

# Lecture Xiv. - Measures to Promote Revivals.

by Charles Finney

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*Charles Finney argues that the church has been slow to adopt new measures and that the gospel dispensation leaves the church to determine its own measures and forms.*

**Scripture:** Acts 16:20

**Topics:** "Revival", "Innovation in Worship"

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## Description

Charles Finney discusses the necessity of adopting new measures to promote revivals in the church, emphasizing that God has not established a fixed system of worship under the gospel. He argues that the church must be flexible and innovative in its approach to ministry, as many traditional practices have evolved over time and were once considered innovations themselves. Finney highlights the importance of adapting to the needs of the congregation and the world, asserting that the church must not cling to outdated forms that hinder the spread of the gospel. He encourages ministers to embrace new methods, such as anxious meetings and protracted meetings, to effectively reach and engage the community. Ultimately, Finney calls for a revival of spirit and action within the church, free from the constraints of rigid traditions.

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## Transcript

TEXT. --These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. --ACTS xvi. 20,21.

"THESE men," here spoken of, were Paul and Silas, who went to Philippi to preach the gospel, and very much disturbed the people of that city, because they supposed the preaching would interfere with their worldly gains. And so they arranged the preachers of the gospel before the magistrates of the city, as culprits, and charged them with teaching doctrines, and especially employing measures, that were not lawful.

In discoursing from these words I design to show,

I. That under the gospel dispensation, God has established no particular system of measures to be employed and invariably adhered to in promoting religion.

II. To show that our present forms of public worship, and everything, so far as measures are concerned, have been arrived at by degrees, and by a succession of New Measures.

I. I am to show that under the gospel, God has established no particular measures to be used.

Under the Jewish dispensation, there were particular forms enjoined and prescribed by God himself, from which it was not lawful to depart. But these forms were all typical, and were designed to shadow forth Christ, or something connected with the new dispensation that Christ was to introduce. And therefore they were fixed, and all their details particularly prescribed by Divine authority. But it was never so under the gospel. When Christ came, the ceremonial or typical dispensation was abrogated, because the design of those forms was fulfilled, and therefore themselves of no further use. He, being the anti-type, the types were of course done away at his coming. THE GOSPEL was then preached as the appointed means of promoting religion; and it was left to the discretion of the church to determine, from time to time, what measures shall be adopted, and what forms pursued, in giving the gospel its power. We are left in the dark as to the measures which were pursued by the apostles and primitive preachers, except so far as we can gather it from occasional hints in the book of Acts. We do not know how many times they sung and how many times they prayed in public worship, nor even whether they sung or prayed at all in their ordinary meetings for preaching. When Jesus Christ was on earth, laboring among his disciples, he had nothing to do with forms or measures. He did from time to time in this respect just as it would be natural for any man to do in such cases, without anything like a set form or mode of doing it. The Jews accused him of disregarding their forms. His object was to preach and teach mankind the true religion. And when the apostles preached afterwards, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, we hear nothing about their having a particular system of measures to carry on their work, or one apostle doing a thing in a particular way because others did it in that way. Their commission was, "Go and preach the gospel, and disciple all nations." It did not prescribe any forms. It did not admit any. No person can pretend to get any set of forms or particular directions as to measures, out of this commission. Do it--the best way you can--ask wisdom from God--use the faculties he has given you--seek the direction of the Holy Ghost--go forward and do it. This was their commission. And their object was to make known the gospel in the most effectual way, to make the truth stand out strikingly, so as to obtain the attention and secure the obedience of the greatest number possible. No person can find any form of doing this laid down in the Bible. It is preaching the gospel that stands out prominently there as the great thing. The form is left out of the question.

It is manifest, that, in preaching the gospel, there must be some kind of measures adopted. The gospel must be gotten before the minds of the people, and measures must be taken so that they can hear it, and to induce them to attend to it. This is done by building churches, holding stated or other meetings, and so on. Without some measures, it can never be made to take effect among men.

II. I am to show that our present forms of public worship, and everything, so far as measures are concerned, have been arrived at by degrees, and by a succession of New Measures.

1. I will mention some things in regard to the ministry.

Many years ago, ministers were accustomed to wear a peculiar habit. It is so now in Catholic countries. It used to be so here. Ministers had a peculiar dress as much as soldiers. They used to wear a cocked hat, and bands instead of a cravat or stock, and small clothes, and a wig. No matter how much hair a man had on his head, he must cut it off and wear a wig. And then he must wear a gown. All these things were customary, and every clergyman was held bound to wear them, and it was not considered proper for him to officiate without them. All these had doubtless been introduced by a succession of innovations, for we have no good reason for believing that the apostles and primitive ministers dressed differently from other men.

But now all these things have been given up, one by one, by a succession of innovations or new measures, until now in many churches a minister can go into the pulpit and preach without being noticed, although dressed like any other man. And when it was done in regard to each one of them, the church complained as much as if it had been a Divine institution given up. It was denounced as an innovation. When ministers began to lay aside their cocked hats, and wear hats like other men, it grieved the elderly people very much; it looked so "undignified," they said, for a minister to wear a round hat. When, in 1827 I wore a fur cap, a minister said, "that was too bad for a minister."

When ministers first began, a few years since, to wear white hats, it was thought by many to be a sad and very undignified innovation. And even now, they are so bigoted in some places, that a clergyman told me but a few days since, in travelling through New England last summer with a white hat, he could perceive that it injured his influence. This spirit should not be looked upon as harmless; I have good reason to know that it is not harmless. Thinking men see it to be mere bigotry, and are exceedingly in danger of viewing everything about religion in the same light on this account. This has been the result in many instances. There is at this day scarcely a minister in the land who does not feel himself obliged to wear a black coat, as much as if it were a divine institution. The church is yet filled with a kind of superstitious reverence for such things. This is a great stumbling block to many minds.

So, in like manner, when ministers laid aside their bands, and wore cravats or stocks, it was said they were becoming secular, and many found fault. Even now, in some places, a minister would not dare to be seen in the pulpit in a cravat or stock. The people would feel as if they had no clergyman, if he had no bands. A minister in this city asked another, but a few days since, if it would do to wear a black stock in the pulpit. He wore one in his ordinary intercourse with his people, but doubted whether it would do to wear it in the pulpit.

So in regard to short clothes; they used to be thought essential to the ministerial character. Even now, in Catholic countries, every priest wears small clothes. Even the little boys there, who are training for the priest's office, wear their cocked hats, and black stockings, and small clothes. This would look ridiculous amongst us. But it used to be practised in this country. The time was when good people would have been shocked if a minister had gone into the pulpit with pantaloons on. They would have thought he was certainly going to ruin the church by his innovations. I have been told that some years ago, in New England, a certain elderly clergyman was so opposed to the new measure of a minister's wearing pantaloons, that he would on no account allow them in his pulpit. A young man was going to preach for him, who had no small clothes, and the old minister would not let him officiate in pantaloons. "Why," said he, "my people would think I had brought a fop into the pulpit, to see a man there with pantaloons on, and it would produce an excitement among them." And so, finally, the young man was obliged to borrow a pair of the old gentleman's clothes, and they were too short for him, and made a ridiculous figure enough. But any thing was better than such a terrible innovation as preaching in pantaloons. But reason has triumphed.

Just so it was in regard to wigs. I remember one minister, who, though quite a young man, used to wear an enormous white wig. And the people talked as if there was a divine right about it, and it was as hard to give it up, almost, as to give up the Bible itself. Gowns also were considered essential to the ministerial character. And even now, in many congregations in this country, the people will not tolerate a minister in the pulpit, unless he has a flowing silk gown, with enormous sleeves as big as his body. Even in some of the Congregational Churches in New England, they cannot bear to give it up. Now, how came people to suppose a minister must have a gown or a wig, in order to preach with effect? Why was it that every

clergyman was held obliged to use these things? How is it that not one of these things have been given up in the churches, without producing a shock among them? They have all been given up, one by one, and many congregations have been distracted for a time by the innovation. But will any one pretend that the cause of religion has been injured by it? People felt as if they could hardly worship God without them, but plainly their attachment to them was no part of their religion, that is, no part of the Christian religion. It was mere superstition. And when these things were taken away they complained, as Micah did, "Ye have taken away my gods." But no doubt their religious character was improved, by removing these objects of superstitious reverence. So that the church, on the whole, has been greatly the gainer by the innovations. Thus you see that the present mode of a minister's dress has been gained by a series of new measures.

2. In regard to the order of public worship.

The same difficulties have been met in effecting every change, because the church have felt as if God had established just the mode which they were used to.

(1.) Psalm Books. Formerly it was customary to sing David's Psalms. By and by there was introduced a version of the Psalms in rhyme. This was very bad, to be sure. When ministers tried to introduce them, the churches were distracted, people violently opposed, and great trouble was created by the innovation. But the new measure triumphed.

Afterwards another version was brought forward in a better style of poetry, and its introduction was opposed with much contention, as a new measure. And finally Watt's version, which is still opposed in many churches. No longer ago than 1828, when I was in Philadelphia, I was told that a minister there was preaching a course of lectures on psalmody to his congregation, for the purpose of bringing them to use a better version of psalms and hymns than the one they were accustomed to. And even now, in a great many congregations, there are people who will go out of church, if a psalm or hymn is given out from a new book. And if Watt's Psalms should be adopted, they would secede and form a new congregation, rather than tolerate such an innovation. The same sort of feeling has been excited by introducing the "Village Hymns" in prayer meetings. In one Presbyterian congregation in this city, within a few years, the minister's wife wished to introduce the Village Hymns into the female prayer meetings, not daring to go any further. She thought she was going to succeed. But some of the careful souls found out that it was made in New England, and refused to admit it. "It is a Hopkinsian thing, I dare say."

(2.) Lining the Hymns. Formerly, when there were but few books, it was the custom to line the hymns, as it was called. The deacon used to stand up before the pulpit, and read off the psalm or hymn, a line at a time, or two lines at a time, and then sing, and the rest would all fall in. By and by, they began to introduce books, and let every one sing from his book. And what an innovation! Alas, what confusion and disorder it made! How could the good people worship God in singing, without having the deacon to line off the hymn in his holy tone, for the holiness of it seemed to consist very much in the tone, which was such that you could hardly tell whether he was reading or singing.

(3.) Choirs. Afterwards another innovation was carried. It was thought best to have a select choir of singers sit by themselves and sing, so as to give an opportunity to improve the music. But this was bitterly opposed. Oh, how many congregations were torn and rent in sunder, by the desire of ministers and some leading individuals to bring about an improvement in the cultivation of music, by forming choirs of singers. People talked about innovations and new measures, and thought great evils were coming to the churches, because the singers were seated by themselves, and cultivated music, and learned new tunes that the old

people could not sing. It did not use to be so when they were young, and they would not tolerate such new lights and novelties in the church.

(4.) Pitchpipes. When music was cultivated, and choirs seated together, then the singers wanted a pitchpipe. Formerly, when the lines were given out by the deacon or clerk, he would strike off into the tune, and the rest would follow as well as they could. But when the leaders of choirs begun to use pitchpipes for the purpose of pitching all their voices on precisely the same key, what vast confusion it made! I heard a clergyman say that an elder in the town where he used to live, would get up and leave the house whenever he heard the chorister blow his pipe. "Away with your whistle," said he. "What! whistle in the house of God!" He thought it a profanation.

(5.) Instrumental Music. By and by, in some congregations, various instruments were introduced for the purpose of aiding the singers, and improving the music. When the bass viol was first introduced, it made a great commotion. People insisted they might just as well have a fiddle in the house of God. "Why, it is a fiddle, it is made just like a fiddle, only a little larger, and who can worship where there is a fiddle? By and by you will want to dance in the meeting house." Who has not heard these things talked of, as matters of the most vital importance to the cause of religion and the purity of the church? Ministers, in grave ecclesiastical assemblies, have spent days in discussing them. In a synod in the Presbyterian church, only a few years ago, it was seriously talked of by some, as a matter worthy of discipline in a certain church, that they had an organ in the house of God. This within a few years. And there are many churches now who would not tolerate an organ. They would not be half so much excited to be told that sinners are going to hell, as to be told that there is going to be an organ in the meeting house. Oh, in how many places can you get the church to do anything else, easier than to come along in an easy and natural way to do what is needed, and wisest, and best, for promoting religion and saving souls! They act as if they had a "Thus saith the Lord," for every custom and practice that has been handed down to them, or that they have long followed themselves, however absurd or injurious.

(6.) Extemporary Prayers. How many people are there, who talk just as if the Prayer Book was of divine institution! And I suppose multitudes believe it is. And in some parts of the church a man would not be allowed to pray without his book before him.

(7.) Preaching without notes. A few years since, a lady in Philadelphia was invited to hear a certain minister preach, and she refused, because he did not read his sermons. She seemed to think it would be profane for a man to go into the pulpit and talk, just as if he was talking to the people about some interesting and important subject. Just as if God had enjoined the use of notes and written sermons. They do not know that notes themselves are an innovation, and a modern one too. They were introduced in a time of political difficulties in England. The ministers were afraid they should be accused of preaching something against the government, unless they could show what they had preached, by having all written down beforehand. And with a time-serving spirit, they yielded to political considerations, and imposed a yoke of bondage upon the church. And, now in many places, they cannot tolerate extempore preaching.

(8.) Kneeling in Prayer. This has made a great disturbance in many parts of the country. The time has been in the Congregational churches in New England, when a man or woman would be ashamed to be seen kneeling at a prayer meeting, for fear of being taken for a Methodist. I have prayed in families where I was the only person that would kneel. The others all stood, lest they should imitate the Methodists, I suppose, and thus countenance innovations upon the established form. Others, again, talk as if there was no other posture but kneeling, that could be acceptable in prayer.

### 3. Labors of Laymen.

(1.) Lay Prayers. Much objection was formerly made against allowing any man to pray or to take a part in managing a prayer meeting, unless he was a clergyman. It used to be said that for a layman to pray in public, was interfering with the dignity of ministers, and was not to be tolerated. A minister in Pennsylvania told me that, a few years ago, he appointed a prayer meeting in the church, and the elders opposed it and turned it out of the house. They said they would not have such work, they had hired a minister to do the praying, and he should do it, and they were not going to have common men praying.

Ministers and many others have very extensively objected against a layman's praying in public, and especially in the presence of a minister. That would let down the authority of the clergy, and was not to be tolerated. At a synod held in this State, there was a synodical prayer meeting appointed. The committee of arrangements, as it was to be a formal thing, designated beforehand the persons who were to take part, and named two clergymen and one layman. The layman was a man of talents and information equal to most ministers. But one doctor of divinity got up and seriously objected to a layman's being asked to pray before that synod. It was not usual, he said; it infringed upon the rights of the clergy, and he wished no innovations. What a state of things!

(2.) Lay exhortation. This has been made a question of vast importance, one which has agitated all New England, and many other parts of the country, whether laymen ought to be allowed to exhort in public meetings. Many ministers have labored to shut up the mouths of laymen entirely. They overlooked the practice of the primitive churches. So much opposition was made to this practice nearly a hundred years ago, that President Edwards actually had to take up the subject, and write a labored defence of the rights and duties of laymen. But the opposition has not entirely ceased to this day. "What! A man that is not a minister, to talk in public! it will create confusion, it will let down the ministry; what will people think of us, ministers, if we allow common men to do the same things that we do?" Astonishing!

But now, all these things are gone by, in most places, and laymen can pray and exhort without the least objection. The evils that were feared, from the labors of laymen, have not been realized, and many ministers are glad to have them exercise their gifts in doing good.

4. Female Prayer Meetings. Within the last few years, female prayer meetings have been extensively opposed in this State. What dreadful things! A minister, now dead, said that when he first attempted to establish these meetings, he had all the clergy around opposed to him. "Set women to praying? Why, the next thing, I suppose, will be to set them to preaching." And serious apprehensions were entertained for the safety of Zion, if women should be allowed to get together to pray. And even now, they are not tolerated in some churches.

So it has been in regard to all the active movements of the church. Missions, Sunday Schools, and everything of the kind, have been opposed, and have gained their present hold in the church only by a succession of struggles and a series of innovations. A Baptist Association in Pennsylvania, some years since, disclaimed all fellowship with any minister that had been liberally educated, or that supported Missions, Bible Societies, Sabbath Schools, Temperance Societies, etc. All these were denounced as New Measures, not found in the Bible, and that would necessarily lead to distraction and confusion in the churches. The same thing has been done by some among the German churches. And in many Presbyterian churches, there are found those who will take the same ground, and denounce all these things, with the exception, perhaps, of an educated ministry, as innovations, new measures, new lights,

going in their own strength, and the like, and as calculated to do great evil.

5. I will mention several men who have in Divine providence been set forward as prominent in introducing these innovations.

(1.) The apostles were great innovators, as you all know. After the resurrection, and after the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, they set out to remodel the church. They broke down the Jewish system of measures and rooted it out, so as to leave scarcely a vestige.

(2.) Luther and the Reformers. You all know what difficulties they had to contend with, and the reason was, that they were trying to introduce new measures--new modes of performing the public duties of religion, and new expedients to bring the gospel with power to the hearts of men. All the strange and ridiculous things of the Roman Catholics were held to in the church with pertinacious obstinacy, as if they were of Divine authority. And such an excitement was raised by the attempt to change them, as well nigh involved all Europe in blood.

(3.) Wesley and his coadjutors. Wesley did not at first tear off from the Established Church in England, but formed little classes everywhere, that grew into a church within a church. He remained in the Episcopal church, but he introduced so much of new measures, as to fill all England with excitement and uproar and opposition, and he was everywhere denounced as an innovator and a stirrer up of sedition, and a teacher of new things which it was not lawful to receive.

Whitefield was a man of the same school, and like Wesley was an innovator. I believe he and several individuals of his associates were expelled from college for getting up such a new measure, as a social prayer meeting. They would pray together and expound the Scriptures, and this was such a daring novelty that it could not be borne. When Whitefield came to this country, what an astonishing opposition was raised! Often he well nigh lost his life, and barely escaped by the skin of his teeth. Now, everybody looks upon him as the glory of the age in which he lived. And many of our own denomination have so far divested themselves of prejudice as to think Wesley not only a good but a wise and pre-eminently useful man. Then almost the entire church viewed them with animosity, fearing that the innovations he introduced would destroy the church.

(4.) President Edwards. This great man was famous in his day for new measures. Among other innovations, he refused to baptize the children of impenitent parents. The practice of baptizing the children of the ungodly had been introduced in the New England churches in the preceding century, and had become nearly universal, President Edwards saw that the practice was wrong, and he refused to do it, and the refusal shook all the churches of New England. A hundred ministers joined and determined to put him down. He wrote a book on the subject, and defeated them all. It produced one of the greatest excitements there ever was in New England. Nothing, unless it was the Revolutionary War, ever produced an equal excitement.

The General Association of Connecticut refused to countenance Whitefield, he was such an innovator. "Why, he will preach out of doors and anywhere!" Awful! What a terrible thing, that a man should preach in the fields or in the streets. Cast him out.

All these were devoted men, seeking out ways to do good and save souls. And precisely the same kind of opposition was experienced by all the ecclesiastical bodies, obstructing their path and trying to destroy their character and influence. A book, now extant, was written in President Edwards' time, by a doctor of

divinity, and signed by a multitude of ministers, against Whitefield and Edwards, their associates and their measures. A letter was published in this city by a minister against Whitefield, which brought up the same objections against innovations that we hear now. In the time of the late opposition to revivals in the State of New York, a copy of this letter was taken to the editor of a religious periodical with a request that he would publish it. He refused, and gave for a reason, that if published, many would apply it to the controversy that is going on now. I mention it merely to show how identical is the opposition that is raised in different ages against all new measures designed to advance the cause of religion.

6. In the present generation, many things have been introduced which have proved useful, but have been opposed on the ground that they were innovations. And as many are still unsettled in regard to them, I have thought it best to make some remarks concerning them. There are three things in particular which have chiefly attracted remark, and therefore I shall speak of them. They are Anxious Meetings, Protracted Meetings, and the Anxious Seat. These are all opposed, and are called new measures.

(1.) Anxious Meetings. The first that I ever heard of under that name, was in New England, where they were appointed for the purpose of holding personal conversation with anxious sinners, and to adapt instruction to the cases of individuals, so as to lead them immediately to Christ. The design of them is evidently philosophical, but they have been opposed because they were new. There are two modes of conducting an anxious meeting, either of which may effect the object of them.

(a.) By spending a few moments in personal conversation and learning the state of mind of each individual, and then in a address to the whole, take up all their errors and remove their difficulties together.

(b.) By going round to each, and taking up each individual case, and going over the whole ground with each one separately, and getting them to promise to give up their hearts to God. Either way they are important, and have been found most successful in practice. But multitudes have objected to them because they were new.

(2.) Protracted Meetings. These are not new, but have always been practised, in some form or other, ever since there was a church on earth. The Jewish festivals were nothing else but protracted meetings. In regard to the manner, they were conducted differently from what they are now. But the design was the same, to devote a series of days to religious services, in order to make a more powerful impression of divine things upon the minds of the people. All denominations of Christians, when religion prospers among them, hold protracted meetings. In Scotland they used to begin on Thursday at all their communion seasons, and continue until after the Sabbath. The Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists all hold protracted meetings. Yet now in our day they have been opposed, particularly among Presbyterians, and called new measures, and regarded as fraught with all manner of evil, notwithstanding they have been so manifestly and so extensively blessed. I will suggest a few things that ought to be considered in regard to them.

(a.) In appointing them, regard should be had to the circumstances of the people; whether the church are able to give their attention and devote their time to carry on the meeting. In some instances this rule has been neglected. Some have thought it right to break in upon the necessary business of the community. In the country, they would appoint the meeting in harvest time, and in the city in the height of the business season, when all the men were necessarily occupied and pressed with their temporal labors. In defence of this course it is said that our business should always be made to yield to God's business; that eternal things are of so much more importance than temporal things, that worldly business of any kind, and at any

time, should be made to yield and give place to a protracted meeting. But the worldly business in which we are engaged is not our business. It is as much God's business, and as much our duty, as our prayers and protracted meetings are. If we do not consider our business in this light, we have not yet taken the first lesson in religion; we have not learned to do all things to the glory of God. With this view of the subject, separating our business from religion, we are living six days for ourselves, and the seventh for God. REAL DUTIES NEVER INTERFERE WITH EACH OTHER. Week days have their appropriate duties, and the Sabbath its appropriate duties, and we are to be equally pious on every day in the week, and in the performance of the duties of every day. We are to plough, and sow, and sell our goods, and attend to our various callings, with the same singleness of view to the glory of God, that we go to church on the Sabbath, and pray in our families, and read our Bibles. This is a first principle in religion. He that does not know and act on this principle has not learned the A B C of piety as yet. Now there are particular seasons of the year in which God in his providence calls upon men to attend to business, because worldly business at the time is particularly urgent, and must be done at that season, if done at all; seed time and harvest for the farmer, and the business seasons for the merchant. And we have no right to say, in those particular seasons, that we will quit our business and have a protracted meeting. The fact is, the business is not ours. And unless God, by some special indication of his providence, shown it to be his pleasure that we should turn aside and have a protracted meeting at such times, I look upon it as tempting God to appoint them. It is saying, "O God, this worldly business is our business, and we are willing to lay it aside for thy business." Unless God has indicated it to be his pleasure to pour out his Spirit, and revive his work at such a season, and has thus called upon his people to quit, for the time being, their ordinary employments, and attend especially to a protracted meeting, it appears to me that God might say to us in such circumstances, "Who hath required this of your hand?"

God has a right to dispose of our time as he pleases, to require us to give up any portion of our time, or all our time, to duties of instruction and devotion. And when circumstances plainly call for it, it is our duty to lay aside every other business, and make direct and continuous efforts for the salvation of souls. If we transact our business upon right principles, and from right motives, and wholly for the glory of God, we shall never object to go aside to attend a protracted meeting whenever there appears to be a call for it in the providence of God. A man who considers himself a steward or a clerk, does not consider it a hardship to rest from his labors on the Sabbath, but a privilege. The selfish owner may feel unwilling to suspend his business on the Sabbath. But the clerk, who transacts business not for himself but for his employer, considers it a privilege to rest upon the Sabbath. So we, if we do our business for God, shall not think it hard if he makes it our duty to suspend our worldly business and attend a protracted meeting. We should rather consider it in the light of a holiday. Whenever, therefore, you hear a man pleading that he cannot leave his business to attend a protracted meeting --that it is his duty to attend to business, there is reason to fear that he considers the business as his own, and the meeting as God's business. If he felt that the business of the store or farm was as much God's business as attending a protracted meeting, he would doubtless be very willing to rest from his worldly toils, and go up to the house of God and be refreshed whenever there was an indication, on the part of God, that the community was called to that work. It is highly worthy of remark, that the Jewish festivals were appointed at those seasons of the year when there was the least pressure of indispensable worldly business.

In some instances, such meetings have been appointed in the very pressure of the business seasons, and have been followed with no good results, evidently for the want of attention to the rule here laid down. In other cases, meetings have been appointed in seasons when there was a great pressure of worldly business, and have been signally blessed. But in those cases the blessing followed because the meeting

was appointed in obedience to the indications of the will of God, by those who had spiritual discernment, and understood the signs of the times. And in many cases, doubtless, individuals have attended who really supposed themselves to be giving up their own business, to attend to God's business, and in such cases they made what they supposed to be a real sacrifice, and God in mercy granted them the blessing.

(b.) Ordinarily, a protracted meeting should be conducted through, and the labor chiefly performed by, the same minister, if possible. Sometimes protracted meetings have been held and dependence placed on ministers coming in from day to day. And they would have no blessing. And the reason was obvious. They did not come in a state of mind to enter into the work, and they did not know the state of people's minds, so as to know what to preach. Suppose a person who was sick should call in a different physician every day. He would not know what the symptoms had been, nor what was the course of the disease or of the treatment, nor what remedies had been tried, nor what the patient could bear. Why, he would certainly kill the patient. Just so in a protracted meeting, carried on by a succession of ministers. None of them get into the spirit of it, and generally they do more hurt than good.

A protracted meeting should not, ordinarily, be appointed, unless they can secure the right kind of help, and get a minister or two who will agree to stay on the ground till the meeting is done. Then they will probably secure a rich blessing.

(c.) There should not be so many public meetings as to interfere with the duties of the closet and of the family. Otherwise Christians will lose their spirituality and let go their hold of God, and the meeting will run down.

(d.) Families should not put themselves out so much in entertaining strangers as to neglect prayer and other duties. It is often the case that when a protracted meeting is held, some of the principal families in the church, I mean those who are principally relied on to sustain the meetings, do not get into the work at all. And the reason is, that they are encumbered with much serving. They often take needless trouble to provide for guests who come from a distance to the meeting, and lay themselves out very foolishly to make an entertainment, not only comfortable but sumptuous. It should always be understood that it is the duty of families to have as little working and parade as possible, and to get along with their hospitality in the easiest way, so that they may all have time to pray, and go to the meeting, and to attend to the things of the kingdom.

(e.) By all means guard against unnecessarily keeping late hours. If people keep late hours, night after night, they will inevitably wear out the body, and their health will fail, and there will be a reaction. They sometimes allow themselves to get so excited as to lose their sleep, and become irregular in their meals, till they break down, and a reaction must come. Unless there is the greatest pains taken to keep regular, the excitement will get so great that nature will give way, and they run down, and the work stops.

(f.) All sectarianism should be carefully avoided. If a sectarian spirit breaks out either in the preaching, or praying, or conversation, it will counteract all the good of the meeting.

(g.) Be watchful against placing dependence on a protracted meeting, as if that of itself would produce a revival. This is a point of great danger, and has always been so. This is the great reason why the church in successive generations has always had to give up her measures--because Christians had come to rely on them for success. So it has been in some places, in regard to Protracted Meetings. They have been so blessed that in some places the people have thought that if they should only have a protracted meeting, they would have a blessing, and sinners would be converted of course. And so they have appointed their

meeting, without any preparation in the church, and just sent abroad for some minister of note, and set him to preaching, as if that would convert sinners. It is obvious that the blessing would be withheld from a meeting got up in this way.

(h.) Avoid adopting the idea that a revival cannot be enjoyed without a Protracted Meeting. Some churches have got into a morbid state of feeling on this subject. Their zeal has become all spasmodic and feverish, so that they never think of doing anything to promote a revival, only in that way. When a protracted meeting is held, they will seem to be wonderfully zealous, and then sink down to a torpid state till another protracted meeting produces another spasm. And now multitudes in the church think it is necessary to give up protracted meetings because they are abused in this way. This ought to be guarded against, in every church, so that they may not be driven to give them up, and lose all the benefits that protracted meetings are calculated to produce.

### (3.) The Anxious Seat.

By this I mean the appointment of some particular seat in the place of meeting, where the anxious may come and be addressed particularly, and be made subjects of prayer, and sometimes be conversed with individually. Of late this measure has met with more opposition than any of the others. What is the great objection? I cannot see it. The design of the anxious seat is undoubtedly philosophical, and according to the laws of mind. It has two bearings:

1. When a person is seriously troubled in mind, everybody knows that there is a powerful tendency to conceal it. When a person is borne down with a sense of his condition, if you can get him willing to have it known, if you can get him to break away from the chains of pride, you have gained an important point towards his conversion. This is agreeable to the philosophy of the human mind. How many thousands are there who will bless God to eternity, that when pressed by the truth they were ever brought to take this step, by which they threw off the idea that it was a dreadful thing to have anybody know that they were serious about their souls.

2. Another bearing of the anxious seat, is to detect deception and delusion, and thus prevent false hopes. It has been opposed on the ground, that it was calculated to create delusion and false hopes. But this objection is unreasonable. The truth is the other way. Suppose I were preaching on the subject of Temperance, and that I should first show the evils of intemperance, and bring up the drunkard and his family, and show the various evils produced, till every heart is beating with emotion. Then I portray the great danger of moderate drinking, and show how it leads to intoxication and ruin, and that there is no safety but in TOTAL ABSTINENCE, till a hundred hearts are ready to say, "I will never drink another drop of ardent spirit in the world; if I do, I shall expect to find a drunkard's grave." Now, I stop short, and let the pledge be circulated, and everyone that is fully resolved is ready to sign it. But how many will begin to draw back and hesitate, when you begin to call on them to sign a pledge of total abstinence. One says to himself "Shall I sign it, or not? I thought my mind was made up, but this signing a pledge never to drink again, I do not know about that." Thus you see that when a person is called upon to give a pledge, if he is found not to be decided, he makes it manifest that he was not sincere. That is, he never came to that resolution on the subject, which could be relied on to control his future life. Just so with the awakened sinner. Preach to him, and at the moment he thinks he is willing to do anything; he thinks he is determined to serve the Lord; but bring him to the test, call on him to do one thing, to take one step that shall identify him with the people of God, or cross his pride--his pride comes up, and he refuses; his delusion is brought out, and he finds himself a lost sinner still; whereas, if you had not done it, he might have gone away

flattering himself that he was a Christian. If you say to him, "There is the anxious seat, come out and avow your determination to be on the Lord's side," and if he is not willing to do so small a thing as that, then he is not willing to do anything, and there he is, brought out before his own conscience. It uncovers the delusion of the human heart, and prevents a great many spurious conversions, by showing those who might otherwise imagine themselves willing to do anything for Christ, that in fact they are willing to do nothing.

The church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians. And in modern times, those who have been violently opposed to the anxious seat have been obliged to adopt some substitute, or they could not get along in promoting a revival. Some have adopted the expedient of inviting the people who were anxious for their souls to stay for conversation after the rest of the congregation had retired. But what is the difference? This is as much setting up a test as the other. Others, who would be much ashamed to employ the anxious seat, have asked those who have any feeling on the subject to sit still in their seats when the rest retire. Others have called the anxious to retire into the lecture room. The object of all these is the same, and the principle is the same, to bring people out from the refuge of false shame. One man I heard of who was very far gone in his opposition to new measures, in one of his meetings requested all those who were willing to submit to God, or desired to be made subjects of prayer, to signify it by leaning forward and putting their heads down upon the pew before them. Who does not see that this was a mere evasion of the anxious seat, and that it was designed to answer the purpose in its place, and he adopted this because he felt that something of the kind was important?

Now what objection is there against taking a particular seat, or rising up, or going into the lecture-room? They all mean the same thing, when properly conducted. And they are not novelties in principle at all. The thing has always been done in substance. In Joshua's day, he called on the people to decide what they would do, and they spoke right out in the meeting, "We will serve the Lord; the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

#### REMARKS.

1. If we examine the history of the church we shall find that there never has been an extensive reformation, except by new measures. Whenever the churches get settled down into a form of doing things, they soon get to rely upon the outward doing of it, and so retain the form of religion while they lose the substance. And then it has always been found impossible to arouse them so as to bring about a reformation of the evils, and produce a revival of religion, by simply pursuing that established form. Perhaps it is not too much to say, that it is impossible for God himself to bring about reformations but by new measures. At least, it is a fact that God has always chosen this way, as the wisest and best that he could devise or adopt. And although it has always been the case, that the very measures which God has chosen to employ, and which he has blessed in reviving his work, have been opposed as new measures, and have been denounced, yet he has continued to act upon the same principle. When he has found that a certain mode has lost its influence by having become a form, he brings up some new measure, which will BREAK IN upon their lazy habits, and WAKE UP a slumbering church. And great good has resulted.

2. The same distinctions, in substance, that now exist, have always existed, in all seasons of reformation and revival of religion. There have always been those who particularly adhered to their forms and notions,

and precise way of doing things, as if they had a "Thus saith the Lord" for every one of them. They have called those that differed from them, who were trying to roll the ark of salvation forward, Methodists, New Lights, Radicals, New School, New Divinity, and various other opprobrious names. And the declensions that have followed have been uniformly owing to two causes, which should by no means be overlooked by the church.

(1.) The Old School, or Old Measure party, have persevered in their opposition, and eagerly seized hold of any real or apparent indiscretion in the friends of the work.

In such cases, the churches have gradually lost their confidence in the opposition to new measures, and the cry of "New Divinity," and "Innovation" has ceased to alarm them. They see that the blessing of God is with those that are thus accused of new measures and innovation, and the continued opposition of the Old School, together with the continued success of the New School, have destroyed their confidence in the opposition, and they get tired of hearing the incessant cry of "New Lights," and "New Divinity," and "New Measures." Thus the scale has turned, and the churches have pronounced a verdict in favor of the New School, and of condemnation against the Old School.

(2.) But now, mark me: right here in this state of things, the devil has, again and again, taken the advantage, and individuals have risen up, and being sustained by the confidence of the churches in the New Measure party, and finding them sick of opposition, and ready to do anything that would promote the interests of Christ's kingdom, they have driven headlong themselves, and in some instances have carried the churches into the very vortex of those difficulties which have been predicted by their opposers. Thus, when the battle had been fought, and the victory gained, the rash zeal of some well-meaning but headlong individuals, has brought about a reaction that has spread a pall over the churches for years. This was the case, as is well known, in the days of President Edwards. Here is a rock, upon which a light-house is now built, and upon which if the church now run aground, both parties are entirely without excuse. It is now well known, or ought to be known, that the declension which followed the revivals in those days, together with the declensions which have repeatedly occurred, were owing to the combined influence of the continued and pertinacious opposition of the Old School, and the ultimate bad spirit and recklessness of some individuals of the New School.

And here the note of alarm should be distinctly sounded to both parties, lest the devil should prevail against us, at the very point, and under the very circumstances, where he has so often prevailed. Shall the church never learn wisdom from experience? How often, Oh, how often must these scenes be acted over before the millennium shall come! When will it once be, that the church may be revived, and religion prevail, without exciting such opposition in the church, as eventually to bring about a reaction?

3. The present cry against new measures is highly ridiculous, when we consider the quarter from which it comes, and all the circumstances in the case. It is truly astonishing that grave ministers should really feel alarmed at the new measures of the present day, as if new measures were something new under the sun, and as if the present form and manner of doing things had descended from the apostles, and were established by a "Thus saith the Lord:" when the truth is, that every step of the church's advance from the gross darkness of Popery, has been through the introduction of one new measure after another. We now look with astonishment, and are inclined to look almost with contempt, upon the cry of "Innovation," that has preceded our day; and as we review the fears that multitudes in the church have entertained in by-gone days with respect to innovation, we find it difficult to account for what appear to us the groundless and absurd, at least, if not ridiculous objections and difficulties which they made. But, my hearers, is it not

wonderful, that at this late day, after the church has had so much experience in these matters, that grave and pious men should seriously feel alarmed at the introduction of the simple, the philosophical, and greatly prospered measures of the last ten years? As if new measures were something not to be tolerated, of highly disastrous tendency, and that should wake the notes and echoes of alarm in every nook and corner of the church.

4. We see why it is that those who have been making the ado about new measures have not been successful in promoting revivals.

They have been taken up with the evils, real or imaginary, which have attended this great and blessed work of God. That there have been evils, no one will pretend to deny. But I do believe, that no revival ever existed since the world began, of so great power and extent as the one that has prevailed for the last ten years, which has not been attended with as great or greater evils. Still a large portion of the church have been frightening themselves and others, by giving constant attention to the evils of revivals. One of the professors in a Presbyterian Theological Seminary, felt it his duty to write a series of letters to Presbyterians, which were extensively circulated, the object of which seemed to be to sound the note of alarm throughout all the borders of the church, in regard to the evils attending revivals. While men are taken up with the evils instead of the excellencies of a blessed work of God, how can it be expected that they will be useful in promoting it? I would say all this in great kindness, but still it is a point upon which I must not be silent.

5. Without new measures it is impossible that the church should succeed in gaining the attention of the world to religion. There are so many exciting subjects constantly brought before the public mind, such a running to and fro, so many that cry "Lo here," and "Lo there," that the church cannot maintain her ground, cannot command attention, without very exciting preaching, and sufficient novelty in measures, to get the public ear. The measures of politicians, of infidels and heretics, the scrambling after wealth, the increase of luxury, and the ten thousand exciting and counteracting influences that bear upon the church and upon the world, will gain their attention and turn all men away from the sanctuary and from the altars of the Lord, unless we increase in wisdom and piety, and wisely adopt such new measures as are calculated to get the attention of men to the gospel of Christ. I have already said, in the course of these lectures, that novelties should be introduced no faster than they are really called for. They should be introduced with the greatest wisdom, and caution, and prayerfulness, and in a manner calculated to excite as little opposition as possible. But new measures we must have. And may God prevent the church from settling down in any set of forms, and getting the present or any other edition of her measures stereotyped.

6. It is evident that we must have more exciting preaching, to meet the character and wants of the age. Ministers are generally beginning to find this out. And some of them complain of it, and suppose it to be owing to new measures, as they call them. They say that such ministers as our fathers would have been glad to hear, now cannot be heard, cannot get a settlement, nor collect an audience. And they think that new measures have perverted the taste of the people. But this is not the difficulty. The character of the age is changed, and these men have not conformed to it, but retain the same stiff, dry, prosing style of preaching that answered half a century ago.

Look at the Methodists. Many of their ministers are unlearned, in the common sense of the term, many of them taken right from the shop or the farm, and yet they have gathered congregations, and pushed their way, and won souls everywhere. Wherever the Methodists have gone, their plain, pointed and simple, but warm and animated mode of preaching has always gathered congregations. Few Presbyterian ministers

have gathered so large assemblies, or won so many souls. Now are we to be told that we must pursue the same old, formal mode of doing things, amidst all these changes? As well might the North River be rolled back, as the world converted under such preaching. Those who adopt a different style of preaching, as the Methodists have done, will run away from us. The world will escape from under the influence of this old fashioned or rather new fashioned ministry. It is impossible that the public mind should be held by such preaching. We must have exciting, powerful preaching, or the devil will have the people, except what the Methodists can save. It is impossible that our ministers should continue to do good, unless we have innovations in regard to the style of preaching. Many ministers are finding it out already, that a Methodist preacher, without the advantages of a liberal education will draw a congregation around him which a Presbyterian minister, with perhaps ten times as much learning, cannot equal, because he has not the earnest manner of the other, and does not pour out fire upon his hearers when he preaches.

7. We see the importance of having young ministers obtain right views of revivals. In a multitude of cases, I have seen that great pains are taken to frighten our young men, who are preparing for the ministry, about the evils of revivals, new measures, and the like. Young men in some theological seminaries are taught to look upon new measures as if they were the very inventions of the devil. How can such men have revivals. So when they come out, they look about, and watch, and start, as if the devil was there. Some young men in Princeton, a few years ago, came out with an essay upon the "evils of revivals." I should like to know, now, how many of those young men have enjoyed revivals among their people, since they have been in the ministry; and if any have, I should like to know whether they have not repented of that piece about the evils of revivals.

If I had a voice so loud as to be heard at Princeton, I would speak to those young men on this subject. It is high time to talk plainly on this point. The church is groaning in all her borders for the want of suitable ministers. Good men are laboring and are willing to labor night and day to assist in educating young men for the ministry, to promote revivals of religion; and when they come out of the seminary, some of them are as shy of all the measures that God blesses as they are of popery itself.

Shall it be so always? Must we educate young men for the ministry, and have them come out frightened to death about new measures, as if there had never been any such thing as new measures. They ought to know that new measures are no new thing in the church. Let them GO ALONG, and keep at work themselves, and not be frightened about new measures. I have been pained to see that some men, in giving accounts of revivals, have evidently felt themselves obliged to be particular in detailing the measures used, to avoid the inference that new measures were introduced; evidently feeling that even the church would undervalue the revival unless it appeared to have been promoted without new measures. Besides, this caution in detailing the measures to demonstrate that there was nothing new, looks like admitting that new measures are wrong because they are new, and that a revival is more valuable because it was not promoted by new measures. In this way, I apprehend that much evil has been done, already, and if the practice is to continue, it must come to this, that a revival must be judged of, by the fact that it occurred in connection with new or old measures. I never will countenance such a spirit, nor condescend to guard an account of a revival against the imputation of new or old measures. I believe new measures are right, that is, that it is no objection to a measure that it is new or old.

Let a minister enter fully into his work, and pour out his heart to God for a blessing, and whenever he sees the want of any measure to bring the truth more powerfully before the minds of the people, let him adopt it and not be afraid, and God will not withhold his blessing. If ministers will not go forward, and will not preach the gospel with power and earnestness, and will not turn out of their tracks to do anything new for

the purpose of saving souls, they will grieve the Holy Spirit away, and God will visit them with his curse, and raise up other ministers to do work in the world.

8. It is the right and duty of ministers to adopt new measures for promoting revivals. In some places the church have opposed their minister when he has attempted to employ those measures which God has blessed for a revival, and have gone so far as to give up their prayer meetings, and give up laboring to save souls, and stand aloof from everything, because their minister has adopted what they call new measures. No matter how reasonable the measures are in themselves, nor how seasonable, nor how much God may bless them. It is enough that they are called new measures, and they will not have anything to do with new measures, nor tolerate them among the people. And thus they fall out by the way, and grieve away the Spirit of God, and put a stop to the revival, when the world around them is going to hell.

FINALLY.--This zealous adherence to particular forms and modes of doing things, which has led the church to resist innovations in measures, savors strongly of fanaticism. And what is not a little singular, is that fanatics of this stamp are always the first to cry out "fanaticism." What is that but fanaticism in the Roman Catholic Church, that causes them to adhere with such pertinacity to their particular modes, and forms, and ceremonies, and fooleries? They act as if all these things were established by divine authority; as if there were a "Thus saith the Lord" for every one of them. Now we justly style this a spirit of fanaticism, and esteem it worthy of rebuke. But it is just as absolutely fanatical, for the Presbyterian Church, or any other church, to be sticklish for her particular forms, and to act as if they were established by divine authority. The fact is, that God has established, in no church, any particular form, or manner of worship, for promoting the interests of religion. The scriptures are entirely silent on these subjects, under the gospel dispensation, and the church is left to exercise her own discretion in relation to all such matters. And I hope it will not be thought unkind, when I say again, that to me it appears, that the unkind, angry zeal for a certain mode and manner of doing things, and the overbearing, exterminating cry against new measures, SAVORS STRONGLY OF FANATICISM.

The only thing insisted upon under the gospel dispensation, in regard to measures, is that there should be decency and order. "Let all things be done decently and in order." We are required to guard against all confusion and disorderly conduct. But what is decency and order? Will it be pretended that an anxious meeting, or a protracted meeting, or an anxious seat, is inconsistent with decency and order? I should most sincerely deprecate, and most firmly resist whatever was indecent and disorderly in the worship of God's house. But I do not suppose that by "order" we are to understand any particular set mode, in which any church may have been accustomed to perform their service.

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