

"THE GREAT AWAKENING."

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY-ABOUT 1740.

HEMAN HUMPHREY - From the Book "Revival Sketches" 1859

PRECIOUS and permanent as were the fruits of the great work of God in the seventeenth century, and though God all along raised up many valiant witnesses for the truth, yet, for some fifty years, beginning towards the close of that century, especially through the disabilities enforced by the "Act of Uniformity," and the ravages of death among the champions of the gospel, there was a falling away in the Protestant churches that became extremely alarming to those who still clung to the ark of the covenant. It was not so much that the Philistines threatened to come and carry it away, as that the priests, who should have borne it on, deserted it one after another, and went over to the enemy.

Dr. Macfarlan, in his History of Revivals in the Eighteenth Century, says in respect to both England and Scotland, "About the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century most of the churches were in a comparatively low state. The old style of preaching was being fast laid aside, and cold formal addresses, verging towards a kind of Socinianism, were becoming fashionable."

Old Mr. Hutchison, who saw but the beginning of this progress, used to say, "When I compare the times before the Restoration with those since the "One advantage which I had was through the zeal and diligence of the godly people of the place, who thirsted after the salvation of their neighbors, and were in private my assistants; and being dispersed through the town, they were ready in almost all companies, to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, and convince, reprove, and exhort men according to their needs ; and also to teach them how to pray, and to help them to sanctify the Lord's day. Those people that had none in their families who could pray or repeat the sermons, went to the houses of their neighbors who could do it, and joined with them; so that some houses of the ablest men in each street were filled with them that could do nothing

or little in their own.

"And the holy, humble, blameless lives of the religious was a great advantage to me. The malicious people could not say, Your professors here are as proud and covetous as any. But the blameless lives of godly people shamed opposers, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and many were won by their good conversation."

Among the Puritan worthies was Blackerby, whose memoirs were blessed in kindling to higher Christian zeal the eminent Andrew Fuller, who was a leading spirit in establishing the monthly concert of prayer for foreign missions, and planting at Serampore the first of modern missions to India.

Revolution, I must own that young ministers preach accurately and methodically; but far more of the power and efficacy of the Spirit and the grace of God went along with sermons in those days than now."

From the Restoration down to the early part of the seventeenth century, both churchmen and Nonconformists unite in deploring the decayed condition of religion and morals.*

Bishop Burnet says, 'I am now in the seventieth year of my age, and as I cannot speak long in the world in any sort, I cannot hope for a more solemn occasion than this for speaking with all due freedom both to the present and to the succeeding ages. I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over this church, and by consequence, over the whole Reformation. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained are ignorant, to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. There are those who have read some few books, yet many seem never to have read the Scriptures.'

Dr. Watts declares that there was a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men, and that it was common among dissenters and churchmen, and a matter of mournful observation among all who laid the cause of God to heart; and he called upon every one to use all possible efforts for the recovery of dying religion

in the world. In these sentiments it is well known that his endeared friend Dr. Doddridge fully sympathized.

Another writer says, "The religion of nature

* See Steven- History of Methodism, vol. L

makes up the darling topics of our age, and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only as far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light."

Archbishop Seeker says, "In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open professed disregard has become the distinguishing character of the present age. Such are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligacy, intemperance, and fearlessness in committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teacher of it without any at all."

Bishop Butler says, "It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; and accordingly it is treated as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all persons of discernment, and nothing remained hut to set it up as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule."

Southey says, "The clergy had lost that authority which may always command at least the appearance of respect."

Archbishop Leighton spoke of the church as a fair carcass without a spirit.

Isaac Taylor, in his history of Methodism, says that when Wesley appeared, "the Anglican church was an ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism, or a state hardly to be distinguished from it."

Natural religion was the favorite study of the clergy and of the

learned generally, and included most of their theology. Collins and Tindall had denounced Christianity as priestcraft. Whiston pronounced the miracles to be Jewish impositions. Woolston declared them to be allegories. Arianism, Socinianism, taught by such men as Samuel Clarke and Wiliston, had become fashionable among the best English thinkers.

Some of the brightest names of the times can be quoted as exceptions to these remarks, but such was the general condition in England. The higher classes laughed at piety, and prided themselves on being above what they called its fanaticism; the lower classes were grossly ignorant, and abandoned to vice while the church, enervated by a universal decline, was unable longer to give countenance to the down-fallen cause of truth.

The night was long and stormy; but at length the day dawned, and the clouds began to break away.

It is a fact worthy of the most profound consideration, and of grateful praise, that God opened the windows of heaven, and poured out a blessing almost simultaneously on England, Scotland, and America, about the year 1730.

SCOTLAND.

To begin, as in our notice of the work in the preceding century, with

SCOTLAND. The habitations of horrid cruelty abroad, and the abominations of immorality at home, began to engage the public mind. There were here and there encouraging indications that the Sun of righteousness was about to arise upon the mountains and the moors with healing in his wings.

Among other indications, Mr. Robe of Kilsyth speaks of providential events affecting that parish, and preparing the way for what followed, as early as 1~33; and the direct means afterwards blessed, began to be used two years before the commencement of the revival.

In 1740, (three years after Whitefield's public ministry commenced in England,) Mr. Robe says, "I began to preach on the doctrine of regeneration. This course of sermons was acceptable to the Lord's people, and there was more than ordinary seriousness in hearing them; yet I could see no further fruit. But the Lord, who is infinitely wise and knoweth the end from the beginning, was preparing us for the uncommon dispensation of the Spirit, which we looked not for."

About the same time there were similar encouraging preparations at Cambuslang. Mr. McCulloch the pastor, for nearly a twelvemonth before the work began, had been preaching on those subjects which tend most directly to explain the nature and prove the necessity of regeneration. This was the state of things in the spring and summer of 1741. The revival which followed in Cambuslang, and spread widely over that part of Scotland, was as life from the dead to the churches. It was unmistakably commenced and carried on by the mighty power of God; and many, both old and young, of all classes, were added to the Lord. The narrative before me is so deeply interesting and instructive, that I would gladly enrich my historical sketches with copious extracts, but want of space forbids. I have only room to say that the glorious work in its progress exhibited all the leading scriptural characteristics of revivals before and since, under the faithful preaching of the doctrines of grace set home upon the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

As every tree is known by its fruits, so is every revival. We naturally and properly inquire, What are its fruits? So in this case. What were the fruits of the great revival just glanced at in Scotland? Mr. Macfarlan's History contains this testimony from Rev. Mr. McCulloch, the faithful pastor at Cambuslang, which I have much condensed:

"First, all the persevering subjects of the work agree in professing faith in Christ as the Mediator, through whom alone we can come to God the Father, through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit; and secondly, there is evidence that in their walk and conversation they adorned their Christian profession. They have from that time till now,

or till the time of their death, behaved as became their Christian profession, with such exceptions as must always be made in judging of imperfect creatures. But besides this general statement, the following particulars are submitted, either on my own personal knowledge, or good and credible information.

"They adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, glorify their heavenly Father, and excite others to do so on their account, by practicing justice and charity, relative duties, public spiritedness, humility, meekness, patience, close and diligent attendance on gospel ordinances, heavenly-mindedness, watchfulness against sin, especially against such sin as easily besets them.

"Such as were given to cursing and swearing have laid aside the practice, learning to speak the language of heaven, having upon them a holy awe of God and of things divine. Such as were accustomed to frequent taverns, to drink, and play at cards, etc., till late, or it may be morning hours, have for nine years past avoided all occasions of the kind, and kept at home, spending their evenings in Christian conference, in matters profitable to their families, and in secret and family devotion. He who was formerly drunken, accustomed to lie in bed till eight or nine o'clock in the morning, sleeping off his night's intoxication, has for these nine years been in the habit of getting up at three or four o'clock in the morning, of reading his Bible and other good books, of being engaged in prayer or meditation, till seven or eight, when he calls together his household for family devotion, which is again repeated in the evening.

"Those who were formerly covetous and selfish, have acquired much of public spirit and of concern for the kingdom and glory of Christ, especially in the salvation of sinners; and with this view they are not only exemplary in their conduct, but useful to all within their reach. They contribute cheerfully, and some of them beyond their ability, at collections for the interests of religion or the relief of the distressed. They carefully observe seasons fixed for the concert for prayer, and join in earnest supplication for the further spread of the gospel and the outpouring of the Spirit on the churches. 'As new-horn babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby;' flocking with eagerness to hear in their different localities. The

weekly lecture on Thursday, which was established in this place in 1742, has been continued ever since, summer and winter, even in winter-vest, when the reapers come running from the fields, where they have been toiling all day. They are careful in their preparations for the Lord's supper, and frequent in the observance. These have been indeed remarkable times of communion with God. This people have seen the goings of their God and King in the sanctuary. They have been made to sit under Christ's shadow with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet to their taste. They have been feasted in the banqueting-house, and his banner over them has been love.

"To conclude, they abound much in prayer, both secret and domestic, and so in the observance of fellowship meetings. In every town or village almost in this country side, where there is any competent number of serious and lively Christians, and where religion is in a thriving state, many private meetings are held. Common tradesmen, who are members and who work for so much a day, allow their employers to deduct so much from the time they are absent. Some of these meetings besides have also special seasons for fasting and prayer on extra-ordinary occasions, such, for example, as on receiving news of heavy losses, or dangers occurring to any of themselves, or of what threatens the interests of religion; and on these occasions they enjoy much of the divine presence, though less, alas, than in former times.

"Now to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

To this was added the following attestation, signed by the elders of the church:

"We the undersigned, elders and members of the kirk session of Cambuslang, having heard the foregoing read to us by our pastor, and having maturely considered the same, paragraph by paragraph, do hereby make it our own, being persuaded that it contains a just and true account of the extraordinary work here in 1742, and of the comfortable and abiding effects of it on many, probably on more than

four hundred, mentioned in the foregoing attestation, and particularly as regards those who lived in this parish until 1742, and from that time down, or till their death, who lived, to the best of our knowledge, as becomes their profession."

The foregoing is but a hasty glance at the glorious revival which descended from the opening heavens upon Scotland, which arrested the alarming progress of infidelity and ungodliness, turned back the captivity of scores of churches that might have remained in bondage even until now, and restored to life the doctrines of the reformation, of which John Knox was the exponent and the powerful advocate. Perhaps no work in Scotland has borne richer fruits than this of the eighteenth century, in which Mr. McCulloch, Whitefield, Robe, Bonar, Hamilton, McKnight, Gillies, Alexander, Anderson, and others of kindred spirit, bore a conspicuous part.

ENGLAND AND WALES.

Returning now to ENGLAND and WALES, we recall the lamentations of such men as Hutchinson and Buract and Watts and Seeker and Butler over the alarming prevalence of infidelity, ignorance, and immorality throughout the United Kingdom in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. To human view, the state of religion was more hopeless in England than in Scotland. The Established church scarcely had a name to live, save in her articles and liturgy, and religion in the dissenting churches was at a very low ebb. It was evident that nothing short of some special interposition by the great head of the church could restore the fallen interests of Zion.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity, and such an interposition was at hand. God had been raising up three young men in the university of Oxford, the two brothers John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, to commence and carry on the work. He prepared them for it by long and sharp personal convictions of their own lost estate; and that they might endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, by subjecting them to the fiery ordeal of scorn and

persecution in the university, and as they were almost hopelessly feeling their way into the ministry, after they left it. It was in Oxford that they and the few others who sympathized with them were contemptuously called Methodists by their ungodly fellow-students, little thinking that they were giving an honorable name to one of the largest denominations in England and America.

As the university was their Alma Mater, so was the Established church of their native land. They were strongly attached to her ecclesiastical polity, to her liturgy, to her forms and ceremonies, and had not the most distant thought of leaving her communion. They preached in her churches till they were driven out into the open fields as deluded schismatics; and they clung to the Establishment through evil report as long as they could, the Wesleys as long as they lived. They never formally broke off their connection, though they were forced by persecution to avail themselves of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, to turn as many as possible to the Lord, whether within or without the pale of the Established church.

As the reformation advanced, God raised up Fletcher and Romaine and Madan and Berridge and Shirley and Benson and Howell Harris and others, to take part with them in their itinerant ministry; and so rapidly did the work spread, that, "or ever they were aware," the converts had so greatly multiplied outside of the Establishment as to demand an organization of some sort. Wesley could not resist the pressure. The thousands were liable to be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. They must be taken care of, or the roaring lion would come and devour them; and though he would not, even in that extremity, form a new denomination, he organized them under what was called the Methodist Canner "so mightily did the word of God grow and prevail."

The history of this remarkable era of revivals which commenced about 1740, and spread so widely over England, Wales, and Ireland, is so fully recorded in the lives and writings of Whitefield, Wesley, Lady Huntingdon, and others, that it is needless for me to descend to particulars.

That there was intermingled with this work much of animal

excitement among the thousands upon thousands hung upon the lips of Whitefield and the Wesleys in Moorfields, on Kensington common, and other out-door stations, and who sometimes rent the air with their sobs and outcries, and that the preachers looked upon these impassioned demonstrations with too much allowance, there is no room to question; nor, on the other hand, can any but sceptics doubt that "the power of the Highest" was there, by which multitudes were arrested, convicted, and truly converted.

Mysterious and trying as was the opposition these distinguished preachers received from the Established church of that day, I think we can see the wisdom and goodness of God in permitting it. Had it come entirely from without, the heaven could scarcely have been infused into the great lump, where it was so much needed. As the first great revival preachers were churchmen, and labored within the pale of the church wherever they could get an opportunity, the truth found an entrance where the doors would otherwise have remained closed. Some of the clergy were raised from their moral depression, and gained over to "the faith once delivered to the saints," and became zealous preachers in their own parishes. The evangelical element was thus infused into the churches of the Establishment, or if it were already there, was quickened into life, where it had long been petrified by formalism. How much the large class of evangelical churches of the Establishment in the British isles are indebted to the blessed influence of that "great awakening," it were impossible to say; but that there is now much more of the power of godliness, of vital, active piety in the English church there would otherwise have been, I think all will agree who candidly study the religious history of that eventful period, and trace the growing evangelism of that church down to the present time. The good seed which was then sown has been springing up and bearing fruit, more or less, ever since.

The Independents too, of different sects, who did not fall in with the Methodists, shared in the blessing, and some of their ablest preachers were active in promoting the revival. All in all, it was a glorious ingathering of souls to Christ, though much was lost for want of able stationary pastors to bring the converts into regularly organized churches, and by a pious watch and care build them up in the most holy faith. This Whitefield and the other evangelists could not do, as

they went on from place to place, crying, like John in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

The chief apostles of that reformation had different gifts, and did not harmonize exactly in all their theological speculations; but the same spirit animated them and dwelt in them. Their grand and all-absorbing aim was to win souls to Christ. The differences between Whitefield and the Wesleys at one time threatened to create a lasting alienation; but mutual forbearance and charity reconciled them. They found they had no time to dispute while sinners who they might hope to save were perishing. They labored and prayed together as before; their personal friendship - as, if possible, more closely cemented, as they went on sowing the good seed over the same fields. Essentially they were of one heart and one mind, till death came and took them up to that brighter world, where it is impossible not to see eye to eye, or to fall into any mistakes. Whitefield preached the offers of a free salvation to all, without distinction or exception, as earnestly as it was possible for Wesley to do. So Wesley, in his prayers, rejoiced to exalt God on the throne, and magnify his grace; and I never heard a Methodist pray in a revival who did not. Indeed, how can any body pray that the unconverted may be born again, without first believing that they are dead in trespasses and sins; and in this view of their lost condition, invoking the Holy Spirit to come down in his sovereign and mighty power to awaken, renew, and sanctify them?

So long as the number of converts was comparatively small, and some of the churches of the Establishment yet opened their doors to the revival preachers, the necessity of outside chapels was not very urgent, especially as there was so much field preaching to the thousands without, whom the Lord stirred up to press eagerly around the stands, inquiring what they must do to be saved. But as the revival spread on every hand, and great numbers of converts needed to be gathered into societies for regular instruction and oversight, the want was severely felt.

But the mass of the converts were poor, and how were the chapels to be built? Who would furnish the means? Anticipating the growing necessity, the great Head of the church had been raising up help in

high quarters, from which the necessary aid could hardly have been expected. And just here I have been forcibly struck with the remarkable coincidence between this state of things and what we read of the first great revival period, in the Acts of the Apostles. God then raised up helpers from the higher classes, without whose aid the thousands of converts, being mostly poor and sorely persecuted, could scarcely have subsisted. Thus, when Paul and Silas passed over from Troas into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, they found there a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, and she constrained them to come into her house to abide, which they did as long as their mission would allow them to stay. Her traffic had probably made her rich. Still more striking is the record in the next chapter. When Paul and Silas went down to Berea and preached the gospel in that city, many of the Jews received the word with all readiness of mind; also of "honorable women," who were Greeks, and of men not a few. These women are here called honorable, as belonging to the higher classes, who having both the disposition and the means, encouraged and helped the missionaries to go on with their work, when other resources must have failed.

So here, in this great revival, God raised up honorable women just when they were most needed to help the preachers, and provide places of worship for those who were too poor to do it themselves. Several of their names are mentioned, as Anne and Frances Hastings, Lady Mary Hamilton, Lady Gertrude Hotham and Countess Delitz, sisters of Lady Chesterfield, Lady Chesterfield herself; Lady Fanny Shirley, and others of the aristocracy, who established the first female prayer-meeting that I remember to have seen noticed anywhere. Though all connected with the Established church, they looked with great favor upon the wonderful reformation that was going on among the hitherto uncared-for masses outside, and cheerfully contributed, more or less, to help build them chapels, in parts where they were most needed.

Thus many daughters did virtuously, but there was one that excelled them all. This was that remarkable "elect lady," the Countess of Huntingdon, who was remotely related to the royal family, and who moved in the highest circles. Amid all the allurements and fascinating

worldly prospects of her exalted rank, God arrested her by an alarming sickness, brought her to renounce all for Christ at the foot of his cross, and brought her into fellowship with his despised and persecuted disciples, of whom the world was not worthy. While in her doctrinal belief she sympathized strongly with Whitefield she also cherished prominent preachers of the other branch of the Connection of whom Wesley was the leader; and deemed it an honor to number Dr. Watts, Dr. Doddridge, and other dissenting ministers of the day, among the warmest of her friends in the household of faith. Time would fail me to reckon up her munificent charities for building chapels, and supporting the brotherhood in their self-denying labors to win souls to Christ; to speak of her boundless hospitality at home; to follow her as she "went about doing good," and in her shining upward progress towards the saints' everlasting rest. Considering her moderate income, her contributions, after the death of her husband, for religious and charitable purposes, were almost incredible. They were estimated to have amounted to at least \$500,000.

Thus did that illustrious lady the Countess of Huntingdon go on from strength to strength, serving God and her generation by the will of God, till, ripened for the inheritance of the saints in light, she, at the advanced age of eighty-four, rested from her labors, and her works followed her. For what she was and what she did, the reader is referred to the volume entitled, "Lady Huntington and her Friends," published by the American Tract Society, to Isaac Taylor's History of Methodism, and other religious histories of the times. She was certainly one of the most remarkable women of that or any age. Her name will be had in everlasting remembrance. We can hardly see how Whitefield and Wesley and the other prominent leaders in that religious movement would never prosper in the work as they did without her pecuniary assistance and other efficient aid. Certain it is, that in all subsequent ages her name will be associated with those of the most illustrious reformers of that extraordinary revival epoch. And who can doubt that when she died, she ascended to join those holy women of old, whose memorial stands upon the sacred record, in their eternal services and songs?

THE UNITED STATES:

Leaving the fatherland and crossing the ocean, we proceed to inquire what was the state of religion in the AMERICAN CHURCHES previous to the "Great Awakening," at which we have just glanced in the mother country. Certainly, when that remarkable revival commenced, the churches had not sunk so low here as there. From the beginning of the century, we find there had been isolated revivals here and there. There were verdant inclosures in the vineyard, while also the drought was wide and sore.

The Rev. Mr. Danforth of Taunton, Massachusetts, wrote, in 1705, "We are much encouraged by a universal and amazing impression made by the Spirit of God on all sorts among us, especially on the young men and women. It is almost incredible how many visit me with discoveries of extreme distress of mind they are in about their spiritual condition. The young men, instead of their merry meetings, are now forming themselves into regular meetings for prayer, repetition of sermons, and singing. The profanest among us seem startled at the sudden change upon the rising generation. We need much prayer that these strivings of the Spirit may have a saving issue and effect."

Again he writes, "My time is spent in daily discourse with the young people visiting me with their doubts, fears, and agonies. Religion flourishes to amazement and admiration, that so we should be at once touched with soul affliction, and this in all corners of the place. But I hope that the deeper the wound, the more sound may be the cure. I have little time to think of worldly matters, scarce time to study sermons as I used to do; but find God can bless mean preparations whenever he pleases that such shall be most cried up and commended which I have had scarce time to methodize. I sometimes think that the time of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh may be at the door."

President Edwards mentions revivals in Northampton in 1712 and 1718, under the ministry of his predecessor Rev. Mr. Stoddard. In the year 1721, there was a remarkable revival in Windham,

Connecticut. In 1730 and The three following years, there was a considerable revival in Freehold, New Jersey, under the ministry of the two Tennents, John and William; and other places might be mentioned.

Nevertheless there had been, in the early part of the century, a great falling away, which we find grievously lamented by pious ministers, who remembered those better days when the candle of the Lord shone upon the churches planted by the Puritan fathers.

Dr. Increase Mather, in a book entitled, "The Glory departing from New England," printed in 1702, says, "We are the posterity of the good old Puritan Non-conformists in England, who were a strict and holy people. Such were our fathers who followed the Lord into this wilderness. O New England, New England, look to it that the glory be not removed from thee, for it begins to go. Oh tremble, for it is going; it is gradually departing. You that are aged persons, that can remember what New England was fifty years ago, that saw the churches in their first glory, is there not a sad decay and diminution of that glory? Time was when these churches were 'beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.' What a glorious presence of Christ was there in all his ordinances. Many were converted, and there were added to the churches daily such as should be saved. But are not sound conversions become rare in this day, and in many congregations? Look into the pulpits, and see if there is such a glory there as once there was. When will Boston see a Cotton and a Norton again? When will New England see a Hooker, a Shepard, a Mitchell, not to mention others?

"Look into our civil state; does Christ reign there as once he did? Row many churches, how many towns are there in New England that we may sigh over them and say, the glory is gone! And there is sad cause to fear that greater departures of the glory are hastening upon us; our iniquities testify against us, and our backslidings are many. That there is a general defection from primitive purity and piety in many respects, cannot be denied. The providence of God is threatening to pull down the wall which was a defense to these churches."

Again he writes in 1721, "I am now in the eighty third year of my age, and having had an opportunity to converse with the first planters of this country, and having been for sixty-five years a preacher of the gospel, I cannot but be in the disposition of those ancient men who had seen the foundation of the first house, and wept with a loud voice to see what a change the work of the temple had upon it. The children of New England are, or once were, for the most part, the children of godly men. What did our fathers come into this wilderness for? Not to gain estates as men do now, but for religion, and that they might leave their children in a hopeful way of being truly religious. There was a famous man that preached before one of the greatest assemblies that ever was preached unto seventy years ago, and he told them, 'I have lived in a country seven years, and all that time I never heard one profane oath, and all that time I never did see a man drunk in that land.' Where was that country? It was New England; but Oh, degenerate New England, what art thou come to at this day! 'low are those sins become common in thee that once were not so much as heard of in this land!'"

In a public lecture printed in 1706, Dr. Cotton Mather says, "It is confessed by all who know any thing of the matter-and Oh, why not with rivers of tears bewailed ?-that there is a general and a horrible decay of Christianity among the professors of it. The glorious and precious religion of our heavenly Christ generally appears with quite another face in the lives of Christians of this day, than what it had in the lives of the saints into whose hands it was first of all delivered. The modern Christianity is but too generally but a very shadow of the ancient."

The Rev. Thomas Prince of Boston, in a sermon delivered before the General Assembly of the province of Massachusetts, May 27, 1730, states as his design to "commemorate the righteous and wonderful works of God towards us, both in our own days and in the days of our fathers," and thus proceeds: "Who were our fathers, and what were their distinguishing characters? The generality of them were the near descendants of the first reformers in England. They were born of pious parents, who brought them up in a course of strict religion under the most awakening preachers of those days. Under such means they became inspired with a spirit of piety, and with a growing

zeal to reform the worship of God to the most beautiful and perfect model of his own institutions.

"And to the great glory of God be it spoken, there never was perhaps before seen such a body of pious people together on the face of the earth. Their civil and ecclesiastical leaders were exemplary patterns of piety. They encouraged only the virtuous to come with and follow them. They were so strict, both in the church and the state, that the incorrigible could not endure to live in the country, and went back again. Profane swearers and drunkards were not known in the land. And it quickly grew so famous for religion abroad, that scarce any other but those who liked it came over for many years after."

The Rev. Samuel Blair, speaking of the state of religion in Pennsylvania, says, ' True religion lay as it were a-dying and ready to expire its last breath of life, in this part of the visible church, in the spring of 1740, when the God of salvation was pleased to visit us with the blessed effusions of the Holy Spirit. I doubt not that then there were some sincerely religious people up and down. But a very lamentable ignorance of the essentials of true practical religion, and of the doctrines relating thereto, very generally prevailed. The nature and necessity of the new birth were little known, or of the Holy Spirit opening and applying the law to the conscience, in order to saving closure with Christ. The common notion seemed to be, that if people were aiming to be in the way of duty as well as they could, they imagined there was no reason to be much afraid."

These lamentations over the degeneracy of the times must certainly be taken with some abatements from what a comparison between other periods in the history of the American churches would require. The primitive standard of morals and piety in the first and second generations starting from Plymouth rock was so high, that the declension over which the fathers mourned seemed to them to have brought religion to a lower ebb than it would have otherwise appeared. No wonder they were alarmed. No wonder they lifted up their voices like a trumpet. There was "a cause" before their eyes. They had seen those better days, and felt that if God did not soon appear and revive his work, all would be lost.

Among the causes which led to this lax and downward tendency of the churches, was the introduction of the so-called "Halfway Covenant." It crept in gradually at first, but ere long spread widely over New England. It was intended to open the door for parents who were not members of the churches, and who made no pretensions to personal piety, to bring their children for baptism. The substance of it was, a general confession of faith in the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures, and a promise to "come up to the Lord's supper as soon as they should see their way clear," which most of them never did. Hence the name, "Halfway Covenant." This system was introduced as early as 1662. The consequence was, that the membership of the churches in full communion rapidly decreased. Having got their children baptized, few of the parents came into full communion, and hardly any of the unmarried were found at the Lord's table.

To keep the churches full, the next departure from the Puritan organization was to hold up the Lord's supper as a converting ordinance, and thus to throw the door wide open for the entrance of the unconverted. The Rev. Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, with the best intentions no doubt, in a sermon published in 1707, maintained that "sanctification is not a necessary qualification for partaking of the Lord's supper, and that it is a converting ordinance." Dr. Increase Mather published an able reply to this sermon; but the principles of Mr. Stoddard were adopted by the church in Northampton, and soon in other parts of New England.

I have dwelt the longer on the period preceding the Great Awakening to show what formidable obstacles had accumulated in the way of a revival.

Nothing strange was the opposition which it had to encounter from the pulpit and the press; but strange indeed it would have been, if, in the progress of that remarkable revival, with such hostile antecedents, there had been nothing mixed with it to be regretted by its warmest friends and advocates.

It would be easy to fill more than one large volume with the narratives and records in various forms of that ever memorable revival in the American churches. It was almost as life from the dead,

so deep was the spiritual apathy in which it found them. But my notice must be extremely brief, and indeed that is all which seems to be called for, since the progress of the work was so largely and faithfully chronicled at the time in Prince's History, Gillies' Historical Collections, Edwards' Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, published by the Amer-jean Tract Society, and "The Great Awakening," an octavo volume by the Rev. Joseph Tracy, of which a new edition has just been issued.

The more prominent agents whom the great Head of the church employed in carrying on that glorious work on this side of the Atlantic, were Mr. Edwards, Mr. Whitefield, Dr. Bellamy, the two Tennents, William and Gilbert, President Davies, Mr. Blair, and Mr. Parsons. Scores of other good ministers cooperated with them or labored successfully without them in their respective parishes, though some of the pastors doubted whereunto it would grow, and stood aloof.

Small space as I can spare for this revival, which arrested the deplorable backslidings of the churches, I feel bound to magnify the grace of God by borrowing some brief extracts from the copious narratives to which I have just alluded. As the first revival took place under the preaching of Mr. Edwards, and as he stood at the head of the most able defenders of that mighty work of the Spirit, and was one of the most judicious and successful laborers both at home and abroad, I shall first make condensed extracts from his "Narrative of the Revival in Northampton, in 1734," as a fair example of the character of the remarkable series which followed and spread so widely over the land.

"Just after my grandfather's death, it was a time of remarkable dulness in religion. Many of the youth were much addicted to night-walking, frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices. They would often spend the greater part of the night in frolics, without regard to any order in the families they belonged to; and indeed family government did too much fail in the town.

"But in two or three years after Mr. Stoddard's death, there began to be a sensible amendment. The young people by degrees left off their

frolicking, and thenceforward there was a remarkable reformation among them. In the month of April, 1734, there happened a very sudden and awful death of a young man in the bloom of youth, and the sermon which was preached on that occasion very much affected many of the young. This was followed by the death of a young married woman. In the beginning of her illness, she was greatly distressed about the salvation of her soul, but seemed to obtain satisfactory evidence of God's saving mercy before she died, and in a most earnest and moving manner counseled and warned others. This seemed much to affect many young persons, and increased the religious concern on people's minds.

"It was in the latter part of December that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to act in and wonderfully to work among us. Very suddenly five or six persons, one after another, were to all appearance savingly converted, some of them in a very remarkable manner. Presently a great and earnest concern became universal in all parts of the town among persons of all ages. The noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder. All the conversation in all companies was upon spiritual things, except so much as was necessary for ordinary secular business. Men seemed to follow their business more as a part of their duty than from any disposition to it. Religion was with all sorts the great concern. It was then a dreadful thing among us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell. All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls, and very often met together in private houses for religious purposes. There was scarcely a person in town, young or old, that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world.

"Those that had been disposed to think and speak lightly of religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. The work of conversion was carried on in the most astonishing manner. Souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ." From day to day for many months might be seen evident instances of sinners being brought out of darkness into marvelous light. It made such a glorious alteration in the town, that in the following spring and summer, 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was so in almost every house. Our public assemblies were then beautiful. The congregation was alive in God's service, and every hearer eager to drink in the

words of the minister. The assembly were in general from time to time in tears, some wee ping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love; others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors. Our young people, when they met, were wont to talk of the dying love of Jesus Christ and the glorious way of salvation, the wonderful free and sovereign grace of God, and his glorious work in the conversion of souls. Those among us who had been formerly converted, were greatly enlivened with fresh and extraordinary incomes of the Spirit of God.

"This dispensation has also appeared very extraordinary in the numbers of those on whom we have reason to hope it has had a saving effect. We have about six hundred and twenty communicants, which include almost all our adult persons. I am far from pretending to determine how many have been the subjects of such mercy, but I hope that more than three hundred were brought home to Christ in this town in the space of half a year, and about the same number of males as females.* I hope that by far the greater part of persons in this town over sixteen years of age are such as have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; and so, by what I have heard, I suppose it is in some other places, particularly at Sunderlaud and South Hadley.

** The population of the town was then about eleven hundred.*

"This has also appeared a very extraordinary dispensation, in that the Spirit of God has so much extended not only his awakening but his regenerating influences, both to elderly persons and also to those that are very young. It has been a tiling heretofore scarcely to be heard of; that any were converted past middle age. But now we have as much reason to think that many such have been changed, as that others have been in more early years.

It has heretofore been looked upon as a strange thing, when any have seemed to he savingly wrought upon and remarkably changed in their childhood; hut now I suppose that near thirty were, to appearance, between ten and fourteen years of age, two between nine and ten, and one of about four years.

"God has also seemed to have gone out of his usual way in the

quickness of his work, and the swift progress his Spirit has made in his operations on the hearts of many. Many have been taken from a loose and careless way of living, and seized with strong convictions of their guilt and misery, and in a very little time 'all things have become new' with them. God's work has also appeared very extraordinary, in the degree of saving light and love and joy that many have experienced, and in the extent of it, being so swiftly propagated from town to town. In former times to the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon this town, though in some of them it was very remarkable, it reached no further.

The work of God seemed to be at its greatest height here in March and April, at which time God's work in the conversion of souls was carried on in so wonderful a manner, that so far as I can judge, from what I have witnessed in the progress of this work, conversions have been at the rate at least of four persons in a day, or near thirty in a week, take one week with another, for five or six weeks together. When God so remarkably took the work into his own hands, there was as much done in a day or two as, in ordinary times, with all endeavors that men can use, and with such a blessing as men commonly have, in a year."

Then follow brief notices of the work in many other towns, as South Hadley, Sunderland, Deerfield, Hatfield, West Springfield, Westfield, Hadley, North-field, and other places, marked by the same unmistakable evidences of the Divine presence, though with diversities of operations, according to His pleasure who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." Among the places specially visited in Connecticut, were East Windsor, Coventry, Lebanon, Stratford, Durham, New Haven, Guilford, Mansfield, Tolland, Hebron, Bolton, Preston, and Woodbury.

And so far was that glorious work, which lasted several years, and was at its height about 1740, from being confined to New England, that it was equally powerful in many parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

New York too shared in the blessing, beyond which there was no West then, and the same Spirit wrought powerfully in some parts of

the southern states, particularly in Delaware, Virginia, and South Carolina. To all human appearance, it was the salvation of the church from an irrecoverable departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. It was as if the Saviour had said to his desponding disciples, "Be not faithless, hut believing, and ye shall see greater things than these."

We have already seen that the Rev. George Whitefield was one of the most zealous and successful preachers of that day. I cannot follow him through his marvelous mission, having the everlasting gospel to preach wherever he went. It would require a volume. I am happy that the American Tract Society have published his life, in a volume of five hundred pages. But it has seemed to mc I could not do less, in justice to him and to "the grace of God which was in him," than to glance for a moment at what he was and what he did.

It is questionable whether any preacher since the days of the apostles has done so much, in a degenerate age, to rouse the churches, and "turn back their captivity" from dead formalism, latitudinarian indifference, and erroneous proclivities, and to bring them into the old paths in which their Puritan fathers walked, both on this side and beyond the sea. From the commencement of his extraordinary career, like a flaming seraph as it were, he passed from city to city, and from land to land, having the everlasting gospel to preach; attracting the gaze of thousands wherever he went, swaying uncounted multitudes by his fervid and matchless eloquence, and beyond all peradventure, bringing great numbers, on both sides of the ocean, to the foot of the cross.

Of Jonathan Edwards, his compeer, and much more in the depths of theological science, it may said that, in his great sermon on Justification by Faith alone, he struck the key-note of the songs of new-horn souls in that revival.

Restricted as my limits are, I must not omit to add a paragraph or two, from a letter of the Rev. Thomas Prince, Jr., touching that great awakening in Boston.

Great numbers in this town were so happily concerned about their

souls, as we had never seen any thing like it before. Our assemblies, both on lectures and Sabbaths, were surprisingly increased.

"After Mr. Whitefield left, the Rev. Gilbert Tennent came, and he seemed to have as deep an acquaintance with the experimental part of religion, as any I ever conversed with, and his preaching was as rousing and searching as I ever heard. He aimed directly at the hearts and consciences of his hearers. His aim was to lay open the delusions of sinners, and show them their numerous hypocritical shifts, and drive them out of every deceitful refuge. From the terrible convictions he had passed through in his own soul, he had such a lively view of the divine Majesty, and of the strictness, spirituality, extent, and justice of his law, that the terrors of God seemed to rise fresh in his mind, when he displayed and brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners.

"I do not recollect any crying out, or falling down, or fainting, either under Mr. Whitefield's or Mr Tennent's preaching; and though terrible preaching may strongly work on the animal passions, and frighten the hearers, rouse the soul, and prepare the way for terrible convictions, yet those mere animal terrors are quite different things from such convictions as were wrought in many hundreds by Mr. Tennent's searching ministry; and such was the ease of those many scores, in several of the congregations as well as mine, who came to me and others for direction under them. It was such a time as we never knew. Mr. Cooper was wont to say, that more came to him in one week, in deep concern about their souls, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry. He had about six hundred different persons visit him in three months' time; and Mr. Webb informs me he has had, in the same space, above a thousand. Sometimes rising of sixty hills were put up at once, in public, by the awakened; and their cases represented were, a blind mind, a vile and hard heart; some under great temptations, some in concern for their souls; some in great distress of mind for fear of being unconverted, others for fear they had been all along building on a righteousness of their own; some for a long time, even for several months, under these convictions; some fearing lest the Holy Spirit should withdraw; others having quenched his operations, were in great distress lest he should leave them for ever.

"Within six months, to the end of January, 1741, there were scores joined to our communicants, the greater part of whom gave a particular account of the work of the Spirit of God on their souls and effectual calling, as is described in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Mr. Webb, senior pastor of the New North, informs me that of admissions to full communion of those hopefully wrought upon in this day of grace, about one hundred and sixty joined his church, of which one hundred and two joined from January, 1741, to 1742, and many more give good evidence of grace. In this year, 1741, the very face of the town seemed to be strangely altered. Some who had not been here since the fall before, have told me of their great surprise at the change in the general look and carriage of the people, as soon as they landed. One of our worthy gentlemen informed me that whereas, when he used with others on Saturday evening to visit the taverns in order to clear them of their town inhabitants, they were wont to find many there, and meet with much trouble to get them away, he now found them empty of all but lodgers. Thus successfully did the divine work go on in town, without any lisp, as I remember, of a separation, either in this town or province, for about a year and a half after Mr. Whitefield left us."

I have exceedingly interesting accounts before me of nearly simultaneous revivals in Natick, Wrentham, Bridgewater, Plymouth, Sutton, Taunton, Middleborough, Halifax, Reading, Gloucester, Northampton in 1740, Raynham, Rochester, Cambridge, Plympton, and other places in Massachusetts; Westerley and Charlestown, in Rhode Island; Portsmouth and New Castle, in New Hampshire; Enfield, and other towns already mentioned by Mr. Edwards, in Connecticut; Newark, Elizabethtown, and several other places in New Jersey; Philadelphia, New Providence, Nottingham, White Clay Creek, and Neshaminy, in Pennsylvania. The revival also extended to Virginia, and was quite powerful in some of the counties of that ancient commonwealth.

The labors of Rev. Mr. Frelinghuysen, who came over from Holland in 1~20, were greatly blessed in New Jersey, especially among the Reformed Dutch churches.

The Rev. Jonathan Dickinson of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, speaking of Elizabethtown and Newark, says, August 23, 1743," In these towns religion was in a low state, and there was but little of the power of godliness among us till some time in August, 1739, when there was a remarkable revival in Newark. It was chiefly among the young people till the following March, when the whole town was brought under a common concern about their eternal interests; and there is good reason to conclude that a considerable number experienced a saving change. The summer following this awakening was sensibly abated, till in February, 1741, they were again visited by the special effusions of the Holy Spirit, when a plain familiar sermon was set home with power. Many were brought to see and feel that till then they had no more than a name to live, and there seemed to be but very few in the whole congregation who were not moved more or less, though mostly among the rising generation. There is good reason to believe that there were now a greater number brought to Christ than in the former gracious visitation."

Mr. Dickinson goes on to say that about the same time there was a powerful revival in Elizabethtown. "Under the preaching of the word, there was a sudden and deep impression on the congregation. There was no crying out or falling down, as elsewhere happened, but tears and sobbing in almost all parts of the assembly. There appeared such tokens of a solemn and deep concern as I never saw before in any congregation. All our opportunities for public worship were carefully attended. Numbers were almost daily repairing to me for direction and assistance in their eternal concerns."

In another letter written by Mr. Dickinson about that time, he says, "I have still the comfortable news to inform you of; that there is yet a great revival of religion in these parts. I have had more young people address me for direction in their spiritual concerns in three months, than in thirty years before.

"Though so many were brought under conviction at once, we had very little appearance among us of those irregular heats which are so loudly complained of in other parts of the land. This work was substantially the same in all the subjects of it. Though some were more distressed, and for a longer time than others, none obtained

satisfying discoveries of safety in Christ till they were first brought to despair of help from themselves or any of their own refuges.

"It is remarkable, that as this work began among us in a time of the greatest health and prosperity, so it began sensibly to wear off in a time of the greatest mortality that had ever been known in the town, which makes it appear more evidently to be the work of God himself. If we may judge the tree by the fruits which we have now had as long a time to observe-three years or more-we have reason to suppose that about sixty have received a saving change in this congregation."

It was estimated that, at that time, the population of all the colonies was about 2,000,000; and it was believed that the number of converts amounted to not less than fifty thousand. If so, they bore as great a proportion to the whole number of inhabitants, and would as much change the relative proportion of the religious and irreligious, as the conversion of six hundred thousand would now. How many were hopefully born again, during the same revival in England, Scotland, and Wales, I have no means of ascertaining. But it admits not of a doubt, that a great multitude were "turned to the Lord." It was a mighty and glorious work of the Holy Spirit, both here and there, such as had not been witnessed for ages.

In looking back, it is exceedingly interesting to find a revival of the cardinal doctrines of the Reformation, in the preaching of all the distinguished ministers under whom the work was carried on. However they might differ on some points, they "saw eye to eye," and "their testimony agreed together" in every thing that was essential for bringing sinners to repentance, and building up the churches in the most holy faith.

Enemies were to the truth, opposers there were to the revival, scattered all over the land; ministers there were who stood aloof from it, but the preaching was evangelical. "The subjects chiefly insisted on, were the sin and apostasy of mankind in Adam; the blindness of the natural man in the things of God; the enmity of the carnal mind; the evil of sin; the desert of it, and the utter inability of the fallen creature to relieve itself; the sovereignty of God; the way of redemption by Christ; justification through his imputed

righteousness received by faith; this faith the gift of God, and a living principle that worketh by love; the nature and necessity of regeneration, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"The principal means of the great revival," says the "Testimony" of a large number of pastors in eastern Massachusetts, printed and sent out to the churches in the summer of 1745," were the more than ordinary preaching of the more important doctrines of Scripture: as these, namely, The all-seeing eye, purity, justice, truth, power, majesty, and sovereignty of God; the spirituality, holiness, extent, and strictness of his law; our original sin, guilt, depravity, and corruption by the fall, including a miserable ignorance of God and enmity against him; our impotency and aversion to turn to him, the necessity that his law should be fulfilled, his justice satisfied, the honor of his holiness, authority, and truth, maintained in his conduct towards us; our utter impotence to help ourselves, and our continual hazard of being sent into endless misery; the astonishing displays of the absolute wisdom and grace of God, in contriving and providing for our redemption; the divinity, mediation, perfect holiness, obedience, sacrifice, merits, satisfaction, purchase, and grace of Christ; the nature and necessity of regeneration to the holy image of God by the supernatural operation of the divine Spirit, with the various parts of his office in enlightening our minds, awakening our consciences, and wounding, breaking, humbling, subduing, and changing our hearts. Also the nature of gospel obedience and holiness, and their necessity, not as matter of justification, but as the fruit and evidence of justifying faith, and to glorify God and enjoy him, the principal end both of our creation and redemption; and lastly, the sovereignty of the grace of God in this whole transaction, from its original! purpose to its consummation in glory."

I am next constrained, in passing, to glance at those "bodily exercises" which profit little, and which in some places disturbed the regular order of worship, both in public and private. It were to be wished, that in a revival there should be no excitement beyond what the truth, faithfully addressed to the understanding, and applied to the heart and the conscience, is calculated to produce. But the time had not then come. There were nervous contortions, fainting,

shrieking, and other disturbances, which sometimes quite drowned the voice of the preacher; which were looked upon by many as the genuine operations of the Holy Spirit, and of course encouraged, rather than repressed.

Mr. Whitefield, in the early part of his rousing ministry, undoubtedly rejoiced to witness these surgings and outcries in the vast multitudes under his preaching. Long experience and observation, however, very much modified his early impressions, if they did not convince him that shrieks and convulsions were no certain proofs of genuine conviction. Some other popular preachers evidently encouraged these outbreaks, under the persuasion that they were excited by the mighty power of God. Even Edwards, in his early experience in revivals, seems not very decidedly to have discountenanced them; but observing how little they profited, how soon they passed away, as the morning cloud and the early dew, he stood more and more in doubt of them," and used his influence to discourage them, as in his searching treatise on the Affections. The leading ministers in Boston and many others were from the first afraid of them, as calculated rather to mar and bring the revival into discredit, than to promote and extend it; and wherever they were promptly checked, the revival went on quietly, with real solemnity, and produced more genuine and fruit.

On the other hand, while some of the most zealous and successful preachers of the day relied too much upon such outward demonstrations, others went quite into the opposite extreme, and set themselves to discountenance the work and keep it out of their parishes, under the impression that if there was some good it, it was vastly overbalanced by the fanaticism which it engendered and promoted. This opposition was a great damper upon the revival, and great evils and divisions grew out of the two extremes. As religion had sunk so low when this great awakening broke in upon the deep slumber of the churches, it is not strange that they fell into mistakes and extremes which many of the ministers afterwards saw and lamented. Notwithstanding these agitations upon the surface, the undercurrent was borne on by the Spirit of God, and watering the fields, produced abundant harvests.

But a check was coming in from an unexpected quarter, which, to a lamentable extent, arrested its progress. It was not the opposition of the enemies of the work. In spite of all they could do to arrest it, it might have gone on indefinitely. It was not an enemy but a friend who did it; and of this he deeply repented, when it was too late to repair the mischief.

In looking back upon the progress of the great awakening, up to 1742, it is evident that the excitements which attended it, and were but too much encouraged in many places, prepared the way for that outburst of fanaticism which Edwards and others, who had seen and rejoiced in the salvation of God, so deeply deplored.

From the strong persuasion that those bodily agitations, groans, and outcries which they had witnessed, were essential features and parts of the revival, it was but a step or two more to visions and revelations, when a leader should arise, of unquestioned piety, whose praise was in the churches. Such a leader was the Rev. James Davenport, a lineal descendant of the renowned John Davenport of New Haven and Boston, which circumstance no doubt added to his influence over many predisposed minds. He was settled at Southold, Long Island, and was a favorite of Whitefield. He had stood high in the opinion of the Tennents. Mr. Whitefield said he never knew keep so "close a walk with God;" and Mr. Parsons of Lyme, another distinguished laborer in the work, said that not one minister whom he had seen was to be compared to Mr. Davenport for living near to God, and having his conversation always in heaven. When he had lost his balance, after performing great and successful labors, he, more than any other man, embodied in himself and promoted in others the extravagances into which the revival was running. In admiring the spirit of the age," as it appeared in him, men of a fanatical turn admired their own spirit. Going foremost in the wrong direction, he was by fly regarded as a model man and preacher, by a comparison with whom all others were to be judged.

It appears from the concurrent testimony of all parties, that his influence, so far as it was felt, brought the revival to a crisis. Commencing with his own church, he called those whom he esteemed regenerate, brother, and the others, neighbor; the latter of

whom he soon forbade to come to the Lord's table. He next went from place to place denouncing churches that hesitated to receive him, claiming the right to demand of ministers the grounds of their Christian hope; and when they refused to answer, or their answers were unsatisfactory, he declared them to be unconverted, and warned the people against hearing them. When, on a certain occasion, four ministers called to see him and remonstrate against his career, he broke out and vehemently lectured them as unconverted men, blind guides, wolves in sheep's clothing, and the like; and wound up by offering a prayer, partly for their conversion, and partly against them. Thus he 'went on from place to place, demanding of ministers an account of their religious experience, and condemning all who refused to give it. In this fanatical mission, to which he nothing doubted God had called him, he became more and more excited in denouncing all who opposed him, encouraging visions and revelations among his deluded followers, dividing and breaking up churches, and bringing great reproach upon the revival by leading many unwarrantably to identify it with these deplorable proceedings.

The epidemic reached its crisis at New London in the month of March, 1743, where he gave out catalogue of religious books which must be brought together and burned, as unsafe in the hands of people. They were accordingly carried to the w and burned by his followers, singing round the pile Halleluia and glory to God, and declaring, that as the smoke of these books ascended up in their presence, so the smoke of the torment of such of their authors as died in the same belief was now ascending in hell. Strange to tell, among those authors were Berridge, Flavel, Mather, Colman, and Sewall, not even sparing Parsons, one of the most fervid revivalists. This was the last and crowning act of fanaticism, so far at least as Davenport was concerned. From this time he disappears from the stage, till the summer of 1744. Charity believes that this burning zeal, spurning all restraint, then reached the crisis of absolute mental derangement. But, blessed be God, it was not to last; and when he came to himself; he the next year published, July 28, 1744, his humble recantations, from which, in justice to him, I make the following brief extracts:

"Although I do not question at all but there is great reason to bless

God for a glorious arid wonderful work of his power and grace, in the edification of his children, and the conviction and conversion of numbers in New England, in the neighboring governments, and several other parts, within a few years past, and believe that the Lord hath favored me, though most unworthy, in granting special assistance and success, the glory of all which be given to Jehovah, to whom the glory belongs; yet, after frequent meditation and desires that I might be enabled to apprehend things justly, I am fully convinced and persuaded that several appendages of this glorious work are no essential parts thereof but of a different and contrary nature and tendency, which I have been instrumental in promoting by a misguided zeal; being, further, much influenced in the affair by the false spirit which prompted me to unjust apprehensions and conduct in several particulars, which have been great blemishes to the work of God, very grievous to some of God's children, no less ensnaring and corrupting to others of them, the sad means of many persons questioning the work of God, concluding and appearing against it, and of the hardening of multitudes in their sins, and an awful occasion of the enemy's blaspheming the right way of the Lord, and very offensive to that God before whom I would lie in the dust prostrate in deep humility and repentance, imploring pardon for the Mediator's sake, and thankfully accepting the token thereof.

"The articles which I specially refer to, and in the most public manner retract and warn others against, are these which follow:

1. The method I used for a considerable time with respect to some ministers, in openly exposing such as I feared or thought unconverted, in public prayer or otherwise; herein making my private judgment, in which also I much suspect I was mistaken in several instances, the ground of public actions or conduct, offending against the laws both of justice and charity.

"2. By advising and urging to such separations from those ministers whom I treated as above, as I believe may justly be called rash, unwarrantable, and of sad and awful tendency and consequence; and here I would ask the forgiveness of those ministers whom I have injured.

"3. I confess I have been much led astray by following impulses or impressions as a rule of conduct, whether they came with or without a text of Scripture. I am persuaded this was a great means of corrupting my experiences in carrying me off from the word of God.

"4. I believe further that I have done much hurt to religion, by encouraging private persons to a magisterial or authoritative kind of method of exhorting, which is particularly observable in many such being much puffed up and falling into the snare of the devil, while many others are thus directly prejudiced against the work.

"And now may the holy and wise and good God be pleased to guard and secure me against such errors for the future, and stop the progress of those, whether ministers or people, who have been corrupted by my words or example; and Oh, may he grant withal, that such as by reason of the aforesaid errors and misconduct have entertained unhappy prejudices against Christianity in general, or the late glorious work of God in particular, may by this account learn to distinguish the appendages from the substance or essence that which is vile and odious from that which is precious, glorious, and divine, and thus be entirely and happily freed from all those prejudices referred to, and this in infinite mercy through Jesus Christ; and to these requests may all God's children, whether ministers or others, say, Amen."

That so pious and devoted a minister as Mr. Davenport was believed to be by his contemporaries who knew him best, and as he doubtless was, should be left to bring so much distrust and reproach upon tire most glorious revival that the country had ever enjoyed, was a mystery which will not be fully disclosed till the judgment of the great day. But it is full of instruction and warning. The great head of the church may have seen that such a lesson of human weakness at its best estate, should be put upon record as a warning to "the generations following."

The rapid sketch which I have given of that wonderful time of refreshing, almost a century and a quarter ago, would have been one-sided and incomplete if I had omitted these statements. It is due to those into whose hands this epitome may fall, that they should be

put on their guard against such outbreaks of animal excitement and enthusiasm as have marred and cut short former revivals.

After making every abatement, the years of the Great Awakening" were precious years of the right hand of the Most High. It left the churches of New England in a far sounder and better state than it found them. It effectually shut the door against admitting unregenerate persons to the Lord's supper as a converting ordinance, which Mr. Stoddard had unhappily opened in his own church, and by his writings in others. Reasoning out of the Scriptures, Mr. Edwards, in his "Terms of Communion," showed the practice to be wholly indefensible; and I am not aware that any evangelical church has favored it since. This was a great gain. Had the practice been continued, and become universal, it would have been more than a paralysis. The churches might have retained their names, but as true churches of Christ they would not have survived.

Another important gain was, that the revival, widely extended and powerful as it was, prepared the way for freeing the churches from the "Half-way Covenant." Though in some quarters it held its ground longer, it was very much circumscribed. We shall meet with some remains of it hereafter, but dying out.

Another immense gain to the cause of Christ was, that it greatly relieved the churches from the soporific influence of an unconverted ministry. It was admitted that there were unconverted pastors over some of the churches, and regeneration had come to be thought by many no essential qualification for the sacred office. It was held, that if preachers were men of blameless lives they were not to be rejected though they did not profess to have been born again. Some of this number were the subjects of the revival, and confessed that they had preached for years without knowing what experimental piety was. In this respect the revival prepared the way for a great change for the better. It is not claimed that there can be any certain protection against the intrusion of unconverted men into the ministry. The strictest examination for the cure of souls cannot shut them out, for God alone knows the heart; but that none save converted men are fit to enter the ministry, is now universally held by the evangelical churches of all denominations.

Moreover, the preaching in the orthodox churches was, ever since this great revival, been more spiritual and discriminating than it was when it began. The cardinal doctrines of universal and entire depravity, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith alone, with other kindred evangelical topics drawn from the word of God, held from that time forth a more prominent place in the ministrations of the pulpit, than they had done for ages before.

Hence, though all that could have been desired was not accomplished, the good seed was sown broadcast over the land; and though we shall find, in the next period, that many hostile influences checked its growth for nearly half a century, it was so far from being lost where it did not spring up at once, that it was to take root and grow and ripen into other harvests, with more wheat, fewer tares, and less chaff.

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