

Our Contributors.

THE "NEXT REVIVAL"

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The spirit of prophecy seems to have descended upon certain good men on both sides of the ocean, and the subject of their confident predictions is what they call "the next revival." In our own land that stalwart patriot and philanthropist, the Rev. Dr. Josiah Strong, has published a small volume entitled "The Next Great Awakening," in which he contends that each spiritual awakening in modern times has rested on some one great special idea, and that it was called forth by the special circumstances of the time. Rev. Dr. John Watson, of Liverpool, the brilliant author of "The Bonnie Brier Bush," and many other popular works, has recently been exercising his prophetic gifts in an address before the Baptist College of Bristol, which is attracting no small attention. The Liverpool doctor contends that such evangelistic movements as were conducted by Mr. Moody are now a "spent force and his peculiar methods are now obsolete!" Instead of a work whose chief purpose is the conversion of sinful souls and the quickening of spiritual life of believers, Dr. Watson emphasizes the superior claims of a great humanitarian work for feeding the hungry, improving the dwellings of the poor, insuring fair wages to the laborer, cleansing the slums and in all kindred lines of social reform.

OLD PROPHECIES RENEWED.

After reading this eloquently constructed manifesto I recalled at once a similar pronouncement made just fifty years ago by that distinguished philanthropist Mr. Charles Brace, the founder of the Children's Aid Society and the author of a notable book called "Gesta Christi." At that time the Christian people of New York were being aroused to the horrible condition of the slums and their wretched occupants; the Five Points House of Industry and the Old Brewery Mission had just been started, and Mr. Brace had launched his admirable Children's Aid Society. "Here comes the new revival!" exclaimed my good friend, Mr. Brace, with all the exultation of a spiritual Columbus who discovers a new continent opened to Christianity. What was the result? The sort of social and sanitary reforms which Mr. Brace helped to pioneer has been going forward from that day to this, in New York, in London, and many another hive of population. Mr. Brace made his declaration in 1853. Five years afterward came the wonderful revival of 1858, which spread over New York and this whole nation, and extended to Great Britain, resulting in the conversion of multitudes of souls. In 1873 Mr. Moody began his great evangelistic campaigns which were attended with mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. From that time to this upon these churches that have done the right kind of preaching, the right kind of praying, and the right kind of giving and working the divine Spirit has descended in full measure. We can assure my dear Brother Watson that the Christianity

of Calvary and of Pentecost is good for both the bodies and the immortal souls of men, and that the aims and the methods of such evangelistic servants of Christ Jesus as Moody and Spurgeon and McNeill and kindred preachers, are no more a "spent and obsolete force" than sunshine and showers are obsolete. God's world and God's glorious gospel are big enough and broad enough for both kinds of revival.

AN OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT.

What is the exact meaning of the word "revival?" In its true and legitimate sense it is the result of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It describes a state of things in a church or in the community when Christians become more spiritually-minded and active in good works, and the conversions of impenitent souls are more than ordinarily numerous. Two vitally important phenomena are essential to a genuine revival—the Holy Spirit quickens believers and the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners, and the fruit is a new kind of life to both classes. That is the essential type and characteristic of all true "awakening," from the days of Pentecost to the present hour. Good men from good motives may organize religious methods and machineries, but they end in pious clatter unless the "living Spirit is within the wheels."

Every one who studies carefully both the Bible and human nature must acknowledge that however excellent may be all humanitarian philanthropies, yet the seat and fountain-head of the evils, the wrongs and the miseries is the human heart. That the carnal heart is at enmity with God and of course with godly living. The disease that lies at the root in that heart—whether in fine mansion or in hovel—is sin, sin, sin. No impure fountain can send forth sweet waters. Jesus Christ "died to save us from our sins." The Holy Spirit is sent to "convince the world of sin," and the apostles never stopped with lopping off the twigs of social evils; they struck at the roots. It is a noteworthy fact that the men who have been the means of the mightiest revivals — John Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards and Charles G. Finney — have turned the lightning flash of divine truth on the damnable nature of sin, and made that the prime reason for fleeing to Jesus Christ. Would not more of such pungent preaching—red hot with love of souls—hasten the coveted revivals?

THE FRUIT OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

If such genuinely evangelical revivals come, one of the fruits of the Spirit will be brotherly love. The faith that furnishes no food to hungry bodies, or raiment to shivering backs, is denounced by the Bible as "dead." How can a man love God if he love not his brother man? It is a striking fact that so many of the foremost laborers for the conversion of souls have been the foremost in the practical philanthropies which Dr. Watson commends. For example, on a certain Sabbath in London I joined with

that glorious old reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, in a Gospel service for neglected non-churchgoers, and during that week I visited the "Ragged School" which he had established among the poor outcasts of the "Smithfield" district. Hon. Wm. E. Dodge (our American Shaftesbury) was equally ready to labor among Pennsylvania coal miners in an inquiry meeting, and with New York millionaires in sustaining scores of charitable institutions. Charles H. Spurgeon, the prince of evangelistic preachers, maintained his orphanages and mission schools, and other reformatory agencies, but his chief aim was the conversion of souls, for he felt that a clean heart was the best guarantee of a clean home, a clean deposit in a savings bank, and clean living. When Christ's servants endeavor to satisfy hungry souls by filling an empty stomach—when they are satisfied with paying the sons of toil fair wages, and do nothing to make them heirs of heaven; when they care only for sick and suffering bodies and bring no remedies for sin-sick and perishing souls, they are guilty of treason to their Master and of criminal robbery of those for whom Jesus died. May God save his church from "revivals" that take no account of Calvary's cross, or the day of judgment, or the tremendous realities of eternity!

UNEXPECTED REVIVALS.

The most idle waste of breath is to predict revivals. My beloved friend, Moody, was sometimes tempted to do it and suffered a sore disappointment. God is a sovereign and takes none of us into his secret councils. His kingdom cometh not with observation, or by sounding of trumpets. During my forty-four years of pastoral experience the most copious outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon my church came when we were not expecting them. While neither pastor nor churches can predict the seasons of the Spirit's peculiar presence, it is their imperative duty to be preaching God's whole message, to be praying without ceasing, to be doing Christ's work after Christ's personal fashion of personal effort and then trust our promise-keeping God for showers of blessing as Elijah did on Mount Carmel.

All those material benefits that Dr. Watson pleads for are eminently desirable; but they are more likely to come when Christians put spiritual things above secular things, and are baptized with the unselfish and loving spirit of our crucified Lord. Humanitarian reforms are admirable as far as they go; but verily they do not go far enough when they stop short of salvation from the curse of sin, and stop short of the Cross of Jesus, and stop short of a new heart and of the life everlasting in heaven. May the "next revival" in our churches be a revival of holy and unworldly zeal in not only saving men's suffering bodies but saving their immortal souls and their daily lives by bringing them to Jesus Christ—a revival whose glorious results shall last clear through into eternity!

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