

285
H 28

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE,

CONVENED AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1880.

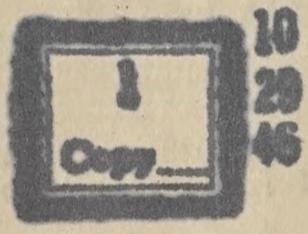
PRINTED BY DIRECTION OF THE COUNCIL.

EDITED BY

JOHN B. DALES, D.D., AND R. M. PATTERSON, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL COMPANY,
AND
J. C. McCURDY & CO.,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.,
CINCINNATI, O., CHICAGO, ILL., AND ST. LOUIS, MO.

4 BX
1518



Copyright by
J. ELLIOTT CONDUCT.
1880.

~~~~~  
FERGUSON BROS. & CO.,  
PRINTERS AND ELECTROTYPERS,  
PHILADELPHIA.  
~~~~~



We are not only training our students for the ministry, but we are also actively engaged in mission work. We are carrying forward the mission work in the New Hebrides, and we have missionaries among the Chinese and among the aborigines.

I trust this brief statement of the work in Australia will serve to impress upon the members of this Council that you have not only sister churches in other lands, but that you have a little sister in Australia of whom, I hope, you will have an affectionate remembrance, and that she will have an abiding place alike in your sympathies and in your prayers. We are ready to extend the hand of fellowship to you, and I trust you in turn will extend it very cordially to us.

The REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD, D. D., of New York, read the following paper on

REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

Christianity is of God. Its history stamps it divine. Beginning at Jerusalem, in the majesty of its conscious might, it "went forth conquering and to conquer," and rested not till it had subdued the world. It has survived the conflicts of the ages, and the wrecks of empires. Its vitality is the world's wonder. "Cast down," it cannot be "destroyed." It is to-day the mightiest power on the earth. Its principles and spirit are the controlling forces in modern civilization. It dominates the world.

It has a future infinitely more glorious than its past. It was made for man—designed for the race—for the whole world. It is adapted, as no other religion is, for the universal brotherhood of humanity. It meets the need of every class, every condition, every age. It is suited alike to the bond and the free; the savage and the civilized; the learned and the unlearned; the rich and the poor. It reclaims, renews, refines, expands, exalts and purifies the soul. It sustains, consoles and heals the stricken; pacifies the troubled and distressed; and, with hopes enrapturing and immortal, inspires the dying. It is sure to triumph over all rivalry, all enmity. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It must become the religion of the world.

With all this accords the voice of inspiration. The stone, "cut out without hands," becomes "a great mountain, and 'fills' the whole earth." To Him, who hung on the tree and burst the bars of death, is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." "The God of the whole earth shall he be called." "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." For "the earth shall

be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." So we believe and teach.

How, now, shall this grand consummation be brought to pass? By what agencies, by what instrumentalities? Is the past to be the model and the measure of the future? Are we to be content with past attainments, with present achievements? Is there not to be, and that in the near future, a vivid quickening of the Spirit; an intense vitalizing of the forces of the Church of Christ, in its assaults on the kingdom of darkness, and in its conquering march through the world? Is not the day at hand, when she is to look for vastly mightier manifestations of converting and sanctifying grace, than at any former period; for special, and copious, and widespread effusions of the Holy Spirit, stimulating, beyond all precedent, the hopes, the faith and the purposes of the people of God, and sweeping away all opposition to the onward and triumphant march of the great Captain of salvation? "I will pour water," saith the Lord God Almighty, "on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."

The promises and the prophecies of God's word give abundant warrant for the expectation of far greater, more frequent, and more extensive effusions of the Spirit of God, henceforth, increasingly, to the end of time. In other words it is to be expected, that, as in times past, so in the time to come, and much more abundantly and mightily, the kingdom of Christ on earth is to be built up, mainly, by revivals of religion; by copious showers of divine grace; by the quickening of the spirit of life, simultaneously, in particular localities, districts and regions, among large bodies of people, in connection with, and in attestation of, the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus; rousing the dormant energies of the Church to new and unwonted activity; greatly elevating the tone and the standard of piety; and bringing sinners, in large and increasing numbers, to bow at the feet of Jesus. Revivals of religion, therefore, it is maintained, are to be regarded as appointed means of grace; as the most precious and desirable of all God's gifts to his Church on the earth; and are to be sought most fervently, to be expected most confidently, to be promoted by all the wisdom, energy and piety of God's people, and to be guarded against everything that can mar their purity, or diminish their power for good.

The phrase—*Revival of Religion*—is ordinarily applied to the case of a community, in which a special interest, more or less general, is felt in spiritual and eternal matters; accompanied with a marked manifestation of divine power and grace, in the quickening of believers, in the reclaiming of backsliders, and in the awakening, conviction and conversion of unbelievers—of sinners. It matters not by what agencies or measures these results may have been reached;

with what degree of excitement the work may have been carried forward; nor whether exception may not properly be taken to some of the methods and teachings of preacher or people, in their zealous efforts for its advancement. The adventitious is not to be confounded with the essential. The adjuncts may, in some respects, be of questionable propriety; may be proper subjects of condemnation. Nevertheless, it may be a blessed work of grace, giving abundant evidence of its genuineness, and constraining even the bold blasphemer to say, "Surely, this is the finger of God."

Are revivals of religion, thus understood, to be regarded as falling in with the divine plan for the best and most rapid diffusion of the gospel over all the earth; and so to be made the object of intense desire, of fervent prayer, and strenuous effort on the part of all who look and long for the speedy coming of the kingdom of Christ in power and divine glory? Or are we to depend exclusively on what are known as the ordinary means of grace for the spread of the gospel among men?

Not a few have serious doubts as to the desirableness of these movements; have had little or no experience of these special seasons; or have seen or heard of disorders and irregularities growing out of or accompanying these visitations, so baleful or dangerous as to make it questionable whether they are not, on the whole, productive of more evil than good. They maintain, therefore, that it is best to rely on the regular course of things, and move on in a quiet way, with gradual and regular accessions, believing that in the end quite as much will have been accomplished, and more satisfactorily.

Greatly, however, as steadiness and regularity and freedom from declensions and excitements may be desirable, and beautiful as is the theory of constancy in the progress of the gospel among men and in its gracious operations in the human heart, no such state of things is to be looked for. It consists not with human experience in any of the relations of life. The very nature of the human soul, and its relations to the outer world, forbid it. As well may we expect unclouded serenity in the heavens above and around us, unvarying heat in summer or cold in winter, or an equable temperature for the whole year and all the years, or the steady growth of plants, irrespective of the accidents of frost, or flood, or drought. Man cannot come into conflict with the laws of nature, and expect to have his own way. Universal law controls him; not he it. Theory must give place to stubborn fact.

The principle of the divine life in the soul is, at the outset, but the merest germ. Its first pulsations can rarely, if ever, be detected and determined. The subject himself becomes conscious of it only after some interval. It is like leaven; it is like seed cast into the ground, that springeth up and groweth, no one knows how, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It attains its full development only after a long process of careful and diligent cultivation, by the use of appliances, smaller or greater, in conformity with

the natural laws of mental, moral, and spiritual action. In the young believer, it is a sapling, easily swayed hither and thither by aerial currents; in the mature disciple, it is a giant of the forest, towering aloft, deep and wide-rooted in the earth, the victor in a thousand conflicts with storm and tempest,

“Unhurt amidst the war of elements.”

It is found in every possible stage of development short of absolute perfection, to which it attains only when all occasion for conflict has passed.

Sure as is the growth of grace in the soul of the believer, the measure of this growth is exceedingly variable. It is subject, like all things human, to fluctuations more or less frequent and considerable. The voyager on the sea of time, with favoring currents and propitious gales, makes rapid progress; the winds die, and he floats with the tide; or storms arise, and beat him back on his course. Now he is all life, and buoyant with hope; anon he is cast down and disquieted. Now every Christian grace is in lively exercise, and he makes steady growth in the knowledge and love of God; again, he is borne along by the billows of political excitement, or of some all-absorbing commercial speculation. He has his moods of peace and trouble, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heat and cold. The night follows the day; the winter's cold the summer's heat; and all this at intervals quite uncertain and irregular.

Spiritual development, moreover, is subject to invariable law. It may be hastened or retarded by the use or neglect of appropriate means. Thought and feeling, mind and heart, are continually acting and reacting upon each other for good or ill. Thought is indispensable to feeling. Before an object can act upon the heart, it must be more or less distinctly perceived by the mind. Deeply to feel and be moved to action in spiritual concerns, you must “think on these things,” life and death, sin and guilt, heaven and hell, time and eternity, Christ and his cross, the Spirit and his work, obligation and responsibility. If such concerns never occupy your thoughts, your heart will be as hard as a stone, as cold as an iceberg. On the other hand, so constantly, closely, and intensely may you think on these and similar themes, as to stir up your whole spiritual and moral nature; to fill your heart with glowing emotion; and to be deemed an enthusiast, a fanatic, a madcap.

Thought, also, in like manner, is subject to law. Means of thought there are, as well as means of grace. Thought is just as susceptible of cultivation as bone and muscle. The object determines the thought. The child is taught to think, by setting before him proper objects of thought and fixing his attention upon them. Thought may be compelled, or suppressed, by a fixed purpose, and corresponding effort to exclude from the mind all but a particular class of objects. The mourner arrays himself in sable; gathers about him the relics of the loved and lost; shuns all cheerful and joyous associations and occupa-

tions; muses on death and the grave; shuts out the warm light and glow of heaven; lives "in the region and shadow of death." His home is a sepulchre.

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." "God is not in all his thoughts." To think of God is painful to the sinner. He shuts God out of his mind—gives him no place there whatever; shuns everything fitted to bring him to mind; brings in the world and fills every nook and cranny of his mind with things of time and sense. "God is not in all his thoughts." His heart becomes a stone.

The believer may, at times, be drawn away from the steady pursuit of holiness. So closely may he suffer himself to be occupied with the cares and pursuits and pleasures of the world, as to lose much of the genial warmth of God's presence and love. His heart is benumbed; he wanders from the right ways of his God; he becomes more or less a backslider in heart, if not in practice. Spiritual declension is infectious. Backsliders sin not alone. A whole community of believers, by the same or a similar process, may for a time be turned aside, to some extent, from the steady pursuit of holiness. Worldly matters of deep and absorbing interest excite and engross attention, thought, emotion, effort. Spiritual and eternal concerns are, in a degree, subordinated to the carnal and the temporal. The declension becomes general, and possibly long protracted.

The renewed heart is sanctified but in part. The natural is ever in conflict with the spiritual; "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." It requires constant vigilance, untiring diligence, and ceaseless strife with the flesh, on the part of the believer, to hold on his way, and make daily advances in the life divine. An earnest, faithful and godly ministry, with gospel ordinances in their purity, is indispensable to the preservation of a church from error, worldliness, lukewarmness, and spiritual torpor. Even with these helps and incitements, how frequently, in the absence of the special outpouring of the Spirit of God, are our very best churches brought under the dreadful blight of spiritual declension!

"My people," says the God of Israel, "are bent to backsliding from me. Why," he asks, "is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" The same statement and the same inquiry might have been made in every period of the wonderful history of the people of Israel in the days of Moses, of the judges, of the kings, and of all the prophets. The fire was kept burning on the altar only by a succession of divine interpositions. Judges and rulers, priests and prophets, Deborah and Barak, Samuel and David, Elijah and Elisha, Ezra and Nehemiah, were raised up from time to time to beat back the waves of corruption, to arrest the tide of degeneracy, and to restore the people of Israel and Judah from their perpetual backslidings.

Similar has been the history of the church in all subsequent periods.

In the absence of the special effusions of the Spirit of God, how uniformly have ministers and churches lost the fervor of their "first love," as at Ephesus; become "lukewarm" in the service of the Master, as at Laodicea; "defiled their garments," as at Sardis; or given ear to the voice of error, as at Pergamos and Thyatira. What a mournful picture of declension is presented in the case of the seven churches of Asia not only, but of Jerusalem and Antioch, Philippi and Corinth, and, most of all, of the Church of Rome! How deplorable has been the defection of not a few of the churches of the Reformation! Even among the most orthodox and circumspect communions, the ear is pained and the heart is grieved with the story of leanness and coldness, of worldliness and deadness! How often, in their annual narratives of the state of religion, do Presbyteries and Synods and General Assemblies lament the prevalence of sinful conformity to the world, the decay of piety, and the lukewarmness of many among their people! Truly, the Christian Church, as well as the Jewish, are bent to backsliding. The natural tendencies of human hearts are all backward and downward, so grievous is the corruption of our poor, sinful nature.

Now, what is the true and only appropriate remedy for spiritual declensions? Most assuredly, spiritual revivals. By all the authorized means at their disposal, the people, who are constrained to acknowledge and lament their backslidings, should seek with their whole heart and soul a speedy revival of the work of the Lord among them.

But how is this greatest of blessings to be secured? What has been the history of revivals? How have they begun, and how has their continuance been promoted? Happily, we are not left in doubt on these points. Whatever may be the case in other parts of the world, the American churches and (may we not say, though possibly not to the same extent?) the churches of Great Britain and Ireland have had large experience of these gracious visitations, and not a few of them have made grateful record of their rise and progress.

What is the promise? "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." Various are the ways in which the desired result is brought about. Naturally, and without violence to the laws of mind, the blessed Spirit, by whom the principle of divine grace is implanted in the heart, and the dormant energies of the soul are aroused to newness of life, arrests the steps of the wanderer, stirs up the conscience of the backslider, and disturbs the dreams of the worldly professor. A sudden and severe illness; a sad and sore bereavement; a prevalent and infectious disorder; a disastrous reverse of fortune; the treachery of a friend; the faithlessness of a lover; deliverance from the very jaws of death; or the tidings of some great catastrophe involving great loss of property and life; nay, "a still small voice," heard only in the deep recesses of the soul, may rouse the slumberer, and reveal to him his perilous condition and prospects.

The mind thus turned towards itself, becomes conscious of its unrest, its want of entire conformity to the divine will, its want of heart in God's service, its disregard of the wants of its own moral nature and its wretchedness. A sense of guiltiness, more or less acute, succeeds; a sense deep enough at times to produce remorse, penitence, renewal of covenant obligations, abhorrence of past neglect and wanderings from God; ardent desires after holiness of heart and life, earnest efforts to be reinstated in the divine favor; and, in a word, a whole-hearted consecration to God. The believer is now brought into free and full fellowship with the divine nature. He walks in the light, and rejoices in the love of God "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He reflects the radiance divine—the home, the shop, the storehouse, the walks of trade, the circle of domestic love, the round of social intercourse, the community of fellow-believers, and even the outlying world, all feel, to some extent, the heavenly influence of the renewed life. The blessed infection spreads; other sleepers are aroused; the community are stirred; the pulpit glows with new light and life; "the house of God" becomes "the gate of heaven;" the gatherings for social prayer are enlarged; the formal listless utterance gives place to fervency and importunity; the attention of the ungodly and the careless is arrested; sinners are brought under conviction; and converts of "such as should be saved" are multiplied. A great, a peculiar, a wonderful change comes over the community, and the world are constrained to say that "God is in the midst of" them in deed and in truth. This is a revival of religion.

In bringing about these blessed results, the Holy Spirit uses every variety of agency and instrumentality, within the domain of the right and the true. The work may begin in the heart of a single believer, and that one illiterate, it may be, and obscure; or several hearts may be moved separately and simultaneously. It invariably begins "at the house of God." Very often the pastor of the flock becomes so deeply sensible of the need of more grace, for himself and his people, as to be roused to greater fervor in prayer, to deep heart-searchings, and to unwonted importunity in preaching the word. He can no longer be content with barren ordinances. He longs to reap as well as to sow. "Give me the souls of my people, or I die," is the purport of his every prayer. He now deals with themes of infinite moment—the worth of the soul; its undone condition, its exceeding guiltiness, and its perishing need of the salvation offered in the gospel; the danger of delay; the exclusive efficacy of the Saviour's blood; the shortness and uncertainty of life; the tremendous realities of the future state; the necessity of regeneration; and the utter dependence of the sinner on the sovereign influences of the Holy Spirit; these are the themes that the awakened preacher presents. They arrest the attention of the careless; arouse the slumbering; wake up the stupid; take hold of the heart; and become the all-absorbing subjects of thought, of anxious inquiry, and personal concern. They are accompanied with an unction from the Holy One; are preached "in demonstration

of the Spirit and of power." House after house becomes a Bochim. Songs of gratitude follow hard on tears of penitence. Converts are multiplied; saints are quickened; wanderers are brought back; Christ is honored; God is glorified. Blessed people, that are thus refreshed with the divine presence!

In all this, wonderful and glorious as are the results, there is nothing miraculous or abnormal, more than in the case of every convert to Christ. The work is of God, but conformed, in all its parts and stages, to the well-known laws of our mental and moral nature. True—"the wind bloweth where it listeth," has a way of its own, "past finding out." Every aerial current, however, in its inception, course, velocity and continuance, is subject to laws as fixed and definite as those which govern the solar system. "So is it" with "every one that is born of the Spirit." He who created the universe, and controls, by laws of infinite wisdom and might, the starry systems, is the author of the new creation, and of every gracious operation in the human soul, working by law, as fixed and definite in the one case as in the other.

Revivals of religion, then, are to be regarded, sought and looked for, as the legitimate result of principles that shape and govern the spiritual nature of man; as in entire conformity to the plans, purposes and procedure of the Almighty, in the building up of the kingdom of grace on the earth, as set forth in promise and prophecy, and confirmed by the history of the Church in all ages. From the beginning, God has carried forward his great work of redemption among men, by successive outpourings of his Spirit, age after age, until now. The "History of Redemption" is a continuous record of spiritual declensions, succeeded and overcome by great and wonderful spiritual revivals.

The Christian dispensation, as distinguished from the Jewish, was born in the greatest revival of religion ever known until then. "From the days of John the Baptist, until now," said the great prophet of Nazareth, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." What a deep and all-pervading commotion was created in Judea and in Galilee, by the preaching of John and of Jesus; of James and of his brother John; of Peter and of Paul; of Silas and of Barnabas! How wonderful were the effusions of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and immediately subsequently! and on through the apostolic age, what mighty revolutions were effected by the consequent upheaval of society, and the introduction of the new dispensation of grace among men! The history of the Christian Church during the first three centuries of our era, among both Jews and Gentiles, is simply a history of revivals. When the Papal apostacy had resulted in an almost universal declension of true godliness, and the dark ages had shrouded the Church, how was the light restored, and the Church redeemed, but by those wonderful revivals of religion that followed the faithful preaching of Huss the Bohemian, of Jerome of Prague, of Wickliff the Briton, of Luther and Calvin,

of Knox and Farel, of the great host of British and continental reformers and martyrs? And, when the reformation itself had degenerated, how were the power and prevalence of godliness restored, but by the remarkable revivals of religion, that resulted from the earnest and godly preaching of Bunyan and Baxter, and the noble band of Puritans that adorned the seventeenth century in the British Isles, and from that of Wesley, Whitefield and their compeers in the eighteenth century?

The Presbyterian Church, in both the old and the new world, owes everything to the gracious and powerful revivals of religion that from the beginning have characterized its history. It was by an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, that Scotland was redeemed, in the days of Knox, from the blight of the Papacy. "The whole nation," says Kirkton, "was converted by lump. Lo! here a nation born in one day; yea, moulded into one congregation, and sealed as a fountain with a solemn oath and covenant." "What swift course," says Fleming, "the preaching of the kingdom of Christ had, and how professors of the truth thronged in, amidst the greatest threatenings of those on whose side authority and power then were! Oh! how astonishing and extraordinary was this appearance of the Lord there on all ranks, so that they offered themselves willingly for the truth! The Church of Scotland was born anew in this great revival."

Wonders of divine grace were witnessed in those days among her congregations, under the preaching of George Wishart, William Cooper, John Welsh, and other such servants of Christ. It was a mighty effusion of the Spirit that wrought upon the General Assembly of 1596; more than four hundred men of God to humble themselves with sighs and groans, and shedding of penitential tears, and with one mind and heart, to renew the league and covenant of their fathers. With what power in those memorable days did Bruce, at Edinburgh, bear witness to the truth, making, as one says, "always an earthquake upon his hearers, and rarely preaching but to a weeping auditory!" Memorable, in the annals of the old Kirk, was that sacramental day, June, 1630, in the parish of Shotts, when, under the preaching of the aged Bruce, and the youthful Livingston, the Spirit of God was poured out with such power that "near five hundred had, at that time, a most discernible change wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterwards—so much so that many of the most eminent Christians of that country (Clydesdale) could date either their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case, from that day."

Miracles of grace were also wrought in 1625, at Stewarton, in an outpouring of the Spirit, under the preaching of Dickson of Irvine, exciting the wonder of the whole land. Multitudes, too, were converted in his own parish, and few Sabbaths passed, for a considerable time, without such tokens of the presence and power of the Spirit. At the signing of the covenant, in 1638, the whole country was stirred

as by the mighty hand of God, so that Livingston said, "In all my lifetime, excepting at the Kirk of Shotts, I never saw such motions from the Spirit of God." "I have seen," he adds, "more than a thousand persons all at once lifting up their hands, and the tears falling down their eyes."

Similar manifestations of divine grace occurred in 1650, under the preaching of William Guthrie, of Fenwick, multitudes from all the region round thronging to the kirk, Christians developing extraordinary zeal in their Master's cause, and a great number of souls being truly converted to Christ.

These baptisms of the Holy Ghost, so abundantly dispensed during the first hundred years after the Reformation from popery, gave to the Kirk of Scotland a signal position among the Churches of Protestantism; so that, ever since, she has been regarded as a mighty bulwark of the faith, and her people as among the most orthodox and godly on the face of the earth. She owes everything to revivals.

In later days, also, her people have been favored with similar attestations of the Spirit's power. At Camburslang and Kilsyth, at Campsie and Calder, at Gargannock, and in all the region round about, in 1742, as signal revivals prevailed as were experienced, at the same date, in New England, under the preaching of Edwards and Buell, and their coevals. Time would fail to enumerate the blessed effusions of the Spirit, with which the Church of Scotland, in her various branches, Established, Free, Covenanting, Relief and United, has been favored in the present century.

What God has done, in this regard, for the churches of the same faith and order in America, is known to all the world. From the beginning, the Presbyterian ministry and people of this land have believed in revivals as the richest of blessings; have sought in earnest prayer the bestowment of these divine gifts, and labored strenuously to obtain and secure them. In the darkest times, their cry has been "O Lord, revive thy work!"—and not in vain. The American Presbyterian Church, in all its several parts, is a standing monument to the necessity and blessedness of revivals of religion. But for these visitations of mercy she would never have filled the land, as she has, with the savor of her orthodoxy, and the fruits of her piety. The Presbyterian Church, in 1740-1742, shared largely, under the preaching of the Tennents, Dickinson, and their associates, in the wonderful work of grace with which New England was then visited, and was everywhere built up in the faith. During the period of battle, in the Revolution and immediately afterwards, infidelity, irreligion, and immorality came "in like a flood," but the Lord God lifted "up a standard against them," and, for a considerable period, from and after 1784, poured out his Spirit upon numerous congregations, and gave a wonderful impulse to the cause of his Son. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

In the year 1799, Dr. Griffin said, "I could stand at my door in New Hartford, Litchfield county, Conn., and number fifty or sixty

congregations laid down in one field of divine wonders, and as many more in different parts of New England. By 1802 revivals had spread themselves through most of the Western and Southern States, and since that time they have been familiar to the whole American people." This was said in 1831, at a time when, for several years, a mighty wave of the Spirit had been pouring over the land. Repeatedly since, in 1858, and in 1876, particularly, similar pentecostal showers have been poured upon the churches of America, to the praise of divine grace, and the great enlargement and edification of the kingdom of the Redeemer. Scarcely a year has passed, for more than half a century, when some considerable portions of the country, or numerous particular congregations, have not been thus visited and blessed. Differ as we may about the means and methods of conducting and promoting revivals, we believe in revivals themselves almost to a man.

It is a matter of record, that by far the larger number, not less probably than seven-eighths of the hundreds of thousands of Presbyterian communicants in America, are the fruits of these blessed means of grace. The periods of largest growth and greatest efficiency have been revival periods. The Annual Narratives of the several General Assemblies, for ninety years past, bear uniform testimony to the desirableness of these visitations, with lamentations over their absence, or grateful attestation to the goodness of God in bestowing them, while the churches are continually urged to pray and labor for their widespread diffusion.

Nearly all the great institutions of Christian benevolence—the home and foreign missionary and education boards and societies, the Bible, tract, and temperance societies, and kindred organizations—have mainly sprung up within the period of the Modern Revival Era, and have been best sustained, and proved most efficient, in those sections of the Church where these divine influences have been most abundantly enjoyed. A very large proportion of the energetic and effective ministry of the land have themselves been converted in revivals. Very many others, by reason of the occurrence of such works of grace among their people, have put new life and efficiency into the whole of their subsequent ministry. The remark has been made very truthfully, that "it is amidst the effusions of the Spirit of God, that men are trained to engage actively and efficiently in the great enterprise of Christian benevolence; have their hearts and their hands opened in behalf of those who are sitting" in the region and shadow of death; "catch that spirit of zeal and self-denial, and holy resolution, which will lead them to attempt great things, and, by God's blessing, to accomplish great things, towards the moral renovation of the world."

More, therefore, than for aught or all else in the wide world, should the Christian Church plead the promise of the Father, and seek the gift, in large and copious effusions, of the Spirit of God. More abundantly, than in aught else, does the Father delight in these blessed dispensations of grace. Called to serve God under the dispensation

of the Spirit, most implicitly should we believe, and act upon, the inspired testimony, that if we, "being evil," know how to give good gifts to our "children," "much more shall" our "Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The one great need of the Church is the outpouring of the Spirit upon all people. The one great need of this Presbyterian Council, and the most blessed consummation possible of its deliberations, is such a baptism of the Holy Ghost as came upon the first Christian Council, at Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost after the blood of Jesus, our divine Lord, was shed for the remission of sins. Most memorable in the annals of the Church would this Council be, if, thus baptized anew with the Holy Ghost, its members should return to their respective homes, so burdened with the heavenly gift, as to kindle, everywhere, among the particular churches of their several communions, a burning desire and an intense zeal for the revival of God's work among them. Even now we may hear a voice from the inner temple, crying, in the fullness of Almighty love, to all these servants of Christ, and the churches that they represent: "Awake! awake! put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments." "Arise! shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

The great and glorious day of the Lord is at hand—the day of the Redeemer's triumph, and coronation as "King of kings," and "Lord of lords." Prophecies and wonderful providences have ushered it in. The age of revivals is upon us. God is giving us the mightiest means of grace ever instituted and given to the Church of Christ. Our great cities are to be saved thereby. The world can be saved only thus. More and more these divine manifestations are to be sought in prayer—to be the burden of every prayer for the Church. The ministers are to be taught, in their theological training, how to preach, how to labor, and how to pray for them. The whole Church are to look and long for them, with unwavering faith, and intense expectation.

A voice from the throne—a voice of infinite love—is continually saying to ministers and people, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," "and prove me now herewith," "if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The REV. PROF. DAVID STEELE, D. D., of Philadelphia, read the following on

PERSONAL RELIGION.

The age in which we live is one of great activity. Willing hands and enterprising minds are at work, striving after something higher, better, nobler, and more worthy of our race, than anything that has yet been reached. In art, in science, in philosophy, in literature, and in discovery, this is true. This activity gives existence and form to plans, systems and operations, distinguished by principles conservative of