

confined, and ought our expectations to be confined, to routine, formality, and fixed order and measures? Should we not look for times of refreshing, days of power, intimations of the coming millennial glory? Are not these awakenings the very things we have prayed for, longed for, waited for? Are they not the subject of inspired prophecy? Are they not given to support our faith in Divine prediction, and animate our languid hopes of the coming glory of the millennial age, when a nation shall be born in a day? And are there no hopeful signs of such an awakening amongst us? Do we not see a cloud, though no bigger than a man's hand, rising out of the sea, the auspicious portent of a coming rain? What means this universal stir about the working classes, this breaking down of the barriers of ecclesiastical formalities, this starting up of lay evangelists in the North, and of clerical irregularities in the South, this opening of our abbey-churches, and cathedrals for the preaching of the Word of God to the masses, this entrance of the gospel into places of trade and amusement, this gradual removal of the distinction between things sacred and secular,—when the sacred are not becoming secular, but the secular sacred—and especially this miniature representation of the American revivals in some parts of our own country? I could speak of what has occurred in a town in my own neighborhood, as remarkable for its extent as anything that has taken place across the Atlantic.

“ Before I conclude, may I, my beloved and honored brethren in the ministry, as one who has attained to patriarchal standing, though, I am duly aware, to few of its honors or its claims, beseech you with affectionate earnestness to give this momentous subject your calm, deliberate, solemn, and prayerful attention. Our responsibility is tremendous, and should make us fear and tremble, and in an agony of spirit to exclaim, ‘ Lord, who is sufficient for these things?’ On us does it in some measure depend whether the heavens shall open and the blessing in its fullness come down,—whether the life-giving power shall ooze and trickle in drops or flow in streams. How is it we can be so easy in such circumstances, and with such interests dependent on us? How is it we can sleep so soundly upon our beds or sit so comfortably around our table and our fire? Are we, indeed, watching for souls, or trifling with them? Are we so stiffened into formality, so drilled into routine, so enchained by custom, that when anything new or startling comes across our orbit, or enters into our sphere of observation, we will not notice it, or ask what it means? Shall we who are stationed on the walls of Jerusalem be unprepared with an answer to the question—‘ Watchman, what of the night?—Watchman, what of the night, what of the night?’ Shall we who are expected to form public opinion, to influence public sentiment, to direct and control public movement, stand by in this case with cold and careless gaze, or sneering contempt or actual opposition? Eversupposing we take no new steps, shall we not quicken those we already take in our own course? If we adopt no new measures shall we not be stirred up to carry forward our old ones with more vigour? Let us, oh! let us recollect, that we are the servants of Him who maketh His ministers a flame of fire. Dearly beloved brethren, let this be such a meeting as we have never held; let a new baptism of fire come upon us all to-day. Let this be a time of humiliation for the past, of consecration for the present, and of determination for the future. Let us enter to-day into covenant with each other and with God, to be more diligent and devoted servants of Christ, and then, depend upon it, we shall be more successful ones. You cannot know, as I do, the solemnity of the feeling that is produced by the conviction that life is almost gone—the awe that comes over the mind of him who knows that he is upon the border-country of eternity, and must soon lay down his ministry, and give in his account. Let him, then, in conclusion, conjure you and himself by the solemn vows of our ordination; by the worth and danger of immortal spirits; by the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; by the felicities of heaven, the torments of hell, and the ages of eternity; by the great white throne, and the presence of Him that sits upon it, before which we must soon appear—let me, I say, conjure you to inquire what use we shall make of the extraordinary events which have called for this paper, and in what way we shall turn it to our own account in watching for souls, reviving the spirit of piety in our churches, and bringing back this revolted world to the dominion of Christ.”