

Rev. Dr. Cramp

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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

Thoughts of Heaven.

No sickness there,
No weary wasting of the frame away,
No fearful shrinking from the midnight air,
No dread of summer's bright and fervid ray!

No hidden grief,
No wild and cheerless vision of despair;
No vain petition for a swift relief,
No tearful eye, no broken hearts are there.

Care has no home
Within that realm of ceaseless prayer and song—
Its tossing billows break and melt in foam,
Far from the mansions of the spirit throng.

The storm's black wing
Is never spread athwart celestial skies!
Its wailing blends not with the voice of spring,
As some too tender floweret fades and dies.

No night distills
Its chilling dews upon the tender frame;
No moon is needed there! the light which fills
That land of glory, from its Maker came.

No parted friends
O'er mournful recollections have to weep;
No bed of death enduring love attends,
To watch the coming of a pulseless sleep!

No blasted flower
Or withered bud, celestial gardens know!
No scorching blasts, or fierce descending shower,
Scatters destruction like a ruthless foe!

No battle word
Startles the sacred host with fear and dread;
The song of peace Creation's morning heard,
Is sung wherever angel minstrels tread!

Let us depart,
If home like this await the weary soul.
Look up, thou stricken one; thy wounded heart
Shall bleed no more at sorrow's stern control.

With faith our guide,
White-robed and innocent, to trace the way,
Why fear to plunge in Jordan's rolling tide,
And find the ocean of Eternal Day!

Religious.

First Things; or the Development of Church Life.

BY BARON STOW.

THE FIRST REVIVAL.

As we stand among the listening crowd, we sympathize with the feeling that prevails. The atmosphere seems charged with an influence that produces solemnity and tenderness. The speaker feels it; his eyes are liquid, his tones are tremulous, his manly frame is convulsed with the energy of his emotions. The hearers feel it; their countenances fall; their hearts ache with compunction; the great deep of their sensibilities is broken up; their tears gush. The Apostle has no thought of concluding, for he has enough to say. But he is interrupted in a manner which, when he commenced, no one anticipated. He has just finished a line of argument with these words: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know, assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." "Whom ye have crucified;" this does the work. Hearts are pricked, and the pent-up feeling is released. From every part of the audience comes up a cry of anguish. The excitement is not sympathetic but is the product of a common conviction. There is no imitation one of another; every one acts for himself, and all act simultaneously. Under a common pressure, and feeling alike the pungency of God's truth, they make one inquiry. It is not new to the Christians; for they have once made it for themselves, and they have heard others make it, and know how John the Baptist and how their adorable Master answered it. The only thing peculiar in the case is the number of those who together propose the question. They know what has prompted it; they understand the fitting reply. Oh, where is the preacher, worthy of his vocation, who would not covet the privilege of standing where we see that honored Apostle, in the presence of a congregation subdued and softened by the Word and Spirit, and lift-

ing toward him the tearful eye, and, with the tones peculiar to godly penitence, proposing the one vital question, "What shall we do?" But, desirable as is the privilege, a responsibility is involved which well might make him tremble, and pray for Divine direction. How much depends upon the answer that shall be given! These people have reached a critical point in their existence. Their eternal destiny turns upon a delicate pivot. A wrong answer may lead to self-deception, and make sure their ruin. The right may bring them upon safe ground, and secure for them the greatest possible good. An unintelligible answer may perplex them and aggravate their suffering, or send them elsewhere for the needed information.

Their state of mind can be no better expressed than by the word *compunction*. It does not yet amount to repentance; but it is the preceding and the preparatory work. There is a deep sense of guilt and of consequent danger. Observe the process. The Apostle has charged them especially with one sin, and their consciences plead guilty with respect to both the act and its enormity. But their anguish of heart results from broader views. Genuine conviction of sin cannot be confined to one offence, for the light that reveals one exposes many others. The Saviour pointed out to the woman of Sychar a single fact in her historical depravity, and that so opened up to her own view her entire character that she reported him as having told her all things that ever she did. Fire kindled at one point in a forest will spread until the whole is enveloped in flame. Awaken in any bosom correct views of one sin, and the grand result is secured. Hence the fitness of concentration and particularity in preaching. Mansoul is never captured by generalities. Make one breach in the wall, and the besiegers enter, and the town surrenders.

No sooner are these hearers convinced of their guilt, then they see and feel their wretched condition. They are alarmed, and know not what to do. Who shall inform them but the very men through whom they have become acquainted with so much truth? They are not ashamed to become inquirers, and in earnest they ask for saving direction: "Men, brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter is ready with the answer: "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." All this is well understood. The duties enjoined are, that repentance which includes such a sorrow for sin as produces reformation of character, and that profession of faith in Christ which will make them known as his followers; first, the submission of the heart, then, that outward act of obedience which is the symbol and the pledge of voluntary consecration to the service of the Redeemer. If they will thus submit and obey, their sins shall be all remitted, and the Holy Spirit shall be their Comforter. The promise is comprehensive, including all who are effectually called; it is particular, applying to those who are now called. This direction Peter follows with a variety of instructions and exhortations fitted to the necessities of inquirers. With no circumlocution, but with great directness and condensation, he communicates much in a few words. Their minds are in the right posture to welcome whatever he says; they easily understand every lesson, and have a fixed purpose to practise what they learn. Upon those lips which have shot such burning truths into their consciences, they now hang with delight eager to catch every sentence uttered. They gladly receive the word; it is a balm to their wounded spirits. They long now to be numbered with the disciples. How suddenly, how graciously changed!

When Peter commenced his sermon, he had probably no thought of uttering a word respecting baptism. He knew the place which that ordinance holds in the Christian system, and, on all suitable occasions, would present its claims; but, while his hearers

remained unconverted, his first business was to preach "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." They must repent of sin, and believe on the Son of God, before they could be admitted to a privilege that is significant of the death and burial of the old nature, and an emergence of the new man to a new life. Consequently, he aimed directly and exclusively at the conversion of sinners, well knowing that if they should become new creatures they would be ready to perform known duty. But now that the awakened thousands inquire what they shall do, he recognizes the true order of duty, just the order which his Master established, and answers accordingly. He does not seem to fear that he shall hinder the revival by enforcing a Christian duty. He gives that duty no special prominence; he simply enjoins it as a matter having a secondary place in the Christian scheme. It is a necessary part of the answer to the inquiry.

Christ said, "If any man love me, he will keep my words." These converts love him, and are anxious to show their love by a prompt obedience to his commands. They need no instruction as to what constitutes baptism. They know the meaning of the word; they remember where, and how, and to whom, John, the harbinger of Jesus, administered the ordinance. They are ready and desirous to imitate the example of Him whom it is their purpose ever to follow.

The remainder of the day—a long day, near the summer solstice—is devoted to the work of baptism. Happy administrators! Happy converts! The sun goes down upon that Church enlarged by an addition of about three thousand members!

The disciples now understand why their Master said, "Beginning at Jerusalem." It seemed at first a hard duty, an apparent impossibility. But God prepared them for it, and then opened the way; and now the work is done, easily done. The bearings of this day's triumph upon future operations they do not measure; but they see that the infant Church is signally authenticated by Heaven; that Divine Power and Faithfulness are on her side, and that she may proceed with assurance of success.

As, at the close of this remarkable day, we review the events of the day and of the whole period since the ascension of Christ, we are filled with admiration. We see how the parts of the series are connected, the first, through prayer, with the throne of God, and the rest, one with another, in appropriate succession. The Church, as a body, lies low and looks high, without diversion or interruption, until the blessing comes. No sooner is the Church revived, than the people collect around her, and the preached gospel takes effect, and there is a powerful revival. Thus, in the entire series of First Things we witness a rapid and orderly Development of Church Life. The lessons are instructive for all time.

We are at first anxious upon one point. Has not this little Church erred in receiving at once and so soon after their professed conversion, such a multitude of new members? Was not her action precipitate and imprudent? A little reflection brings relief. The arrangement of the Saviour was that men should believe and be baptized, specifying no time as necessary to intervene between the one duty and the other, but plainly, by precept and practice, indicating the order of the two duties. The only question for the Church to decide, was, whether these people were, or were not, truly believers. It was purely a question of fact, to be determined by evidence. To them the proof was satisfactory.

The revival which we have seen commenced to-day is evidently genuine. There have been no human contrivances to work up an excitement. The disciples have in all simplicity followed as they were led, not by man, but by an unseen Guide. The only means which they have used are prayer and preaching—means purely of Christ's appointment, and the results must be entirely the products of his blessing upon those means. The converts are his, and therefore genuine. Thus, we infer, it must ever be; the greater the evidence that a revival is the work of the Spirit, the less the

risk of hasty admissions into the Church; the more powerful the revival in the exclusive employment of the appointed instrumentalities, the less the danger of spurious conversions. The hotter the furnace, the smaller the amount of dross to disfigure the work of the founder. The time may come when professed conversions will be doubtful; when the praying of the Church shall be less unselfish, and spiritual, and self-abasing; when the preaching shall include with some truth also some error; when appeals shall be made more to the emotional nature than to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart; when resort shall be had to human expedients to produce an impression. Then, surely, it will be necessary for the Church to be extremely cautious, lest she introduce to her membership those who never knew the grace of God in truth. Should such times ever come, it will not do to plead apostolic example as an apology for hasty admissions. "Are they believers in Christ?" must ever be the question to be settled. In some cases, the affirmative answer can be given, with little danger of mistake, in one hour. Other cases may require a week, a month, a year of careful observation. The teachings of Christ define, with sufficient accuracy, what it is to be a true disciple. When three or three thousand cases are tested by his standard, and found to be genuine, who can forbid their immediate admission?

In the case before us, the circumstances rendered it improbable that any would make a false profession. Some might be self-deceived, but hardly could any be insincere. And the guards against self-deception were of the strongest kind. Considering well the previous prejudices of these converts, the obstacles which they had to surmount in becoming Christians, and the exposures to which a change of their religion would subject them, we can discover no motive that would be likely to induce them to make an untrue profession. There was everything to dissuade unrenewed men from a public avowal of friendship to Christ.

The Church, therefore, felt no hesitation in receiving at once the immense number of converts. No examination was needed; the evidence patent, under such circumstances, was conclusive; they were baptized, and cordially welcomed as the first fruits of a great harvest.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Hope of Heaven.

The hope of heaven is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. How necessary that we should be certain that this hope is well founded. Let each reader ask—On what does my hope rest? Is it morality of life? Is it good deeds, or works of charity that I may accomplish? Is it that I expect, like the thief on the cross, at the last moment, to gain admittance into heaven? Ah, my friend, if this is the foundation of your hope, I fear it is neither sure nor steadfast. How vain, yea, almost insane, to leave the whole work of life for our last moments. What reason have we to suppose that the sands of life will ebb slowly at last? and thus give us an opportunity to prepare to meet God. We are told that in such an hour as we think not the Son of Man cometh. Should a lingering illness end our earthly career, our frame may be so racked with pain as to deprive us of the power of thought. Let us then be wise, and make sure work for eternity.

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to ensure the great reward."

Jesus Christ must be the Alpha and Omega, and he will then not fail, as when the billows of Jordan roll over our souls, but will be as an anchor sure and steadfast.

"Thou, oh Christ, art all we want,
All in all in thee we find."

Perhaps some will read this who have a good hope through grace. Thankful indeed should we be, when we see so many without God and without hope in the world. Let us be diligent, in trying to show them that this blessed, this glorious hope is free for all. Let us go on, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Yet a little time,