

THINGS ESSENTIAL TO A REVIVED RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF TORONTO BY THE REV. WM. DONALD, AND PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SYNOD.

We all unite in deploring the low state of religion, at the present time, in the community and even in our own church. There are grounds for lamentation. Myriads are perishing. Vast numbers within the Church's pale are apparently satisfied with a fruitless and lifeless orthodoxy. To many of them a sound and scriptural creed has become a mere body of death. Those of us who have been ordained to the sacred office have often to ask ourselves, Where are the souls of our ministry? where are the many conversions to God for which, as ambassadors of Christ, we ought to look? We see almost everywhere in our churches a large measure of conventional propriety. There is also going on in many places a great deal of valuable Christian work; and for this we thank and praise the God of grace as for one of His best and choicest blessings. But we have still to confess mournfully that the religious life of our time and country is low and weak. Is it to remain so? Are we content to go on week after week with our somewhat mechanical activities, while the Lord's arm remains unrevolved? Are we here of the Canada Presbyterian Church rest satisfied with the poor dying rate at which we have for so long been living? There are many signs that seem to answer—No. These confessions in our church courts, important movements in different Presbyteries both within the bounds of this Synod and beyond it, the concern on the subject in the minds of Christian people, all seem to echo the prophetic words, "There is a sun and abundance of rain." Some of us think that, like the waiting king, we hear "the sound of a going on the tops of the mulberry trees"—that perhaps the Lord thus announces to us that the time to favor Zion is come—and that He thus calls upon us to push our advantage and go forward. If we interpret the signs aright, clearly we ought, like David, to bestir ourselves: for the Lord goes out before us. The present, therefore, seems a suitable time to inquire what are the things essential to a revived religious life in the church. I venture, as the result of some thought and reading on the subject, to express the belief that four things, of which I wish to speak in this paper, are the certain and invariable prelude or accompaniments of every great work of grace. Wherever these things have been wanting, there the church's light has been low. Wherever they have existed, there mighty victories for Christ have usually been won. It will be admitted also that the things to which I refer are within the reach of all, and that, therefore, it ought to be the ambition—the fixed, invincible determination of all, by God's grace, to possess them.

1. The first essential to a revived religious life amongst us of which I would speak, is a *previous expectation of the blessing of a some previous desire for its coming.* I do not know that any great revival has ever taken place without these signs preceding. The expectation might be very vague, and the desire limited to a very small number, but such desire and expectation seem always to have preceded any new era of spiritual life and victory. As a case in point I have to mention Pentecost. The Disciples wait for the promise of the spirit: they earnestly desire His coming. They return to the upper room, and continue expecting the fulfilment of their promise. That heavenborn desire is a prophecy—that attitude of high and rapt expectancy is a pledge that a true revival is coming. Each one in the long succession of awakenings with which the church has been blessed furnishes like proof. W. C. Burns discusses with his brother the effects of the outpouring of the spirit in answer to the importunate pleadings of a reviving church. The earnest young Evangelist holds that Pentecost is a pattern of what the Church might expect to witness in any age, even more gloriously. The brothers were conversing on this subject as they walked together from Glasgow towards their home at Kilsyth, shortly before William began his work in Dundee. I say informs us, "I venture to question whether, even though the working of the Divine Spirit in the bosom of a Christian congregation were as powerful and profound as in Pentecostal times, the habitual reserve and self-restraint of modern days, especially amongst the more educated classes, would not prevent such unrestrained expression of inward feeling as that there displayed. To this view he demurred, deeming that if the mighty rushing wind which bloweth where it listeth should indeed come with power, we should hear the sound thereof, so that even the world itself should not be able wholly to close its ear." Within a month or two those expectations were more than realized in Kilsyth and Dundee. He desired and expected much, and the Lord gave him the desire of his heart. The extensive awakenings during the past fifteen years in the United States, in Ireland, in Wales, and in Scotland, all point to the same conclusion. Of the least known of them—the Welsh Revival—I venture to furnish the following particulars. In 1858, a minister returns from America to his native Wales, which has been for a considerable time in a state of intense longing for reviving grace. He has brought with him and wishes to impart to others a portion of what his countrymen soon learn to call the American fire. Fast and far it spreads, like the great forest fires of our own land, but with far other results. In a single county there are added to the church within a few months 15,000 new communications—about one-fifth of the entire population. Now, a careful examination of the history of the movement makes it clearly apparent that in the districts where the expectation and desire manifested themselves, there the blessing came, whereas in those districts and churches where no such longing existed, there were few or no manifestations of divine grace. And in reference to this point, the experience of the church seems to have been always and everywhere somewhat the same. In view of this fact it is reasonable to ask ourselves, as workers for Christ, whether we have any such expectation or desire as I have described. If

we have no such expectation, if we hardly believe in the possibility of extensive revival, can we be said to believe in the Holy Ghost? If we have no such desire, where is our concern for the glory of Christ, for the prosperity of Zion, and for the salvation of the lost? If we have no such desire, I might even ask, where can be found any good reason for our being here as members of this Synod and office-bearers in the church? Devoid of this expectation and desire, we cannot magnify, we cannot even justify our office. If we are to be true to our King and true to ourselves, we must, as ministers and elders, attain to such views of the Spirit's work and of the exalted possibilities of the church's future as shall make us look and long for breaking clouds, for copious showers, and for a consequent revival of the Lord's heritage when it is weary. And let it be remembered that the connection between the expectant desire of the blessing and the reception of it is not casual or accidental. It is a law founded on the nature of things. As the warm current of the Gulf Stream modifies the temperature of the region through which it flows, so this expectant desire of sovereign awakening grace appears to raise the temperature of the soul, to dissolve the frost and snow of the heart, and to make it possible for God's spiritual works to come forth in vernal freshness and beauty.

2. A second element, vital and altogether essential to a revival, is *genuine care for souls*—a consuming anxiety respecting their salvation. This anxiety is born of love and knowledge. The knowledge I mean is that of the soul's value and of its extreme danger. Every one must see that this combined love and knowledge ought to fill all Christian people and especially all Christian ministers, as with a haunting passion—a high and constant enthusiasm for saving souls. It is safe to say that where this enthusiasm is wanting, there has never been—and probably from the nature of the case there never can be—any great revival of the Lord's work. History seems plainly to prove that every extensive revival has been preceded as well as accompanied by evidences of this hunger of the Christian heart after the conversion of the unsaved. And wherever such desire for the salvation of souls has been awakened, and has been long and widely cherished, God has in a large measure granted to His people that desire of their heart. The Apostle, who was probably the greatest soul-gatherer of any time, travelled in Britain, till Christ was formed in believers' hearts the hope of glory. It has been strikingly said of another most successful worker for Christ, that he was "indefinitely, unstably greedy of the conversion of souls." As I speak thus, there are probably some in this Synod who will remember Matthew Henry's saying—"I would think it greater happiness to gain one soul for Christ than mountains of gold and silver for myself." There are more who will think, in this connection, of Ruth's declaration to his people at Anathoth—"My witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me; and the salvation of you all two salvations to me." I must not fail to mention here the tender compassion for the perishing which pervaded Whitefield's life and preaching, and lent him much of his unrivalled power. It might almost be said to have constituted the seal of his ministry. His yearning compassion for souls in jeopardy impelled him to brave every danger to rescue them. It accounts for the fact that he hardly ever preached a sermon without weeping. It made it perfectly natural for him to look silently around an immense audience, as if eternal issues were in the glance, and then burst into tears before uttering a syllable. The same compassion and painful solicitude for the perishing filled the stronger soul of William C. Burns. Very instructive is it to be told how his mother "had gone in to Glasgow, unknown to him, on some domestic errand, and was passing through the narrow covered street called the Argyle Arcade, when she saw him turn the corner in front and advance towards her from the opposite direction, as in deep reverie. Though she went up straight to him, he was quite unconscious of her presence, and started when addressed, as from a dream. "O mother," said he, with deep emotion, "I did not see you; for when passing along Argyle street just now, I was so overcome with the sight of the countless crowds of immortal beings eagerly hastening thither, but all posting onwards towards the eternal world, that I could bear it no longer, but turned in here to seek relief in quiet thought." There spoke the true spirit of the great soul-winner in a time not far distant. In beautiful harmony with this is his own statement in regard to his feelings on that memorable day when the great work at Kilsyth began, "I remember in general that I had an intense longing for the conversion of souls and the glory of Emmanuel, that I mourned under sense of the awful state of sinners without Christ, their guilt in rejecting Him as freely offered to their acceptance, my own inability to help them by anything I could do, and my complete unfitness and unworthiness to be an instrument in the hands of the Holy Ghost in saving their souls, while at the same time my eyes were fixed on the Lord as the God of Salvation with a sweet hope of His glorious appearing." The same anxiety for the souls of dying men is sometimes felt, and is often seen afterwards to be the first drops of a gracious shower. One most striking illustration of this was furnished last year in connection with Mr. Spurgeon's tabernacle in London. In the *Second and Trowel* for January, 1872, appeared a very characteristic paper from the pen of the great Baptist preacher. It appears that during the closing months of 1871 he had been long and dangerously ill. When he rose from his sick-bed he had experience of the bitterest pangs and soul-travail at the thought of multitudes passing on to eternal misery. To use the language of his own narrative, "Especially did it burden us to see so many of our regular hearers undecided. After so much preaching, were they after all to perish? Were they to find no Saviour in the Gospel but that of death unto death? These questions pricked us in our veins and gave us no rest. Our desire and anguish grew, and acted upon each other until both became regret within us beyond all else." At this juncture, when the pastor's spirit was thus stirred within him, there reached him from different individuals in the church many

communications, some verbal and some in writing, expressing the same burning anxiety for the conversion of the unsaved. A fire seemed to be kindled almost simultaneously and spontaneously in many different hearts. Out of this state of feeling would necessarily grow importunate and prevailing prayer. I shall allow Mr. Spurgeon himself to tell the result: "We gave notice that the pastor would sit two whole days to see inquiring souls, and that each evening there would be a meeting at which he would speak on the discouragements and encouragements of seekers, and any of the elders who felt moved to do so would exhort. Blessed be the Lord for the ingathering of those two days; they wearied the reaper for very joy. As soon as the hour appointed struck, several were waiting, and they streamed in all day. The number was too great to see all privately—one by one—so we had to appoint another season to see many of them. In the evening there were more than two hundred and fifty seekers present, and they were seekers indeed." I may not quote farther from this most instructive paper. I must mention, however, that on the evening succeeding the pastor's two days conference with the inquiring, sixty persons were, according to the custom of the Tabernacle, proposed for membership in the church. And these were but the first fruits. The ingathering, in less than a month, as I learn from a note in a subsequent number of the *Second and Trowel*, amounted to 118. And the pastor knew that many others were on the way. This experience of Mr. Spurgeon's confirms the momentous truth that if we are to expect an awakening for a slumbering church and a dead world, we also, as ministers and elders, must have an infinite compassion, an insatiable hunger for souls. If we were imbued with that compassion, if we were to feel the sharp pangs of that hunger, what prophets of God, what heralds of the Invisible and the Eternal might we not become.

3. A third element, also vital and altogether essential to a revival, is the *Abundance of Prayer.* Prayer must not be hindered. There must be the simplicity of a constant dependence on God. The strength of workers for Christ is born of earnest and habitual prayerfulness. The only success that is worth much—the only success, indeed, that is worth anything—is won at the mercy seat. I have read a monkish story of a famous preacher whose sermons converted great numbers, and to whom it was revealed that not one of the conversions was owing to his eloquence or talents, but to the prayers of a poor lay brother who sat during the sermon on the pulpit steps, groaning before the Lord and praying incessantly for the divine blessing on the preacher's labours. In form, this story is but a Romish legend, but it enshrines a precious truth. That truth is conferred and illustrated by the history of all genuine awakenings, and by the experience of all those whose labours the Lord has most signally blessed. As I write thus there rises before my mind the thought of Knox pleading, "Give me Scotland, or I die" of Joan Welsh wondering "how a Christian could lie all night in his bed and not rise to pray," of Joseph Allen exclaiming, at four o'clock in the morning, when he heard the first noise of workmen going to their daily toil, "How this noise suames me! Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?" Of Edward Payson gaining his theology on his knees. We all know the great work which each of those men were permitted to do for Christ and His church, and these words of theirs show how well they had learned the true secret of success in working for the Lord. Very instructive is the following description of David Brainard from the pen of Jonathan Edwards:—"His life shows the right way of success in the work of the ministry. He sought it as the resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle, or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love for Christ and souls, how did he labour always fervently, not only in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in prayers night and day, wrestling in birth, with unutterable groans and agonies, until Christ was formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent! How did he thirst for a blessing upon his ministry, and watch for souls as one that must give account! How did he go forth in the strength of the Lord God, seeking and depending on the special influence of the Spirit to assist and succeed him! And what was the happy fruit at last, after long waiting and many dark and discouraging appearances? Like a true son of Jacob he persevered in wrestling through the darkness of the night until the breaking of the day."

Almost equally noteworthy is the biographer's record respecting Mr. Cheyne. He had spoken just before of that eminently holy minister's diligence in preparation for the pulpit, and he adds:—"Yet his prayerfulness was greater still. Indeed, he could not neglect fellowship with God before entering the congregation. He needed to be bathed in the love of God. This minister was so much a bringing out of views that had first sanctified his own soul, that the helpfulness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigor and power of his ministrations." "With him the commencement of all labour invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears, as well as of his cries. These cases—and they might be multiplied almost indefinitely—seem to be in the highest degree suggestive. Those men were all men of prayer. Their prayers were prayers of faith. And because their prayers were offered with the earnestness and importunity of true faith, it came to pass that when they spake to God for men, their words were words of power and opened the windows of heaven and when they spake to men for God, their words were words of power then too, and often opened men's hearts marvelously. Those results are to be accounted for chiefly, no doubt, because prayer has real power with the Most High. Prayer is as powerful to-day as when Elijah's cry brought abundance of rain after three years' drought and famine. But these great results from the labours of praying men are perhaps partly to be accounted for, also, by the well-known reflex influence of prayer. It cannot be doubted that a constant familiarity with the court of heaven tends to impart to a minister the same of praying truth

—imparts even to what is called his delivery—a genuine warmth and fervour which add immensely to the power of speech. For these reasons the truly successful preacher must be one that prays without ceasing. I ask then, would it not be well occasionally to celebrate extraordinary seasons of prayer? I read of one great English divine who was accustomed every year to retire for a month into the most perfect seclusion, and to spend that time in devotion. Doubtless he would return to his flock with shining face and his nature all enriched. I ask again would it not be well for Christian brethren and especially for Christian ministers if they were to hallow their occasional meetings with united supplication more frequently than they are wont to do? Would not such a practice be likely to tell most beneficially on the state of their own souls and on their labours for Christ? And finally, in this connection I would ask, would it not be a most fitting thing to consider the possibility and desirability of a more or less extensive re-union at certain hours in a concert of prayer? Very extraordinary manifestations of God's converting power have again and again been witnessed in connection with such concerts. A few years ago it was very earnestly recommended to the brethren of a certain Presbytery in the state of New York and to the thoughtful members of the different congregations within the bounds, to observe a few minutes in the twilight of every evening as a season of special prayer for awakening and reviving grace. The call would seem to have met with a very general response; and the churches laboured as well as prayed. Within a few months there was a great outpouring of God's spirit; and soon a most remarkable revival extended throughout two contiguous Presbyteries. Circumstances like these—and many such might be mentioned—urge us to give the Lord no rest till He appear in His glory to build up Zion, and she no more be termed Forsaken, but be called Hephzibah—my delight is in her." Those of us who desire to see a revived religious life in the church, and who believe that the low measure in which the gift of the Spirit is now enjoyed in her greatest affliction, should be incessant in our pleading till the Spirit comes to us in His boundless wealth of blessing.

4. Of the Fourth Essential I must speak very briefly. It may be thus expressed:—*Those of us who are called upon to teach others must endeavour with great directness and tenderness to deal with the hearts and consciences of our hearers in regard to the great truths of the Gospel. There must be greater directness of aim.* This seems to have characterized all who have been markedly successful in winning souls for Christ. Probably we could all be justly convicted of having often wearily beat the air, instead of taking a direct and successful aim. But with the directness must be tenderness. "Were you able to preach on that text tenderly?" asked Mr. Cheyne of a brother minister who had preached on a very awful subject. There is a most important connection between sowing in tears and reaping in joy. Those who over the perishing have been tender almost, or altogether, to weeping, have often become the joyous as well as great winners of souls. And this directness and tenderness must be exercised in pressing the essential truths of the Gospel home on the heart and conscience. Men have often dared to preach another Gospel; and experience shows that connected with such preaching there have not only been an interest and fascination but even an exalted and an apparently deep spiritual impression. But that only is genuine, divine, and permanent which comes from the everlasting Gospel of salvation for the lost through the blood of Christ. The sunmer must still touch the hem of Jesus' garment and find that virtue goes out of Him. Revivals that come otherwise have only been caricatures or counterfeits of Pentecost, searing and blighting, instead of blessing the heritage of God. It is probable that in very great work of grace, these four elements can be discovered. Thus, for example, great meetings of heart followed a sermon by Jonathan Edwards prepared and delivered under the following circumstances. There had been among devoted people of the neighbourhood very much of most earnest prayer for a season of divine visitation. The subject was the terrible one, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God;" the text, "their foot shall slip in due time." His description of the sinner's doom was absolutely overwhelming in their calm power and awfulness. "Oh Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards, is not God a God of mercy?"—exclaimed one of the awed and startled ministers present. Sinners are said to have been crying for mercy on every hand; and we can hardly doubt that it was a great spiritual birth-day in the church of Christ. The incident seems to me very full of instruction as almost certainly combining the Four Essentials to a revival. There was no doubt the Desire and probably also the Expectation of abundant blessing. There was the Prayerfulness that would not be denied. There was the consuming anxiety for the salvation of the perishing that like a fire burnt its way to the very seat of feeling in the hearers' breasts. And there was, least of all, such direct dealing with the conscience of the sinner that it was almost like plucking him as a brand from the burning. What holding these four things as essential to success in winning souls, and as certain, according to the teaching of experience to result in enduring work such as will abide the fire—we are yet to remember that the issues of our labours are all with God; that He sitteth King in Zion; and that believers "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." I do not introduce this thought at all for the sake of maintaining a form of orthodoxy, but as a truth urgently needed at the present time, and one of weighty practical importance in connection with our present theme. There are many reasons why all workers for Christ should seek to obtain and keep hold of the great doctrine that God is sovereign. Whatever our faithfulness may be, if we forget that "it is not of him that sitteth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," we shall find that the heavenly arklike brass and the earthlike iron. In the midst of earnestness, diligence and fidelity, God may by withholding His spirit and by other terrible things in righteousness, teach us and compel us to renege from man whose breath is in his nostrils. It is irreligion—it is destruction to forget that it is God's inviolable prerogative to grant the Spirit. The intelligent appre-

ciation of this truth will assist us mightily in our office as ambassadors for Christ. It will help to make us zealous, patient, and self-denying. It will prompt the prayer in its right sense and just emphasis, Will Thou not revive us again, O Lord God of Hosts? And thus we are brought to the fundamental principle of all true religion, that God is all in all; that of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

CALLED TO A BUSINESS LIFE.

It is an important consideration that you are permitted, if at all, to go into your business occupation by a really divine call. Not many, I suspect, ever think of such a possibility, for a merely secular employment, or for any but that perhaps of the Christian ministry. Whereas the real and really grand truth is, that God has a place for every man, in what is to be his particular employment, as He has a place for every rock, and tree, and river, and star. And exactly this we assume, perhaps without knowing it, when we speak of this or that man's employment as being this or that man's calling. We use the word as in another meaning, to signify only his engagement or life-occupation; but there lingers in it, we may see, a certain divine recollection, as if it were his privilege to be, as by God's personal and particular call. He may not so believe, himself, but just as surely as he is in his own right place, he is in that to which he is called, whether he has ever thought of it that way or not. Some are not in their place, and it is their infelicity that they never can be. But the great majority of men, I do think, are led, drawn, beckoned, whispered into their calling, some pushed in by stern necessities, some by urgent wants or incapacities, some crowded in by providential circumstances. Meantime, a blessed few find their places by going to God for them. And this most sublime and really glorious privilege is for all, and for all kinds of places and employments. There is such a thing as spiritual guidance for men. You can form some judgment of your calling by finding what others think of you; by considering, also, your tastes, and temper, and capabilities; what kind of annoyances you can bear; also, by considering what opportunities of good are afforded; and where you can make yourself of greatest consequence to mankind, and the salvation given to mankind; but then, when all such inquiries are ended you can be absolutely sure of your calling, seeking into God's oracle for it. Tided in daily by His divine Spirit, as you may be, you will flow in sweetly, as by silent drift, into the very thing which is to be your calling—whether it be trade, manufacture, or any other calling. And then, having found your occupation, and come into it by the calling of God, what satisfaction you will have in it! How reverently, joyously, safely, you will invest your life in it.—Dr. Bushnell.

Suppose that Christ interceded as we pray. How can we expect Him to do better than we? If the client is not in earnest, can he blame his advocate?

A Christian has advanced but a little way in religion when he has overcome the love of the world; for he has still more powerful and importunate enemies: self—evil tempers—pride—undue affections—a stubborn will. It is by the subduing of these adversaries that we must chiefly judge of our growth in grace.—Cecil.

If you get near to Jesus in your contemplations, you feel you are approaching those comforts which the spirit intends you to enjoy. Oh! do not run for consolation to mere prophecies of the future, or soft reflections about the past. Hard of the cross is the deep well of consolation undrilled, from which the Eternal Spirit draws full buckets for his thirsty people. Be afraid of that comfort which is not based upon truth. Hate the comfort which does not come from Christ. Water from the well of Beth-lehem is what you want.—Spurgeon.

Everybody has the hardest battle to fight in himself. If men go wrong and do wrong, we must punish them; nevertheless, in their own circumstances they have a battle unknown to us. We must hold them up, and try to see them as they will be out of the human body and its temptations; the weak, imperfect, sinful, natural heart, purified and enabled by God's grace. This thought makes me very patient with my fellow-men. It makes it easier to get along with them. It makes my friends dearer, and friendship a more profound reality.—Beecher.

Mother, the boy of your love will soon outgrow these tender embraces. The rough world will take him from you. Its tasks and burdens await these growing muscles. The eyes you now guard so carefully must look upon scenes that would appal you were you now to see them. These tender fingers, these sweet lips, that broad brow and silk hair—O, mother, the bug and thrush and tribulations of life will play havoc with the loveliness before you now. Prepare the boy for the struggle. Strengthen him by true training and holy faith for the temptations, sorrows, services, and perils of the years to come. Then in the eternal home you shall meet him again young and innocent—a saint of God.

Apply unto thyself all that thy Saviour is or hath done. Wouldst thou have the graces of God's spirit? fetch them from his anointing. Wouldst thou have power against spiritual enemies? fetch it from his sovereignty. Wouldst thou have redemption? fetch it from his passion. Wouldst thou have absolution? fetch it from his perfect innocence; freedom from the curse? fetch it from his cross; satisfaction? fetch it from his sacrifice; cleansing from sin? fetch it from his blood; mortification? fetch it from his grave; newness of life? fetch it from his resurrection; right to heaven? fetch it from his purchase; audience in all thy suits? fetch it from his intercession. Wouldst thou have salvation? fetch it from his session at the right hand of Majesty. Wouldst thou have one God and Father of all, who is Light, Truth, and Love, and all in all?