

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

Mr. Webster, at more than one period of his life, dallied with the muses. In 1825 he had the misfortune to lose a son, three years of age, named Charles, represented to have possessed a singular attractiveness of mind and character even at that early age. On that occasion, Mr. Webster enclosed the following in a letter to his wife:

My son, thou wast my heart's delight,  
Thy morn' of life was gay and cheery;  
That morn' has rushed to sudden night,  
Thy father's house is sad and dreary.

I held thee on my knee, my son!  
And kissed thee laughing, kissed thee weeping;  
But ah! thy little day is done,  
Thou'rt with thy angel sister sleeping.

The staff on which my years should lean,  
Is broken, ere those years come o'er me;  
My funeral rite thou should'st have seen,  
But thou art in the grave before me.

Thou rear'st to me no filial stone,  
No parent's grave with tears beholdest;  
Thou art my aneester, my son!  
And stand'st in Heaven's account the oldest.

On earth my lot was soonest cast  
Thy generation over mine,  
Thou hast my predecessor passed;  
Earlier eternity is thine.

I should have set before thine eyes  
The road to Heaven, and showed it clear,  
But thou, untaught, spring'st to the skies,  
And leav'st thy teacher ling'ring here.

Sweet seraph, I would learn of thee,  
And hasten to partake thy bliss!  
And oh! to thy world welcome me,  
As first I welcomed thee to this.

Dear angel, thou art safe in Heaven;  
No prayers for thee need more be made;  
Oh! let the prayers for those be given  
Who oft have blessed thy infant head.

My father! I beheld thee born,  
And led thy tottering steps with care;  
Before me risen to Heaven's bright morn,  
My son! my father! guide me there.

## Select Sermon.

### Spiritual Revival, the want of the Church.

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"O Lord, revive thy work!"—Hab. iii. 2.

ALL true religion is the work of God: it is pre-eminently so. If he should select out of his works that which he esteems most of all, he would select true religion. He regards the works of grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature: and he is therefore especially careful that it shall always be known, so that if any dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies to the contrary, that God is indeed the author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of grace, and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and of the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to anything else but God. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is aught in the heart, which can be acceptable unto God, save that which God himself has first created there. When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one truth; but when I deny that he works grace in the heart, I deny a hundred truths in one; for in the denial of that one great truth, that God is the author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the doctrines which make up the great articles of faith, and have run in the very teeth of the whole testimony of sacred Scripture. I trust, beloved, that many of us have been taught, that if there be anything in our souls which can carry us to heaven, it is God's work, and, moreover, that if there be aught that is good and excellent found in his church, it is entirely God's work, from first to last. We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead; positively "dead in trespasses and sins;" that it is God who maintains the life of that soul, and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the

blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God. We dare not for a moment think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own effort or by the efforts of others: we conceive that there are means and agencies employed, but that the work is, both alpha and omega, wholly the Lord's. We think, therefore, that we are right in applying the text to the work of divine grace, both in the heart and in the church at large; and we think that we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the text. "O Lord, revive thy work!"

First, beloved, trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavour to apply the text to our own souls, personally, and then to the state of the church at large, for it well needs that the Lord should revive his work in its midst.

I. First, then, to OURSELVES. We should begin at home. We too often flog the church, when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar; we bind her, and try to execute her at once; we bind her hands fast, and tear off thong-full after thong-full of her quivering flesh—finding fault with her where there is none, and magnifying her little errors; while we too often forget ourselves. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are part of the church, and that our own want of revival is in some measure the cause of that want in the church at large.

Now, I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians—and I take the charge to myself also—with a need of a revival of piety in these days. I shall lay the charge before you very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of Christian men in this age need a revival; and my reasons are these.

In the first place, look at the conduct and conversation of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the sacred place of a pulpit to flatter his hearers, and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with too many of you who unite yourselves with Christian churches, and in practically protesting against your profession. It has become very common now-a-days to join a church; go where you may you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's table or another; but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not. The age is as immoral as any that preceded it; there is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulchre may be whiter: but within, the bones are just as rotten as before.

Again: where the conduct of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, does not the conversation of many a professor lead us either to doubt the truthfulness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of too many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December, and you would never be tired of their religion for what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all.

And yet a third remark here. There are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part unctious with the gospel, and savoury of truth; but even they will confess a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ. If, thanks to divine grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent, and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves, from a lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the high mark of the true child of God.

Ah! we many of us want revival, but few of us feel that we want it. It is a blessed sign of life within, when we know how to groan over our departures from the living God. It is easy to find by hundreds

those that have departed, but you must count those by ones who know how to groan over their departure.

Notice in the last place, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad estate, because of its declension and departure from God, is never content without turning its groanings into prayer, and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter: "O Lord, revive thy work!" Some of you, perhaps, will say, "Sir, I feel my need of revival; I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul." Do not say it; and above all things, do not try to do it, for you never will do it. Make no resolutions as to what you will do; your resolutions will be as certainly broken as they are made, and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins. I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayers. Say not, "I will revive myself," but cry, "O Lord, revive thy work!" And let me solemnly tell thee, thou hast not yet felt what it is to decline, thou dost not yet know how sad is thine estate; otherwise thou wouldst not talk of reviving thyself. If thou didst know thine own position, thou wouldst as well expect to see the wounded soldier on the battle-field heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as thou wouldst expect to revive thyself without the help of God. I bid thee not do anything, nor seek to do anything, until first of all thou hast addressed Jehovah himself by mighty prayer—until thou hast cried out, "O Lord, revive thy work!" Remember, he that first made you must keep you alive; and he that has kept you alive must restore more life to you. He that has preserved you from going down to the pit, when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon a rock, and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian, but beginning at once with firm prayer and earnest supplication to God: "O Lord, what I cannot do, do thou! O Lord, revive thy work!"

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn liturgy: "O Lord, revive thy work!" In the present era there is a sad decline of the vitality of godliness. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life.

The church at large, may be, wants a revival of downright earnestness in its members. Ye are not men to fight the Lord's battles yet. Ye have not the earnestness, the zeal, which once the children of God had. Your forefathers were oaken men; ye are willow men. Our people, what are they, many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong-doctrine men; but they waver when they get others, and they change as often as they change their company; they are sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die; they are not the men that know how to die daily, and so are ready for death when it comes.

Beloved, do you think it is true that the church wants reviving? Yes, or no? "No," you say, "not to the extent that you suppose. We think the church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, 'The former days were better than these.'" Perhaps you are not; you may be far wiser than we are, and therefore you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are to us so small, that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the church is in a good condition; if so, of course you cannot sympathise with me for preaching from such a text, and urging you to use such a prayer. But there are others of you who are frequently prone to cry, "The church wants reviving." Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the church, to cry, "O Lord, revive thy work!" "Oh!" says one, "if we had another minister! Oh, if we had another kind of worship!"

Oh, if we had a different sort of preaching! Just as if that were all! It is, "Oh, if the Lord would come into the hearts of the men you have got! Oh, if he would make the forms you do use full of power!" You do not want fresh ways or fresh machinery; you want the life in what you have. There is an engine on the railway; a train has to be moved. "Bring another engine," says one, "and another, and another." The engines are brought, but the train does not move at all. Light the fire, and get the steam up, that is what you want; not fresh engines. We do not want fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented, to make the church better; we only want life in what we have got. Given, the very man who has emptied your chapel; given, the self-same person that brought your prayer-meeting low; God can make the chapel crowded to the doors yet, and give thousands of souls to that very man. It is not a new man that is wanted; it is the life of God in him. Do not be crying out for something new; it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have. Cry, "O Lord, revive thy work!" I have noticed in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan, and thought that would succeed; then he tried another; that was not it. Keep to the old plan, but get life in it! We do not want anything new; "the old is better;" let us keep to it. But we want the life in the old. "Oh!" men cry, "we have nothing but the shell; the are going to give us a new shell." No, sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell too; we will have the old thing; but we must, or else we will throw the old away, have the life in the old. Oh! that God would give us life! The church wants fresh revivals. Oh! for the days of Cambuslang again, when Whitfield preached with power! Oh! for the days when in this place hundreds were converted sometimes under Whitfield's sermons! It has been known that two thousand credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary discourse. Oh! for the age when eyes should be strained, and ears should be ready to receive the Word of God, and when men should drink in the word of life, as it is indeed, the very water of life, which God gives to dying souls! Oh! for the age of deep feeling—the age of deep, thorough-going earnestness! Let us ask God for it; let us plead with him for it. Perhaps he has the man, or the men, somewhere who will shake the world yet; perhaps even now he is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon man, which shall make the church as wonderful in this age, as it ever was in any age that has passed.

### Hope for Africa.

A variety of circumstances have recently transpired, which excite the liveliest hopes in regard to Africa. Public attention is turned toward that country in a manner not before known. From many quarters, and in many ways, without concert on the part of those taking the lead in the movements to which we refer, helping hands are stretched out towards the long-neglected and long-oppressed tribes of that unhappy country.

The discoveries of Dr. Livingston and his visit to his native land, have brought matters as it were to a crisis. The attempts which have been made in former times to introduce commerce and civilization into the interior, have not wholly failed. English influence has penetrated far inland; hence when a large number of the Matabele, near Peto, who mistook him for a Portuguese, were closely scrutinising Dr. Livingston, they were at last satisfied, and expressed their satisfaction in language too honourable to us, and too touching in itself, to be soon forgotten—"You belong to the tribe that loves the black man!"

Mr. Macgregor Laird, already one of the foremost in the endeavour to civilize Africa, has engaged to have a steamer passing regularly from Fernando Po to the great rivers, and he also runs one on his own account besides. To afford every facility