

Revival Study Part 5

The American Revivals – B. Evans

Handout from the class taught by Pastor Doug Livingston, October 10, 2012

This pamphlet, containing the outline of a lecture delivered at Scarborough, England in 1859, gives a brief history of American revivals & a very helpful assessment of the 1858-59 awakening, which was currently in progress in the U.S.

In the first American revival (1730-1750), God used Jonathan Edwards, without passion or excitement, to preach the doctrines of God's grace, the evil of sin, man's responsibility & utter ruin, the sufficiency of Christ's death & the power of the Divine Spirit. All of these were brilliantly addressed by Edwards in his message "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" based on Deuteronomy 32:35.

In contrast, the second American revival (1831-1832), of which not much was written, was marked by excitement & passion. Revival ministers roamed from city to city w long meetings lasting for sometimes 2 to 3 weeks. There was much of man, but less of God. And yet, God still worked to bring souls into His Kingdom.

The present great awakening (1858-1859) was quite different in that there was less of man & more of God. There was less passion & religious excitement, but more of the manifest power & presence of the Divine Spirit.

The state of the Church of God was very low. Its piety was feeble. Its success very limited. In its inner sanctuary, the spirit of the world was enthroned. Christian people were under its influence. They were attracted to physical things & not to Christ.

And, then, the country was hit with an economic crisis which ruined many of its chief citizens. Families of the highest rank, who had enjoyed many of the concentrated joys of social & domestic life, were reduced to poverty & want. Christians felt this & were humbled. The uncertainty of everything but Christ was seen. In the depth of their distress they returned to God.

All the evangelical communities, & some who would regard it as no compliment to be classed in the number, have been roused to deeper earnestness – more persevering prayer, & have reaped in proportion. The work originated with, & has been sustained by prayer. The people would gather in the morning, at noon & in the evening for prayer.

The noon prayer meeting was started by a city missionary who thought 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. would be beneficial to businessmen. It started out with 6 men once-a-week, then grew & grew &, in some places, became a daily event.

The format consisted of a layman or minister starting out with a reading of Scripture which was followed by a known hymn & an invitation to pray. In a prayer meeting in Philadelphia, anyone was allowed to speak or pray for 3 minutes when a bell would ring to allow others to do the same. Hymns were sung, prayer requests were read &, at 1:00 p.m., a minister would pronounce a benediction & the crowd would disperse, although some ministers would stay to address any spiritual needs.

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The results of this revival were incredible:

Prayers for unsaved loved ones were being answered in spectacular ways! Read the testimonies on pages 7 & 8.

Young men were enrolling in colleges & theological schools to be trained for the Master's service! Millions of people in China, Japan & Africa were crying out for the Americans to come & help them!

Men & women took seriously holy living, faith, prayer & their witness to the lost!

Women of social standing became Christ to those women who were poor, homeless & downtrodden!

Businessmen would open up their theaters for worship services!