



Session 9: The Revival of 1858

The Way the Fire of Revival Came

It Was the Best of Times: U.S. Experienced Growth in:

1. Population
2. Geographic boundaries
3. Economy

It Was the Worst of Times: Spirituality Declined

The influence of the Second Great Awakening continued for almost half a century. However, around the mid-1800s, revivals almost totally ceased throughout the country. From 1843-1857 the additions to churches scarcely equaled the losses sustained by death, removal, or discipline. Further, a wide-spread indifference to religion became prevalent resulting in a fifteen year spiritual drought. The reasons for the drought were:

1. Economic
2. Political
3. Religious

The Ignition of the Fire of Revival

In 1857, when things seemed to be the darkest, the tide began to turn:

1. A number of churches in both the North and the South began to experience powerful revivals.
2. Presbyterians yearning for a fresh touch from God through evangelism conferences.
3. Aggressive Sunday School enrollment push
4. Union Prayer Meetings

Most historians point to the union prayer meetings begun in metropolitan NYC as the actual start of the Revival of 1857-58. The downtown churches in NYC were experiencing decline. Membership in the churches was dropping as people and churches were moving to the suburbs as a result of the encroachment of trade and commerce into the inner city.

5. The Panic of 1857

The Spread of the Revival

The revival spread with unbelievable rapidity throughout the nation. Prayer was the common denominator. In many cases, the revival followed the pattern of the prayer meetings in NYC, each of which began without knowledge of the other. The newly invented telegraph and growing media were used by God to spread the news of prayer meetings. Revival was splashed across the front pages of secular newspapers. Preaching services were held to further this great revival, but the union prayer meetings were the mainstay of the movement.

Mid-Atlantic States

- First took off in NYC where 150 union prayer meetings occurred daily, with more than 150,000 New Yorkers praying daily.
- The greatest impact was felt by the Baptist churches in the Philadelphia, PA, area.

New England

- A total of 150 towns in Mass. reported revival, with more than 5,000 converted by the end of March 1858.
- Church bells summoned people to prayer in Portland, Maine.
- It was reported that in one town in Conn. not a single unconverted adult could be found.

Midwestern States

- The Midwest was the stronghold for Methodist work.
- Kalamazoo, Michigan
- The life of Dwight L. Moody was affected by the YMCA noon prayer meetings.

Southern States

- The slavery issue hindered the revival fires at first, but the South did experience a movement of God.

Interesting Characteristics

1. Not the work of famous men
2. Lead by laymen
3. Emphasis upon prayer
4. Lack of emotional excess
5. Christian cooperation
6. Mature adult converts – often career persons
7. Almost unanimous approval – few had unkind words to say of the movement

Impact of the Revival

1. The growth of churches
2. A new emphasis upon the laity
3. Demand for immersion as the mode of baptism
4. Impact on college campuses
5. Increased candidates for the ministry
6. Moral uplift for the nation
7. Later evangelistic efforts
8. Revival in the armies of the civil war
9. Women in Ministry
10. Revival's Spread to Other Lands