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SOME FACTS ABOUT REVIVALS

From the writings of Rev. Charles G. Finney
Revivals Not New

Almost all the religion in the world has been produced by revivals. God has found it necessary to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind to produce powerful excitement among them before He can lead them to obey. Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion and to oppose the influence of the gospel, that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them, till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles. They must be so aroused that they will break over these counteracting influences before they will obey God.

Look back at the history of the Jews, and you will see that God used to maintain religion among them by special occasions, when there would be a great excitement, and people would turn to the Lord. And after they had been thus revived, it would be but a short time before there would be so many counteracting influences brought to bear upon them, that religion would decline, and keep on declining, till God could have time, so to speak, to convict them of sin by His Spirit, and rebuke them by His Providence, and thus so gain the attention of the masses to the great subjects of salvation, as to produce a widespread awakening.

Revivals a Necessity

The state of the world is still such, and probably will be till the millennium is fully come, that religion must be mainly promoted by means of revivals. How long and how often has the experiment been tried to bring the Church to act steadily for God, without these periodical excitements! Many good men have supposed, and still suppose, that the best way to promote religion is to go along uniformly, and gather in the ungodly gradually, and without excitement. But however sound such reasoning may appear in the abstract, facts demonstrate its futility.

But as yet the state of the Christian world is such, that to expect to promote religion without excitement is unphilosophical and absurd. The great political and other worldly excitements that agitate Christendom are all unfriendly to religion, and divert the mind from the interests of the soul. Now, these excitements can only be counteracted by religious excitements. And until there is sufficient religious principle in the world to put down irreligious excitements, it is in vain to try to promote religion, except by counteracting excitements. This is true in philosophy, and it is a historical fact.

Men Must Be Aroused

It is altogether improbable that religion will ever make progress among heathen nations

except through the influence of revivals. The attempt is now in making to do it by education, and other cautious and gradual improvements. But so long as the laws of mind remain what they are, it cannot be done in this way. There must be excitement sufficient to wake up the dormant moral powers, and roll back the tide of degradation and sin. And precisely so far as our land approximates to heathenism, it is impossible for God or man to promote religion in such a state of things but by powerful excitements.

This is evident from the fact that this has always been the way in which God has done it. God does not create these excitements, and choose this method to promote religion, for nothing, or without reason. Men being so reluctant to obey God, will not act until they are excited. For instance, how many there are who know that they ought to be religious, but they are afraid that if they become pious they will be laughed at by their companions. Many are wedded to idols; others are procrastinating repentance until they are settled in life, or until they have secured some favorite worldly interest. Such persons never will give up their false shame, or relinquish their ambitious schemes till they are so excited by a sense of guilt and danger they cannot hold back any longer.

The Appointed Means

A revival is the result of the right use of the appointed means. The means which God has enjoined for the production of a revival doubtless have a natural tendency to produce a revival. Otherwise God would not have enjoined them. But means will not produce a revival, we all know, without the blessing of God. No more will grain, when sown, produce a crop without the blessing of God. It is impossible for us to say that there is not as direct an influence or agency from God, to produce a crop of grain, as there is to produce a revival. What are the laws of nature according to which it is supposed that grain yields a crop? They are nothing but the constituted manner of the operations of God. In the Bible, the Word of God is compared to grain, and preaching is compared to sowing the seed, and the results to the springing up and growth of the crop. A revival is as naturally a result of the use of the appropriate means as a crop is of the use of its appropriate means.

There is one fact under the government of God worthy of universal notice and of everlasting remembrance; which is, that the most useful and important things are most certainly obtained by the use of the appropriate means. This is evidently a principle in the divine administration. Hence, all the necessities of life are obtained with greatest certainty by the use of the simplest means. The luxuries are more difficult to obtain; the means to procure them are more intricate, and less certain in their results; while things absolutely hurtful

and poisonous, such as alcohol and the like, are often obtained only by torturing nature and making use of a kind of infernal sorcery to procure death-dealing abominations.

This principle holds true in moral government, and as spiritual blessings are of surpassing importance, we should expect their attainment to be connected with great certainty with the use of the appropriate means; and such we find to be the fact. And I fully believe that, could facts be known, it would be found that when the appointed means have been rightly used, spiritual blessings have been obtained with greater uniformity than temporal ones.—Wesleyan Methodist.

THE SOUL WINNER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The following solemn incident appears under the title of "Gospel Incidents for Christian Workers," where the writer vouches for the historical character of the recital.

It appears that a rector in New England, who went through his ministerial tasks in a formal manner but without definite plans and labor for the salvation of his people had an alarming dream. When he came to the breakfast table his wife, noticing that he was distressed and ill, asked him what was the matter. "Oh," he said, "I have had a most awful dream!" "Dreams are nothing," she replied. "I don't know," he said, "There was something in this dream. I thought I was standing at the judgment seat of Christ, and He looked me in the face and said, 'Where are the souls of the children I gave you?' 'I do not know, Lord.' 'Where are the souls of the servants who lived in your house?' 'I do not know, Lord,' again I had to reply. 'Where are the souls of the congregation to whom I appointed you a minister?' and I said, O Lord, I know not, I never spoke to any of them.' And as I said these words I seemed to sink into perdition, and I thought I was hunted through hell by these lost souls—and I awoke." And as the clergyman said these words, he fell over against his wife—dead.—Sel.

NEW BIRTH ESSENTIAL

I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of northern Italy, where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it, but when I perceived it was made of mud I reflected that the more she scrubbed the worse it would be. The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement; there must be a new nature implanted, or the man will be only "washed to deeper stain." "Ye must be born again." Ours is not a case for mending, but for re-creating new.—Spurgeon.

"Speech is a barometer of moral character."

Mrs. Geo. Tedlie, Feb. 40