

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY
AND
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

OCTOBER, 1832.

ART. I.—SPRAGUE ON REVIVALS.

Lectures on Revivals of Religion, by Wm. B. Sprague, D.D., Pastor of the 2d Presbyterian Church, Albany: with an Introductory Essay by Leonard Woods, D.D., also an Appendix, consisting of Letters from the Rev. Drs. Alexander, Wayland, Dana, Miller, Hyde, Hawes, McDowell, Porter, Payson, Proudfit, Neill, Middledollar, Davis, Lord, Humphrey, Day, Green, Waddell, Griffin, and the Rev. C. P. M'Ilvaine.—Webster & Skinner, Albany, 1832.

“DRAW not nigh hither,—put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” is the warning which this momentous subject speaks to all who would approach it! The posture which befits us, is that of Elijah on Horeb, with our faces wrapped in our mantles! Indeed, it would seem as if the Eternal Spirit himself were needed still, as in the “Acts of the Apostles,” to inspire the historians of his divine operations, in order to shun the stain of human hands, and the fatal consequences of human error, at the seat of life.

It is, no doubt, an impression of holy awe and conscious unfitness for the important work, that has deprived the world of a connected history of Revivals of Religion, in our age,
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and especially in our own country. This is deeply to be regretted, especially in reference to the American churches, which it has pleased God, in successive periods, for more than a century, to make the theatre of the most extended and glorious revivals that the world has ever witnessed. Such a history, at all times important, has become peculiarly proper, and is even most urgently demanded at the present crisis. Whether we consider the greatness of the work of the Spirit in our own land, or the peculiar and perilous abuses which have in latter years attended that work, silence on these topics has ceased to be a virtue. We hail, therefore, the appearance of Dr. Sprague's Lectures on Revivals of Religion, &c. &c., as most timely and auspicious. Nothing could have been more seasonable; and, in view of the difficulty and greatness of the subject, it is as excellent as it is seasonable. If, as has been intimated, the worthy author has published *too much* for so young a man, yet taking into the account the plan and execution of the *entire* work, he would have written *too little* for the Church, for the world, for posterity, and for his injured Lord, if he had withheld this book from the public. We esteem it one of the most important and useful productions of the American press for the present century.

There is a moral beauty and "meekness of wisdom" in the spirit and manner in which this book is gotten up. The enlightened author, feeling the solemnity of the themes he is discussing, and the weighty responsibility of his work, modestly calls in the superior experience and concurrent testimony of his fathers and brethren around him. A series of letters, written at his request, and in reply to his inquiries, is subjoined to the volume in the form of an Appendix. He thus speaks of them in the preface:

"In the appendix the reader will find a series of letters on the same subject, from a number of the most distinguished clergymen of our country, and from six different religious denominations. The object in requesting these Letters has been twofold. First, to obtain authentic history of our revivals, in which unhappily we have hitherto been greatly deficient; and, second, to ascertain the manner in which revivals have been conducted by men whose wisdom, experience, and standing in the Church must at least entitle their opinion to great consideration." "He allows himself to hope that whatever the decision of the public may be in respect to the Lectures, they will find in the Letters which follow, much authen-

tic and important information; and he doubts not that the testimony on this momentous subject of such a representation from our American Church, will not only be gratefully received, but considerately and earnestly pondered.”—p. 6.

For force of truth, fearlessly, yet wisely expressed,—for uniformity of opinion, amidst variety of experience and of circumstances,—for concurrence, without collusion, on the part of a great number (20) of distinguished gentlemen, belonging to six different denominations, and from nearly every state of the original American Union, on the most difficult and important of all subjects—this series of Letters is almost without a parallel. We have read them with unmingled satisfaction. They illustrate with peculiar beauty the *essential* unity of the Christian church. They constitute a galaxy of truth on the “ministration of the Spirit.” They show that there is recovering power, and even healthful life in the midst of us, notwithstanding all the false doctrines and dangerous innovations of the present critical conjuncture. They give augmented hopes of the purity, the combined action, the enlarged influence, and continual Revival of the American Church.

In the following extracts we have an extended definition by the author, of a “*Revival of Religion.*”

“I proceed to the main design of the discourse, which is to exhibit the nature of a revival of religion. Religion consists in a conformity of heart and life to the will of God. It consists in a principle of obedience implanted in the soul, and in the operation of that principle in the conduct. Religion is substantially the same in all worlds; though the religion of a sinner is modified, in some respects, by his peculiar character and condition. In common with the religion of the angels, it consists in love to God—to his law, to his government, to his service; but in distinction from that, it consists in repentance of sin; faith in the merits of a crucified Saviour; resignation under trials; opposition to spiritual enemies. Moreover, religion in the angels is an inherent principle; it begins with their existence; but in the human heart it is something superinduced by the operation of the spirit of God.”

“Now, if such be the nature of *religion*, you will readily perceive in what consists a *revival* of religion. It is a revival of scriptural knowledge; of vital piety; of practical obedience. The term *revival of religion* has sometimes been objected to, on the ground that the revival of any thing supposes its previous existence;

whereas in the renovation of sinners, there is principle implanted which is entirely new. But though the fact implied in this objection is admitted, the objection itself has no force; because the term is intended to be applied in a general sense, to denote the improved religious state of a congregation, or of some other community; and it is moreover applicable in a strict sense, to the condition of Christians, who, at such a season, are in a greater or less degree revived; and whose increased zeal is usually rendered instrumental of the conversion of sinners. Wherever, then, you see religion rising up from a state of comparative depression to a tone of increased vigour and strength; wherever you see professing Christians becoming more faithful to their obligations, and behold the strength of the Church increased by fresh accessions of piety (piety? numbers,) from the world; there is a state of things which you need not hesitate to denominate a revival of religion."—Pp. 6, 7, 8.

The Christian religion (which is the only religion of a sinner) depends for its existence and extension in the world on the continued interposition of God.

Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus,
Inciderit,

was a canon-law of the ancient tragic Muse who used "The Gods" to grace the stage and to develop the plot of the drama. But the religion, like the being of a creature is constantly dependent upon God, not only for its origin, but for its continued existence in the soul, at every step. And surely nothing is more supremely worthy of the interposition of a God, than the renovation and eternal redemption of a ruined world! In the economy of redemption the Spirit of God is the great official Agent in carrying forward the religion of Christ in the world. The *work* of the Spirit is no less necessary than the death of Christ. Indeed it is only the continued divine application of the merits of that death. *The gift* of the spirit is the comprehensive blessing of Christianity; and in the word of God, it is a term convertible with "*all good things.*"*

"In the esteem of our Lord, it was more than a compensation to his disciples for the loss of his bodily presence; so much superior to it, that he tells them, it was expedient he should leave them, in order to make way for it: 'If I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you. I have many

* Compare Matthew vii. 11, with Luke xi. 13.

things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth. He will convince the world of sin; of righteousness, and of judgment.' Nor is there any pretence for alleging, that this communication was confined to miraculous gifts, since it is asserted to be that Spirit which should abide in them forever, and by which the Church should be distinguished from the world."* In a word this gift is the sum of eternal life to men—the regeneration—the sanctification and eternal salvation of their souls.

But religion in the soul (not necessarily, yet) through the remaining evils of the Christian's heart and the dangers of his way is exposed to frequent and great decays. At such seasons, whether produced by some sudden temptation, or, (as is more common) by a gradual and unperceived declension, the Author of life, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and to a great extent, abandons the heart. Darkness then fills the deserted soul, and grace threatens to expire under the weight of reviving corruption.

Now, when the "Good Spirit" returns, as he did to the repenting king of Israel, to wash away anew the *stain* of sin and forgive its *guilt*; to restore the lost favour of God with the high and holy joys of his salvation; and to renovate the languishing graces of the heart, by the communication of new life, the Christian is most properly said to be *revived*. "He revives as the corn; and grows as the vine."

But again, man is eminently a *social* being. The religion of Christ finds him wearing such a nature, and is adapted to it with infinite tenderness and wisdom. The church itself, which is the depositary of this religion on earth, is constituted by God, a social institution. While God insulates every creature, in the dispensation of his law, of his providence, and of his Spirit now, (as he will in the final judgment,) yet He also deals with each one as a member of society; and each one carries this relation with him into the Church of God. When a number of persons are united in a Church, their personal decays and revival, exert respectively a direct influence upon those around them; and the combined result forms their religious state *as a society*. Now if we look abroad upon the churches, is it not a deplorable fact that the great body of them is in a state (we allude entirely to their spiritual history) of religious declension?

* Robert Hall.

Amidst many churches we see only an occasional church that is really awake: and so in any particular church; as a *mass* they decay—while here and there only an individual may be revived and truly awake to the great things of eternity and God. As a body “they slumber and sleep.” And when any is awakened, it is separately, irregularly, partially; not all at once. Now it is quite apparent that such a church cannot flourish or be useful in any appropriate measure. Its action is impaired. It is an irregular undisciplined force, in which there *is no* combined and effective action. Its intercession is not felt in heaven; nor its goodly influence on earth. Sinners are not converted unto God. His worship is neglected—his cause dishonoured; and the Spirit of God leaves them, as he went up of old with his awful train from the violated temple to the mountain-top.*

But when the mourning people, in view of these things, humble themselves before God, having put away all their abominations, and, *as a people* “call out of the depths” upon the name of the Lord; and when an injured, absent God, returns to renovate with the graces of his Holy Spirit, the guilty decays of his people; when the Church renews her youth and beauty in the baptism of her Lord, and salvation is poured from on high, then may their state be fitly called “life from the dead.” It is the divine influence upon *the mass*—the popular and social application of religion. It is the Spirit of God awakening, *at the same time*, to holy love, and harmonious action, the whole body of Christians in a particular place. It is not of *professors* of religion merely that we speak; for the voice of the archangel and the trump of God alone, will awaken some of these. But when the real spiritual Church among a people experience this deep and simultaneous renovation, it is most properly styled a
REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

We have already remarked, that the Church of God is the depositary of the religion of Christ on earth. She has the Gospel in trust for the world. She is the seat of God below; a missionary organization; a magazine of means. “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and from her the deliverer come.” When the people of God are faithful to this great trust; when they truly possess and properly display the spirit of their Master, they are God’s appointed and adapted instruments

* Ezek. x. 23.

for spreading the salvation of Christ. Now the appropriate character and influence of a Christian church, are no where so strongly seen and exercised, as in a *Revival of Religion*. Then the Church arises and shines, her light having come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon her. Then she *puts on her strength*, to do her Master service, and her *beautiful garments* to show forth his praise! Such a people are called "vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work;" "and a people made ready prepared for the Lord." It is a great general law in the divine economy of means, that such a people shall be abundantly blessed in turning souls to God. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*" "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Hence, as an inseparable concomitant of a Revival of Religion among a people, is *the simultaneous conviction and conversion of many sinners*. It is thus that the Infinite Spirit, in divine sovereignty, is pleased to carry on his work. This the Bible explicitly declares, and it is a fact confirmed by all experience. We find the following just delineation of this feature of the subject in the first Lecture:

"Another prominent feature in the state of things which I am describing, is *the alarm and conviction of those who have hitherto been careless*. Sometimes the change in this respect is very gradual; and for a considerable time nothing more can be said than that there is a more listening ear, and a more serious aspect, than usual, under the preaching of the word; and this increased attention is gradually matured into deep solemnity and pungent conviction. In other cases, the reigning lethargy is suddenly broken up, as if there had come a thunderbolt from eternity, and multitudes are heard simultaneously inquiring what they shall do to be saved. There are others who are partially awakened; whose attention is in some measure excited, but not enough to prompt to any decided and vigorous effort."

"It also belongs essentially to a revival of religion, that there are those, from time to time, *who are indulging a hope that they are reconciled to God, and are born of the Spirit*. "In some cases the change of feeling is exceedingly gradual,* insomuch that the

* The meaning of course is, that the *discovery* of this change is gradual. The change itself is *instantaneous*.

individual, though he is sensible of having experienced a change within a given period, is yet utterly unable to refer it to any particular time. Sometimes the soul suddenly emerges from darkness into light, and perceives a mighty change in its exercises, almost in the twinkling of an eye," &c. &c. "The church receives a fresh and often a rich accession both to her numbers and her strength; an accession which, in some cases, raises her from the dust, and causes her to look forth in health and beauty."—pp. 9—13.

We cannot forbear here to introduce the very just, and inimitably beautiful description of a revival of religion, found in the Rev. Dr. Alexander's letter: "But I come now to speak of genuine revivals, where the gospel is preached in its purity, and where the people have been well instructed in the doctrines of Christianity. In a revival, it makes the greatest difference in the world, whether the people have been carefully taught by catechizing, and where they are ignorant of the truths of the Bible. In some cases, revivals are so remarkably pure, that nothing occurs with which any pious man can find fault. There is not only no wildness and extravagance, but very little strong commotion of the animal feelings. The word of God distils upon the mind like the gentle rain, and the Holy Spirit comes down like the dew, diffusing a blessed influence on all around. Such a revival affords the most beautiful sight ever seen upon earth. Its aspect gives us a lively idea of what will be the general state of things *in the latter day glory*, and some faint image of the heavenly state. The impressions on the minds of the people in such a work, are the exact counterpart of the truth; just as the impression on the wax corresponds to the seal. In such revivals there is great solemnity and silence. The convictions of sin are deep and humbling: the justice of God in the condemnation of the sinner is felt and acknowledged; every other refuge but Christ is abandoned; the heart at first is made to feel its own impenetrable hardness; but, when least expected, it dissolves under a grateful sense of God's goodness, and Christ's love; light breaks in upon the soul either by a gradual dawning, or by a sudden flash; Christ is revealed through the Gospel, and a firm, and often a joyful confidence of salvation through Him is produced; a benevolent, forgiving, meek, humble, and contrite spirit predominates; the love of God is shed abroad; and with some, joy

unspeakable and full of glory, fills the soul. A spirit of devotion is enkindled. The word of God becomes exceedingly precious. Prayer is the exercise in which the soul seems to be in its proper element, because, by it God is approached, and his presence felt, and beauty seen; and the new-born soul lives by breathing after the knowledge of God, after communion with God, and after conformity to his will. Now also springs up in the soul an inextinguishable desire to promote the glory of God, and to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth, and by that means to the possession of eternal life. The sincere language of the heart is, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" That God may send upon his Church many such revivals, is my daily prayer; and many such have been experienced in our own country, and, I trust, are still going forward in our churches."

Such is this glorious and blessed work of the Spirit of God.* No language can justly celebrate its excellency. Its influence upon a languishing people is like that of the spring, when it renews the face of nature, after the decay of a long and dreary winter. "Happy is that people that is in such a case. Happy are her men: happy are her servants!" Well may they take down from the willows, their neglected harps, and sing the joyful song of Zion. "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a goodly smell."

Copiousness is also a characteristic of a revival of religion. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him," through whose intercession, and for whose sake the Church receives this greatest of gifts. Its peaceful blessings are for abundance resembled unto a river. "I will extend peace unto her as a river." The influence of the Spirit is compared to showers which are poured out from on high to water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; and to the lucid, innumerable dew-drops which are born from the womb of the morning. And well does such amplitude accord with the amazing value of the soul—with the immense deso-

* An extraordinary "divine influence prevailing through a whole congregation at the same time." (App. 8th letter.)

lations of sin in this ruined world—with the vastness and bounty of the plan of redemption—and with the whole nature of the God of love.

This feature is characteristic, especially of gospel-times, which are comprehensibly called “the ministration of the spirit.” The promise made in Joel, (ii. 28–32.) is expressly referred to by Peter, (Acts, ii. 16–22.) as accomplished in the great outpouring of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were added to the Lord in one day. “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, that *I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: and whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” This was the first, the great model-revival of religion, in the Gospel-Church. It began a work which shall never end, until the world is converted to God. *Copiousness*, next to divine interposition and holiness, is its most striking trait. And He, with whom is the residue of the spirit, is as ready now as He was then, to grant “great things” to his people. The people that wait on him, like Elijah on the mountain-top, shall soon hear “the sound of abundance of rain.” (1 Kings, xviii. 41–46. and James, v. 15–20.)

One of the most affecting views which can possibly be taken of the state of the world, is the very *slow progress* which our beneficent religion has thus far made towards the recovery of the entire race. The cause of this most distressing fact, it is not here the place to seek after. But the truth is undoubted; and the misery and ruin which have resulted from it are wholly unimaginal. Oh, the innumerable millions that have perished for lack of its saving knowledge! Oh, the successive generations it might have saved from death; the worlds of iniquity it might have covered!

Now revivals of religion *accelerate* the work of converting the world. They mercifully hasten the flight of the Gospel. They bring men in *masses*, and with urgent speed, to the cross of Christ. They seem to say, it is not *required* that you come to Christ in slow succession, one by one: henceforth the Gospel shall outrun the grave: the work of the Lord need not linger, nor his, forever, be a *little flock*. A revival of religion is a limited but lovely exhibition of that age, (and a divine preparative for its coming) when “*a*

nation shall be born in a day." Under this benign and heavenly influence, all things are quickened with unwonted life. The means of grace receive new impulse from on high: God's servants, actuated by an unearthly spirit, "do exploits in the high places of the field." Religion swells in the eyes of men, into the greatness and duration of eternity; sinners, in great numbers, are redeemed from death; and the God of heaven seems, for the time, about to return and possess once more his revolted world.

While speaking of this feature of the subject, it may not be amiss here to remark, that there is also this peculiar excellence in a revival of religion. It gathers up and brings to rapid issue, the immature and indeterminate impressions made upon the minds of men, by the preaching of the Gospel, during, perhaps, a series of years. Besides the *recently* arrested sinners, there is commonly found among a people a number of *chronic* cases (if such an expression be allowed) of serious, but not converted persons, who need the production of a *crisis* in their relation to the Holy Spirit. This, a revival of religion, effectually does. "It burns like an oven" on the lingering soul; it shakes like an earthquake, into new alarms, the conscience that has been resisting and losing its impressions. In a word, its tendency is to force every mind to the *decision*, to embrace, or abandon the Saviour. The same train of thought will apply with great force to cases of backsliding and apostacy. It is of the nature of a revival to hasten and force a final decision. It reclaims or seals them; and indeed all men, good and bad, *live very fast at such a time.*

It is an overwhelming fact, in connexion with this topic, that *God also accelerates the recovery of the world from the reign of sin, by the rapid and simultaneous removal of wicked men.* What an appalling illustration is Jehovah now giving of this great truth, in the view of all nations! The eye of every living man has been lately directed to the heavens in 'fearful looking' for death! And the plague yet spreads, and we cannot doubt will still spread, until the God of heaven shall have *swept* the earth; and by the accelerated conversion, or hastened destruction of men, brought on that day when all shall know Him; and "none be left, to molest or make afraid in all the earth!"

The following interesting extracts from the 9th Lecture on "Results of Revivals," are not merely excellent in them-

selves, but exhibit, in a somewhat connected view, some of the thoughts upon which we have been dwelling:

“Revivals tend towards the complete moral renovation of the world, *by enlarging the moral resources, and quickening and directing the moral energies of the Church.*”

“The Church is much indebted to revivals for the increase both of her numbers and her graces. Observe this influence as it is often exerted in individual cases, and on the spiritual interests of particular communities of Christians. It were no difficult matter to find many instances which have occurred in these latter years, in which hundreds, during a single revival, have hopefully become the subjects of renewing grace.” “And in many of these cases, a church which before had scarcely an existence, has not only been saved from utter extinction, but has been enlarged by great accessions to its numbers and influence.” “And if the influence of a revival be so great and good as it respects particular instances and individual churches, what shall we say of the influence of all the revivals which take place during a single year; much more of all which have hitherto existed, as well as those which are hereafter to exist, before the world shall be filled with the glory of the Highest?”

“Again: Revivals *increase the efficiency of the Christian ministry*, both by increasing the qualifications of those who are engaged in it, and by bringing others to give themselves to the work.” “It has often been remarked that ministers, after having passed through a revival, have preached, and prayed, and done their whole work with far more earnestness and effect than before; and they themselves have not unfrequently acknowledged that what they have gained, during such a season, has been worth more to them than the study of years. But revivals contribute also to increase the number of ministers. They are the means of introducing many young men of talent and promise into the kingdom of Christ; not a small part of whom consecrate themselves to Him in the ministry of reconciliation.” “And as the cause of revivals advances in coming years, we cannot doubt that there will be a constantly increasing number directing their eyes towards the sacred office, until the Saviour’s command shall actually be obeyed to preach the Gospel to every creature.”

“Revivals also *lend an important influence to the support of our benevolent institutions*. It is by means of these especially that the Gospel is to be sent abroad to the ends of the earth; and the kingdom of Christ every where to be established.” “Now, this moral machinery, so far as our own country, at least, is concerned, is evidently to be sustained and increased chiefly through the influence of revivals. Each individual who is converted to

God is a new labourer in this glorious cause; and the multitudes who already are, or hereafter will be, born into the kingdom, must bring to it an amount of influence of which we can form no adequate conception. Besides, it is the tendency of revivals to make those who are already Christians to address themselves with more vigour and efficiency to their work."

"There is yet another way in which revivals increase the moral energy of the Church. I mean *by cherishing a spirit of prayer for the success of the Gospel.*" "No doubt the prayers of Christians for the general diffusion of the Gospel, which are drawn forth by revivals, have much to do instrumentally in setting in motion, and keeping in motion the great moral machinery of the age. And the prayers of the Church, which her revivals will secure, will have much, very much to do, in carrying forward the triumph of the Gospel, until the Church shall be able to recognize the whole world as her habitation; and to record that the work that was given her to do, has been accomplished. Pp. 269—278.

The testimony which revivals bear to the being of God, and the truth of Christianity, is most imposing and delightful. Like the evidence from prophecy, it is living and accumulating. "The lighting down of God's arm" is seen, and his sovereign power acknowledged, in those transforming and permanent effects which could have been produced by no being but a *God*. Changes the most sudden and entire, on a great number of persons, attributed by themselves to God alone, to the God of the Bible; such as every human cause had failed to effect; such as are most unlikely, most lovely, and most needed; such as the Bible requires, and the Saviour promises—are the daily fruits of genuine revivals, and bear a resistless testimony to the being of God, and the truth of Christianity.

It often occurs too, at such a time, in the infinite goodness of God, that scoffers and infidels are themselves led captive at the chariot of Christ, and grace the victories of truth by being shown "in their right minds," holding, perhaps, "preaching the faith which they once destroyed." But, however that may be, a revival of religion takes evil men *at a disadvantage*. It is to them a new and unknown agency. Its ways are *above* their ways, as the heavens are above the earth. While they are meditating its resistance in *other* minds, it is in the midst of *them*, and upon them. "It cometh not with observation." It outstrips their expedients. It is from

above. They find no true footing to fight against it. It altogether confounds them. Perhaps they may refuse to *acknowledge* its real nature, but they cannot deny it; they cannot account for it, except by admitting its divine origin. The description given by Dr. Porter, of Farmington, (Letter 8th) of the impressive effect of a revival of religion, experienced there in the year 1821, affords a most apposite illustration of the above remarks. "The state of feeling which at this time pervaded the town, was interesting beyond description. There was no commotion, *but a stillness in our very streets*, a serenity in the aspect of the pious, and a solemnity apparent in almost all, which forcibly impressed us with the conviction, that in very deed, *God was in this place.*" App. p. 72.

We had wished to dwell somewhat at large on the transcendent glory which genuine revivals of religion give to God, in view of the value of each soul; and of the unnumbered millions already reclaimed, or to be reclaimed by them; and thus, of the immeasurable happiness resulting from them; and still more, of the amazing exhibition of the divine glory, made in the production of *holy beings*, out of such a mass of loathsome pollution and spiritual death. All this is the result of the work of the Spirit, applying the death of Christ; and the work of the Spirit is by eminence seen in a revival of religion. The last Lecture in the series, "On Results of Revivals," will be read with interest. We have not space to extract from it, nor to dwell on this topic. In connexion, however, with it, we subjoin, that God glorifies himself exceedingly, in a revival of religion, by the deep and diffusive impressions which are then made on the minds of impenitent men. The chief amount of impression made in a revival, will never be known in this world. It belongs to the *secret history* of men, and to the disclosures of the last day. But while we know not, God's Holy Spirit goes down into every heart, except such as have been sealed for perdition. Into those deep and secret recesses, where no eye but His can ever penetrate, he pours the light of day. He warns, rebukes, exhorts, invites. Thus, a distinct dispensation of the Spirit may be said to be granted to every man; and every one under His influence is left without excuse.* Thus God

* The same remark is true, we cannot doubt, of every Gospel hearer; but more emphatically and intensely so in a revival of religion.

will glorify his grace, and justice too, even on the vessels of wrath fitting for destruction. These traces of the finger of God on the soul, though forgotten now, will be remembered in eternity; they will revive in the trembling conscience at the bar of God; and even anticipate the sentence of the Judge, in the power and publicity of self-condemnation.

Two leading and most important subjects remain, to which we wish, in this review, to invite the attention of our readers. The former of these is the *department of means*, in the promotion of revivals of religion. This subject is discussed at large in the 5th Lecture:

“In a preceding discourse, we have contemplated the agency of *God* in a revival: in the present, we are to contemplate the agency of man.” “These means may be considered as of two kinds: those which are expressly prescribed by God, and those which are adopted by men, professedly in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel.

“In respect to the former, viz. *the instituted means of grace*, we must suppose that they are fitted to accomplish their end in the best possible manner. He who devised them, made the mind, and is perfectly acquainted with all its moral disorders, and knows by what means it can be best approached, and what kind of instrumentality is most in accordance with its constitution. Unquestionably, then, in all our efforts to cure the disorders of the mind, or what is the same thing, to produce or promote a revival of religion, we are to depend chiefly on the means which God himself has appointed; and we are to expect the greatest and best effect from them, when they are used in their greatest simplicity.

“But God has not limited his people in their efforts to advance his cause, to what may properly be divine institutions. He permits them to adopt means to a certain extent *of their own devising*, though in exercising this liberty, they are to take heed that they depart not at all from the spirit of the Gospel.

“What then are some of the *general characteristics* of those measures which the Bible authorises, in connexion with a revival of religion? The true answer to this question may not only enable us to distinguish between right and wrong measures, of man’s devising, but also to decide when the instituted means of grace are, or are not, used in a scriptural manner.

“All the means which God’s word authorizes, are characterized by *seriousness, order, simplicity*; and by this I mean the opposite of all parade and ostentation. Closely connected with the preceding, is *honesty*; by which I mean the opposite of all worldly artifice.

“The last general characteristic which I shall notice, of the means which God’s word authorizes for promoting a revival, is *affection.*”

And there might most appropriately have been added, an entire dependence upon God, for the success of means.

After considering, with much propriety, these several *characteristics* of the means authorized by the word of God, to be used in connexion with a revival of religion, the author proceeds to examine the *means themselves*, presenting indiscriminately, those which are of divine institution, and those which are not. He enumerates them in the following order. *The faithful preaching of God’s word ; private and social prayer ; conversation ; Sabbath-school and Bible-class instruction ;* (rather vague;) *the faithful discharge of parental duty, and an exercise designed particularly for awakened sinners.* For this exercise, he proposes a sort of intermediate plan between “*inquiry meetings,*” and “*anxious seats,*” which is as follows :

“At the close of a public service, in which God’s truth has been exhibited and enforced, let those who have been impressed by it, and who wish to have their impressions deepened, and to be instructed in reference to their duty and salvation, be requested to remain after the rest of the assembly have retired. And then, let the minister, or some other competent person, address them earnestly and affectionately—” &c. &c.

He subjoins in a note the following explanation :

“From the experience I have had on this subject, I am inclined to think that this mode of treating inquirers is to be preferred to that which has been common, and which I have myself formerly adopted, of hold a meeting of a *more public nature* for the express purpose of inquiry. It is no doubt of great importance that an opportunity of inquiry should be given ; but the more private, other things being equal, the better.”

(*Quere.*—In ordinary cases, will this really be a *more private*, or *as private*, a meeting as the other.)

This lecture throughout is good ; some parts of it are superlatively good. The nature of such a review, however, does not admit of enlarged extracts, and no man will do justice to the great subject, the book, or himself, who, if he can, does not read the *entire work*. We must content ourselves here with giving to the reader, *par morceaux*.

On the first and second particulars, in the enumeration of means, we find the following interesting paragraphs in the Appendix:

In the able and excellent letter of Rev. Dr. Griffin, President of Williams College, viz: "These are the eight revivals which the pity of heaven has granted to this College in twenty-six years, five of which, including two of less extent, have appeared in seven years.

"The means employed in these revivals have been but two, the clear presentation of divine truth, and prayer: nothing to work upon the passions but sober, solemn truth, presented, as far as possible, in its most interesting attitudes, and closely applied to the conscience.

"Sinners have been constantly urged to immediate repentance, and every excuse has been taken away. At the same time we have not denied or concealed their dependence for the sake of convincing them of their obligations. On the contrary, we have esteemed it vital to urge that dependence in order to drive them from all reliance on their own strength, and make them die to every hope from themselves. All that you can possibly gain by flattering their independence, is to extort a confession of their *obligations*; for, as to matter of fact, they *will not* submit until they are made willing in the day of God's power."

To the two primary means mentioned by Dr. Griffin the Rev. Dr. Wayland, in his judicious letter, adds the following very important one: "*On the part of the church, putting away all known sin.*" Page 11, App.

We cannot here forbear to introduce an extract from Edwards' great work on Revivals, in which he mentions "*abounding in deeds of charity,*" as a mean, under God, of promoting a revival of religion among a people. We need hardly say that nothing was farther from the author's intention than to attribute any *merit*, or *intrinsic efficacy*, to the right discharge of this, or any other duty in doing good, but he names it as one of the means which God is accustomed greatly to bless.

"If God's people in this land were once brought to abound in such deeds of love, as much as in praying, hearing, singing, and religious meetings and conference, it would be a most blessed omen: there is nothing would have a greater tendency to bring the God of love down from heaven to the earth: so amiable would be the sight, in the eyes of our loving and exalted Redeemer, that it would soon, as it were, fetch Him down from his throne in hea-

ven, to set up his tabernacle with men on the earth, and dwell with them. I do not remember ever to have read of any remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, that continued any long time, but what was attended with an abounding in this duty. So we know it was with that great effusion of the Spirit that began at Jerusalem in the Apostles' days; and so, in the late remarkable revival of religion in Saxony, which began by the labours of the famous Professor Franek, and has now been carried on for above thirty years, and has spread its happy influence into many parts of the world: it was begun, and has been carried on, by a wonderful practice of this duty. And the remarkable blessing that God has given Mr. Whitfield, and the great success with which he has crowned him, may well be thought to be very much owing to his laying out himself so abundantly in charitable designs. And it is foretold that God's people shall abound in this duty, in the time of the great outpouring of the Spirit that shall be in the latter days.—Isaiah xxxii. 5–8. ‘The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the church said to be bountiful. But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.’—Vol. iii, p. 348–9.

We might go on to multiply quotations from the Lectures themselves, and from almost every page of the excellent Letters; but those given above may suffice as specimens of the views of the work on this important topic. We fully approve them, and heartily rejoice in their peculiar fitness to do good at this time.

The use of means, it would appear, when stripped of false philosophy, is to the Christian a very simple and intelligible subject. They are of divine appointment; they must be used; without them there is no blessing, and their proper use, therefore, is of infinite moment; yet, they are nothing without God. The impenitent sinner abuses the means, because he is a *sinner*, having not “a true heart” and a spiritual mind to discover their proper nature, uses, and ends; and so, we fear, it is also with many of the professed friends of God. It is because they are *not taught of God*, that they so sadly pervert them; either by a *fatalism*, which is prone to neglect means, or a daring and profane presumption, which *virtually* expels God's influence, and finds in the means and in the sinner *power* enough to do all the work; or which calls in God's Spirit only, to *stir up* in the reluctant sinner, that reposing competency which he is asserted to possess, in order to do, unaided, all his duty. These two extremes are actually, and even extensively found in the Church at this day.

They mutually produce and augment each other; and they tend to the same fatal issue of dishonouring God, and of ruining the souls of men. While each claims to be right, as the opposite of the other; both are wrong, and the truth lies between them. But we leave this subject to abler hands, while we proceed briefly to notice a single other topic, expressed in part in the heading of the 8th Lecture, viz. "*The evils to be avoided in connexion with a Revival of Religion;*" or the *Abuses of this glorious work of God.*

The Rev. Dr. Miller thus begins his impressive letter on this subject, with the remarkable words of Baxter. "The pious and devoted Mr. Baxter somewhere remarks, '*The word of God is divine, but our mode of dispensing it is human: and there is scarce any thing we have the handling of, but we leave on it the prints of our fingers.*'" The justness of this remark we shall probably all acknowledge; and although the contemplation of the fact which it expresses, ought by no means either to discourage the Christian, or lead him to depreciate the real importance of human instrumentality, in extending and building up the Church, it ought to lead us all to cease from man, as an ultimate guide in divine things." And where do we see so much of the *stain of human hands* as in revivals of religion! Truly, it is wonderful that the Eternal Spirit will dwell for a moment in such hearts as ours; or endure the torture of human agency in the promotion of his blessed work! Now, in proportion to the glory which redounds to God, and the immense good done in the world by genuine revivals of religion, is the nameless evil of abusing so rich a boon. If revivals bear such a testimony to the being of God and the truth of Christianity, if they so copiously apply the blood of Christ, and hasten the conversion of the world, if, in a word, without their diffusive and divine influence the race never will be restored to the love of God, how fearful, how guilty is it to abuse them!

It has been most justly remarked, that as Satan has nothing so much to dread as a revival of religion, so there is nothing against which his subtlety, malignity, and power of evil, are so steadily directed: and as it is the greatest blessing in the world, so its abuse is the greatest evil.

"If revivals of religion are so exceedingly important to the Church, is it to be wondered at, if the enemy of God and man

should assume the disguise of an angel of light, and should audaciously mimic or counterfeit God's glorious work to answer his own evil purposes?

"I can easily conceive of at least four objects to be answered by him in making the attempt, viz: To draw off the attention of Christians from a work in which he is very actively engaged, at the present day, that of suppressing God's truth.

"To induce a presumptuous reliance on a self-determining will and power to be all, and to do all, that God requires; thus leading men to question their dependence on the Holy Spirit, to usurp his office, eventually, to deny his work and influence.

"To seduce into all manner of extravagance, that the whole work of revivals may thereby be brought into disrepute.

"And to open a door for the introduction of all manner of scepticism."—See *Dr. Milledoler's letter, in Appendix.*

In all ages of the Church, the work of the Spirit has been exposed to the evils of abused human agency; and the history of revivals in the world, from the days of the Corinthian disorders down to the present times, gives a melancholy picture of what God's cause has in this form endured from man. But our own age is, above all others, perhaps, prone to the production of the evils of which we speak. We cheerfully concede to it a peculiar fertility, in qualities which if well directed, are eminently fitted to adorn our nature, and extend our holy religion. But, at the same time, it is an age rife in the spirit of change and innovation; in impatience of restraint, pride of opinion, and love of novelty; in intense excitement, social combination, licentious liberty, and mighty action; in a spirit, which if not sanctified and ordered by the God of all grace, will go on to innovate his word, his worship, and work, and finally, bring in upon the Church an atheistic, self-sufficient mechanism, like the infidel system of cause and effect in the natural world.

The following solemn and just language is held by the Rev. Drs. Davis and Dana, in their respective letters.

"We live in an age of peculiar character, marked by a restless spirit of bold and daring enterprize, and an eagerness for discovery and invention, which is reckless of consequences. There is a prevailing and strong propensity to adopt what is new, because it is new; to stop our ears to the voice of experience and the dictates of common sense, and to turn aside from the *good old paths* in which our fathers have walked. This spirit affects all our most important concerns. Even religion itself is not exempt from its

influence. Indeed, no one of our interests is so much endangered by it."—Appendix, pp. 108, 109.

"Are there not certain characteristics of the age, which threaten in a greater or less degree, the purity of religion?"

"This is an age of *display*. Almost every thing new pushes itself into notice, courts the public gaze, and claims the public admiration. But religion, genuine religion, is modest, unobtrusive, and humble. It seeks not public applause. It is content with the notice and approbation of God. These characteristics constitute not only its beauty, but in some measure, its very essence. A vain ambitious popularity-seeking Christian is almost as great a solecism as a profane, or prayerless Christian. Should this spirit once enter our churches, it will sadly mar the beauty, and consume the very vitals of their religion."—App. pp. 20, 21.

These qualities which distinguish our *age*, still more eminently characterize our own *country*. Our character and circumstances give to them a special intensity; and when we add to this, that our land has been made the selected theatre of God's most extraordinary work of grace, the subject assumes additional solemnity and importance at every step. Alas! that we should have to confess and to deplore that we have been distinguished no less by our *abuse*, than our *participation* of the divine favour!

The evils of which we speak have, in former periods of our history, been of irregular occurrence, of limited extent, and of transitory reign. During their continuance, a world of mischief was accomplished; but they soon *burnt out*, and became rather beacons, than models to mankind. They were even overruled, in the result, as to the country and church *at large*, "to edify us much without intending it: they have had the effect which the great critic of antiquity assigns as the purpose of the tragic muse—that of *purifying by pity and terror*." This was emphatically true in the case of the memorable Davenport, and of the great excitement in Kentucky, in 1802, whose instructive history is so well embodied in the 4th Letter of the Appendix. But it would seem as if in later years a system of measures has been organized, in connexion with a scheme of doctrine and a spirit of action, which are evidently designed to give universality, duration, and supreme dominion to the influence of these evils. We do by no means intend to assert, that their promoters as a body are not men of God: we doubt not their sincerity, and even entire conviction of the rectitude of their intentions, and the

excellency of their system. Indeed, the peculiar mixture of truth and error, of piety and indiscretion, of good and evil done, while it may afford ground of hope for the leaders, terribly augments the danger of their followers and imitators. For, while any good that is done is in *spite*, and not in *consequence* of their errors, the second generation of friends may admire them in *spite* of their *virtues*, and in *consequence* of their *errors*; or, as one has said, “copy the wart of Cicero, and the stammer of Demosthenes.” It is because of the good that mingled with these *evils*, that the best and wisest men in the Church were so long silent on this subject. They said among themselves, “*touch it not, for a blessing is in it.*” They cherished the amiable but fallacious hope that the evils would cease, and the good be augmented and made permanent. This silence, in its character and consequences, is well defined by good old Cotton Mather. “There was a town called Amyclæ, which was ruined by silence. The rulers, because there had been some false alarms, forbade all people, under pain of death, to speak of any enemies approaching them; so, when the enemies came indeed, no man durst speak of it, and the town was lost.” *Corruptions will grow upon the land, and they will gain by silence.* It will be so invidious to do it, no man will dare to speak of the corruptions, and the fate of Amyclæ will come upon the land.” Such was the public crisis when the Rev. Dr. Beecher gave to the world his very noble letter on “The New Measures,” dated Boston, January 1827, and published by his request in the New York Observer, in December of the same year. This letter of its kind is unrivalled.—It deserves to be put by the side of Calvin’s letter to the king of France. We would publish every word of it, (omitting names) if we had room; and we have attempted to give a faithful abstract of its admirable views. We feel the more pleasure in doing this, because the author had, at the time, no connexion with the Presbyterian Church, and was supposed to be capable of a disinterested and calm survey of the whole subject before him: and he declares in the letter, that he had “unquestionable evidence from eye-witnesses, and friends of the work.” His opinions may be regarded, therefore, as peculiarly just:

Boston, January 1827.

Dear Brother,—It is some time since I have been rejoicing in the revivals of the West,—as I had hoped, the beginning of a new era in revivals, in respect to rapidity and universality.

“It is not until recently that a rumor has floated on the breeze to excite solicitude. But first by a paragraph in the *Christian Register*, I was alarmed ; and since, by unquestionable information from eye-witnesses and friends of the work, my fears have been greatly increased, that Satan, as usual, is plotting to dishonour a work which he cannot withstand.

“I have no doubt that the promises of God, in respect to prayer, includes much more than has commonly been apprehended, and that a chief means of promoting those revivals which are to bring down the mountains, and exalt the valleys, and introduce the millennium, is to be found in more comprehensive and correct views concerning the efficacy of prayer.

“I am persuaded too, from the close alliance between the moral and social movements of our nature, that some degree of imperfection and indiscretion may be as inseparable from a sudden and powerful revival of religion, as it is from every other sudden and powerful movement of human feeling.

“No man appreciates more highly than I do, the importance of ardent, powerful, and fearless preaching, as a means of promoting revivals ; or would deprecate more than I should, a cold-hearted, timid prudence, which would extinguish zeal and weaken the power of holy men when they are constrained by the love of Christ and the terrors of the Lord.

“But the more important revivals of religion are, the more should we deprecate all needless repellences in the manner of conducting them ; and the deeper the wave of public feeling which is rolled up by the breath of the Almighty, the greater is the danger, and the more injurious the effect of mismanagement. The ship pressed by mighty winds upon the mountain-wave, needs a keen eye and a vigorous arm, as a slight movement of sail or helm may produce instantaneous shipwreck.

“The following are the subjects, upon which I would suggest a few thoughts :

“The hasty recognition of persons as converted upon their own judgment, without interrogation or evidence. Revivals may become so great and rapid, as to make it proper that those experiencing a change, in the course of a day, should meet in one place not to be recognised as converts, but to be examined, cautioned, and instructed ; for the more powerful and rapid is the work of grace in a community, the more certain is the existence of sympathy and all the causes of self-deception ; and the more imperious the necessity of caution, unless we would replenish the Church with hypocrites, to keep her agitated by discipline or covered with shame by the neglect of it.

“Severe and repelling modes of preaching and conversing with stupid and awakened sinners.

“Assuming without sufficient evidence, that persons are unconverted. We may not possess any evidence that a person is pious, and it may be highly probable that he is not; but probabilities do not render it expedient to assume the fact as certain.

“The application of harsh and provoking epithets, which, though they may be true in some theological sense, are, as they would naturally be understood, a violation of civilized decorum and of Christian courtesy. The application to men, of all the epithets which their character in the sight of God might justify, would constitute a hell upon earth. And should such provoking epithets be hurled at each other by members of the same community, it might qualify them sooner for Billingsgate than for the Church of God.

“Another evil to be deprecated by such unusual treatment of mankind, is its tendency to produce imitators, who, without the moral power, will offer the same provocation, and be treated by an indignant community as the seven sons of Sceva were treated by the unclean spirits.—‘Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?’

“The laws of the human mind are not to be outraged in preaching the Gospel, or the depravity of the heart needlessly roused and brought out into virulent action against man and God. There is impediment enough in man while the rage of his enmity sleeps, to forbid the exciting of its extreme violence, and enough to inspire compassion for the sinner, without involving him in new disabilities by arraying against him the exasperated power of his depravity; and if some are saved notwithstanding, there is no reason to doubt that many are destroyed by such treatment, who might otherwise have been saved.

“Female prayer in promiscuous assemblies.—First, it is no where commanded. Secondly, it is no where authorized, either by precept or example. Thirdly, female prayer in promiscuous assemblies for worship is expressly forbidden. ‘I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence.’

“Bold, or imprudent expressions in the ardour of preaching, or under the provocation of opposition, or in the delirious exultation of spiritual pride.”

“Language of unbecoming familiarity with God in prayer.—Such a thing is possible in good men, but it is piety degenerated and mingled commonly with carnal affection or spiritual pride. No frequency of real spiritual access and communion with God, can possibly breed irreverent familiarity. For a man, then, to talk to his Maker about men and things, in the dialect more familiar and divested of reverence than a well-educated child would adopt, in addressing an earthly parent, is utterly inadmissible.

“Coarse, blunt, and vulgar expressions.—These, if indulged by good men, indicate, or infallibly produce, the want of that delicacy of feeling, which, next to conscience and piety, is our greatest safeguard against impropriety.”

“A harsh and severe mode of addressing sinners.—Whatever language a man uses, it tends to beget in him the style of feeling of which it is characteristic. In the time of Davenport, they used to address men from the pulpit as “cursed sinners,” and talk about their being “damned to hell;” which made some people wonder what had got into ministers to swear so.

“New era in revivals—reformers—reformation always opposed, even by good men, &c.—Such ideas, cherished, bring to the naughty and deceitful heart of man no small danger, and have ruined many; for though multitudes have thought they were raised up to be reformers in the church, but a small number of men have been in reality such; and as to opposition from good men, the facts generally have been the other way.”

“A self-sufficient and daring state of mind, which is reckless of consequences, and incorrigible to argument or advice. It was this “know-certain-feeling,” which emboldened Davenport to chastise aged and eminent ministers, and to pray for them, and denounce them as unconverted, and to attempt to break them down by promoting separations from all who would not conform implicitly to his views,—by setting on fire around them the wood, hay, and stubble, which exist in most communities, and may easily be set on fire, at any time, by rashness and misguided zeal.”

“Whatever the code of public opinion has adopted which is sinful, must be rejected; but there are a multitude of things which belong to man as an intellectual and social being, which cannot be disregarded, without destroying alike civilization and Christianity. There are some things which adorn, and some which disgrace religion, and should we therefore in our zeal strip religion of the mildness, and kindness, and courtesy of civilized decorum, and exhibit her in alliance with all the repellencies and roughnesses of uncultivated humanity, as well might the bodies in the valley of vision have been animated and sent forth in all their unsightly nakedness before the skin came upon them.”

“Success an evidence that all which is done in revivals is right. The grounds of deception are two. 1. Drawing general conclusions from particular premises; inferring that because some preacher’s mode of address or action has been useful in some circumstances, it is applicable to all circumstances. As if the shipmaster, who had once been driven out to sea before boisterous winds, without anchor, or compass, or chart, or rudder, and who reached by miracle his port in safety, should return to denounce

henceforth these means of safety, and insist that nothing was needed to conduct auspiciously the commerce of the world but a direct course, and mountain-waves, and all sails standing, and a hurricane for a breeze. 2. Judging from limited views and immediate effects, without regarding general and permanent results, The world, both material and intellectual, is governed by general laws, and though the violation of them may produce a temporary good, the certain result, on the great scale, will be more than a balance of general evil. Now the importance of the soul and of eternity is such, as that good men in a revival are apt to feel no matter what is said or done, provided sinners are awakened and saved. But it ought to be remembered, that though the immediate result of some courses of conduct may be the salvation of some souls, the general and more abiding result may be the ruin of a thousand souls, destroyed by this conduct, to one saved by it; and destroyed by it, as instrumentally, in the direct and proper sense of the term, as any are saved by it."

"To some of the consequences of a revival, conducted under such auspices as I have described, I beg leave now to call your attention.

"It will become more and more exceptionable. Urged by circumstances, men will do things, which, if in the beginning they had been predicted, they would have said, 'Are thy servants dogs, that we should do these things?' By degrees, however, all landmarks will be removed, and what was once regarded as important will be set at nought, and what would once have produced horror, will be done fearlessly. Like the cave of Æolus, or the gate of Pandemonium, a single arm may suffice to let out the storm. But when once the atmosphere is put in motion, no human power can stop it, until it has exhausted its fury in works of moral desolation."

"Another of the evils to be apprehended, is opposition on the part of good men, and the consequent disunion of the churches by a civil war. The peculiarities of the system I have recognised, cannot go through the churches without opposition. Splendid by its early power, many have yielded to it who disapproved, for fear they might quench the Spirit: and many have been silent, because they feared that they might speak against a work of God. But when the work shall have given out its distinct character, and put off the natures of love and gentleness, &c. and put on those of wrath and strife: when other reformers shall hasten on to new discoveries, and surpass their predecessors as much as these surpassed others: and denounce them as they denounced those who could not go with them; when stripling imitators of pious men, having nothing in common with them but their imprudence, without their age and moral power, shall go out to outrage humanity, and caricature revivals of religion, then will these irregularities be

met, and then the collision will be keen and dreadful. For, in every church, there is wood, hay, and stubble, which will be sure to take fire on the wrong side."

"Another evil to be feared is, that it will unavoidably array a large portion of the unrenewed part of the community against revivals and religion; and produce infidels, scoffers, Unitarians, and Universalists, on every side—increasing the resistance seven fold to evangelical doctrine; withdrawing in proportion, the voluntary support of the Gospel; and consigning the precious cause of Christ, which ought and might govern public opinion, to the hands of a feeble, despised, dispirited few, who watch the holy fire upon the deserted altar of God."

"Another effect to be deprecated is, that it will prevent the great evangelical assimilation, which is forming in the United States, and paralyze general efforts as much as private churches. The rumor of extravagance would soon begin to press hard upon the friends of revivals in New-England; who could not and would not take the responsibility of justifying what they disapproved, and would be compelled in self-defence, publicly to clear themselves, as having no part nor lot in such matters."

"Another thing to be feared is, that meeting in their career with the most determined opposition from educated ministers, and Colleges, and Seminaries, all these in succession would be denounced, and held up as objects of popular odium, and a host of ardent, inexperienced, impudent young men be poured out, as from the hives of the North, to obliterate civilization, and roll back the wheels of time to semi-barbarism."

"Dear brethren in Christ; you must not, for a moment, suppose that I do not fervently love you: or that I ascribe to you, *in extenso*, all the defects to which I have alluded; but that I have drawn the outlines of a moral chart, which such a disastrous revival, as your present course could not fail to lead to, would amply fill up, I have not a doubt."

The following extract is from the letter written by him to the editors of the Observer, on the occasion of his requesting the publication of the above:

"But recently, circumstances to which I need not allude, have brought me to the conclusion that it is my duty to consent to its publication. Indeed, from the principles contained in Mr. ——'s Sermon, and from what I know concerning revivals which have taken place under his immediate auspices, I am sure that the 'new measures,' as they are justly called, though not unattended with some good, do nevertheless introduce into revivals another spirit, of whose nature and general influence those who countenance these measures seem not to be aware.

It is a spirit of fanaticism, of spiritual pride, censoriousness, and insubordination to the order of the Gospel, which, if not met by the timely and decided disapprobation of ministers and churches, threatens to become one of the greatest evils which is likely to befall the cause of Christ."

These admirable paragraphs need no comment. It required no small amount of moral courage to pen such a letter; and if the ministers of Christ throughout the land, had then come out and supported this timely and powerful testimony, the good done might have been unspeakable.

It was at the same critical season that the venerated Asahel Nettleton lifted up his warning voice, against the rising and dangerous evils, which Dr. Beecher, as we have seen, then rebuked with such nobility and truth.

Since the days of Edwards no man has arisen in our country, so eminently fitted as he to do justice to this subject. His experience, his wisdom, and success in revivals of religion, so far as we know, are without a parallel.

Mr. Nettleton united with Dr. Beecher in deploring, and in labouring to correct, the evils already mentioned. He rebuked them with the heroic spirit of an apostle, he foretold their desolations with a prophet's ken, and when no longer sustained by

"Zions friends and his,"

he weekly withdrew, shunning, perhaps, the very painful, but otherwise inevitable alternative of silent acquiescence of public and protracted controversy. We welcome his recent return to his native land. We trust he has been restored to us at this solemn crisis, with renovated health, to renew his labours of love, attended as heretofore, with the peculiar smiles of the great head of the Church.

We find the following notice of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton's letters on "the new measures," in the Preface to these Lectures.

"It was originally the author's intention to have republished the well known letters of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton written several years ago, in which the same general views which this volume inculcates, are defended with great zeal and ability. But upon examination he finds they are so much identified with the occasion in which they originated, that he thinks it best to omit them."

Now *our* reason for their introduction here is, that the

“occasion with which they are identified, and in which they originated,” was the very point at which the present abuses of revivals arose; and at which therefore the inquiry into their nature ought to begin.

But the letters in the Appendix, written several years after those of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, fully confirm their sentiments, and sustain their views.

Take the following as examples:

“Many of those who become truly pious, entertain for a while, hopes, which they afterwards are convinced to be unfounded; and to pronounce such persons converted at once, and hurry their admission to the Lord’s table, would be the most effectual method of preventing their saving conversion. There may be an error on the other side, of too long a delay, and of discouraging real believers from approaching the table of their Lord; but the error is on the safest side. As to apostolical precedent, it is just as strong for a community of goods; and after all, there is no undoubted case of any convert being immediately received to the Lord’s supper.”—*Dr. Alexander.*

“But the great, shall I say the fatal error in the management of revivals, is the hasty admission of the subjects to the privileges of the church. Convictions, we have reason to apprehend, are often mistaken for conversion;—a momentary impulse for ‘the renewing of the Holy Ghost,’ without which no man can see the Lord.”—*Dr. Proudfit.*

“Another remark I would make, is, that we have carefully guarded against a speedy admission to the privileges of the church. Seldom in times of revival have we admitted persons to the communion in less than six months after they first became serious.”—*Dr. M'Dowell.**

“The whole number received into the church, during my ministry, is six hundred and seventy-four. None of these have presented themselves for examination, *under two and three months*, after they began to cherish a hope of having passed from death unto life.”

“Neither have I seen it to be proper, even in seasons of the greatest excitement, to call upon impenitent sinners, either in our public meetings, or in the inquiring room, to manifest their *determination* to seek religion, or to give any *pledge* that they would do it.”—*Dr. Hyde.*

“A sinner may be converted at too great an expense. I mean, that measures may be adopted, that shall issue in the conversion of a sinner, which measures may, at the same time, by exciting preju-

* Whose experience in pure, enlarged, and repeated revivals, is hardly exceeded in the Presbyterian Church.

dice and enmity, be the occasion of a vast deal more evil than good.”—*Dr. Hawes.*

“The distinguishing doctrines, and the ecclesiastical order of our church, have, at such periods, always suffered. The doctrines of God’s sovereignty, original sin, the entire dependence of the sinner on the special influence of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and conversion, and justification solely by the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believing penitent, and received by faith alone, have almost invariably been either denied, or perverted and misrepresented, in a manner that was equivalent to a denial. The order of our church has been disregarded.”

“It has even happened that a minister who has led others into extravagance, has at length found himself left behind them, and been considered and treated as a mere formalist, for whose conversion prayer needed to be made, and has been made accordingly, in the social meetings of his former disciples.”—*Dr. Green.*

“If you ask me, what means and measures have been most eminently blessed, in the revivals which have fallen under my own personal observation, in college and elsewhere, I answer,—substantially the same as were “mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds” in the Apostolic age—the same as were employed by Edwards, and Bellamy, and Brainard, almost a century ago—the same that have been so remarkably owned of God, under the labours of our beloved brother,* now in a foreign land.”—*Dr. Humphrey.*

“We have known here nothing, except by report, of the ‘new measures,’ for building up the kingdom of Christ. We have no machinery for making converts; and we could allow none to be introduced. We should be afraid to make, or suffer an impression upon the young men under our care, many of whom will be ministers of Jesus Christ, that the Gospel can be helped, or the work of the Holy Ghost facilitated by human devices. And I think we shall hold, on this subject, to our general principles, too long settled by the experience of ages, and confirmed by the blessing of God attending the application of them, to be now thrown away in the ardour of questionable excitements, or for the love of innovation, or even to escape the imputation of being the enemies of revivals. I cannot tell you how much I sometimes fear, when I look abroad upon our country, that Christianity will degenerate in our keeping. Yet let us hold to the old foundations.”—*Dr. Lord.*

“The use of anxious seats, and putting the people to the test of a public vote, under the influence of strong feeling.”

“Public confession of sins, in the face of promiscuous assemblies.”

* The Rev. Mr. Nettleton.

“ Calling upon zealous but unauthorized persons to perform the appropriate duties of ordained ministers.”

“ Hasty admission to the communion, of very young persons, or of those who have given but little proof of their knowledge of the Gospel, or of their having experienced a gracious change of heart.”

“ A neglect of the ministers of the Gospel, who are not considered thorough-going revival men.”—*Dr. Neill.*

“ Reliance on means, instead of reliance upon the spirit of God.”

“ A tendency to exaggeration is specially to be avoided.”

“ A tendency to spiritual pride needs frequently to be corrected.”—*Dr. Wayland.*

“ The agency of the Holy Spirit, as the beginning and ending, has been almost or entirely set aside. A revival has been represented and sought for as an article of manufacture for which you have only to set the machinery and raise the steam of excitement, caring little with what fuel, and converts will be made to hand. Artifices to catch attention ; devices to entrap the careless ; representations to create impression ; an exaggerated style of preaching to produce alarm, have in some cases been put in requisition, over which truth, and reverence, and humility, and faith must weep, and which have done more to injure revivals in certain places, than all the direct opposition of coldness and unbelief.”—*Rev. C. P. McIlvaine.*

“ From these two excesses two special evils are sure to follow ; one among the ignorant, the other among the learned and refined. That among the ignorant is gross, palpable disorder. The other evil referred to is, that these excesses, (I speak not of the *disorders*,) prejudice men of learning and taste against revivals, and arm the influence of society against them. And thus, while they throw discredit on the most precious of God’s works and obscure his glory where it was chiefly to be shown, they lay stumbling blocks before the blind, over which millions will fall into hell.”—*Dr. Griffin.*

From the above extracts it must be apparent that dissatisfaction at the measures referred to, does not result from *sectarian feelings*, for here are the representatives of six different denominations : nor from *party-spirit*, for here are venerable, and learned, and pious men of all the schools, we were going to say, except that which has adopted these excesses, making one great common party, in defence of a great common cause : *nor from inexperience in revivals, or secret opposition to them*, for here are men who have been for a series of years, and still are, the accredited friends and successful promoters, under God, of revivals of religion.

It is proper to say before closing this article, that we, by no means, intend to charge these abuses indiscriminately upon all who, in *part*, approve, or use what are called the *new measures*. Some of our best and most beloved brethren, who live far away from the seat of these evils, and have not yet seen the issue from the beginning, filled with a praiseworthy desire to realise the blessings of a revival of religion, have, we fear, without due reflection, introduced some of them into their congregations. It is, however, a grave question, "*What shall be the end thereof?*" They ought well to weigh the whole matter, at a crisis such as this, and to enquire whether the transition, which they and their people need, be not rather to a new spirit, than to new measures.

In regard also to protracted meetings we say, that unless, in connection with abuses, they are not to be numbered among new measures. They are as old as the Kirk of Scotland, yea, as the Church of Christ; and are virtually recommended in our directory for worship. Nor is a measure *evil* because it is *new*, any more than because it is *old*. Protracted meetings, when properly conducted, (a people being properly prepared for them) are often highly useful. They *combine* the labours and prayers, of many ministers, and of a whole church at once; they protract and deepen the impression of the truth upon the principle and after the manner of the Sabbath; they arrest attention, throw off for a time, the weight of the world's cares, and callings, and especially amidst the intensity and pressure of a city life, give time for the mind to think, and the heart to feel. It must be admitted, however, that they have been greatly abused; and afford peculiar inducements to substitute excitement, for divine impression, and concentrated means, for continued devotion.

We only add, that there are those to be found in the church, who oppose revivals of religion, if we may speak so, *on principle*, and who do well nigh as much harm as all our errorists and innovators. They give an ill savour to orthodoxy, by identifying it with inactivity, and utter deadness of spirit. Their opposition favours, as their life aids, in producing the opposite extreme, in the Church of God. To them belongs no small part of the evils of which we speak; and we should esteem it a real calamity to be called to choose between these evils. It were like selecting between stupor and intoxication; between madness and death.

In fine, from the signs of the times, our hope is high, that

good and wise men (especially among ourselves, where it is so much needed) are about to unite to save the Church of God, in this eventful day of its history, by rebuking the extremes to which we are exposed, and recalling the spirit with the success of the apostles.

There is one aspect of the general subject which we regard with peculiar hope, and which we cannot close this article without noticing. It is, *that the friends of order and truth in New England, and in the Presbyterian Church, are beginning to understand each other better, and to act more in concert. Such men have too long been strangers to each other, and fostered mutual and ill-founded prejudices.* The best men of the Congregational Churches of New England, and of the Presbyterian Church, think and feel very much alike on most subjects, and entirely alike on fundamental ones. It is time, that burying jealousies, without the surrender of principle, they should unite their labours, influence, and prayers, to arrest the progress of those errors in doctrine, and excesses in measures, which are now rampant in their respective denominations; and which, by abuses of revivals, by corrupting the fountains of religious knowledge, and turning to their account the power of the periodical press, threaten to overrun the land. We conclude with the memorable words of Robert Hall, in reference to another subject: "A growing unanimity has begun to prevail among the good in different parties, who, finding a centre of union in the great truths of revelation, and in a solicitude for their interests, are willing to merge their smaller differences in a common cause. The number of the sincerely pious, is, we trust, increasing among us, whose zeal, far from suffering abatement from the confidence of (those opposed to them) has begun to glow with a purer and more steady flame than ever. These are pleasing indications that the presence of the *Holy One of Israel* is still in the midst of us."

A FRIEND TO REVIVALS.

Philadelphia, Oct. 3d, 1832.

Note.—The Preliminary Essay is worthy, in all respects, of its distinguished author; and the letters, to which little or no reference is made, are also truly excellent. But it so happened that the train of thought which the writer pursued led him to select topics, which called more specially for the extracts which have been introduced.