

*The*  
*American Evangelical*  
*Philosophy of Civilization*

1735 - 1905

*Including Six Basic Historical Documents*

By  
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**Research in Evangelical Revivals**

**2015.**

**ISBN**

## CONTENTS

The American Evangelical Philosophy of Civilization	5
The Necessity of Revivals of Religion to the Perpetuity of our Civil and Religious Institutions	18
David Riddle: Our Country for the Sake of the World	27
Henry C. Fish: Primitive Piety Revived	38
Henry C. Fish: Handbook of Revivals	45
Warren Candler: Chapter One	51
Warren Candler: Chapter Nine	53
Arthur B. Strickland. Chapter One	61
Bibliography.	66



## **The American Evangelical Philosophy of Civilization 1735 – 1905**

As a sequel to my book *The Prayer which Brought a Great Revival*, which portrays the history and achievements of the Monthly Concert of Prayer, and of the many revivals which were given by God in answer to these prayers, now called Second Great Awakening, we are here considering the philosophy of civilization which arose out of these revivals.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that many people contributed to these historical events and movements over many years, the events described in the first book, and the philosophy described in this essay, can both be usefully viewed as parts of the prayer heritage which flowed from the writings of Jonathan Edwards.

The religious values which provided the foundation for the thirteen colonies that became the United States of America arose from religious revival movements in England and on the European Continent. These included the English and European Reformation, the Puritan movement, Quakerism, and the English and Continental Baptists. Certain Political and Civil developments had also flowed from these movements in the Home Countries.

Before the Great Awakening around 1740, the thirteen American colonies operated rather like thirteen separate countries. Travel between the colonies, other than by ship, was difficult, so communication was limited. The Great Awakening provided a strong spiritual foundation for the future, and, in particular, a strong unifying influence between the thirteen disparate colonies, which united them as they faced the Revolutionary War with Britain in the 1770s. In this sense, Strickland has said that the spiritual father of the United States of America was really George Whitefield, the famous itinerant evangelist, whose ministry all down the East Coast produced a basis for unity.<sup>2</sup> Washington and the others like him were the new country's leaders in other areas, although some of them provided a spiritual dimension as well.

In describing the revivals which Edwards saw in Massachusetts, he expressed the view that these revivals might be a prelude to the glorious things promised in the Bible to the Church in the last days. In his *Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival in New England*, Edwards wrote:- "It is not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or, at least, a prelude of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which, in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind."<sup>3</sup>

In this section, Edwards used Isaiah 60:9 as a basis for believing that this renewal of mankind would "probably" begin in America. "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring my sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." (A.V.)

The context of the passage he understood to apply to the renewed church, and the word "isles" applied to very distant places from which worship would be brought to God. The concepts of "isles" and "distant lands" were discussed from several other passages as well, and these all led him to believe that America was being referred to in this prophesy.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Evans. *The Prayer which Brought a Great Revival*. Hazelbrook, N.S.W. publ. by the Author. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> A.B. Strickland. *The Great American Revival*. Cincinnati. Standard Press. 1934. page 13.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards. *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*. Part two, Section two.

He was not alone in believing in the renewal of mankind in the last days.<sup>4</sup>

In 1747, Edwards published his “Humble Attempt...” in support of a call to united and extraordinary prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was issued by ministers in Scotland, with whom Edwards corresponded.<sup>5</sup> The prayer call by the Scottish ministers, and by Edwards in his “Humble Attempt...” were all based in a theology which we would now generally call Evangelical, Protestant and Post-Millennial.

While the spirit of revival might have waned in New England by the time Edwards’s book was published, especially under the impact of men like James Davenport, and also following some indiscreet utterances by Whitefield himself, the revival burst forth in a number of other places on the East Coast of America in the following decades.

### **The Prayer Call of 1784.**

In 1784, another Call to extraordinary prayer was issued by some Particular Baptist ministers in Northamptonshire, England. This Call led to a series of revivals amongst these Baptists, and then amongst the English Congregationalists, and then spilling over into the other denominations. The Prayer Call of 1784 was of a similar theological character. These Baptist leaders re-published Edwards’s book as part of their Call. This Call became linked to the beginnings of the Baptist Missionary Society, the sending forth of William Carey, and then the beginnings of the London Missionary Society, followed by the Church Missionary Society.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Call to Prayer in New England, 1792**

Across in New England, a similar Call was issued to all the churches by Isaac Backus and Stephen Gano, and about twenty other ministers. They prayed for the revival of religion, and the evangelisation of the world, the conversion of everyone in the world, and they hoped for the coming of the Millennium. The decision to adopt this call to united and extraordinary prayer was made on the level of Assemblies, Associations, and hierarchy officials. But it was carried out at the local congregational level.

### **The Second Great Awakening 1798 – 1842.**

Published accounts exist for many of the initial few revivals which occurred between 1791 and 1798. But these were followed by a deluge of local revivals which appeared all through Connecticut, Vermont, Pennsylvania and the “frontier” of upstate New York, and then by widespread spectacular revivals which swept through Kentucky and the Carolinas, transforming the quality of social life and culture.

Another important step in the story occurred in 1804, when Lyman Beecher published a sermon on the practicability of suppressing vice by means of societies created for that purpose.<sup>7</sup> This was not a new idea, of course. William Wilberforce had provided an

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<sup>4</sup> *Signs of the Times Considered*, or The high Probability that the present Appearances in New England, and the West of Scotland, are a Prelude of the Glorious Things promised to the Church in the latter Ages. Edinburgh, 1742.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards. *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom. Etc.* 1747.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Fuller. *The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith: a sermon delivered at the Annual Association of the Baptist Ministers and Churches met at Nottingham, June 2, 1784. To which are added a Few Persuasives to a General Union in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival and Extent of Real Religion.* 1784. (Modern reprint.). Also, M.A.G. Haykin. “John Sutcliffe and the Concert of Prayer.” In *Reformation and Revival*. A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership. Vol.1. No.3. 1992. pages 65 – 88. Also, E. A. Payne. *The Prayer Call of 1784*. London. Baptist Layman’s Missionary Movement. 1941.

<sup>7</sup> Lyman Beecher, *The Practicability of Suppressing Vice, by Means of Societies Instituted for that Purpose.* – a sermon delivered before the Moral Society in East Hampton, Long Island. Sept. 1, 1803. New London, 1804.

example to follow, and new societies for various Christian purposes had started to appear in England. Beecher's sermon provided a starting point in building on this example in America.

After these revivals declined. There was dislocation because of the War between England and Spain, which affected the religious scene in America. Sporadic revivals still occurred, but the revivals re-commenced very strongly and widely around 1815, and another strong peak of revivals occurred in the north-eastern states around 1820. Connecticut especially benefited through the ministry of Asahel Nettleton.

As Nettleton's revival ministry declined, mainly because of his own declining health, another powerful burst of revivals occurred in upstate New York around 1826, largely associated with the name of Charles G. Finney, resulting in thousands of conversions. A great revival occurred in many parts around 1831. The number of conversions occurring in this revival has been roughly estimated as up to half a million. Revivals and special protracted meetings continued largely through the 1830s, culminating in another widespread revival in 1842. Over a forty years period, even in the years when revivals seemed to decline in numbers, records showed that many local revivals did in fact occur every year through the Eastern States, resulting in thousands of professed conversions each year. The peak periods of 1815, 1821, 1826, 1831 and 1842, saw local revivals in many hundreds of churches, and saw tens of thousands of conversions in each of those years.

The revivals of 1799 – 1805 encouraged a sense of optimism in many observers of these movements, and the hope that millennial glories were in the process of breaking out. 1815 saw this optimism appear again. This sense of optimism developed further in the two decades up to 1842, as these revivals produced many interesting examples of localised social transformation.

### **Albert Barnes's Verdict.**

Albert Barnes, the New Testament notes-maker, said in 1842 that these revivals were the glory of the age, and that they had done more than any other single factor to form the public mind in America.<sup>8</sup>

He was not alone in thinking like this, and this optimism encouraged the idea in many minds that revivals would actually succeed in helping to produce the Millennium in their country. Widespread calls were made for many more revivals, indeed, revivals with greatly increased power and effectiveness. Along with this desire for more revivals came the idea that America had a special calling from God, and a special role to play in evangelising the world.

### **Providence and the Founding of the American Republic.**

There already had developed the providential historical theory that Divine providence had been involved in the formation of the United States before, during and after the Revolutionary War, and that there was a further Divine purpose in that God had created this American nation to take a lead in fulfilling His purposes for mankind. This providential historical theory was eventually explained more fully in Jesse Peck's history of the Great Republic, published in 1868, as we shall see.<sup>9</sup>

Edwards was only one of the American prophets who had believed in a Millennium before the coming of the Lord, embodying the fulfilment of all the glorious things prophesied, but without having any detailed social theory describing how this kind of social situation could develop and operate. After the American Revolutionary War, these prophets

<sup>8</sup> Albert Barnes. (ed. Weston). *Revival Sermons*. London. William Tegg. 1865. Page 56.

<sup>9</sup> Jesse Peck. *History of the Great Republic: from a Christian Standpoint*. New York+. Broughton and Wyman. Published by subscription. 1868.

believed in the good qualities of the American Constitution, and the liberty which was enshrined in it, and that God could use it to fulfil His purposes through it.

But, after the Second Great Awakening had been in progress for two or three decades, there began to appear journal articles, and then books, which described some features of a social philosophy pointing out how steps might develop towards the approach of the Millennium. This view of civilization is based on the belief that the strength of a nation depends upon the quality of the religious beliefs of the people.

A large part of this optimism about what the revivals might achieve developed because of the growth of the various missionary societies and benevolent societies which had sprung up since 1800, and as the activism increased. Indeed, the benevolent societies, and especially the Home Missionary Societies, became so extensive and active, and yielded such success, that they seemed to create the belief that *by this means* the Millennium might arise in America, and that this country could then play a special role in bringing this message and reality to the history of the world.

### **The “American version” of this social theory.**

It was widely believed amongst these Christians that the American Constitution and the political system associated with it, had been brought into existence providentially, and was such a suitable vehicle for good social outcomes and progress that Millennial blessings might indeed come through them, by God’s power. This would depend very much upon the revivals progressing and converting increasing numbers of Americans, including the vast numbers of immigrants who were flooding into the country, and forming Christian maturity in the lives of the vast majority of the population.

The 1831 article – *The Necessity of Revivals of Religion to the Perpetuity of Our Civil and Religious Institutions* – presented a strong statement listing the dangers which faced the civil and religious institutions of the newly formed United States of America, and re-enforced the belief that only revivals of religion could strengthen the bulwarks and foundations of the nation so that these Millennial prospects would be able to be realized.

The publication of this article coincided with the appearance of the Great Revival of 1831, which was followed by a string of other revivals through the 1830s, and the evolution of evangelism into protracted meetings got up through human effort. In a good many instances these evangelistic campaigns enjoyed a degree of the spirit of revival, and produced some good results.

The French Republic after 1789, and other Republics in ancient history, provided examples of ways in which Republics had failed, and disappeared, in the past, and these Christian men did not wish the American Republic to fail like all the others.

The dangers facing the new Republic which the article mentioned were (1.) the vast extent of the territory which the government came in due course to control; (2.) the rapidly increasing and large size of the population; (3.) the diversity of local interests between States, and especially between North and South, and (4.) selfishness and hatred observed in many leaders and ordinary people. (5.) The corrupting influence of a national prosperity would produce fleshly desire, voluptuousness, extravagance, and rash speculation. There was also a danger that increased intellectual power without a corresponding increase in moral restraint would pose serious problems for the new Republic, especially in unstable people. (6.) Also atheistic philosophy could lead to an anti-social conspiracy, as Rousseau had produced in France. Anti-religious parties would try to break the unity amongst Christians, or that Roman Catholics would establish their own hegemony in this country.

The vast extent of territory was already a real problem. Areas west of the Mississippi were vast, and could easily be lost because of the failure of law and order (Kentucky before 1800 had already seen the failure of law and order). In the future, secession movements, and

conquering armies would pose the same problem. The result could fracture the “United” nature of these States, and thus destroy much of the national strength.

The large size of the population, and the fact that it was growing so fast through immigration which was not easy to control, made many opportunities to create a population which was not culturally, religiously or politically unified. Diversity of local interests also posed problems which might create a fractured society. Already some writers had boasted about the Gospel’s ability to convert migrants which arrived in America, even Roman Catholics, and that it was a lot cheaper and easier to convert them after they came to America than it was to send missionaries to these countries overseas to convert them in their homes.

Selfishness and hatred were serious problems created simply by the sinfulness within human nature, leading to widespread corruption. Many of these problems had appeared in the French Republic only a few decades beforehand, and were fresh in the minds of these educated Christian men in Boston. And they knew their classical history as well.

The 1831 article had emphasised that the American Republic’s only hope was in God. Only God could reconcile universal liberty and boundless prosperity. God’s purposes for this country, and for the world, included strong moral and religious improvements, as well as intellectual, social and civic results much beyond what had ever existed beforehand.

The dangers could not be avoided, nor could the positive results be achieved, by any other means than by the interposition of the Holy Spirit. It could NOT be achieved by FORCE, or by cultivating the INTELLECT, or by emphasising CREEDS, or by an evangelical MINISTRY (although this was very desirable), or by evangelical CHURCHES, or by church ORGANISATIONS. All these factors had failed on previous occasions. The outpouring of the Spirit in answer to prayer was the only path which could achieve these things, although other factors had their place.

The fundamental point in the philosophy of civilization, of which all these men were painfully aware, was that religion provided the foundations of a nation’s culture, unity and moral practices. They knew that to serve the best purposes of these United States, the religion which was required was Protestantism, and not Catholicism, or a mixture of various religions. They were aware of the poor cultural effects which Catholicism had created for the ordinary people in many European countries since the Reformation, as well as having theological features which they thought were both wrong and socially deleterious.<sup>10</sup>

As already mentioned, between 1805 and the 1830s, many new organisations were founded to promote foreign missions, home missionary work, Bible distribution, and the widespread use of tracts and cheap Christian literature. There sprang up also a wide range of benevolent societies with the aim of caring for needy people, or ridding society of one or other of its evils. Many of the denominations had both Home and Foreign missionary societies. One of the first in America was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, founded by the Congregational Associations in New England, in conjunction with the Plan of Union they made with the Presbyterian churches. The American Education Society, based in Boston, did much to encourage and to finance the training of ministers who then took the Gospel far and wide. Many of these students experienced revivals in towns they came from, and in the colleges where they trained.

These organisations did much good work, and had such good success, especially if they were influenced by revival movements. They strengthened the sense of optimism that the revivals were creating. People began to think that God would use these organisations to evangelise and Christianise their large country, but also the rest of the world.

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<sup>10</sup> “The Necessity of Revivals of Religion to the Perpetuity of Our Civil and Religious Institutions.” In *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*. 1831. Pages 467 – 479.

A problem that soon loomed large, however, was the sense that much of the work of the benevolent societies could have been done regardless of whether or not those who did the work were themselves converted.

The book which presented the views from this article most extensively and setting out its optimistic aspects, was written by William Cogswell, secretary of the American Education Society.<sup>11</sup>

In his book, Cogswell spends a long chapter each, describing the work of Bible distribution in the United States, the efforts to sanctify the Sabbath, the distribution of tracts, foreign missions, efforts to convert the Jews, home missions, encouraging the supply of trained ministers, Sabbath schools, the promotion of temperance, reformed attitudes to slavery, religious improvement for seamen, the reformation of prisoners, the promotion of peace, charitable contributions, and benevolent agencies. Each of these chapters are full of wisdom and knowledge, and testify to the amount of good which had been done at that point as a result of the impact of the revivals in this religious awakening since 1799.

However, the final two chapters in the book are the most important. The first of these is about revivals. That is where the driving power had come from to achieve what had been done so far as a result of this religious awakening. That is where the power would have to come from to achieve whatever was going to result positively in the future.

The last chapter was on the Millennium. It pointed to the great possibilities which were promised to the Church in the future, and sought to raise the prospects in the mind of the reader to expect that the future lay in that direction, and that good possibilities were not far away, if we all pressed on with the work.

A long Appendix included notes on various benevolent societies, and provided statistics on some relevant points. Cogswell was very confident that these organisations which he described, and the spiritual power which would come from God through the revivals, would actually produce results contributing to the Millennium, which was not far away.

Basically it presented the same message as the other books of this kind, but so much emphasis was being placed upon the activist side, and human work, that it was easy to think the strictly spiritual side was not so important.

Through the period from 1830 to 1857, the nature of revival activities had evolved, and had become much more humanly activist in nature. As Colton pointed out, some revivals depended upon a human instrument, who was obvious, and was the centre of attention. The human centred activity in the nature of these evangelistic activities was also not effective in reaching many kinds and classes of people.

After 1842, these revivals seemed to be fading out, and also enthusiasm for spiritual things by many people.

The years after 1842 were marked by massive economic expansion in North America. Increasingly people were “hasting to become rich.” Also, it was realized that most of the revivals had tended to be in rural areas, and had not affected cities in a sufficient manner to produce Millennial results in them which these Christian writers wished so much to see. So, a concern developed amongst some that future revivals, and evangelistic efforts, should find a way of conquering the cities, and thus overcoming this problem.

This last point led The New School Presbyterian minister, Albert Barnes, to preach a series of sermons on revivals, showing why they were desirable and possible in large cities such as the one in which he lived – Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> William Cogswell. *The Harbinger of the Millennium*. Boston. Pierce and Parker. 1833.

<sup>12</sup> Albert Barnes. *Revival Sermons*. (ed. A. Weston.), especially sermons 4 – 8.

### **Between 1842 and 1857.**

A particularly interesting attempt to strengthen Home Missions appeared in 1851, when the Rev. David Riddle, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, wrote a sermon, and preached it at least twice in New York and Brooklyn, on behalf of the American Home Missionary Society.<sup>13</sup>

His text was Psalm 67:1-2. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy ways may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

The overall theme was "Our Country for the Sake and Salvation of the World."

The sermon was a call for Christian patriotism, applying the text not only to the Jews in the days when the psalms were written and sung, but to the United States in 1851. It even applied to Christians in any country – that they should love and serve their country, with the prayer that God would revive and strengthen their country morally and spiritually, thus their country would become the means of blessing the rest of the world, leading to the conversion to Christ of mankind, and to the development of Millennial blessings.

It envisaged and hoped for a specially evangelical and Protestant form of society and government in the United States, practicing very high moral standards, and true devotion to God (including the full separation of Church and State) so that this could then fulfil a humble, Messianic role for the benefit of the rest of mankind.

Because the address was for the benefit of the American Home Missionary Society, it emphasised that this work had to be achieved at home first, before the role could be properly played for the rest of the world.

Despite this decline in national moral and spiritual strength after 1842, many desired greatly to see revivals occur. One such person was an anonymous benefactor who offered a prize of \$200 to the Congregational Board of Publication in Boston, to be presented to an author of a Premium Essay on the subject of "The more perfect exemplification in Christian Life of the doctrines of the gospel, and with special reference to the conversion of sinners to Christ." It was to include listing and explanation of the human factors which stood in the way of the gospel in America; to present the New Testament's answer to this problem; and to explain the qualities of revival Christianity, and how it might be attained. Three leading New England Congregational ministers were appointed to judge who should win the prize.

In due course, the winning Premium Essay was written by the young Rev. Henry Clay Fish, then of Newark, N.J., who wrote a manuscript called *Primitive Piety Revived; or the Aggressive Power of the Christian Church*.<sup>14</sup>

This book analysed the problems of the world and the church, as these then stood, and in the last chapter presented the solution.

The defects, which were analysed at some length, were, lack of singleness of aim or simplicity of purpose, lack of sufficient dedication to God, lack of self-denial for Christ, lack of a Scriptural faith, a lack of earnestness, and lastly, what Fish called a lack of individualism. This last point seemed to be basically that the power of large organisations and church structures can limit and restrict what a person can do in serving God.

The solution to all these problems of the day was presented by Fish - the desire to see "a General and Powerful Revival of Religion in the Churches," as the "Grand Remedy for all Existing Defects in Christian Character." This book was widely read, appreciated and it was duly influential.

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<sup>13</sup> David H. Riddle. *Our Country for the Sake of the World*. A sermon in behalf of the American Home Missionary Society. Preached in New York and Brooklyn, May, 1851. N.Y., A.H.M.S. 1851.

<sup>14</sup> Henry C. Fish. *Primitive Piety Revived; or the Aggressive Power of the Christian Church*. Boston. Congregational Board of Publication. 1855.

It was noted earlier that most of the revivals in the Second Great Awakening occurred in smaller towns or country villages. The city of Rochester, for example, had a population of about 10,000 in 1831, when Charles Finney arrived to preach. As time passed, there was concern that the larger cities were not being transformed. When Finney pastored a church in New York for several years, there were many conversions, but no major impact occurred such as occurred in the much smaller town of Rochester.

There had been a movement called the Washingtonian Revival in 1840, which was much more of a city movement. It was a strong part of the Temperance movement, arising from the conversion of John B. Gough, as a result of his attendance at an evangelistic meeting led by the Baptist evangelist, Elder Jacob Knapp.<sup>15</sup>

This general point of the lack of revivals in large cities was highlighted further in 1842, when Albert Barnes preached his sermons on revival. Barnes was particularly concerned to ask why significant revivals could not also occur in major cities, such as Philadelphia where he lived. His sermons were really about the reasons why revivals were needed in larger cities, the possibilities of such revivals in cities, and the ardent desirability of such things.

Little or no progress was made in the early and mid-1850s, so that J. T. Hendrick could say, in early 1857, "What remedy to these sad defects? Nothing but a true revival "can save the church from the fatal spell by which Satan now holds her bound under the delusive spirit of worldliness." The prospect was all the darker because "there never was a time, since the settlement of the country, when the churches have been in such danger from worldly prosperity."<sup>16</sup>

The situation was suddenly changed when a major revival broke out in New York later in 1857, beginning just a few weeks before a major economic collapse occurred, ruining many people who had become rich in the previous decade and a half.

### **The Revival of 1857.**

Professor Perry Miller called this 1857 revival - "the Event of the Century." It started in cities, and seemed to flourish mainly in cities, producing astonishing results and a new optimism to a greater degree. But the negative moral aspects and features of city life still remained a major obstacle.<sup>17</sup>

Miller opens his discussion of this revival by saying:- "And then, just when there seemed no alternative to despair, when 'there was weeping in secret places over the general decline, and many prayers were offered for the return of the Spirit,' the miracle was wrought. This event, beyond anything in the past, unanimously declared the clergy, was not the result of any human project, concerted arrangement, or prescribed plan. 'No man pretends to have ever seen the like.'

"The Great Awakening of 1857 and 1858 was different from all previous revivals, first, in that it was concentrated in the cities, and second, in that it arose from below, among the laity, and the astonished ministers had to run fast to catch up with it."

Bishop McIlvaine opined that the revival had occurred at a time of rebuke, because it seemed to coincide with a major economic collapse. Actually the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting began several weeks before the economic collapse, but it had not progressed to the point where it was widely known or influential. Indeed, it had a very quiet beginning.

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<sup>15</sup> John A. Krout. *The Origins of Prohibition*. Russell and Russell. Chapter 9. (1<sup>st</sup> publ. 1925. See also Elder Jacob Knapp. *Autobiography of Elder Jacob Knapp*. Sheldon and Co. 1868.

<sup>16</sup> Perry Miller. *The Life of the Mind in America: from the Revolution to the Civil War*. Harcourt Brace. 1965. Page 88.

<sup>17</sup> Miller. Op cit. pages 88 – 95.

The noon-day prayer meetings were timed so that businessmen could most easily attend. Each speaker was allowed only five minutes to speak or pray. No reference was allowed to be made to any denominational or sectarian connections that anyone had. Even most of the Boston Unitarians joined in some of the meetings. No controversial subject was allowed to be raised, even the big moral issue of slavery was not allowed to be mentioned. This tactic produced a strong feeling of unanimity amongst those at the meetings. They worked and prayed together, without noticing their differences.

It had commonly been believed that God and commerce, business and piety, did not mix. These revival meetings were specially made for businessmen, and were surprisingly successful. It was a revival amongst businessmen, and they led the prayer meetings..

City religious life was given new meaning. Instead of the “camp meeting” in a country location for revival meetings, there was now the tent placed on an empty city block, for special meetings, or the use of a church building or theatre. And the Y.M.C.A. was given an enormous boost to its usefulness and popularity.<sup>18</sup>

Miller thought that this revival made a number of extremely important contributions to the life of the nation. Thus, he seemed quite happy with the lofty title for the revival – “The Event of the Century.”

It carried into the urban context the assertion of the unity of Christians.

It also carried into the urban context the expectation of the immediate attainment of the Millennium, by means of a national religion. It was not that any denomination had become established as a State Church. It was that all Christians had united in practising a form of piety of practical experience of God, which had a revivalist character.

Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio, and Dr J.W. Alexander of Princeton both expressed the thought that the revival was a work of preparation for the future. The people gathered to pray. They did not gather to hear a famous preacher, or professional evangelist. The ministers and evangelists clustered around the fringes of the movement and organised special meetings, but this was not the core activity.

All except a very few said that the revival was “the finger of God.” Rough estimations have been made as to the number of conversions which occurred during this revival movement. One estimation was that a million conversions had occurred. But this could easily be wrong by a considerable margin.

“The revival, being urban and business-like, confirmed the union of the millennial expectation with applied science. The unanimity, which might at first seem wholly supernatural, was wrought by the telegraph and the press. These conveyed and published ‘the thrill of Christian sympathy, with the tidings of abounding grace, from multitudes to multitudes in every city simultaneously assembled, in effect almost bringing a nation together in one praying intercourse.’ Nor could it be only fortuitous that the movement should coincide with the Atlantic cable, for both were harbingers of that unity which is the forerunner of ultimate spiritual victory. ‘There can be little doubt that the millennial glory is to begin before many years.’”<sup>19</sup>

Although controversial subjects were banned from the prayer meetings, Timothy Smith said that “the awakening of 1858 appeared to contemporaries to deepen the national soul-searching and so pave the way for the election of Lincoln and the coming of the war.”<sup>20</sup>

However, the revival had an enormous impact in the South, as well as in the North. But this did not produce an anti-slavery feeling in the South as it did in the North. The South had its own form of millennialism, which included slavery. It reflected the division which

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<sup>18</sup> Miller. Op cit. pages 89 -90.

<sup>19</sup> Op cit. page 91.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Miller, Op cit, page 94.

had already occurred in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, causing Southern Methodists, and Presbyterians, to fight in defence of their culture based on slave labour.<sup>21</sup>

In 1860, Governor William Gist of South Carolina proclaimed a fast day to implore the direction and blessing of Almighty God. Thomas Smyth, who preached the sermon in Charleston, did not have a high opinion of Northern piety. He asked, “What is the religion of the North?” He answered, “Atheists, infidels, communists, free-lovers, rationalists, Bible haters, anti-Christian levellers and anarchists.” To the Southerners he said, “to you is given the high and holy keeping, above all other conservators, of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible; and of that liberty of conscience, free from the doctrines and commandments of men.”<sup>22</sup>

Both sides viewed the Civil War as a holy crusade. This revival served the American people well through the difficult times of the Civil War, but the post-war period provided a wide range of different problems. It was a very different world from what had existed before 1860, containing a range of new problems – industrialism, urbanisation, economic conflict. What response would be made to these?

In many ways, the Americanised version of this philosophy of civilization was brought together by the Rev. Jesse Peck, in his large book on the history of the Great Republic, published in 1868.<sup>23</sup>

Perry Miller says that Peck’s book was an effort to take stock of the situation created by the Northern victory in the Civil War. “His thesis was simply that God ‘formed this Great Republic, and that religion is the only life – force and organising power of liberty.’”

Revivalistic piety had become a kind of national religion, and was the primary force in maintaining the grand unity of national strength. This was the Evangelical Heritage.

Jesse Peck’s work was very optimistic in a number of different ways, including the style in which it was written. Part of his conclusion contained a quotation from the California Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1867:- “We recognise God as the Supreme Disposer of our national affairs: our peace and true prosperity depend upon our allegiance to him and his eternal principles of justice and right.”

Then he went on to say: “The history, which, in its principle and controlling facts, has passed before us, has shown the hand of God so distinctly, that it must be a strange blindness which can conceal it. He appears everywhere, not only as the Creator of our great continent, but as the grand, directing Providence, the gracious sovereign, of the nation. We have his laws, not only in the book of revelation, but in the spirit of liberty which he has imparted to our government; in the Christian character of our institutions; in the succession of facts rising above the power, and contrary to the inclinations, of men. These all reveal his stern condemnation of our personal and national sins, and his divine approval of individual and national virtue, of the true spirit of worship and piety throughout the land. We know his will. His orders to us are as distinct and peremptory as though they had been written upon the fair face of the heavens, or proclaimed in an audible voice to every ear from his throne above. We know that, as our Sovereign, he forbids us to worship idols; to be a nation of swearers, murderers or adulterers; to steal, bear false witness, or covet houses or beasts, people or lands, which belong to our neighbours; that he requires us to keep sacred the holy Sabbath, and to honour fathers and mothers; to love him with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves. We know that all our attempts to enslave men are denounced by his law and his administrative justice in our guilty land; and that he requires justice of us, - clear, distinct, elevated, universal justice. We know, that, as our great common Ruler, he disallows

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<sup>21</sup> Jack P. Maddex. “Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism.” In *American Quarterly*. Vol. 31, No.1. (Spring, 1979) pages 46 – 62.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Miller, Op cit, pages 93 – 94.

<sup>23</sup> Jesse Peck. *History of the Great Republic*. New York. Broughton and Wyman. 1868.

all our dishonesty, political corruption, intemperance and bribery. If the plea of ignorance with regard to the will of the sovereign could ever avail for any nation, after the marvellous revelations of God in our history, it certainly cannot avail for us.”<sup>24</sup>

Disobedience before God will mean that God’s “vitalizing, pervading, immortal power,” in the promotion of liberty, will be passed on to other peoples instead of to us. What responsibilities, and opportunities, does this pose for us, today?

### **Further Steps.**

This Philosophy of Civilization was developed further by subsequent writers – especially by Henry Clay Fish in 1874, and by Bishop Warren Candler in 1904.

In one sense, Fish’s book – *Handbook of Revivals*, - is a “How to do it” book, although it is not as strident or dogmatic, or as one-sided theologically, as Finney’s *Lectures on Revivals* had been, in 1835.<sup>25</sup> However, it was much more a book which promoted the philosophy of civilization that we have been describing. After an interesting definition of revivals in Chapter One, the second chapter gives a surprisingly extensive overview of the history of revivals. Chapter Three is very important, giving an overview of what the American nation owed to the revivals their country had seen. It showed what the revivals had achieved, and what impact they had created. From these chapters he concludes that that the Christian churches in the United States in 1874 had the strength which they possessed because of revivals.

Chapter Four talks about “the Divine Economy of Revivals,” or possible reasons why God acts in the way that He does through revivals, and, therefore, why they are so necessary. It sought to build upon an essay that Horace Bushnell had written nearly forty years earlier on this subject, which had been published first in the *Quarterly Christian Spectator* for 1838, but which had been re-published several times since.<sup>26</sup>

From the point of view of this present essay, the most important chapter is the last – chapter eighteen. Its title is – “Revivals – the Hope of the World.”

Firstly he discusses at some length the very low rate of growth in church membership amongst the American Congregational churches in the years 1860 – 1866. At this rate it would take the Congregational churches 100 years to double their membership, whereas the American population as a whole would be doubled four times in that period. At that rate, the salvation of mankind would be an utterly hopeless task.

He claimed that the other churches had not done much better, although Methodist and Baptist figures are not introduced.

Regarding the moral condition of American society, he said that it was easy to boast about “a great country; a good government; a common language; Christian churches and religious liberty; rapid communication; unbounded wealth; numerical growth and the like. But no one pretends that all this can insure a people’s welfare. With all this society may be corrupt from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. And few intelligent Christians will claim that the mass of the population, with all we are doing, is being thoroughly leavened with saving truth. It were pleasant to think so, but such is not the case, even in the most favoured communities.”<sup>27</sup>

He discussed then the ability, or lack, of the churches to have an impact on society, and concludes that revivals are essential to achieve what is needed in that area. He discussed

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<sup>24</sup> Peck. Ibid. pages 704 – 705.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Clay Fish. *Handbook of Revivals: for the Use of Winners of Souls*. (1st ed. 1874.) Harrisonburg, Va. Gano Books. 1988.

<sup>26</sup> *The Quarterly Christian Spectator*, conducted by an Association of Gentlemen. New Haven. Hezekiah Howe. Volume 10. 1838. Number One. pages 131 – 148.

<sup>27</sup> Fish. *Handbook*. page 398.

further the way country churches had declined in recent years – the crowd of members who joined in revivals thirty years ago, were passing from the scene, and others had moved to the cities. Also, it was a fact to consider that big city churches were not having very much impact on city life in the way one might hope. “Now there is no way of doing it but by powerful revivals.”

Even the great benevolent movements of the age could not progress without revivals, because new crops of workers were needed continually. Also, the only way to stop the benevolent societies from becoming secularised was for more revivals to occur.

If there are not powerful and widespread revivals, the task of evangelising the world will become more and more impossible. Fish quotes figures for his own day of the population of the world. – about 800 million souls. How are they to be converted to Christ? About 30 million births happen every year. To evangelise THAT generation, a million conversions at least must occur every year for thirty years. “Mighty revivals must become yet more and more frequent, until there shall cease to be intervals between them, and they shall run into each other, and flow together in one long and still spreading river of salvation.”

The writer who brought this treatment of the American Evangelical Philosophy of Civilization to its last level of statement, was Bishop Warren Candler.<sup>28</sup>

This book treats the subject both as an American issue, but also as a world-wide necessity. He begins with the basic assumption, with which many of the best thinkers on this subject will agree. “The forms and forces of national life take their rise in the religion of the people. National life is feeble or strong according as the faith of the people is faint or vigorous.”

We should also add, that the ethical system underpinning this religion should also be “high,” and not be providing a “lower” kind of system of morals.

This is all perfectly natural, because, in any world-view that a person may adopt, the religious and/or philosophical component is basic to all other factors. Even the atheist who wishes to build a world-view in which there is no God, and who thinks therefore that it has no religion, is making a mistake, because his basic premise IS a religious one. It is based upon a religion in which there is no God, and other factors in his system play the role that God would play, if He was acknowledged.

It was Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College, at the beginnings of the Second Great Awakening, who declared that when atheistic philosophies are used as the foundations of a society, then the moral standards practiced in the community will **always** tend to decline and deteriorate to lower levels.<sup>29</sup>

Candler quotes from Lamartine to emphasise what happened in France, when the nation turned to atheism, in 1789, and in the hundred years following that. Lamartine said, “I know, and I sigh when I think of it, that hitherto the French people have been the least religious of all the nations of Europe. The Republic of these men without a God was quickly stranded. The liberty won by so much heroism and so much genius, did not find in France a conscience to shelter it, a God to avenge it, a People to defend it, against that atheism which was called glory.”

A great deal of this book is well worth the study. He used the method of writing chapters on each of the major revivals of recent centuries – 1. The revivals in the old world which gave rise to the American colonies, 2. The Great Awakening of 1740, 3. The Wesleyan Revival, 4. The Great Revival of 1800, 5. The Great Revival of 1857, 6. The Revival in the Days of Moody and Sankey, to illustrate the progress which came to the American nation,

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<sup>28</sup> Warren A Candler. *Great Revivals and the Great Republic*. Nashville, Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. 1904. (This copy, reprinted 1924.)

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Dwight. *The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy*: in two discourses. Dr. Dwight’s sermons to the candidates for the Baccalaureate in Yale College, September 9, 1797. New Haven. 1798.

and to the world, as a result of these spiritual movements. This treatment of these subjects has become a more common method of approaching the subject.

His main concluding chapter is in two sections. In the first he speaks of the challenges facing the United States, and in England, and in the second section speaks of what great dangers face America, and the world at large, if the moral and spiritual foundations upon which Western Society is based are allowed to crumble and fail. They will fail in their God-given task.

He concludes:- "If the movement of Providence over the Anglo-Saxon nations is not to terminate in a blind alley and end in a frustrated plan, they must advance in the power of the same divine grace which has led them safe this far. They must continue to be lifted and strengthened by greater and greater awakenings, inspired and invigorated by greater and greater revivals of religion, till their mission is fulfilled."<sup>30</sup>

Other books have appeared since 1904 along similar lines, but these sources are the main formative statements of this philosophy.

The period from 1830 to 1857 had been strongly influenced by the personality and work of Charles G. Finney. During the thirty years from 1870 onwards, the main person of influence in evangelism in the U.S.A. was D. L. Moody. But he was joined by many other lesser lights. It was also a period marked by the rapid growth of the Baptist and Methodist denominations, which affected greatly the development of the new States and territories west of the Mississippi. The Holiness movement was also a very important factor.

There is also a very important English version of this philosophy. This was stated most clearly by the English historian, J. R. Green, in his *A Short History of the English People*, and by the famous journalist, W. T. Stead, in *The National Significance of Revivals*.

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<sup>30</sup> Candler. Op cit, page 307.

# DOCUMENTS

## THE NECESSITY OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION TO THE PERPETUITY OF OUR CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

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[This article was written just a few months before the outbreak of the Great Revival of 1831, which was seen as a wonderful step towards the fulfilment of that blessing for which the article is pleading.]

The dangers which threaten these United States, and the free institutions here established, are numerous and appalling. They arise, in part, from our vast extent of territory, our numerous and increasing population, from diversity of local interests, the power of selfishness and hate. All these are powerful causes of strife, and never were they in more powerful or terrific action.

These causes, alone sufficient to set on fire the course of nature, have, during several of the last years, been wielded, concentrated, and blown into fury, by a mad ambition. The thirst of power and dominion has fallen upon some of our leading politicians, to whom the ordinary elements of strife seem tame and lazy in the work of ruin; - and they - regardless of consequences, and with a view to subserve their own political ends - have heated the furnace of anger seven-fold, and raised to a seven-fold height the winds and waves of political commotion.

To these must be added the corrupting influence of a pre-eminent national prosperity, productive of voluptuousness, extravagance, and rash speculation, and leading, in many instances, to reckless poverty and misery.

The increase of intellectual power too, without a corresponding increase of moral restraint, and this connected with the universality of suffrage, presents an ocean of unstable mind to the ruthless power of mad ambition.

Nor are these our only sources of danger. There are the Atheistic, anti-social conspiracy which, amid the war of elements, would blot out the sun, suspend moral attraction, dissolve society, and turn out the whole family of human animals into one common field of unbridled appetite and lust. And there is a religious party spirit, destroying the confidence of the great Christian denominations in one another, inflaming them with jealousy and hatred, and paralysing their energy of action against a common foe, and for the cause of their common Lord. There is also the perversion of governmental influence to foment these jealousies, and break the moral power of Christianity, by playing off one denomination against another, still drawing the church in some form into an alliance with the state, and cursing the nation with the double source of a religious and political conflict, agitating us in all our elections.

Another danger not to be overlooked, arises from the intrigues of Catholic Europe, through the medium of our own Catholic population, to give a predominance to their religion with all its anti-republican tendencies, and thus to divide us, and destroy our institutions.

Such are some of the dangers which threaten us. And they are not fictitious; nor are they trifles magnified for rhetorical effect. The language I have employed is indeed strong language, but it falls unmeasurably below the amplitude and imminence of the evils which have been described. The laws of the moral nature of a great nation are here operating powerfully in a state of perversion, and with such unmanageable violence, as bids defiance to human wisdom and to human power. Unless some subduing, tranquilizing influence can be applied, superior to all which man can apply, our race as a nation is swift, and our destruction sure.

Let me then call the attention of my readers to *our only remaining source of hope – GOD – and the interpositions of his Holy Spirit, in great and general Revivals of Religion, to reform the hearts of the people, and make the nation good and happy.*

There is for us assuredly but one remedy, and that is, such a state of the affections towards God and our neighbour, as the Law and the Gospel require:- Not the ascendancy of Christians over the world, but the world, in the day of God's power, becoming Christian. The influence which is necessary to save us is the influence of truth, made effectual by the supernatural influence of God's Holy Spirit; - not supernatural as revealing any new truth, or creating new facilities, or suspending or doing violence to their exercise; but supernatural in this respect, that God accomplishes by the truth that change in the affections which the interests of time and eternity alike require, and which no human skill avails to achieve.

It is not to be supposed a thing beyond the power of God, to effect such a change of human character as will reconcile universal liberty and boundless prosperity, with their permanence and purity. Neither reason nor philosophy requires us to suppose, that God has created a race whom he cannot, if it seems good to him, reclaim and govern, in accordance with the highest degree of temporal prosperity.

The benevolence and mercy of God would lead us to infer, from what he has done in providing redemption, that he will do much more than he has yet done in its application. Everything shows that his purposes are tending to intellectual, and civil, and social results, much beyond what has ever before existed. And this analogy, coupled with his mercy, would lead us to anticipate a more than corresponding moral and religious amelioration. In this too we are confirmed by the consideration, that every other cause has been tried and has completely failed.

1. Force has failed. It may intimidate and perpetuate ignorance, superstition, and hypocrisy, but it cannot compel benevolence, honesty, purity, and the graces of the Christians character; and the more force has been relied on, has human nature been brutified and debased.

2. The cultivation of intellect has failed. Ages the most distinguished for intellectual culture have been alike distinguished for voluptuousness, and all the elements of moral dissolution.

3. The insufficiency of *creeds* to preserve faith and holiness has been long since determined. It is the right of men to express their views of Christian doctrines in creeds, as much as of states to express, in bills of right, and constitutions, their political faith. Nor are creeds any encroachment on other men's rights, so long as they are not required to subscribe to them. Religious liberty includes the right to have creeds, if men please, as really as to have none, if they please. Nor are creeds the setting up of human opinion above the Bible. This is a gross misrepresentation. They are simply an honest avowal of the particular sense in which the Bible is understood, on points on which Christians differ. Is there any treason in this? Nor have creeds been without their use. They have been powerful memorials of

truth, descending from age to age, and regarded with affectionate veneration by those who receive them, as the faith once delivered to the saints – the faith of the Reformers, and of a pious ancestry.

Nor is it true that those who denounce creeds have none. Do they believe nothing? Then are they sceptics, and not Christians. Do they believe Christianity in any form? Then do they have creeds. They may not indeed be reduced to articles and printed; but are they the less real, or the less efficacious? Is a living creed less influential than a creed on paper? Or [is] a creed in the head and heart, [less] than a creed in the pocket? Those whose creeds are not printed understand one another, and act in concert for the defence of a common faith with as much accuracy as veteran soldiers, and with as much zeal and perseverance as characterise any sect whatever. Creeds which are ambulatory, each page of which, as it moves on, is cancelled as mistaken, to be followed, not by new truths discovered, but new mistakes to be cancelled, ought not to be printed. As well might the Almanack for 1831 be stereotyped for all future times.

But Scriptural, venerable, and useful as creeds have been and are, their efficacy falls unspeakably below the exigencies of our national necessity. They do not produce holiness of themselves; nor do they, of course, ensure it; nor can they perpetuate themselves against innovation and subversion, in seasons of religious declension. While they remain, they are mere technical landmarks between truth and error – mounds against which the waves beat and are rolled back – and their existence in the letter only, without the spirit, killeth instead of giving life. Of all stupidity, orthodox stupidity is the most dreadful. It ought to be remembered that ice palaces may be formed, and have been formed, of orthodox as well as of heterodox materials, and when the creed, which is but the means of promoting religion, is regarded with more zeal than religion itself, the reign of high church and creed idolatry has begun.

4. A faithful evangelical ministry is not alone sufficient to diffuse and perpetuate moral purity. It is doubtless the most powerful cause which man is permitted to wield. But they who wield it are not suffered to continue by reason of death, and they cannot form to holiness the heart of a single successor to the pastoral office, or of a single person of the generation to follow – without a concurring supernatural agency.

Instances are not wanting in the Primitive Age, at the Reformation, and in our own country, of the rapid declension of the evangelical ministry, both in doctrine and piety. And if the race of holy ministers could be succeeded by holy men, their power is unequal to the toil and effort which is indispensable to bring a great, intellectual, rich, contentious, and proud people into a willing subjection to the laws of Christ. Amid the elements of selfishness, and pride, and covetousness, and ambition, the mere human power of preaching is like the impotent expostulation of old Eli to his sons, or like binding Samson with cords of flax.

5. Evangelical churches, were they formed and extended over the land, would be no sure defence. Their action would extend only through one generation, - and then, without the renovating power of the Spirit, the churches would be filled with mere nominal Christians, and a cold and formal orthodoxy, falling back upon heresy and error, would ensue.

There is no remedy for self-ruined man but regeneration; and there is no remedy for corrupt, agitated, and threatened communities, but revivals of religion. ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’

6. Alike impotent for the preservation of truth and holiness are the various forms of church organisation. These have been the occasion of bigoted attachment, of furious controversy, and of unfounded confidence, as if the grace of God and life eternal hung on modes of worship and forms of discipline.

They are important, doubtless, as means to an end, as the scaffolding to the spiritual building it helps to raise; and some modes of organisation, without doubt, approximate nearer than others to the real evangelical pattern. But if we had that pattern to a certainty, and all the churches with one accord were organized exactly right, the influence of this church order to produce holiness, and control the mighty causes of national ruin, would be but the power of the cobweb to hold the whirlwind, or chain down the ocean. That estimation of forms which overlooks the vitality of religion and the powerful energies of the Spirit in its rapid production, and with denominational selfishness looks only to its own formal, slow-paced movement, is the Christianity which has ruined, but never saved the nations; and however, in days of tranquillity, it may rear temples to be admired, and sustain the fine arts of God's worship – the architecture, sculpture, music, and oratory of Christianity – it is not a religion which will stand the conflict which is coming on. It is the religion behind whose shield the enemies of Christ will find shelter, instead of resistance, and whence they will aim their shafts at the followers of the Lamb.

The government of God is the only government which will hold society, against depravity within and temptation without; and this it must do by the force of its own law written upon the heart. This is that unity of the Spirit and that bond of peace which alone can perpetuate national purity and tranquillity – that law of universal and impartial love by which alone nations can be kept back from ruin. There is no safety for republics but in self-government, under the influence of a holy heart, swayed by the government of God.

But even these principles of national conservation, to avail, must become immensely more extensive and operative than they have been or are; for it is not the church which is to govern the world, but the world must become Christian and govern itself. There is as much liberty in self-government, according to the laws of the devil; - as much free agency and republicanism in holiness, as in vice and irreligion. The renovating power must then operate on greater masses of mind, than it ever has done. It must move onward in the work of mercy more rapidly, more simultaneously, through towns, and cities, and states, and nations. It was by such powerful and simultaneous changes of character that Christianity moved up the tide of human hate and prejudice and scorn, and rose to empire over Paganism. The existing moral power of the Gospel, with all its supernatural efficiency, is nothing to the tremendous causes of opposition which are every day developing their strength and concentrating their power. A few drops in the Mississippi might well stop and turn back the whole descending flood, as Christianity attempt, in its present state, to turn the public sentiment of the nation. The wicked will do wickedly, and will claim the right to do so, without the hindrance of law or shame, and there is no stopping the insurrection, but as the hearts of men, by the grace of God, shall be radically changed.

Since the overthrow of Puritan public sentiment, it is only recently that Christian principles have been thought of, as exerting any influence in national policy. And the first indication of such intrusion of conscience and principle, has been met with sneers and contumely in the halls of national legislation, while it has sent alarm through all the ranks of worldliness and sin. An eternity of such slow-paced and limited success, as had for centuries past attended the preaching of the Gospel, would leave the nation still under the dominion of the powers of darkness.

We have fallen upon other times than the church of God ever saw before – times in which the same amount of religious and moral influence which once availed to advance the cause of Christ will not now enable it to hold its own. The intellect of man has waked up to a new activity – has burst the chains that bound it, and the barriers that confined it, and with ten-fold means of influence, is going forth in its mightiness to agitate society. Old foundations are broken up, and old principles and maxims are undergoing a thorough and perilous revision, and that too upon a mighty scale.

In our colonial state we were few, and poor, and feeble. Intercourse was difficult and rare, and moral causes insulated and local. What was said in one colony was not heard in another. But now, each colony is a state, and each state a nation, and intercourse is rapid, and local causes tell in their result throughout the whole, as every stroke on the body is felt through all its members. Nations compose our confederacy, and nations our religious denominations, and nations the army of the aliens. Since then such new and increased action has commenced, for the moral energies to be stationary, is relatively to retrograde to imbecility and insignificance. The relative increase of unconverted population, by birth and emigration and irreligious and corrupting influence, without a corresponding increase of divine influence to render the government of God effectual, would supersede the persecution of the church only by placing her in such obscurity, as to be overlooked both by fear and by hate.

Some who, reasoning from past analogies, think it [is] most desirable that conversions should be dilatory and gradual, rather than sudden and multitudinous, forget that the revivals in the kingdom of darkness are moving on with terrific haste and power. Millions are bursting into that kingdom, while hundreds only are added to the kingdom of Christ. **It is no time for ministers to think themselves faithful and successful without revivals.** The seed cannot be long buried without being trodden down past coming up, or being choked instantly by thorns when it vegetates. The springs of evil are bursting out, and sending their hasty and copious contributions, to form the river whose mighty and angry waves roll and dash and foam against that stream which is destined to make glad the city of our God. On steamboats and canals, and railroads, and turnpikes, the ungodly are gathering together against the sacramental host, to obliterate the Sabbath, and raze Zion to her foundations. Nothing but the power of almighty God can sustain the churches in this tremendous conflict. Nothing but speedy, extensive and powerful revivals of religion can save our nation from impending ruin. Patriotism may help, but cannot be relied on as a principal. Philosophy may speculate correctly, but cannot stand the shock of so mighty a collision. Religious education is that without which we cannot stand, but not that whose efficacy alone will avail. Nothing but a phalanx of holy hearts around the Sabbath can save it. Nothing but such a national change of heart and affections as will cause the Sabbath to become a delight, and the sanctuary of the Lord honourable, can preserve our institutions from desecration and ruin. In the day of God's power, the nation must become willing to obey him, or its destruction is inevitable.

Theological Seminaries can do much. They can extend the field of knowledge, increase the amount of learning, and elevate, in respect to elocution and style, the productions of the pulpit and the press. They can provide a ministry – such as the ministry must be to meet the exigencies of the day – more literary and respectable than that of past generations. But let it not be thought that all this can be gained, unattended by new temptations and dangers. There is danger that, studying in classes and receiving instruction from lectures, the tax of personal responsibility and the discipline of personal, original investigation may decline. There is danger that a general indeterminate Orthodoxy may gradually supplant that precision and exactness of definition and knowledge which was given to theology by Edwards, and has descended through the schools of private instruction.

There is danger that our young men will be much more perfected in taste and literature, than in the duties of the pastoral care, - that they will get more of the theory and less of the practice of their profession, which will render their ministry formal and imbecile. There is danger that the ambition and rivalries of the college may be transferred to the seminary, and the seeds of future jealousy and envy be nurtured, just where they ought to be extinguished. And there is danger that in the severity of protracted study and the acquisition of much learning (both of which are good) there may be a relative diversion of the mind from the means and duties of vital godliness, and a cold palsy, a dead palsy, fasten upon the heart; -

the very door, wide open day and night, through which all faithful revival preaching goes out of the church, and all heresies come in.

Let me not be thought to depreciate the blessings of theological seminaries; but he who supposes them beyond perversion, dreams. He who does not understand that Satan surrounds them with all his wiles, does not yet understand his policy; and though all the good men to whom they are committed watch and pray, as they do, against these dangers, there is no effectual safeguard, but in such copious revivals, as will bring out in the community around them a tone of evangelical sentiment and feeling which will not permit them to retrograde, - a public feeling and judgment and taste, which will render learned dullness intolerable, and the glittering eloquence of words, without thought and weight, contemptible.

Revivals are indispensable to sanctify the literature of the nation, and to associate intellectual culture with holiness of heart. In all our systems of education, from the common school up to the college, these have been dissociated. The care of the heart, if any care was bestowed upon it, has been turned over to the nursery, while the intellect and the memory have been sent to school to receive a separate education. The result has been such as might be expected. The depravity of the heart, unwatched, unresisted, and in some respects deliberately fostered, has made fearful profligacy in the government and perversion of the understanding.

The neglect of moral culture and the power of social contamination in our common schools is in many instances dreadful. And in academies and colleges, the principles most sedulously cultivated and relied on, as the spring of action, are pride, emulation, and ambition. As if they needed no check in this bad world - as if they could not by hot-bed culture, added to native strength of soil, be made to grow too rank - the principles, which of all others have most obstructed vital Christianity, setting the world on fire without, and exciting the most unyielding controversy within till the Christian's dying day, are all the way from childhood up studiously cultivated. Unless this unhallowed fire can be put out, instead of being kindled, in the progress of our national education, we are undone. What wonder is it, that ministers should have jealousies and envyings, who, from their cradle, till their public education is completed, have been stimulated to action by principles of pride, rivalry and ambition? What wonder that ministers and Christians of different denominations should be filled with envy, instead of joy at each other's prosperity, whose entire intellectual culture has been goaded on by the stimulus of such ungodly principles? What wonder that physicians, and poets, and orators, and lawyers, are agitated with feuds, and behold each other through the medium of green-eyes envy? What wonder that Bonapartean hearts burn hot and beat high under the unostentatious garb of republican simplicity, setting on fire the course of nature, as if set on fire of hell? How can we expect every where to move men by pride in their education, and have them meek and lowly in heart in their subsequent action? But how shall the evils of an anti-Christian education be remedied? They cannot be, until regeneration has formed a public sentiment which in education will co-operate with the Gospel, to repress and extirpate, and not to nurture, the most baleful and powerful passions of the human heart.

No influence but that of the wisdom from above, which is pure and gentle, and easy to be entreated, can unite the local, jarring interests of this great nation, and constitute us benevolently one, - so that if one member suffers all will sympathise; and if one is honoured, all will rejoice. Nothing, short of this, will put out the fires of ambition, and permit our troubled sea and heaving earth to rest. The people, might they be let alone, would not rush upon one another in such angry collisions. But there are men who will not let them alone. Opposing partisans need them as the ladder of their ambition, and as if jealousy and furious hate were harmless and safe as the breath of zephyrs, they blow the coals of strife, and rouse up the divided nation to contend furiously against itself. The political papers vomit forth

invective, and scorn, and slander till the national heart burns with malignant fires and throbs with indignation. While in the highest places, the men whose fortunes we have followed walk naked, and before the nation and the world foam out their shame.

Equally hopeless, without an effusion of love by the Holy Ghost, is the cessation of religious strife, and the concordance of the great denominations under the banner of a common Christianity – in all the fundamental principles of which they are agreed. Like troops of different nations, our Lord is calling us, and the enemy is compelling us to a coalition; but how slow, and with what jealousies, and hesitations, and reluctances, do we bear with or give up our little differences; and with what divided and balanced efficiency do we serve Him, who gave his life for the world! Oh for those days of grace and supplication, which shall cast out fear, and fill our hearts with love, and our hands with those implements which are to reap the harvest of the world – which will fill the garner of every denomination and make their place too strait! One Pentecostal day would do more to tranquillize and harmonize the church of God, than ages of controversy.

Nothing but the grace of God, subduing opposition and shedding abroad love in the hearts of men with unparalleled rapidity and power, can wake up the world from its Lethean sleep, stimulate to feeding its paralytic heart, and stay the floods of worldliness and the vortex of pleasure, and burst the chains of caste, by which the god of this world keeps up the non-intercourse of his subjects with holiness and heaven.

The revival of real holiness never commences and moves on in a congregation or town, or city, without a strong reacting sensation; - and it is only by the prostrating rapidity of revivals, that the infuriated resistance of persecution can be superseded. The witnesses must rise suddenly; a nation must be born in a day. The activity and resources required to enlighten and disenthral the world, demand a vast and rapid increase of holiness by the power of God's Spirit. Religion, real heartfelt religion, is to become, at no distant day, the predominant characteristic of man, the governing principle of empires and of the world. But this, though not to be accomplished by the might and power of man, is to be accomplished by his instrumentality, and by moral means as much in advance of what have been applied, as the results are to be greater than have ever yet been witnessed.

The political renovation of the world by revolutions will demand enterprise, and treasure, and blood. But the whole boundless sacrifice and victory will be a wanton waste of life and treasure, unless Christianity, with its healing and tranquillizing power, may follow the shock of battles, and staunch the flowing blood, and bind up the wounds of a bleeding world. But to do this, no accidental effort will suffice; no handfuls of charity occasionally dropped, as the reapers of Boaz met the exigencies of a single individual. The world itself must be aroused, - the Redeemed and emancipated part, to enlighten and emancipate those that sit in darkness and the region of the shadow of death. The emancipation of man – the intellectual, political, and moral emancipation of the world, must engross the desires, and concentrate the wisdom, the charity, and the enterprise of the world itself.

Revolution is to liberty and virtue only what the breaking up of winter is to the future harvest. It only removes obstacles, and throws the field open to cultivation, which must be desolate still, unless the plough pass over it, and the seed of future harvests be sown. But who shall break up this wide spread fallow, and sow this harvest of the world? I weep to think how many oppose it, - and how few and faint the efforts which urge it on. Truly the harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few; Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth his Spirit, and thrust in labourers.

I am aware that revivals of religion, so called, have been regarded by many with suspicion, and by not a few with aversion, as the device of men, and the result of human weakness and credulity. But all who thus judge, form their opinions from hearsay, through prejudiced mediums, and not from a correct knowledge of the real, moral results of these

days of mercy. That they may be abused, is certain; and so may civil liberty be abused. That sometimes they are alloyed by enthusiasm and fanaticism is true; but what great change of human character and condition was ever accomplished without defect? The Reformation, though the sunrise of liberty, was attended by noxious vapours and obscurations, which its growing light has chased away. The defects of Luther and of Calvin were spots on their sun; but still they were suns, without whose blessed light, the night of ages might still have brooded over the earth. In the civil wars of England there were defects enough in the Puritans for infidels to ridicule and Christians to lament; but if, to escape these defects, the world had been bereft of their virtues, still the untutored savage had dwelt in his forest, and the rod of iron had still ruled the children of the Pilgrims. Our own blessed revolution, was it marked by no excess and folly, and stained by no crime? And yet the great *principle* which beat in the heart of the nation was that of liberty.

Why must the moral renovation of man alone be expected to move on, unattended by the accidents of human imperfection, - or be discarded as wholly human, and unworthy of confidence and gratitude to God? When anything which God in his mercy does for man, by human instrumentality, is perfect, the imperfection of revivals may occasion doubt concerning their origin and their utility.

For more than thirty years, there have been a series of revivals in our land, with increasing power, extent and frequency - unalloyed in a great measure by those irregularities which had marred some of the previous seasons of refreshing. Generally they have been free from enthusiasm and excess - have been seasons of silent attention and deep feeling, of clear, intellectual, argumentative, doctrinal preaching, with pungent applications to the conscience, attended with deep convictions of sins, and with subsequent joy and peace in believing. Their effect upon religion and morals has been most auspicious. They have furnished, probably, three fourths of the living ministry of the evangelical churches of our land, and nearly three-fourths of the members of the churches. They have reared and sustained the family altar, and trained up the rising generation in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They have provided hearts, and hands, and means, to superintend the manifold ministrations required to organize infant and Sabbath schools, and all our benevolent voluntary associations.. Thirty years ago, it was a rare thing to meet with a young person in the church; and now, more than half the professors of religion are in early life. And it may be truly said, that almost the entire moral energy by which the cause of Christ now moves on from conquering to conquer, is the result of those revivals of religion which for thirty years have been enrolling, augmenting and disciplining the sacramental host.

It has been objected, that revivals of religion are seasons of mere temporary excitement - transient as the overflowing of the summer's brook, and evanescent as visions of a heated imagination. But instead of this, they are the moral heart of this great nation, whose pulsation throbs with unceasing stroke and rising healthful tone, propelling the life-blood from the centre to every extremity. And instead of febrile dreams, and ephemeral emotions, they are fast waking up the nation to the abiding realities of God's eternal government, and affording fast practical illustration that 'godliness is profitable unto all things, both for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come.'

It is true that the intense interest of a revival, when in a few weeks or months hundreds are brought out of darkness into marvellous light, does not continue. It is not needed, perhaps could not be permanently sustained; but that the results are transient is not true. If there be religion on earth, sustained by the exhibition of all the fruits of the Spirit, Christian graces, and good works, that religion is the abiding product of revivals. If death-beds of peace, and hopes full of immortality, are the seal of heaven's work in the soul, then does God progressively, for forty and fifty years after the revival has passed away, set his seal to it that it is his most blessed work.

It has been inquired, whether a more gradual dispensation of the Spirit were not better than these sudden outpourings. But we have been accustomed to feel that God is the best judge of this matter, and that man cannot make a revival either gradual or sudden. When he gives us drop by drop, we are thankful; and when the cloud of mercy above bursts and pours down a flood at once, we dare not request him to stay his hand, - we cannot but exult and rejoice in the exuberance of his mercy. Nor can we perceive how it is possible that 800,000,000 of souls, or any considerable part of this number, can be washed from their sins, within the most distant time, to which the millennium can be deferred according to prediction, by single drops falling in such slow and deliberate succession as should not excite the fears, and should satisfy the prudence, of some apparently very good men. We doubt not that greater revivals than have been are indispensable, to save our nation, and to save the world, by giving universal and saving empire to the kingdom of Christ; and as clouds thicken and dangers press, we look for them with strong confidence, and with the increased urgency of unutterable desire.

Since the preceding sheets were written, what they anticipate as demanded by the exigencies of the church and nation, has begun to be verified in the providence of God. From the first of January, a series of revivals have burst out and are moving on, so extensive, numerous, and rapid, as to surpass enumeration, and to outrun calculation. The scenes of wonder and joy which are opening upon us in these times of refreshing it is impossible to describe. Those who witness them, and those who feel their transforming power, and those angelic messengers who bear to heaven the tidings of souls renewed and sins forgiven, can alone appreciate the glories of this rising day. We can only say "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him.' 'Joy to the world, the Lord is come.'

*The Spirit of the Pilgrims*. Volume four. September, 1831. pages 467 – 479.

# OUR COUNTRY FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD

**Rev. David H. Riddle.**

A Sermon in Behalf of the American Home Missionary Society, preached in the cities of New York and Brooklyn. May, 1851. New York. A.H.M.S. 1851.  
The Rev. David H. Riddle. D.D. of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## **Psalm 67: 1 – 2.**

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.”

The beautiful principle embodied in these words, we propose, on this occasion, to apply to the subject of Home Missions; for rightly understood, we think it places that enterprise in its most attractive and sublime relations. This principle, if we have apprehended it, is, that the establishment and prevalence of right religious influences and institutions in our own land, is the surest and speediest method of securing the evangelization of the world. The principle was originally applied, of course, to those who lived under the Old Testament dispensation. This Psalm belonged to the liturgical service of the Jewish church; and was a portion, therefore, not merely of the private devotional reading of that people, but of their public religious education. It was designed and adapted to develop a proper spirit in the mass of the people, and to shape the genius of the ancient church.

The peculiar structure of the passage shows the close relation existing between the spiritual prosperity of God’s ancient people, and the salvation of the nations of the earth. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us” In these words is acknowledged God’s blessing as the true source of national excellence and prosperity, and the only security of their glorious institutions. But why did they so earnestly desire this blessing and the perpetuity of their national institutions? “That thy way” – God’s revealed method of salvation – “may be known on earth, thy saving health” – God’s means of curing the moral maladies of man – “among the nations.” “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall praise him.”

This view of the passage, which accords, we think, with all just principles of philosophy, exhibits the ancient church in a lovely, to some, possibly in a novel aspect. Even in the ancient church, when under tutors and governors, till the times appointed by the Father, there was cultivated an expansive benevolence, which embraced the wants and wretchedness of the race – a spirit which taught them to esteem themselves trustees of the blessings of God’s salvation for “all nations.” To every child of Abraham his native land was peculiarly lovely, associated as it was in every hill and valley with so many glorious recollections of the past; the land of promise, where the battles of the Lord had been fought by the heroes of faith; where the bones of the Patriarchs reposed; where the Ark of the Covenant dwelt, and the Shekinah appeared. In their jubilees piety and patriotism blended in the rapturous cry, “He hath not dealt so with any nation.” But, when the true spirit of the dispensation of types and shadows was imbibed, their country, the glory of all lands, was most glorious in its destined relations to God’s plans towards the world, - loveliest, as the chosen centre whence the “lines” of “saving health” should “go forth through all the earth,” and bless and beautify “all nations.” A genuine patriotism baptized with the spirit of religion, because, as it always must, a blessed and world-wide philanthropy. In his nation

was embosomed, and afterwards manifested, “a light” which was to lighten the Gentiles, as well as be “the glory of his people Israel.”

When the church should obey the voice of her Lord, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,” then nations would come to her light, and Kings to the brightness of her rising. The forces of the Gentiles, the abundance of the sea, the flocks of Kedar, the rams of Nebaioth, gold and incense, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, - the peculiar products of every clime and the glory of every kindred, were to beautify his sanctuary, and make the place of his feet glorious. And for this purpose, to them were entrusted the Oracles of God, and to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises. Theirs were the fathers, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.

A Jew, rightly trained by the inner spirit and genius of this dispensation, would therefore prize his institutions, and pray for their continuance; would most earnestly of all desire God’s blessing, the sunshine of his face and favor on his native land, for the sake and salvation of others, yea of “*all nations.*” “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.” “As the new wine is found in the cluster,” potentially and in Purpose, and one saith, “destroy it not, for a blessing is in it,” the Jew would rejoice that one whose word was omnipotent for preservation, had said this of his land and nation, because in it, to God’s eye and the eye of faith, was found an element, not yet indeed matured, the new wine of the kingdom of God, which yet all nations were to drink for refreshment and salvation – the prelibation of a nobler cup at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Brethren, as Americans, and especially as American Christians, we are privileged as was the ancient Jew, and for analogous reasons, to love our country, and to pray for God’s blessing and the sunshine of his favor on our native land! Patriotism, without boastful presumption, may say, “He hath not dealt so with any nation.” God never made such another country as ours. The sun, as he goes careering and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, from one end of heaven to the other, does not shine on another land like this. Yes! we may, and for good and substantial reasons, **love our country.** But there is a nobler sentiment which should be enkindled in every soul, and incorporated with every passion, and refine and ennoble every thought and feeling and action of all our mighty population – **our country for the sake and salvation of our world.** If we are true to our mission, and imbibe the spirit of our Master, and walk worthy of the manhood of the church, and be not rebuked by the manifestations even of its pupilage; American patriotism, baptized by piety, must become a world-embracing – world benefiting - world-saving philanthropy!

We should seek the blessing of God on our country, and labor for its spiritual prosperity, and the universal establishment, in all our borders, of Christian institutions and their collateral and consequent influences. And he is not a Christian, in deed and in truth, who does not do this to the full extent of his ability and opportunity, by his wealth, example and influence. But Oh! what an increment of motive and energy will be added to all, if we do this, as the willing instruments and conscious trustees of the great God, for the speedy and universal evangelization of our race.

On this high ground, we desire to place the enterprise, and obligations, and glory of Home Missions. We plead and labor for the establishment and extension of a sound ministry, and the evangelical influences which invariably cluster around it, beneficent to man and conservative of his interests in all his relations. By the enlargement of Home Missions, correspondently with our unparalleled enlargement of territory, and increase of population, we desire to secure the prevalence of true piety and Christian principle at home; but in so doing, we are pleading and laboring for a world’s redemption, for the good of a race for

which Christ died, and over which he is set to reign; and thus, indirectly, indeed but effectually and practically, we are fulfilling the injunction of the Master, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." We try to fulfil this intensive dispensation of Christianity in our land as represented by David, that so "the mustard seed," the symbol of its extension, may grow to its destined proportions, and happy spirits from all nations may sing amidst its branches, and thence to take their flight, in joyous myriads, and nestle amidst the branches of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, where all at last, of every tribe, and kingdom, and clime, will sing together the new song of Moses and the Lamb.

Let our whole land be leavened, our country thoroughly evangelized – let all our institutions be brought under the sanctifying influences of Christian principles; let all our populations, high and low, rich and poor, learned and rude, from the President who occupies the people's house, to the peasant who inhabits the lowliest hamlet or hovel of our Western wilds, be baptized with the spirit of Jesus Christ; let Christianity of a pure apostolic type, reign without a rival in all our councils, modify all our legislation, be the inspiring genius of all our commercial, agricultural and manufacturing interests; let its precepts direct the application of our increasing and superfluous wealth, and the grace of its author guide us in projecting and prosecuting our schemes of philanthropy; let America, in a word, as the result of God's blessing on her institutions of religion and organs of benevolent action, once fully realize her responsibility to God, and see aright her mission to mankind, and the way of God would soon be known on earth, and his *saving health* would soon be experienced among all nations. Right institutions, civil and religious – the common heritage, and which appertain equally and inalienably to all nations, and which we hold in trust for the rest of the race, would soon be enjoyed by this dark and troubled world, tossed so long by tempests on the surges of unavailing change. The prayer of the great American church of all denominations, caught from the ancient oracle, should be, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among the nations." And every one who has a heart to love God, his country and his kind, should say, Amen! For it is the prayer and response of enlightened patriotism, enlarged philanthropy, and true Christianity.

This position of Home Missions is based on the assumption of the immense influence of our country, for good or evil, on the other nations of the earth, - a postulate which we presume will be questioned by no intelligent Christian or citizen who has allowed his mind at all, or intelligently at least, to dwell upon the subject. The providence and past dealings of God seem to say to our country, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" In the arrangements of that Being who "setteth up one and putteth down another," whether it be spoken of a nation or a man only, we have come to a position of peculiar, at least, if we cannot say peerless eminence, amongst existing nations; to the possession of extensive, if not incomparable influence, giving us incalculable power over the rest of the world. With a gladness of gratitude, not unmingled with solicitude for the fearful responsibilities involved, we gather evidence of this, alike from the acknowledgement of friends, and the unwilling but not less unequivocal admissions of our enemies; from the hopes of the struggling masses, and the fears of the dominant and oppressive minorities of the earth. And was there ever "such a time as this," when so many elements derived from the intimations of prophecy and occurrent events, combined to constitute and justify the expectations of a crisis, and when possession of power involved such mighty responsibilities? Granting that there is to be an end, as unquestionably there is an expectation, that God – who has allowed these anticipations to be gradually formed in the great heart of humanity, deepening and an atheistic age, "all things are to continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," in never-ending cycles of expectation and disappointment, is unphilosophical, as well as untrue; do not the signs and the tendencies of the times, the voice of prophecy, the

wants of the world, the deep cry of our baffled race “made subject to vanity,” all seem to indicate, that soon God’s “way is to be known on earth, and his saving health among all nations?” and that our country, for this purpose has been raised up, and trained, and disciplined, and preserved through all our past vicissitudes and perils as a nation?

Surely God has a purpose in so ordering events that elements of power, at particular periods, should come into the possession of particular nations, so that they may exert a decisive influence on the destinies of the age and the fate of the world. “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace,” said the Saviour, to a nation of old; “but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Thus it has been often in the past history of the world. If nations could have seen their dispensation, as we now see it – could our light have been thrown back on their path, or the issues thundered in trumpet tones, how different would have been their consciousness of their mission, and possibly, the course of their conduct.

At one point, had one more onward step been taken, Carthage, the representative of African, instead of Rome, the representative of European civilization, might have triumphed, and been mistress of the world: and at another, had some other general, instead of Grouchy, been selected, who would have scorned to taint his itching palm with gold, the tide of battle might have been turned at Waterloo, and with it, the fate of the world. God, who, “hath determined the times, and the bounds of our habitations before appointed,” seems to have purposed that our country, if conscious of her mission and prepared to meet it, may exert a mighty, possibly a decisive influence on the destinies of the earth, and have a glorious part assigned her amidst the last acts of the long dramas of time. And shall it be said of us, “Oh! if thou hadst known in this thy day?” Or shall we try to realize our true mission, and come to the consciousness of God’s kind intentions before it is too late? There is danger indeed of unduly modifying the interests and probable results of our own period, and of exaggerating every present crisis, and of glorifying our own particular mission. Many such a presumed crisis has passed, and the world abideth still. Heaven and earth have been invoked, in regard to the perils or prospects, now forgotten, or remembered by the thoughtful student or antiquary with the smile of pity or contempt. But surely “the end cometh.”

There is a great temptation, also, to exaggeration among Americans. But aside from all these self-exalting exaggerations, in the sober and solemn light of facts and statistics, and the deep responsibilities they involve we can hardly adequately measure the present, and especially the prospective greatness and consequent influence of our country. This impression is deepened by every view we can take of our country.

Look at the extent of territory, embraced in our present limits, immensely enlarged by recent annexations and acquisitions, requiring new editions of geography and alterations of maps every year to keep pace with our progress. Stretching already from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from wintry Maine to golden California! What a country! What an immense sea coast! And then a northern boundary of glorious inland seas – God’s highways of commerce and communication from one extremity to the other!

The same impression is made, if we look at *the physical resources of our country* – the almost immeasurable capacity of sustaining populations, and the almost infinitely varied productions of her soil. The natural resources of the American continent, it is computed, would afford sustenance to 3,600,000,000 inhabitants – four times the estimated population of the globe. The Western country alone, could supply the whole world with bread stuffs! I remember to have seen at one time, years ago, on the levee at St Louis, a pile of such, half a mile long, and nine feet high!

Again, this impression is deepened, if we think of the prospective population of our country. It is conjectured, that fifty years from this time, we shall have a population of 75,000,000; and 100 years hence, of 275,000,000. In other words, where there is now one

person, 50 years hence there will be 5, and a hundred years from this time 16. And these will not be serfs or paupers, but American freemen, enlightened by education, conscious of their rights, and privileges, and powers, whether moulded and restrained by religion or not. Long before this latter period, our people, reinforced from the effete nations of the old world, will have filled up the vast basin of the Mississippi, and stretched across the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific, and be occupying centres of commercial wealth and of moral power, in close proximity to China and the East; and thus, empire and civilization, completing the mystic cycle, will reach the point whence they began their march westward round the world! Recent developments prove how speedily their centres can be moved half across a continent. Long before that time, too, the appliances of locomotion and transportation, now going forward, will be completed. Intelligence will be transmitted, with lightning speed, from one end of the continent to the other. From Boston and New York, to San Francisco and Oregon City, dispatches can be sent in a few seconds, to hasten vessels of steam across to China or Japan; and men may travel continuously from Maine to California without breaking the Sabbath.

Again, the same view is confirmed if we think of *the enterprise of our country*. How many hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory have been settled already; and how many tens of thousands of miles of canals and railroads have been constructed, and are now constructing and progressing! What immense primeval forests have given place, as by enchantment, to villages and towns and cities! See how agriculture, and commerce, and manufactures, and schools, and churches spring up along the path of American enterprise! In virtue of this characteristic the United States have already become the third, if not the second in the rank of commercial nations. The rapidity of our growth in this respect, throws Tyre, and Venice, and Holland, and England altogether into the shade. We now compete successfully with England in furnishing ships, engines and machinery for other nations. We excel and undersell her, in almost every market in the world; and by superior diplomacy, share with her in the results of her conquests in India and China. At the wharves of Pittsburg we fit our vessels for the trade of the Orinoco. American artisans build railroads for the Autocrat of Russia. They construct steamers for the Sultan of Turkey, and build and drive coaches across the desert for the Pasha of Egypt. We shall soon have lines of communication to the Pacific, across the continent. But a few years ago, we carried on a war with one nation of the New World, and without inconvenience, fed at the same time the starving nations of the Old. Go where you will over the globe, and you will find Americans – amidst the icebergs of the Northern and Southern Poles, in the ports of China, India and Japan, in the Bosphorus and the Baltic, at the foot of the Himalayas and the Caucasus, at the World's Fair in London, and in search of Sir John Franklin!

In the same connection we may notice the element of power involved in *our unity*. With this immense population, and almost measureless resources, we shall have, unless evil counsels and sectional animosities prevail – which God in his mercy forbid – the influence of a united people. There is nothing like this in Europe. The ten toes of the great image, part iron and part clay, have no common principle of cohesion. European influence is frittered, from the fact that it has had no unity since the age of Charlemagne. Europe is but a congregation of nations of different languages, habits, and religions; and the traveler feels it as he passes from Britain to France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. But power, as it passes into our hands, comes to one people, speaking the same language, the language of Milton, Shakespeare, and the English Bible, having one literature, and one great common soul.

Amidst all other common aspects, it is cheering to see how soon the process of homogeneity and nationalization is perfected here. Contrary to all antecedent reasoning, and in face of the Latin adage, "*Caelum, non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt,*" it is a fixed fact, that men of all nations and languages, are here unified and Americanized! It seems as if

the great God meant of all these materials to “make one new man,” a type of humanity embracing the separate excellencies of all other forms. The element of power, for good or evil, involved in this unity and nationality, is immense. Already the name of America, embodying our institutions and the weight of our example, to the hope of millions, is strangely magical, in the ears and hearts of the savage and civilized portions of the Old World. What will it be, if fifty years hence finds us as now, “E Pluribus Unum;” when the new man, now comparatively in childhood, shall have grown to the measure of the stature of his destined proportions? What will be the influence of such a united and immense people, for good or evil, to scatter Christianity and its temporal accomplishments and eternal consequences, or circulate pestilence and death over our world? In this view especially, the problem of perpetuated union, to the Christian philanthropist, presents reflections of unparalleled intensity and interest. It is especially in the light of the great idea, our country for the sake of the world, that the question of secession and division should be contemplated; and that Christians are concerned to know whether the centrifugal forces must necessarily be predominant; or whether one national life cannot be made to pervade this great land, notwithstanding differences of sentiment, and interests, and peculiar institutions.

If we look at these elements separately, especially if we combine them together on the most obvious principles, it must be allowed that our influence will be great; the weight of our example must be felt, the spirit of our institutions will be copied, and the type of our Christianity or infidelity will be reproduced over the globe. We are set for the rise or the fall of many in our world. Nations unborn will rise up and call us blessed, if we become their benefactors, or load us with their heaviest curses, if we disappoint their rightful expectations. Oh! my country, after traversing thy beautiful prairies, and vast rivers, and inland seas, and viewing thy growing territory, and population, and future prospects, especially these elements of power; who that has a heart to love God, or his race, can refrain from praying, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among the nations!”

We do believe – who can indeed help believing? – that if these elements of power are Christianized and consecrated to the glory of God, and the spiritual good of men; if in our voyages and circumnavigations to every port where we traffic, and to every people where we transport our fabrics, we take the Bible, and a beautiful exemplification of its precepts in our own lives and principles; if American enterprise becomes synonymous with Christian activity, and the love of Christ – the noblest and sweetest passion – comes to constrain commercial men, with a power and constancy equal to the love of money, which is the meanest; the way of God will soon be known on earth, and his saving health among all nations. On the other hand, if these elements be left to flow forth in selfish and vainglorious channels, unregulated by conscience and the sense of accountability; if the American name becomes identified in the apprehensions of the nations of the earth, with cunning, covetousness, and accumulation; then, no tongue can tell or heart conceive the influence for evil which will be exerted all over the earth, by our country.

We try to abound in hope; but we cannot altogether repress our fears, when we study the history of trade in past ages, and trace, with facts before us, the premonitory symptoms of the decline and fall of the ancient centres of commercial greatness, which have successively figured and faded on the tableau of time. It is sad to muse on the elements of the glory of ancient Tyre; it is a solemn study, in view of the portraiture of the prophet Ezekiel, and the accomplished fact, to remember the late prediction of the Secretary of the Treasury in regard to this city, that “**soon the balance sheet of nations will be adjusted in New York.**” We are a great people, indeed, and our greatness is increased every decade. While traversing the mighty West, a man finds himself saying, “This is a great country – great for good or evil, for Christ or Antichrist!” Which shall it be? Whose shall be these prairies and cities, and this

stalwart yeomanry? What part will they take in the great battle of principle? Whose forces will they swell in the last conflict? There is one reply every Christian would love to make, but there is an alternative also, in which all this enginery will be for evil – part of “the sublime mechanics of depravity,” more potent, because more polished instruments of perdition.

Yes! American Christians, in the nature of the case and from the analogies of the past, it is safe to conclude that we must be a great people, but not necessarily or universally a holy people. This, with the blessing of God, depends on the efforts and sacrifices of those who have pledged themselves, and covenanted with God, to make the world’s salvation their paramount concern, and everything else subservient thereunto; and who, understanding aright the relations of our country to the world, as we have tried to depict them, have resolved to do their part under this stirring idea, “at such a time as this.” For, let no man delude himself with the dream, alike contrary to fact and philosophy that without evangelical influences and institutions, anything else, however excellent, will preserve us as a people from ruin. There is no absolute warrant of safety in the peerlessness of our position, the grandeur of our mission, or the awful results of our failure; no promise of God, to prevent the most terrible catastrophe which fancy can conceive, or past history enables us to realize, provided we do not use the means which God has put in our power. Unless Christians, by their efforts and self-sacrificing zeal, make Christian institutions, and their collateral evangelical influences commensurate with our widening population; unless we send the educated Christian missionary along with the emigrant, and plant churches and Sabbath schools where the hand of enterprise has felled the forest or dotted the prairies with farms and villages; our country, the star of hope and guidance to bewildered nations, will itself wander, and we shall lose an opportunity of blessing mankind, such as God never gave to any people since the world was created. Nothing but the power of the Gospel, made effectual in the hearts of men, and influencing them in all their relations, can save a free country like ours from destruction – a country where no despot in church or state does or dares force outward conformity to religious requirements; where the people rule, and make their own laws; where public opinion is well nigh omnipotent, and independence of all control, human and divine, is the most striking and natural tendency. Here the alternatives are moral principle, - making every man a law unto himself, without which outward law is a cobweb – the wildest anarchy, or military despotism. The Gospel planted these colonies with “seed sifted from three kingdoms.” Gospel institutions have made us what we are, and nothing but the Gospel can preserve us from destruction, or enable us to fulfil our high destiny towards the race. It is not enterprise, or physical improvements, of a glorious constitution and good laws, or free trade, of a tariff, or railroads and steamships, or philosophy, or science, or taste; but the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, appearing to every man, and inwrought into the heart of every man, that can save us from the fate of former republics, and make us a blessing to all nations.

The issues involved in this question depend very much, too, in our apprehension, on the character assumed and influence exerted by the West – on the fact, in other words, whether we supply its wastes and build there in a few years “the foundation of many generations.” Religious institutions do not rise spontaneously, or necessarily keep pace with the growth of population. The human heart naturally does not value or secure evangelical influences. Its uncounteracted tendencies, if not to barbarism, are certainly to irreligion. Men everywhere, and in all ages, love darkness rather than light; especially the men who go out from the influences of churches and pastors, to seek their fortunes and dig for golden ore, and build them towers whose top will reach unto heaven. And such is the character of much of the population crowding the West. Scorched by the revivals, and restive under the restraints of other States, they go like Cain of old to found or find a city of repose. The restless spirit of change, the feeling of Daniel Boone, drives men from New England or New

York, to Illinois or Iowa, and then to Wisconsin and Minnesota, and then to Oregon and California. The outward wave is rolling onward, without regurgitation, till it meets the Pacific, where next to dash, God only knows! No one who has not travelled in the West can conceive aright of this subject, and the momentous issues involved in it. In the absorbing cares of business, the multiplicity of outward incitements and ever-recurring pageants, the uniform flow of affairs year after year, in older States and cities, we are prone to think that all is well, and the West will take care of itself. But to be able to pray the prayer of the text aright, every Christian ought, if possible, to see the West for himself. Good old deacons from New England, staid divines from churches where order and orthodoxy are triumphant, New York merchants, retired civilians, and philanthropists, in order to realize their obligations, should go and survey the land where their children or children's children are to dwell – to be blessed or cursed, be blessings or curses, according as we do or neglect to do our duty. This rapid transfer of population from the older settlements to the new, and the unparalleled tide of emigration from the Old World, to which recent events there will only give additional momentum, is a new development in the economy of nations, giving rise to new duties and responsibilities, and adjusting Christian obligation on a new scale of projection altogether.

“No pent up Utica contracts our powers,  
But the whole boundless continent is ours,”

to care for and Christianize. It is hard, after all we have read, to conceive with what rapidity the West is filling up with population. In some parts, “a nation is born in a day.” Fifty years ago, a line drawn from Pittsburg north to Lake Erie, and southward along the Alleghany and Cumberland Mountains, to the Gulf of Mexico, would have embraced a white population of less than 500,000; now the State of Ohio alone contains a small fraction less than 2,000,000; Indiana little less than 1,000,000; Illinois 850,000. The total population of the States and Territories west of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio River in 1830, was 1,840,000, less than Ohio alone at this time; while the entire population of Wisconsin amounting to upwards of 800,000, and of Iowa a little below 200,000, has been received since 1838. The city of St Louis has regularly doubled its population every six years since 1831, when it numbered 6,000; at which time Chicago, Milwaukee and others now young giants, had no existence. A brother in the Convention in Chicago a few years ago, said, “In June you see one cabin on a prairie, passing along in September you see forty.”

It need not and ought not to be concealed, that in the West there is a singular “energy of error,” and tendency to extremes of opinion on all subjects. Everything there is on a large scale – rivers, forests, prairies. However philosophically accounted for, the same is true of their errors also. Errors, like weeds, grow rank in the human heart, without constant cultivation; while truth, like the valuable productions of the husbandman, requires constant, patient and diligent cultivation. The errors of the West are of gigantic proportions. Their leaders are bold, reckless and revolutionary. One of the most striking characteristics of the West, too, is the spirit of self-reliance, not to term it self-assurance, which manifests in church and state, among saints and sinners. They pronounce judgment on subjects which have perplexed the wisest heads of all time, with a self-satisfaction absolutely thrilling. They have, beyond all doubt, “the spirit of power,” whether blended or not with the elements of “love and a sound mind.” They are like their steamboats of high pressure, which have vast propelling power, whether they have prudent captains and sober crews or not. Like one of their representatives in Congress, many of them feel themselves head and shoulders above the rest of mankind. Every variety of human opinion, too, every heresy ever conceived in the human heart, or studied in the silent chamber in past ages, every plunge of radicalism, and every grade of infidelity is there. The errorist and revolutionist, from the older States and the other hemisphere, there find the material all plastic to their hand. The extremes of opinion,

represented in our most sober communities, and trying in vain to work themselves into the religious and social structure, may there be carried out to the full extent, without regard to consequences. The mighty West seems like a great cauldron, where every heterogeneous element is fermenting, foaming, and every now and then overflowing. Far off in these wilds you may meet travelling agencies for New York books, a certain kind of literature, there known as the "Yellow Cover Literature," the miserable trash of paid scribblers – the staple productions of some large and flourishing eastern establishments. Whether we sleep over this subject, or wake up to a proper sense of duty or danger, while some ecclesiastics are fearing lest colportage will trench on their official prerogatives, there are bold and strong men there, "not afraid to speak evil of dignities," night and day sowing tares, scattering broadcast over the land their pestilent errors, loosening the bonds of morality, sapping the foundations of society, and baptizing the young with their baleful influences. What we do in this matter, we must do quickly, if at all – with our might, or the crisis is past. The preponderating political and religious influences of our country will soon be found, if it does not exist already, in the West. If we wait, if we trust these matters to chance, or please ourselves with dreamy anticipations, and do not rise and build, other hands will be found to give shape and character to this region, and seize these elements of power, and use them for their own purposes. There is a tide in human things, moments when the light dust may turn the balance of a nation's destiny one way or the other. And what but an educated, orthodox ministry, a ministry acquiring influence by intellectual superiority, and retaining it by intelligent piety and persevering efforts – just such a ministry as the Home Missionary Society proposes to send out – will meet the exigency created by these circumstances? What other conservative principles, than evangelical piety and institutions can we trust amidst the tempests of passion and error which threaten to engulf all that is dear to us as patriots and Christians, and all that is embosomed for our world, in the purity and perpetuity of American Christianity?

In addition to all we have said, you are aware that systematic overtures are making to bring our country, through the predominant power of the West, and thus our world, under Roman Catholic influence; to fight in that arena the battle of Popish or Protestant supremacy! On this point we are not, and never have been alarmists. We do not blame the Roman Catholics for their zeal. We honor them, on the contrary, for their consistency. They believe there is no salvation out of the church – meaning the Romish church; that the best temporal and civil interests of man are identified with the possession and prevalence of the true religion; and that every interest must be subordinated to the establishment and extension of Christ's kingdom on earth. With these principles, what else could we expect than the most vigorous and well-directed exertions to gain preponderance of power in our country, whose institutions are destined ultimately to spread over the world? They are fully cognizant of the facts and principles we have been stating. They know that our country must have immense influence, one way or the other, on the nations of the earth, and that the West is the destined seat of power. They lay their plans, and plant their institutions accordingly. They project their cathedrals, schools and colleges, on a scale of magnificence commensurate with our loftiest anticipations of the future. They build for future ages. They believe in perpetuity. They take hold of human nature by every handle to turn it to their purposes, and despise no avenue to human affection, or instrumentalities of human confidence. It is by no means uncommon to meet large Catholic churches where there are, now, scarcely any Catholic hearers; and female seminaries where there are scarcely any other than Protestant patrons. Verily, the prize is worth contending for – the privilege of a preponderating influence over this land, and thus over the world. As was said in the ancient games – "*Detur dignissimo*" – the prize to him that wins it. In this matter, God will not reverse the great principle of his economy. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." It will not do for us to be forever quarreling with the Catholics, calling them bad names, accusing them of ambition,

conspiracies, and what not, while we are doing nothing to establish Protestant institutions. It is pitiable to be groaning perpetually over Catholic progress and encroachments, while we lavish our wealth in schemes of self-glorification, without equaling, or at least emulating the zeal and benevolence of those whom we dread. We must rear better schools, give a better education to youth of both sexes, found libraries, sustain a learned and orthodox ministry so liberally, that they can cope successfully with the Jesuit. We must scatter evangelical books and a Christian literature, over the whole field. Yea, we must personally labor in our respective posts, learn the luxury of making money to give away in large-hearted schemes of benevolence, if we would not see another generation, seduced by the gorgeous ceremonies and splendid pageants of Popery, forsaking the religion of their forefathers, and surrendering the institutions of America to the power of Antichrist.

Roman Catholics are in earnest. They say, "We must make haste; the moments are precious. America will one day be the centre of civilization, and shall truth or error establish there its empire? If Protestants are beforehand with us, it will be difficult to destroy their influence." Are we prepared to contemplate such a policy, and such results, with composure? Is it nothing to us whether truth, in their sense of the term, that is, Popery, or error, by which they mean the Protestant faith, Protestant morals, and Protestant institutions, shall be established in our land, and thus reign over the earth?

Catholics are united too, as well as earnest. Would to God, Protestants were also. We want a blessed evangelical alliance, with the spirit of the text for its motto, ***Our country for the sake and salvation of the world.*** Whatever denominational distinctions and lines of operation our imperfect sanctification and absorption in non-essentials may render still necessary or unavoidable, this great idea should outmaster and control every other, and make everyone who loves Christ and labors for the salvation of our country, our brother beloved and honored, whether he casts out devils by our formularies, and follows with us or not.

A village in the West, for one half its population, which is Catholic, has one church and pastor, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; the other half, which is Protestant, has five or six pastors and churches, and each has his separate "Psalm, doctrine, tongue, revelation and interpretation!" Yet, "God is not the author of confusion," but of peace, in all the churches of the saints.

Brethren, the mission of our country, and the alternative it involves, has not been conjured up for the occasion, but it is placed upon us by Providence, and grows necessarily out of the facts, principles, and statistics we have been contemplating. In the light of the idea we have endeavored to elucidate and incorporate with your heart's deepest feelings, we can best see the reason and meaning of all God's past dealings with our country. In this aspect, our country must ever appear, to all capable of apprehending her position and relations, most lovely and glorious – as the signet in the right hand of God Almighty, by which he purposes to seal upon our fallen humanity its last type of beauty and blessedness. In the light of this purpose, we read with peculiar interest the facts of our antecedent history, civil and religious, from the beginning, hitherto. We can see why he planted these colonies; why he has preserved them; why he has interposed in answer to prayer in our darkest perils; why he has kept alive the spirit of piety, and granted us so many seasons of revivals; why he suggested the idea of voluntary associations; why he originated the Tract Society and the glorious appendage of colportage; why, when the career of emigration first began, he put it into the hearts of good men to form the Plan of Union; why, in advance of that unexampled career of expansion in recent times, which finds limits only by stretching from ocean to ocean, he originated this glorious Association of Home Missions, with its collateral blessings, to keep pace, if possible, with the march of an almost incalculable multiplication. Yes! It does seem as if God, our Heavenly Father, had prepared us, has been teaching us, for something great,

and good, and glorious, - as Joseph was trained in youth, and then raised out of prison, to save much people alive in time of famine; and as David was called from tending sheep to lead the armies of the living God; and Hadassar was advanced from orphanage to the side of royalty to save her people, at an awful crisis.

Oh! My Country! “Who knoweth whether thou” – lone orphan, cast out from thy fatherland and cut off from a mother’s kindness in thy youth, and now Queen regnant, imperial and peerless – “hast not some to the kingdom for such a time,” and for such a purpose “as this?” And after all, wilt thou fail to understand thy mission, and fall in with God’s obvious purpose and responsibility? In schemes of self-glorification or aggrandizement, wilt thou lose the glorious opportunity of impressing thine image, as God’s signet, on the rest of the earth? O, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, American Christians of this generation! “Shall our country be the home of piety and virtue, or the mighty reservoir of irreligion and vice? Shall the voice of prayer and praise, or of cursing and blasphemy be heard throughout her borders? Shall our literature and science, and commerce and agriculture pay their tribute to the King of kings, or serve to foster to giant growth the worst passions of the human heart? Shall this great nation be rent with sectional jealousies and scarred with the judgments of the Most High, or shall its future millions, as they rise in successive generations, walk in the light of his countenance, and, appreciating themselves the value of civil and religious liberty, extent their blessings to every land illumed by the sun or laved by the sea?”

**God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.**

Henry Clay Fish.

***Primitive Piety Revived, or the Aggressive Power of the Christian Church.***

A Premium Essay. Boston. Congregational Board of Publication. 1855.

Chapter Eight. Pages 231 – 249.

Upon a review of the preceding pages, it will be seen that we were led, first of all, to inquire into the actual existence of any serious defects in the prevailing piety of the age; and that we were compelled, by various considerations, to adopt the painful conclusion that such defects do really exist. We then proceeded to consider several prominent features of the piety of primitive times, in respect to each of which there is now an alarming deficiency. These were, simplicity of purpose, - Consecration to God, - a scriptural faith, - self-denial for Christ, - earnestness, - individualism.

An examination like this, of subjects most intimately related to the welfare of Christ's kingdom on earth, is adapted to awaken emotions of no ordinary character. The thoughtful, praying disciple, who has long waited for the glorious day predicted of old, will almost involuntarily exclaim: Great God, where is the promise of Thy coming? Is this thine earth, - the world pledged to Thy Son for a pure inheritance and an undisputed possession? Are not six hundred millions of the race still under the almost entire control of Satan? Does not the destroyer still walk abroad as the god of this world? Does not idolatry still defy the heavens? Alas! Maker of the universe, what a debased and maddened world turns round to thine eye! How long! O how long!

“For near six thousand years thy foe  
Has triumphed over all below;  
Save that a little flock is found  
With ravening wolves encompassed round!”

When, *when* shall the reign of the tempter end?

More affecting still, if possible, to the pious soul, is the condition of the church. Amid some things that are encouraging, how much there is to sadden the heart! How much worldliness, and selfishness! How much deadness to spiritual objects! How much insensibility to the perils and woes of dying men! How many unsanctified hands, and hearts, and possessions! And how little of that faith which ventures all on God, and which subordinates this world to the next! How little of suffering and sacrificing for Christ, and of ardent and personal endeavour to save souls from going down to perdition!

And with what emphasis comes the cry of one of Zion's most faithful watchmen: ‘O what, and who shall rouse the church of God to a sense of her duty, her destiny, and her honour as God's instrument for converting an ungodly world? Where the more than trumpet breath that, with the thunders of the skies, and the voice of eternal truth, shall break in upon the slumber of a luxurious and unbelieving church? What visitations of mercy or of judgment; what internal commotions, or external assaults; what national convulsions or social disruptions, are necessary to arouse her to her work, and prepare her to perform it! When shall every Christian feel that God's chief end in keeping him out of heaven for a season is, that he might keep immortal souls out of hell! When shall another Luther rise up to reform us from our worldliness, even as the first delivered us from Popery? When shall another Whitefield pass through the midst of us, and with his burning eloquence, kindle a fire of zeal in our hearts which shall consume the earthliness, and purify the gold of our faith?’

The means by which the defects that have been particularly considered, are to be removed, and the churches rendered more efficient, is a branch of our subject already partially noticed in the main discussion. It is deserving, however, of special attention. Those means are varied in their character, and in degrees of importance. But there is one remedy

excelling, heaven wide, all others; and, indeed, concentrating all others into itself: and that is, a general and powerful revival of pure religion. Nothing short of the indwelling of a larger measure of the divine Spirit, which constitutes a genuine revival, can effect the removal of those alarming evils which afflict the church, and the world. And this can effect their removal. These are the two propositions to be maintained.

Observe, then, *the Spirit of God is the grand animating agency in the Christian Church.* He first gives life to the soul, and afterwards sustains and increases that vital energy. The vigour of the whole spiritual being depends upon His presence. He is the sanctifier of the soul. He enables us to overcome and eradicate the remains of sin within us; and gives to the new nature symmetry, beauty, maturity and strength. And what He does for an individual Christian, He also accomplishes for the body of believers. When the ark abode in the house of Obed-Edom, it was doubly blessed and happy. When God's presence was manifested among his people of old, it diffused bloom and beauty all abroad. 'Carmel's summit displayed a richer green; Hermon's acclivity with its varying belts of cloud and sunshine, sent forth more fertilizing vapour to irrigate the soil; Ophir and Tarshish poured still ampler stores into the marts of trade; health smiled on every hand; and each one sat under his own vine and fig-trees, none daring to molest or make afraid.' And so when God's spiritual garden is favoured with the special divine presence, the dry and barren ground is made to abound with springs of water, and become fruitful soil; the drooping vines revive.

"The spices yield their rich perfume;  
The lilies grow and thrive."

Who that has witnessed the effects of a powerful revival of religion upon the hearts and lives of God's children, has failed to observe that the eye is then single, the energies and affections are cheerfully consecrated to God, faith is in vigorous exercise, the saving of souls, and the concerns of the world to come, occupy the mind, and this world, as Edwards presents it, speaking of the light in which it was viewed by the people of New England during the great awakening of his time, "is a thing only by the by."

And hence it is that, while under the influence of the Holy Spirit the imperfections of the people of God disappear, their preparedness for the subjugation of a wicked world to Christ is secured. Then are they possessed, not only of the principle of *life*, but of *power* also. In the tabernacle service, the sacred utensils, and the priests were of no avail, except the *cloud* appeared, which symbolized the divine presence. And in equipping his servants for their mission, they were directed by the Lord to "tarry at Jerusalem," until they should experience the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. He came, at length, and then were they "Endued with power from on high." Then went they forth to subdue the enemies of the cross, and triumphed in all places. So in every advance which the church has made since the days of the apostles. It has not been by might, nor by human power, but by God's Spirit. The measure of the gift of the Spirit has always determined the measure of success. The larger the outpouring from above, the larger the ingathering from earth.

It is interesting to notice, also, in support of our position, *the more remarkable aggressive movements of the Christian church in modern times*; and observe how clearly they have been traced to extensive revivals of religion. Not to dwell upon the early efforts of Eliot and the Mayhews to evangelize the American Indians – efforts which had their rise in a revival under the labours of the old Puritans, - nor upon the mission of Schwartz and others from Germany to India, which owed its origin to the revival of the Protestant faith under Franke, Spener, and those of kindred spirit, - nor upon the missionary enterprise of the Moravians, which may be traced to the successful labours of Zinzendorf, - let us turn to the great missionary movement of this present century. We must look for the remote cause of that glorious enterprise, as far back as the period of the "Great Awakening," which dates from about the year 1740. Associated with that wonderful work of grace, is the brilliant

constellation of familiar names, - Wesley, Whitefield, Romaine, Wren, Lady Huntingdon, Doddridge, Erskine, the Tennents, Davies, Edwards. Both in this country and in Great Britain, vital, evangelical religion was extensively revived. Edwards, who has so extensively written the history of its rise and progress in the United States, says, "It might be said at that time, in all parts of the country, 'Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?'" In respect to his own field of labour he observes, "There was scarcely a single person in all the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world." "The town seemed to be full of the presence of God; it was never so full of love, nor of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then." "A loose, careless person, could scarcely be found in the whole neighbourhood; and if there *was* anyone, it would be spoken of as a strange thing."

The fruits of that work remain unto this day. How largely they entered into the grand, immediate causes of the missionary movement, it is impossible to tell. Doubtless as their result, in part, Heber and Martyn and Buchanan and Carey sent forth, from the mother country, to preach salvation to the heathen. And, doubtless, as regards our own land, the work of grace at the beginning of the present century, was, in some sense, but the *renewal* of that which had preceded it.

But coming down to the time last indicated, the year 1800, we meet with one of the most blessed revivals with which the churches have ever been favoured. At that time began the moral change, which, as says Dr Griffin, "swept from so large a part of New England its looseness of doctrine and laxity in discipline, and awakened an evangelical pulse in every vein of the American church." Then it was that the same individual, speaking of certain parts of Connecticut, could make mention of "thrice twenty congregations, in contiguous counties, as laid down in one field of divine wonders." And just here, by this gracious visitation from on high, were quickened into life the germs of those great benevolent institutions, which are the glory of our country and age. The labourers, themselves, in that revival, became missionaries in every direction. One was sent into a destitute part of Vermont; some plead, with trumpet tongue, the cause of missions at home and abroad, and some organized local societies for its promotion.

Here we begin to recognise the name and influence of Samuel J. Mills, who originated in one of the counties where the power of God was remarkably displayed, and from whom the eloquent Griffin, according to his own testimony, received that mighty impulse which enabled him to become so efficient in the formation of several benevolent organizations. Close by the side of young Mills, Gordon Hall originated; who became one of the pioneer missionaries. Connected with another of the godly men who shared a part in that glorious awakening, was James Richards, who was one of the six young men who declared to a meeting of Congregational ministers in Massachusetts, in the year 1810, their intention to preach the Gospel to the heathen.

It is to these very three individuals – Mills, Hall, Richards – and with them Judson and Rice, that we refer those prayers and communings, those holy aspirations and high resolves, which invest with such grandeur the commencement of the American missionary enterprise. They are the men concerning whom it is written, that, while students at Williams College, "On Wednesday afternoons they used to retire for prayer to the bottom of the valley south of the west college; and on Saturday afternoons, when they had more leisure, to the more remote meadow on the banks of the Hoosae; and there, under the haystacks, those young Elijahs prayed into existence the embryo of American missions."

But, however important the results of that gracious outpouring of God's Spirit in arousing the churches of Christ to systematized and determined efforts for the salvation of the Gentiles, they were scarcely less important upon the permanent welfare of our own country.

At the period to which we refer, the war of the Revolution had just been terminated. During that war many churches had been disorganized; their members had been called to the battlefield; the houses of worship had been converted into hospitals; the public mind had been engrossed with other than religious subjects; and vital piety had suffered a decline. Worse than this: the opinions of sceptical French philosophers were becoming prevalent. Sympathizing with France in her struggles, as this nation could not fail to do, it almost naturally imbibed her irreligious principles; and we were fast becoming a nation of infidels. That revival was the lifting up of the standard, when the enemy was coming in like a flood. Then it was that Dr Dwight and others preached and wrote so powerfully. The Spirit of God came down upon the College of which this good and great man held the presidency, on no less than four special occasions, and more than two hundred young men embraced the Gospel, who in their turn were the means of saving thousands of others. In every direction, "the truth as it is in Jesus" triumphed over error. Churches were reorganized, planted in new localities; the ministers and members grew strong again under the fresh anointing from on high, and "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Then followed the fervent appeals, and wise deliberations, and liberal devisings, in connection with which our various benevolent organizations, of different names and spheres of action, arose.

Such have been some of the results, in times past, of the extensive revival of pure religion. How obvious that it is *precisely this that is now required* for the perfecting of Zion, and the successful prosecution of enterprises which she has so nobly commenced!

That which is needful is, the elevation of the entire church of Christ on earth, to a higher position in point of holiness. Of numbers, and intelligence, and wealth, she is now possessed. There is no element of influence wanting, save that chief, and *only real* element of power, *vital godliness*. Without more of this she cannot long remain even her present position. She is now but slowly advancing. It is with a halting, trembling step. At times, she even seems to falter; and at some points her forces absolutely retreat; while the enemy exultantly cries, Where is now thy God? and threatens to drive her from the field.

*What can save our large cities* but a powerful revival of religion? In the present state of things, as we have seen in the opening chapter of this work, while the population is rapidly increasing, the churches, as to numbers, are scarcely holding their own. Infidelity, intemperance, licentiousness, - every form of irreligion, and every species of vice, may there be seen springing up, and flourishing in a luxuriant growth. And more painful still to contemplate, the churches appear to be departing from the simplicity of the Gospel, and in many instances, by the array of wealth and fashion, and the expense consequent upon it, absolutely placing beyond the reach of the masses, the privileges of God's house. Indeed, partly from this circumstance, and partly from their own indifference to all religious subjects, the great bulk of the lower classes, in many of our cities, is, in no proper sense of the term, operated upon by the religious part of the community. What must be the end of these things, unless some radical change is effected, it is not difficult to foretell.

It is written in the epitaphs of those mighty and wicked cities of old, buried, long since, in oblivion. Will anything short of a powerful work of grace effect the needful change? Will anything short of this reach and eradicate the fearful evil? Who can devise any other adequate remedy? This, and this alone, is efficacious. It would uproot and overturn the most deep-seated and far-spreading vices, - it would lead to the consecration of the vast treasures of wealth there accumulated, and to a great extent in the hands of professing Christians, - and, by purifying, and filling with new life the great centres of action, it would cause to be sent forth to the furthest extremities of the land, influences for good.

But why speak we of particular localities? Let anyone cast his eye over our beautiful and broad domain, - let him call to mind the origin, the history and the character of the people who mainly inhabit it, and their commerce and language and institutions, - let him consider its geographical position as related to other portions of the globe, - and its moral position as related to the world of corrupt and vitiated civilizations, on the one hand, and paganism on the other, - and also the wonderful providences of God, which have, of late, given to us such vast regions of rich territory, at the same time burst open the floodgates for the nations to flood in and possess it, - and he cannot but exclaim, "O for a voice of mighty thunderings to rally the forces of our American Christendom, for another bold, prayerful self-devoted, *Puritan* effort to found the institutions of the Bible all over these vast plains, and build God's altars all along these mighty streams, before the god of this world shall have here forged his deadly missiles and fortified his strongholds!" A *powerful, widespread revival* would gain these glorious results.

What *one thing*, therefore, does this whole country so loudly call for, as the *descent of the Holy Ghost upon the churches*? Its salvation must "*come out of Zion.*" If its foundations be not sapped by prevailing immorality, - if it fall not into the hands of Barbarism, nor Anarchism, nor Romanism, - if it be not rent asunder by internal dissensions, - if it call not down upon itself the swift vengeance of God, because of its aggravated national and individual sins - then it must be because the Most High has here a people who fear Him and keep His testimonies, - it must be because they, the salt of the earth, spread abroad throughout the entire mass of society a sanctifying and conservative influence.

And let it remain in every mind, as a deep, inwrought conviction, that *only* by a more general indwelling of the Divine Spirit, can this sublime mission of the American churches be accomplished. They may build houses of worship in every nook and corner of the land, - they may endow hundreds of institutions of learning, - they may perfect their methods and means of doing good, - they may do battle upon the many and complicated vices which affect humanity, - they may aim at the correction of *domestic* abuses and political evils, - and in doing it may gain important ends for the cause of righteousness and truth, - but in order to final and complete success, there must be *an increase of the Spirit of the Most High* in the hearts of those who bear the Christian name. Nothing else can make the churches strong. Nothing else can remove the existing defects of piety, and render it efficient. These defects are beyond the reach of all expedients. Their roots run too deep, and are too firmly interwoven with the depravity of our nature, to be eradicated by mere human volition. There must be something that is elemental in its operations. Far down in the heart, must be felt the hidden power of Almighty grace, working mightily at the very foundations of life and action, and imparting new vigour and force.

This gained, all is gained. There is not a single thing required for carrying forward to ultimate success the work of the Lord, which this indwelling of the divine efficiency would not secure.

Is there a demand for more labourers in the *ministry* both at home and abroad? Suppose the work of God to be revived in all our colleges and seminaries of learning, would not the demand most certainly be met? One hundred of the converts in nine revivals which occurred in Dartmouth College, are known to have entered the ministry. And who can tell how large has been the accession to the ministerial force, from the numerous revivals with which Yale, Williams, Amherst, Hamilton, Middlebury, and other colleges, have been blessed in years gone by?

Is there a demand for intelligent, active *laymen*, to lead on our noble enterprises? A revival among the young men at their schools of learning, or in the bosom of the churches,

would meet the demand. "Every student in a college, of respectable talents and attainments," says a late writer, "may be regarded as the representative of at least one thousand immortal beings to be moulded by his opinion and example."

Is there a demand for *increased contributions to the objects of benevolence*? Arguments and appeals from pastors and returned missionaries may fail to call them forth. But they would not be withheld under a powerful work of grace. A close, penurious hand is not the companion of a heart that is full of love to God and man.

And is there an imperative necessity for more singleness of aim, and trustful, self-sacrificing, zealous endeavour, on the part of the respective members of Christ's body, for the saving of their dying fellow men? It would no longer exist, if primitive piety were but universally revived. When it prevailed, each disciple considered himself as called to the work of evangelizing the world, and went forth giving to it a practical illustration in his daily life. What is needful, then, save a return of the scenes of apostolic days, especially those of the memorable Pentecost? – a revival of the simplicity of purpose, - the entire consecration, - the scriptural faith, - the self-denial for Christ, - the earnestness and individualism of effort, so signally developed in the early triumph of Christianity, when the multitude of them that believed were of one hearts and one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, and "great grace was upon them all."

And *why may we not anticipate the return of Pentecostal seasons*? Why may not Christians *now* be "filled with the Holy Ghost," as were they in primitive times? Not for the working of miracles, it is true, but for the doing of "*greater works than these*," is the special presence of God's Spirit available still, for the disciples of Christ. Moreover, is there not left for our encouragement, the assurance of God's readiness to bestow that Spirit? Behold how the Saviour has condescended to reason the case with us! "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!*" Why, therefore, despairingly lament that Zion languishes? Why deplore the many defects in Christian character, and the worldliness and impiety that prevails, with no efforts toward their removal?

"Whence do our mournful thoughts arise,  
And where's our courage fled?"

**God lives!** He still watches over the interests of his kingdom on earth. He waits to be gracious. He will hear prayer, and bestow his blessing.

Let ministers, then, be more earnest in their endeavours for a general and powerful revival of primitive religion. Let them cry aloud and spare not. Let them set the trumpet to the mouth, and rally the hosts to battle. Let them call upon the people to take to themselves words, and to return unto the Lord with mourning, and with fasting, and with supplication. Let there be weeping once more between the porch and the altar, and the cry heard, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine inheritance to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them!" Let them preach, and labour, with special reference to more holiness, and deeper religious feeling, and greater engagedness. Let them expect revivals, and not rest satisfied without them. Let them act upon the suggestions of Edwards, and be fellow-helpers in the work, - often meeting together, and acting in concert; since, as he intimates, the very sight or appearance of a thoroughly engaged spirit, together with fearless courage, and unyielding resolution, would do much towards accomplishing the desired end.

And yet believers generally strive after higher attainments in spiritual life. Let there be more of that weeping and confessing and praying and covenanting together, among

Christians, which characterised the days of revivals gone by, and which always accompany, to a greater or less extent, the commencement of a powerful work of grace. Let the great theme be salvation; and the great aim the stirring up of each other's minds by way of remembrance; and the snatching of perishing souls from the everlasting burnings. Let any *one* believer who mourns over the desolations of Zion, not wait for the revival of the entire congregation, but personally take hold upon the promises, and in the name of the Lord, resolve never to cease from efforts and prayers for increased religious interest, until it is experienced. What may not one individual, thoroughly in earnest, under God, accomplish!

Fellow Christians; *let the work begin in your own bosom!* Call upon the Lord to arouse your drowsy souls. Why stand you idle? The future is the time to rest, - the present for action. "In this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and his angels to be lookers-on." Up, then, and seek to compass life's great end. Go work in the Lord's vineyard. He will soon call you to your account. The Judge standeth at the door. The throne will be set. The books will soon be opened, and men's destiny sealed up for ever. "Behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Have you no spirit for his service? Is your heart cold, and dead? Then take it to Christ.

"None but a bath of blood divine  
Can melt the flint away."

Repair again to Calvary, where your heart was first melted. You cannot linger amid the scenes of the Crucifixion, and remain unaffected. The Pilgrim in his journey to the Celestial City, saw a *cross*, and stood still and wondered. He stood and looked, and looked again, "till the springs that were in his head, sent the waters down his cheeks." Draw near that you may behold a suffering Jesus. Gaze upon that countenance that had borne no other look than benevolence. What *agony* is now depicted! Look again. See those hands, that had been filled only with benefits for men, - that had fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, and ministered healing mercies to the sick, - see them now pierced through with cruel nails! Look again. See those feet, that had borne him up and down, throughout the length and breadth of the land on errands of mercy, now spiked to the wood! And again. See that majestic brow, that had been ever radiant with more than a brother's compassion, - see it now all besprinkled and dripping with blood!

"See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!"

Look, if you can, still once again. There is that heart, that throbbed with more than a *mother's* affection, - is it not enough that it has been crushed, till it can beat no more? No, it must *bleed!*

See! They have pierced it with a spear! His *heart's blood* is pouring forth! And *for what? Wherefore* all this?

"Was it for crimes that *I* had done,  
He groaned upon the tree?"

Yes, for you, my brother, *all this for you!* Surely must *such* love warm into life the best affections of your soul. Surely must it constrain you to make such returns as lie in your power, by putting forth every possible effort to save those for whom Christ died. And thus *yourself* revived, encourage this same spirit among your brethren; nor cease, at the mercy-seat of the Everlasting Father, to urge, with the faithful of the earth, the earnest cry, "O Lord, REVIVE THY WORK!"

Henry Clay Fish. *Primitive Piety Revived.* or the Aggressive Power of the Christian Church. A Premium Essay. Boston. Congregational Board of Publication. 1855. page 231 - 249.

## REVIVALS – the HOPE of the WORLD.

Henry C. Fish. “Handbook of Revivals.” U.S.A. 1874.  
Chapter Eighteen

How this world is soonest to be given to Christ, is a question that should concern every one of his followers. Our object is to show that it will not be done apart from extensive and frequent revivals of religion.

*The argument from the past* is in place. Coleridge has likened *experience* to the stern-light of a ship, which illuminates the track it has passed over. And Sir Philip Sydney affirmed that all is lip-wisdom which wants experience. The lessons of the thousands of by-gone years are here before us for instruction.

What we are today is attributable to revivals. This is a strong assertion; and yet the pages of this book abundantly confirm it. Let anyone read but the two chapters, “Historical View of Revivals,” and “What we owe to Revivals,” and our language will not be deemed extravagant. Nor is there the least ground for believing that God will essentially change the methods of his operations in the time to come. As he has hitherto carried forward his work by revivals, we may expect that he will continue to do the same, only on a much grander scale. (p. 395.)

*The present slow progress of religion* comes in as an argument. There appeared some years ago in a leading religious paper, the following: “From the statistical report of the American Orthodox Congregational Churches for 1862, it is seen that out of the fourteen hundred and eighteen churches of New England, 738, or more than half, had not a single conversion, or addition by profession, during the year. 182 other churches had but one conversion each. And only 66 churches had as many as ten each. Excepting the churches with which evangelists had laboured, there was an average of less than two conversions to a minister for the year; and for all the United States and Canada, probably not over two.

The results for the last four years do not vary greatly from these numbers. Many of these churches have not been blessed with a revival for periods of fifteen, twenty, and even thirty years together; and some of them not with a single conversion. It further appears that the whole number of converts gathered at home and abroad, under the entire auspices of the American Congregational Orthodox churches of the denomination, gives an average gain of less than three-fourths of one to a church for the year. Or, otherwise stated, two thousand and sixteen churches had a net gain (p. 396.) of one soul each for the year, and one thousand and forty churches had not one addition.”

The article, no doubt, was based upon facts and statistics taken from the “Congregational Quarterly,” and published in a tract form in 1867. We give that part of the statement bearing on the point before us.

“There are about one thousand four hundred and twenty Orthodox Congregational churches in New England. The number of conversions, or additions by profession over losses by death and excommunication, reported by them for the year;-

1860 was 385, or about one-fourth of one to each church.

1861 was 117, or about one-twelfth of one to each church.

1862 a loss of 284 over all additions.

1863 a gain of 318, or less than one-fourth of one to each church.

1864 a gain of 1,412, or near to one for each church.

1865 a gain of 2,416, or nearly two to each church.

1866 about 1,257, or nearly one to each church.

Nearly one-half of these churches reported, in each of these seven years, not a *single conversion*, or addition by profession.

About two hundred other churches reported, in each of these seven years, only one addition each. Nearly all the larger gains were made by those few churches that have made 'extra efforts' for the conversion of men.

Such is New England's record for the last seven years, and probably for the last thirty years it has been little or no better.

The average number of the Orthodox congregational Churches of the United States and Canada for these seven years was about two thousand eight hundred. Their gain over losses for the year,- (p. 397.)

1860 was less than one-half of one to each church.

1861 was less than two-thirds of one to each church.

1862 was less than one and one-twenty-seventh to each church.

1863 was less than one and one half to each church.

1864 was less than one and one-third to each church.

1865 was about two and one-tenth to each church.

1866 was about the same as last year.

So far as can be gathered from these statistical reports, *the churches of the other denominations, have not been more successful* in gathering converts from the world during this period than the Congregational churches have been.

As the churches average less than one hundred members, and make a net gain of less than one member a year, at this rate of increase it will take *one hundred years* for them to double the membership. While the population of the country will probably double *four times* in this period, and become one hundred and fifty millions, the churches will be only eight millions. Without more general and powerful revivals than ever have been, how soon the churches will be overwhelmed and lost in the world!"

In view of such considerations, the remarks of an eminent Christian writer are worthy of the deepest thought.

"At our present rate of march we can scarcely keep in sight of the army of aliens whom we would subdue to Christ. I see the cause of human salvation to *be altogether hopeless* without the special interposition of the Holy Spirit. Should this interposition be granted to only one individual in ten (which has been, perhaps, about the average of saving conversions in our evangelical congregations) nine tenth of the population, even in New England, would remain "aliens to the congregation of Israel." Darker still is the prospect in those sections of our country where scarcely one in fifth exhibits any evidence, or makes any profession, of piety. The hope of the church, then, is in revivals of religion – *continued, powerful, general revivals.*

*The moral condition of society at large* strengthens this view. It is easy to boast about a great country; of a good government; of a common language; of Christian churches and religious liberty; or rapid intercommunication; of unbounded wealth; of numerical growth, and the like. But no one pretends that all this can insure a people's welfare. With all this society may be corrupt from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. And few intelligent Christians will claim that the mass of the population, with all we are doing, is

being thoroughly leavened with saving truth. It were pleasant to think so; but such is not the case, even in the most favoured communities.

The old processes of Christian education are a laughing stock to the present generation. Catechising, exact definitions of doctrines, creed-statements – these are scouted as things fit only for a “puritanical” age. As someone has it, that charity which believeth all things *but God’s truth*, has opened the doors to a fatal religious literature, in which, by a sort of universal solvent, all the doctrinal bones of theology are reduced to a gelatinous mass of ambiguous statements. And the consequence is, that the people are losing all sense of the diversity of creeds, become looser and more ignorant as falsehood grows familiar, and are led off to Scepticism and universalism on one side, and to popery on the other; or not less degrading and ruinous, to Socinus, Swedenborg, familiar spirits and the Mormons.

Even Christian teachers, and those claiming to be orthodox, from their pulpits and editorial chairs, join in the cry against “the stringency of formulated creeds,” and are so much more *liberal* than *loyal* as to forget that truth makes no compromises. Perceiving diversities of doctrine and opinions, they would help the people out of their difficulties in knowing what to hold, by telling them that all beliefs are equally valid – that some doctrines are not essential, even admitting that they are truths! – and that “it does not matter what the creed is if the practice be right!” Dr Guthrie once said “the more that ‘works’ are preached up instead of ‘faith,’ the worse are the ‘works’ that men do.” Might it not be claimed with equal force, that the more men clamour for “Life” in place of “doctrine,” the more corrupt are the lives of many who submit to such preaching?

Farther: are the numerous evangelical churches positively putting forth their power upon the communities? Forms and ceremonies, yea, and sound doctrines, *may* exist, where the church is spiritually prostrate. Indeed it often occurs that the “ability” of churches lead to extravagance and indolence; so that a body boasting that she “is rich, and increased with goods, and has need of nothing,” is really “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” And what do the above facts and figures show as to the actual power of the churches upon the communities!

Nothing so impresses the thoughtful mind as the *possibilities* of influence on the part of the churches. But it is like the power of steam before it was evoked and applied to man’s service; like that of electricity before science climbed the height of the skies, and seized the spirit of thunder, and chained it to the chariot of human progress. It is *latent* power.

Capital that is unused is called *dead* capital; and a man may have a shop or storehouse full of it and still not get ahead. O, the amount of dead capital in the churches! O, what numbers of them are dying of inertia, - dying of the dry-rot of formalism! Dying of decency and respectability!

Now it is specifically the effect of revivals to increase church-power. This is not a thing of organism. Undoubtedly Christianity would be advantaged by consolidating her resources. But will a grand, imposing organization furnish the power that converts bad men into good ones? Will it enable them, when converted, to lead holy and spotless lives? (p.401) Will “a strong church,” in popular acceptance, give greater effect to sermons, more unction to exhortations, more success to the instruction of the young, and richer answers to prayer? Will it make Christians more humble, more contented, more charitable? Will it make the covetous liberal’ and bring the Lord’s portion into his treasury? *This* is not the solution of the problem of church-power! It is the “*power of the Highest*” that is needed!

Consider what revivals would do for the *rural districts*. In 1802 Rev. Jesse Edson wrote from Halifax, Vermont, thus: “The Holy Spirit seemed to come down like a rushing, mighty wind, to melt the souls of God’s children, to cause sinners to tremble, stubborn wills to bow, and hard hearts to relent. Numbers flocked to Christ as a cloud, and as doves to their windows. Fifteen were received the next communion, twenty-one the communion following;

about sixty, in the whole.” In later years, and especially under the labours of Rev. Samuel Fish, frequent and blessed revivals were experienced in that town, among the fruits of which were not less than twelve or fifteen missionaries and ministers of the Gospel, besides great numbers of efficient Christian workers; most of whom, however, have either deceased, or removed to places of greater social or business advantages.

Years ago the church of Mr. Edson (Congregational) died out. That of Mr. Fish (Baptist) barely survives (in two localities) to keep the Gospel banner flying on those hills. (p.402). The extinct church lived for fifty years by virtue of the revival referred to; and on account of the later awakenings the surviving society has not expired. Now, one powerful revival in that town would put the feeble interest on its feet for another whole generation, and save the community from being given over to religious indifferentism and social barbarism. We see no hope for the cause, whatever, except in such a special awakening. And this is but a picture of thousands of rural districts, especially in the inner parts of New England, where the population is depreciating. Will anyone tell us what is to save such places from godlessness except gracious revivals?

Consider, too, what revivals would do for the *cities*. In the absence of strong remedial agencies, great cities are great sores. With such influences, they are centres of gracious influence. Our Lord, and after him the apostles, bestowed effort chiefly upon cities, “beginning at Jerusalem,” the capital of the nation. They acted on the principle on which Alexander and Caesar, and all the great conquerors of all times act, that of seizing upon the strong places of power, and holding them in subjection, with the assurance that all other places will then become an easy conquest. For in cities are accumulated wealth, and talent, and energy and enterprise; and if this be consecrated it is a mighty gain. Besides, men are in masses there, and therefore ought to be more readily reached and moved; and carrying these, the surrounding villages and all parts of the country are reached.

(p. 403). Now there is no way of doing it but by powerful revivals. Look at things as they exist. City churches are not really reaching the dense masses of population. Strong in their wealth and social position, they are too much like polished shafts whirling on their bearings, but without cogs interlocking them with anything. They are not linked with society, and moving it with a magnificent influence. Even with all their appliances of Sunday Schools, city missions, tract operations, ragged schools and the like, the churches only touch the rim of the surrounding wickedness. Not one quarter part of the population of the great cities ever hear the Gospel! A large proportion of the people are practically heathens, - as much so as are the dwellers in absolutely pagan lands.

By present processes, then, these masses of immortals will never be reached and rescued. Multitudes of them have no Bible; of if they had, they could not read it, or would immediately pawn it. They spurn a tract, of if they do not, it would be useless to them. Multitudes of them study concealment; practice crimes which cannot be exposed to the light of day; and alike shrink away from police officers and friends of religion. Here and there some Christian effort picks off one soul from the godless mass; but nothing is making anything like an inroad upon it.

What is wanted is an awakening that would shake the dry bones in even the lowest stratum of society, rousing them from filth and drunkenness, (p. 404) and raising them into a great army to fight the battles of the Lord. What is needed are mighty revival impulses, urging them toward inquiry, and urging godly men and women to carry the heavenly light to those who will not come to it, and to compel the wanderers to come in that the divine guest-chamber may be full. And what short of powerful revivals *can* accomplish this? Is there any conceivable way except that by which God thus suddenly arouses the churches, and moves simultaneously the hearts of great multitudes?

A succession of such revivals as have occasionally been witnessed, sweeping through all the great cities of Christendom, would secure every condition of the moral elevation of these myriads of inhabitants. And without them the case appears hopeless indeed.

Again: *the relation of the ministry to revivals* is to be taken into account. As we have seen in a previous chapter (3), the large part of ministers of Jesus Christ hath hitherto come from revivals; and in the mere point of numerical supply, whence but from this source can they be expected in the future? Without revivals, the hosts of young men necessary for home and foreign work, glowing with love to Christ, and ready to sacrifice for his cause, cannot be expected to come forward, but will continue to be drawn into business and the other professions.

Besides: (p. 405) those converted in revivals may be expected to be the most efficient winners of souls. They possess the same revival spirit, and adopt the same style of preaching, and substantially the same means, as they had felt and witnessed to be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Moreover, actual contact with revival work wonderfully intensifies a preacher's power. In a revival a pastor is thrown upon his own resources. His energy and ingenuity are taxed to the utmost. And thus new ideas are created, and new methods of illustrating and applying divine truth are acquired. His soul is aflame; and his words go blazing from his lips, and falling like fire upon the consciences of men, and lookers on are amazed at his added pathos energy and power. For the *ministry's* sake, then we must have revivals.

Again: *the great benevolent movements of the age* cannot progress without revivals. Every outpouring of the Spirit raises up new friends to the cause of missions, increases the amount of funds devoted to that cause, and wafts to heaven more numerous and fervent desires that the kingdom of God may come. Let but revivals cease, and what would become of the great enterprises for converting mankind to God? What would become of our benevolent associations, of various kinds at home? And how could our foreign work go forward? A general and lasting declension of religion would dry up all the sources of supply, both of men and money, upon which such operations depend.

We forget that each generation of the modern world (p. 406) consists of 30,000,000 of children; so that to christianize this added population alone there must be *one million conversions per year!* In this view of the case, what a prodigious work is before us! And how can it be accomplished without remarkable, and wonderful and sudden effusions of the Spirit of God?

Revivals, then, are emphatically the hope of the world. From every estimate we can form on this subject, it would seem clear beyond a doubt that we must have them, and of a still more powerful character than we have hitherto had, or else the work of the conversion of this world to God can never be consummated. It is impossible to see how 800,000,000 souls, or any considerable part of that number, can be washed from their sins, within the most distant time to which the millennium can be deferred, by the single drops of converting grace falling as now. Mighty revivals must become yet more and more frequent, until there shall cease to be intervals between them, and they shall run into each other, and flow together in one long and still spreading river of salvation.

And why not have such revivals? We do not see why they are not to be looked for; - those of far greater power and wider extent than have hitherto been experienced. Where is the improbability of supposing that whole nations, the largest associated bodies of men on the globe, are to feel the power of the Spirit in one general and simultaneous effusion, and to evince that they feel it by a general and simultaneous turning to God, - even as the whole army of dry bones in the prophet's vision were re-animated and stood upon their feet at once, when the Spirit from the four winds came upon them? (p. 407).

Not less apposite than animating, just in this connection, are some words of the late Dr J. W. Alexander, of N. Y. “Imagine a shower of grace in this single city; every house filled with worshippers, every place of business made solemn or joyful by the presence of religious emotion. Think of season during which religion should be the great matter of interest with every young person. Think of the effect on ministers, on professing Christians, on sinners. Imagine, if you can, a universal work over the whole country and world! My brethren, what visions arise before the eye of faith in the expectation of such a blessing! Oh that I could impress, and be possessed myself with a due sense of the loveliness, the glory; the indispensableness of such a gift! If I judge aright, all other pursuits are nothing to the pursuit of this! Here is the great work of philanthropy, the only thing worth living for!”  
O Lord, Revive Thy work!”

## **Religion and National Life.**

### **Chapter One of “Great Revivals and the Great Republic.”**

**By Warren A. Candler.**

The forms and forces of national life take their rise in the religion of the people.

National life is feeble or strong according as the faith of the people is faint or vigorous. [and whether the religion is “high” or lower.]. The fruitful periods of a nation’s history are those during which religion is flourishing, and periods of religious declension are marked by the withering of all social and political vitality. Literature and art have no such vital relation to political institutions. They flourish without invigorating national life and fail without enfeebling it. They have often attained to their highest development during periods of national decay, and some of their finest forms have sprung up amid political ruins. But such is not the case with religion. When it withers the State wanes. When faith begins to perish, all things else begin to die, as if the dew of heaven had been denied, or the former and the latter rain had been withheld.

This was manifest in the history of ancient Israel, and not less so in the history of the Grecian and Roman commonwealths. The book of Judges in the Old Testament is a record of backsliding and bondage, and of revivals and restored prosperity. The annals of Greece and Rome equally reveal the connection between a loss of faith and a loss of power. Declension in religion was followed by declension in morality, and that, in turn, by the enfeeblement of national life and the loss of political freedom.

The history of modern France emphasises the lessons taught by the records of the world’s earlier governments. French governments have lacked steadiness and stability because they were not rooted in the depths of religion [i.e. since the 1789 Revolution], from which spring the conservative and inspiring powers of national life. Lamartine lamented this fact in the history of his people. He says: “I know, and I sigh when I think of it, that hitherto the French people have been the least religious of all the nations of Europe. The republic of these men without a God was quickly stranded. The liberty, won by so much heroism and so much genius, did not find in France a conscience to shelter it, a God to avenge it, a people to defend it, against that atheism which was called glory.”

The founders of the American republic, which has remained stable in spite of many shocks, established it in a nobler spirit, and erected it upon a more enduring basis. They recognised the vital connection of national strength and religious life, and cherished faith as the formative force of the nation.

At the outset of the War of Independence, Congress, by formal action, expressed its desire “to have the people of all ranks and degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense of God’s superintending providence, and of their duty to rely in all their lawful enterprises on his aid and direction.” Accordingly, a general fast was proclaimed, that the people might, “with united hearts confess and bewail their manifold sins and transgressions, and by a sincere repentance and amendment of life appease God’s righteous displeasure, and through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ obtain his pardon and forgiveness.”

In the midst of the war, General Washington issued an order commanding a proper observance of the Sabbath by the army, and throughout his illustrious career he gave the force of both his precept and example to the maintenance of Christian faith.

In the Convention, assembled after the war to frame the Federal Constitution, Benjamin Franklin, then above eighty years of age, offered a motion for daily prayers in the body, and, in support of the proposition, said: “In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for divine

protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed the frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed, in this political building, no better than the builders of Babel."

These were remarkable words, coming from a man of liberalistic opinions. They point to a prevalence of religious sentiment which reached and affected the astutest among the rationalists even. Men who were descendants of the first colonists could not rid themselves of the convictions which had driven their ancestors to the New World, nor utterly renounce the faith from which their colonial institutions had sprung. They knew, as their forefathers had believed and taught, that commonwealths not founded in religion rest precariously on shifting sand.

It must be so. The deepest and most influential thing in the life of any people is its religion, and its customs and codes must inevitably be coloured by its moral convictions. Atheism breeds anarchy as like begets like, and in all the gradations of civil government, from the lowest absolutism to the highest types of free institutions, the character of the political system is exactly determined by the faith that underlies it.

The governments of all heathen lands are despotisms by the very law of their being. Civil freedom cannot live in an atmosphere of pagan superstition. Nations that forget God do thereby forge chains for their own hands.

And in the nominally Christian lands it will be found that the power of political institutions is in direct proportion to the purity of the Christianity with which they coexist. According to the different degrees of religious intelligence in the nations of Christendom will be found the elevation or degradation of their political systems. Romanism has made South America and Southern Europe what they are, and Protestantism has made England, Germany, Holland, and North America what they are. As Romanism wanes in Italy, freedom waxes stronger; but when a chill falls upon the Protestant churches in the United States, the moral vigour of the nation is impaired.

From the widest observation of the political systems of mankind, in all lands and in all times, we derive, therefore, the generalisation that national life roots itself in religious conditions, and that it is feeble or powerful according to the religion from which it springs. Religion makes and moulds States; irreligion mars them. With governments, as with individuals, godliness with contentment is great gain.

Pages 7 – 12.

## CHAPTER NINE.

### EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

#### and the SECURITY of the GREAT REPUBLIC

#### and the HOPE of the WORLD.

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The welfare of the Great Republic and the religious condition of the world in the future are so intimately related that what secures the one vitally affects the other. In this age no nation liveth unto itself, and no nation can die alone – least of all the United States. All are members one of another, and national isolation is no longer possible.

Moreover, moral forces are always aggressive. They are intolerant of opposition, and by their very nature aspire to universal dominion. Hence a religion which is content to be the faith of a part only of the world confesses thereby its unfitness for the acceptance of any portion of mankind, and is a doomed and dying system. Wherefore as the nations, through the virtual annulling of the effects of time and space, by the swift processes of modern communication, come closer and closer together, the earth must inevitably become more uniform in religion and moral government. A generation ago one of the great statesmen of America declared that it was impossible for the United States to continue long with a part of them slaveholding States and part of them free-soil States. History has vindicated the soundness of his judgment. The ends of the earth are closer together at the present hour than were the extremities of our country in 1860, and the world must soon be all Christian or all antichristian. Scepticism and superstition must reign everywhere, or the truth as it is in Jesus must be the religion of the race of men.

We have seen in a former chapter that civil governments rest on religious bases, and that they cannot rise higher nor remain longer than the nature of their foundations allows. We have seen also that the United States are a nation founded by faith and sustained and developed through the instrumentality of a series of national revivals of the faith of the founders, extending over a period of more than a hundred years. While thus blessed by these great revivals, the nation has come to its present position of prosperity and power. Advancing with it, and by the inspiration of the same faith and like revivals, the British nation has also risen to international leadership.

Can this nation, thus born and nourished by faith, renounce now the source of its greatness without losing its freedom and rushing to ruin? Can it fall without pulling down the governments of the English-speaking world and discouraging the hope of constitutional liberty in all lands? Can it and its kindred Anglo-Saxon people perish without extinguishing the light by which all the nations are being led into the perfect day, and ushering in the darkest age our benighted planet has ever known?

In his “Narrative” of the great awakening Jonathan Edwards devoted one entire section to the consideration of “the reasons for believing that the great work of God for the world’s conversion may begin in America.” Like the Hebrew prophets were wont to do, he found in the spiritual force that was upon him and within him the promise of world-wide glory. In the same buoyant hopefulness spoke Vincent Perronet, the devout vicar of Shoreham, when at a little later time he said of the contemporaneous Wesleyan revival in

England: "I make no doubt that Methodism, notwithstanding all the wiles of Satan, is designed by Divine Providence to introduce the approaching millennium."

If the vision of Edwards is extended to include the English-speaking world, and that of Perronet is widened to include all of the evangelical or revivalistic Churches, the circle of their faith and hope will be found exactly coincident, and the circumference of their common expectation will not include anything unreasonable.

Perhaps, after all, neither was very wide of the mark. The hope of mankind is in the keeping of the Anglo-Saxon nations, led by the United States; and evangelical Christianity, with Methodism in the forefront, is the hope of these nations.

If these nations should perish, and the evangelistic type of religion which they hold should fail, the chill which would fall on the race of man would be mortal. And they cannot reasonably hope to endure merely because they are at present powerful. Before them have been powerful nations which have utterly passed away, and they too may be overthrown by the same destructive influences which have overcome others.

The perils of nations are not without but within themselves, and they are always moral perils. No nation was ever destroyed by the murderous attacks of its enemies; all that have gone down fell as suicides die – by their own hands.

There is no real danger threatening the Anglo-Saxon nations today (1904) that is not a moral danger and a domestic danger. There is not a peril besetting them against which evangelical Christianity does not offer a perfect defence; and this is especially true of the Great Republic.

#### **[Regarding the United States of America:]**

Is the republic threatened by selfish wealth and angry want, living near as neighbours while fierce as foes? Did not the Wesleyan revival meet and master similar conditions in England? What said the Hon. Carroll D. Wright very recently upon this subject? In a signed article on John Wesley, contributed to the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, of Chicago, he said: "A body without spirit is dead matter, and this is quite true when we consider mechanical powers. There must be intellectual forces involved; and, further, there must be the comprehension of the spiritual forces of industry in order to bring them to their fruition. It is in this that the influence of John Wesley in social and industrial matters, as well as in the religious life of the world, has been felt; and herein he was a power greater than industry, greater than the new mechanical contrivances, greater than the industrial pride of England." In the same issue of the paper mentioned Mr. Threlfell, Secretary of the Labour Association of England, testifies to the persistence of the saving and soothing influence of the Wesleyan revival to this day among the miners of Great Britain. He says: "Methodism has undoubtedly played a very important part in organizing miners. No one can read the detailed history of the great strikes in the mining world without observing how many of the leaders are connected with some branch of the Methodist Church... Methodism has become the dominant faith of the miners. Such affinity of the vanguard of labour for this particular Church is not only eloquent for the past, but is significant for the future. It is not based on local peculiarities, upon conditions of employment, upon tradition or material surroundings, but springs from the fact that Methodism has most nearly approached the miners' conception of a democratic Church. Its spiritual zeal aroused him. Its democratic instincts were in keeping with his political aspirations, and its organizing ability educated him in the principles of unity.... Can there be any more striking tribute to the influence of Methodism upon the mining community than the fact that five mining members in the present House of Commons have all been trained in the Methodist Church, four being local preachers? In the parliament of 1858 there were six."

Principal A. M. Fairbairn, in his carefully considered volume entitled "Religion in History and Modern Life," bears similar testimony in these words: "Methodism, in its several branches, has done more for the conversion and reconciliation of certain of the industrial classes to religion than any other English Church. It is but just to say that the enfranchisement of our mining and agricultural populations made this evident – that their regulative ideas were religious rather than utilitarian and secular. The politician finds, when he addresses the peasantry, that he has to appeal to more distinctly ethical and religious principles than when he addresses the upper or middle classes. And we may hope that even in a politician the principles he appeals to may ultimately affect his policy. Meanwhile, we simply note that it is the local preacher rather than the secularist lecturer who has, while converting the soul, really formed the mind of the miner and the labourer, and who now largely represents the ideas he seeks, in his dim and inarticulate way, to see applied to national policy and legislation."

If this continued testimony of a student of industrial statistics and conditions, a labour leader and secretary of a labour organisation, and a religious philosopher, be not sufficient, let us recur to the words of the sceptical historian, Lecky, who said that he conceived that it was peculiarly fortunate for England that the rise of industrialism "should have been preceded by a religious revival which opened a new spring of moral and religious energy among the poor, and at the same time gave a powerful impulse to the philanthropy of the rich."

The results thus attributed to the Wesleyan revival in England in the eighteenth century we have seen following also the revival in the days of Moody and Sankey meetings in America in the nineteenth century. Neither time nor place forestalls the operation of the fundamental principles of evangelical Christianity. When they prevail they subdue the selfishness of wealth and the sensitiveness of poverty, casting down the animosities of class against class, and establishing the noblest brotherhood of souls.

It is to be feared that neither capital nor labour realizes its indebtedness to revivals in the past, or comprehends how it must rely on evangelical religion in the future. Nothing else can save either. With both parties armed with implements of industrial warfare, practically irresistible, they will destroy each other, unless selfishness is exorcised from the hearts of both; and this kind goeth not out but by the mighty prayers and fastings of evangelical religion. The dainty and impotent forms of ritualism or the timid and equivocal utterances of rationalism are worse than useless in composing the difficulties of these angered and able combatants. They will dwell together as brothers as soon as they really are brothers, and that will be when they are born again.

Great revivals, which shall cause them to realise in the agonies of penitence and the raptures of regenerating grace the love of their Heavenly Father, will draw them into the most affectionate relations of brotherhood. This is the cure for congested wealth and consuming poverty. This will extinguish the fires of socialism, as travellers escape the perils of prairie fires by burning the grass around their feet and standing on the burned spot. This will establish a Christian communism, which does not say, "We shall have all things equal by my taking from thee what is thine;" but which generously declares "We shall have all things equal by my giving to thee what is mine." Against such socialism there is no law, for love is the fulfilling of all law.

But what, says some one, of the perils of immigration that threatens the Great Republic? Well, the nation has been solving that problem by revivals ever since the founding of the first colonies. That solution of the problem has become the established method in America, and there seems to be nothing better in sight. It was entirely adequate in colonial times, and it was found sufficient in the time of the great revival of 1800. Mr. Moody found the same prescription efficacious in the slums of Chicago, and it worked well in the hands of

Jerry McAuley on the Bowery and in the Water Street Mission. Of course such a solution means nothing to men who have no more than an academic interest in the great problem presented by the foreign settlements in the cities and the isolated settler in the far West. Ritualism and rationalism can do nothing for the foreigner in the city; all that sort of influence has been tried on him in the Old World to no purpose. And of course the lonely frontiersman has no time for such child's play. But the Gospel of a dying Saviour's love, spoken to either the foreigner in the city or to the dweller of the plains, by lips that quiver with the warm emotions of a brotherly heart, will be heard and heeded. This expedient was effective wherever applied to the festering sores of the city life in the Roman Empire and to the emigrant bands of the restless first century of the Christian era, and it will be potent for good in the remotest corners of great West and the darkest alleys of our overcrowded cities in all the years to come. A great revival saved the West in 1800: can a better prescription be applied to it now? A great revival rescued the cities in 1858: can they be otherwise redeemed now?

But is there not a great menace in Romanism? Undoubtedly; but Romanism could not defeat evangelical Christianity in the days of Martin Luther in Germany and of Ridley and Latimer in England, when the sword and the fagot were in its hands, and when it wielded the civil power for the extermination of the faithful. It surely cannot withstand evangelical religion in this day and in this free land. It has no songs like those of Watts and Wesley and Sankey, with which to cheer its benighted hosts. [they do now]. The spirit of the age is against its incredible dogmas. Let the Romanists come on to America; their coming will save the trouble and expense of sending the gospel to the lands where they live in poverty, ignorance, and national decadence. We can handle the hosts of Romanism better here than in papal lands. Evangelical Christianity has reached and saved millions of them already. The total Romish population in the United States does not equal the Roman Catholic immigrants who have come to our shores. It has been truly said that "this country is the biggest grave for popery ever dug on the earth." And the evangelical Churches are preaching the gospel of a spiritual Christianity in Roman Catholic countries. There are more Methodists in the city of Rome today, not to mention other evangelical Christians there, than there were Christians in Imperial Rome when Paul declared in his letter to the Romans that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it was the power of God unto salvation. The same power still resides in the gospel, and it will be found thus potent to redeem by all those evangelical Churches who show themselves as ready as was the great apostle to preach the gospel "to them who are in Rome also." It goes without the saying that an apish Romanizing Church can do nothing to withstand the perils of Romanism. As little can a disputatious ministry that can find nothing better than a controversy with which to reach a follower of the pope.

Intemperance, Mormonism, socialism, spiritualism, "Christian Science," and every other high, or low, thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God may be easily overthrown by the uncaral but powerful weapons which the Captain of our salvation has put at the disposal of fervent faith and loving zeal. But these strongholds will not yield to the assaults of a paralytic preaching of theological uncertainty, nor to the empty parade of a religious tableau. The walls of Jericho fell not at the mellifluous notes of delicate minstrelsy, nor at the bidding of a hesitant faith, but by the rude, loud blast of the ram's horn, sounded by men who trusted in the living God.

There is not a peril menacing the Great Republic today that, in some form or other, has not been met and overcome by revivals – great, general revivals – during the past. These perils gather strength and reappear from time to time. So must the revivals of religion. The revivalistic spirit and methods of the fathers of the republic will prevail in our generation if their children and children's children walk and work in the same way of faith.

**[Regarding the Rest of the World:]**

*But this evangelical Christianity is not only the security of the republic; it is also the hope of the world.* That this claim may not appear extravagant, let us consider several facts that are known and read of all men.

The Anglo-Saxon nations – by which term is meant not only the people directly descended from the Angles and the Saxons, but those also who, by collateral descent or by political association with them, have been conformed to their type and identified with their destiny – occupy the position of supremacy in the family of nations today, and their rise to this elevation has been coetaneous with the period of the great revivals amongst them, which have passed in review before us. In the year 1700, scarcely more than thirty years before the beginning of the great awakening in America and the rise of the Wesleyan revival in England, this race numbered less than 6 million souls. By the year 1800, when another great revival began and a century of revivals opened, they had increased to 20,500,000. They now number more than 130,000,000 (1904); control above one-fourth of the land surface of the earth; exercise authority over one-third of the world's population; own half of the wealth of the globe, including the richest mines of gold, iron, and coal; occupy all the strategic points on the planet; command the highways on the sea and the railways on the land; dominate the commerce of mankind, and transmit its news. Their colonies are in every continent and on the isles of the sea, and from every colony their language, laws, and religion are spread in all directions.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that as these nations go so will go the world. In view of the commanding position of the United States in this family of Anglo-Saxon people, some have ventured to affirm that as goes the United States so will go the world. But whether that thesis is or is not tenable, there can be no reasonable doubt that into the hands of the English-speaking nations has been given the future of mankind for centuries to come.

If civil liberty and a spiritual Christianity are to become the possession of all the children of men, they must be communicated by the Anglo-Saxon people. Nowhere else is either the disposition or the resources required for so great an achievement. Nor can any one of them do the mighty work alone. They must stand together if they accomplish the ends of this high mission which is so manifestly set before them.

Let us now recall what we have discovered concerning their religious history during the centuries in which they have been steadily advancing to their present eminence. We have seen great revivals among them, elevating their lives and purifying their laws, opening vast tracts for their habitation and rescuing the early settlers in those regions from the dangers and deterioration of frontier life, quickening industry and cleansing it from the forces of self-destruction, overthrowing doubt and restoring faith, healing national alienations and removing international antipathies – in short, helping to avert every peril that has beset them, and assisting to enhance every victory that has come to them.

Can we, then, reasonably suppose that there is any hope for these nations, or for the world dependent upon them, outside of the evangelical religion which has been their inspiration and constant attendant in all the way over which they have come? This faith has brought them safe thus far; can they go forward if they abandon it?

It is as certain as any generalisation in the philosophy of history can be that these nations are not going to renounce Christianity, nor exchange the type of Christianity under which they have grown to greatness for any other. The doctrines and life of evangelical Christianity will hold the field against all comers, whether they be the forces of doubt denying all faith, or the companies of rationalism or ritualism with their pinched and paralytic faiths. A robust evangelism, having, like the angel of the Apocalypse, the everlasting gospel to preach, and singing as a seraph as it flies, is a form of religion to which these nations will

cling, and the religion which they will impart to mankind if they succeed in evangelising the globe.

Moreover, this is the only type of religion which they could carry throughout the earth, even if they were of a mind to try some other sort. Evangelical Christianity only has in it the elements of universality and permanence. Doubt is transient, ritualism is local. All forms of rationalism are the fleeting fashions with which men of an indolent and curious culture interest themselves for an hour, and ecclesiastical forms at best are merely national. Sacramentalism is superstitious and cannot endure the light of a scientific age. But evangelical Christianity, incarnated in the experience of glowing souls, is at home in all lands, potent in all times, and unembarrassed in any presence. It is as broad as human need, and as penetrating as the Divine Spirit. It is unshaken by the assaults of infidelity and unhindered by the advance of knowledge. Its doctrines of sin, repentance, justification by faith, the new birth, the witness of the Spirit, Christian perfection, and the life eternal after death are certified by the deepest wants, the highest aspirations, and the profoundest convictions of the race. No discoveries of science can make them appear either more or less true. And the attenuated theories of a painful and changeful criticism of the Holy Scriptures are but side issues of minor importance when brought into comparison with them.

If all the conclusions of science, upon which some rely to overthrow Christianity, were demonstrably true, and all the hypotheses of a microscopic criticism, upon which others depend to overthrow orthodoxy, were absolutely established upon immovable bases of fact, these great principles of evangelical Christianity would remain entirely undisturbed. They speak with authority to all classes, from the highest to the lowest, and subdue the men of all races with an unearthly imperialism. In the hands and heart of an evangelist like Wesley they scatter the writings of Voltaire like chaff before the blast of a tornado. Uttered even by a plain lay preacher like Mr. Moody, they so enthrall the hearts of the multitudes that "Mr. Tyndall and Mr. Herbert Spencer and Mr. Huxley are not much in their minds while the evangelist is around."

**[These great revivals produce strong arguments in favour of their truth.]**

These doctrines, when preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, produce great revivals, which are themselves the insoluble problem of the faithless and the despair of the armies of doubt. Mr. Lecky is constrained to give a large space in his sceptically conceived histories to the Wesleyan revival, and is forced to acknowledge its benign influence. Mr. Herbert Spencer feels impelled to preside over one of Mr. Moody's meetings to raise funds for the Yong Men's Christian Association, and contributes largely to the collection.

Now these revivals of Wesley and Moody and the rest are great and far-reaching facts, and as such they demand adequate explanation. The voice of modern science seconds the imperative demand that they be accounted for by a reasonable hypothesis. Was there in Mr. Moody's natural powers or Mr. Wesley's "environment" anything adequate to account for the prodigious effects which they accomplished? Pending Moody's meetings in New York, Dr. J. G. Holland, in an editorial in *Scribner's Magazine*, put this phase of the case well: "The great men of science now engaged in uprooting the popular faith in Christianity have a new problem in science. Was there enough in Mr. Moody's eloquence, or personal influence, to account for the effect produced? Would it not be very unscientific to regard these little means sufficient to account for these great results? It is a fair question, and it deserves a candid answer. Until we get this answer, people who have nothing but common sense to guide them must repose upon the conviction that the power which Mr. Moody seemed to wield was in the truth he promulgated, or that it emanated from a source which he recognised as the Spirit of God."

.The nations which have come to power along with this evangelical Christianity are also a problem for objectors to solve. Confessedly they are the most enlightened and peaceful and prosperous nations on the globe. Why? Wendell Phillips said: "The answer to the Shastas is India; the answer to Confucianism is China; the answer to the Koran is Turkey; the answer to the Bible is the Christian civilization of Protestant Europe and America."

But more particularly let us inquire: To what are the puissant nations of the Anglo-Saxons the answer, if not to evangelical Christianity, with its doctrines of experience, gospel hymns, and revivals of religion? Let the doubters answer this question before they have talked any more about the anthropoid ape and the composition of the "polychrome" Pentateuch. We are a trifle surfeited with that sort of academic cant, and wish a change for a rest, anyhow. We wish something more serious and practical. We want to know who shall save the world if these nations do not save it, and what can save these and all other nations if evangelical Christianity cannot?

Still further, the evangelisation of the world is a costly enterprise, and it will require nothing less than the powerful influences of an evangelical Christianity to command even the material resources demanded for such a task. Outside the nations in which this type of Christianity is dominant there is neither the money nor the enthusiasm necessary for so vast an undertaking. Pagan faiths are too poor to pay their travelling expenses, and Christianity of the rationalistic or ritualistic type is too indolent and indifferent to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation.

This was put beyond all question by the reports and representatives of the Ecumenical Conference of Missions in New York in 1900. We have seen how missionary boards sprang up in England and America in the wake of great revivals, and the facts gathered by the Conference in New York demonstrated how those enterprises have been sustained, from the beginning until now, from the same sources of faith and zeal. No religion but that of the evangelical Churches commands the means, or cares for the work of world-encompassing schemes of redemption.

Again, no one Church is equal to the task of evangelizing the world; and if the various Churches working in foreign fields do not cooperate with each other, but fall to fighting among themselves in the presence of the heathen, all of them together will do something worse than fail. On the mission field only bodies pervaded by a catholic spirit are of any avail. But the doctrinal basis of evangelical Christianity is the only platform wide enough for all parties to stand harmoniously upon. Strifes about forms of ordinances, doctrines of historic episcopates and apostolic successions, and dogmas concerning forms of governments and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, appear ridiculous to intelligent pagans, and it is worthy of remark that such worthless things disappear from the home land, even, whenever a great revival sweeps over the country. These minor matters cannot be of the essence of Christianity, and no amount of verbal jugglery or astute argumentation can make them appear as of prime importance to any healthy mind which is free from partisan bias, or to any devout soul filled with the joy of the Spirit.

Moreover, it will take a glad, singing Christianity to persevere in the evangelisation of the world until the work is done. Any and all other sorts will weary of the task and faint by the way. Only the evangelical Churches have songs and joy enough to keep going till

Every kindred, every tribe,  
On this terrestrial ball,  
All majesty to Christ ascribe,  
And crown him Lord of all.

And this mighty enterprise cannot be carried to such a culmination without the help of the lay element in the Churches. There are not enough men in orders to do all the work if it were wise to propagate Christianity by clerical hands alone. The lay element must have a

part in the last century of Christian conquest, as it did in the first century. Dwight L. Moody and John R. Mott are signs that point in the right directions in this high matter. There are schools to be conducted, prayer meetings to be held, and other work to be done on foreign fields, which will require the fervent service of thousands and tens of thousands of laymen. It is not money alone that the laymen of the Churches must supply. Their heads and hands and hearts are needed to penetrate and purify the dark places in the crowded cities of our own and heathen lands. And the multitude of laymen demanded for this great service cannot be found in sufficient numbers, or with the requisite training, outside the Churches which have had their growth by revivals of religion. In the other churches the layman bears a very inferior part. In truth, laymen are not suited to the work of operating an elaborate ritualism or enforcing a complicated system of speculative dogmas. Doctrines which can be found experientially, and which can be preached most effectively out of a living experience, are the weapons best adapted to the use of this great infantry division of the Church of God. Laymen can handle effectively the implements of warfare belonging to evangelical Christianity; in the use of any other sort they are awkward and incompetent.

For all these, and for other reasons that will suggest themselves to a devout and thoughtful mind, it is clear that evangelical Christianity is “the security of the Great Republic and the hope of the world.” If the movement of Providence over the Anglo-Saxon nations is not to terminate in a blind alley and end in a frustrated plan, they must advance in the power of the same divine grace which hath led them safe thus far. They must continue to be lifted and strengthened by greater and greater awakenings, inspires and invigorated by greater and greater revivals of religion, till their mission is fulfilled.

Some would have it believed that the days of revivals have passed for ever. If this be true, the end of these revivalistic nations is drawing near. If the springs of their greatness have run dry, their leaves must soon wither and their fruit fail. Revivals will cease when these nations fail, or when their work is done and the crowns of their eternal reward have been won. The day of revivals will have passed away when the sun of these evangelical people has set to rise no more, or when the day has dawned upon the final government of the world – the New Jerusalem – not built upon the suffrages of men, but established by the power of God. Revivals will not cease until sin has become invincible or salvation universal.

Candler. Page 283 to page 308

# **THE GREAT AMERICAN REVIVAL.**

## **A Study of the Great Revival (1800 – 1842.)**

### **Religious Revivals a National Necessity.**

A religious revival often has been a national necessity. Great revivals of religion have resulted in social and political reconstruction. History encourages the hope that society again can be redeemed through a spiritual awakening. The late W. T. Stead said: "The progress of the world is largely made up of successful revivals. The revival of religion has been the inevitable precursor of social and political reform."

This was true of England. It took a revival to liberate that country from the chaos of feudal misrule. The people welcomed the austere Cistercians as they travelled over the moors and through the forests. Everywhere the people met in groups to pray. England was spiritually awakened. This resulted in the people securing the Great Charter.

Later the Dominicans and the Franciscan friars carried the gospel to England's poor. Spiritually revitalized, these people secured their first parliament. When these same monastic orders declined spiritually, it took another revival under Wycliffe and the Lollards to bring the people back to God. This awakening reasserted and demonstrated the fact that the rights of man must be respected.

Tyndale and his successors gave the Bible to the English people in their mother tongue. Bible reading became universal and led to the English Reformation, the Puritan Revival, the overthrow of the Stuarts and the founding of the English Commonwealth.

The Wesleyan and Evangelical revivals produced a new philanthropy which abolished slavery, mitigated the cruel penal laws, reformed the prisons, and gave rise to popular education. These facts led Mr. Stead to write: "Until this nation goes to the penitent form, it never really pulls itself together for any serious work."

If these words are true of England, a monarchy, how much more true must they be of America, a democracy. Babson sensed this: "First let me say that we believe the only development which can possibly keep democracy afloat is a revival of religion. Under the old system of centralized government, conditions depended only upon the character of the rulers and not upon the character of the masses. Once a government could prosper, whatever the condition of the churches, or even without any educational system for the people, but today, with every man a voter and with all the votes counting the same, the stability of the government depends not upon wealth nor armies, but on the character of the electorate."

### **America, Land of Revivals.**

America, in becoming a mighty nation, depended upon great revivals of religion. The United States has been pre-eminently a land of revivals. It was conceived in a revival. The men and women who came out of the Puritan revival in England, and the Pietist revival on the Continent, became the germ of our future nation. These noble souls with a revitalised spiritual life came to the New World to enjoy a fuller, richer expression of the divine life surging within them. Thus America's conception as a great republic was in a revival atmosphere. The forms and forces of its national life took their rise in the religion of their people.

When the early days of hardship and privation gave way to times of general prosperity, the children of these pioneers neglected things spiritual. There was a drift from God in all the colonies. A great awakening in the middle decades of the eighteenth century called the people back to God. This spiritual awakening was part of a great national and

international revival. The Wesleys and Whitefield in England, Howell Harris in Wales, and Edwards, the Tennents and Whitefield in America, were the outstanding revivalists. This movement is called by the historians "The Great Awakening."

The Great Awakening took the diverse and disunited colonies and gave them a spiritual unity, without which political union never could have been secured. George Whitefield, in his evangelistic labours in all the colonies and among their various religious groups, paved the way for the Political union which came in the decade following his death. He is the spiritual father of the American Republic. The Great Awakening in the middle of the eighteenth century became a vital factor in the making of our nation.

Following the Great Awakening, religion was honoured on every side. Infidelity had received a stunning blow. Christianity was in the ascendency. It became popular to join the church, and, in some instances, church membership was a necessary passport to respectable society. In other cases, it was a prerequisite to political preferment. The churches were filled. With a population of nearly three million, there was an evangelical minister for every two thousand people. This wave of popularity, however, filled the churches with many people who did not possess any vital Christian experience.

The French and Indian Wars, and later the Revolutionary War, had a depressing influence upon the church. War is never friendly to spirituality. Bitterness and hatred animated all classes. The church, in fostering patriotism, ceased to develop personal piety. Infidelity lifted up its head again, and waved its sceptre over the land. England was suffering from the profligate School of Bolingbroke. Voltaire visited England, absorbed its teaching and returned to corrupt the French. He visited the court of Frederick the Great, where he introduced the reign of infidelity and scepticism.

Thomas Jefferson visited France and brought back copious draughts of the same infidel poison. As President, he exerted a great influence in spreading infidelity in America. Thomas Paine at this time sought to supplant the Bible with his "Age of Reason." It looked as though Christianity in the New World was to be entombed by a popularized atheism. "Our people had discovered that there could be a church without a Pope or Bishop, a Land without Prince or King, and were on the point of deciding that there could be a world without a God."

However, a godly remnant, an intercessory minority, still survived. God interposed, and soon in all the eastern States and in all the western territories the power of God was felt. Infidelity was defeated, and both church and nation entered upon a new and advancing era of its history. The story of this great revival is the story of the remarkable rebirth of aggressive evangelical Christianity in America.

It was the first great revival which came to the United States of America after it had become an independent nation. This revival brought the church in America to a sense of its great mission in the world. It gave birth to the great missionary and philanthropic movements which made the nineteenth century so outstanding in this expression of Christian life and service. Historians call this "The Great Revival."

Some historians believe The Great Revival saved the United States politically as well as religiously. This revival met America's national necessity. France at the same time had a similar need. This nation, with its extreme atheism and irreligion, stands in great contrast with America. Lamartine has well expressed it: "The republic of these men without a God was quickly stranded. The liberty won by so much heroism, and so much genius did not find in France a conscience to shelter it, a God to avenge it, a people to defend it against that atheism which was called glory."

The Great Revival was long sustained. Its opening scenes were followed by successive revival waves, which continued with more or less interest and power, until 1842. This revival was followed by great national prosperity; gold was discovered in the West; railroads were projected across the continent; banks were established everywhere; industrial

plants sprung up like mushrooms overnight. Many thought the golden age of America's prosperity had arrived. The great panic which broke out in Wall Street, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1857, was the hand writing on the wall. The nation had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Banks failed, business houses closed, railroads went into bankruptcy, and all business was at a standstill. Man's extremity was God's opportunity.

Providentially the Fulton Street noonday prayer meeting had been organized three weeks before the panic. This prayer meeting grew in interest and attendance as the panic tightened its grip on the city. Many other prayer meetings were established in New York City. These were held from six o'clock in the morning until late in the night. Prayer meetings were held in all sections of the country. A great revival swept America. This "Prayer-meeting Revival" crossed the ocean and visited, in turn, the churches of Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England. It is claimed that a million converts were won for Christ and church membership in this Prayer-meeting Revival.

The Prayer-meeting revival prepared America for the impending crisis of its Civil War. The war did not completely quench the revival fires. Revivals continued in the Northern States. They broke out in the Confederate camps. Following the Civil War came Moody and his successors – B. Fay Mills, M. B. Williams, J. Wilbur Chapman, Biederwolf, Sunday, Torrey, Gipsy Smith, and many others, who have made notable contributions to revival successes in American churches.

The World War marked a new epoch in American religious life. Even prior to the War it was evident that evangelism was in retreat. In turn, evangelism has given way, as the centre of interest, to the Social Gospel, to Religious Education, and the more recent interest on Christian Worship. At the same time where evangelism was stressed there has been a growing departure from the fundamental revival principle to that of methods and organizations. Instead of insisting on the revitalization of its spiritual life as the essential condition in soul winning, the church has depended upon the perfection of human methods in highly organized campaigns. The word "revival" went into disrepute during this period.

### **Revival, a Much Misused Word.**

Out of the American religious revivals has come a three-fold use of the word "revival." Throughout the centuries revivals at times have been associated with certain excesses of emotion and excitement. Because of these physical accidentals, the word "revival" has attached to it certain connotations which are offensive. Some psychologists use the word synonymously with erratic physical excitements. However, careful students of revival history have no difficulty in distinguishing the froth of emotional excitement from the mighty wave beneath it.

"We must carefully separate the revival from its adjuncts and accessions. We must distinguish it from false and dangerous excitements which have usurped its name; for, common and almost technical as the word revival has become, it is often understood by those who oppose all earnestness in religion, and all true religion itself, to denote every species of religious extravagance. Even the wildest outbreaks of fanaticism and superstition are dignified by the name of revival." (Fish's *Handbook of Revivals*, p.11.)

There are worse things than emotional excesses," writes President Little. "Moral stupor is worse. So is the seared conscience and the petrified heart. So is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." (*Revival, a Symposium*, page 48.)

Revival, the spiritual awakening of Christians, has been closely associated with the winning of the unbeliever. In fact, the revival of the church has been its most successful evangelistic method. Hence, the word "revival" has come to mean any special protracted effort to win the unconverted to a Christian experience. Beardsley writes: "According to the generic significance of the word, it means to reanimate, to awaken new life, and hence it

proposes a state of declension. But since the awakened church is always a converting agency, any religious awakening is a revival, whether the term is applied to the work of converting the unregenerate, or the task of bringing new life to a dead and decaying church. With this understanding revivals are as old as human history.” (Beardsley. *History of American Revivals*. pages 41 – 42.)

Revival, as defined by the dictionary, is a “restoration from a state of languor, depression or discouragement.” The frailties and failures of our human nature makes necessary the divine intervention which makes possible the spiritual revitalization of God’s people. There is a supernatural element in all spiritual revivals; God continues to be the “great marshal of events.” In every revival which history records, the human preparation has been inadequate, defective, pitifully meagre. It is profoundly heartening the declension has its limitations. The wave of spiritual progress recedes, but even in receding it is gaining power and volume to return and to rush further in. Evil then can claim no empire over the soul of man. God has set a limitation to the defection of his own church. When the night is the darkest, the dawn is on the way. (Burns, *Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders*. Page 12.)

### **Revival, God’s Law of Progress.**

Horace Bushnell, who was converted in the Great Revival, wrote in 1838: “Revivals are a part of the divine economy... Progress, the law of all God’s works, involves variety and change. Spring is a first stage of progress... In fact there is no reason to doubt that God, in framing the plan or system of his spiritual agencies, ordained fluctuations and changing types of spiritual exercise, that he might take advantage, at intervals, of novelty in arresting and swaying the mind of men.... If one expects to carry on the cause of salvation by a steady rolling on the same dead level, and fears continuously lest the axles wax hot and kindle a flame, he is too timorous to hold the reins of the Lord’s chariot.” (Quoted by Fish from *Quarterly Christian Spectator* [1838], in *Handbook of Revivals*, page 116.)

In the inevitable recoil which follows revivals, the spiritual ebb tide never reaches the low level which preceded the previous revival. It is a declension which looms large when contrasted with the high level reached by the preceding incoming flood tide. It is the ebb of a constantly advancing tide. “The church today stands in a different attitude. The church today could not fall so low as in past days as it falls from a loftier height. It may reveal in its defection none of the old abuses, in this respect may compare favourably with even the best periods in other and earlier epochs; but this standard of judgment is false. Each age has its own standard, and by that standard the church may be condemned of pitiful defection even while in comparison of other ages, full of good works.” (Burns, *Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders*,” page 12.).

### **Watchman, What of the Night?**

Burns diagnoses the present situation when he says: “First of all no one pretends it is well with the church today. When every allowance is made for exaggeration there is enough left to arouse deep searching of heart. On every side there is complaint of the church’s loss of spiritual power, of the increasing indifference of the people toward her services and of the startling decrease in her membership. Where there is not decline, there is at least a conscious arrest of her influence, and in the world a widespread hostility to her claims. It is not that the church is inert. Never before was there more activity and less result. There is abundant energy, but it is not conquering energy conscious of its power, but feverish energy conscious of its impotence. Nor is it that the pulpit is asleep. Never was learning more widespread and never has the pulpit reached a higher average of ability and culture. Nevertheless, the message of the pulpit has largely lost its power to convince and the preacher his power to convert.

“When we look beneath the surface we see much to account for this. We have been passing through an age of commercialism. Never before in the history of the world have the hearts of men been set with such a passion of avarice, upon material things, and this has deadened men’s hearts, as it must always do, to the gospel of renunciation... It is more than a fear that the church has not escaped from its corrupting spirit; that the love of wealth, of ease, the palliation of commercial immorality, the pampering of the wealthy, and the neglect of the poor, the judging of things according to material standards have been allowed to creep in and to devitalize her spiritual witness...

“Another reason for the present state of impotence which characterizes the church today, arises from the fact that we have been passing through an age of theological unrest, in the shifting of our foundations and the prolonged theological conflict. It is an age of transition, and all transition periods are periods of suffering.

“The unrest in this sphere of belief has risen through the scientific revival which has characterized the second half of the past century. Amazing indeed have been the results. Science has broken through the barriers of the skies, it has bound lightning to its chariot, has wrested from nature a thousand secrets, and with impatient curiosity has forced every door of knowledge.

“The results of these changes have been for many the unsettling of belief, for many others the loss of faith, and for all a certain hesitation regarding even the most central doctrines. It has introduced into the pulpit certain conscious uncertainty as of men who were not quite sure of their ground. A disposition has grown to leave many of the disputed doctrines alone, and fall back upon moral precepts and the inculcation of good living.

“The result is that much, if not all that is most distinctive and life-giving in the message of Christianity has been lost; passion is simulated; earnestness is often directed toward useless things, and men in the pew, even though they do not consciously realize it, yet are unconsciously affected by the absence of the note of certainty and intense conviction.

“So pulpit and pew are united in common misgiving; men find it easy in the midst of declining ideals, to drift from the church; their conscience is unaffected by their relapse, because there is little of that atmosphere of reality, which thinks in spiritual things the neglect of God’s house an awful thing. A weakened church means the strengthening of every influence which makes for man’s undoing and no heart escapes the sorrow.” (Burns. *Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders*. pages 44 – 46.)

In such an hour the church would do well to familiarize itself with the history of the great revivals, and with the laws which govern their genesis and progress. Andover, the first American Protestant theological seminary, had in its early years a “Revival Association.” These students studied the history of revivals. The leaders considered this to be the best method in their day to produce revival preachers and revivals. The memory of the Great Prayer-meeting Revival (1857 – 1860) was an important factor leading to the revival of 1904-05 in Wales.

Bishop Candler, referring to certain books dealing with revivals in America, writes, “Nothing outside of the Bible could contribute more directly in the promotion of revival than a general prayerful perusal of these highly and exceedingly stimulating treatises.” (Candler, *Great Revivals and the Great Republic*.)

In this present time of great spiritual depression, it is becoming apparent that a great revival of religion is a national necessity. We therefore do well to acquaint ourselves with what God did in a similar period of our history. What He did then He can do again. The story of the Great Revival (1800-1842) should kindle faith and hope, and promote measures which might hasten another great spiritual awakening.

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