

A painting of a man in clerical robes, likely a minister, with his hands raised in prayer. He is wearing a dark blue or black robe with a white collar and a white wig. He is standing in front of a large, arched stained glass window. The window features a central cross with a yellow and purple design, and other smaller stained glass panels. The background is dark and textured, suggesting an interior church setting. The overall style is that of a 19th-century religious painting.

# TRUE REVIVALS

*& the men God uses*

HORATIUS BONAR (1808-1889)

# **True Revivals and the Men God Uses**

Horatius Bonar

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# True Revivals and the Men God Uses

The world is still sleeping its sleep of death. It has been a slumber of many generations, sometimes deeper [and] sometimes lighter, yet still a slumber like that of the tomb—as if destined to continue till the last trumpet sound, and then there shall be no more sleep.

Yet God has not left it to sleep on unwarned. He has spoken in a voice that might reach the dullest ears and quicken the coldest heart. Ten thousand times has He thus spoken and still He speaks. But the world refuses to hear. Its myriads slumber on, as if this sleep of death were the very blessedness of its being.

Yet, in one sense, the world's sleep has never been universal. Never has there been an age when it could be said there is not one awake. The multitude has always slept, but there has always been a little flock awake. Even in the world's deepest midnight there have been always children of the light and of the day. In the midst of a slumbering world some have been in every age awake. God's voice had reached them, and His mighty power had raised them, and they walked the earth—awake among sleepers, the living among the dead.

The world has written at large the history of its sleeping multitudes; it becomes the Church of Christ to record the simpler, briefer annals of its awakened ones. Doubtless, their record is on high, written more imperishably than the world can ever accomplish for its sons, yet still it is well for earth to have

a record of those “of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb 11:38).

Their story is as full of interest as it is of importance. The waking up of each soul would be matter enough for a history—its various shakings and startings up, ere it was fully aroused: the word or the stroke that effected the work, the time, the way in which it became awake for eternity and for God, as well as its new course of light after it awoke. All these are fraught with an interest to which nothing of time or earth can ever once be compared.

And then, when the voice of God awakes not one, but thousands, it may be in a day—when whole villages and districts seem as if arising and putting on new life—how intensely, how unutterably interesting! At such a crisis it seems as if the world itself were actually beginning to awake, as if the shock that had broken the slumbers of so many were about to shake the whole world together. Yet alas! The tokens of life soon vanish. The half-awakened sleepers sink back into deeper slumber, and the startled world lies down in still more sad and desperate security.

The history of the Church is full of these awakenings, some on a larger and some on a smaller scale. Indeed, such narratives form the true history of the Church, if we are to take our ideas of this from the inspired Church history given us in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Many a wondrous scene has been witnessed from the day of Pentecost downwards to our own day. What better deserves the attention and the study of the believer than the record of these outpourings of the Spirit? Besides the interest that

cleaves to them, there is much to be learned from them by the Church. To see how God has been working, and to observe the means and instruments by which He has carried on His work, cannot fail to be profitable and quickening. It makes us sensible of our own short-comings, and it points out the way by which the blessing may be secured.

Let us look for a little [while] at the instruments and their success. Let us note their character and contemplate their success. They were men of like passions as we are, yet how marvelously blest in their labours! Whence, then, came their vast success? What manner of men were they? What weapons did they employ?

# 1. What Characterized These Men?

**a. They were in earnest about the great work of the ministry on which they had entered.**

They felt their infinite responsibility as stewards of the mysteries of God, and shepherds appointed by the Chief Shepherd to gather in and watch over souls. They lived, labored, and preached like men on whose lips the immortality of thousands hung. Everything they did and spoke bore the

stamp of earnestness, and proclaimed to all with whom they came into contact that the matters about which they had been sent to speak were of infinite moment<sup>[1]</sup>—admitting of no indifference, no postponement, even for a day.

Yet their fervour was not that of excitement; it was the steadfast but tranquil purpose of men who felt the urgency and weight of the cause entrusted to them, and who knew that necessity was laid upon them. Yea, woe was unto them if they preached not the gospel (1Co 9:16). They felt that, as ministers of the gospel, they dared not act otherwise—they dared not throw less than their whole soul into the conflict. They dared not take their ease or fold their arms; they dared not be indifferent to the issue when professing to lead on the hosts of the living God against the armies of the prince of darkness.

## **b. They were bent upon success.**

It was with a good hope of success that they first undertook the awful<sup>[2]</sup> office of the ministry, and to despair of this would have been shameful distrust of Him Who had sent them forth, while to be indifferent to it would have been to prove themselves nothing short of traitors to Him and to His cause. As warriors, they set their hearts on victory, and fought with the believing anticipation of triumph, under the guidance of such a Captain as their Head. As shepherds, they could not sit idle on the mountainside in the sunshine, or the breeze, or the tempest—heedless of their straying, perishing, bleating



flock. They watched, gathered, guarded, and fed the sheep committed to their care.

### **c. They were men of faith.**

They ploughed and sowed in hope. They might sometimes go forth weeping, bearing precious seed; yet these were the tears of sorrow and compassion, not of despair. They knew that in due season they would reap if they fainted not, that their labour in the Lord would not be in vain, and that ere long they would return bringing their sheaves with them. They had confidence in the God Whose they were and Whom they served, knowing that He would not send them on this warfare on their own charges. They had confidence in the Saviour Whose commission they bore, and on Whose errands they were gone forth. They had confidence in the promises of glorious success with which He had armed and comforted them. They had confidence in the Holy Spirit's almighty power and grace, as the glorifier of Christ, the testifier of His work, and the quickener of dead souls. They had confidence in the Word, the Gospel, the message of reconciliation that they proclaimed, knowing that it could not return void to Him Who sent it forth (Isa 55:11). Thus they went forth in faith and confidence, anticipating victory, defying enemies, despising obstacles, and counting not their lives dear unto them that they might finish their course with joy (cp. Act 20:24) and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus.

#### **d. They were men of labour.**

They were required to bear the burden and heat of the day. It might be truly said of them that “they scorned delights and lived laborious days” (John Milton, 1608-1674). Their lives are the annals of incessant, unwearied toil of body and soul. Time, strength, substance, health, all they were and possessed, they freely offered to the Lord—keeping back nothing, grudging nothing; joyfully, thankfully, surrendering all to Him Who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood, regretting only this: that they had so little, so very little to give up for Him Who for their sakes had freely given Himself!

They knew by experience something of what the apostle testifies concerning himself to the Corinthian church. They knew what it was to be “in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2Co 11:27). They had no time for levity, sloth, pleasure, or idle companionship. They rose before dawn to commence their labours, and the shades of evening found them, though wearied and fainting, still toiling on. They laboured for eternity, and as men who knew that time was short and the day of recompense at hand.

#### **e. They were men of patience.**

They were not discouraged, though they had to labour long without seeing all the fruit they desired. They continued still to sow. Day after day they pursued what, to the eye of the world, appeared a thankless and fruitless round of toil. They were not soon weary in well-doing, remembering the example of the husbandman in regard to his perishable harvest: "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (Jam 5:7).

Many a good plan has been rendered abortive by impatience. Many a day of toil has been thrown away by impatience. Many a rash step has been taken, and hasty changes adopted, in consequence of impatience. Attempts have been made to force on a revival by men who were impatient at the slow progress of the work in their hand; and seldom have these ended in anything but calamitous failure, or at best a momentary excitement, which scorched and sterilized a soil from which a little more patient toil would have reaped an abundant harvest. There may be and there always ought to be the calmest patience in conjunction with the most intense longing for success. "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16).

A friend and brother in the Lord some years ago was called to till a portion of the Master's vineyard in our own land. He laboured and prayed and sought fruit with all his soul; yet at that time he saw but little. He was called away to another sphere of labour. After some years he heard that a work of God had taken place in his former field under another faithful brother and fellow-worker in Christ. On visiting the spot he was

amazed and delighted to find that many of those who had been converted were the very individuals whom he had several years before visited, warned, and prayed for. “One soweth, and another reapeth” (Joh 4:37).

## **f. They were men of boldness and determination.**

Adversaries might contend and oppose, timid friends might hesitate, but *they* pressed forward, in nothing terrified by difficulty or opposition. Timidity shuts many a door of usefulness, and loses many a precious opportunity; it wins no friends, while it strengthens every enemy. Nothing is lost by boldness, nor gained by fear. It seems often as if there were a premium upon mere boldness and vigour, apart from other things. Even natural courage and resolution will accomplish much, how much more courage created and upheld by faith and prayer. In regard, for instance, to the dense masses of ungodliness and profligacy<sup>[3]</sup> in our large towns, what will ever be effected if we timidly shrink back, or slothfully fold our hands, because the array is so terrific and the apparent probabilities of success so slender? Let us be prepared to give battle, though it should be one against ten thousand, and who shall calculate the issues?<sup>[4]</sup>

There is needed not merely natural courage in order to face natural danger or difficulty. There is, in our own day, a still greater need of moral boldness, in order to neutralize the fear of

man, the dread of public opinion—that god of our idolatry in this last age, which boasts of superior enlightenment, and which would bring everything to the test of reason, or decide it by the votes of the majority. We need strength from above to be faithful in these days of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy—to set our faces like flint, alike against the censure and applause of the multitude, and to dare to be singular for righteousness' sake, and to fight, single-handed, the battles of the faith. The sneer, the scoff, the contemptuous smile of superiority, the cold support, the cordial opposition, the timid friendship, the bold hostility, in private and public, from lips of companions, or neighbours, or fellow-citizens—often under pretext of reverence for religion—these are fitted to daunt the mind of common nerve. And to meet these, nothing less than divine grace is needed. Never, perhaps, in any age has wickedness assumed a bolder front and attitude; and never, therefore, was Christian courage more required than now.

Men of the world, and mere professors, can tolerate or perhaps commend the customary routine of ministerial duty. But to step beyond that, to break the regularity of well-beaten forms, to preach and labour in season and out of season, in churches, barns, school-houses, streets, or highways, to deal faithfully and closely with men's consciences wherever they may happen to be brought into contact with them—to be always the minister, always the watchman, always the Christian, always the lover of souls—this is to turn the world upside down, to offend against every rule of good breeding, and to tear up the landmarks of civilized society. Ministers and Christians require more than ever to be “strong and of good

courage” (Jos 10:25), to be “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58). This has ever been one of the great secrets of success. Those that honour God, God has never failed to honour and bless.

### **g. They were men of prayer.**

It is true that they laboured much, visited much, studied much—but they also prayed much. In this they abounded. They were much alone with God, replenishing their own souls out of the living fountain, that out of them might flow to their people rivers of living water. In our day there is doubtless among many a grievous mistake upon this point. Some who are really seeking to feed the flock and to save souls, are led to exhaust their energies upon external duties and labours, overlooking the absolute necessity of enriching, ripening, filling, elevating their own souls by prayer and fasting. On this account there is much time wasted and labour thrown away. A single word coming fresh from lips that have been kindled into heavenly warmth by near fellowship with God, will avail more than a thousand others.

Did Christ’s faithful ministers act more on this principle, they would soon learn what an increased fruitfulness and power are thereby imparted to all their labours. Were more of each returning Saturday spent in fellowship with God, in solemn intercession for the people, in humiliation for sin, and supplication for the outpouring of the Spirit, our Sabbaths

would be far more blest. Our sermons would be far more successful. Our faces would shine as did the face of Moses. A more solemn awe and reverence would be over all our assemblies, and there would be fewer complaints of labouring in vain, or spending strength for nought. What might be lost in elaborate composition, or critical exactness of style or argument, would be far more than compensated for by the “double portion of thy Spirit” (2Ki 2:9) we might then expect to receive.

## **h. They were men whose doctrines were of the most decided kind, both as respects Law and gospel.**

There is a breadth and power about their preaching, a glow and energy about their words and thoughts, that makes us feel that they were men of might. Their trumpet gave no feeble nor uncertain sound, either to saint or sinner, either to the church or the world. They lifted up their voices and spared not. There was no flinching, no flattering, or prophesying of smooth things.

Their preaching seems to have been of the most masculine and fearless kind, falling on the audience with tremendous power. It was not vehement; it was not fierce; it was not noisy—it was far too solemn to be such. It was massive, weighty, cutting, piercing, sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). The weapons wielded by them were well tempered, well

furbished, sharp, and keen. Nor were they wielded by a feeble or unpracticed arm. These warriors did not fight with the scabbard instead of the blade. Nor did they smite with the flat instead of the edge of the sword. Nor did they spare any effort, either of strength or skill, which might carry home the thrust of the stroke to the very vitals. Hence so many fell wounded under them, such as in the case of the celebrated Thomas Shepard of Cambridge (1604-1645), regarding whom it is said that, "he scarce ever preached a sermon but some or other of his congregation were struck with great distress, and cried out in agony, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"

Or take the following account of the effects produced by a sermon of Jonathan Edwards[5] at Enfield in July 1741:

*While the people in the neighbouring towns were in great distress for their souls, the inhabitants of that town were very secure, loose, and vain. A lecture had been appointed at Enfield; and the neighbouring people the night before were so affected at the thoughtlessness of the inhabitants, and in such fears that God would, in His righteous judgement, pass them by, while the divine showers were falling all around them, as to be prostrate before Him a considerable part of it, supplicating mercy for their souls. When the appointed time for the lecture came, a number of the neighbouring ministers attended, and some from a distance. When they went into the meeting-house, the appearance of the assembly was thoughtless and vain. The people hardly conducted themselves with common decency.*

*Jonathan Edwards preached. His plain unpretending manner, both in language and delivery, and his established reputation for holiness and knowledge of the truth, forbade the suspicion that any trick of oratory would be used to mislead his hearers. He began in the clear, careful, demonstrative style of a teacher solicitous[6] for the result of his effort, and anxious that every step of his argument should be clearly and fully understood. His text was Deuteronomy 32:35, "Their foot shall slide in due time."*



*As he advanced in unfolding the meaning of the text, the most careful logic brought him and his hearers to conclusions that the most tremendous imagery could but inadequately express. His most terrific descriptions of the doom and danger of the impenitent only enabled them to apprehend more clearly the truths that he had compelled them to believe.*

The effect was as might have been expected. Trumbull informs us that,

*Before the assembly was ended, the assembly appeared deeply impressed and bowed with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was such a breathing of distress and weeping that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence, that he might be heard. This was the beginning of the same great and prevailing concern in that place, with which the colony in general was visited.*

## **i. They were men of solemn deportment and deep spirituality of soul.**

Their lives and their lips accorded with each other. Their daily walk furnished the best attestation and illustration of the truth they preached. They were always ministers of Christ, wherever they were to be found or seen. No frivolity, no flippancy, no gaiety, no worldly conviviality<sup>[7]</sup> or companionships, neutralised their public preaching or marred the work they were seeking to accomplish. The world could not point to them as being but slightly dissimilar from itself, or as men who, though faithful in the pulpit, forgot throughout the week their character, their office, their errand. Luther<sup>[8]</sup> once remarked, regarding a beloved and much admired friend, “he lives what we preach.” So it was with these much-honoured

men, whose names are in the Book of Life.

## 2. The Doing of the Lord!

### a. Gilbert Tennent

We quote the following account of Gilbert Tennent's [\[9\]](#) life and doctrine from the pen of Thomas Prince (1687-1758). It will illustrate some remarks under the former head.

*From the terrible and deep convictions he had passed through in his own soul, he seemed to have such a lively view of the Divine Majesty; the spirituality; purity; extensiveness, and strictness of His Law—with His glorious holiness and displeasure at sin, His justice, truth, and power in punishing the damned—that the very terrors of God seemed to rise in his mind afresh when he displayed and brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners. And though some could not bear the representation and avoided his preaching, yet the arrows of conviction by his ministry seemed so deeply to pierce the hearts of others, and even some of the most stubborn sinners, as to make them fall down at the feet of Christ, and yield a lowly submission to Him.*

*Such were the convictions wrought in many hundreds in this town by Mr. Tennent's searching ministry; and such was the case of those many scores of several other congregations as well as mine who came to me and others for direction under them. And indeed, by all their converse, I found it was not so much the terror as the searching nature of his ministry that was the principal means of their conviction. It was not merely nor so much his laying open the terrors of the Law and wrath of God, or damnation of hell (for this they could pretty well bear as long as they hoped these belonged not to them, or they could easily avoid them), as his laying open their many*

vain and secret shifts[10] and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes, their utter impotence, and impending danger of destruction; whereby they found all their hopes and refuges of lies to fail them, and themselves exposed to eternal ruin, unable to help themselves and in a lost condition. This searching preaching was both the suitable and principal means of their conviction.

*And now was such a time as we never knew. More came to one minister in one week in deep concern about their souls, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry.*

## **b. George Whitefield**

We add a few quotations from *George Whitefield's* (1714-1770) *Journals*. The reader will see how they bear upon the preceding statement regarding the Christian ministry.

*On Thursday he preached the public lecture at the Old South. He had chosen another text, but it was much impressed on his heart that he should preach from our Lord's conference with Nicodemus (Joh 3). A great number of ministers were present, and when he came to the word, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things," he says,*

*"The Lord enabled me to open my mouth boldly against unconverted ministers; to caution tutors to take care of their pupils; and also to advise ministers particularly to examine the experience of candidates for ordination. For I am verily persuaded the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ, and the reason why congregations have been so dead is because they have had dead men preaching to them. O that the Lord may quicken and revive them, for His own name's sake! For how can dead men beget living children? It is true, indeed, God may convert men by the devil, if He pleases, and so He may by unconverted ministers; but I believe He seldom makes use of either of them for this purpose. No, the Lord will choose vessels made meet[11] by the operation of the blessed Spirit for His sacred use. Unspeakable freedom God gave me while treating on this head. In the afternoon, I preached on the common[12] to about fifteen thousand*

people, and collected upwards of £200 for the Orphan House. Just as I had finished my sermon, a note was put up to me, wherein I was desired to pray for a person just entered upon the ministry; but under apprehension that he was unconverted. God enabled me to pray for him with my whole heart, and I hope that note will teach many others not to run before they can give an account of their conversion. If they do, they offer God strange fire (Lev 10:1-2).”

He preached on Monday at Westfield and Springfield, and on Tuesday at Suffield, to large audiences and with his usual power. A little below Springfield, when crossing a bridge, he was thrown from his horse, and “stunned for a while,” but was soon able to remount and proceed. At or near Suffield he met with a minister, “who said it was not absolutely necessary for a gospel minister to be converted,” meaning doubtless that though conversion was necessary for his salvation, it was not indispensable to his ministerial character and usefulness. This interview gave Whitefield a subject, “I insisted much in my discourse upon the change of the new birth, and also the necessity of a minister’s being converted before he could preach Christ aright. The word came with great power, and a great impression was made upon the people in all parts of the assembly. Many ministers were present. I did not spare them. Most of them thanked me for my plain dealing. But one was offended, and so would more of his stamp if I were to continue long in New England. For unconverted ministers are the bane<sup>[13]</sup> of the Christian Church.”

His ride to Stanford was dark and rainy. That night he was visited with a great inward trial, so that he was pained to the heart. He was somewhat dejected before he went out of his lodgings the next morning, and somewhat distressed for a text after he got into the pulpit. “But at length the Lord directed me to one, but I looked for no power or success, being very low by my last night’s trial. Notwithstanding, before I had preached half-an-hour, the blessed Spirit began to move on the hearers’ hearts in a very awful manner. Young, and especially many old people, were surprisingly affected, so that I thought they would have cried out. At dinner, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me again, and enabled me to speak with such vigour against sending unconverted persons into the ministry, that two ministers, with tears in their eyes, publicly confessed that they had laid their hands on young men without so much as asking them whether they were born again of God or not. After dinner, finding my heart much enlarged, I prayed, and

*with such power, that most in the room were put under concern. And one old minister was so deeply convicted that, calling Mr. Noble and me out, with great difficulty (because of his weeping), he desired our prayers; for, said he, 'I have been a scholar and have preached the doctrines of grace[14] for a long time, but I believe I have never felt the power of them in my own soul.' O that all unconverted ministers were brought to make the same confession."*

Such were the instruments. Such were the mighty things accomplished by them in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord. In the different awakenings, there were doubtless many things which proclaimed the frailty and imperfection of the agency through which the Holy Spirit wrought His mighty signs and wonders. There were things to remind man that the treasure was in earthen vessels. These revivals were not without their blemishes. There might be errors; there might be imprudencies; there might be excitement; there might be physical emotion. But still, notwithstanding all that may be spoken against them, the hand of God was manifestly there, awakening, deepening, extending, carrying forward the mighty movement by which the walls and bulwarks[15] of the prince of darkness were, in many of his strongholds, shaken to their deepest base. "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those who published it" (Psa 68:11), as well as of those who received and obeyed it.

Nothing was to be seen but a faithful minister of Christ, surrounded by a small band of praying ones, leading on the array against the prince of darkness! There was no pomp, no display, no artifice,[16] no carnal attraction. Yet the ranks of darkness gave way before them, and multitudes owned the power of the simple yet resistless words that fell from their earnest lips! How could the world but wonder at such vast

results, so disproportioned to the apparent cause? How could they but feel, if they did not confess, that all this was the doing of the Lord?

## c. Jonathan Edwards

As an illustration of how remarkably the work was of God and not of man, we quote without comment the following passages from *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* by Jonathan Edwards.

*It is observable how, at this remarkable day, a spirit of deep concern would seize upon persons. Some were in the house, and some walking in the highway; some in the woods, and some in the field; some in conversation, and some in retirement; some children, some adults, and some elderly persons, would sometimes of a sudden be brought under the strongest impressions, from a sense of the great realities of the other world and eternal things. But such things, as far as I can learn, were usually, if not [always], impressed upon men while they were in some way exercising their minds upon the Word of God or spiritual objects. And for the most part, it has been under the public preaching of the Word that these lasting impressions have been fastened upon them.*

*A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages. The noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder (Eze 37:4ff). All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things, was soon thrown-by...The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world; it was treated among us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it...*

*The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven, and everyone appeared to be pressing into it. The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid, it appeared in their very countenances. It*

*was then a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what persons' minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives, and fly from the wrath to come (Luk 3:7). All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls, and were wont[17] very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes; and such meetings, when appointed, were greatly thronged.*

*There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were wont to be the vainest and loosest, and those who had been most disposed to think and speak slightly of vital and experimental[18] religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner and increased more and more. Souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvelous light.*

*Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnest, intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general was, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours...Those amongst us that had formerly been converted were greatly enlivened and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomes of the Spirit of God, though some much more than others, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Many who had before laboured under difficulties about their own state, had now their doubts removed by more satisfying experience and more clear discoveries of God's love.*

### **3. Conclusion**

When man proceeds to the accomplishment of some mighty enterprise, he puts forth prodigious[19] efforts, as if by the sound of his axes and hammers he would proclaim his own fancied might, and bear down opposing obstacles. He cannot

work without sweat, dust, and noise. When God would do a marvelous work, such as may amaze all heaven and earth, He commands silence all around, sends forth the still small voice, and then sets some feeble instrument to work—and straightway it is done! Man toils and pants, and after all effects but little; the Creator, in the silent majesty of power, noiseless yet resistless, achieves by a word the infinite wonders of omnipotence![\[20\]](#)

In order to loose the bands of winter and bring in the verdure[\[21\]](#) of the pleasant spring, He does not send forth His angels to hew in pieces the thickened ice, or to strip off from the mountain's side the gathered snows, or to plant anew over the face of the bleak earth flowers fresh from His creating hand. No! He breathes from His lips a mild warmth into the frozen air. And forthwith, in stillness but in irresistible power, the work proceeds. The ice is shivered, the snows dissolve, the rivers resume their flow, the earth awakes as out of sleep, the hills and the valleys put on their freshening verdure, the fragrance of earth takes wing and fills the air—till a new world of beauty rises in silence amid the dissolution of the old!

Such is God's method of working, both in the natural and in the spiritual world—silent, simple, majestic, and resistless! Such was the Reformation! Such were the revivals in Scotland under our fathers of the Covenant! Such was the Kirk o' Shotts on that memorable Pentecost when the unstudied words of a timid trembling youth carried salvation to five hundred souls. Such was Ayr in its Pentecostal days, when from the lonely church at midnight, there went up to heaven the broken sighs of that man of prayer, John Welsh (1568-1622). And such was



Northampton in later times, when Jonathan Edwards watched and prayed for its citizens, and when, from the closet of that holy man, there went forth the living power that wrought such wonders there!

And is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save, or is His ear heavy that it cannot hear (Isa 59:1)?

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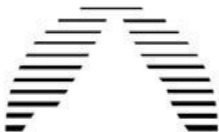
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- [1] **moment** – importance; consequence.
- [2] **awful** – that which fills with awe.
- [3] **profligacy** – immorality and shamelessness.
- [4] **issues** – what comes out from a particular effort; results.
- [5] **Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) – American Congregational preacher; regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening along with George Whitefield. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.
- [6] **solicitous** – showing care, attention, or concern.
- [7] **conviviality** – fondness of festive activity.
- [8] **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic [monk](#), [theologian](#), university professor, and [church reformer](#) whose ideas inspired the [Protestant Reformation](#) and changed the course of [Western civilization](#).
- [9] **Gilbert Tennent** (1703-1764) – pastor and evangelist, born in County Armagh, Ireland; one of the leaders of the Great Awakening in Colonial America, along with Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. He was son and brother of three other Presbyterian clergymen. His father, William Tennent, emigrated to America in 1718, and was the founder of a theological school at Warminster, Pennsylvania, called the Log College.
- [10] **shifts** – deceitful schemes or methods.
- [11] **meet** – suitable.
- [12] **common** – undivided land belonging to the members of a local community, often in the center of the village and used for gatherings.
- [13] **bane** – cause of distress, death, or ruin.
- [14] **doctrines of grace** – the historic doctrines recovered in the Reformation that exalt God's sovereignty and holiness.
- [15] **bulwarks** – fortifications for defense and protection.
- [16] **artifice** – trickery or craft.
- [17] **wont** – accustomed.
- [18] **experimental** – known by or derived from personal experience.

[19] **prodigious** – of great size, power, extent; enormous; huge.

[20] **omnipotence** – the quality of having unlimited power and authority.

[21] **verdure** – greenness; freshness of vegetation.