

so, if revivals of religion, such as those in the Apostolic age, and the times of the Reformation, have been rare, it has been because the servants and people of Christ have rarely exercised the faith in Him, and waited on Him in prayer with the same earnestness and importunity as they did at those periods.

Now, be it so, that it is no uncommon thing in our own day to find the ministry of the gospel apparently void of all power in the hearts of men; this is to be lamented, and the more so, that it is not uncommon. And we are especially called to lament the want of power in the ministry in our own church. Is it not so? we appeal to our brethren in the ministry and eldership—that, few are added to the lists of our communicants, either from the families of those who are themselves communicants, or from the irreligious neighborhood which it may be, surrounds us? That some of our churches are at best stationary, as to the number of their members, the balance against deaths and removals being barely kept up by new settlers, and those who have been admitted for the first time? In the continuance of such a state of things, where is the prospect of the word of the Lord sounding out from us into the adjacent regions? Where the power of the truth that is to banish profligacy, infidelity, and superstition from the land? Let not those, who look and long for a revival of religion, be regarded as visionary and wild enthusiasts.—They, in religious matters are eminently fools, who suppose that nominal and dead christianity is to be a match for the active wickedness of the human heart—that religion not animated by the Spirit of God, is to counteract and subdue the vicious propensities of men, stimulated as they are, by the countless incentives which are found in our fallen world, and by Satan the God of this world. We would say then that our churches must experience a revival of the power of religion, if we would see them in a state of health and vigor, and spreading themselves over the land.

II. *The want of a spirit of prayer in our churches* proves the need of a revival in them. Prayer has a twofold relation to true religion; and that of the most intimate and important kind. The first, as it is a necessary means towards the production, and the maintenance of religion in the soul; and the second, as it is a natural and proper expression of religion, where it is lively and vigorous. We must ask, in order to receive, and having received, we will go to God, to thank and praise him for his mercy. Yea, and to ask for more to ourselves,

and to ask also for others; and, from our very delight in God, and love to him, to ask also for the manifestation of his glory throughout the universe. Prayer is thus an essential exercise of the christian life. The soul that is a stranger to it, is also a stranger to God: and the church or community, in which few are found, who delight in prayer, has little true religion in it. Now, do we slander the church, when we say that there is a great want of the spirit of prayer in our congregations? Would to God that there were facts to warrant a more favorable conclusion. But is it not so, that there are heads of families amongst us numbered with the people of God, who yet do not statedly pray with their families at all? And, of these who do bow the knee with them, how many are there who pray only in the letter, and seem utterly void of the deep concern for spiritual and heavenly blessings which leads to importunity and perseverance in prayer; and of the love to God and joy in him which dispose the christian to rejoice in the oft returning occasions for prayer and the kindred exercises of devotion! Our elders ought to be eminently men of prayer, and such we trust, some of them are: yet we fear that many of them give no distinct evidence of being spiritual men, and rarely if ever attend at the bedside of the sick and the dying, to counsel them and pray with them, or preside in the private assemblies of their christian neighbors for supplication and intercession. But, we may well anticipate the reproof—"Thou art inexcusable, O man who-soever thou art that judgest." Yes, we would be ingenuous and acknowledge that we, who are set apart to the ministry of the word and prayer, have but poorly exhibited ourselves as men of prayer. Alas! that very condition of our people which implies the need of a revival of religion, is in some respects a proof of a want of fidelity on our part. They are to some extent at least what we have made them.—Were we more frequently in our closets wrestling with God,—were our studies, our visitations, our whole ministry pervaded with the spirit of prayer—then undoubtedly, we would have had less reason for lamenting the want of a praying spirit amongst our elders and people.

But we would not omit to notice one prominent indication of the want of such a spirit in our congregations, and that is the unfrequency of prayer meetings. We are aware that these meetings are kept up in some congregations—but we believe that in very few are they so well sustained and attended on as their importance requires; and, that in many, they are not en-