

to be satisfied, and in which it is not commonly expected, that Christians should possess much faith or fervor. Many have taken this for granted, and poured bitter lamentations over those churches which are enjoying no revivals of religion, although those very churches may be walking in the faith and order of the gospel, growing in grace, and not only waiting, but praying and labouring for "the salvation of the Lord," in reference to their fellow-men. Moreover, it has come to be a question for discussion, whether the churches may not enjoy a perpetual and uninterrupted revival. Now, we regard this as a misapplication and abuse of language; for a thing which, in its very nature, cannot take place, except in peculiar circumstances, and at irregular intervals, can never be permanent and uninterrupted. If the inquiry were made, whether a church could enjoy permanent prosperity,—that is, grow in knowledge, faith, and purity, and have such accessions made to it, either from week to week, month to month, or year to year, as shall, upon the whole, increase its numbers and strength,—the thing could be fully understood, and easily determined from the word of God, as both possible and desirable. Faith and prayer, active exertion, and the blessing of Heaven, will certainly secure this to every Christian church. But when such vague and, as we consider them, unscriptural views are taken of the meaning of the expression, it becomes a matter of doubt and difficulty, altogether insuperable, to answer this and similar questions.

It is our humble though decided opinion, that those persons misunderstand the nature of religious revival, who apply the phrase to every season of interest and prosperity in the church; because the preceding condition of that church, though neither so exciting or even so delightful as this, may not have been one of dead-

ness and declension. We think, too, that an improper use is made of the expression, when it is used to describe a season in which considerable accessions of young converts are made to the church; because this may be the result of previous and long-protracted effort and prayer. God has promised to hear our prayers and bless our efforts; but, so far as we understand the Scriptures upon this subject, he has made no promise to do so *immediately* and *directly*. The sentiment expressed in the well-known lines,

" Though seed lie buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive our hope,"

has the sanction of the whole church, and, above all, of the Bible. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." This is language which has afforded consolation and encouragement to ministers and others in all ages of the world, and has formed the theme of many an interesting discourse with regard to the eventual success of fervent prayer, and well-directed, persevering effort. There may be a long course of preparation, on the part of a church, or on the part of individuals belonging to the church, for that season of special prosperity and increase, which by many is called a revival, and which is not usually connected in their minds with any such effort. No body of Christians ought to be satisfied without being useful; and if any church is declining upon the whole,—if it is not gathering strength, from time to time, and receiving accessions of converts, we do not say regularly, but occasionally, so that its numbers and energies are increasing, *upon the whole*,—then does it need a revival, most assuredly. In this case, there is every reason to believe, that it is either built upon a false foundation, or that it consists of bad materials, or that it is in a fearful state of backsliding. Such a church, instead of being urged to go