

# The Free Press

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Rev. J. McLeod.]

VOL. XXVI.—No. 7.

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

SAINT JOHN, N. B., FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1879.

[EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.]

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**P. McPEAKE.**  
FREDERICTON, Oct. 25.

## The Intelligencer.

THE CONDITIONS OF A REVIVAL.

BY REV. WM. JUSTIN HARRIS.

There are two things comprised in the general idea of a revival: (a) The reviving of the church and (b) the conversion of sinners. The first seems to be the legitimate thought, and should be the principal aim in a revival, and then the second, the conversion of sinners, will follow as a certain consequence. Many a cold Christian in a church says: "Let us get up a revival," little understanding what breaking of his own pride and humbling of his own heart would be implied and necessary if his wish should be realized. If the church be once revived there will be no trouble about the conversion of sinners. I do not believe in getting up a revival, but I do believe in getting one down, and it must flow through the church. (See Acts iii. 19.) In order to show that a revival legitimately has to do with the church, refer to Ps. lxxxv. 6 and Hab. ii. 2. Let me give you the outline of a Bible reading on this subject, taking up the following: (a) The church and the conversion of sinners. We will take Neh. viii. as our text for the first point, studying it as showing a time of revival in the church, and the steps or conditions included in it. It is well known that the Jewish Church had been in a state of neglect, had forgotten many commandments of God, had neglected the reading of the Law—in short, was in a state of great spiritual coldness. In this eighth chapter, Nehemiah gives us the successive steps in their spiritual return to God and his service. Neh. viii.

Verse 1.—First condition, *Unity*. This is very necessary. See Jer. l. 4 and 5. "The children of Israel and of Judah came together." Acts i. 1. The church must be of one mind and have a revival. Achan alone stopped the whole company of the Israelites because of his sin. One Christian may impede God's work.

Verse 3.—Second condition, *Interest in God's Word*. God will have his word honored. See Ps. cxxxviii. 2. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Study of God's word is at once the condition and result of revival.

Verse 4.—Third condition, *Support of Minister's Hands*. Grand scene in Exod. xvii. 8-12. This is always exemplified in a revival. There can be none when minister and people are at swords points.

Verse 6.—Fourth condition, *Reverence*. This is one of the lost arts. Mat. iii. 15. "The children of Israel and of Judah came together." This is very important. See Luke xiii. 21 and 22. Luke was praying when he was baptized. (Christ is the Gospel of Prayer.) Before every important event in our Lord's life, Luke tells us He prayed. Luke recalls all Christ's parables and discourses on prayer. See Isa. vi. 16. In the margin we are said to be God's remembrances, i. e., those whose duty it is to cause God always to remember our wants. See Isa. xlviii. 21-24. Here God brings this strange indictment against his people: viz.: that they had not wept in prayer as they ought to have done. See Zech. iv. 7-10, also xii. 10-14 of xlii. 1. This passage teaches us individual humiliation as a condition of revival.

Verse 7.—Sixth condition, *Lay Activity*. Not necessarily lay preaching. Instead, work on part of church members in invitation, prayer meetings, &c., is essential. See Matt. xiii. 57.

Verse 8.—Seventh condition, *Faithful Preaching of the Word*. This verse gives us a whole treatise on homilies. We are not called to make bread for the people, but to break the bread of God's word. (This is the metaphor in Paul's claim of being "the steward of the mysteries.") 1 Cor. iv. 1. God is pleased to convert through the "foolishness of preaching." See Isa. i. 4 and 1 Tim. iv. 15 and 16.

Verse 9.—Eighth condition, *Contrition and Confession*. See Zech. xii. 10-14, already referred to. See also Matt. xxi. 39. In this passage Christ says that the Jews shall not see Him until they humble themselves as they had done on a former occasion when they had rejected Him into Jerusalem, shouting "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Verse 10.—Ninth condition, *Liberty*. "Send portions." See Mal. iii. 10, and Acts iv. 31 v. 14. It is to be noticed how prominent God makes generosity as a condition of revival.

Verse 12.—Tenth condition, *Joy*. Tenth condition. We do not value as highly as we should the joyful element in Christianity. If an angel should pass before us in a heavenly chariot staying to hear us to the celestial land, and if that angel had a sorrow upon his face, and was constantly bemoaning his sad lot, no one would enter the choir to be borne to the service of such a Master. If Christians, then, do not weep and Christ, let them be joyful in the Lord, and rejoice as well as pray without ceasing. See Psalm li. 12-13, and c. 2.

Verse 14.—Eleventh condition, *Personal Conversion*. God has always made the separation of the people from the world a condition of blessing. See Exod. viii. 22-23 (Mare) When the Israelites had marched out of Egypt they passed first through Raamses, (i. e., "the washing away of sin"), and the very next station was Succoth, which signifies "a place of temporary dwelling." At Succoth, they dwelt in booths, (referred to in Neh. viii. 14, &c.), and were taught the great lesson that God's people are a peculiar people. God never blesses His children until they realize that they are "peculiar," i. e., His own children, "the word in early English means, Titus ii. 14.

Verse 15.—Twelfth condition, *Doing as well as Hearing*. This very important condition is also insisted upon in Hos. vi. 1-3, where the promise is that "if we follow on to know the Lord" we shall know. In this Hos. vi. 3 are two great tendencies: *Man Godward* and *God Manward*. See also Rev. xxi. 1-3. It is the conversion of sinners, little need be said in this paper; for if the church is in the condition of spiritual activity we have traced, many will certainly be added unto it. For a test on this point, refer to Exod. xxvii. 1-10.

Here we have the whole dreadful story of moral ruin, and the blessed story of regeneration. I refer but to two ideas: (a) Prophecy upon the bones, (verse 4) There could seem no reason for it, but there was the command. (b) Prophecy upon the Spirit (verse 9) Here was the great power given effect; it was the work of the Spirit.

Thus our work in the Gospel ministry, whether in the pulpit or before our Sabbath-school class, comprises these two thoughts, prophesying upon the dry bones, and upon the Spirit. If this be done faithfully we shall see our pupils and congregations standing "on their feet," an exceeding great army, in the service of our blessed Master—Standard.

Your children are yourselves living anew. Their faults are largely inherited from you. Labor, therefore, to make up for defects toward them by love, and compensate both them and the world by aiding them in correcting their errors and rising victorious over their infirmities.

## A CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

(Illustrated by Bishop Simpson in his Yale Lectures, from his own experience.)

Let me illustrate one form of this call by my own experience, for occasional glimpses of that I believe you desire. Trained religiously, I had come to a young man's years before making a public profession of religion. Occasionally, prior to my conversion, thoughts of the ministry sometimes flashed across my mind; but it was only a flash. After my conversion I was earnest for the welfare of others, and worked in various ways to promote the interests of the church and humanity. The conviction grew upon me that I must preach. I tried to put the thought away, but I found it fastened upon me. I saw the greatness of the work and the reproach and poverty, the privation and suffering, connected with the itinerant ministry. Two special difficulties were in my way: First, I had no gift of speech. All through my studies I followed students told me I could learn, but I could never be a speaker. In discussing professions they thought the law was out of the question for me, because I could never successfully plead a case. My voice was poor. I always shunned declamation whenever it was possible to avoid it. I had an unconquerable aversion to reciting or reading aloud, and whenever I attempted to declaim, it was pronounced a failure. My associates believed, and I firmly believed, I could never make a speaker. So when I felt the conviction that I must preach, the thought of the impossibility of preaching successfully made me question the reality of the call. At my work, and in my studies—for I spent three years in preparing for the profession of medicine—I was frequently in mental agony. I think I should have resolutely rejected the idea, only that it seemed indissolubly connected with my own salvation. I longed for some one who could tell me my duty. I fasted and prayed for Divine direction. I found no rest until reading in the Bible a passage seemed written especially for me: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." I accepted and resolved to do as I was ever God by His Providence should indicate by opening the way. I never hesitated to friend the slightest intimation of my mental agony, but began to take a more earnest part in church services. One Sabbath, I felt a strong impulse to speak to the people at night in prayer-meeting, as we had no preaching. But I said to myself: How shall I tell my friends I think me foolish, for they know I cannot speak with interest. Especially I dreaded the opinion of an uncle, who had been my father, and who had superintended my education. While I was discussing this matter with myself, my uncle came into the room, and after a moment's hesitation, said to me: "Don't you think you could speak to the people to-night?" I was surprised and startled, and asked him if he thought I ought to. He said: "Yes, he thought I ought to go."

That night, by some strange coincidence, the house was crowded, and I made my first religious address to a public congregation. It was not written; it was not very well promulgated; it was the simple and earnest outpouring of a sincere heart. The next morning I was soon pressed to preach, but evaded all conversation on the subject as far as possible. My mother was a widow; I was her only son, and the only child remaining at home. It seemed almost to break her heart to propose it. But as I saw the church would probably be full, and I had promised God to follow His opening, I one day, with great embarrassment, introduced the subject to my mother. After I had told her my mental struggles, and what I believed God required, I paused. I shall never forget how she turned to me with a smile on her countenance, and her eyes suffused with tears, as she said: "My son, I have been looking for this hour ever since you were born." She then told me how she and my dying father, who left me an infant, consecrated me to God, and prayed that if it were His will I might become a minister. And yet, she said, she had never dropped a word or intimation in my hearing that she ever desired me to be a preacher. She believed so truly in a Divine call that she thought it wrong to bias the youthful mind with even a suggestion, so much as uttered in casual prayer. The conversation settled my mind. What a blessing is a settled mother! I can even now feel her hand upon my head, and I can hear the intonations of her voice in prayer. I was requested shortly after to preach a trial sermon, but refused. The authorities of the church said, if I did not preach a trial sermon, they would not license me. I was qualified. I replied there was no order in the discipline of our Church directing, or even permitting, such a sermon; that I did not desire a license to preach; but had only promised God to obey the order of the church, should it license me; and that I would never try to preach until I was so authorized. So I was licensed without grave deliberation and discussion, both as to whether I would ever make a preacher, or whether my health afforded any reasonable indication that I would ever be of service to the church. I entered the pulpit triumphantly. "Thank God, the Doubter's souls were awakened and converted, and by the grace of God, I have continued to this day."

Christ solved the problem of ages when he preached the resurrection of sin. It is a great thing to be forgiven. Profound and conscientious thinkers have ever felt it to be so. Socrates sighed for it with unutterable longings "but died without sight." Justice has seemed to preclude hope, by its inflexible and all-prevailing behests. "Whatsoever thou shalt say on earth shall be bound on earth, and on earth shall be loosed, and shall be loosed in heaven." But here we have the whole dreadful story of moral ruin, and the blessed story of regeneration. I refer but to two ideas: (a) Prophecy upon the bones, (verse 4) There could seem no reason for it, but there was the command. (b) Prophecy upon the Spirit (verse 9) Here was the great power given effect; it was the work of the Spirit.

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measure of perfection, to express the fullness of God's nature, to exercise the wealth of his nature, and satisfy the strong demands of his heart.

God longs to forgive. The gift of his Son is the measure of his desire. He seeks opportunity; presses his case; is intensely eager, and always on the alert. Indeed, the covenant of pardon is made out, signed and sealed for every soul, and only waits delivery. His part of the work is "finished," all things are ready, "the gates ajar," the ransom paid. One hindrance remains, the sinner's unrepentance. The Lord can not give this blessing to the unrepentant. He sends rain upon the evil and the good; many flowers come from the thoughtless and unthankful. But pardon implies reconciliation, in which both parties must share. Hence, the stupid, indifferent and rebellious can not receive it. Not because it is not offered, but because access to their souls is impossible; they lack the frame of mind indispensable to accepting it.

Repentance and faith are conditions of remission, simply because they are elements of receptiveness, the reaching out of the soul after God; a prayer for reconciliation: a response to the offer of mercy; a grasp of the helping hand extended from the skies; a signature of the covenant made in blood, long since signed by God. Pardon implies two persons, give and receiver; two acts, giving and receiving; two results, the joy of forgiving and peace of being forgiven, and is not complete without them all. We cannot receive except we believe, for believing is receiving. Not one can teach, console, or be in fellowship with us, only as we have confidence in him. The very presence of one in whom we have no faith, distresses us. But faith in a person makes him a delight to us; we receive from him according to our faith. So it is between us and God.

A wayward son rebelled and forsook his widowed mother. Years of waiting, praying, hoping, passed, the door never bolted; a plate of silver was set for the lost one. Did all of this bless the prodigal? Not while he wandered. At a rough, water-beaten sailor stood before the open door, fearing to enter. The mother rushed to embrace him, and led him into the habitation of love. Had she to make ready to receive him? Her forgiveness had waited for him, ready and more ready, since the day he departed. So it is with God. He needs the Christian's faith, not his repentance, to enter his kingdom. We may all look up through our tears, and testify, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

How changed are all things by clear views of pardon. It mellows, beautifies and glorifies the whole realm of justice, law, holiness, duty and religion. While I was discussing this matter with myself, my uncle came into the room, and after a moment's hesitation, said to me: "Don't you think you could speak to the people to-night?" I was surprised and startled, and asked him if he thought I ought to. He said: "Yes, he thought I ought to go."

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of his conscience. When I discover that certain persons are increasingly delinquent at that where they ought to be. It requires a strong hindrance to keep a healthy Christian from being where his Master invites him.

A large majority of the excuses which professing Christians offer for neglecting their duty, amount to this: "The breath which utters them. None of these delinquents would think of staying away from the reading of a will, if they were not a legacy. Brother Lackgace would count it very disrespectful to refuse to attend a neighbor's funeral, but feels no scruple about slighting the calls of that Lord, whom he professes to serve. Mr. Kestrelton is too delicate in health to go to God's house on the Sabbath, yet he faces a storm to reach his own store on Monday morning. Disagreeable Sundays s/ church-sifted the ten thousand troops under Gideon. Those who really want to go to God's house on a wet or a windy Sabbath, usually do get there. The richest spiritual blessings are often obtained by those who submit to some hardship in order to do their duty. And what a melancholy spectacle to the eye of our loving Lord must be the sight of His own sanctuary on disagreeable days; and of His own "upper rooms" of communion when His disciples have turned their backs upon Him! For one, I honestly confess that all the trash of the skeptics from Renan or Huxley down to Ingelsoll, do not inspire such misgivings of Christianity as a heart power as are awakened by the spectacle of delinquent Christians in unfavorable weather. Next to that is the sight of a contribution-box after it has gone round a congregation who live in "called houses" and keep their own carriages.

The best season of the year for doing God's work in the sanctuary and the prayer-room has arrived. With it comes the season of the strongest social temptations. Fashion and Pleasure will send out their cards, and receive but few "regrets." The forlorn Master will invite His blood-bought to meet Him; and oh! how many will begin to make excuse. It is no wonder that more of the world's people do not come to the weekly assemblies of prayer and giving, Christ's people are so slow to come themselves. The very persons who ought to be there are the ones who are not there. Perhaps these scenes on earth are prophecies of the next world. Perhaps we shall look for some members of Christ's visible Church on the right hand of the Father at the last great day, and they will not be there!

How changed are all things by clear views of pardon. It mellows, beautifies and glorifies the whole realm of justice, law, holiness, duty and religion. While I was discussing this matter with myself, my uncle came into the room, and after a moment's hesitation, said to me: "Don't you think you could speak to the people to-night?" I was surprised and startled, and asked him if he thought I ought to. He said: "Yes, he thought I ought to go."

That night, by some strange coincidence, the house was crowded, and I made my first religious address to a public congregation. It was not written; it was not very well promulgated; it was the simple and earnest outpouring of a sincere heart. The next morning I was soon pressed to preach, but evaded all conversation on the subject as far as possible. My mother was a widow; I was her only son, and the only child remaining at home. It seemed almost to break her heart to propose it. But as I saw the church would probably be full, and I had promised God to follow His opening, I one day, with great embarrassment, introduced the subject to my mother. After I had told her my mental struggles, and what I believed God required, I paused. I shall never forget how she turned to me with a smile on her countenance, and her eyes suffused with tears, as she said: "My son, I have been looking for this hour ever since you were born." She then told me how she and my dying father, who left me an infant, consecrated me to God, and prayed that if it were His will I might become a minister. And yet, she said, she had never dropped a word or intimation in my hearing that she ever desired me to be a preacher. She believed so truly in a Divine call that she thought it wrong to bias the youthful mind with even a suggestion, so much as uttered in casual prayer. The conversation settled my mind. What a blessing is a settled mother! I can even now feel her hand upon my head, and I can hear the intonations of her voice in prayer. I was requested shortly after to preach a trial sermon, but refused. The authorities of the church said, if I did not preach a trial sermon, they would not license me. I was qualified. I replied there was no order in the discipline of our Church directing, or even permitting, such a sermon; that I did not desire a license to preach; but had only promised God to obey the order of the church, should it license me; and that I would never try to preach until I was so authorized. So I was licensed without grave deliberation and discussion, both as to whether I would ever make a preacher, or whether my health afforded any reasonable indication that I would ever be of service to the church. I entered the pulpit triumphantly. "Thank God, the Doubter's souls were awakened and converted, and by the grace of God, I have continued to this day."

Christ solved the problem of ages when he preached the resurrection of sin. It is a great thing to be forgiven. Profound and conscientious thinkers have ever felt it to be so. Socrates sighed for it with unutterable longings "but died without sight." Justice has seemed to preclude hope, by its inflexible and all-prevailing behests. "Whatsoever thou shalt say on earth shall be bound on earth, and on earth shall be loosed, and shall be loosed in heaven." But here we have the whole dreadful story of moral ruin, and the blessed story of regeneration. I refer but to two ideas: (a) Prophecy upon the bones, (verse 4) There could seem no reason for it, but there was the command. (b) Prophecy upon the Spirit (verse 9) Here was the great power given effect; it was the work of the Spirit.

Thus our work in the Gospel ministry, whether in the pulpit or before our Sabbath-school class, comprises these two thoughts, prophesying upon the dry bones, and upon the Spirit. If this be done faithfully we shall see our pupils and congregations standing "on their feet," an exceeding great army, in the service of our blessed Master—Standard.

Your children are yourselves living anew. Their faults are largely inherited from you. Labor, therefore, to make up for defects toward them by love, and compensate both them and the world by aiding them in correcting their errors and rising victorious over their infirmities.

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