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REVIVAL

#166

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THE REAL REASONS FOR REVIVAL

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now the way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name”—Exodus 33:12-17.

Before we continue with our study of this great chapter from Exodus, let me remind you of what we have learned from it up to this point. Moses has prayed for a personal assurance as far as he himself is concerned; he has asked for power, power for himself and for the people and, thirdly, he has asked for some exceptional authentication of the Church and his message. And now we must go on to consider why he prayed for these things. What were his motives? Surely this is all-important for us, because, if I understand the situation at all, it is in this realm of purpose and of motives that we so constantly go wrong. We start at the wrong end. And, therefore, shall derive great benefit and instruction as we watch Moses praying here. And, of course, you will find everywhere in the Scriptures that what is true of him at this point is true

of God's intercessors, God's saints, as they plead with God, wherever you find them in the Scriptures. Moreover, I would remind you that if you read the history of the great revivals of the past, you will find that, as you read of the men whom God has used most signally, as you study them in the period before the revival came, when they were pleading and interceding, you will find invariably that they were animated by exactly the same motives as we find here in the case of Moses.

So we must be perfectly clear with regard to this matter of our motives. *I am calling you to pray for revival. Yes, but why should you pray for revival? Why should anybody pray for revival? And the answer that is first given here is this: a concern for **the glory of God**.* You will find it at the end of verse 13: 'Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people.' That is the motive. That is the reason. Moses was concerned primarily about **the glory of God**. Now, you will find that he constantly used this particular argument with God. There is an illustration of this in the previous chapter, chapter 32 verses 11 and 12. God was angry with the Children of Israel because they had made the golden calf and had rebelled against him, and God said to Moses,

I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? (Exod. 32. 9-12).

You see Moses' concern? He is concerned about the name, and, as it were, the reputation and **the glory of God**. And that is the point he is making here again. 'This nation,' he says, 'is thy people.' He is saying, in effect, that God's honour, and God's glory is involved in this situation. They are, after all, his people, they have claimed that, he has given indications of that, he has brought them out of Egypt in a marvellous and a miraculous manner. He has brought them through the Red Sea, is he going to leave them here in the wilderness? What will the Egyptians say? What will the other nations say? Has he failed? He promised them great things. Can he not execute them? Can he not bring them to fulfilment? Moses is suggesting to God that his own glory, his own honour, is involved in this whole situation. Now you will find this plea endlessly in the Psalms. You will find it constantly in the Prophets. Their prayer to God is, 'for thine own name's sake', as if to say, 'We have no right to speak, and we are not really asking it for ourselves, but for thine own name's sake, for thy glory's sake, for the sake of thine eternal honour.' Moses, thus, had a concern for and was jealous about, the name and **the glory of God**. And here he is asking God, for his own sake, to do this extra, this special, thing.

Now, we cannot go into all these points in detail, but this is the thing that matters is it not? The Church, after all, is the Church of God. 'She is His new creation, by water and word.' We are a people for God's own peculiar possession. And why has he called us out of darkness into his own marvellous light? Surely it is that we may show forth his praises, his excellencies, his virtues. And, therefore, we should be concerned about this matter primarily because of the name, and the glory, the honour of God himself. Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that the world judges God himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole of the Christian faith, by what it sees in us. We are his representatives, we are the people who take his name upon us, we are the people who talk about him, and the man outside the Church regards the Church as the representative of God. And, therefore, I argue that we must emulate the example of Moses, as we find it here. Our first concern should be about **the glory of God**.

But am I being unfair when I suggest that this is scarcely ever mentioned? There is great concern about the Church today, of course, but what is the concern about? Today's concern is about statistics, and figures. People are talking about churches being empty, and they talk about means and methods of trying to fill them and of getting the people in again. They are interested in the figures, in membership, in finance, and in organization. How often do you hear annual conferences and assemblies expressing a concern about **the glory of God**, and the honour of the name of God? No, our attitude seems rather to be that the Church is a human organization, and of course we are concerned about what is happening to it, as a man is concerned if his business is not going well. We are businessmen, and we are concerned about the institution, and the organisation. But this was not Moses' primary concern. His first and chief concern was about **the glory of God**. Are you grieved at the state of the Church? If so, why are you grieved about it? Is it because you are old enough to remember the end of the Victorian era, or the Edwardian period, when it was the custom for people to crowd into churches? Is it just a sort of nostalgia for the great days of the Church? Or do we know something of a concern for the name of God? Are we pained? Are we hurt? Are we grieved? Does it weigh heavily upon our hearts, and minds, and spirits, when we see the godlessness that surrounds us, and the name of God taken in vain? Do we know something of this zeal, this holy zeal?

Have you noticed the concern of the Psalmist in Psalm 79, when he says, 'Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?'. That is what they are saying. They are laughing as they say 'They talked about some great God, who was the God above every other god. They said that the God of Israel was the God, they gloried in him, they said he was

wonderful. Where is he? Look at them! How can these people claim that they are in the hands of such a God? They would never be in such a condition if that were really true.’ You see, what is involved, primarily, is the glory and the honour and the name of God. It is not our institutions, it is not our success or failure, that matters, the primary thing is *the glory of God*. Of course, the Psalmist sees it. Take the second Psalm, how well he puts it. ‘The kings of the earth set themselves’, he says, ‘and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying....’ Of course, they were attacking David, they were attacking the Children of Israel, but David has the insight of a spiritually minded man. He says, ‘It is not against me, it is against God. It is against the Lord and his anointed that these people are setting themselves.’

Indeed, this is the great theme that you will find running everywhere through the Psalms. Let me give you just one other instance of it, in Psalm 83. ‘For, lo,’ says the Psalmist, ‘thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against the hidden ones.’ Yes, but it is all against God. And there is that marvellous, and almost lyrical example to be found Acts 4.

After they had tried Peter and John and forbidden them to preach the gospel, the authorities were determined to exterminate the Church and put an end to all her preaching, so they made serious threats to the Apostles. Peter and John went back and they began to pray with all the assembled company of believers. And this is what they said—notice how they were quoting the second Psalm—‘The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.’ Then their own words, ‘For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel, determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings...’ (4.26-26). You see, they had a clear insight. You would have thought that they would have prayed entirely about themselves, but they did not do that primarily. They recognised that all that was happening was really against God. And here is the thing, surely, that we must needs recapture. We are so subjective in our approach, always thinking about ourselves. And that is not the way to pray for revival. **We must, in the first place, be concerned about God, his glory, his honour, his name.**

This, to me, is the essence of the whole matter. Go through the great prayers of the Old Testament and you will find it always there. These men had a passion for God, they were in trouble, they were unhappy, because this great God was not being worshipped as he should be. And they prayed God for his own sake, for his glory’s sake, to vindicate his own name and to arise and to scatter his enemies. That is the first thing.

Then the second thing—and it must always come in the second place, never in the first—is a concern about the honour of the Church herself. Incidentally, in this particular passage, there is nothing more wonderful than the way in which Moses shows his concern for the Church, which was then the nation of Israel. God had been giving Moses some wonderful intimations of his loving interest in him, but Moses is not content with that. Moses does not merely seek personal blessings. He wants to make sure that the Children of Israel, as a whole, are going to be involved in this blessing. He is given again a wonderful example of that in Exodus 32, one of the most glorious passages in the Old Testament. ‘It came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. *And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet ‘ pause. It is as if he broke down and could not speak any longer. He is in a great agony of soul—‘Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin— ...’ and then he is able to speak— ‘and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written’ (32:30-32). I do not want to go on living, he says, if you are not going to include them in the blessing.*

God had said, ‘I am going to blot out this people, I am going to make a nation out of you.’ ‘No,’ says Moses, ‘blot me out as well. I do not want to go on without them.’

Oh, this is true intercession. The man is concerned about the state of the whole Church, and his personal life and welfare and well-being are nothing to him, unless the Church is to be blessed. And here he is in this chapter repeating all that. ‘Thy people, this nation.’

We could linger over this, but we must move on. I would simply leave it like this. **It seems to me that there is no hope for revival until you and I, and all of us, have reached the stage in which we begin to forget ourselves a little, and to be concerned for the Church, for God’s body, his people here on earth. So many of our prayers are subjective and self-centred. We have our problems and difficulties, and by the time that we have finished with them, we are tired and exhausted and we do not pray for the Church. My blessing, my need, my this, my that. Now, I am not being hard and unkind, God has promised to deal with our problems. But where does the Church come into our prayers and intercessions? Do we go beyond ourselves and our families? We stand before the world and we say the only hope for the world is Christianity. We say the Church, and the Church alone, has the message that is needed. We see the problems of society, they are shouting at us and they are increasing week by week. And we know that this is the only answer. Very well, then, if we know that and if we believe that, let me ask you in the name of God, how often do you pray that the Church may have power to preach this, in such a manner that all**

these citadels that are raising themselves against God shall be razed to the ground and shall be flattened in his holy presence? How much time do you give to praying that the preachers of the gospel may be endued with the power of the Holy Ghost? Are you interceding about this? Are you concerned about it? Moses, I say was more concerned about this than about himself. He would not go up alone to the promised land. He did not want to be made the great man alone. 'No, it is the Church,' he said, 'I am not going on unless they are all coming with me, and with you in the midst.'

We must learn to think again about the Christian Church. Our whole approach has become subjective. It is subjective in evangelism, it is subjective in the teaching of sanctification, it is subjective from beginning to end. We start with ourselves, and our own needs and problems, and God is an agency to supply an answer, to give us what we need, but it is all wrong. Evangelism, and everything else, must start with God and his glory. The God who is over all and to whom all things belong. It is because men are not glorifying him that they need to be saved, not to have some little personal problem solved. And if the motive for evangelism is to fill the Churches, it is doomed to failure. Of course, you may fill your Churches, and it will not help you, it will not avail you, it will not make any difference to the main problems. It is this conception of the Church as the people of God, who bear his name and who have been brought into being by him, it is this that matters. We must cease to think of the Church as a gathering of institutions and organisations, and we must get back this notion that we are the people of God. And that it is for his name's sake, and because his name is upon us, we must plead for the Church. Yes, and for her glory and her honour, because she is his.

And then, of course, the third reason is that Moses is concerned about the heathen that are outside. He wants them to know: 'For wherein shall it be known here [in the wilderness, where we are], that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.'

These are the motives in praying for revival. For the name, and honour, and glory of God and for the sake of the Church which is his. Yes, and then for the sake of those people that are outside, that are scoffing, and mocking, jeering, and laughing, and ridiculing. 'Oh, God,' say his people, one after another, 'arise and silence them. Do something so that we may be able to say to them, "Be still, keep silent, give up."

'Be still, and know that I am God' (Ps. 46. 10). That is the prayer of the people of God. They have got their eye on those that are outside. And you find illustrations of this right through the Bible. And this has been true also of all men who have felt the burden of the condition of the Church, and whose hearts are breaking because they have seen the name of God blasphemed. Oh, you will find it in very strong language here in the Bible, sometimes so strong that certain little people are troubled by the imprecatory Psalms. But the imprecatory Psalms are just an expression of the zeal these men have for the glory of God. 'Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,' says the man in Psalm 104. There they are, he says, spoiling your great creation. I see the mountains, and the valleys, and the streams. I see the cedars of God which are full of sap.... He thinks of the birds and all creation conspiring together to show the wonder, and *the glory of God*. But here is the sinner, who, in spite of all God's goodness to him, still reviles, and rebels and blasphemes. And the Psalmist, in his righteous indignation and zeal, says, 'Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth.'

And that, I would say, is the real explanation of these people. It was not a desire for personal vengeance. **It was that these men were consumed by a passion for God and his glory and his great name.** And there is something wrong with us if we do not feel this desire within us that God should arise and do something that would shut the mouths, and stop the tongues of these arrogant blasphemers of today, who speak with their mincing words upon radio and television—these supposed philosophers, these godless arrogant men. Do we not feel, sometimes, this desire within us that they might know that God is God, and that he is the eternal God? Ah, yes, there is a desire that they may be answered, that they may be silenced, but it does not stop at that, of course. Following that comes a desire that they may be convicted, that they may be convinced, that they may really see the truth. A desire that God should do something so strange, so wonderful, that they would be arrested and apprehended, and say, 'What is this? Are these people right after all? Do our arguments not seem to be falling astray? We thought that God had failed, that he had left them there in the wilderness. Everything was going against them.' Then if God should suddenly break in and do something miraculous, and lead them through, the heathen will have to think again and say, 'Ah, perhaps they were right after all.' And that is the first step in the direction of conviction and conversion. Their interest has been aroused, and whenever you get a revival that always happens. People who have always scoffed at the name of God, have gone to look on in sheer curiosity, and that has often led to their conversion. Now Moses is praying for that, that these people may be arrested and apprehended, and may develop an interest in which God is leading them, and is directing them.

This should make us ask, therefore, whether we are concerned at all about these people who are outside. It is a terrible state for the Church to be in, when she merely consists of a collection of very nice and respectable people who have no concern for the world, people who pass it by, drawing in their skirts in their horror at the bestiality, and the foulness, and the ugliness of it all. We not only want the scoffers to be silenced, we should desire that these men and women, who are

like sheep without a shepherd, might have their eyes opened, might begin to see the cause of their troubles and be delivered from the chains of iniquity, and the shackles of infamy, and vice, and foulness. Are we truly concerned about such people and are we praying to God that he would do something, that they may be influenced and affected?

There, as I understand it, are the three main motives which animated Moses as he offered up these petitions to God. There is something else for us to notice and that is the way in which he prayed. We have seen what he prayed for, we have seen why he prayed for it, now let us watch his method of prayer. And if ever we needed instruction, it is just here.

There are certain elements that always come out in all the great biblical prayers, and the first characteristic of Moses' prayer is its boldness, its confidence. There is no hesitation here. There is a quiet confidence. Oh, let me use the term, there is a holy boldness. This is the great characteristic of all prayers that have ever prevailed. It is, of course, inevitable. You cannot pray truly, still less can you intercede, if you have not an assurance of your acceptance, and if you do not know the way into the holiest of all. If, when you get down on your knees, you are reminded of your sins, and are wondering what you can do about them, if you have to spend all your time praying for forgiveness and pardon, wondering whether God is listening or not, how can you pray? How can you intercede, as Moses did here? No, Moses was face to face with God, he was assured, he was bold with a holy boldness. As we have seen, God had granted him intimations of his nearness and so he was able to speak with this confidence and assurance.

Now this is absolutely vital to prayer. Do you know the way into the holiest of all? There is only one way—Hebrews 4.14 puts it so perfectly—'Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God....' Then the writer goes on to describe him as a high Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Then, he comes to the prayer, 'Let us therefore,' he says, 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' You notice his 'therefore'? 'Therefore, let us come boldly.' What does it refer to? Oh, it refers to the truth about the great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens, and to all the truth about him. That is the only way to be bold in the presence of God. If I look at myself I cannot be bold, I become speechless. With Job, I put my hand upon my mouth: 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 42. 5-6). I cannot speak. But I must speak if I am to intercede. How can I do so with confidence and assurance? There is only one answer- it is to know that my great High Priest is Jesus, the Son of God, and that by his blood I have a right of entry into the holiest of all, and can go there with boldness. Notice the confidence and the assurance with which Moses prayed. And, if you read some of the prayers of the saints of the centuries, you will find this self-same thing.

But, there is a second point, which is most valuable and interesting, and that is the element of reasoning, and of arguing that comes in. It is very daring, but it is very true. Let me remind you of it. 'Moses said unto the Lord, See...'—which really means that he is arguing with God—'See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said....' You see, he is reminding God of what he had said. He is having an argument with God: 'And yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore,' says Moses, as if he were saying to God, 'Be logical, be consistent, carry out your own argument. You cannot say this to me and then not do anything.' 'Now therefore, I pray thee, if...'—still arguing—'if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.' And then in verse 16, 'For, wherein'—if you do not do this—'wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated....' He reasoned with God. He argued with God. He reminded God of his own promises and he pleaded with God in the light of them. He said, 'Oh, God, can you not see that having said this you must...?'

Is it right, someone may ask, to speak to God like that? Is this not presumption? No, these things go together. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, who talked so much about our going boldly to the throne of grace, at the same time reminds us that we do so always with reverence and with godly fear. This is all right. What is happening here is this: we are not seeing a man under the Law speaking to the Law-giver. No, it is a child here speaking to his Father. And the little child can take liberties with his father that a grown-up man, who is not his child, would not dare to take. Oh, yes, this is a child speaking, and he knows it. God has spoken to him, as it were, face to face, and Moses knows that. And he comes with his love, and his reverence, and his godly fear, and he ventures to argue. He says, 'You have said this, therefore...

'Again I commend to you the reading of biographies of men who have been used by God in the Church throughout the centuries, especially in revival. And you will find this same holy boldness, this argumentation, this reasoning, this putting the case to God, pleading his own promises. Oh, that is the whole secret of prayer, I sometimes think. Thomas Goodwin in his exposition of the sealing of the Spirit in Ephesians 1.13 uses a wonderful term. He says, 'Sue him for it, sue him for it.' Do not leave him alone. Pester him, as it were, with his own promise. Tell him that what he has said he is going to do. Quote the Scripture to him. And, you know, God delights to hear us doing it, as a father likes to see this element in his own child who has obviously been listening to what his father has been saying. It pleases him. The child may be slightly

impertinent, it does not matter, the father likes it in spite of that. And God is our Father, and he loves us, and he likes to hear us pleading his own promises, quoting his own words to him, and saying 'in the light of this, can you refrain?' It delights the heart of God. Sue him!

Another thing we should notice about prayer is its orderliness, its directness. The specific petition. Notice that Moses here does not offer up some vague, indefinite general prayer. No, he is concentrating on the one great need. Of course he worshipped God, of course there was the reverence and the godly fear, yes, but at this point he concentrates on this one thing, this presence of God. He will not get away from it. He says, 'I will not move unless you come. You must come with us.' And he gives his reasons and plies him with all these arguments about it. And if I may speak for myself, I shall not feel happy and encouraged until I feel that the Church is concentrating on this one thing—prayer for revival. But we have not come to it, we are still in the state of deciding in committees to do this, that and the other, and asking God to bless what we have done. No, there is no hope along that line. It must be that one thing. We must feel this burden, we must see this as the only hope, and we must concentrate on this, and we must keep on with it—the orderliness, the arrangement, the concentration, the argument, and always the urgency. Moses here is like Jacob was in Genesis 32. This element always comes into true intercession. 'I will not let thee go,' said Jacob. I am going on. The morning was breaking, he had been struggling through the night.

'Let me go.'

'No, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.'

There is the urgency. Read the great biblical prayers; it is always in them. In Acts 4 we read of the Christians asking God to act 'Now.' Oh God, they said, in the light of this, in our situation now—do this. Give us some indication, give us some signs, enable us to witness with this holy boldness, and to bear witness to the resurrection that they are prohibiting us to speak about. See the urgency of the prayer. Moses keeps on coming back to it, repeating it, putting it in different forms and from different angles. But there was just this one thing: 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' Insisting urgently, 'I will not let thee go.'

There, it seems to me, are some of the lessons from this passage. We say our prayers, but have we ever prayed? Do we know anything about this encounter, this meeting? Have we the assurance of sins forgiven? Are we free from ourselves and self-concern, that we may intercede? Have we a real burden for *the glory of God*, and the name of the Church? Have we this concern for those who are outside? And are we pleading with God for his own name's sake, because of his own promises, to hear us and to answer us? Oh, my God make of us intercessors such as Moses. It is no use anybody saying, 'Ah, but he was an exceptionally great man.' God, as we have seen in the past history of revivals, has made use of men who are mere nobodies in exactly the same way as he used Moses here. A hundred years ago, the unknown James McQuilken was the man whom God burdened in this way. He was the Moses in Northern Ireland. It can be any one of us. May God make of us intercessors such as Moses was.

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THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Robert M. McCheyne (1813-1843)

LORD, God the Holy Spirit, in this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost, descend in all thy power,
We meet with one accord in our appointed place,
And wait the promise of our Lord, the Spirit of all grace,
Like mighty rushing wind upon the waves beneath,
Move with one impulse every mind—one soul, one feeling breathe.
The young, the old inspire with wisdom from above,
And give us hearts and tongues of fire, to pray and praise and love.
Spirit of light, explore and chase our gloom away,
With lustre shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Spirit of truth, be Thou in life and death our guide,
O Spirit of adoption, now may we be sanctified.—MONTGOMERY.

Diversity and ceaseless change appear to be enstamped on all the works of God. Perpetual change pervades the universe; and the variety of the external world, from the mightiest object to the most minute, evinces the unsearchable wisdom and infinite resources of the omnipotent and unchangeable Creator. This earth, on which we dwell, is endlessly diversified with continent and ocean—mountain and plain—the fruitful field and the primeval wilderness—trees and shrubs and beautiful flowers—the glassy lake and the majestic river—the foaming cataract whose “mighty waters” roll evermore their deafening thunders, and the meandering rivulet that creeps along the grassy vale—the peopled territory and the untenanted Sahara—the city’s crowded thoroughfares and stupefying din—and the sequestered retreats of rural solitude. Earth’s nations are ever changing; and they, too, are endlessly diversified in their characteristic features, place, power, position, and civilisation. During the course of the “slow-treading ages,” one nation after another rises into a prominent position and assumes a commanding influence—carries its conquering arms over half the globe, attains to pre-eminence in the arts and sciences, in literature and commerce, and eventually falls into decay and perishes in oblivion. The people are now at rest, and political quiet, deep as the silent moon of night, broods over them, and, anon, they surge and tumultuate like the storm-lashed waves of the “ancient sea.” Revolution reigns. Undying change has assumed the insignia of supremacy, and the thrones of dynasties, long thought to be stable as the firm foundations of the “everlasting hills,” are convulsively overthrown, and the diadems of the mightiest monarchs are dashed in the dust, and the sceptre of empire falls from the enfeebled grasp of tyrants, who have been a scourge and terror to the world, like the rejected plaything of a pampered child. “Things under the earth” also are liable to silent, convulsive, and periodical change. The subterranean fires appear for many a day to have been extinguished, and, again, they burst forth at the belching mouths of the quivering volcano; and the earthquake, in its terrific and devastating course, tears up the loveliest regions of our world, transforms cities and villages into heaps of ruins, and tens of thousands of their unfortunate inhabitants are crushed to death between its devouring jaws.

The seasons, too, are ever changing, in one place silently and gradually, at another suddenly and violently; and man himself, physically, mentally, and morally, is also the subject of incessant change. **Nature and society are thus characterised by infinite diversity, periodical and convulsive change, as well as by quiet and less noticeable mutation: and “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” appears to manifest the same general features and to be subject to the same general laws. The great work of awakening and conversion is generally accomplished silently and gradually under the regular ministrations of the sanctuary; but there are times when God, in his wise and holy Providence, answers prayer “by terrible things in righteousness,” and close upon the back of a judgment period, the Holy Spirit descends upon a whole community as “a rushing mighty wind,” like “floods upon the dry ground,” or “like rain upon the mown grass,” and the great heart of society begins to heave and palpitate as the heart of one man, and myriads of careless sinners are arrested, alarmed, filled with anxiety about salvation, and turned simultaneously to look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn those sins that pierced Him and brought Him to the dust of death.**

The quiet conversion of one sinner after another under the ordinary ministry of the Gospel must always be regarded with feelings of satisfaction and gratitude by the ministers and disciples of Christ; *but a periodical manifestation of the simultaneous conversion of thousands is also to be desiderated because of its adaptation to afford a visible and impressive demonstration to a world lying in wickedness, that God has made that same Jesus, whom they have rejected and crucified, both Lord and Christ; and that, in virtue of his Divine Mediatorship, He has assumed the royal sceptre of universal supremacy, and “must reign till all His enemies be made His footstool.” And, considering that He is “by the right hand of God exalted,” as the rightful though rejected Sovereign of the world, is it not reasonable to expect that, from time to time, He will repeat that which, on the day of Pentecost, formed the conclusive and crowning evidence of His Messiahship and Sovereignty, and, by so doing, startle the slumbering souls of careless worldlings, gain the attentive ear of the unconverted, and, in a remarkable way, break in upon those brilliant dreams of earthly glory, grandeur, wealth, power, and happiness, which the rebellious and God-forgetting multitude so fondly cherish?*

Such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit would form at once a demonstrative proof of the completeness and acceptance of His once offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and a prophetic “earnest” of the certainty that He “shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation,” to “judge the world in righteousness,” and “give to every man according as his work shall be.” And in every age of the Church, the God of our salvation has graciously bestowed the Holy Spirit in His demonstrative power, that He might glorify Jesus by discovering Him in all His fulness to the regenerated souls of multitudes of His ransomed people. When “the promise of the Father” was first realised on the solemn day of the first Pentecost, after the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of power, an all but universal awakening was experienced, and thousands of Jerusalem sinners were simultaneously convinced of sin and converted to God. We read that “about three

thousand souls” “repented, and were baptised in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost,” as the result of one exhibition of the Cross and Sceptre of the glorified Emmanuel. With one voice we exclaim, “How blessed!” *But how very many of us are, at the same time, entertaining the idea, that although it was peculiarly needful then, as a testimony for Jesus, and to solemnise the inauguration of the new dispensation, which is termed emphatically “the ministration of the Spirit,” yet such a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and such a vast number of simultaneous conversions, are not to be expected in subsequent ages. But, by harbouring such a thought, we entertain an opinion which both Scripture and ecclesiastical history unite to disclaim: for the Word of God leads us still to expect the Holy Spirit, “like floods upon the dry ground”; and such “times of refreshing” and wide-spread, simultaneous conversion have repeatedly occurred in the history of the Church, as to prove conclusively that extraordinary religious awakening and simultaneous conversion ought not to be regarded as peculiar to the day of Pentecost, but as part of the ordinary working out of God’s great purpose of grace, for the conviction and conversion of the ungodly, and for ultimately “bringing many sons to glory.”* The history of the Church in our own land bears ample and frequent testimony to such periodical awakening and remarkable revival; and for some time, the Christian professors of these realms have been partially awakening from their spiritual slumbers by news of the Holy Spirit falling upon multitudes of the inhabitants of the United States of America. A great awakening is still going forward there. The Spirit of God seems to have descended in His awakening power upon various localities over the entire nation; for, in all parts of the country, and among all classes of society, there appears to be an intense desire, and a very general movement, to “go speedily and pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.”¹

Religion has become the all-absorbing topic, and the salvation of the soul the all-engrossing subject. The press, both religious and secular, has been teeming with details of the mighty awakening. Hundreds of thousands have been converted;² and what a minister in New York said in the course of a sermon in 1851 of the triumphs of Christ’s cause, has been realised almost to the very letter:

“The time is coming,” said he, “when His successes shall be reported with more than the rapidity of Napoleon’s victories; when the press shall teem with intelligence of Christian movements in the world; when the steamer shall furrow the deep to speed the tidings of His power; when the electric wires³ shall thrill with heavenly life, to convey from city to city, and from continent to continent, the news of revivals of religion, and of ‘nations born in a day.’ The kingdom of Christ is yet to be the one thing thought of in the world, and at every market, in every exchange, in every bulletin—at the street corners, men shall speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power one to another, making known His mighty acts and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.”

“These words,” says an American paper, “given as they were written, and spoken seven years ago, may then have passed for impassioned rhetoric; *now they are but a literal transcript of what is daily passing before our eyes.*”

Hope is a little word, but it is a pregnant one. It is the verbal symbol for one of the mightiest, most pleasing, and powerful emotions of the human mind. It is also all-pervading, and is therefore as common as it is needful in this sin-blighted world. It forms the sunshine of childhood, the day-dream of youth, and the entrancing vision of ripening manhood. It is the summer of the soul—the lever of fortune—the lamp of the unfortunate—and the ready solace of daily toil. It is, in short, the delicious music of futurity, which falls in flute-like notes upon the harassed mind, as it issues forth from the untrodden solitudes of coming years.

Ours is an expectant nature.

FOOTNOTES:

1. I. L. B., a writer in the *Christian Times*, who was in the midst of these scenes of awakening, thus describes the wide-spread influence of the revival of last year:—“For some weeks a general spirit of prayer had pervaded the churches, and early in February the expected blessing came down, and overshadowed whole communities in a way by no means looked for. The origin of the work cannot be located. It commenced far and near at the same time. Unconverted men crowded the churches, and petitioned to be instructed in the way of salvation. Presently, the ordinary religious services were found insufficient for the thousands of awakened souls, of whom the astonished ministers were led to ask, ‘Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?’ Special services naturally sprung out of this necessity, and many of the churches were opened at half-past eight in the morning and half-past seven in the evening. But this was not enough. Men in business felt the oppressive influence of the world’s whirl of care, and ‘business-men’s’ noonday prayer-meetings were organised, the superintendence of which was gladly left to the *Christian laity* by the overworked ministers.”

2. It is believed that half a million of conversions have taken place. The Bishop of Ohio, when speaking at a meeting in London in the beginning of last year, is reported to have said of the present American awakening:—“It is indeed a revival in reference to those who were before Christians, but it is also more than a revival as is evidenced by *the*

conversion of multitudes from the world to God... This revival has spread over a vast extent of country, and there have, I believe, been *hundreds of thousands of genuine conversions*. Everybody seems accessible to religion. People, even worldly people, seem to expect to be spoken to about it. May we not look forward to such manifestations of the Divine interposition in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.'" What the worthy bishop then stated with regard to America may be affirmed now with respect to our own country. During the lapse of 1859, many thousands have been converted to God in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and England; and the good work of revival is still going on. The Lord increase it more and more!

3. "At many of the telegraph offices in this city (New York), as also in other places, messages have been sent to all parts of the country, announcing conversions and many of them have been exceedingly tender and touching. Some have been as follows:—'Dear mother, the revival continues, and I too have been converted.' 'My dear parents, you will rejoice to hear that I have found peace with God.' 'Tell my sister that I have come to the cross of Christ.' 'At last I have faith and peace.' Many young men engaged in business in this city have sent such news to their homes in New England."

BORN AFTER MIDNIGHT

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)

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

This is one of those proverbs which, 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." Hunger and thirst are physical sensations which, 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 "cries the more a great deal." 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 good will 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.

REVIVALS THAT STAY

E.M. Bounds(1835-1913)

Revivals are among the charter rights of the church. They are the evidences of its divinity, the tokens of God’s presence, the witness of his power. The frequency and power of these extraordinary seasons of grace are the tests and preservers of the vital force in the church. The church which is not visited by these seasons is as sterile in all spiritual products as a desert, and is not and cannot meet the designs of God’s church. Such churches may have all the show and parade of life, but it is only a painted life.

The revival element belongs to the individual, as well as to the church, life. The preacher whose experience is not marked by these inflows of great grace may question with anxious scrutiny whether he is in grace. The preacher whose ministry does not over and over again find its climax of success and power in these gracious visitations of God may well doubt the genuineness of his call, or be disquieted as to its continuance.

Revivals are not simply the reclamation of a backslidden church. They do secure this end, but they do not find their highest end in this important result. They are to invigorate and mature by one mighty act the feeble saints; they also pass on to sublimer regions of faith and experience the advanced ones of God’s elect. They are the fresh baptisms—the more powerful consecration of a waiting, willing, working church to a profounder willingness, and a mightier ability for a mightier work. These revivals are the pitched battles and the decisive victories for God, when the slain of the Lord is many, and his triumph glorious.

There are counterfeit revivals well executed, well calculated to deceive the most wary. These are deceptive and superficial, with many pleasant, entertaining, delusive features, entirely lacking in the offensive features which distinguish the genuine ones. The pain of penitence, the shame of guilt, the sorrow and humiliation of sin, the fear of hell—these marks of the genuine are lacking in the counterfeit. The test of a genuine revival is found in its staying qualities. The counterfeit is but a winter spurt, as evanescent and fitful as the morning cloud or early dew—both soon gone—and the sun but the hotter for the mockery of the cloud and because of the fleeting dew. These surface revivals do more harm than good, like a surface thaw in midwinter which only increases the hardness and roughness of tomorrow’s freeze. **The genuine revival goes to the bottom of things; the sword is not swaddled in cotton, nor festooned with flowers, but pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow.**

A genuine revival marks an era in the life of the church. It plants the germs of the great spiritual principles which grow and mature through all the changing seasons that follow. Revival seasons are favoring seasons, when the tides of salvation are at their flood, when all the waves and winds move heavenward...days of emancipation and return and rapture. The church needs revivals; it cannot live, it cannot do its work without them. Revivals which will lift it above the sands of worldliness that shallow the current and impede the sailing. Revivals which will radicate the great spiritual principles, which are worn threadbare in many a church. It is true that in the most thorough work some will fall away, but when the work is genuine and far-reaching, as it ought to be, the waste will scarcely be felt in the presence of the good that remains.

The first element, in a revival whose effects will stay, is that the revival spring from within the church, the native outgrowth of the spiritual condition of the church. The so-called revivals do not spring from the repentance, faith, and prayers of the church, but are induced by foreign and outside forces. Many of the religious movements of the day have no foundation in the travailing throes of the church. By outside pressure, the presence and reputation of an evangelist, of imported singers and imported songs, an interest is awakened, a passing impression made, but these are quite different from the concern aroused by the presence of God and the mighty power of his almighty Spirit. In the manufactured revival there is an interest which does not deepen into conviction, which is not subdued into awe, which cannot be molded into prayer, nor agitated by fears. There is the utter absence of the spirit of prayer; neither has the spirit of repentance any place; lightness and frivolity reign; tears are strange and unwelcome visitors. *The church-members, instead of being on their knees in intercession, or mingling their wrestling cries with the wrestling penitents, or joining in rapturous praise with their rapturous deliverance, are simply spectators of a pleasing entertainment, in which they have but a momentary interest, the results of which, viewed from a spiritual stand-point, are far below zero. A revival means a burdened church and a burdened pastor and burdened penitents.*

The revival whose results are gracious and abiding must spring from the spiritual contact of pastor and church with God. A season of fasting and prayer of deep humiliation and confession are the conditions from which a genuine and powerful work springs.

The nature of the preaching is of the first importance. Its character will grade the converts and measure the depth of the work. The word of God in its purity and strength must be given. The law of God in its spiritual demands must arouse the conscience, and pierce and lay bare the heart. If there ever is a time for sentimental anecdotes, for the exercise of wit, if the preacher is ever justified in pausing to soften the sympathies or inflame the fancy, it is not at this period.

The object must not be to increase the impulses, or move on the surface, or work on tender emotions, but to convict the conscience, search out the sinner and expose his sins, to alarm the guilty soul, and intensify the faith and effort of the believer. The word of God is the imperishable and vitalizing seed. The Spirit of God is the quickening energy that is to be let loose. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The sword must be unsheathed, and cut with both edges.

The spirit of prayer must be the one evident and prevailing spirit. The spirit of prayer is but the spirit of faith, the spirit of reverence, the spirit of supplies, of grace, and mercy and is increased. This spirit holds in its keeping the success of the word and power of the Holy Spirit; as the spirit of prayer fail these fail. If the spirit of prayer is absent or is quenched, God is not in the assembly. He comes and stays only in the cloud of glory formed by the incense of a church whose flame of prayer is ascending to him. All genuine revivals are simply God coming with great grace to his Church. The revival that springs from heart contact of the church with God, which is directed and intensified by the pure preaching of the pure word of God, and in which, and through which, prayer, mighty prayer, prevails, will be a revival that will stay in its coming.

Taken from E.M. Bounds Writings

THE MEN GOD USES IN REVIVAL

E.M. Bounds (1835-1913)

We put it as our most sober judgment that the great need of the church in this and all ages is men of such **commanding faith**, of such **unsullied holiness**, of such **marked spiritual vigor** and **consuming zeal** that their ministry will be of such a **radical and aggressive form** as to work spiritual revolutions which will form eras in individual and church life.

We do not mean men who get up sensational stirs by novel devices, nor those who attract by a pleasing entertainment; but men who can stir things, and work revolutions by the preaching of God's word, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, revolutions which change the whole current of things.

Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but a capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of a thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory and an ever present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God. Men who can set the church ablaze for God, not in a noisy, showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves every thing for God.

We instance *John Fletcher* as a type and pattern. Madeley, the place of his work, was given over to wickedness of the lowest kind. Holy things were decried, the forms of religion held up to contempt, the restraints of decency disregarded. It was a crowded, debauched, heathenish population, without seemliness or promise. A dismaying prospect to any save a strong faith. Without hope of recovery save by the gospel of the Son of God in its genuine and divine form. Into this seething mass of corruption the ministry of Fletcher was injected. It was like caustic or salt on a sore, there were kickings and adversaries and opposition and insults of all kinds from the worldly clergy as well as from the wicked rabble. His words were wrested, his actions misrepresented, his name cast out as evil. But his ministry came with resurrection power, the valley of death was shaken as by the archangel's voice and the trump of God. Fletcher gave them the words of God, and it reprov'd their sins, convicted their consciences, exposed their guilt and their doom. Dauntless, self-sacrificing, on fire with holy zeal, he affected them despite their opposition, he influenced them despite their hate. His scantily attended church was soon overflowing. The whole aspect changed, a mighty work was wrought, the community transformed. Madeley became the rendezvous for religious persons, a privileged and honored place, a sort of Christian Jerusalem. The influence still remains. A late distinguished Methodist writer says: "Madeley will long be a kind of Mecca to the Methodists." Three Established and seven Methodist churches formed out of his work attest the present and enduring results of his labors.

What were the elements by which this revolution was secured? He preached the word of God in its entirety with great fidelity. He sought persistently, daily, hourly, and all the time the increased energy and conscious power of God's Spirit, enabling him and enabling the word.

He was untiring and urgent in securing personal holiness. An example he was of the Methodist doctrine of perfect love, and of that ceaseless groaning after it which always characterizes those who are its partakers. He was a saintly character, his holiness was not of the tame, conservative, insipid type; but pungent, aggressive, fresh, radiant as the morning, hostile as a bannered host against sin. With touches gentler than a woman's to the brokenhearted, Fletcher went out after his people, he followed them to their haunts, preached in their dens, broke into their assemblies of lust and wickedness with a vehement and holy indignation. He solved the question of reaching the masses, the question that has given so much theoretical trouble to professional preachers. The man who reaches his church for God will reach the masses. A quickened church and a holy ministry is the secret of reaching the masses. Fletcher was stirred mightily for God, and he moved toward God with impetuous and fiery burnings. No man can stir things mightily for God who is not himself stirred mightily for and toward God.

Simple, frugal, self-denying, and unworldly in his piety, he labored with the single eye, and his heart in heaven. His zeal knew no abatement, tireless and consuming, his whole being was aflame for God and his glory; nothing selfish, low, or earthly, adulterated this pure flame.

He was mighty in prayer; the wall of his room still bears the stains of his breath where he poured out his soul to God day and night. His faith and desires for God were mightily helped fasting. He had a mighty faith, a westling spirit, believed in God mightily, and, as its results, worked for men mightily. God was with him, as he will be with every man who seeks him as Fletcher sought him, honor every man who honors him as Fletcher did. Fletcher lived singly, simply, and only for God, and these are the only men by whom God will work mighty works. Had Fletcher thought of salary, had an eye or half an eye to self, mixed his motives with desires for place or position, then he had never wrought his work for God, then Madeley would never have felt the pressure, force, and revolution of his ministry. Then Fletcher never would have had a place in the calendar of saints. He said when offered another place: "Too much money and too little work." With this crucified earthliness he began, continued, and wrought out his work. Such men God delights to honor.

Taken from E.M. Bounds Writings

REVIVAL TRUTH

William Reid

Our matured conviction is that the great thing needed at present is not so much revival sermons, or revival prayer-meetings, as REVIVAL TRUTH; and as the very essence of that truth is "*the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,*" (Rom 1:1,2),—or, in other words, the testimony of the Holy Spirit (*externally* in the preaching of the

Word, and *internally* in its spiritual application) to the all-sufficiency and infallible efficacy of “THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST,” (1 Pet 1:19),—that which is pre-eminently required in order to the general revival of religion is a full, clear, intelligent, and earnest utterance of the grand leading doctrines of “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” (Acts 20:24). True revival is not obtainable by merely preaching about revival, but by the constant proclamation of that all-important truth which is employed by the Holy Spirit to produce it,—that “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (1 Pet 3:18). He will prove the most effective preacher in bringing about a holy, deep, spiritual revival, who gives the greatest prominence to these three great facts,—“That CHRIST DIED for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He WAS BURIED; and that HE AROSE AGAIN the third day according to the Scriptures,” (1 Cor 15:3,4).

And I am convinced that the reason why so many ministers exhaust nearly all their converting power (I mean *instrumentally*) during the first few years of their ministry, while some continue to possess it, and finish their course with joy, is greatly owing to the former leaving the simplicity that is in Christ and betaking themselves to *sermon-writing* about secondary matters, while the latter make CHRIST CRUCIFIED their “Alpha and Omega.” Oh, that all the ministers of Jesus Christ would return, for a few months at least every year, to all the common texts from which they preached discourses which seemed to be so much blessed to awaken and save souls in the early days of their ministry! Were they to take a series of such texts as Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; 1 John 1:7; and, after restudying them, and bringing all the light of their reading, spiritual insight, and experience to bear upon the exposition and enforcement of them, to preach from them with the Holy Ghost, and with a lively faith, that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit accompanying their preaching, the unconverted among their people would be immediately converted, there might be a great and general awakening, and tens of thousands might be added to the Lord.

It is also of vast importance to present “*the truth of the gospel*” as the Holy Spirit Himself has presented it to us in “*the word of Christ,*” (Col 3:16). It has been well said: “The derangement of *God’s order* of truth is quite as dangerous and far more subtle than the denial of the truth itself. In fact, to reverse *the order is to deny the truth*. We are not merely to maintain both Christ’s work and the Spirit’s work in their individual integrity, but in their *exact scriptural order*.” We believe that the refreshing truth, that “*the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin,*” (1 John 1:7), is the great central sun which sheds a flood of light on the whole system of divine revelation. Atonement by the blood-shedding of Christ is the substratum of Christianity; for the sole ground of a sinner’s peace with God is “THE BLOOD OF JESUS.” We who were at one time “far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for He is our peace,” (Eph 2:13,14), “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,” (Eph 1:7); and so, “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” (Rom 3:24,25), “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” (Rom 5:1,2).

In the Westminster Assembly’s “Shorter Catechism,” which is considered by all orthodox people to be an excellent summary of Christian doctrine, you will find the very same truth stated which we have advanced and confirmed by the above quotations, and which we have been writing for publication almost daily for the last ten years.

The answer to the question in that Catechism, “What doth God require of us that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?” commences with, “*God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life,*” &c. Now, this shews that the framers of that symbol of sound doctrine were accurate in their conceptions, and precise in their statement of the *order* and *position* of this great scriptural truth. They suppose an anxious inquirer desirous of knowing how he is to escape the wrath and curse of God due to him for sin; and do they say that the first thing he is to do is to pray for the Holy Spirit, and get his mind changed, and his unholy heart sanctified, previously to his believing in Jesus? No. *The very first thing* they teach the awakened sinner to do is, *to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved*. Now this is all the more remarkable, considering that, when laying down the system of divine truth *theologically*, they had placed *effectual calling* by the Divine Spirit before *justification by faith*. There they speak to the intellect of the converted man and instructed Christian; but here the matter is reversed when an anxious sinner is to be guided as to what he is to do to be saved, and we have faith in *Jesus Christ* placed before *repentance unto life*; shewing us that they held, that while we must ever acknowledge the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work in order to the creation, and exercise of saving faith, we should never direct an anxious sinner to look to the Spirit as *his Saviour*, but to Christ alone; never direct an inquirer to seek first an *inward* change, but an *outward* one—a justified state in order to enjoying a sanctified heart—the former being the necessary precursor of the latter.

Repentance is, properly speaking, *a change of mind*, or a new mind *about* God; regeneration is *a change of heart*, or a new heart *towards* God; conversion is *a change of life*, or a new life for God; adoption is *a change of family*, or a new relationship to God; sanctification is *a change of employment*, or a consecration of all to God; glorification is *a change of place*, or a new condition *with* God, but justification, which is *a change of state*, or a new standing *before* God, must be presented to the anxious inquirer as going before all, for being “*accepted in the Beloved*” is the foundation and cause of

all, or more properly speaking, the “precious seed” from which all the rest spring, blossom, and bear fruit: and, consequently, the first and great duty of those who have to deal with awakened souls is to make this very clear, and to keep them incessantly in contact with the blessed evangelical truth: “A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ,” (Gal 2:16).

From all this you will observe, dear reader, that I am not settling the position which a doctrine in theology ought to hold, but simply dealing with the *practical necessities* of an anxious inquirer. Were I called upon to state my views theoretically, I would say, they are described by what another has termed *Jehovahism*, “for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever,” (Rom 11:36); but I am not contemplating the sinner as standing before the throne of *glory*, but before the throne of *grace*, and I am not endeavouring to settle a subtle question in theology, but to give the practical solution of an urgent question of *salvation*. I am not attempting to lay down a system of divinity, but to discover the kind and order of truth divinely appointed and fitted to bring immediate peace to awakened and inquiring souls. And hoping to accomplish this most important end, I present “JESUS ONLY,” “for He is our peace,” who “having made peace through the blood of His cross,” (Col 1:20), has come “and preached peace,” (Eph 2:17), by His “everlasting gospel,” to them “who were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”

The first practical step towards realising and acknowledging the sovereignty of God, is to “let the peace of God rule in your hearts,” (Col 3:15). You may hold a sound creed with a proud, unbroken heart, and be more deeply damned on that very account. But if you wish to know God in all the glory of His being and attributes, you must grasp the manifestation of that glory as it is embodied and manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. You can know the *glory* of God as a Sovereign only by realising His *grace* as a Saviour. For “God was manifest in the flesh,” (1 Tim 3:16). “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth,” (John 1:14). “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him,” (Matt 11:27).

*“A mind at ‘perfect peace’ with God; Oh, what a word is this!
A sinner reconciled through blood; This, this, indeed, is peace!*

*“By nature and by practice far—How very far!—from God;
Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him, through faith in Jesus’ blood.*

*“So nigh, so very nigh to God, I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son, I am as near as He.*

*“So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son, Such is His love to me.*

*“Why should I ever careful be, Since such a God is mine?
He watches o’er me night and day, And tells me, ‘Mine is thine.’”*

Taken from the booklet “*The Blood of Jesus*”

THE STORY OF GOD’S MIGHTY ACTS

C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

A Revival Sermon preached in 1859 during the Revival in the British Isles

*“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us,
what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”—Psalm 44:1*

Perhaps there are no stories that stick by us so long as those which we hear in our childhood, those tales which are told us by our fathers, and in our nurseries. It is a sad reflection that too many of these stories are idle and vain, so that our minds in early infancy are tinctured with fables, and inoculated with strange and lying narratives.

Now, among the early Christians and the old believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now, and the stories with which their children were amused were of a far different class from those which fascinated us in the days of our babyhood. No doubt, Abraham would talk to young children about the flood, and tell them how the waters overspread the earth, and how Noah alone was saved in the ark. The ancient Israelites, when they dwelt in their own land, would all of them tell their children about the Red Sea, and the plagues which God wrought in Egypt when he brought his people out of the house of bondage. Among the early Christians we know that it was the custom of parents to recount to their children everything concerning the life of Christ, the acts of the apostles, and the like interesting narratives. Nay, among our puritanic ancestors such were the stories that regaled their childhood. Sitting down by the fireside, before those old Dutch tiles with the quaint eccentric drawings upon them of the history of Christ, mothers would teach their children about Jesus walking on the water, or of his multiplying the loaves of bread, or of his marvellous transfiguration, or of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Oh, how I would that the like were the tales of the present age, that the stories of our childhood would be again the stories of Christ, and that we would each of us believe that, after all, there can be nothing so interesting as that which is true, and nothing more striking than those stories which are written in sacred writ; nothing that can more truly move the heart of a child than the marvellous works of God which he did in the olden times. It seems that the psalmist who wrote this most musical ode had heard from his father, handed to him by tradition, the stories of the wondrous things which God had done in his day; and afterwards, this sweet singer in Israel taught it to his children, and so was one generation after another led to call God blessed, remembering his mighty acts.

Now, my dear friends, this morning I intend to recall to your minds some of the wondrous things which God has done in the olden time. My aim and object will be to excite your minds to seek after the like; that looking back upon what God has done, you may be induced to look forward with the eye of expectation, hoping that he will again stretch forth his potent hand and his holy arm, and repeat those mighty acts he performed in ancient days.

First, I shall speak of the marvellous stories which our fathers have told us, and which we have heard of the olden time; secondly, I shall mention some disadvantages under which these old stories labour with regard to the effect upon our minds; and, then, I shall draw the proper inferences from those marvellous things which we have heard, that the Lord did in the days of yore.

I. To begin then, with THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS.

We have heard that God has at times done very mighty acts. The plain everyday course of the world hath been disturbed with wonders at which men have been exceedingly amazed. God hath not always permitted his church to go on climbing by slow degrees to victory, but he hath been pleased at times to smite one terrible blow, and lay his enemies down upon the earth, and bid his children march over their prostrate bodies.

Turn back then, to ancient records, and remember what God hath done. *Will ye not remember what he did at the Red Sea, how he smote Egypt and all its chivalry, and covered Pharaoh's chariot and horse in the Red Sea? Have ye not heard tell how God smote Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, because they withstood the progress of his people? Have ye not learned how he proved that his mercy endureth for ever, when he slew those great kings and cast the mighty ones down from their thrones? Have you not read, too, how God smote the children of Canaan, and drove out the inhabitants thereof, and gave the land to his people, to be a possession by lot for ever? Have you not heard how when the hosts of Jabin came against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera? The river of Kishon swept them away, "that ancient river, the river Kishon," and there was none of them left? Hath it not been told you, too, how by the hand of David, God smote the Philistines, and how by his right hand he smote the children of Ammon? Have you not heard how Midian was put to confusion, and the myriads of Arabia were scattered by Asa in the day of his faith? And have you not heard, too, how the Lord sent a blast upon the hosts of Sennacherib, so that in the morning they were all dead men? Tell—tell ye these, his wonders! Speak of them in your streets. Teach them to your children. Let them not be forgotten, for the right hand of the Lord hath done marvellous things, his name is known in all the earth.*

The wonders, however, which most concern us, are those of the Christian era; and surely these are not second to those under the Old Testament. *Have you never read how God won to himself great renown on the day of Pentecost? Turn ye to this book of the record of the wonders of the Lord and read. Peter the fisherman stood up and preached in the name of the Lord his God. A multitude assembled and the Spirit of God fell upon them; and it came to pass that three thousand in one day were pricked in their heart by the hand of God, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And know you not how the twelve apostles with the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, and the idols fell from their thrones? The cities opened wide their gates, and the messengers of Christ walked through the streets and preached. It is true that at first they*

were driven hither and thither, and hunted like partridges upon the mountains: *but do ye not remember how the Lord did get unto himself a victory, so that in a hundred years after the nailing of Christ to the cross, the gospel had been preached in every nation, and the isles of the sea had heard the sound thereof?* And have you forgotten how the heathen were baptized, thousands at a time, in every river? What stream is there in Europe that cannot testify to the majesty of the gospel? What city is there in the land that cannot tell how God's truth has triumphed, and how the heathen has forsaken his false god, and bowed his knee to Jesus the crucified? The first spread of the gospel is a miracle never to be eclipsed. Whatever god may have done at the Red Sea, he hath done still more within a hundred years after the time when Christ first came into the world. It seemed as if a fire from heaven ran along the ground. Nothing could resist its force. The lightning shaft of truth shivered every pinnacle of the idol temple, and Jesus was worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

This is one of the things we have heard of the olden times.

And have ye never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Hath it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, how, whenever he preached, the church was thronged with attentive hearers; and there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spake with a majesty unparalleled, the word of God in truth and righteousness; the people listening, hanging forward to catch every word, and anon breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet; then silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator; and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands, and shouting for joy again? Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved.

And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth, when Popery sat upon her throne and stretched her iron rod across the nations and shut the windows of heaven, and quenched the very stars of God and made thick darkness cover the people? Have ye never heard how Martin *Luther arose and preached the gospel of the grace of God, and how the nations trembled, and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingli among the Swiss, and of Calvin in the city of Geneva, and of the mighty works that God did by them?* Nay, as Britons have ye forgotten the mighty preacher of the truth—*have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers that Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the gospel of God?* Oh, doth not history tell us that these men were like fire-brands in the midst of the dry stubble; that their voice was as the roaring of a lion, and their going forth like the springing of a young lion. Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock; they did push the nation before them, and as for the enemies, they said, "Destroy them." None could stand before them, for the Lord their God had girded them with might.

To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity, and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley, men whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings, and the church said: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" They come! they come! numberless as the birds of heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood. Within a few years, from the preaching of these two men, England was permeated with evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town, and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated. In those days of the slow-coach, when Christianity seemed to have bought up the old wagons in which our fathers once travelled—where business runs with steam, there oftentimes religion creeps along with its belly on the earth,—*we are astonished at these tales, and we think them wonders. Yet let us believe them; they come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by his grace he will yet do again. He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is his name.*

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden time; they derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our churches believe that things must grow, gently, by degrees; we must go step by step onward. Concentrated action and continued labour, they say, will ultimately bring success. *But the marvel is, all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand. They were converted at once and baptized that very day; they were that hour turned to God, and become as truly disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years.*

So was it in the day of Martin Luther: it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle and the candle burned, and there was the light in an instant—God works suddenly. If anyone could have stood in Wurtemberg, and have said: "Can Popery be made to quail, can the Vatican be made to shake?" The answer would have been:—"No; it will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations, and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process." "Not so," however,

did God say. He smote the dragon sorely, and the nations went free; he cut the gates of brass, and broke in sunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in an hour. Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light, and upon them that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, did the light shine.

So was it in Whitefield's day. The rebuking of a slumbering church was not the work of ages; it was done at once. Have ye never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Camslang. He was preaching in the church-yard to a great congregation, that could not get into any edifice; and while preaching, the power of God came upon the people, and one after another fell down as if they were smitten; and at least it was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin. He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges, and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was equal to it.

So has it been in all revivals; God's work has been done suddenly. As with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high; not slowly, but on cherubim right royally doth he ride; on the wings of the mighty wind does he fly. Sudden has been the work; men could scarce believe it true, it was done in so short a space of time.

Witness the great revival which is going on in and around Belfast. After carefully looking at the matter, and after seeing some trusty and well-beloved brother who lived in that neighborhood, I am convinced, notwithstanding what enemies may say, that it is a genuine work of grace, and that God is doing wonders there. A friend who called to see me yesterday, tells me that the lowest and vilest men, the most depraved females in Belfast, have been visited with this extraordinary epilepsy, as the world calls it; but with this strange rushing of the spirit, as we have it. Men who have been drunkards have suddenly felt an impulse compelling them to pray. They have resisted; they have sought to their cups in order to put it out; but when they have been swearing, seeking to quench the Spirit by their blasphemy, God has at last brought them on their knees, and they have been compelled to cry for mercy with piercing shrieks, and to agonize in prayer; and then after a time, the Evil one seems to have been cast out of them, and in a quiet, holy, happy frame of mind, they have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and have walked in his fear and love.

Roman Catholics have been converted. I thought that an extraordinary thing; but they have been converted very frequently indeed in Ballymena and in Belfast. In fact, I am told the priests are now selling small bottles of holy water for people to take, in order that they may be preserved from this desperate contagion of the Holy Spirit. This holy water is said to have such efficacy, that those who do not attend any of the meetings are not likely to be meddled with by the Holy Spirit—so the priests tell them. But if they go to the meetings, even this holy water cannot preserve them—they are as liable to fall prey to the Divine influence. I think they are just as likely to do so without as with it.

All this has been brought about suddenly, and although we may expect to find some portion of natural excitement, yet I am persuaded it is in the main a real, spiritual, and abiding work. There is a little froth on the surface, but there is a deep running current that is not to be resisted, sweeping underneath, and carrying everything before it. At least there is something to awaken our interest, when we understand that in the small town of Ballymena on market day, the bartenders have always taken one hundred pounds for whiskey, and now they cannot take a sovereign all day long in all the bars. Men who were once drunkards now meet for prayer, and people after hearing one sermon will not go until the minister has preached another, and sometimes a third; and at last he is obliged to say: "You must go, I am exhausted." Then they will break up into groups in their streets and in their houses, crying out to God to let this mighty work spread, that sinners may be converted unto him. "Well," says one, "we cannot believe it." Very likely you cannot, but some of us can, for we have heard it with our ears, and our fathers have told us the mighty works that God did in their days, and we are prepared to believe that God can do the same works now.

I must here remark again, in all these old stories there is one very plain feature. Whenever God has done a mighty work it has been by some very insignificant instrument. When he slew Goliath it was by little David, who was but a ruddy youth. Lay not up the sword of Goliath—I always thought that a mistake of David—lay up, not Goliath's sword, but lay up the stone, and treasure up the sling in God's armory for ever. When God would slay Sisera, it was a woman that must do it with a hammer and a nail. God has done his mightiest works by the meanest instruments: that is a fact most true of all God's works—Peter the fisherman at Pentecost, Luther the humble monk at the Reformation, Whitefield the potboy of the Old Bell Inn at Gloucester in the time of the last century's revival; and so it must be to the end. God works not by Pharaoh's horses or chariot, but he works by Moses' rod; he doth not his wonders with the whirlwind and the storm; he doth them by the still small voice, that the glory may be his and the honour all his own. Doth not this open a field of encouragement to you and to me? Why may not we be employed in doing some mighty work for God here?

Moreover, we have noticed in all these stories of God's mighty works in the olden time, *that wherever he has done any great thing it has been by someone who has had very great faith.* I do verily believe at this moment that, if God willed it, every soul in this hall would be converted now. If God chose to put forth the operations of his own mighty Spirit, not the most obdurate heart would be able to stand against it. "He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." He will do as he pleases; none can stay his hand. "Well," says one, "but I do not expect to see any great things." Then, my dear

friend, you will not be disappointed, for you will not see them; but those that expect them shall see them. *Men of great faith do great things.* It was Elijah's faith that slew the priests of Baal. If he had the little heart that some of you have, Baal's priests had still ruled over the people, and would never have been smitten with the sword. It was Elijah's faith that bade him say: "If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him." And again: "Choose one bullock for yourselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood and put no fire under, call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah." It was his noble faith that bade him say: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape"; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there—a holocaust to God. The reason why God's name was so magnified, was because Elijah's faith in God was so mighty and heroic.

When the Pope sent his bull to Luther, Luther burned it. Standing up in the midst of the crowd with the blazing paper in his hand he said: "See here, this is the Pope's bull." What cared he for all the Popes that were ever in or out of hell? And when he went to Worms to meet the grand Diet, his followers said: "You are in danger, stand back." "No," said Luther, "if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would not fear; I will go"—and into Worms he went, confident in the Lord his God. It was the same with Whitefield; he believed and he expected that God would do great things. When he went into his pulpit he believed that God would bless the people, and God did do so. Little faith may do little things, but great faith shall be greatly honoured. O God! our fathers have told us this, that whenever they had great faith Thou hast always honoured it by doing mighty works.

I will detain you no longer on this point, except to make one observation. *All the mighty works of God have been attended with great prayer, as well as with great faith.* Have you ever heard of the commencement of the great American revival? A man unknown and obscure, laid it up in his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After praying and wrestling and making the soul-stirring enquiry: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he hired a room, and put up an announcement that there would be a prayer-meeting held there at such-and-such an hour of the day. He went at the proper hour, and there was not a single person there; he began to pray, and prayed for half an hour alone. One came in at the end of the half-hour, and then two more, and I think he closed with six. The next week came around, and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times; at last the prayer-meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start prayer-meetings; at last there was scarcely a street in New York that was without a prayer-meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The prayer-meetings became daily ones, lasting for about an hour; petitions and requests were sent up, these were simply asked and offered before God, and the answers came; and many were the happy hearts that stood up and testified that the prayer offered last week had been already fulfilled. Then it was when they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell upon the people, and it was rumored that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching in thorough earnest, and there had been hundreds converted in a week. The matter spread into and through the Northern States—these revivals of religion became universal, and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million people were converted to God through the short space of two or three months.

Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast by the same means. The brother thought that it lay at his heart to pray, and he did pray; then he held a regular prayer-meeting; day after day they met together to entreat the blessing, and fire descended and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos but by hundreds and thousands, and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of his gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Make each of you your own estimate of them if you please.

II. Agreeable to my division, I have now to make a few observations upon THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOUR.

When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is: "Oh, that was a very long while ago." They imagine that times have altered since then. Says one: "I can believe anything about the Reformation—the largest accounts that can possibly be given, I can take in." "And so could I concerning Whitefield and Wesley," says another, "all that is quite true, they did labour vigorously and successfully, but that was many years ago. Things were in a different state then from what they are now." Granted; but I want to know what the things have to do with it. I thought it was God that did it. Has God changed? Is he not an immutable God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever? ***Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time he can do at another? Nay, I think I may push it a little further, and say what he has done once, is a prophecy of what he intends to do again—that the mighty works which have been accomplished in the olden time shall all be repeated, and the Lord's song shall be sung again in Zion, and he shall again be greatly glorified.***

Others among you say, "Oh, well I look upon these things as great prodigies—miracles. We are not to expect them every day." That is the very reason why we do not get them. If we had learnt to expect them, we should no doubt obtain them, but we put them up on the shelf, as being out of the common order of our moderate religion, as being mere curiosities of Scripture history. We imagine such things, however true, to be prodigies of providence; we cannot imagine

them to be according to the ordinary working of his mighty power. I beseech you, my friends, abjure that idea, put it out of your mind. Whatever God has done in the way of converting sinners is to be looked upon as a precedent, for "his arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that He cannot hear." If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in ourselves, and with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy his grace as in the days of old.

Yet there is yet another disadvantage under which these old stories labour. The fact is, we have not seen them. Why, I may talk to you ever so long about revivals, but you won't believe them half so much, nor half so truly, as if one were to occur in your very midst. If you saw it with your own eyes, then you would see the power of it. If you had lived in Whitefield's day, or had heard Grimshaw preach, you would believe anything. Grimshaw would preach twenty-four times a week: he would preach many times in the course of a sultry day, going from place on horseback. That man did preach. It seemed as if heaven would come down to earth to listen to him. He spoke with a real earnestness, with all the fire of zeal that ever burned in mortal breast, and the people trembled while they listened to him, and said, "Certainly this is the voice of God." It was the same with Whitefield. The people would seem to move to and fro while he spoke, even as the harvest field is moved with the wind. So mighty was the energy of God that after hearing such a sermon the hardest-hearted men would go away and say: "There must be something in it, I never heard the like."

Can you not realize these as literal facts? Do they stand up in all their brightness before your eyes? Then I think the stories you have heard with your ears should have a true and proper effect upon your lives.

III. This brings me in the third place to the PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD'S MIGHTY DEEDS.

I would that I could speak with the fire of some of those men whose names I have mentioned. Pray for me, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me, that I may plead with you for a little time with all my might, seeking to exhort and stir you up, that you may get a like revival in your midst.

My dear friends, the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about to-day?—then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing to our well-beloved a song concerning what he is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows, and sing an old song, and bless and praise his holy name for the things which he did to his ancient church, for the wonders which he wrought in Egypt, and in all the lands wherein he led his people, and from which he brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm.

When we have thus begun to praise God for what he has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other great duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer, that he would repeat the like signs and wonders among us. Oh! men and brethren, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion—men whose faith is large enough, and their love fiery enough to lead them from this moment to exercise unceasing intercessions that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations.

Why, look you here in this present assembly what objects there are for our compassion. Glancing round, I observe one and another whose history I may happen to know, but how many are there still unconverted—men who trembled and who know they have, but have shaken off their fears, and once more are daring their destiny, determined to be suicides to their own souls and to put away from them that grace which once seemed as if it were striving in their hearts. They are turning away from the gates of heaven, and running post-haste to the doors of hell; and will not you stretch out your hands to God to stop them in this desperate resolve? If in this congregation there were but one unconverted man and I could point him out and say: "There he sits, one soul that has never felt the love of God, and never has been moved to repentance," with what anxious curiosity would every eye regard him? I think out of thousands of Christians here, there is not one who would refuse to go home and pray for that solitary unconverted individual. But, oh! my brethren, it is not one that is in danger of hell fire; here are hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures.

Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? Hitherto all other means have been used without effect. God is my witness how often I have striven in this pulpit to be the means of the conversion of men. I have preached my very heart out. I could say no more than I have said, and I hope the secrecy of my chamber is a witness to the fact that I do not cease to feel when I cease to speak; but I have a heart to pray for those of you who are never affected, or who, if affected, still quench the Spirit of God. I have done my utmost. Will not you come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Here they are; I commend them to you. Men and women whose hearts refuse to melt, whose stubborn knees will not bend; I give them up to you and ask you to pray for them. *Carry their cases on your knees before God. Wife! never cease to pray for your unconverted husband. Husband! never stop your supplication till you see your wife converted. And, O fathers and mothers! have you no unconverted children? have you not brought them here many and many a Sunday, and they remain just as they have been? You have*

sent them first to one chapel and then to another, and they are just what they were. The wrath of God abideth on them. Die they must; and should they die now, to a certainty you are aware that the flames of hell must engulf them. And do you refuse to pray for them? Hard hearts, brutish souls, if knowing Christ yourself ye will not pray for those who come of your own loins—your children according to the flesh.

Dear friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we do but pray for a blessing. Look at the movement we have already seen; we have witnessed Exeter Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, crammed to the doors, but we have seen no effect as yet of all these mighty gatherings. Have we not tried to preach without trying to pray? It is not likely that the church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? O dear friends! let us agonize in prayer, and it shall come to pass that this Music Hall shall witness the sighs and groans of the penitent and the songs of the converted. It shall yet happen that this vast host shall not come and go as now it does, but little the better; but men shall go out of this hall, praising God and saying:—"It was good to be there; it was none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." Thus much to stir you up to prayer.

Another inference we should draw is that all the stories we have heard should correct any self-dependence which may have crept into our treacherous hearts. Perhaps we as a congregation have begun to depend upon our numbers and so forth. We may have thought: "Surely God must bless us through the ministry." *Now let the stories which our fathers have told us remind you, and remind me, that God saves not by many nor by few; that it is not in us to do this but God must do it all; it may be that some hidden preacher, whose name has never been known, will yet start up in this city of London and preach the Lord with greater power than bishops or ministers have ever know before.* I will welcome him; God be with him; let him come from where he may; only let God speed him, and let the work be done. Mayhap, however, God intends to bless the agency used in this place for your good and for your conversion. If so, I am thrice happy to think such should be the case. But place no dependence upon the instrument. No, when men laughed at us and mocked us most, God blessed us most; and now it is not a disreputable thing to attend the Music Hall. We are not so much despised as we once were, but I question whether we have so great a blessing as once we had. We would be willing to endure another pelting in the pillory, to go through another ordeal with every newspaper against us, and with every man hissing and abusing us, if God so pleases, if he will but give us a blessing. Only let him cast out of us any idea that our own bow and sword will get us victory. We shall never get a revival here unless we believe that it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, that can do it.

Having made this statement, I will endeavour to stir you up with confidence that the result may be obtained that I have pictured, and that the stories we have heard of the olden time, may become true in our day. Why should not every one of my hearers be converted? Is there any limitation in the Spirit of God? Why should not the feeblest minister become the means of salvation to thousands? Is God's arm shortened? My brethren, when I bid you pray that God would make the ministry quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword, for the salvation of sinners, I am not setting you a hard, much less an impossible, task. We have but to ask and to get. Before we call, God will answer; and while we are yet speaking he will hear. God alone can know what may come of this morning's sermon, if he chooses to bless it. From this moment you may pray more; from this moment God may bless the ministry more. From this hour other pulpits may become more full of life and vigour than before. From this same moment the Word of God may flow, and run, and rush, and get to itself an amazing and boundless victory.

Only wrestle in prayer, meet together in your houses, go to your closets, be instant, be earnest in season and out of season, agonize for souls, and all that you have heard shall be forgotten in what you shall see; and all that others have told you shall be as nothing compared with what you shall hear with your ears and behold with your eyes in your own midst.

Oh ye, to whom all this is as an idle tale, who love not God, neither serve him, I beseech you stop and think for a moment. Oh, Spirit of God, rest on thy servant while a few sentences are uttered, and make them mighty. God has striven with some of you. You have had your times of conviction. You are trying now, perhaps, to be infidels. You are trying to say now—"There is no hell—there is no hereafter." It will not do. You know there is a hell and all the laughter of those who seek to ruin your souls cannot make you believe that there is not. You sometimes try to think so, but you know that God is true. I do not argue with you now. Conscience tells you that God will punish you for sin. Depend upon it—you will find no happiness in trying to stifle God's Spirit. This is not the path to bliss, to quench those thoughts which would lead you to Christ. I beseech you, take off your hands from God's arm; resist not still His Spirit. Bow the knee and lay hold of Christ and believe on him. It will come to this yet. God the Holy Spirit will have you. I do trust that in answer to many prayers he intends to save you yet. Give way now, but oh, remember if you are successful in quenching the Spirit, your success will be the most awful disaster that can ever occur to you, for if the Spirit forsake you, you are lost. It may be that this is the last warning you will ever have. The conviction you are now trying to put down and stifle may be the last you will have, and the angel standing with the black seal and the wax may be now about to drop it upon your destiny, and say,

“Let him alone. He chooses drunkenness—he chooses lust—let him have them; and let him reap the wages in the everlasting fires of hell.”

Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus: repent and be converted every one of you. I am bold to say what Peter did. Breaking through every bond of every kind that could bind my lip, I exhort you in God’s name—Repent and escape from damnation. A few more months and years, and ye shall know what damnation means, except ye repent. Oh! fly to Christ while yet the lamp holds out and burns, and mercy is still preached to you. Grace is still presented; accept Christ, resist him no longer; come to him now. The gates of mercy are wide open today; come now, poor sinner, and have thy sins forgiven. When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag, and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that the black flag was put up, and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up to-day; perhaps to-morrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the law; and then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world or in that which is to come. An old eastern conqueror when he came to a city used to light a brazier of coals, and, setting it high upon a pole he would, with sound of trumpet proclaim, that if they surrendered while the lamp held out and burned he would have mercy upon them, but that when the coals were out he would storm the city, pull it stone from stone, sow it with salt, and put men, women, and children, to a bloody death. To-day the thunders of God bid you to take the like warning. There is your light, the lamp, the brazier of hot coals. Year after year the fire is dying out, nevertheless there is coal left. Even now the wind of death is trying to blow out the last live coal. Oh! sinner, turn while the lamp continues to blaze. Turn now, for when the last coal is dead thy repentance cannot avail thee. Thy everlasting yelling in torment cannot move the heart of God; thy groans and briny tears cannot move him to pity thee.

Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Oh, to-day lay hold on Christ, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

MODERN HOSTILITY TO REVIVALS.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

The world has condemned “revivals”—not the name merely, but the thing. It speaks out privately, both in conversation and in letters. It speaks out publicly in its newspapers and literary journals. Though some of its organs have been silent, though others have chronicled “revival facts” as items of needful intelligence, yet its leading organs have given verdict against them in warm and insulting language; the verdict, as it is reckoned, of modern intellect and philosophic candour.

Though not so actively intolerant as in last century, the world, under the progress of the nineteenth, is quite as hostile as the eighteenth, and indicates no abatement of malignity. It has not yet summoned the mob to-stone the preacher and scatter the congregation; it has left that to the Romish priest; yet it hints that there is room for the interference of magistracy and police, to protect the sober-minded community from the contagion of a fanaticism, which the world dreads as much as it hates.

The attack has, as yet, been more general than special; individual ministers or others, doers of the work, have been spared. It was not so in the days of Whitefield and his fellows. He

*“Stood pilloried on infamy’s high stage,
And bore the pelting scorn of half an age;
The very butt of slander, and the blot
For every dart that malice ever shot.
The man that mention’d him at once dismiss’d
All mercy from his lips, and sneer’d and hiss’d;
His crimes were such as Sodom never knew,
And perjury stood up to swear all true;
His aim was mischief, and his zeal presence,
His speech rebellion against common sense;
A knave, when tried on honesty’s plain rule;
And when by that of reason, a mere fool.
The world’s best comfort was, his doom was pass’d,*

In our day, the hostility has not yet reached this extreme, though, certainly, it is not far from it. Delusion, fanaticism, enthusiasm, insanity, hysterics, and such like, are the words now current regarding the Irish revival, especially in secular newspapers and among worldly men. These, however, are very harmless missiles—projectiles of the old school of warfare, neither of a long range nor very destructive.

The world's peace has been sorely disturbed; and though political, or warlike, or diplomatic disturbances are rather relished as a relief from tedium and routine than disliked as a nuisance; yet disturbance from a religious quarter; disturbance which explodes man's fond theories of self regeneration; disturbance which sinks the political, and the romantic, and the external, and brings up into vivid prominence and breadth the purely spiritual and eternal element; disturbance which condemns the world and the world's ways; disturbance from such a quarter and of such a nature is not a thing which can be tolerated. The disturbers of the peace must take the alternative of being bound or banished. The war-trumpet of Magenta or Solferino, summoning thousands to death and sending sorrow into unnumbered families, is a thing of poetry, and must be celebrated by a hundred pens; the peace-trumpet of Connor and Coleraine, calling the dead to life, and pouring gladness into souls and families and villages without number, is harsh and hateful, the fit object of invective and malignant ridicule.

The world is unjust; and the ground on which it bases its attack indicates the injustice. It looks only at one side of the subject, and deals only with one class of facts. It finds some excitement, some extravagance; and it exhibits these as specimens of the revival. By such arguments the admirers of continental tyranny have always defended themselves and their despotisms, pointing to the extravagances said and done in Great Britain as a conclusive demonstration against liberty. This is injustice. Every subject has its weak side; but it is unjust to present the weak parts as specimens of the whole. Every religious subject has its human side, and there the imperfections of fallen humanity will shew themselves; but it is unjust to argue from the imperfection that all is evil and hollow. Especially is it unjust to isolate these imperfections; and then, having coloured and magnified them, to exhibit them as specimens of religion, and of the doings of religious men.

It was precisely in this way that Paine, Voltaire, and the infidels of a former generation attacked the Bible. They took the characters described and events narrated in Scripture, and isolating the bad from the good, they scoffingly proclaimed the former as specimens of a book calling itself divine. They pointed to Noah's drunkenness, and asked, Is this the man that is declared "perfect in his generation?" They pointed to David's fall, and asked, Is this "the man after God's own heart?" They argued against the Bible exactly as our worldly newspapers are arguing against the revival. The argument of both is, that a thing, or a book or an event containing in it decided elements of human frailty and evil, cannot be from God. But if this be valid, then what is there in our world that can claim to be of God? Our earth is swept by storms, convulsed with earthquakes, strewed with death; can it be of God? The flower fades, the tree sheds its leaf, the serpent stings, the tiger devours; can they be the workmanship of God? This body is impregnated with disease and pain, mortality and corruption; can it have come from the hand of God? Were we, then, to argue at large on the same principles on which the world argues as to revivals, we could prove that nothing, on earth at least, is divine.

The world is unfair in the handling of its own argument. Even admitting that the adhering evils are to be the test of the character of the whole work, the evidence as to the existence of these evils, and specially as to their number and magnitude, ought to be fairly taken. The witnesses ought to be competent as well as impartial. This is denied us. The newspaper assailants declare that they must choose their own witnesses, and that no minister or person specially interested in the work, or religious persons generally, can be received as witnesses. In other words, the only testimony to be received is that of men who know nothing of religion, who dislike religious earnestness, and who are prejudiced against revivals. Such witnesses are surely neither competent nor impartial. They are both biased and blinded. We should not count the keeper of a bar a fair witness as to the utility of temperance societies. In determining the nature of the telegraph, we should not call in agriculturists, or lawyers, but men of science, men who know the subject, and who have a real interest in it. In the inquest upon the late explosion in the "Great Eastern," it would not have served the ends of justice or of commerce to have called in the Poet Laureate or the Lord Chancellor of England; still less to have got the testimony of some noted enemy of the ship, and of the company. So, most certainly, the friends rather than the enemies of revivals ought to be examined upon the subject; ministers rather than secular correspondents of newspapers ought to be admitted, if not into the jury, at least into the witness-box. To act otherwise is to treat the subject most unfairly, without regard to the common rules of law, or the common principles of equity. Nothing can be more certain to defeat all fair inquiry, and to produce a false verdict, than the exclusion of those witnesses who understand the subject best, and have been most thoroughly conversant with all the facts of the case, great and small, favourable and adverse.

In its attacks and condemnations the world has been as inconsistent as it is unjust. It does and it applauds the same things in its own circle which it censures among religious men. It condemns the excitement of the revival, yet fosters that

of the opera or ball-room. It condemns appeals to the feelings in the pulpit, and sneers at the “fanaticism” of men weeping for sin; yet it pleads for such appeals in the theatre, and records in its journals the impressions produced on such a night, when under such a skilful actor the whole audience was dissolved in tears. It vehemently denounces the late hours of some religious meetings; yet glories in telling that at such and such a party dancing was kept up till sunrise. It condemns the crowds of the open-air meetings, yet carefully registers the crowds at the fair or the race-course, and the thousands that poured in by this train and the other train from north and south.

This is as inconsistent as it is unjust. If excitement be wrong in religion, it must be wrong in everything else. If it be wrong in the things of eternity, it must be much more so in the things of time. If earnestness be fanaticism in religious matters, it must be something worse than fanaticism in worldly matters. If crowds are wrong at the revival-meeting, they must be no less so at the race-course. If it is right for people to feel, and to give utterance to their glad or their sorrowful emotions, in things pertaining to this life, it must be no less right and proper to do the same in things pertaining to that which is to come.

When, then, the world parades certain extravagances in religious movements as condemnatory of the whole work, we say, Physician, heal thyself! Act, O world, upon the same principles you so fervently inculcate on the Church, and then we shall believe you to be sincere. Disband your armies, because vice and intemperance prevail in the ranks. Prohibit commerce, because so many frauds and knaveries have been brought to light among your merchants. Dissolve parliament for ever, because bribes are given, and corruption stains the honour of your elections. Issue a decree against poetry, because songs of impurity abound. Annihilate the liberty of the press, because it is often but another name for licentiousness and libel.

What is a revival? Strictly speaking, it is the restoration of life that has been lost, and in this sense it applies only to the Church of God. But used in the more common acceptation, it is the turning of multitudes to God. As conversion is the turning of a soul to God, so a revival is a repetition of this same spiritual process in the case of thousands. It is conversion upon a large scale. It is what occurred under the apostles at Pentecost, when three thousand were converted under one sermon. It is what took place at Corinth, at Thessalonica, and Ephesus, when, under the preaching of the apostles, multitudes believed and turned to the Lord. This is what we mean by a revival. In so far as it corresponds with these Scripture scenes, in so far as it is right, and we defend it; in so far as it departs from Scripture precedent, or is inconsistent with Scripture rule, we do not defend it. Let the opponents of revivals meet us here. We are willing to apply this test. Are they? It is an equitable and satisfactory one; they need not fear it, if it is truth they seek.

We can suppose the existence of honest objections to revivals. If they produce immorality, or sow sedition, or foster licentiousness, or are the hot-beds of hypocrisy, then are they worthy of condemnation. But are they such? Have they brought forth these fruits of evil? Have they made men bad citizens, bad masters, bad parents, bad children? Have they turned sober men into drunkards, chaste men into lewd, peaceable men; into riotous, reverential men into blasphemers, loyal men into seditious? Are they crowding or are they thinning our jails? Are they filling or emptying our bars? Are they exciting or are they allaying party spirit? Are they increasing or are they diminishing the calendar of crimes and criminals? Let us answer these questions by citing a few statements. Party spirit has ceased wherever the revival has come, and enemies have embraced each other, so that a Popish judge bears testimony to the wonderful improvement, in this respect, in his own vicinity. The drunken assemblages at weddings and funerals have not only ceased, but been transformed into meetings for praise and prayer: and the brutal scenes of brawling and bloodshed, on such occasions, are no longer heard of. Thousands of drunkards have become sober, thousands of blasphemers have turned from their profanity, the whole moral aspect of families, of villages, of towns, has been altered for the better. Hundreds of Romanists have turned from their superstition; hundreds of Unitarians have owned the Lord Jesus as God; poor, profligate females have turned from their evil courses; bars have been shut up, and inroads made among those whom we are accustomed to call the “masses,” such as have not been made by any efforts heretofore.

It would thus appear that the results of the Irish revivals have been good, and not evil; good religiously, morally, socially. Their tendencies are all in the right direction. So that even admitting all that has been said against them, and making full allowance for what are called extravagances, nay, assuming that there has been a mixture of hypocrisy and deception in some cases, a very large balance remains in their favour. They have diminished crime, they have turned drunkenness into sobriety, dishonesty into honesty, brawling into good neighbourhood, hatred into love. Of bad citizens they have made good ones, of bad husbands and wives they have made good ones, of bad masters good ones, of bad parents good ones, of bad children good ones, and of mere formalists in religion they have made devout and fervent worshippers.

These are the results of what has taken place. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Are these the works of Satan? Are these things from beneath or from above? Are they earthly or heavenly? If they be Satan’s doings, then is his kingdom divided, and he is fighting against himself.

It is to be noticed, too, that the really religious men who have visited the scenes are all convinced that the work is of God. Their enemies are among the irreligious and profane. The Popish priests are against them. The bar-keepers are against them. The Unitarians are against them. The lovers of pleasure are against them. But these are the things that tell so strongly in their favour.

Manifestly the work is of God, not of man, nor of Satan. God has risen up to do a work in our day worthy of Himself; a glorious work, in which human instruments are set aside, and the Holy Spirit is the great and indisputable worker. A work like this will not easily be overthrown. It will not be put down by scoffing, nor injured by misrepresentation, nor arrested by the hostility either of formal Protestants or angry Romanists. Fling your handfuls of sand into the torrent, ye enemies of Christ; will these arrest its victorious rush? Cast up embankments on the Nile, from Thebes to Alexandria; will these hinder its overflow? Bring your mighty engines to bear upon this divine conflagration that is now blazing through Ulster; will you quench one spark? Send for your Balaams, your lying prophets of the press, ye Balaks of Moab, place them upon every green mountain, from Donegal to Downpatrick, say to them, "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel;" what can the answer be but, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?"

Taken from: *Authentic Records of Revival* compiled by William Reid; Biblical Press, 1981.

