

cial disasters which spread such wide havoc in America, and which is happily still proceeding, has been the most important and encouraging of them all. There has been less excitement about it; it has been more extensive; and it has apparently produced more conversions than were the result of any previous revival. All accounts show that there has been vouchsafed to the churches in America a manifestation of divine grace, for which we should give God thanks. We should also earnestly pray that it may be continued and extended; for there seems to us to be little in the scriptural delineations of the work of God to warrant the idea of periods of prosperity and decline, of active operations and indolent pauses, of labour and rest. This may happen with men whose powers are restricted, and soon exhausted; but it can have no place with God, who faints not, neither is weary. "My Father," said Christ, "worketh hitherto, and I work." Divine agency is incessant, unwearied, and inexhaustible. It is true, indeed, that there have been in the church, times of revival and decline—that there have been alternations of day and night in the spiritual as in the natural world; but this has been owing to the inactivity and the unbelief of the people of God. Just as the Christian sins, slides back from God and duty, and is again revived, established in the faith, and comforted, so it is with churches; but, at the same time, there can be little doubt, that the law of duty requires that the church, as well as the Christian, make continued progress, and that its path should be like that of the sun, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Now, of these two modes of increase we would rather have that which is silent, steady, and progressive. There may be something in the social habits and constitutional tendencies of the people of America which God is pleased graciously to overrule for the advancement of his own cause, and which he renders subordinate to the extension and the building up of the church. But we consider that state more healthful and more scriptural, where the increase is continuous—where the instructions of the family, the Sabbath, and day schools, and the ministers' Bible classes, blessed by God, lead the young early to give their hearts to Christ, and to associate themselves with his people; and where the faithful preaching of the Gospel, attended by the energy of the Spirit, brings to Christ any unconverted adults that may have been destitute of early religious tuition, or have withstood its influence, and carries on to maturity the work of grace in the hearts of all who believe. The church is compared to a field; and we know that it is continued, systematic, and wisely expended labour that renders any field productive. The church is likened to a river; and that river advances with a steady flow, deepening and widening as it goes. Still, as it is the tendency of all means to lose their influence—as familiarity destroys effect, so it is ever the duty of the church to cry to God for reviving grace, and to avail itself of all occasions that are fitted to excite attention, and to induce men to give greater heed to the things which concern the salvation of their souls. This is one of the special ends which personal or domestic affliction serves; it gives greater freshness and power to the means of grace. And it is well also for the church, when events occur which tend to counteract the deadening influence of habit, which prompt a greater interest in divine things, and which lead to more abounding personal, family, and social prayer.

2. *The special need that there is at the present time for an enlarged measure of the gracious influence of the Spirit.*—The Lord, who has blessed the churches of America, is willing also to bless us. We should seek this. The Lord is waiting to be gracious; and we too shall obtain increased blessing, if we ask it in a right manner. We do not wish to see any additional means established; but we fervently desire to see existing means vivified and made more fruitful; and on this account we are glad to know that the tidings from America have led to increased prayer in many places. We greatly need a higher degree of spirituality, and we should ardently endeavour to realise it. No one can shut his eyes to the consideration, that the religious state of Scotland is full of peril. There never was a time in any country when the means of grace were so abundant. The gospel of Christ is everywhere preached; education abounds; copies of the Holy Scriptures are cheap, and excellent religious books may be had at very little cost. The agencies that are seeking the spiritual welfare of all classes of the community are numerous