

CONTENTS

Foreword	7
1. Born After Midnight	9
2. The Missing Witness	13
3. Faith Is a Journey, Not a Destination	19
4. The Key to Human Life Is Theological	23
5. The Power of God to Usward	29
6. We Live in a State of Emergency	35
7. Words Without Deeds: The Vice of Religion	39
8. The Erotic vs. the Spiritual	45
9. What to Do about the Devil	49
10. To Be Right, We Must Think Right	53
11. The Way of True Greatness	57
12. Heard but by Our Singing	63
13. Faith Dares to Fail	67
14. Light Requires Sight	71
15. Accepting the Universe	77
16. Sanctifying the Ordinary	81
17. Quality Matters, Not Size	85
18. Let's Be Humble about Our Orthodoxy	91
19. Refined or Removed?	97
20. Are We Losing Our "Oh!"?	103
21. Only a Few Things Matter	107
22. The Value of a Sanctified Imagination	111
23. Let's Go Off the Defensive	117
24. The Tragedy of Wasted Religious Activity	121
25. The Transmutation of Wealth	125

26. The Christian Is Wiser Than He Thinks	129
27. The Fellowship of the Brethren	133
28. The Unity of All Things	137
29. Nearness Is Likeness	141
30. Work and Worship	147
31. The Powers That Shape Us	151
32. Why We Are Lukewarm about Christ's Return	157
33. Our Hope of Future Blessedness	161
34. Joy Will Come in Its Own Time	165

Born After Midnight

Among revival-minded Christians, I have heard the saying, “Revivals are born after midnight.”

This is one of those proverbs that, while not quite literally true, yet points to something very true.

If we understand the saying to mean that God does not hear our prayer for revival made in the daytime, it is of course not true. If we take it to mean that prayer offered when we are tired and worn-out has greater power than prayer made when we are rested and fresh, again it is not true. God would need to be very austere indeed to require us to turn our prayer into penance, or to enjoy seeing us punish ourselves by intercession. Traces of such ascetical notions are still found among some gospel Christians, and while these brethren are to be commended for their zeal, they are not to be excused for unconsciously attributing to God a streak of sadism unworthy of fallen men.

Yet there is considerable truth in the idea that revivals are born after midnight, for revivals (or any other spiritual

gifts and graces) come only to those who want them badly enough. It may be said without qualification that every man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. He may not be as full as he wishes he were, but he is most certainly as full as he wants to be.

Our Lord placed this beyond dispute when He said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Hunger and thirst are physical sensations that, in their acute stages, may become real pain. It has been the experience of countless seekers after God that, when their desires became a pain, they were suddenly and wonderfully filled. The problem is not to persuade God to fill us, but to want God sufficiently to permit Him to do so. The average Christian is so cold and so contented with His wretched condition that there is no vacuum of desire into which the blessed Spirit can rush in satisfying fullness.

Occasionally, there will appear on the religious scene a man whose unsatisfied spiritual longings become so big and important in his life that they crowd out every other interest. Such a man refuses to be content with the safe and conventional prayers of the frost-bound brethren who "lead in prayer" week after week and year after year in the local assemblies. His yearnings carry him away and often make something of a nuisance out of him. His puzzled fellow Christians shake their heads and look knowingly at each other, but like the blind man who cried after his sight and was rebuked by the disciples, he "cried the

more a great deal” (Mark 10:48). And if he has not yet met the conditions, or there is something hindering the answer to his prayer, he may pray on into the late hours. Not the hour of night, but the state of his heart, decides the time of his visitation. For him it may well be that revival comes after midnight.

It is very important, however, that we understand that long prayer vigils, or even strong crying and tears, are not in themselves meritorious acts. Every blessing flows out of the goodness of God as from a fountain. Even those rewards for good works about which certain teachers talk so fulsomely, and which they always set in sharp contrast to the benefits received by grace alone, are at bottom as certainly of grace as is the forgiveness of sin itself. The holiest apostle can claim no more than that he is an unprofitable servant. The very angels exist out of the pure goodness of God. No creature can “earn” anything in the usual meaning of the word. All things are by and of the sovereign goodness of God.

Lady Julian summed it up quaintly when she wrote,

It is more honor to God, and more very delight, that we faithfully pray to Himself of His goodness and cleave thereunto by His grace, and with true understanding, and steadfast by love, than if we took all the means that heart can think. For if we took all those means it is too little, and not full honor to God. But in His goodness is all the whole, and there

faileth right nought. . . . For the goodness of God is the highest prayer, and it cometh down to the lowest part of our need.

Yet for all God's goodwill toward us, He is unable to grant us our heart's desires till all our desires have been reduced to one. When we have dealt with our carnal ambitions; when we have trodden upon the lion and adder of the flesh, have trampled the dragon of self-love under our feet and have truly reckoned ourselves to have died unto sin, then and only then can God raise us to newness of life and fill us with His blessed Holy Spirit.

It is easy to learn the doctrine of personal revival and victorious living; it is quite another thing to take our cross and plod on to the dark and bitter hill of self-renunciation. Here many are called and few are chosen. For every one that actually crosses over into the Promised Land, there are many who stand for a while and look longingly across the river and then turn sadly back to the comparative safety of the sandy wastes of the old life.

No, there is no merit in late-hour prayers, but it requires a serious mind and a determined heart to pray past the ordinary into the unusual. Most Christians never do. And it is more than possible that the rare soul who presses on into the unusual experience reaches there after midnight.