

**LETTERS TO REV. B. STOW,
R. H. NEALE,
AND R. W. CUSHMAN,
ON MODERN REVIVALS**

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Letters to Rev. B. Stow, R. H. Neale, and R. W. Cushman, on Modern Revivals by Otis A. Skinner

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OTIS A. SKINNER

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LETTERS

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REV. B. STOW, R. H. NEALE, AND
R. W. CUSHMAN,

ON

MODERN REVIVALS.

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By OTIS A. SKINNER.  
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1842.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following work was written from a deep sense of duty. The author was almost daily assailed, during the revival which called it forth, in a personal and exceedingly abusive manner. He was denounced as an enemy to God, and was repeatedly charged with preaching a doctrine which he knew to be false. His ministering brethren, and all liberal Christians, were assailed in the same spirit; and their opposition to the revival was called opposition to God. They were repeatedly denounced as infidels, and doomed to hell. They were addressed as though strangers to religion, and interrogated with regard to the number of their prayers, and called upon, in the most peremptory manner, to give up their views.

This violent and persevering opposition was endured, till endurance became a sin. The author, therefore, speaks in self-defence; and, so far as he speaks for others, it is for their defence. He is a friend of revivals, but not of modern revivals. He believes in the influence

of the Spirit, but not in its supernatural influence. The day of miracles, he thinks, is passed ; and, therefore, he does not allow that, in conversion, there is any thing supernatural.

The Letters composing this work were addressed to Messrs. Stow, Neale, and Cushman, because they, it was understood, were chiefly instrumental in bringing Mr. Knapp to this city, and because they were the first to give countenance to his measures and his personal attacks upon liberal Christians.

The author has no ill feelings towards his assailants ; and, though they may have intended evil to the Universalist societies, he has the satisfaction of stating, that the excitement has added many to their number, and greatly to their zeal and firmness. He believes the same is true with regard to its effects upon the Unitarians.

The author has avoided, as much as possible, all personalities ; for it was his wish to give a general expose of modern revivals, and place revival religion in contrast with the beautiful religion of the Saviour.

Boston, March 2, 1842.

LETTERS

TO

REV. B. STOW, R. H. NEALE, AND
R. W. CUSHMAN.

LETTER I.

CONTENTS. — *New Measures* — Messrs. Stow, Neale, and Cushman, uphold Mr. Knapp — Reason for writing — True view of a Revival — Description of a modern Revival — The general estimation in which Mr. Knapp is held by the Clergy of Boston — False Representations of Liberal Christians — Views of Dr. Sharp, Prof. Sears and Mr. Hague — Fears with which Mr. Knapp was introduced into Boston — Extract from the Christian Review.

REV. GENTLEMEN, — I have no apology to offer for addressing you in this public manner. By the course which you have recently pursued, you have openly avowed yourselves the devoted advocates of modern revivals. You have departed from the established customs of your denomination, and justified the introduction among you of measures which are entirely new, and which some of your most worthy and talented ministering brethren regard as highly injurious to the cause of Christ. You have approved a style of preaching which

is to the good citizens of Boston a great novelty, and which, for vulgarity, extravagance, misrepresentation, and severity, has never been surpassed in any age of fanaticism. You have held in your arms for weeks one who has rioted in the work of destruction, and whose labors have produced more cases of insanity, a greater amount of sectarian hatred and bitterness, and done more to drive the Christian spirit from the church, than any man who ever occupied a Boston pulpit. You, gentlemen, are accountable for what has been done. You introduced here this fanatical preacher. You sat in your pulpits and laughed at his sarcasm and ridicule, when the ravings of those he had maddened might have been heard from their wretched homes even to your churches, had it not been for the ravings to which you were there listening.

I believe, gentlemen, that you are naturally amiable in temper, and that you have heretofore been somewhat distinguished for the mild virtues of the gospel, and a warm sympathy with your fellow Christians of other sects. But a sad change has recently taken place in your feelings. You have been infatuated by a religious sorcerer. You have rejoiced in the labors of a man who has produced scenes of desolation that have made misanthropy itself weep. You said to him, *Go on, go on, deal out your abuse, ridicule your opposers, terrify the weak, excite the multitude*, when the fathers of our city were beseeching you, in the name of Heaven, to change your course, and allow your fellow-citi-

zens the privilege of enjoying unmolested their religious opinions. But you would not listen to their entreaties, and on you must fall the discredit, if not the evil, of this procedure.

But, gentlemen, I do not write so much for your benefit, as I do for the benefit of those you have deceived. That you are sick of the revival, I have no doubt; that you are ashamed of the part which has been acted, I have no doubt; and, could I believe that you would think it expedient to avow publicly your convictions, I would lay aside my pen, and spare myself the unpleasant task of exposing the measures and effects of your revival. Your brother Hague, of the Federal Street Church, acted the part of a high-minded Christian. Though at first he approved of the revival, he had the manliness to withdraw his support, and lift up his voice against it, when he became convinced that he had misjudged. For this he is to be commended; and he will reap his reward in the approval of a good conscience, and the permanent prosperity of religion among his people. We should never be unwilling to look back after having put our hand to the plough, if we find we have engaged in a bad cause. It is ever honorable to draw back *from* perdition.

Before proceeding to the expose which I am about to make, I wish to say a word to guard you against misapprehension. I am no enemy to revivals of religion. If I know my own heart, I can pray as fervently as any man,—"O Lord, revive thy work." I am a believer in conversion, in the