

Revivals And Church History :: THOUSANDS WEPT IN SORROW

THOUSANDS WEPT IN SORROW - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/8/21 0:28

THOUSANDS WEPT IN SORROW AND JOY

The awakening work of the Holy Spirit in the 18th century was not confined to America, England and Wales. Scotland also had its powerful revival...

The parish of Cambuslang in Strathclyde (now almost a suburb of Glasgow) numbered around 200 families, mainly farmers and miners. It had been without a minister for some years, but in 1731 it received William M'Culloch, then aged forty. He had grown up in Covenanter country, surrounded by martyrs' graves, and longed for God to move again upon the land. His labours almost ended in despair. The congregation was in such poor spiritual health that he did not feel it right to celebrate Communion for three years.

Over the same period he became deeply aware of his own unfitness as an instrument of the Lord. A saintly colleague urged him to devote himself to intercessory prayer for a deeper work of God's Holy Spirit.

News of the 'Great Awakening' in America gave impetus to such prayer and to a closer study of the Bible. Then, a devastating hurricane followed by months of famine in 1740 brought the people to brokenness before God.

The next year George White-field arrived in Edinburgh, preaching the gospel with such power that many cried aloud. Fourteen from Cambuslang found their hearts "melted down and overboiling with tears". Back home the thought of revival consumed them day and night.

In February, 1742, M'Culloch sent the people home, charging them to "fall on their knees before God, and with all possible earnestness, as for life itself, to beg of Him His Holy Spirit to renew and change our hearts and natures, and to take no comfort in any thing till we get it".

They were not kept waiting long. Within days a young woman cried out in the church: "Christ says to me He will never leave me or forsake me!" The effect was electric, with many weeping and others crying aloud for joy, and M'Culloch needing three hours to counsel the enquirers.

There was now no holding back the Holy Spirit's work. Whole households fell under conviction of sin. People would burst into tears in the street.

One young woman, noted for her timidity, preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit to a large crowd with compelling power. A visiting minister wrote of how some that were previously notorious sinners had now the meekness of the Lamb. On Tuesday, July 6 1742, White-field came to Cambuslang at midday and preached at two, six and nine o'clock. For about an hour and a half there were scenes of uncontrollable distress, like a field of battle.

Many were being carried into the manse like wounded soldiers. "Such a commotion was surely never heard of especially at eleven at night," he wrote to a friend. "It far out-did all I ever saw in America."

All night in the fields could be heard the voices of prayer and praise.

News spread far and wide, and by the time of Whitefield's next sermon in July the crowd numbered upwards of 20,000.

Whitefield wrote to John Cennick "Such a universal stir I never saw before. The motion fled as swiftly as lightning from one end of the auditory to the other. You might have seen the thousands bathed in tears; some at the same time wringing their hands, others almost swooning and others crying out and mourning over a pierced Saviour."

During these and other gatherings men and women trembled and wept and some sank down as dead. Joy as much a part of this work as was sorrow over sin. Many believers found themselves so moved by a sense of the Saviour's love as to be lifted almost into a state of rapture. The phrase 'joy unspeakable and full of glory' occurs frequently in the Cambuslang

g records and undoubtedly depicts the experience of many, among both the new converts and the established Christians.

The results of the revival were considerable. M'Culloch himself, limiting his estimate to his own parishioners, speaks of over five hundred genuine conversions, but hints at hundreds more among the many visitors. Within seven years it was estimated that church attendance in the Glasgow area had risen to 35 percent of the population. From Cambuslang the flames spread to other places, with well-documented moves of the Holy Spirit at Kilsyth, Muthil, Torryburn and Nigg.