

A
S E R M O N

ON THE PRESENT

Revival of Religion, &c.

IN THIS COUNTRY;

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE
KENTUCKY SYNOD.



SING UNTO THE LORD; FOR HE HATH DONE EXCELLENT
THINGS: THIS IS KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH.



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ISAIAH 21. 11, 12.

The burden of Dumah. He called to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night.

THE prophecy expressed in these words, is very short. It does not appear to be connected with any thing preceding or following it; which can reflect any light upon the subject. We have no history of its accomplishment by which it can be explained: it is therefore dark and hard to be particularly and exactly understood.

However we have here in a vision, one who appears to be anxiously concerned for the good of his country, enquiring of the prophet into the state of it; *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* He expresses his earnestness and desire of information by repeating the question. Here is no doubt a reference to the necessary custom of appointing watchmen in cities, to guard men from harm, or to give the alarm when danger approaches.

The prophet, under the character of a watchman, answers, the morning cometh, and also the

night, i. e. you shall have a little respite from your national distresses and calamities, but this will soon be succeeded by a dark night of affliction. A dawn of national prosperity is often succeeded by great national judgments and sore afflictions; and so a time of revival in religion is frequently followed by great error and delusion. When the sun of trials and persecution arises, the stony ground hearers wither away: when the thorns of worldly cares spring up, the seed is choaked, and desolation overspreads the field. Then a sad night of deadness and desertion succeeds.

Though we want the historical and exact explanation of this passage, yet from the similarity of the subjects, and the suitableness of the words, they may be safely and properly accommodated to the state of the christian church. Being thus accommodated, we understand by *He*, some man of *Seir*: a serious enquirer after the state of the church. By the *watchman*, formerly the prophets, and now the ministers of the gospel, who are placed as watchmen on Zion's walls—By the morning, a time of revival of religion and prosperity of the church: by the night a time of declension, backsliding and desertion.

I. I shall say something of the morning and its approach.

II. Something of the night and what brings it on.

III. More particularly enquire into the state of religion among ourselves.

I. I shall say something of the morning and its approach.

The morning, a time of revival and flourishing state of religion, is frequently, and I believe,

where there is a professing people, generally introduced by much of a spirit of prayer poured out on the people of God: so that, Jacob like, they are wrestling with him, that his children may be quickened and comforted, sinners converted, and Zion made to flourish and rejoice in the Lord. A little before the restoration of the Jews, which it seems was a time of religious revival, Daniel had much of this spirit of prayer. With what solemnity and faith does he address his Maker, "O Lord the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;" with what humble penitence does he confess and bewail his sins and the sins of his people! How heartily and sincerely does he acknowledge the justice of God in their punishment! And how fervently does he plead for mercy! Thus the Supreme Being shews his people that he is a God hearing prayer, and has not said to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. Thus he makes them sensible of their dependence, and thankful for his mercies.

In the beginning of a revival, there is commonly an increasing solemnity and animation in preaching the gospel, and dispensing its ordinances. The spirit of the Lord is poured out upon ministers, they are anointed to preach the gospel, are stirred up to labor with more than usual diligence and faithfulness.

In a time of revival, lifeless formalists are awakened and roused up; backsliders are made to return. They go, weeping as they go; they enquire the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten."

At such a time, the Bible, that antiquated book, before considered too dull to be read by any person of taste, comes into credit and is highly esteemed: there is an ardent desire to read, hear and understand its sacred contents. It is highly valued as containing the rule of the christian's duty, the way of life, and the gracious charter of all the believer's privileges. It is the delight of awakened souls, and their meditation night and day. It is the unerring standard by which they try every doctrine, and measure every practice. It guards the judicious and sensible christian from specious errors, cold formality and enthusiastic flights of passion; and its many great and precious promises, are the strength and joy of their souls.

Sabbath opportunities are highly prized and outward ordinances greatly esteemed, as means of grace of divine appointment, and attended with great diligence: at the same time the mind is deeply impressed with a persuasion that the success of all means depends upon the divine blessing. Men are not now disposed to argue away the authority of the Sabbath, and find a thousand objections against a strictly religious observation of it. No! they see the wisdom and goodness of God in the institution, and give thanks to his name for it, as an inestimable privilege. They see that religion would soon dwindle away and die without it. That it is useful as a means of propagating religion in our benighted sinful world, converting guilty sinners to God, and edifying his people. The duties and exercises of the Sabbath are the comfort and joy of their souls.

When the morning is come, there is commonly found to be a considerable, if not a large

number of members added to the communion of the church by conviction and conversion. This is a day of Christ's power, when his people are made willing in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning : a day in which his word is made like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces, and in which the eyes of men are opened, and they turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

In a time of revival there is among the subjects of the work; a growing reformation of manners. Gross immoralities are carefully and conscientiously avoided, and christians diligently return to their duty. They have that faith which works by love, and that love which engages them to keep Christ's commandments. They possess a forbearing and forgiving temper of heart. Humility, modesty, meekness and benevolence rule their minds, and their conduct towards their fellow creatures. Temperance, chastity and sobriety appear in their lives. They have a compassionate regard to their fellow creatures in distress and honestly endeavour to relieve them--especially those who are distressed in their consciences under a sense of unpardoned guilt. Where men are truly and thoroughly reformed, care will be taken to make restitution for injuries done to others, and also to do justice to the persons, reputations and estates of men.

In a time of revival christians' hearts are warmed with sincere love to all who bear the image of Jesus Christ, though they go by different names from themselves, and have different sentiments on several religious subjects. Yet the judicious christian will not part with truth, or

make a sacrifice of his creed to other people, however he may esteem them, knowing that the best of men are fallible and have their mistakes, and that there is no unerring guide, but the oracles of divine inspiration. It is true men are often strongly disposed to justify or condemn persons or things by the lump. A particular person is esteemed all perfection or imperfection--a particular party is thought to be almost blameless; or void of any good qualities *at all*. A scheme of doctrines is thought to be all truth, or all error. A religious stir to be all from the spirit of God and therefore right, or all from the spirit of error and delusion: all rational and agreeable to scripture, or all wild and enthusiastic. But the quickened and judicious christian knowing that there is no absolute perfection among men will not justify or condemn in the mass; but will endeavour rightly to distinguish and separate the wheat from the chaff. He will love those who appear to bear the image of Christ and receive them in his heart and affections, though he believes them to labor under a number of mistakes.

II. I shall say something of the *Night*, and what brings it on.

By the night, as I said, we are to understand a time of declension, backsliding and desertion--- When the love of many waxes cold, and the life of religion decays, it is common for many to backslide, "to return with the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Then God deserts the souls of professors--deserts his ministers and his ordinances. Now the sun is set, and darkness, thick darkness overspreads the church. God's people forsake him and he forsakes them, and covers

his Zion with a cloud in his anger. Some professors are given up to wild enthusiastic errors and delusions, and some bound fast in the chains of a bigotted orthodoxy.

There are many things which tend to put a stop to a religious revival : some of these human weaknesses and corruptions rise out of the revival itself.

Spiritual pride is one of these : this is raised out of great illuminations and bright manifestations. It is evidenced by great self-confidence, a forward assuming dogmatical air, a great disposition to be judging the state of others, pronouncing on them with a decisive tone and casting on them censorious reflections. Such have a fondness for their own attainments and experiences and to make these the common topics of their conversation, and that when there is no proper call for it. They show a fondness to be admired for these things, and for their great gifts if they are possessed of any. Such commonly speak with an air of infallibility and are impatient of contradiction. They are blind to their own faults, eagle-eyed to discern the faults of others and liberal in their censures. When this temper is observed in professors, prejudices are too apt to rise in the minds of men against religion itself : and by it that God is provoked who has said he will stain the pride of all glory : the light of his countenance is withdrawn and thick darkness succeeds.

Through the weakness of human nature a degree of enthusiasm attends almost every revival of religion. Where it rises to any great height it naturally tends to mar the work and put a stop to its progress.

By enthusiasm I do not mean a great degree of

warmth and animation in religion, nor a persuasion that this warmth and animation arises from the operations of the holy Spirit applying divine truth and impressing the heart with a sense of its excellency and importance, exciting an ardent love to precious immortal souls, and desire for the coming of the kingdom of God's grace. Neither by enthusiasm do I mean, over sanguine expectations of a great, speedy and extensive spread of religion, beyond what cool reason will justify. Something of this, call it enthusiasm if you please, seems to be necessary for the accomplishment of every great design. It was political enthusiasm, akin to this, which carried the Americans through their arduous conflict with Britain. Enthusiasm like this, no doubt animated Luther and other reformers to dare the great attempt of rescuing Christendom from ecclesiastical tyranny. This I say is not what I mean. The enthusiasm I expose arises from a mistake about the operations of the divine spirit; from not distinguishing between its common and extraordinary operations--between the gifts and graces of the spirit. Being mistaken here, men think some strong impulses or impressions on their minds, caused perhaps by the heat and strength of their imaginations, or a tumultuous motion of various passions, are a kind of revelation from heaven. They are the more ready to think so, if these impressions be attended, as they may be in some instances, with sweet serenity of mind; or as in some others, with great religious joy. Under the influence of these enthusiastic mistakes men may positively conclude this or that doctrine to be true or false, not because they find or do

not find it in the holy scriptures ; but because they felt so and so, when praying, thinking or speaking about it. Or they conclude that this or that is their duty, not from any precept they find in the Bible ; but because they feel so and so, because they have such and such extraordinary exercises of mind about it. This is in effect making the exercises of their mind, or their religious feelings, a new or an additional revelation from heaven. Under the influence of such mistakes as these, I suppose, some have believed themselves called to preach the Gospel, whom nature has forbidden to preach, and whom the God of nature never called to the work. Under the same mistake a man may believe that every idea he expresses for half an hour together, and the very words by which he expresses them, are immediately given him from heaven ; when there is very little useful matter in his discourse and as little common sense. All however is ascribed to the spirit of God, and that divine spirit made answerable for man's weakness : or he may think he has received messages from the Lord to particular persons, and may carry and deliver them as by divine authority.

But to mention all the wild things which this mistake has produced would be an endless task. Many for a while may be carried away with these notions : but after some time their heat commonly abates, they become cool, dwindle away, sink into insignificance and soon cease to exist : or as has been the case in some instances, they recover by degrees from their delirium, correct their own errors, and form themselves into an orderly society.

When professors imbibe these notions, it is commonly in vain to reason with them--they are beyond the reach of all argument. They cannot suspect themselves to be under a mistake being as they think favored with the guidance of infinite wisdom.

When this enthusiasm predominates, some may be carried away by it irrecoverably: some in order to avoid this extreme run into an opposite one, perhaps equally offensive to God and hurtful to the souls of men--I mean that of a dull, lifeless formality: while others ever prone to judge of religion by its professors, and not from the sacred Oracles, imbibe strong prejudices, sink into scepticism and renounce all religion. Honest christians who are determined to persevere through every discouragement are greatly distressed and give themselves up to a life of secret mourning. Thus a pleasant morning is succeeded by a dismal night of clouds and of darkness that may be felt.

Another thing which I suppose frequently brings on a gloomy night is the people dolizing certain instruments or means of grace. A minister has something very engaging in his manner, or his labors have been blessed with great success: high expectations have been raised, and ardent desires excited to hear this man preach above all others. The creature is looked to and depended upon more than the creator. Or one religious ordinance is much preferred to another and great dependence put upon it, while others equally the appointments of heaven are comparatively undervalued and neglected. Sacramental solemnities, baptizing days, quarterly or class meetings are much attended and great dependence

put upon them ; while ordinary preaching, secret and family worship or family instruction, are too much undervalued and neglected. Means which are partly the inventions of men are preferred to those which are evidently of divine appointment, and more dependence put upon them than on the fountain of grace. This idolatry is provoking to the Almighty and causes him to withhold the light of his countenance ; and thus is brought on a night of desertion.

The same fatal effect may be produced by Ministers becoming vain of their popularity or success, and desiring to be called of men *Rabbi*. A concern for their own glory swallows up their concern for the glory of God and the salvation of men. This vanity is too often excited, especially in young preachers, by the injudicious applauses of some honest weak people. By this detestable idolatry however the Lord is provoked to desert his ministers and their labors ; he covers their souls with darkness and stains the pride of their glory.

Another thing which tends to produce the evil we are speaking of is placing religion in things in which it does not consist, or in which it consists but very little. This naturally turns the minds of men off from the essential and important doctrines and duties of religion, from the life, the power and practice of godliness to comparatively trifling circumstances. The soul of religion then departs or degenerates into trifling ceremony, empty formality, party prejudice or uncharitable bigotry. Now as much or more zeal is discovered about a ceremony, a mode of worship, a form of government or even a coat, a habit or a button, as about the salvation of a soul.

The progress of religion and prosperity of the church, may be stopped by the improper exercise of church discipline. Too lax a government withholds a proper testimony against vice and immorality; which tends to countenance loose living, and to harden mens' hearts in sin. But, perhaps, a more common and fatal error in a time of revival, is too much severity in animadverting upon the faults of brethren, and sometimes those faults comparatively small. A forward zeal hurries on the members or officers of the church, beyond the limits of good order. They aim at the credit of religion, but mistake the means of accomplishing their purpose. Rash sentiments are passed, which can by no means be justified, and scarcely excused. Suspicions are raised, ill will excited, parties are formed, wrangling takes place, the sun of prosperity sets, and a dark night succeeds.

Another thing destructive to a religious revival is party debates, with christians of other denominations. These debates may be about the essential and important doctrines or duties of religion. In this case, it is the duty of all in their proper places, and according to their abilities, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. But much injury is done to vital religion, by the manner of contending for it. It is not in christian humility, meekness and benevolence: railing is used instead of reasoning, hard words instead of sound arguments. But these pernicious debates are most commonly about the modes of worship and government, or the terms of admission to the distinguishing ordinances of the gospel.

I suppose it possible for ministers and other leading members of a church to insist so long

and so earnestly upon the baptism of children, by effusion, as to induce the people to believe it impossible for a child to be saved, unless thus baptized. Or, for them to dwell so much on the baptism of adults, by immersion, as thereby to persuade many to think it essential to salvation, and that without it none are to be esteemed and treated as christians. When these, and such like things, are argued into matters of such vast importance, and the minds of men heated with the subject, they are prepared to contend earnestly for these things, as for the most important truths. Mutual opposition between litigants, produces mutual coldness of affection, they grow ill, and at length looking on each other as enemies to the truth and cause of God, they prepare for war, and engage with all their forces. Thus immoderate zeal for matters of little comparative importance, degenerates into ill nature, the spirit of love is destroyed, the church is deserted and left in darkness. Much bigotry, prejudice and party zeal may remain; but little of the power and practice of godliness.

Ministers, alas! are men of like passions with others, and often indulge their passions to the dishonour of God, and great grief of his people, and especially of the tender lambs of his flock. When the ministers of love and peace are found, contending one with another, in a bitter and implacable manner; when each has influence enough to associate with himself a number of partizans, and then diffuse their ill humour among the people, the effects are fatal to the interest of religion. These ministers may have been the instruments of the morning's coming, they may have been as the morning star to usher in the day: they are also the instruments

of bringing on a dismal night of darkness. They are the means of hardening the hearts of impenitent sinners, of bringing seeking souls back to a state of carelessness, grieving the hearts of God's people, and weakening the hands of their brethren in the ministry: they not only hinder their own usefulness, but prevent the success of others. They may do more injury to the cause of Christ in a few hours, than they do good in seven years, or even a whole life time. O my brethren, let us stand and tremble at our situation, at our own great imperfections! Let us be humbled in the dust and live a life of constant dependence on the wisdom and grace of God! The Academy of Christ is kept among the willows in the valley of humility, and the peaceable loving temper that becomes a minister of his gospel can be learned only there.

Another powerful cause of declension is contentions among a professing people of the same religious connection. These arise from the unguarded use of the tongue, from the clashing of temporal interests, or from a diversity of sentiments about the doctrines or duties of religion. They are agitated with intemperate heat, produce an alienation of affection and many evil surmises and severe reflections: mutual love is no more, and mutual good offices cease. When these things prevail in a society, the spirit of God is grieved and departs.

Another thing, and one of the most effectual too, which stops a revival and hinders the success of the gospel is contentions between ministers and their people. These are commonly caused by neglect of duty in ministers, or people, or both. Ministers sometimes preach with little or no previous study---they

do not read in order to lay up a store of useful knowledge; therefore their discourses contain very little useful matter, this is repeated over and over in a confused way, without any proper connection or arrangement. They do not pay a proper attention to the state of the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers: children and youth, the lambs of the flock, are greatly, if not totally neglected. This neglect arises sometimes from indolence, sometimes from excessive attachment to their worldly interest; or they spend too much time in reading authors of taste, or in keeping fashionable company, conversing on war politics or other current topics of the day. Thus their time is wasted in trifles, which ought to be spent in useful studies, in prayer for their people, in instructing the ignorant, in warning the unruly or comforting those who mourn in Zion. When the people observe this negligence it never fails to make them uneasy. Some of the most sagacious, perhaps not the most charitable, express their uneasiness, and sometimes in a way unmercifully severe. They do not go to them in a brotherly way and in a spirit of love and meekness point out to them their faults; but express their uneasiness to one neighbor and another until they spread discontent through the whole society. The minister perhaps is too proud to receive a reproof from one of his own people; and if an offended person go to him and tell him his fault, he esteems it an affront. However the manner in which he is treated is frequently not very respectful or regular. He resents the usage, and mutual criminations take place. The matter proceeds from bad to worse, until it gets into such a wretched situa-

tion that it cannot be amicably adjusted, but must be decided by presbyterial authority. When this is resolved on, each party will endeavor to strengthen himself all he can, and by so doing spreads the mischief wider and wider. Each one sees the cause of Christ now bleeding and charges the guilt of it on his antagonist.

But a minister will say, and some I believe may say it with truth, that it is his ardent desire more diligently and constantly to devote himself to the work of the gospel ministry; but his worldly circumstances are so straitened and the demands of his family so pressing that he cannot do it without denying the faith and being worse than an infidel. Where this objection is honestly made and sufficiently supported by facts, I acknowledge a minister is in a sad dilemma. He is obliged by the law of nature, a divine law which he is bound to obey, to attend to the demands of his family: at the same time he sustains another relation, the duties of which are very important and pressing. If he neglects the duties of the gospel ministry, he sees the interests of religion and of precious souls suffering: if he neglects to provide for his family, he forfeits the character of a christian: if he does not discharge his debts which he has necessarily contracted, he forfeits the character of an honest man: if he complains of his worldly circumstances, he opens the mouths of his enemies and the enemies of religion, and increases their number: professors of other denominations uncharitably make it matter of reflection upon the whole society to which he belongs. In this situation his mind is distressed and distracted night and day; and his life is extremely uncomfortable, if not useless. If his people

are of ability to support him, whatever he may say, he *thinks* hard of them; he thinks they are unkind and unjust: these thoughts have a natural tendency to destroy that love which a minister ought to have for the people of his charge. He grows weary of his situation, and desires to change it for a better, if possible.

Notwithstanding all these things, it is the duty of a gospel minister to be instant in season and out of season; to give himself to reading, meditation and prayer, to the ministry of the word, and the pastoral inspection of the flock committed to his care. And this it must be acknowledged is sufficient to occupy the time and abilities of any one man. If he does not do this, he unavoidably becomes lean or barren, and his preaching has very little instruction or edification in it.

This leads me to call up the observation, that disputes between ministers and people sometimes arise from the people's neglect of their duty to their minister. They refuse to submit to, or to countenance and support that wholesome discipline which is necessary for the well-being of the church, and which Christ has appointed for its edification. This weakens the hands of a minister, discourages his heart, and prevents the success of his labor. Or they withhold from him that support which he needs, and which they are able to afford him without being subjected to any intolerable burden. They are at any rate more able to support their minister than a woman is to support a minister for them, and five or six children of her own besides. Where they are not obliged by any particular compact to afford him his support, it is nevertheless ungenerous to

withhold it. He has sown, and is sowing to them spiritual things ; and is it a great matter that he should reap their carnal things ? He is their servant, and the servant is worthy of his hire : but though they enjoy the benefit of his labors, they unjustly withhold his wages---they disregard the authority of God, who has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. They say he ought to live by his own labor and the labor of his poor wife, but God says otherwise. Where there is a particular contract, and the people have explicitly engaged to support a minister while he labors among them, and they do not discharge their obligations to him, they are guilty of deceiving him by false promises, and that often to his great injury. They are in a word covenant-breakers and live under the guilt of wilful, known falsehood : and yet they must be called christians, and treated as such. Should they treat any other man as they do their minister, they would justly fall under the censure of the church, and without repentance, would be excommunicated.

When there is what is esteemed a revival, the people sometimes seem so taken up with other things that they almost entirely forget their duty to their minister. They leave him and his family without the necessary means of support. He partly out of modesty and partly out of fear of injuring the cause of Christ, which lies near his heart, bears long and says little or nothing : his incomes however are stopped, and the means of support fail. He lives on his credit, until it is almost sunk. At length he is obliged to speak and utter his complaints. He no sooner begins to complain to his people than they suf-

pect him of worldly-mindedness---their affections begin to cool towards him, and they still withhold from him what is justly his due, and sometimes spread surmises or cast reflections upon him to the injury of his character; the consequence frequently is, the relation is dissolved and a final separation takes place. 'The morning came, the night is also come, and all is covered with darkness.

Where a minister sees it his duty to settle as the pastor of a people, who are poor and not able to do much for his support, they ought to divide the burden between them. 'The people should do what they can for his support and comfort; and the minister should be contented with as little as may be. He should spend what time he can in the duties of his functions; and they allow him a portion for necessary family business. In this way they should keep up christian communion and fellowship with each other. This would unite them in love, and contribute much to their mutual comfort and edification. Where a minister is placed among a people who are able to support him, he is out of his duty if he spend his time in worldly business to the neglect of his official duties: and the people are out of their duty if it is necessary that he should. All, both minister and people, are living in sin and cannot reasonably expect the blessing. They are acting contrary to the mind of God, who has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

'The christians of the present day seem to have no respect to the recompence of reward. 'The apostle says, speaking on this subject of supporting ministers, *they who sow sparingly shall also reap sparingly*; and may we not

justly infer that they who sow nothing shall reap nothing? They are not 'honoring the Lord with their substance, nor with the first fruits of their increase---they are not laying up treasure in heaven, nor making to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.' We see what is the ordination of God: but some though they 'break this commandment, and teach men so; yet do not seem to realize that this their disobedience will prove them to be least in the kingdom of heaven, even if this should be the least of his commandments.'

When church members and especially ministers imbibe much of the spirit of this world, view the honours, the fashions, and the wealth of the world, as matters of great importance; and become anxious to obtain them: when they are conformed to this world, and not transformed by the renewing of their mind; are alive to the world, and not crucified to it with its affections and lusts; then declension, backsliding and desertion takes place; the progress of religion is stopped, and a strong bar laid in the way of its revival.

III. I shall endeavour more particularly to enquire into the state of religion among ourselves.

It appears to me that if we carefully and impartially enquire into the state of religion in this land, and duly consider the stir which has so much engaged the attention of people generally, we shall have reason to conclude that we enjoy the morning of a gracious revival of the religion of Jesus: but that it is not a morning without threatening clouds, and a prospect of a gloomy night.

1. It appears to me, that the present stir in the land, is a real revival of the christian religion. My reason for this opinion, is not my seeing a considerable number of people very earnestly engaged in this matter ; for men may be very earnestly engaged, not only in true, but in false religion. Nor is it that many are thrown into great bodily agitations ; sometimes into fainting or convulsive fits, or are the subjects of violent spasmodic affections,* which give them strength and activity of body, far beyond the ordinary strength of nature ; for such bodily agitations have been produced, and I suppose may again be produced, by the operations of imposture on the credulity and superstition of mankind ; yea, by things which have no relation to religion. I do not draw my conclusion from the strong assurance some of the subjects of this work, often

* As to those bodily exercises, I acknowledge I never experienced them ; and therefore it becomes me to speak about them with modesty. As far as I can learn from a number of instances compared together, those who are the subjects of these bodily exercises, have sometimes their minds covered with darkness, and their ideas all in confusion ; so that nothing can be made of them one way or another. But commonly their ideas are very lively and impressive, though not always just. If they have right notions of divine things, previous to their falling into these exercises, their ideas in the time are just, lively, and very impressive : and their exercises have a happy influence on their temper and conduct, if they are careful to make the written word their guide ; as they commonly are, because it is the truth in the word that makes the impression. If previous to their falling, their ideas are wrong, the impression is very lively, but false, and the effects dangerous. The danger is, they imagine that these discoveries and impressions are made by the spirit of God, and are therefore certainly true, and out of this belief it is exceedingly difficult to reason them. Each of the above observations might be illustrated by particular instances, which would serve as facts to establish them. This renders it very necessary in the present day, to guard against enthusiasm : but though it is extremely necessary, the very attempt might expose a man to the censure of being an enemy to the revival. In religious matters, men are commonly the least afraid of that they are in most danger of.

express of their own conversion. I build but very little upon men's opinion of themselves, believing that the self-deceived often have as great assurance as the true convert, and are apt to express it with equal, if not greater confidence. I do not draw my conclusion from people's meeting together in large crouds, and spending three or four days in religious exercises, with but little intermission. Neither is my inference drawn from seeing people transported with joy, and shouting and singing the praises of God and a Redeemer: for I know by experience and observation, that there are false joys as well as true. A mistaken belief, that the Lord is my God, may fill me even with unutterable joy, as well as a rational and scriptural persuasion of it. My inference is not drawn from seeing persons, after great distress and horror of mind, suddenly breaking out into transports of joy and thankfulness; because I believe this is frequently the case, where there is no true knowledge of God and his son Jesus Christ, nor faith in the gospel plan of salvation. My conclusion is not drawn from my finding people exceedingly zealous to promote this work, and defend every attending circumstance. This is often discovered in promoting and defending a false religion, as well as a true. It may arise from pride and party zeal. When it is chiefly employed in defending the outward circumstance of a work, or the peculiarities of a party, it is much to be suspected. Nor finally is my conclusion drawn from this work making a considerable spread, and many people of various ranks falling in with it, nor from its continuance now in the land for six years; for error and delusion may spread far and continue long. But my opinion is founded on the following things, taken in connexion.

1. This revival has made its appearance in various places, without any extraordinary means to produce it, the preaching, the singing, the praying, have been the same, to which people had been long accustomed, and under which they had hardened to a great degree: and the first symptoms of the revival have been a praying spirit in the few pious people found among us. They somehow got their minds impressed with a sense of their own backsliding; with a sense of the prevalence of vice, infidelity and impiety; an unusual compassionate concern for the salvation of precious souls, who were perishing in their sins, and for the prosperity of Zion. They prayed, they endeavoured to excite their friends and neighbors to pray; they formed themselves into praying societies, that they might mutually encourage and assist each other. The revival appears to be granted in answer to prayer, and in confirmation of that gracious truth, that God has not said to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain, when he says I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.

2. As far as I can see, there appears to be in the subjects of this work, a deep heart humbling sense of the great unreasonableness, abominable nature, pernicious effects and deadly consequences of sin; and the absolute unworthiness of the sinful creature of the smallest crumb of mercy, from the hand of a holy God. There appears to be in them a deep mourning on account of their own sins, the sins of their fellow professors, and the sins of the carnals and profane; and particularly for the base sin of ingratitude to God for his many mercies; and also of the justice of God, in condemning and punishing his offending creatures.

3. They appear to have a lively and very affecting view of the infinite condescension and love of God the Father, in giving his eternal and only begotten Son, for the redemption of mankind, and of the infinite love of the Redeemer manifested in the great and gracious work of redemption: manifested in the labours and sorrows of his life and of his death: an affecting view of the astonishing goodness of the adorable Trinity, in providing and applying a complete atonement for the sin of fallen man, and a perfect righteousness for his justification: and all this in a way that not only secures, but advances the honours of God's law and government, and illustrates his justice, holiness, truth and tender mercies. Jesus Christ and him crucified, appears to be the ALL IN ALL to the subjects of this revival, and the creature nothing and less than nothing.

4. They seem to me, to have a very deep and affecting sense of the worth of precious immortal souls, ardent love to them, and an agonizing concern for their conviction, conversion and complete salvation. As far as I can judge, they are pleading for this with strong, fervent desires, with deep humility, with faith in God's promises and in the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the ardency of their love sometimes hurries them into some indiscretions which excite the prejudices of those for whose salvation they are pleading. Men are imperfect creatures, and these, if I may be allowed the expression, appear to be the generous blunders of benevolence. This love, this compassion, this ardent desire, this agonizing, this fervent pleading for the salvation of sinful men and for Zion's prosperity, far ex-

ceed any thing I have ever seen. This love, these fervent supplications are not confined to a particular spot or a particular party. They extend to and include men of every description: Catholics and Protestants, Jews, Mahometans and Pagans. The most savage nations, who are sunk almost beneath the notice of others, are embraced in the arms of their benevolence. Little children lie near their hearts; they take them in the arms, and put the hands of their benevolence upon them, and plead with the father of mercies to bless them. O thou fountain of mercy, give me, give to all this spirit of love, of grace and supplication!

5. A considerable number of individuals appear to me to be greatly reformed in their morals. This is undoubtedly the case within the sphere of my particular acquaintance. Yea; some neighborhoods noted for their vicious and profligate manners are now as much noted for their piety and good order. Drunkards, profane swearers, liars, quarrelsome persons, &c. are remarkably reformed. The songs of the drunkard are exchanged for the songs of Zion: fervent prayer succeeds in the room of profane oaths and curses: the lying tongue has learned to speak truth in the fear of God: and the contentious firebrand is converted into a lover of peace. A number of poor backsliders appear to be sensible that 'it is an evil thing and a bitter that they have forsaken the Lord their God; and are returning to him with penitent hearts, going and weeping, enquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, and we hope are joining themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten.'

6. A number of families, who had lived apparently without the fear of God, in folly and

in vice ; without religious instruction, or any proper government ; are now reduced to order, and are daily joining in the worship of God, reading his word, singing his praises and offering up their supplications to a throne of grace. Parents who formerly seemed to have little or no regard for the souls of their children, are now anxiously concerned for their salvation ; are pleading for them, and endeavoring to lead them to Christ and train them up in the ways of piety and virtue. Masters who formerly treated their servants as brutes, are now earnestly concerned for the salvation of their souls, and using means to promote it.

7. The subjects of this work appear to be very sensible of the necessity of *Sanctification* as well as *Justification*, and that " without holiness no man can see the Lord : " to be greatly desirous that they themselves and " all that name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity ; " should recommend the religion of Jesus to the consciences and esteem of their fellow men ; that the light of their holy conversation should so shine before men that they seeing their good works might give glory to God.' A heaven of perfect purity and the full enjoyment of God appears to be the chief and ultimate object of their desire and pursuit. *

* One objection frequently laid in against the work is what is called *Lay-exhorting*. I take the liberty here to show my opinion on this subject. The custom which has long prevailed among Presbyterians with respect to this matter, I think, has been wrong and very pernicious to the interests of religion in our churches. By custom men's hands have been too much tied up, their mouths too much shut, and they thereby prevented doing what they ought to have done, and what they might have done without stepping out of their own places. The work has been left almost entirely to ministers, and therefore has not spread and prevailed as much as it might have done. When one neighbor addresses another or two or three oth-

Now I have given you my reasons for concluding the *morning is come*, and that we are blessed with a real revival of the benign, the heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ; which demands our grateful acknowledgments to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

ers in an affectionate, kind and respectful manner, it is much apter to gain attention and to affect the heart, than the most solid discourses from the pulpit, and from the mouth of one whose occupation it is to preach the word. I can see no reason why a man or even a woman, when deeply impressed with a sense of the sinful and miserable state of their fellow creatures, should not plainly and affectionately warn them of their danger and persuade them to avoid it. Should they see them exposed to eminent danger from fire or water and insensible of it, no person would blame them should they give warning with loud cries and earnest intreaties: men would not esteem it as too assuming and arrogant, but as a genuine and commendable expression of compassion. Why the former should be censured and restrained, while the latter is commended as proper, I do not see. To hinder men in either case would be a violent restraint on the benevolence of the heart, and nature itself would strongly remonstrate. When this freedom has been used with prudence and an air of modesty and tenderness, I do not recollect ever to have known an instance of its giving offence to any serious mind. But when it is done with an air of domination and authority as if by a commission from heaven, and with a stern, commanding countenance, it is much out of character and very hurtful to the cause: it is exactly calculated to provoke resentment, and fix in the minds of men strong prejudices against religion. If any should say "they cannot help it." I reply if so, they cannot help doing wrong and acting contrary to the word of God. No impulses however strong, can justify a man in acting contrary to scripture and reason: can justify a woman in laying aside her proper, native modesty and delicacy, and assuming a masculine boldness, or a liberty unbecoming her sex. Women professing godliness, at all times and in all places, should be examples of modesty, and especially in the house of God. A woman by deviating a little from female modesty may do more injury to the cause of Christ and to precious souls than ever she will do good by all her most pathetic exhortations.

But what I plead for in the beginning of this note is a very different thing from assuming the character of a public Exhorter. This, I think, none ought to do unless called to it by the society, and agreeably to the rules of government in the society to which he belongs. Only admit of it, only allow one to become an Exhorter when he pleases, and you open a way for those who are too ignorant to know

If I am mistaken, I think it is not a mistake of the nature of religion, but of the appearances of the present day : a mistake about the sufficiency of the phenomena to prove the work to be such as I have represented it. I suppose that numbers, and some of them sensible, pious, good people, have formed a different opinion. Had I viewed the work at a distance, and attended chiefly to outward circumstances ; I should have formed the same unfavorable opinion. I endeavoured as far as I could, to look into the nature of the work, and observe its tendency and effects. I know I have been careful to judge impartially : I have sometimes felt strong prejudices ; I have found fault with many things, I have disputed almost every extraordinary circumstance ; somethings I do not yet approve and perhaps never shall : but you have the conclusion I have drawn upon the whole, and the premises from which that conclusion is drawn. I think I have had as good opportunities to judge of the matter, as most of those who think differently from me : but it is proper each one should judge for himself. We ought, however, to take great care, lest haply we should be found to fight against God.

The morning cometh and also the night.

2. I see, or think I see, a lowering appearance, a prospect of clouds collecting, which will darken the day, and at length bring on a dismal night

their own weakness, too self-confident to be under government and control, too vain to behave with decency, and enthusiastic enough to imagine they have authority to speak in the name of the Lord, though they can scarce speak common sense. This would destroy all rule, and reduce the church to a disorderly Mob. It would be the way to encourage a number of ambitious and enthusiastic pretenders to head every one his party, divide the church into factions, opposite contending factions, and thus destroy it.

of darknets, unless it shall please God by some means or other to disperse them.

In speaking of this point, I shall not in my own mind, confine myself to any one party or denomination of christians.

The doctrines taught in this country, are as far as I am acquainted, generally sound and good; calculated to instruct the ignorant, awaken the secure, lead awakened sinners to Christ, comfort mourners in Zion, strengthen and establish the weak, and lead to holiness of life. But to me it appears, that some of our doctrine smells too strong of antinomianism, some of arminianism and that some is a heterogeneous mixture of both.

Where in describing a work of grace and shewing the character of a christian, repentance, faith, love, joy and other eminent exercises are chiefly insisted upon, and the nature of gospel obedience very little explained, inculcated and urged as the proper evidence of a sound conversion: where a number of moral and religious duties are neglected by professors, and this neglect seldom or never pointed out and reprov- ed, there is a great tendency to antinomianism. Where the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is taught without distinctly showing wherein it consists--without showing that it consists in going on from one degree of strength to another, in a life of faith, love and gospel obedience: taught so as to induce people to think that conversion, or a good set of experiences, is all: that once in covenant and always in covenant, let a person live as he will, I say where perseverance is taught in such a manner as to lead to this, there is at least a strong tincture of antinomianism. Perhaps the preacher

would not teach this doctrine in express terms, but if he teach it in words that tend to this, it amounts to nearly the same thing.

Some on the other hand, seem to me, to hold out life and salvation to be obtained on certain conditions, to be performed in obedience to some new law of grace; which doctrine, if carefully examined, will appear to make salvation as truly impossible to depraved man, as it is by the old law or covenant of works. Great comfort and consolation is held out to believers, on condition of their faithfulness, without informing them in what that faithfulness consists, or what degree of it is requisite, or suggesting any sufficient reason for them to hope they will continue faithful. This appears to me to be consolation, which no well informed christian, who knows his own heart, possibly can or dare to take. Give me no better foundation to rest my hopes upon than this, and I must sink into black despair. I had rather derive my consolation from this promise of God to his people: that they shall be kept by his power, not in unbelief, but through faith unto salvation.

Sometimes there is in our discourses, a strange heterogeneous mixture of antimonianism, arminianism, and I may add, calvinism: calvinism, perhaps in the beginning, antimonianism in the middle, and arminianism at the end of a sermon; which mixture must make a strange appearance to a well informed mind, who has adopted any well digested consistent system.

The important scripture doctrine of divine influences in a work of conviction, conversion and sanctification, is, I believe, generally taught in our land. But some, if I understand them right, approach too near to the representing of it, as a

mere mechanical work, without considering the word of God as the mean by which the spirit works, in producing the excellent effect. Others again, if I take them up right, leave in this work, but very little for the divine spirit to do ; after the inspiration of the holy scriptures.* Both these, I apprehend, are departures from the principles of the reformation, and, what is more, departures from the written word of God ; for true christians are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth, and abideth for ever : they are born of the spirit, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

The religion which is taught and embraced among us, is experimental. Indeed, that religion which is not experienced, is of little value, and will finally be of no advantage. But while we are teaching this experimental religion, too little attention is paid to the practical part. Faith, love, repentance, which are commonly called the graces of the holy spirit, because wrought by his agency, are earnestly inculcated, but humility, meekness, temperance, brotherly-kindness ; their inseparable concomitants, together with an uniform holy practice, are too seldom mentioned, and too sparingly insisted on. This fault may be observed in the conversation of professors on religious experiences, and in experimental preaching. It stops too soon ; it leaves out some important, and I may say essential properties of a sound conversion.

* The truth is, the spirit works by the word. One extreme is, the word works without the spirit. (that is. the third person of the trinity) The other extreme is, the spirit works without the word. The first of these extremes leads to legality, and is a step towards denying the personality of the Holy Ghost: the other leads to enthusiasm.

As to discipline, I fear a wrong method is taken in admitting young members to communion : a method that is dishonoring to religion and injurious to the souls of men. It often buoys them up with a vain conceit that they are true christians, when there is no proper evidence that they understand what christianity is. Too disproportionate a regard is paid to experiences ; too little to knowledge and sound profession. They are said to be received into communion on the profession of their faith, when properly speaking they have never made a profession of the essential doctrines of christianity. Some are admitted who do not understand the first principles of christianity, and who make no profession of its essential doctrines. It does not appear from all they say whether they believe there is one or more Gods ; or that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ; or that there will be a resurrection and future judgment ; or that they understand what is the nature and use of the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper. Now this I think is altogether without scripture warrant, contrary to the dictates of reason, and dishonouring to the religion we profess ; especially where the important business of catechising is as much neglected as it is in our country.

If this duty of catechising is neglected a little longer, we are in great danger of being overspread with a dark cloud of ignorance... Ignorance of the fundamental doctrines and duties of that religion, which we profess to believe. The care presbyterians have formerly taken in teaching youth the first principles of religion has been of great advantage, not only to themselves, but also to other denominations and to

the common cause of christianity. Even those who censure them for their head knowledge, have reason to bless God, that they have been so careful to preserve it : for others, while they have been speaking against it, enjoy in some measure, the benefit of it : the benefit silently and insensibly diffused itself among them.

Here let me observe, that though we do not fully approve of the English hierarchy, and of the opulence of some of the English clergy, yet we have all reason to be thankful to the great Ruler of the world and of the church, that there has been such a set of men raised up in the christian world, as the English bishops. They have been in the course of divine providence, the great bulwark, which has defended the christian cause against the many formidable and violent attacks of its foes. Men in the vale of poverty, never could procure the necessary means of defence, that extensive knowledge requisite for the purpose. But this by the by.

In the government of church members, I think, a laudable care has been taken by all denominations to restrain and discountenance what is esteemed gross immorality, by excluding the openly vicious from their communion. I fear however, proper attention has not been paid to families. Children and servants are suffered to live in ignorance of the first principles of religion ; and the authority which God has given to the heads of families for edification is not used, as it ought to be, for the suppressing of vice and encouragement of piety and virtue. Servants are allowed to squander away the sacred hours of the Sabbath in idleness and wickedness. This is so general, that if an

individual attempts to govern his servants as he ought to do, his attempt is frustrated by the example of others. The liberty we take, and allow our families to take, on the Sabbath day, without any notice or restraint, would induce a stranger to believe we were generally become antifabbatarians. The holy Sabbath is in fact a day devoted to the service of the flesh and the devil, and is the occasion of children, servants and others, improving in the knowledge and practice of vice, beyond what they, without a Sabbath, would ever attain to. That which in itself, and in the end of its institution, is a great blessing, is perverted and turned into a curse. To have our youth trained up in the knowledge and practice of religion and sound morals, is a matter of great importance to civil and religious society. This is too little attended to by churches and their officers; which omission is glaringly absurd, especially in those who practice infant baptism.

Church officers, in the exercise of discipline, attend to the honour of religion and credit of the christian profession; but do not always aim enough at the repentance, reformation and salvation of offenders. The end of discipline is not merely to purge the church by casting out offenders; but also by bringing them back to the bosom of the church by repentance and reformation. Here I think we are often if not always deficient. We take up a bad opinion of an offender, lose our affection for him, and therefore neglect our duty.

Thus have I given you a view, according to my best information, of the state of religion in this state. *The morning cometh and also the night.*

But is the morning of the millennium at hand? is the latter-day glory approaching? the time when "the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands shall break in pieces the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, and become a great mountain filling the whole earth."

This question is too deep for me: 'the times and seasons the Father hath reserved in his own power.' Allow me on this occasion to venture a conjecture or two: I answer, *not very near*. My reasons for this, are,

1. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of peace and love; and there is too little of this temper found among christians, and even among christian ministers. There is too much of a spirit of party, and disposition for party debates. Ministers and other christians are too apt to be endeavoring to expose to ridicule their brethren, who do not think, in some points, like themselves. There evidently appears a disposition to hunt for proselytes, and not that open, candid spirit, which is necessary for union of endeavors in promoting the kingdom of Christ. Though I hope there is less of this temper prevailing now, than there was a few years ago. There is too much pride, self-confidence and censoriousness among professors; and too little meekness, forbearance and of that "charity which hopeth all things," for us to expect that glorious day near at hand.

2. The custom of drinking ardent spirits, not as a medicine, but to please the taste, to comply with fashion, or to shew generosity, is too common and prevalent among professors: and too many of them are employed in furnishing that pernicious bane to the morals of man-

kind. Professors must be cured of this evil before we can rationally expect to see that glorious morning. They must find something else to do with the surplus of their wealth, and lay it up as treasure in heaven.

3. The wealth and the honors of this world are too highly rated, and too much esteemed by professors. They pursue wealth with a view to their own and their children's worldly aggrandisement; with a view to the elegancies and luxuries of life; and not with a view to laying up treasure in heaven; not to relieve the wants and real necessities of the poor; not to assist in propagating the gospel through the world; not in training up promising youth, that they may be qualified for the important services of Christ's church; not in sending out missionaries to the poor heathen, who 'sit in darkness and the shadow of death.' Some are so bent upon the pomps or elegancies of life, as to involve themselves in debt, and neglect to do justice to their creditors by discharging their obligations. Professors do very little more for promoting the kingdom of God by their wealth than others; and seem to be as insensible of their obligations to 'honor the Lord with their substance.' It is true there have lately been some noble examples set in England, and some in America; but the generality of wealthy professors seem inclined to look on, and commend these examples rather than to realize themselves under any obligations to imitate them. We have some preachers among us, who have so great a regard to the cause of Christ as to sacrifice their worldly prospects, the interest of their families, their ease and the health of their bodies in order to promote it. But others in much more afflu-

ent circumstances, look on, commend them as examples of disinterestedness, and seem to think they have no more to do with the matter, and that their estates were given them merely for worldly purposes. Let others labor, and spend, and suffer in the cause of Christ; as for them, they mean to go to heaven by praying and singing, repenting and believing. I think a different spirit will be found among professors before the gospel takes a general spread in the world.

4. It appears to me probable, that before the millennium, there will rise up a set of evangelical preachers, who will more fully realize that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; and so disengage themselves from national attachments and political connexions, as to look upon themselves, and be looked upon by others, as citizens of the world at large, and equally friends to every nation under heaven: and thus find a more easy access to every part of the world, without suspicion of any political intrigue or mischievous design; and that by exemplifying and inculcating the christian spirit, they will be the instruments of uniting the nations of the earth in love, and destroying that national pride and those animosities, which have long deluged the world in blood. Mankind will then live in love and 'learn war no more.' The histories of heroes will cease to be admired... The Nebuchadnezzars, the Alexanders, the Marlboroughs, the Cromwells and the Bonapartes will no longer be set up as examples, in forming the morals of youth. The history of Jesus Christ and of the Apostle of the gentiles will be greatly preferred before them.

5. Another reason, and none of the least, for my thinking the millennium not very near, is the prevalence of arbitrary power in the world; and particularly that the professors of christianity are not rightly disposed to “break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.” They are so attached to the idol, interest, that they find not in their hearts to do justice in this respect, to “do as they would be done by.” Their judgments are in favor of it, but they have not hearts to act; they will not adopt and pursue any rational plan for accomplishing the righteous purpose. For my own part, I have no hopes that the world will enjoy the bright beams of this glorious morning, while this iniquity abounds and is practised by christians.

1. Let us return humble thanks and praise to a gracious God and Redeemer, that he has in any measure revived the things that remained, that were ready to die. I believe that the uncommon largeness of our assemblies, especially on sacramental occasions, and the extraordinary appearances and exercises on these occasions, have induced many to believe the revival to be much greater than it is, or ever has been; yet I am satisfied from my own observation, that there are a goodly number, who have been and are flocking to Jesus as doves to their windows, and turning from the practice of vices of various kinds, to walk in the paths of virtue: and the face of some whole neighborhoods, changed for the better. Though it is a truth much to be lamented, that there are multitudes among us, who remain careless and quite negligent of the one thing needful; many appear to be hardening in sin—many going on in the broad road of vice and impiety to destruction: many look-

ing up in obstinate prejudices, rising from their dislike to vital religion, strengthened by the imprudent zeal of some honest friends to the cause, and some carried away with enthusiastic errors; yet many of the professors of religion have been much quickened, revived and comforted, and are now rejoicing in God as the portion of their souls; and many poor sinners, as I intimated, are flocking to Jesus as doves to their windows, and turning to the Lord. Praise ye the Lord, and magnify him for ever. Especially let us glorify his name by living the lives of christians, and following the example of the Lord Jesus: this is the best way of expressing our thanks, and praising his gracious name.

2. It is matter of joy and thankfulness to find so much of a spirit of prayer and supplication, among the people of God. Let us endeavor to cultivate it more and more. At the same time we should distinguish between the humble, solemn, fervent pleadings of faith, and a bold noisy kind of earnestness; at the same time making proper charitable allowances for difference of custom, in different places and societies. In general, where there is most of this spirit of prayer among christians, there are the most sinners enquiring what they shall do to be saved: the most converts to God, and the most added to the communion of the church. Let us endeavor to pray without ceasing, with all manner of prayer and supplication: and not found our hopes upon appearances, but upon the grace and power of God, and the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ. Let us not limit the holy One of Israel; but persevere in our duty; contented that God should work when and how he pleases.

3. Let us honestly and carefully search into and find out every thing which has a tendency to bring on a gloomy night, lamenting before God with deep humility and penitence of heart, and diligently labor to reform. Let the people strive to find out whatever mistakes they have run into ; whatever duties they have neglected; whatever has been amiss in their temper and conduct, and endeavour to reform without delay. Let us all engage with all our hearts in present incumbent duty : ministers labor faithfully in discharge of the various duties of their function, and the people encourage and support them in it, with cheerfulness of heart. Let us carefully avoid that spiritual pride, which puffs up the mind with vain conceit, and self confidence; that enthusiasm that leads the mind away from the sacred oracles, to follow the ravings of a disordered imagination, as the infallible guidance of the holy spirit; and that spirit of contention with our brethren, of whatever name, which grieves the spirit of God, and destroys love and peace. If we are obliged to contend earnestly for the truth, let us do it in meekness and love, never returning railing for railing.

4. I would take the liberty to say a few words to those who dislike the present work, and are turned opposers. I esteem it the highest of uncharitableness, to treat all who oppose this work as opposers of the life and power of religion. Those who take different views of the same object, form different opinions about it, and consequently observe a different conduct with relation to it. I believe some of the sincere friends of the work, have more effectually injured it, by unguarded addresses and rash censures, than those opposers have by all they have said and

done. The Lord pity and forgive human weakness! It is possible there may be some who would be pleased and happy, could they be persuaded the present revival was a real revival of true religion : but they see, or rather hear, of so many things which appear to them incapable of being reconciled to reason or scripture, that they cannot draw the pleasing conclusion. As to such, I would recommend it to them honestly to labour to divest themselves of all the prejudices they have imbibed ; to endeavour to make all the allowances they reasonably can for human weakness and mistakes ; to pay no regard to flying stories, especially reports of those who are violent opposers ; get acquainted with not one or two, but a number of the subjects of this work ; come near the object, view it impartially and on every side, particularly try to make yourselves acquainted with those things, the report of which, has given you the greatest disgust. Then you may probably see reason to believe it to be a work of divine grace, may heartily own and encourage it, though you may not like several attending circumstances. Perhaps there never has been a revival of religion since the days of pentecost, free from all blemishes. You will not be disposed to deny the charms of a beautiful lady, because she has one or two stains on her dress.

Others are opposers of this work, because it opposes them. It opposes the religion of some, and will not let them rest. They think they are christians, and know they are esteemed so by others. They have long entertained hopes of heaven and immortal glory ; and have had the reputation of worthy respectable members of the church on earth. Shall they now give

up all their hopes of heaven and reputation on earth ; and set themselves down as poor law condemned, unconverted sinners. This they must do, if these people are in the right : if theirs is true religion, they are total strangers to it. Here is something very hard to swallow, and equally hard to digest. This makes them wish to find as many faults as they can, and sets them to hunting for them with diligence. They commonly prove too successful ; they find some disorder in the worship of these people, something that appears whimsical or enthusiastic, some wrong sentiments, or some irregularity of conduct. This greatly comforts their hearts, and gives them a violent hatred to the new religion. They pursue it bitterly, as a man pursues his enemy. They do not mourn over these faults of their fellow creatures, they use no means to reclaim them ; but frequently mention their faults with bitterness, and triumph. If any of this description are now hearing me, let me advise you my friends, seriously to pause and consider what you are about. Are you not opposing a work of God's in defence of your own false hopes ; have you any scriptural evidence that you have any better religion than this you are opposing : do you feel the exercise of it in your hearts, and do you manifest it in your lives ? Perhaps you are offended at some expressing an assurance of their gracious state, and think it nothing but pride and delusion. If you can live without assurance, is it not a strong argument that you are void of the fear of God ? Is it matter of offence to you, that those who are justified, adopted, and sanctified, should have assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost ?

This work opposes the vices of others, and therefore they cannot bear it. It sheds a glare of light upon their conscience that is intolerable. They were living secure and easy in sin: hoping they should have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst, and committed other open iniquities. 'The doctrine preached among this people, is so terrible: it represents sin as so great an evil, my conduct so very sinful, the anger of God so intolerable, hell so awful; that if it is true, I am undone for ever.' This stirs up the mind and sets it in search of false doctrines, of delusions, of blunders in professors, of hypocrites, of any thing that will undervalue the work, ease the conscience, and embolden the mind in sin. Let me ask such, is it worse to be repenting, forsaking sin, flying from the wrath to come, crying for mercy, hearing sermons, praying and singing praises to God; and even to spend whole days and nights at these exercises; than in debauchery, cursing and swearing, drinking and revelling, gaming and cheating, quarrelling and fighting, or even fiddling and dancing? If the messenger, death should be sent for you, which of these scenes would you rather be engaged in? From which would you rather step out of time and appear at the bar of a holy God? If the former, stop: you are not only opposing this work, but you are opposing the light of your own conscience, and fighting against your own souls. Whether these people be right, or no, you are certainly wrong; you are sinners not only condemned by the doctrine they preach, and which is found in sacred writ, but also by your own consciences. At least let these people alone: turn your attention to yourselves, and seek salvation in earnest, or you are undone forever.

5. Let us ministers, as well as others, honestly enquire into our own mistakes, our omissions of duty, and our errors in conduct. Let us realize the great danger of provoking the Lord to withdraw his divine influences, and leave us and our people in darkness. If in any places, or in any measure, he has forsaken us and disowned our labors, let us enquire with humble and sincere hearts, whether it be not our faults; and if it is, let us repent, confess, forsake and reform. Instead of giving ourselves up to despondency and discouraging complaints, let us in humble dependence on divine grace, exert all our powers to promote a clearer knowledge, and a more rational, scriptural, deep, solemn and abiding sense of true practical religion on our hearts.

Since this work began, I have heard much said of, and against opposers: but let us, who profess to be friends to it, take heed lest we ourselves make not the most successful opposition to this gracious and glorious work of God. If we slacken in the work, if we leave the altar and serve mammon, if we get to running after new notions, if we give ourselves up to despondences, if we are strenuous to defend every circumstance attending this work, as if essential to it; if we spend our time in censuring others, of biting and devouring one another, if we represent all as opposers of true religion, who are not pleased with every thing, and pronounce damnation upon them, we most effectually injure the cause ourselves. In my opinion, all the opposers on earth or hell will never stop the work or prevent its happy effects, if we do not contribute our part to the opposition.

Let us be united in christian love and affection, like a band of brothers all engaged in pursuit of one great object, the promotion of the kingdom of God's grace. Let us study to preserve unity in the faith, as much as possible: be of one mind and of one heart.

My opinion is, that the scheme of doctrines commonly called **THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE**. The scheme of doctrine that produced the reformation from the great apostacy, that was supported and defended by the reformers, that is found in the confessions of the reformed churches of Germany, of the United Netherlands, of Bohemia, of Scotland, of England, &c. that has produced every noted revival from the reformation to the present day, and which we have adopted at our licensure or ordination, is entitled to great respect. I do not pretend to justify every sentiment, much less every expression, of these first reformers; yet I will say, that every different scheme which has fallen under my notice, while I was capable of investigating them, has appeared to me deficient or self-inconsistent. This scheme has been examined by the ablest men, and has stood the test for hundreds of years, and I think will until the great burning day. There have been revivals where other doctrines have been mixed with these; but these have been taken into, and make an essential part of every successful scheme.

If I am rightly informed, when the presbyterians in England forsook this system, religion among them soon languished, and their particular churches sunk into contempt, and almost into nonexistence. In some of them the old system was revived, and the doctrines of grace again preached; on which these churches arose

almost from the dead and became flourishing societies. The established churches of England and Ireland, how did they lose the spirit of piety when these doctrines were relinquished ! But a few years ago, when a number of ministers revived the ancient system, the life and power of religion again appeared among them. Thus it has been...and thus I think it will be, whenever the experiment is tried.

In the beginning of the American revolution, what wisdom was there in the American councils, and in their determinations ! How deeply and wisely did they investigate the rights of men and the principles of government ! Was it because they were better and wiser men than ever existed before ? No : but because they knew that on the principles they then adopted, and the line of conduct they then pursued, depended their political salvation : that they were to live or die by these principles. The necessity of these circumstances make them wise and faithful. When this necessity was removed, independence established and peace obtained, they soon began to jar and clash ; one adopted one system and another another ; and the Americans did not appear to be wiser than other people. In a similar situation were the first reformers. By the principles of religion which they then adopted they were to die. They therefore labored thoroughly to examine every article, to try them by the written word, and take nothing upon trust. When this necessity was removed, men ran into various errors and inconsistencies ; and often do so still, to the great corruption of the truth, dishonor of religion and injury of the souls of men. But I think, whenever religion revives and flourishes, there is a recurrence to

first principles, and the ancient system of doctrine again comes into credit. I do not mean that we should be confined to ancient systems and not inquire and judge for ourselves. This we ought to do ; but do it with proper modesty, deliberation and diligence : and never try to distinguish ourselves by advancing new notions, poorly digested, and but half understood. Especially should innovations in doctrine be avoided, as much as possible in a time of revival ; for they naturally tend to check a revival, by turning the spirit of it into a spirit of disputation. They set the minds of men in motion to find out arguments for and against the new opinions, and thereby turn off the attention from the 'one thing needful, and destroy the life and power of godliness ; at least it destroys that mutual love and confidence that should unite the hearts of christians, and especially christian ministers.

My dear brethren, it is very probable that this is the last time I shall ever address you, in the character of a Moderator of any of your judicatures ; therefore indulge me a little longer in venting the affectionate feelings of my heart. I would acknowledge with sensibility, that you have so many years treated me with that respect which is due to a father in the church : and though I have been conscious of the weakness of a younger brother, I have felt, and do feel something of that affection for you, and anxious care for your happiness, credit and usefulness that becomes a father.

The evidence I have had, amidst the infirmities incident to human nature, of your faithfulness and integrity, especially in transacting the business of our ecclesiastical courts, has given me peculiar satisfaction. Go on with increasing faithfulness and wisdom. Through the most unmerited goodness of God, we have had some 'times of refreshment from the presence of the

Lord.' I congratulate you on this account, and call upon you to join in giving thanks and praise to a God of infinite love, that he has condescended in any measure to own and bless the labors of such unworthy creatures as we know ourselves to be. Let former instances of his goodness encourage your hearts to persevere in the way of your duty; and endeavor to go on with increasing diligence and faithfulness. In a little while I shall go hence, and the place which knows me now will know me no more: but the thought that when I am laid in the silent grave you will survive, and be laboring to promote the kingdom of God's grace and the salvation of precious souls, is a pleasing, comfortable thought to me under the decline of nature.

Endeavour to improve yourselves in knowledge as far as you can; and especially in the knowledge of the sacred scriptures and the human heart. This you should do not only for the benefit of others, that you may be master-builders, who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; but also for your own personal benefit: that you may know and do the will of God, that you may imbibe more and more of the christian temper, and be more fully cast into the gospel mould. The knowledge that ministers should search for, should be all practical, or subservient somehow to holy practice. The reformation of their own hearts and lives, and those of their fellow men, should be the great objects of all their studies and labors. Leave other things to other men: leave agriculture and the mechanic arts to farmers and mechanics: leave war and the government of nations to soldiers and politicians, and attend chiefly to the reformation of the principles and practices of men, and the salvation of their souls. Improve in knowledge, while you are capable of it, lest you should, as I have done,

dament the want of it, when it is too late. Do not let straited circumstances, or any other consideration, induce you to entertain your people with empty, loose, indigested harangues in your stated public addresses to them. Avoid this as far as you possibly can. It has been a great satisfaction to me, since the present revival, to find that my brethren have so generally avoided this method, that they were careful to fill their discourses with useful important matter. I rejoiced the more in this, because in times of revival the temptation to this method is very strong; and when ministers give way to it, they thereby sustain an injury which they scarcely recover all their days.

Endeavour as well and as fast as you can, in present circumstances, to train up a pious, sensible, prudent and learned ministry. You know my sentiments are not so rigid as some, about what is called a liberal education: yet I am fully persuaded of the utility and importance of learning; of much more learning than most of us are possessed of. None complain that this food is bitter, but those who never tasted it. Should the presbyterians adopt the same plan in this respect, that some other societies have done, and should it thereby become general, it would undoubtedly be a great injury, not only to our church, but to other churches also, to the general interest of christianity. Many preachers who neglect learning, and some who seem to despise it, and undervalue those who possess it, are themselves indebted to the learned for the advantages they enjoy. Had all been of their opinion, and acted on their principle, we and they should have been sitting together in heathen darkness this day.

If you shall at any time be evil spoken of, whether by professed friends or avowed foes, whether they be of the same or a different denomination; whether they be atheists, deists,

or christians, first enquire honestly, whether their charges against you are just or not. If just, receive the reproof as from a friend, and reform without delay. If unjust, never seek to be revenged, nor retaliate in kind, live the slander out of countenance, and think no more about it. Set your faces like a flint, and persevere in spite of every difficulty and discouragement in that great and truly honourable employment to which you are called.

Think but little of worldly dignity, and seek not to be called of men Rabbi. The true dignity of a gospel minister is diligence, faithfulness, meekness and love, a Christ like temper and conduct, and many seals to his ministry. It does not consist in fine horses, clothes, houses, furniture or founding titles. It does not consist in being skilled in the arts of war, in being great politicians or wise statesmen; but in the knowledge of the sacred scriptures, and skill to direct men to heaven and immortal glory. In a word, the true dignity of a gospel minister, is to be like the despised Nazarene.

Be ye faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life. In a little time you shall surmount every difficulty, you shall conquer every foe. Sin and all its terrible effects shall be for ever done away, all the weaknesses, the pains, the labors the toils, and the various temptations of life shall for ever cease—You shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, and spend a happy and glorious eternity in the full fruition of God. In those regions of perfect purity and peace; I hope and expect to find an humble seat among you, fit for one who is less than the least of all saints; and spend an eternity in celebrating the wonders of redeeming love, and adoring all the perfections of the Deity. I would now collect all the powers of my soul, and bid you an affectionate farewell! Finally, my brethren, farewell!

THE END.