

The Ulster Revival of 1859 From Old Time Revivals by John Shearer

Classic Christian Writings:

In 1855 Rev. J. H. Moore, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Connor, Northern Ireland, urged one of his young men to do "something more" for God. "Could you not gather at least six of your careless neighbors and spend an hour with them in reading and searching the Word of God?" The young man agreed to attempt "something more." And the result was the commencement of the Tannybrake Sunday school.

After two years' labor, the teachers of this little school did again "something more." They asked the parents of the children to come to a meeting for prayer and Bible reading at the close of the school. Only one responded at first, but the meeting grew, and soon the Sabbath School Teachers' Prayer Meeting became intensely interesting, for the Spirit of God came pouring into this newly-opened channel. "Christ and the Cross" became the one absorbing theme of the gathering. An intense desire to win souls for Christ seized the workers.

Amongst these praying folk were four young men — M^{rs} Quilken, Meneely, Wallace, and Carlisle — who were very strongly bound together in the fellowship of prayer. The story of George Muller quickened within them a mighty faith in God as the hearer of prayer. They began to meet regularly in the old schoolhouse of Kells, pouring out their hearts in passionate supplication for revival. Like-minded brethren joined them. Now decided conversions clearly following definite and insistent prayer, greatly encouraged them. In 1858 came the news of the American awakening. They heard how in New York 12,000 businessmen met daily for prayer.

Like Jacob, they cried, "We will not let Thee go, except Thou bless us!" Nor was the answer delayed. Prayer meetings multiplied all around them. Daily conversions took place. Soon Connor was manifestly ablaze with holy fire. In 1859 the heavenly fire was leaping up and spreading in all directions....

There was a wonderful work among the children. The blessing had come to Coleraine, and one day the schoolmaster observed a boy so troubled that he was quite unfit for lessons. He kindly sent him home in the company of an older boy who had already found peace. As the two lads went on their way they saw an empty house, and went into it for prayer. While they knelt, the painful burden lifted from the boy's heart. He sprang to his feet in a transport of joy. Returning to the school, he ran up to the master and with a beaming face, cried out, "Oh, I am so happy! I have the Lord Jesus in my heart."

The effect of these words was very great. Boy after boy rose and silently slipped from the room. In a little while the master followed and discovered his boys ranged alongside the wall of the playground, every one apart and on his knees! Very soon their silent prayer became a bitter cry. It was heard by those within and pierced their hearts. They cast themselves upon their knees, and their cry for mercy was heard in the girls' schoolroom above.

In a few moments the whole school was upon its knees, and its wail of distress was heard in the street without. Neighbors and passers-by came flocking in, and as they crossed the threshold, all came under the same convicting power. Every room was filled with men, women, and children seeking God. The ministers of the town and men of prayer were sent for, and the whole day was spent in directing these mourners to the Lord Jesus. That school proved to be for many the house of God and the very gate of heaven.

It pleased God to use, in a very remarkable manner, the simple testimony of the four young men of Connor. Through them the revival reached the capital. Ministers who had toiled in vain for years suddenly found themselves surrounded by sin-sick souls clamoring for the life-giving Word. But for the loving co-operation of Sabbath school teachers and other friends, they would speedily have been exhausted with the work. Vast and memorable gatherings were held. Districts notorious as the scenes of party strife, witnessed the triumph of the Gospel of peace. Bitter opponents knelt together at the Savior's feet. Belfast became like a city of God.