

SPECIAL SERVICES: THEIR PLACE, AND HOW BEST TO CONDUCT THEM.

By special services, we mean a gospel revival under the grace of God.

WHAT THEN IS A TRUE GOSPEL REVIVAL?

First and Negatively.—It is not a mechanical and continued series of extra meetings commenced with will, worship, and ending with a churchly banquet in company with whosoever will buy a ticket in aid of the funds. Such specials savour of religious dissipation, and remind devout Christians of those "revellings and such like," censured in Gal. iv. 21, and condemned in 1. Peter iv. 3, 5. See also 1. Cor. xi. 32. Special services to promote a gospel revival, are not the patent right of any particular denomination, because ecclesiastical authority, education and organizing skill, cannot command the birth, nor control the sovereign progress of the reign of grace.—Isa. lv. 8-11, Zec. iv. 6. The special of the divine grace is not distinguished by scenic parades and animated excesses, as are certain modern and popular methods of evangelizing that makes appeal to the public eye, and proceed in ways unseemly—contrary to gospel decency, and to order and reverence for the things of Christ.—1. Cor. xv. 32, 33.

We readily concede that special services have quite often and legitimately, been accompanied with strange spiritual phenomena, intense soul agony, and with emotional excesses, but the studied and systematic imitations of the extravagances of this evil world we think, are not gospel methods, nor desirable accessories to the solemn assembly, John iv. 24, Matt. xv. 8, 9, and hence though the new evangelizing departsures *a la militaire*, may wear all the appearances of a popular success, they are non-essentials in acceptable worship, and are divisive gleaners, rather than loving auxiliaries, and their methods should not be adopted by the ordained ministry, as an improved means for effecting permanent conversions to Christ—Coloss. ii. 20, 23. Can worldly rudiments convict of sin, or mature the Christian life? Do not those who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, declare by the fruits, the work is not of God, but of the wisdom of man? "Let all things be done decently and in order," is the Pauline counsel to gospel workers, and the consecrated ministry of Christ, will study and practice in accord with 1 Cor. xiv. 32, 40, 2 Cor. x. 3, 4. Special revival services should not be made subservient to the will-power of some popular star, whose personal influence and forensic eloquence can sway the admiration of the novelty-seeking crowd; for a gospel revival cannot transpire by the will of man, nor by the laws of nature in the ordinary course of cause and effect, from the fact that our Divine Teacher affirms, "Without Me, ye can do nothing," nothing of spiri-

tual permanence.—John xv. 5. Ministers and churches who value in their members, moral character before numbers, will I take it, proceed with caution, before granting to applicants the public recognition of the ordinances of the Lord's house. Is not conversion to Christ the true fence of separation between revealed wrath and divine grace? Is not moral character the true standard of qualification for visible church membership? Secure these, and the love of the spirit will witness to the grace of adoption, by constraining the soul into obedience to Christ.—Rom. viii. 9, 14, John iii. 23, 24, Eph. v. 9-12.

Second and Positively—

WHAT IS A TRUE GOSPEL REVIVAL?

Is it not a special gift of divine grace—a series of hallowed Christian services inaugurated under the direct presidency of the Holy spirit—a fruitful season, when the appointed means of grace are put into more active operation, to reap the results promised of God as his attesting seal? Matt. xxviii. 18, 20. Pentecost, to the sons of ancient Israel, was a true revival under the grace of Christ our Saviour. The sermon of Peter was a special inspiration—a plain and direct application of the truth in Christ to the conscience of his hearers, then assembled in Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven; the spirit of God descended in plentitude, and with saving power He sent home the truth of the new covenant grace to some 3,000 glad recipients. Special services were then held daily, and with gladness and singleness of heart, the apostles praised God, having favour with all the people. Mark the result: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." So Acts, Chap. ii. in loc. Special services also followed the divinely commanded interview between Peter and Cornelius at Casarea on the Mediterranean Sea, when the door of faith was most graciously opened of God, towards the wide, wide Gentile world. In those times, and by direct interposition of the spirit, the model foundations of our holy Christianity were inaugurated, for the working base and example of the Christian church in all ages of the gospel. "The hand of the Lord was then with the apostles of Christ, and a great number believed, and they turned to the Lord," Acts ii. 38, 47, and hence we conclude that the true gospel revival is emphatically the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost.—Acts i. 8, James i. 18, Rom. ix. 15, 16.

Close observers in church work have remarked, "that those persons who attend 'special services' with design of seeking 'more religion' never get any more." Said an aged servant of God—"I have noticed that persons who are determined to live near to God, somehow never get any nearer, except at a protracted meeting. I have also noticed that those who are 'prone to wander,' don't get out of the wilderness by their wanderings; but somehow, they are 'so glad