

couraged at all. Now in opposition, to some plausible objections that have been made to prayer meetings by men of undoubted piety, we are bold to maintain, that the want of them is indicative of a very low state of religion in any congregation. We would just observe that, religion which is designed to transform man's moral nature, yet leaves him as it found him in regard to the permanent and original principles of his constitution. Hence, he is a social creature, whether he be regenerated or unregenerated. Yea, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour have an assimilating influence on christians, and hence, selfishness is subdued in them, and the benevolent affections are fostered, while they are also regulated and directed to proper objects. Christians will thus of all other men be social. And as opportunities are afforded they will meet together for mutual counsel, encouragement and comfort, for deliberating on the interests of the kingdom of God, and for prayer for its advancement. And, inasmuch as that prayer holds such an important place in the class of means for the advancement of that kingdom, and that a special promise is given to the prayers of two or three met together—christians will delight in meetings for prayer. Hence, we may be well assured that any ecclesiastical arrangement which limits the opportunities of a people for meeting for prayer, to the public assembly of the Lord's day, in which pastoral instruction is the principal exercise is in a sense an unnatural, as it is an unscriptural arrangement. And, that any people living in the neighborhood of each other, who yet converse not on the all important concerns of salvation, and meet not to pray for each other, and for the whole church of the Redeemed, and for a world perishing in sin, except on the Lord's day; if it can be said that such persons do then meet for these objects—know little of the nature and power of christianity. Is not the social nature of man constantly exhibiting itself in connexion with his worldly pursuits, as in meetings and societies for political, literary, commercial, and convivial objects? And are the social tendencies to be cramped and restrained when men pass from the world to the church? The want then of social meetings for prayer for the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer, among a people living in each others neighborhood implies, as we firmly believe, the want of a spirit of prayer amongst that people. And as such meetings are very unfrequent in our congregations, we infer from this, as from other considerations, the need of a revival of the power of christianity in them.

III. *The prevalence of a lukewarm and worldly spirit amongst the members of our church* proclaims the need of a revival. Some commentators have supposed that the state of the seven Asiatic churches, as these have been described in the messages sent to them by the Lord Jesus himself, through the apostle John, was intended to represent the condition of the universal church in various successive ages.—This is undoubtedly fanciful. Yet it must be admitted that the last mentioned of those churches bore a character such as that which the church in this late age of her existence extensively possesses. Great portions even of the Protestant Church, are Laodicean-like lukewarm, and proud of their supposed excellencies and privileges. Paul's description of "perilous times in the last days"* is more certainly prophetic. And it is probable, that those days are now near at hand—if they have not already come. Now it would argue great blindness or presumption in us to look for the evils which the apostle there enumerates, within any one portion of the visible church. Not even she, who is styled "the mother of the abominations of the earth," has in herself exclusively all the vices which are to prevail "in the last days." As we value the church, with which we are connected, for the extent of the reformation which has passed upon her, we should be concerned to have her delivered from those vices. And is it not too characteristic of us, that we possess, yea and glory in "the form of godliness," while yet we deny the power of it.—Who so ready as we to boast of the copiousness and orthodoxy of our confession and catechisms, of the simplicity and scripturalness of our modes of worship, and the general decency of our people? Yet alas! with privileges confessedly great, and an exterior highly promising, how little of the power and beauty of christianity do we exhibit! With very many amongst us, faith in the Son of God seems incapable of regenerating the soul to a life of holiness—and the doctrine of the cross, it might be thought, had no power to destroy in those who receive it, the love of sin, and to captivate them to the obedience and service of Christ.

In the passage to which we have referred, the apostle says, "men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous [or according to the plain Greek, *lovers of money*] . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." The conduct of multitudes of our own, and other evangelical denominations in these times, would almost

* See 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.