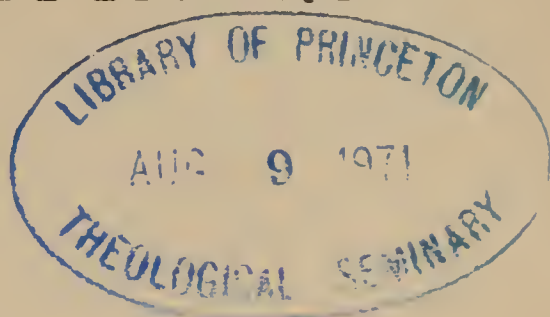


EMINENT AUTHORS



ON

EFFECTIVE REVIVAL PREACHING.

COMPILED BY

✓
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HATFIELD, SHEPARD, PARK, FINNEY, BARNES, McILVAINE, McCOSH,
BEECHER, STOWE, MURRAY, CUYLER, TAYLOR, HALL,
TALMADGE, SPURGEON, MOODY, AND OTHERS.

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EFFECTIVE REVIVAL PREACHING.

CHAPTER I.

THE PREACHER'S AIM.

E. F. HATFIELD, D. D.

What is it? What should it be? Is it always what it should be? Look into thine own heart, and tell me what, when you pray, study, write, preach, visit, is the direct object of effort? What definite end do you propose to yourself?

Perhaps you are mourning over the fewness of conversions among your people. But have you ever, or for any considerable time, set your heart on numerous conversions, as the result of your labors?

In preparing your discourses, have you aimed at immediate conversions?

While preaching, have you looked that souls should be pricked in the heart?

If you have had some such feelings, have they been so strong as to overpower every other feeling, such as

desire of applause, fear of offense, care for temporal support, reputation, and the like?

It is time that we look well into this matter. We are doing but little in the work of bringing souls to Jesus. How many sermons have we preached, that have savoured of nothing but death? A learned divine, not long ago, stated to a friend, that, although he had preached the gospel more than forty years, he did not know that his preaching had been the means of converting one soul!

Is this a solitary instance of like inefficiency? It is to be feared, not. Look over the statistical tables of the annual reports of the churches, for the past few years, and how many report no additions to their church, during the year on examination; how many only one, two or three! Now, what did the prophet mean, when he thus wrote: "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Was it hyperbole in Paul to say: "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds?" Then why are no more souls converted?

In answering this question, I beseech you, dear brother, to look first at the state of your own heart. What is your ruling passion? Is it to win souls, or shine in courts? ecclesiastical courts, it may be? Do you feel deeply, in view of the condition of the unconverted part of your congregation, habitually feel what Paul felt when he said: "My heart's desire (the hearty longing desire of my soul) and prayer to God, for Israel, is that they might be saved? For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren?" Can

this language, by any interpretation, be made to express anything but the most intense anxiety, even to death, for the salvation of souls?

But you shrink from a comparison with this inspired preacher. Let me, then, ask you to look at the hearts of other preachers, whose labors have not been in vain in the Lord.

It is said of the learned John Smith, "that he had resolved very much to lay aside other studies, and to travail in the salvation of men's souls, after whose good he most earnestly thirsted." Of Alleine, the author of "An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," it is said that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls, and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching." Said Bunyan: "In my preaching, I could not be satisfied, unless some fruits did appear in my work." "I would think it a greater happiness," said Matthew Henry, "to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself. If I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction, and I would rather beg my bread from door to door, than undertake this great work." Dodridge, writing to a friend, remarked: "I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than for anything besides. Methinks I could not only labour, but die for it with pleasure." Similar is the death-bed testimony of the sainted Brown, of Hadington: "Now, after near forty years preaching of Christ, I think I would rather beg my bread all the labouring days of the week, for an opportunity of publishing the gospel on the Sabbath, than, without such a privilege, to enjoy the richest possessions of earth. Oh! labour, labour," said he to his

sons, "to win souls to Christ." Rutherford could assure his flock that they were the objects of his tears, cares, fears, and daily prayers—that he laboured among them early and late; "and my witness," said he, "is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me." Fleming, in his "Fulfillment of Scripture," mentions the case of one John Welch, often in the coldest winter-nights, rising for prayer, found weeping on the ground, and wrestling with the Lord, on account of his people, and saying to his wife, when she pressed him for an explanation of his distress, "I have the souls of 3000 to answer for, while I know not how it is with many of them." Brainard could say of himself, on more than one occasion, "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls to Christ. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things; and when I waked, the first thing I thought of was this great work. All my desire was for the conversion of the heathen, and all my hope was in God;" therefore he wrestled in prayer until he sweat through and through, and nature seemed exhausted.

Pages might be filled with such expressions, from the lips of beloved brethren, whose hearts were filled with the love of souls, and an insatiable thirst for their conversion, who are now enjoying the unspeakable reward of those "that turn many to righteousness."

When shall such be the experience of every minister of the gospel? Not until he has something of the same spirit which animated Paul when he said, "the love of Christ constraineth us," or of Whitefield, when he thus wrote: "The more we do, the more we may do for

Jesus. I sleep and eat but little, and am constantly employed, from morning to midnight, and yet my strength is daily renewed. O, free grace! It fires my soul, and makes me long to do something for Jesus. I want more tongues, more bodies, more souls for the Lord Jesus. Had I ten thousand, he should have them all."

Do you think, my brother, that if you had such a spirit, you would have to cry out, "Who hath believed our report?" If you should, from this hour, forsaking the arena of controversy and sectarian strife, and the walks of ambition, devote all your energies to the speedy conversion of all your flock, laying yourself out in every possible way to win souls, how long would it be before you would have joyful reason to exclaim, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Let me entreat you to answer these questions, without delay, as in the sight of God. "The time is short."

Therefore be sure, not only of a definite subject, but a definite object in preaching, so as to save sinners now.

Note. As the ministry of Dr. Hatfield (Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church), was blessed with an almost annual, if not perpetual revival of religion in New York, for nearly thirty years, his suggestions, in the above article, deserve very high appreciation.—*Compiler.*