James W. Alexander. As Jonathan Edwards was the great exponent of the mighty revival movement of 1740, so the devoted pastor referred to may be regarded as embodying and uttering in a remarkable degree the impulse of 1858. The first three articles are taken from the volume entitled "The Revival and its Lessons," the fourth from one entitled "The New York Pulpit in the Revival of 1858," the last from a volume of sermons under the title of "Faith."

It will be observed that the controlling idea in these selections is, that in a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God lie the grand hope and power of the Church; of whom Christ said, He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you—and that this outpouring will be the result of the universal, combined, and urgent prayers of the Church. By no writer has this been brought out with more clearness and power than by Jonathan Edwards, in his "History of the Work of Redemption," a book that every Christian should read over and over many times. In it, describing the age upon which we have entered, he says: "The Spirit of God shall be gloriously poured out for the wonderful revival and propagation of religion. This great work shall be accomplished, not by the authority of princes, nor by the wisdom of learned men, but by God's Holy Spirit." See Zech. iv. 6, 7, and Ezek. xxxix. "There are many things which seem to hold forth as though the work of God would be exceeding swift, and many great and wonderful events should very suddenly be brought to pass." Yet, says Edwards, it will be accomplished, not at once, nor by miracle, like the resurrection of the dead, but by means, by the ordinary means of grace, by the preaching of the gospel. "God, by pouring out his Holy Spirit, will furnish men to be glorious instruments of carrying on this work; will furnish them with knowledge and wisdom, and fervent zeal for the promoting the kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of souls, and propagating the gospel in the world."

This tract, like those preceding, is sent out gratuitously, by a contribution for the purpose, to ministers and theological students (though it can be obtained at cost, \$3 a hundred, by any who wish it for distribution in congregations or otherwise), with the hope that it may aid in inspiring the prayers of God's people with more faith and fervor, and so be one of the agencies by which the sons and daughters of the church may be made the "glorious instruments" of which Jonathan Edwards prophetically speaks.

WILLIAM SPEER, *Cor. Sec.*

## PRAY FOR THE SPIRIT.

In order to mighty and unexampled revival, what we especially need is for the whole Church to be down on its knees before God. Past redemptions should make our cravings great. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Thousands have already been seen gathered in one place for prayer, but when "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" is poured out on the great body of Christians, touched with pity for the desolations of the spiritual Jerusalem, that word will come true: "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come, for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."<sup>1</sup> Oh! that God's people were awake to the privilege of crying aloud for his great gift!

Open your mind, believing reader, to the extraordinary truth, that God has an infinite willingness to bestow in answer to prayer that which, since the sending of his Son, is the greatest of all his possible gifts. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give THE HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?"<sup>2</sup> O parent! ponder on this blessed verse; there is that within thy heart which will reveal its meaning! And what is it that God is so ready to give? It is that which secures and applies all the benefits of Christ's mediation; that which makes revivals here, and heaven hereafter; it is THE HOLY SPIRIT! Ought not all disciples, all over the world, to be prostrate before the throne of grace, beseeching God for Christ's sake to communicate this all-comprehensive boon? To him only do we look, because with him is "the residue of the Spirit."<sup>3</sup> But we ask in the name of CHRIST, for the very name means *Anointed*, and the anointing,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxxi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm cii. 13, 14.

Mal. ii. 15.

which flows from him as Head, to all the members, is this very gift, the Holy Ghost, "for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."<sup>1</sup> He hath it immeasurably, and for his Church, and they draw for it in his name by prayer. Occupy a few moments upon this great gift; it will aid your prayers.

1. *There is such a thing as the pouring out of the Holy Ghost.* As Moses "poured of the anointing oil on Aaron's head," so God pours the unction of his Spirit on the head of our Great High Priest.<sup>2</sup> And as the ceremonial fragrance "flowed down to the skirts of his garments,"<sup>3</sup> so the gift of the Spirit comes on all believers. "The anointing which ye have received of him," says the Apostle John, "abideth in you."<sup>4</sup> But the effusion is sometimes uncommonly great, even to outpouring. Some have found fault with the term, which nevertheless is intensely biblical, and consecrated in the Church. Among promises to Israel in the latter day, the Lord says: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."<sup>5</sup> Apostolic comment applies to New Testament times the words of another prophet: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."<sup>6</sup> So in another place: "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you."<sup>7</sup> The idea necessarily presented is that of bountiful effusion. Let us ask for it. The Lord Jesus comforted his sorrowing disciples by the promise of this gift, as the result of his ascension. "If I depart, I will send him unto you."<sup>8</sup> This Comforter he *did* send, O! how graciously and gloriously, at the first Christian Pentecost. "Having received of the Father *the promise of the Holy Ghost*," said the Apostle Peter, "he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."<sup>9</sup> There had just been suddenly a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where they were sitting; "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Do not fail to observe, that believers had been in union of prayer for this very gift, thus complying with the Lord's injunction that they should "wait for the promise of the Father."<sup>10</sup> The gift was continued, under early preaching; and "the Holy Ghost fell

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxxxiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eze. xxxix. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Prov. i. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Lev. viii. 12.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John ii. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Joel ii. 28.

<sup>9</sup> John xvi. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Acts i. 4, 5, 14; ii. 1

on them that heard the Word."<sup>1</sup> The same Apostle, many years afterwards, refers to the known fact of "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."<sup>2</sup> Every great awakening and plentiful harvest of souls has proceeded from the same Spirit, sought by the same importunity of beseeching prayer. Therefore, pray for the Spirit!

2. *The influence of the Holy Spirit of God is exceedingly powerful.* We ask something mighty and revolutionizing. It is Omnipotence that we are praying for. A wicked city, a wicked world, will yield to no inferior strength. What an encouragement that "with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!"<sup>3</sup> It is as applicable to revival of the Church as to the rebuilding of the Temple. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."<sup>4</sup> Let Christians no longer despair of the conversion of high-handed sinners, even the vilest of the vile, in our filthiest and bloodiest dens; as if we expected in answer to our prayers only some weak, half-way operation. "Our gospel," says the Apostle of the Gentiles, "came not unto you in word, only, but also *in power, and in the Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance."<sup>5</sup> This is our ground of hope when the ministers of the Word proclaim the glad tidings; that the preaching may be "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."<sup>6</sup> God grant us deliverance from our unbelief, as to the power of the Holy Spirit in giving efficacy to the truth!

3. *The Spirit, whom we seek, is the Author of Regeneration and Sanctification.* If God vouchsafe us these, in wide extent, our revival will be indeed complete. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."<sup>7</sup> All believers shout the same praise: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."<sup>8</sup> Look at thousands, utterly blind as to spiritual realities, and say, what can we ask for them so indispensably important, as that SPIRIT OF TRUTH, who will "reprove," or convince "the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment?"<sup>9</sup> He is just as able to convert the ruffian, or the fallen woman, as the church-going Pharisee; just as able to renew a thousand as one. Who is sufficiently awake to the necessity of imploring God to convert a multitude of sinners?

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 44; xi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Thess. i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Titus iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4.

<sup>6</sup> John xvi. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Zech. iv. 6.

<sup>8</sup> John iii. 5, 6, 8.

All revival of the Church is increased sanctification; and all reclaiming of the impenitent is sanctification begun. For both we need the gift of the Spirit; and we need it now. We need it to break the power of sin in professing Christians, and to nail their lusts to the cross; for it is by this influence that we, "do mortify the deeds of the body."<sup>1</sup> Some of the primitive believers had been atrocious sinners; "but," says the Apostle Paul, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>2</sup> Hope, Joy, Love, and consequent activity and success, are fruits of the same Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In a word, the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Revival. Earnest, daily, united prayer of the people of Christ for this high gift puts honor upon God in a remarkable degree; and we already have cause to note how signally he blesses endeavors which were openly begun in prayer. Beloved brethren, let us not mistake the token, nor fail to go in the path pointed out by Providence and the Spirit.

4. *The Holy Spirit sends those gifts which are necessary for successful work.* When miraculous gifts were necessary, they were not withheld. All inspiration, wisdom, and ministry are from the same source. So also are the common qualifications for service demanded in the daily walk of an earnest Christian, who seeks to save souls. "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."<sup>4</sup> The Lord promised that the Spirit should prompt his disciples when arraigned.<sup>5</sup> Equally does the blessed Monitor fill their hearts and lips for common service. Apostles themselves sought for "utterance" by means of prayer;<sup>6</sup> and a praying Church will have a ministry and members, bold and loving in owning and recommending their Lord. The supplications which bring down such influences are themselves wrought of God, when believers, keeping themselves in the love of God, are at the same time "praying in the Holy Ghost."<sup>7</sup> See this how completely dependent we are for all upon the Holy Spirit of God. Grace manifestly began the work; grace keeps it alive; grace must carry it on and give it extension.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 5; 1 Thess. i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. vi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cor. xii. 6, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Jude xx.

Brethren, we must pray as we have never yet prayed. Our want of success is due to our coldness of desire and niggardliness of request. We are not straitened in God; but in our own low, slender conceptions and hopes. We have not, because we ask not. If we were under a deep and solemn impression of the Divine power, bounty, and faithfulness, "how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight!" The lesson which the Revival should teach us is the duty of being instant in supplication for the larger and more glorious effusion of the Holy Spirit. Acting on this, we shall behold new marvels of love in the place of prayer.

## COMPEL THEM TO COME IN.

The worst and vilest may be saved. Mighty awakenings do not stop short of the leprous and abandoned sinner. When the Master of the house was angry, because all his invited guests began to make excuse, and refused to come to the Great Supper, though all things were ready, he thus gave orders to his servants: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." As this was not enough, he gave a second order: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and COMPEL THEM TO COME IN, that my house may be filled."<sup>1</sup> Who are these but the extremest outcast sinners? Such abound in our city, and perish for want of Christ.

There is, in grace a wonderful power of growth, which, under God, is our hope in regard to society. It is salt, it is leaven, it is seed, it is light; these are Scriptural figures, all importing diffusion. In revivals of religion we observe this very remarkably exemplified. From one individual, we see the spark kindling upon a whole family, and from one family, reaching a church or neighborhood. But what we desire to witness, and what we should pray for, is, that Christianity in its vital power should reach far and deeply into the worst layers of society. O brethren! what must become of these self-destroying masses, unless they receive the truth!

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiv. 23.

When the Lord Jesus was engaged in his ministry on earth, he did not limit his regards to those who call themselves the better classes. "The common people heard him gladly." Remark was often made upon his tolerance of the wicked: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He was a "friend of publicans and sinners." Of the multitudes who went out after him, thousands were doubtless poor, and thousands were blind and vicious. Sons of affliction and daughters of infamy heard his gracious words. People of this sort have not only sense of misery but consciousness of guilt. They are often stung and lashed by remorse. In a sort of desperation they sometimes cry to God. They are frequently more ready to be impressed by the glad tidings than church-going formalists. Jesus spake to their hearts, and his gospel is still suited to such. In the great awakenings under WESLEY and WHITEFIELD, there was nothing more remarkable than the degree in which the Gospel was carried home with power to the souls of the very lowest. "My rule," said John Wesley, "is to go not only to those who need me, but to those who need me most." The wretchedness which drove people to Christ was not altogether spiritual in the first instance, though in the Divine providence it had spiritual consequences. He who came for loaves and fishes found the bread of life; she who brought her vessel to the well of Sychar, received living water. So now, the sullen anguish of poverty, discontent, and disease, in cellars, garrets, and overcrowded and pestilential tenements, engenders longings which only the Gospel can gratify. Alas! alas! how slender are the means as yet employed for carrying the Gospel to these extreme points! Yet to these very points the Gospel may be carried with the best hopes of success. It were a dangerous error to presume that the inmates even of the odious resorts, noted and watched by the police, are necessarily devoid of thoughts about religion, and gnawing though vague consciousness of sin. Could we unroof dense portions of this great city, and look into the dens of drink, and play, and debauchery, we should behold the undeniable signs of wounded spirits, without hope, without God. The Gospel is made for such, and has saved such. Amidst the reiterated and increasing prayers which go up for the outpouring of the Spirit, surely there ought to be importunate supplication for influences to penetrate these lowest strata. Awakening is

incomplete unless it go deeper, far deeper down, than our well-dressed throngs. Blessed be God, that these have the privilege; but oh! we crave it for the abject and abandoned. Nor will the victorious progress be complete till it reach the felon, the drunkard, and the "strange woman." In regard to these dangerous and desperate classes, a voice seems to issue from the holy place, "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?"

Although places of instruction and worship are greatly needed for the miserable and vicious, and although all wealthy Christians should feel guilty until such be established, it is not enough to provide these means. Experience proves that good houses may remain empty, and able preachers unheard. We need a shock, to rouse these benumbed souls; an impulse, to urge them toward inquiry; a mighty drawing, to bring them to the Word. Their chief want is that of interest, awakening, motive; something to make them go to church, and care for their own souls. Popular reformations, under the truth, have this effect in some measure. Indeed we can think of nothing more likely to compel the attention of base, violent, and blasphemous men and women, than a mighty tide of revival, pressing its repeated waves into their miserable homes and hearts. Bad influences are propagated thus, why not good influences? All through the electric circle of a certain class, one hour will suffice to thrill the morbid passionate excitement of a prize-fight, a murder, or a rising mob; why should not the same human conductors bear such impulses as have driven multitudes to hear a LUTHER, a WHITEFIELD, or a SPURGEON? Would to God that we could see the day in which the messages of salvation and the meeting for prayer should be crowded by the very class who now fill drinking-shops, dance-houses, caverns of lawless pleasure, and jails! Nothing will effect this but great unexampled awakening; and for this we are to pray. If we carefully read what our blessed Lord spake in parable concerning the two sons, we shall see that these are the people who not only need the truth, but who are accessible to its power. "Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."<sup>1</sup>

When in so remarkable a manner God is displaying his readiness to convert great numbers to himself, all who fear his name

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 28-32.

and love the souls of men ought to be prostrate before him, in beseeching cries, that he would vouchsafe to urge the work of grace more widely and profoundly through the depraved multitude. As certainly as faith and love beget prayer, so certainly will prayer beget action; and means will be used to evangelize the lowest and vilest. Means are already attempted, but they will be better sustained. The blind and vicious, from whose ranks the levies are made for riots and prisons, will not flock to the preached Word, until some fresh and irresistible influence, affecting the whole population, find its way to the very scenes of their nocturnal orgies. Prayer for such an influence is clearly laid before us as a duty. While we pray we must work. These children of the wicked one will not come to the light; it must be carried to them. By territorial division; by cantons of labor, not too large to be manageable; by turning on a force of godly men and women large enough to visit with frequency; by making the effort in concert and exhaustively, so as to leave no nook or corner untouched; and by giving to the miserable some tidings of that rich gospel feast which awaits their acceptance, we shall instrumentally "compel them to come in."

Unbelief as to the power and willingness of God to do this, is at the bottom of all our neglect and wrong action in this matter. If for a moment we fancy such an event as the conversion of our degraded and dangerous classes, the incredulous principle replies, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be!"<sup>1</sup> An awakening which should shake the dry bones in all the lowest populations, rousing them from filth and drunkenness, and raising up an exceeding great army to fight the good fight of faith, is more than we dare ask of God. And yet, brethren, it is not more than we may reasonably expect on Scriptural grounds, nor more than the eyes of the Church shall joyfully see, in the day when, by the Spirit, she shall rise to the height of faith and entreaty. Such a glory will be like that in respect to which the Lord comforts Zion in prediction: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doth."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings vii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xlix. 18.

## THE REVIVAL,

WHEN many souls are coming to Christ at one time, we call it a Revival of Religion. There is no impropriety in this, even though the obvious effects are in converting sinners. This is always preceded by the refreshing of the Church, and just as God reneweth the face of the earth, in the spring, by calling forth grass and flowers, so he revives the wintry places of his Church by bringing to light thousands of hitherto darkened souls. From Pentecost onwards, the Holy Spirit has been frequently sent in effusion so copious as to add multitudes simultaneously to the Church of such as shall be saved. O reader! a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord is also a time for great "searchings of hearts."<sup>2</sup> Will you give a few moments to certain solemn and tender inquiries?

1. *Are you an enemy to the Revival?* You shudder at the thought! yet enemies there are; an arch-enemy, a liar, a murderer, the old serpent, is still the foe of Christ and all his works. His aids and emissaries seek to hinder the arousing of saints, and the conversion of sinners. Perhaps you have heard them sneer, and rail at the work of grace; which they deride as a disease or an infatuation. "These people are insane." "These men are full of new wine."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps you have joined in the laughter of the sons of Belial; or have been afraid or ashamed to break silence. Consider with which party you then ranked yourself. "Who is on the Lord's side?"<sup>4</sup> is still the question. To mock at the operations of the Holy Spirit, ascribing them to lower causes, is not unlike the sin of the Pharisees, who dishonored the miracles of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Men may fight against God,<sup>6</sup> and oppose his work of grace, by denying or disparaging it; by dwelling on every person or incident which has a ludicrous side; by repressing the feelings of awakened souls; or by encouraging frivolous and distracting conversation, reading, or amusements, when the Spirit of God is clearly and mightily moving the community to solemn considera-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm civ. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iii. 22. Luke xi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Judges v. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xxxii. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Acts v. 39.

tion, bitter grief for sin, and earnest turning from the world to Christ.

2. *Do you rejoice in the Revival?* The Church cries to God: Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee? The Church has no greater joy on earth; yea, the Church in heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth; God and Christ rejoice over multitudes renewed and forgiven. Is this your joy, O reader? When the mighty awakening took place in the region of Samaria, "there was great joy in that city."<sup>2</sup> One converted family is cause of joy; when a whole church, when a whole neighborhood, when multitudes in a city, turn unto the Lord, how exceedingly great should be the gladness of all who love Christ and love souls! Are you conscious of such joy? Can it be a matter of indifference to a truly renewed soul, even to hear a report of hundreds brought to confess the Lord Jesus? Feel as Christ and holy angels feel, and you will possess a joy in the salvation of fellow-creatures and the glory of your Lord. But possibly you know nothing of all this.

3. *Are you a subject of the Revival?* The kingdom of God has come nigh unto you; but are you of it? You hear, perhaps you speak, of the great revival; but have you been yourself revived? Has your cold heart, dead in trespasses and sins, been made alive by the Spirit of the living God? "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Have old things passed away, and have all things become new?"<sup>3</sup> Have you that love to the Lord-Jesus Christ, without which your sentence is ANATHEMA MARANATHA?<sup>4</sup> Have you crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts?

These are very serious questions, to which you have long since given a deliberate answer, if you have been faithful to your own soul. Believe me, dear reader, it is not enough to be a communicant in the church. Thousands have been such, who are now in hell. A revived church possesses revived members. Are you such a one? Lay the hand on the breast and say, has the pervading influence of the blessed Spirit kindled your soul to new faith, hope, love, devotion, and duty? If not, you are still outside of this shower of grace.

4. *Do you pray for the Revival?* Many thousands are so praying. It began in prayer. This fresh gift of the loving Sa-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> John xix. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Cor. v. 17.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

viour was born amidst the cries and tears of his people. While they were speaking, God was near to bless. Thus he came upon the gathered Eleven, and thus upon the pentecostal meeting for prayer.<sup>1</sup> The precept is still in force, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; the promise still holds good, "They shall prosper that love thee."<sup>2</sup> As revivals begin in prayer, so are they maintained by prayer. The minister of the Word is but a fainting Moses; if Aaron and Hur cease to uphold his hands.<sup>3</sup> If we would see many thousands converted to God, we must pray. "For thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock, as the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts."<sup>4</sup> In the house of God, in the convened meeting of brethren, in the Sunday-school, in the family, in the closet, pray, pray, pray!

5. *Are you helping forward the Revival?* There is much work to be done among saints and sinners. Almighty God is the only effectual power. Paul and Apollos are nothing, till God give the increase.<sup>5</sup> Yet men are co-workers with God; humble instruments to convey his truth and promote his glory. Say not you are weak. He hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. Say not you have no influence; you have already exerted too much, on the wrong side. Go forward in the name of the Lord, with light and love, and you shall behold the fruit of your labor. You have a relative; a partner, a friend, a dependent, a neighbor, whose soul you have neglected. You have an hour in the week, or five minutes in the day, which you have failed to devote to saving an immortal being. You may conduct one to a religious meeting; you may bless another by rebuke. You may lend a book, give a tract, write an affectionate letter. Especially you may plead with some fellow-creature, that he would be reconciled to God. Peradventure your working-time is short.

6. *Does your heart care for the fruits of the Revival?* There is a duty to the golden sheaves after the ears have fallen before the sickle. Folded sheep must be watched and fed. New converts are endangered creatures, lambs amidst wolves. Christ

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 19, 26. Acts i. 14; ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxxii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xvii. 10, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 38.

cares for them, and wills that his servants should care for them. It is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish.<sup>1</sup> Beware how you offend, that is, betray, into sin, one of these little ones. Seek to prevent their straying. Seek to imbue them with sound doctrine. This ductile condition is the very one in which to receive the mould of truth.<sup>2</sup> Earnestly endeavor to bring them to an intelligent and sincere profession of faith, and then to useful labors. Half the benefit of revivals is lost from neglect of those who have been converted. Might not classes of instruction for such persons, after the primitive model, be found valuable? Dear Christian reader, if your heart has ever felt true penitence and love to Jesus, feed his sheep, feed his lambs!

7. *Have you sought to honor God in the Revival?* The glory of God the Saviour is the chief end to be regarded, in the salvation of the perishing.<sup>3</sup> Every true conversion adds splendor to Messiah's crown. By every true revival of religion, glory redounds to the Lord God Almighty. But this declarative glory is lessened by everything in the work which overclouds divine grace, or exalts poor, sinful man, and his doings and deservings. Oh! how careful should he be, in every meeting, in every devotion, in every word, to maintain a reverence and godly fear for that Holy One whom we profess to believe present! "For our God is a consuming fire."<sup>4</sup> The young Levite, who unwarily touched the ark, was zealous but not reverent. When dealing with or for souls, we cannot be too gentle and tender, even as a nurse cherisheth her [own] children; we cannot be too humble and meek. Pray for the "love of the Spirit."<sup>5</sup> Shun all that is censorious, or savoring of spiritual pride. All religious experiences are doubtful, which leave the soul arrogant, unteachable, harsh, and denunciatory. Let the awe of God's presence affect us, as it did the seraphim; and when our exultation is highest, let us most deeply cry: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!<sup>6</sup> How tenderly we should fear lest any uncrucified tempers of ours, should "eat as doth a canker," and spread contagion through the blessed work.<sup>6</sup> So live, beloved brother in the Lord, that you may be able to say, of all around you, as did Paul, "And they glorified God in me."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xv. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. vi. 1-6.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. i. 24.

## THE IMMENSE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH BY REVIVALS, A SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

THIS IS THE VERY END FOR WHICH CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION. This ingathering of souls is the covenant recompense of our adorable Redeemer. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Such is the representation of prophecy, and our Lord's own words declare the same truth. A few days before the final passion, when certain Greeks desired to see him, he uttered, as he sat in the temple, an awful proclamation of his certain and imminent death, and at the same time, plainly struggling with a conflict which anticipated that of Gethsemane, he cried, "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME!" That instant came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The people, therefore, that stood by said it thundered; others said, "An angel spake to him." But Jesus took this occasion to declare his approaching death; adding, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Remarkable words; into the exposition of which we find no time to enter now, but which might furnish profound meditation for the reflecting mind; as they show beyond contradiction that the conversion and restoration of a multitude of souls is, in the mind of Christ, coupled with the most tender agonies of his atoning work. His solace, as it were, over the cup of anguish, is the vision of many sons and daughters brought to glory. The extension of the church, therefore, by the addition of great numbers of converts, is desirable, as being the very end for which Christ accomplished the work of redemption:

IT IS BY A RAPID INGATHERING OF MANY SOULS THAT GOD HAS HERETOFORE CONDESCENDED TO ELEVATE HIS CHURCH TO ITS HIGHEST PROSPERITY. This has been repeatedly the case, as is proved by the most familiar ecclesiastical history. We need not dwell a

moment on the great and simultaneous conversion of multitudes on the day of Pentecost, but we may well give attention to the fact, that from that time forward, until Christianity had reached its utmost limits, there was a succession of similar awakenings. In other words, the increase of the church during the first two centuries was by the rapid accession of great numbers, rather than by the gradual adding of a few, at a time, after long intervals. That this is true should seem undeniable, when we take the testimony of authentic records as to the great extension of the church within a comparatively short period. By no other mode of increase was it possible for a diffusion of the truth, so speedy and so wide, to have been accomplished.

Let us ask your attention to the neglected truth, that **WHAT WE CALL THE REFORMATION WAS A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION.** It is a deplorable error to consider this moral convulsion as a mere change of speculative tenets, or a mere struggle for liberty of conscience. Both these it did involve, undoubtedly; but beneath these, vivifying and nerving these, was the sense of spiritual things, the experience of conviction, conversion, holy awe, and holy joy, the gracious affections of the new creature, which pervaded countries and traversed a whole continent. It was the personal interest of souls in agony about escape from the wrath to come, which gave interest to the great questions between Popery and Reform. The sudden unveiling of the long-hidden Bible before the laity was like the return of the sun upon a Greenland night. The entrance of the ray gave understanding to the simple; and in thousands of instances, the rejection of Pelagian error and the acceptance of Christ were contemporaneous and undistinguishable exercises. Never, certainly, since the days of the early Christians was there so wide-spread a concern about religion; never were there so many conversions. \* \* \* The good and great men who were the chief instruments in this amazing revival felt and avowed that it was entirely of God, that all true faith was of his immediate operation, and that nothing but the omnipotence of the Spirit could produce the change which they observed and experienced. Their uniform language on this point was a reiteration of the truth, "Jesus, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." And there is reason to believe that the benign work did not abate in its power so long as a full tribute of praise was given to the

sovereignty, and mere grace of God, in applying, as well as providing, the way of salvation. \* \* \* So rapid was this progress, that in less than forty years, in the face of the united opposition of the church and the empire, against all proscription, and in spite of rack and fagot, the principles of evangelical religion had overspread Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, and the British isles. It was an outpouring of the Spirit, under which 'the mountains flowed' down at His presence, with a converting power which was acknowledged by tribes and nations. How idle is it, then, to dream that the accession of great multitudes at once is not agreeable to God's way of dealing with his church!

Enough has been said to justify the statement that it is by revivals of religion that God has seen fit to elevate his church to its seasons of highest prosperity. That he has been pleased to do so in our country, in former days, is to be reckoned among his greatest favors to our nation. For no man can tell how far astray we might by this time have gone, as a people, but for such interpositions of grace; and none can calculate how much the elevated tone of moral and religious feeling which still exists among us, is due to the impressions thus made upon us in our forming state; especially as the generation which was then in childhood and youth was the very one which was in maturity when our fathers remodelled our polity at the Revolution.

IT IS JUST SUCH AN EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH WHICH IS DEMANDED BY THE ACTUAL STATE OF OUR NATION. Of all Christian nations, America is that which most needs genuine revivals of religion. It is because the Lord had a favor unto us, that his "right hand, and his arm; and the light of his countenance" have "granted to us more such seasons than to any other people. It was the bold conjecture of Edwards that the latter-day glory is to begin in America. "God has already put that honor upon the other continent, that Christ was born there literally, and there made the purchase of redemption; so, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things, it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious application of redemption, is to begin in this." Even admitting this to be a pleasing dream, our country, from the very necessity of the case, is to be the theatre of unprecedented revolutions. Our population, our extent, our government, our common lan-

guage, and our religious freedom, mark us out for great things—but whether good or evil, God knoweth. It is the belief of the sagacious, that unless our religious growth keep pace with our national increase, we shall grow up to sectional feud, factious division, disaster, and desolation; that no tardy, languid, scarcely perceptible increase of religion will meet the exigency; and that nothing can do so but great accession to our churches, produced by such revivals of religion as we hope and pray may be granted throughout the length and breadth of our land. That which characterizes us is the centrifugal tendency of our people, and the high rate of their increase. Even if this were not the case, if by some extraordinary check on population, we should stand where we are, and not add another unit to our census, we should still need a large measure of salt to keep us from ruin. We have not been faithful to the deposit with which we are intrusted. From the absurd attempt to keep up religion without doctrine, a large part of the present generation has grown up already with no proper safeguard against soul-destroying error. Not only have they no tests to distinguish Pelagianism from gospel grace, but they even learn to treat with indifference the heresies which deny the atonement and the godhead of Jesus. That charity which believeth all things but God's truth, opens the doors to a fatal religious literature, in which, by a sort of universal solvent, all the doctrinal bones of theology are reduced to a gelatinous mass of ambiguous sentiment. The consequence is easily predicted. In stupid dread of the catechism, and the definitions of the church, these people and their children lose all sense of the diversities of creeds, become looser and more ignorant as falsehood grows familiar, and are led off to universalism on one side, and popery on the other; or, more degrading and ruinous still, to Socinus, Swedenborg, familiar spirits, or the Mormons. We have not been laborious and careful for the perpetuity of the truth. We have multitudes among us who are losing every impression of their infancy, becoming latitudinarian in their creed, relaxed in their morals, and tending towards the world from whom their fathers came out. We have a mixed multitude without the camp, accompanying our march, who ever and anon fall a lusting after some error or some wickedness. Time was when the population of many regions of America was almost entirely religious; it is not so now. Thousands there are, even of those who regularly

attend public worship, who have no theology, no family prayer, no catechizing, who care for no differences of doctrine, and whose children grow up even more ignorant than themselves. By unavoidable mixtures and alliances the parents have learned a new dialect, and "the children speak half in the speech of Ashdod." The nature of genuine piety is less weighed, less understood. The agency of the Holy Spirit has been cast into the shade; new and dangerous views of regeneration have become common; while the tendency has been away from dependence on God, and towards a religion of human fabrication.

Within the old thirteen States we grow by myriads, and what shall I say of the States and territories which rise like an exhalation? Add to this the emigration from abroad still pouring in on us; and then, while all awake with this vision of the future, ask yourselves, Must these millions be left without the gospel? or can the gospel reach them; with our present means? Will not this amazing increase of our people immeasurably outstrip the column of religious influences? At our present rate of march, can we even keep in sight of the army of aliens whom we would subdue to Christ? My brethren, the subject is one of incalculable greatness. Unless the means of grace can be made in some degree to keep pace with the growth of our population, our rising States must be abandoned to error, infidelity, and disorder; and that great West, which is ere long to turn upon us with an influence far beyond that which we now exert on them, must, without the gospel, send back on us the shocks of a practical atheism.

Now we have no means which, in the way we commonly apply them, can reach this case; and nothing can throw one ray of hope upon this scene, until the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high. If, instead of tens or twenties added to our church in a year, God should turn us and cause his face to shine, and "increase us with men like a flock," giving us hundreds on hundreds, as he can easily do, we shall have ministers enough, and holy men enough, to carry on the warfare to conquest.

There are some great facilities for the rapid communication of religious influence and sympathies which were unknown to our fathers. The commerce of mind with mind throughout the whole tract of our country is striking. The telegraphic rapidity of intelligence and feeling is electric, and characterizes the age. Now

the mechanism is ready, the communication is instituted, the train of conductors is laid; and oh, my brethren, shall not God be inquired of by us to give the divine, omnipotent touch? Shall we not beseech him to stir up his strength, and come and save 'us? Shall we not fall before him and entreat that he would forgive our land, and signalize our age by unexampled influences of reviving grace?

We seem strangely bent upon measuring all God's future achievements by those which are past, and limiting what he can do to what he has done, although the whole of prophecy is vocal with the song of wonders yet in reserve. Prophecy must needs be fulfilled, though heaven and earth pass away; but prophecy cannot be fulfilled without a wide-spread conquest of the earth, and a rapid conversion of mankind, such as we have not seen.

THE MEANS OF GAINING THIS TRANSCENDENT BLESSING IS PRAYER; it is God who will increase Israel. And he "will be inquired of to do it for them." All prayer is an acknowledgment of dependence. It is the resort of weakness to Omnipotence: As such it gives glory to the divine agency, from which corrupt, proud human nature is always prone to derogate somewhat, especially in the work of saving souls. But by grace are we saved, and God will have the excellency of the power to be, yea, to appear to be, of himself. All our difficulties in believing in the possibility of an unexampled increase of the church arise from our looking at human agency instead of divine efficiency. Perhaps one reason why God has so often arrested his bountiful hand, and left us to barrenness, is, that we have arrogated to ourselves much of the power. We have substituted man's work. We have taken regeneration out of God's hands into our own. We have made us new hearts, after the image of ourselves. We have in the place of the new creature substituted a mere purpose, a volition to serve God, to choose him to make us happy, a purpose which may be, and often has been altered the next hour. And we have thus exchanged the glory of God for our own glory, and left the Lord Jesus Christ and his merciful atonement entirely out of our system.

My brethren, what visions arise before the eye of faith in the expectation of such a return to us! On Omnipotence we cannot count too much. God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly

above all that we ask or think. Such a dawn of glory as this upon our churches would extend its beams to our remotest missions. Religion would be to our national Union a cement more than all political ties and compromises. The young men of our age would grow up under new influences, a generation fitted for a new work, in a better age. It is no more than is predicted: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Our youth would be the happiest youth, and we the happiest people in the world. Oh that I could impress, and be possessed myself with a due sense of the loveliness, the glory, the indispensableness of, such a gift. If I judge aright, all other pursuits are nothing to the pursuit of this.

Our common and popular methods of doing good to men aim only at temporal good, or if higher, only indirectly; but this is aiming at the good of the soul, and for eternity. Here is the great work of philanthropy, the only work worth living for.

Dear brethren, you do not need so much to have this demonstrated, as to have it pondered. You are not infidels. You believe in the soul, in its immortality, its preciousness, its peril; you believe that most around you are unsanctified, are perishing; you believe that they must be renewed, or lost, and that the time is short; you believe that they cannot save themselves, that they will not come to the Saviour; you believe, that God alone can save them, that he can do it speedily, that he can do it now, that he will be inquired of to do it for you.

Then what room is there for further argument? Your minds concede all that can be demanded. It only remains that you pray. God hath promised, and will perform; these solemn feasts shall be crowded; he "will increase them with men like a flock," as when ten thousand went up to Jerusalem to sacred festivals, filling every avenue, and overspreading the holy place, the city, and the surrounding hills and vales and villages. Let but the blast of the silver trumpet be once heard, long and loud, and sweetly penetrating over mountain and plain of our beloved land, and the sound of jubilee shall reverberate from distant shores,

and the "ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

As the conversion of a multitude, even "flocks of men," sets forth the glory of God, so this is more specially and eminently done, when the blessing comes in answer to prayer. Never have the honors of our common Christianity been so illustrious as when with one consent the people of God have been seen thronging to the place of prayer, as if in public acknowledgment that the excellency of the power is "of God, and not of us."

When united prayer begins, revival is not merely coming, it has come: And this agrees with the word of the Lord: "And it shall come to pass, before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." In sovereignty of dispensation the Most High prepares his own sheep, causes them to hear the Shepherd's voice, and brings them into his fold. When the spirit of prayer is universal, the divine gift will transcend all previous example. Inquiring for God, in the way of renewed prayer, marks growth in the individual Christian. The solitary chamber and the night watches attest the increase of zeal and importunity. Parents, guardians, husbands, wives, teachers, friends, lie prostrate before God, yearning for the conversion of sinners. Above all, ministers of the word and elders of the churches are made to recognize their solemn relation to the work, and give themselves to prayer. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the case of Shots, already mentioned. "In that place," says Mr. Livingston; "I used to find more liberty in preaching than elsewhere; yea, the only day in all my life wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching, was on a Monday, after the communion, preaching in the churchyard of Shots, June 21, 1630. The night before I had been with some Christians, *who spent the night in prayer and conference*. When I was alone in the fields, about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, before we were to go to sermon, there came such a misgiving spirit upon me, considering my unworthiness and weakness, and the expectation of the people, that I was consulting with myself, to have stoleh away somewhere and declined that day's preaching, but that I thought I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon, and got good assistance about an hour and a half upon the points which I had meditated on, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. And in the end, offering to close with some words of exhortation,

I was led on about an hour's time, in a strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart, as I never had the like in public in all my lifetime." Nor should we fail to notice the modesty of the man, who, in this piece of autobiography, drops no syllable concerning the conversion of a single soul by his means. Yet we learn from the best authority that no less than five hundred persons were, as was believed, converted under that sermon, in that rural churchyard. Ministers of the gospel, beyond all others, have a serious responsibility at such times, and have cause to ask the intercession of God's people, that they may, with more devotion of the whole man, give themselves to the word of God and prayer.

## THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

IT IS AN UNSPEAKABLE PRIVILEGE FOR A SINFUL MAN TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE PUBLICATION OF THIS MYSTERY. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Such was Paul's view of the ministerial office. His soul sank under it: Who is sufficient for these things? Here was the spring of his apostolic zeal—the riches of the Gospel in contrast with his own poverty. As he turns from gazing at the page of his commission, on which a single name fills all with its radiance, the name of Jesus—to look at what he was, what he is, he is amazed and overwhelmed that such a one as he should have this honor. He looks at the treasure of which he is a steward—the *Riches of Christ*, well so called; riches of his nature, of his grace, of his atonement, of that love which passeth knowledge; riches of its consequences, in the wealthy bliss of millions of overflowing vessels of mercy. *Unsearchable riches!* incalculable in number, in height, in depth. A river of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, unsearchable in its sovereign source, immeasurable and unfathomable in its ocean flow.

Can you wonder, my brethren, at the subsequent self-devotion

of Paul, that he henceforth could know nothing else, that he speeded over sea and land to fulfil his calling? No. It is the vital spirit of every ancient, of every modern missionary: What were chains to such a man? "I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." What was jeopardy of life? "I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24). It was not a transient fervor. It stood the test. The marks or signs of an apostle were on him (Acts xxi.). He was in labors abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft, in perils by land and sea, from violence and treachery, in weariness and painfulness, and watchings and hunger and cold and nakedness and shipwreck. Yet none of these things moved him. How could they? Two thoughts expelled all others, and reigned in his soul—his own baseness and the unsearchable riches of Christ, his own sin and the glory of the Gospel.

To such a one, life will seem a rapid current, for it will be filled with the haste of fervid action. Oceans will become mere straits to such a zeal. The place, the circumstances of labor, will be mere dust on the balance. So that the Gospel be preached, it will matter little in what language, or amidst what dangers.

[An able and suggestive tract, entitled "An Address to Teachers," by the author of the preceding selections, was published a number of years ago by the BOARD OF EDUCATION. A few copies of it remain on hand, and it will be sent on application gratuitously to those who are engaged, or specially interested, in that work.]

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