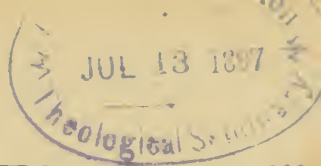


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IN

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A Memorial Volume

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THE NEW YORK PULPIT,  
IN THE  
REVIVAL OF 1858.

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I.

THE HOLY FLOCK.

BY JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.

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Thus saith the Lord God : I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them : I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.—EZEKIEL, xxxvi. 37, 38.

WHEN Israel in the text is encouraged to inquire of God, we may apply it to ourselves ; for if we confine all the more ancient Scriptures to the literal Hebrews, we condemn much apostolic reasoning, and cut ourselves off from precious promises.

The text predicts a great increase. “I will increase them with men like a flock, or with flocks of men : as the holy flock, or the flock of holy ones, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.” At the three great festivals, Jerusalem was crowded both with animals and men. One or both of these may furnish the comparison. If the figure points at the multitude of animals gathered

for sacrifice, we may remember the passover at which Hezekiah and the princes gave the congregation seventeen thousand sheep; or the subsequent passover, at which Josiah gave the thirty thousand lambs and kids: if it points at the multitude of worshippers, we may remember their temple psalm, "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." But whether the former or the latter, **THE CHURCH IS TO BE ENLARGED WITH AN IMMENSE INCREASE, AND WE ARE TO PRAY FOR IT.**

Two things commonly lead to prayer: first, some desirableness in the object; and secondly, some expectation of being heard. Accordingly, the text, under a striking figure, holds forth a desirable object, and excites the confidence that God will entertain our petition. The latter, though a most important truth, is not peculiar to this subject, but common to all the themes of prayer. It is allowable, therefore, to assume your belief that God is the hearer of prayer; that what he has promised he will perform; and that he will be inquired of in order to bless; while we occupy our time chiefly with an attempt to show the desirableness of the blessing promised.

A strange incredulity has occupied the minds of some with regard to **REVIVALS OF RELIGION**. The term may not be wisely chosen, and the thing itself has doubtless been often counterfeited; but that it is agreeable to the divine will, and analogous to the economy of grace, that great enlargement should be granted to the church, at favored seasons, it is wonderful that any can question; and my humble but earnest endeavor shall this morning be, to hold this particular blessing so long in the rays of light beaming from Scripture and history, as shall be necessary to make every candid hearer perceive its glow and radiance; so that some at least may cry out with desire, saying, for the sake of our city, our beloved

land, and our bursting population—"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years!"

We must carefully separate the Revival of Religion from its adjuncts and accessories; we must distinguish it from false and dangerous excitements, which have usurped its name; but understanding by the phrase such an influence of Divine Grace as issues in the simultaneous conversion to God of great numbers, we should not only approve it, but long for it.

Such an increase of the church is desirable, because it glorifies God; because it is the very end for which Christ died; because it is the method in which God has raised his church to its most remarkable prosperity; and because it is demanded by the present state of our city and nation.

Our nation! There used to be magic in the word. Our country was the watchword that passed with magnetic swiftness and power through the lines of our forefathers. Has it ceased to charm their sons? Have we sunk into unpatriotic selfishness? Have Christian souls forgotten—*can* they forget—what it is that blesses a country—that righteousness exalteth a nation—that the Gospel only can redeem us from violence, vice, and damning falsehood? If not, we shall, as Americans, no less than as Christians, seek for a vast increase of success in the conversion of multitudes.

I. IT IS BY JUST SUCH EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN TO GLORIFY HIS NAME.—The world stands for the sake of the church, and the church stands to glorify God; "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things." The conversion of souls is the restoration of rebellious subjects, who thenceforward know God, adore his blessed perfections, do him homage and service, and praise him to all eternity. The ascrip-

tion of honor from all redeemed souls is the same, whether in earth or in heaven: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." If the divine plan is so accomplished by this very event, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, how much more shall the heavenly chorus be swelled over the restoration of hundreds and thousands! As every Christian feels that his own holiness is valuable, chiefly because it is a tribute to the declarative glory of the Lord Almighty; so for the same reason he desires the holiness of all his fellow-men. This, then, is the capital reason which should prompt us to seek a revival of religion, namely, that it is the very means which God has chosen to glorify his name.

II. IT IS THE VERY END FOR WHICH CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION.—This ingathering of souls is the covenant recompense of our adorable Redeemer. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, *he shall see his seed*, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." Such is the representation of prophecy, and our Lord's own words declare the same truth. A few days before the final passion, when certain Greeks desired to see him, he uttered, as he sat in the temple, an awful proclamation of his certain and imminent death, and at the same time (plainly struggling with a conflict which anticipated that of Gethsemane) he cried, "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME!" That instant came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have glorified it and

will glorify it again." The people, therefore, that stood by said it thundered; others said, "an angel spake to him." But Jesus took this occasion to declare his approaching death; adding, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Remarkable words; into the exposition of which we find no time to enter now, but which might furnish profound meditation for the reflecting mind; as they show beyond contradiction that the conversion and restoration of a multitude of souls is, in the mind of Christ, coupled with the most tender agonies of his atoning work. His solace, as it were, over the cup of anguish, is the vision of many sons and daughters brought to glory. The extension of the church, therefore, by the addition of great numbers of converts, is desirable, as being the very end for which Christ accomplished the work of redemption.

III. IT IS BY A RAPID INGATHERING OF MANY SOULS THAT GOD HAS HERETOFORE CONDESCENDED TO ELEVATE HIS CHURCH TO ITS HIGHEST PROSPERITY.—This has been repeatedly the case, as is proved by the most familiar ecclesiastical history. We need not dwell a moment on the great and simultaneous conversion of multitudes on the day of Pentecost; but we may well give attention to the fact, that from that time forward, until Christianity had reached its utmost limits, there was a succession of similar awakenings. In other words, the increase of the church during the first two centuries was by the rapid accession of great numbers, rather than by the gradual adding of a few at a time, after long intervals. That this is true, should seem undeniable, when we take the testimony of authentic records as to the great extension of the church within a comparatively short period. By no other mode of increase was it possible for a diffu-

sion of the truth, so speedy and so wide, to have been accomplished. It has been stated by accurate reckoners, well versed in ecclesiastical story, that there has never been so mighty or triumphant an onset upon the powers of darkness, as in the primitive age, and that the church has never gained so much upon the world as it did before the death of the last apostle. Ancient writers speak of the increase of Christ's kingdom as a matter of amazement. TERTULLIAN, for example, writing about the beginning of the third century in vindication of the new religion, says to the Roman authorities: "Though we are strangers of no long standing, yet we have filled all places of your dominions—cities—lands—corporations—councils—armies—tribes—the senate—the palace—the courts of judicature. If the Christians had a mind to revenge themselves, their numbers are abundant, for they have a party, not in this or that province only, but in all quarters of the world. Nay if they were to combine and forsake the Roman empire, how vast would be the loss! The world would be amazed at the solitude which would ensue." Upon this quotation I remark, that such an extension of Christianity presupposes a progress of the work of conversion immensely more rapid than what we observe in this city. The very persecutions prove this; there must have been a great amount of fuel to support such fires. Even in regions of Africa, which are now a desolation, there were cities and provinces of Christians. The writer just cited, in an appeal to the persecuting governor of Africa, says: "If you persevere in your persecution, what will you do with these many thousands, both men and women, of every rank and every age, who will promptly offer themselves? Carthage itself must be decimated." And again, enumerating the nations who have believed in Christ, he declares that the Gospel has penetrated to regions which



were inaccessible even to the eagles of imperial Rome, and that the church had already spread itself more widely than the four great monarchies. "Excellent governors," says Tertullian, "you may torment, afflict and vex us; your wickedness puts our meekness to the test; but your cruelty is of no avail. It is but a stronger invitation to bring others to our persuasion. The more we are mowed down, the more we spring up again. THE BLOOD OF THE CHRISTIANS IS SEED." \*

These facts have often been used, with good reason, as evidences of the divine origin of our religion; but they are equally strong proofs that the increase of the church in that day was by great effusion, sudden reformation, and something like simultaneous ingathering of multitudes. And when this mode of increase was exchanged for that slow and stealthy progress to which we are familiarized, it is to be observed that the great conquests of religion were brought to a stand, and the Christian host stopped at limits which succeeding ages of effort have scarcely been able to push forward.

Let us not, however, conceal the truth, that similar effusions of grace, in many succeeding centuries, have had analogous, if not equal effects. It should seem, that whenever God looks down in special mercy on his church, the rays of his countenance produce a vernal increase, and when the people are willing in the day of his power, converts are like the dew drops of the morning. It was so, from time to time, in the different countries to which the gospel won its way. It was eminently so in the thirteenth century, when the evangelical servants of God increased so mightily that in Bohemia alone there were, in 1315, reckoned no less than eighty thousand of these witnesses for the truth.

\* *Semen est sanguis Christianorum.* The version is abridged.

It was so in the fourteenth century, when JOHN WICLIF, the "morning star of the Reformation," heralded the dayspring in the land of our forefathers. It was so in the fifteenth century, under the labors of JOHN HUSS and JEROME OF PRAGUE; and most signally was it so in the great revolution by means of LUTHER, ZWINGLE, and CALVIN.

Let us ask your attention to the neglected truth, that WHAT WE CALL THE REFORMATION WAS A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION. It is a deplorable error to consider this moral convulsion as a mere change of speculative tenets, or a mere struggle for liberty of conscience. Both these it did involve, undoubtedly; but beneath these, vivifying and nerving these, was the sense of spiritual things, the experience of conviction, conversion, holy awe and holy joy, the gracious affections of the new creature, which pervaded countries and traversed a whole continent. It was the personal interest of souls in agony about escape from the wrath to come, which gave interest to the great questions between Popery and Reform. The sudden unveiling of the long hidden Bible before the laity, was like the return of the sun upon a Greenland night. The entrance of the ray gave understanding to the simple; and in thousand of instances, the rejection of Pelagian error and the acceptance of Christ were contemporaneous and undistinguishable exercises. Never, certainly, since the days of the early Christians, was there so wide-spread a concern about religion; never were there so many conversions. The published correspondence of the Reformers, and particularly of MARTIN LUTHER and JOHN CALVIN, shows that a large part of their time was employed in giving counsel and consolation to inquiring, convinced, and tempted individuals; and of their published works, considerable portions are wholly employed in discussing those very

points which have paramount interest in a season of general awakening. The good and great men who were the chief instruments in this amazing revival felt and avowed that it was entirely of God—that all true faith was of his immediate operation—and that nothing but the omnipotence of the Spirit could produce the change which they observed and experienced. Their uniform language on this point was a reiteration of the truth, “JESUS”—“having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” And there is reason to believe that the benign work did not abate in its power so long as a full tribute of praise was given to the sovereignty, and mere grace of God, in applying, as well as providing, the way of salvation. Persecution availed as little as it had done ten or twelve centuries before. Even Catholics perceived this. “We are sufficiently taught,” says THUANUS, in his famous dedication to Henry the Great, of France, “we are sufficiently taught by experience that sword, fire, banishment, can not in the least be effectual against the Reformed Religion, but tend more to put it forward. In this very kingdom, we see, the more they are pursued, the more their number and authority increase, and rather seem to lose ground when they have most outward peace.” So rapid was this progress that in less than forty years, in the face of the united opposition of the Church and the Empire, against all proscription, and in spite of rack and fagot, the principles of evangelical religion had overspread Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, and the British isles. It was an outpouring of the Spirit, under which the mountains flowed down at His presence, with a converting power which was acknowledged by tribes and nations. How idle is it, then, to dream that the accession of great multitudes at once is not agreeable to God’s way of dealing with his church!

The remarkable condition of religious things, among our Puritan and Scottish ancestors, was the simple consequence of this Reformation Revival, prosperously carried out and made permanent. The work of grace was upon the hearts of multitudes. Never since apostolical days has religion more widely pervaded a whole community. Men of the world may sneer at the narrowness, or the preciseness, or the apparent sanctimony of the better sort of Puritans, and of the Reformed in Scotland; but, sneer as they may, they are forced to acknowledge that these men had virtue, good order, courage, and success. The final cause of this, so far as we of this country are concerned, is very obvious. Had British America been colonized immediately on the discovery of the continent, New York, or whatsoever great emporium occupied this our island, would probably have been popish at the present hour. But North America was planted by Protestants, and largely by a race of men whose whole activity owned evangelical religion as its animating principle. They came out from amidst great awakenings; and, after the first plantations, every arrival from the old country brought them news of the revivals which took place under the Bunyans and Baxter's of England.

As it regards Scotland, we may judge of the foundation by the structure. Religion made its conquests with a kind of triumphal progress. I will not justify all that was done; but I will say, and challenge contradiction, that the worst offences of the Scottish Reformers may well be forgotten when placed in comparison with the violence, and perfidy, and relentless atrocity of their enemies, and that if true religion of the heart ever existed among men, it existed among the Scottish men of the first and second Reformation period. The subjugation of a whole people within a brief period to the principles

of the gospel, is proof that the church was increased with rapidity, and by large accessions ; in other words, that there was a revival of religion, even in the modern sense ; and such augmentation there was in often-renewed visitations. Again and again the inquiring church was increased with men like a flock.

To omit a multitude of instances, what Scotsman is there, or what descendant of Scotsmen, who does not recur in thought to the wonderful outpouring of the Spirit in the parish of Shots ? It was on that occasion, during the preaching of JOHN LIVINGSTON, ancestor of the late venerable divine of the same name, under a sermon from verses preceding my text (vv. 25, 26), that several hundred persons are supposed to have been brought under saving convictions of sin. Though the greatest, it was not the sole instance ; nay, there were hundreds of the same kind, but less in degree.

Again, more than a century later, in 1742, at Cambuslang, near Glasgow, among the same people, our ecclesiastical ancestors—and under the same doctrines for which we, like themselves, are daily called in question, there was a revival of religion in which there were three hundred conversions in one small parish. This extended to neighboring parishes, precisely as we have witnessed in our own day, when the like blessed influences have been enjoyed among ourselves.

Time would fail me if I were to open the interesting history of the success of the gospel in Germany, under the labors of SPENER, FRANCKE, and the Pietists of Halle, as they were called. It is sufficient for our purpose to say, that the great and rapid spread of religion which accompanied their exertions, affords only another proof of the pleasure which God has taken in communicating his grace copiously, and speedily. But I cannot pass from these examples without saying that our own coun-

try has been the scene of just such blessed events. It is now more than a hundred years since the whole Northern and Middle States began to be shaken by the voice of God, as communicated by such instruments as WHITEFIELD and the TENNENTS. From that time onwards there was a series of revivals, which have given a character to our population which no opposing influences have as yet availed to erase. After the men just named, there were none more remarkable in carrying forward this blessed work, than the first five Presidents of Princeton College: Jonathan Dickinson, Aaron Burr, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, and Samuel Finley. Indeed, so long as heart-religion continues to be cherished, the extant works of two of these will be resorted to as incomparable treasures. The histories of that day tell us of revivals in all the region around us—scarcely a town which is not named as the theatre of such transactions. And I must be allowed, in passing, to mention as an instance of the interest then prevailing as to the things of God, that in the spring of 1740, one hundred and eighteen years ago, Mr. Whitefield's journal contains an entry respecting Nottingham, a place not far from us, and well known to us. "It surprised me," he writes, "to see such a great multitude gathered together at so short a warning, and in such a desert place. *I believe there were near twelve thousand hearers.*" The change wrought throughout New England and portions of the Middle States, was indescribable. I have counted the signatures of more than a hundred pastors. "We look upon ourselves and all the ministers and people of God throughout the land, [as] laid under infinite obligations forever to admire and adore such free and sovereign grace, so amazingly displayed in visiting a professing people, in a day of such general security, indolence, and formality; causing so great an awakening of all sorts

of persons, and bringing such numbers of different ages hopefully to close with Jesus on the self-denying terms of the gospel, so as that it hath far exceeded any hopes and expectations of ours, as well as anything of this nature we ever saw in our day." \*

Here we close the historical summary, being willing to confine our observations to the revivals of former days, of which the instruments and the subjects have long since gone to their account, and of which we can judge with more impartiality, now that the fruits of them have been so long laid up in the garner of the Lord. Enough has been said to justify the statement that it is by revivals of religion that God has seen fit to elevate his church to its seasons of highest prosperity. That he has been pleased to do so in our country, in former days, is to be reckoned among his greatest favors to our nation. For no man can tell how far astray we might by this time have gone, as a people, but for such interpositions of grace; and none can calculate how much the elevated tone of moral and religious feeling which still exists among us, is due to the impressions thus made upon us in our forming state; especially as the generation which was then in childhood and youth, was the very one which was in maturity when our Fathers remodelled our polity at the Revolution. By which I am naturally led to observe, in the fourth place, that

IV. IT IS JUST SUCH AN EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH WHICH IS DEMANDED BY THE ACTUAL STATE OF OUR NATION. Of all Christian nations, America is that which most needs genuine revivals of religion. It is because the Lord had a favor unto us that his "right hand, and his

\* Gillies's Collections, vol. ii., pp. 314, 315.

arm, and the light of his countenance" have granted to us more such seasons than to any other people. It was the bold conjecture of Edwards, that the latter-day glory is to begin in America. "God has already put that honor upon the other continent, that Christ was born there literally, and there made the purchase of redemption; so, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things, it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious application of redemption, is to begin in this." Even admitting this to be a pleasing dream, our country, from the very necessity of the case, is to be the theatre of unprecedented revolutions. Our population, our extent, our government, our common language, and our religious freedom, mark us out for great things—but whether good or evil—God knoweth. It is the belief of the sagacious, that unless our religious growth keep pace with our national increase, we shall grow up to sectional feud, factious division, disaster, and desolation; that no tardy, languid, scarcely perceptible increase of religion will meet the exigency; and that nothing can do so but great accession to our churches, produced by such revivals of religion as we hope and pray may be granted throughout the length and breadth of our land. That which characterizes us is the centrifugal tendency of our people, and the high rate of their increase. Even if this were not the case, if by some extraordinary check on population, we should stand where we are, and not add another unit to our census, we should still need a large measure of salt to keep us from ruin. We have not been faithful to the deposit with which we are intrusted. From the absurd attempt to keep up religion without doctrine, a large part of the present generation has grown up already, with no proper safeguard against soul-destroying error. Not only have they no tests to distinguish Pelagian-



ism from Gospel grace, but they even learn to treat with indifference the heresies which deny the atonement and the godhead of Jesus. That charity which believeth all things but God's truth, opens the doors to a fatal religious literature; in which, by a sort of universal solvent, all the doctrinal bones of theology are reduced to a gelatinous mass of ambiguous sentiment. The consequence is easily predicted. In stupid dread of the catechism, and the definitions of the church, these people and their children lose all sense of the diversities of creeds, become looser and more ignorant as falsehood grows familiar, and are led off to universalism on one side, and popery on the other; or, more degrading and ruinous still, to Socinus, Swedenborg, familiar spirits, or the Mormons. We have not been laborious and careful for the perpetuity of the truth. We have multitudes among us who are losing every impression of their infancy, becoming latitudinarian in their creed, relaxed in their morals, and tending towards the world from whom their fathers came out. We have a mixed multitude without the camp, accompanying our march, who ever and anon fall a lusting after some error or some wickedness. Time was, when the population of many regions of America was almost entirely religious; it is not so now. Thousands there are, even of those who regularly attend public worship, who have no theology, no family prayer, no catechizing, who care for no differences of doctrine, and whose children grow up even more ignorant than themselves. By unavoidable mixtures and alliances, the parents have learned a new dialect, and "the children speak half in the speech of Ashdod." The nature of genuine piety is less weighed, less understood. The agency of the Holy Spirit has been cast into the shade; new and dangerous views of regeneration have become common; while the tendency

has been away from dependence on God, and towards a religion of human fabrication. Even the traditionary reverence of our people for revivals has been played upon by the adversary, and we have had the name, without the reality, and have been called upon to wink hard at error, lest we should fight against the God of truth. Thus, when the king of Egypt took away from the temple the shields of gold which Solomon had made, King Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields. The name was as before. At the same time that we were doing away with the true glory of revivals, even the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit in changing the depraved nature, we were in some places laying mighty stress upon certain external means and measures, which are questionable at best, but which, when erected into sacraments, are like the brazen serpent Nehushtan which Hezekiah destroyed, when the children of Israel burned incense to it. So that even if our population were not to increase, we should need the reviving influences of God.

But the supposition is violent and absurd. We do increase by thousands and tens of thousands. Within the old thirteen States we grow by myriads—and what shall I say of the States and territories which rise like an exhalation? Add to this the emigration from abroad still pouring in on us; and then, while all awake with this vision of the future, ask yourselves, Must these millions be left without the gospel? or can the gospel reach them, with our present means? Will not this amazing increase of our people immeasurably outstrip the column of religious influences? At our present rate of march, can we even keep in sight of the army of aliens whom we would subdue to Christ? My brethren, the subject is one of incalculable greatness. Unless the means of grace can be made in some degree to keep pace with the growth of

our population, our rising States must be abandoned to error, infidelity, and disorder; and that great West, which is ere long to turn upon us with an influence far beyond that which we now exert on them, must, without the gospel, send back on us the shocks of a practical atheism.

Now we have no means which, in the way we commonly apply them, can reach this case; and nothing can throw one ray of hope upon this scene, until the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high. If, instead of tens or twenties added to our church in a year, God should turn us and cause his face to shine, and increase us with men like a flock, giving us hundreds on hundreds, as he can easily do, we shall have ministers enough, and holy men enough, to carry on the warfare to conquest.

There are some great facilities for the rapid communication of religious influence and sympathies, which were unknown to our fathers. The commerce of mind with mind throughout the whole tract of our country is striking. The telegraphic rapidity of intelligence and feeling is electric, and characterizes the age. Now the mechanism is ready—the communication is instituted—the train of conductors is laid; and oh! my brethren, shall not God be inquired of by us to give the divine, omnipotent touch? Shall we not beseech him to stir up his strength and come and save us? Shall we not fall before him and entreat that he would forgive our land, and signalize our age by unexampled influences of reviving grace?

He has done wonders—what do I say! From the Pacific islands, within our own memory brooded over by a night of horrid superstition, we once heard sounds scarcely ever heard before since apostolic days; and God has chosen American evangelists to be the messen-

gers of peace to these Sandwich Isles. I own I am struck with amazement and awe, when I read in the letters of men who went out from ourselves, that seven thousand, within one year, professed faith in Christ. When I behold, in imagination, stated assemblies of two, three, and four thousand, each from those who had been the vilest idolaters, I can only say, Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? What encouragement need we ask for our prayers? Let us not be faithless but believing. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Let us not imitate the folly of the Syrians who said, "The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys." He is not the God of the distant islands merely, but is ready to hear our prayer, and able to accomplish for us such an increase as the world has not yet seen.

We seem strangely bent upon measuring all God's future achievements by those which are past, and limiting what he can do to what he hath done, although the whole of prophecy is vocal with the song of wonders yet in reserve. Prophecy must needs be fulfilled, though heaven and earth pass away: but prophecy cannot be fulfilled without a wide-spread conquest of the earth, and a rapid conversion of mankind, such as we have not seen.

Imagine a shower of grace in this single church—every house filled with worshippers—every place of business made solemn or joyful by the presence of religious emotion. Think of a season during which religion should be the great matter of interest with every young person. Think of the effect on ministers—on professing Christians—on sinners. Imagine, if you can, my brethren, a universal shower over the whole country! God is able to give more than we are able to ask. His power

need not stop at millions. He will be inquired of. He will be prayed unto.

The body of my remarks has been spent in showing the desirableness of such an extension of the church. It is less necessary to expatiate upon the means of gaining this transcendent blessing, as there is only one named in the text, prayer; that one will never be employed while we undervalue the blessing, and never neglected if we value it. But it may not be unnecessary to drop a caution for a certain class of minds which shrinks from this absolute resort to God, and considers prayer as a mere appendage and auxiliary to human exertion. Let us observe that it is God who will increase Israel. And He will be inquired of to do it for them. The appropriateness of this statement is obvious.

All prayer is an acknowledgment of dependence. It is the resort of weakness to Omnipotence. As such it gives glory to the Divine agency, from which corrupt, proud human nature is always prone to derogate somewhat, especially in the work of saving souls. But by *grace* are we saved, and God will have the excellency of the power to be—yea, to appear to be—of Himself. All our difficulties in believing in the possibility of an unexampled increase of the church arise from our looking at human agency instead of divine efficiency. Perhaps one reason why God has so often arrested His bountiful hand, and left us to barrenness, is, that we have arrogated to ourselves much of the power. We have substituted man's work. We have taken regeneration out of God's hands into our own. We have made us new hearts, after the image of ourselves. We have in the place of the new creature substituted a mere purpose, a volition to serve God, to choose him to make us happy—a purpose which may be, and often has been, altered the next hour. And we have thus exchanged the glory of

God for our own glory, and left the Lord Jesus Christ and his merciful atonement entirely out of our system.

My brethren, what visions arise before the eye of faith in the expectation of such a return to us! On omnipotence we cannot count too much. God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Such a dawn of glory as this upon our churches would extend its beams to our remotest Missions. Religion would be to our national Union a cement worth more than all political ties and compromises. The young men of our age would grow up under new influences, a generation fitted for a new work, in a better age. It is no more than is predicted. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Our youth would be the happiest youth, and we the happiest people in the world. Oh that I could impress, and be possessed myself, with a due sense of the loveliness, the glory, the indispensableness of such a gift. If I judge aright, all other pursuits are nothing to the pursuit of this. Our common and popular methods of doing good to men, aim only at temporal good, or if higher, only indirectly; but this is aiming at the good of the soul, and for eternity. Here is the great work of philanthropy—the only work worth living for.

Dear brethren, you do not need so much to have this demonstrated as to have it pondered. You are not

infidels. You believe in the soul—in its immortality—its preciousness—its peril; you believe that most around you are unsanctified—are perishing; you believe that they must be renewed, or lost—and that the time is short; you believe that they cannot save themselves, that they will not come to the Saviour; you believe that God alone can save them—that he can do it speedily—that he can do it now—that he will be inquired of to do it for you.

Then what room is there for further argument? Your minds concede all that can be demanded. It only remains that you *pray*. God hath promised, and will perform—these solemn feasts shall be crowded—He will increase them with men like a flock, as when ten thousand went up to Jerusalem to sacred festivals, filling every avenue, and overspreading the holy place, the city, and the surrounding hills, and vales, and villages. Let but the blast of the silver trumpet be once heard, long and loud, and sweetly penetrating, over mountain and plain of our beloved land, and the sound of jubilee shall reverberate from distant shores, and the “ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.”

As the conversion of a multitude, even “flocks of men,” sets forth the glory of God, so this is more specially and eminently done, when the blessing comes in answer to prayer. Never have the honors of our common Christianity been so illustrious as when with one consent the people of God have been seen thronging to the place of prayer, as if in public acknowledgment that the excellency of the power is “of God and not of us.” The church has long marked in her calendar the connection of Prayer and Pentecost. And amidst many sins and deficiencies in our actual condition in New York, it is cause of adoring thankfulness that so many

thousands have been drawn to put honor upon united and public supplications.

The friend who has already helped us largely is the friend who expects our confidence and our requests. Our divine Benefactor, who hath all fullness, claims that past gifts be remembered, and calls on us to rehearse "the years of the right-hand of the Most High." Are we afraid that he cannot or will not do so great things? The admonition is tender and appropriate: "Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;" and immediately afterwards: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Psalm lxxxi. 7-10. In that awful interview with the patriarch, which almost saved the cities of the plain, Abraham successively received every favor that he asked. But "the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham," and Sodom was given over to vengeance. Let us remember that we pray for nothing less than Christ's great glory, and that it is possible to ask too little. Learn this from the visit of King Joash to the dying prophet. Though he was in earnest, though he wept over Elisha, though he deprecated the invasion by Syria, though he smote with the arrow, which was symbolically the "arrow of the Lord's deliverance," yet he stopped short of the desires and hopes which he ought to have entertained. "Take the arrows," said Elisha. "And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." We have prayed, and have received; but, oh, my fellow-worshippers, have we prayed or received in any measure cor-



responding to the exceeding great and precious promises of Him with whom we have to do? the merits and sufferings of Him whose death and righteousness are our plea? or the boundless compassion of Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not? We are not straitened in God; but we are straitened in our desires, our purposes, our believings. Here all is narrow; there—in the heart of God—all is wide. We have not, because we ask not. If the waste cities are to “be filled with flocks of men,” God will anticipate this fullness of gift by an effusion of the Spirit, causing warm wishes and fervent prayers. “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.” When united prayer begins, revival is not merely coming—it has come. And this agrees with the word of the Lord: “And it shall come to pass, before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” In sovereignty of dispensation the Most High prepares his own sheep, causes them to hear the shepherd’s voice and brings them into his fold. When the spirit of prayer is universal, the divine gift will transcend all previous example.

Inquiring for God, in the way of renewed prayer, marks growth in the individual Christian. The solitary chamber and the night watches attest the increase of zeal and importunity. Parents, guardians, husbands, wives, teachers, friends, lie prostrate before God, yearning for the conversion of sinners. Above all, ministers of the Word and elders of the churches are made to recognize their solemn relation to the work, and give themselves to prayer. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the case of Shots, already mentioned. “In that place,” says Mr. Livingston, “I used to find more liberty in preaching than elsewhere; yea, the only day in all my

life wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching, was on a Monday, after the communion, preaching in the church-yard of Shots, June 21, 1630. The night before I had been with some Christians, *who spent the night in prayer and conference*. When I was alone in the fields, about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, before we were to go to sermon, there came such a misgiving spirit upon me, considering my unworthiness and weakness, and the expectation of the people, that I was consulting with myself, to have stolen away somewhere, and declined that day's preaching, but that I thought I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon, and got good assistance about an hour and a half; when the points which I had meditated on, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. And, in the end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about an hour's time, in a strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart, as I never had the like in public in all my lifetime." Nor should we fail to notice the modesty of the man, who, in this piece of autobiography, drops no syllable concerning the conversion of a single soul by his means. Yet we learn from the best authority that no less than five hundred persons were, as was believed, converted under that sermon, in that rural churchyard.\* Ministers of the gospel, beyond all others, have a serious responsibility at such times,

\* The excellent John Brown, of Haddington, thus writes: "Meanwhile, faithful ministers were remarkably countenanced of God at their sacramental and other occasions. Multitudes crowded to their communions, and being eager to hear as much of the gospel as they could, when they had an opportunity of it, they began to hear one sermon upon Saturday before, and another on the Monday after. Mr. John Livingston, a probationer, after having run so far off that morning, preached a sermon at the kirk of Shots, on Monday, June 21, at which five hundred were converted to Christ."—*History of Church of Scotland*, p. 98.

and have cause to ask the intercession of God's people, that they may, with more devotion of the whole man, give themselves to the word of God and prayer. But the plain and incumbent means, and that on which the great blessing thus depends, is direct prayer to Almighty God for the particular gift of large increase. What the Master has already done is an earnest, not a measure, of what he will do. Have many hundreds been brought to Christ amidst the solemnities of decorous assemblies? We ask more than this at the hands of our covenant-keeping God, and of that Saviour who had compassion on the multitudes. We ask that the river of grace, which now trickles along our highways, may swell to an inundation, breaking with peaceful force into dens and hovels, the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty; that salvation may run down our streets; "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over;" that the tidings of his love, and the baptism of his Spirit, may reach, not merely the church-going and instructed child of the covenant, but the open sinner, the publican, and the harlot. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom!" Amen.