

Revivals And Church History :: May there be a revival of prayer. and persistence..... the 1857 Revival in New York

May there be a revival of prayer. and persistence..... the 1857 Revival in New York... - posted by EAGLEFLYING (), on: 2

Revivals in North America: The Great Revival of 1857 in New York

Written by Gerald Procee

PDF Print E-mail

Reformed Worldviews - The Hand of God in History

It is very instructive to consider how the Lord worked salvation in the past by means of revivals. There were times in the history of the church when it pleased Him to grant very rich outpourings of His Holy Spirit. It seems that many countries had these blessed seasons of awakening in which many sinners were convicted and subsequently converted. Several months ago, we considered the Pyongyang Revival of 1907 in Korea. We now wish to consider some examples of the outpourings of God's Spirit in North America. In conclusion we will try to draw some conclusions for spiritual life today. In this article we turn to the first example, namely the Great Revival of 1857 in New York City.

Material Prosperity

The years leading up to 1857 were characterized by tremendous economic growth and prosperity in the United States. There was a population boom and many people were becoming wealthy. The focus of many was on this world and as a result there was a deep decline in spiritual life. Materialism had become a pervasive force throughout the land. Young people were growing up without God and many were captivated by the love of money. Churches suffered serious decline in attendance.

Inner City Ministry

The population growth of New York City began to force the wealthy residents out of the downtown area, where they were replaced by unchurched masses of working class labourers. Many churches moved out of the city to accommodate their members. But in contrast to these churches the North Dutch Reformed Church of Manhattan decided to stay and reach out to the lost masses of people who surrounded them. To accomplish this, the congregation employed a 48-year old businessman, Jeremiah Lanphier, as missionary to the inner city. Born in 1809, Lanphier was converted in 1842. His contemporaries characterized him as a tall man with a pleasant face and an affectionate manner, who was endowed with much tact and common sense. For years Lanphier had been under the preaching of Rev. James W. Alexander of the Nineteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City. In his preaching Alexander emphasized the necessity of the special work of the Holy Spirit in salvation as well as the effectiveness of prayer. When the Dutch Reformed Church appointed Lanphier to be inner city missionary, he transferred his membership to that congregation. Lanphier was a man of prayer and an effective and energetic speaker. Moved by the spiritual plight of the lost masses, he had given up his business to devote himself to inner city evangelism work. He began to visit homes, distribute Bibles and tracts, and advertise church services.

Noontime Prayer Meeting

Facing discouraging responses, he found comfort in personal prayer and sensed God's guidance to begin a weekly prayer service at noon for workers and business people to call upon God and to pray for a spiritual awakening. He challenged these men who were engaged in thriving businesses to devote a portion of the time usually given to rest and refreshment at mid-day to devotional purposes. For many weeks he handed out pamphlets that stated the following:

How often shall I pray? As often as the language of prayer is in my heart; as often as I see my need of help; as often as I feel the power of temptation; as often as I am made sensible of any spiritual declension, or feel the aggression of a worldly, earthly spirit.... In prayer, we leave the business of time for that of eternity, and intercourse with God.

On the reverse of the pamphlet it said:

A day Prayer Meeting is held every Wednesday from 12 to 1 o'clock in the Consistory building of the North Dutch Church, corner of Fulton and William Streets. This meeting is intended to give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers and businessmen generally an opportunity to stop and call on God amid the perplexities incident to their respective avocations. It will continue for one hour; but it is designed for those who find it inconvenient to remain more than 5 or 10 minutes, as well as for those who can spare a whole hour. Necessary interruption will be slight, because anticipated. Those in

haste often expedite their business engagements by halting to lift their voices to the throne of grace in humble, grateful prayer.

Attendance

Shortly before noon on Wednesday September 23, 1857, Lanphier opened the doors of the Dutch Reformed Church of Manhattan. He waited in the upper room of the consistory building. Nobody came, until around 12:30 he heard the footsteps of a man climbing the stairs. A few minutes after that more came until a total of six men, representing five different denominations had joined Lanphier to pray. The next Wednesday between 14 and 20 people were in attendance. The third week, the prayer meeting was attended by between 30 and 40 men. The meetings were so encouraging that it was decided that they should meet daily. The next day attendance increased again. Soon they filled the Dutch Reformed Church building. The agenda was simple: They prayed for the salvation of souls. There was communal singing, and edifying exhortations were presented. There were no discussions and those in attendance prayed by name for the souls of family members, neighbours, and co-workers.

Increasing Numbers

Then came the economic crash of 1857. It forced thousands of merchants into bankruptcy, banks failed and railroad companies went under. In New York City alone, 30,000 people lost their jobs. In addition to the financial crisis, the nation was gripped by tensions over slavery. Sharp dissension and even civil war loomed on the horizon. Participation at the prayer meetings increased so much during this period that by mid November, two lecture rooms had to be used, and both were filled. At the beginning of the following year, 1858, the church was so crowded, that in an effort to accommodate the increasing numbers, three simultaneous prayer meetings were held in rooms on different floors in the same building.

Many Conversions

Many who attended did not profess to be religious, but they came under conviction of sin and began to look for a saving interest in Christ. Soon, they started prayer meetings in other church buildings in downtown New York City. In March 1858 a noon prayer meeting was started in a large theatre. Half an hour before the announced time, it was filled to capacity. Because the majority of the attendees were businessmen, they started prayer meetings in public buildings. Already in November 1857 Theodore Cuyler, pastor of Nineteenth Street Church New York, said, "he was struck with the earnestness of petitions for the descent of God's Spirit on our city churches." The newspaper editor, Horace Greeley, who worked for the New York Tribune sent a reporter with horse and buggy to ride from one prayer meeting to the next to see how many men were praying. In one hour he could only get to 12 meetings, but he counted more than 6,000 men. According to some eyewitnesses, within six months' time these noontime prayer meetings were attracting 10,000 businessmen, all of them confessing their sins and praying for revival.

Revival

A landslide of prayer began. Other major U.S. cities followed the same pattern. Soon a common mid-day sign on business premises would read, "We will re-open at the close of the prayer meeting." In cities such as Cleveland and St. Louis, thousands of people packed downtown churches 3 times per day, just to pray. There were 6,000 people in attendance in Pittsburgh. Daily prayer meetings were held in Washington D.C. at five different times to accommodate the crowds. The New York Times, in an editorial dated March 20, 1858, stated the following about the revival:

The great wave of religious excitement which is now sweeping over this nation, is one of the most remarkable movements since the reformation.... Travelers relate that in cars and steamboats, in banks and markets, everywhere through the interior, this matter is an absorbing topic. Churches are crowded; bank-directors' rooms become oratories; school-houses are turned into chapels; converts are numbered by the scores of thousands. In this City, we have beheld a sight which not the most enthusiastic fanatic for church-observances could ever have hoped to look upon; we have seen in a business-quarter of the City, in the busiest hours, assemblies of merchants, clerks and working-men, to the number of 5,000, gathered day after day for a simple and solemn worship. Similar assemblies we find in other portions of the City; a theatre is turned into a chapel; churches of all sects are open and crowded by day and night.... It is most impressive to think that over this great land tens and fifties of thousands of men and women are putting themselves at this time in a simple, serious way, the greatest question that can ever come before the human mind—What shall we do to be saved from sin?

The effects were remarkable. Many ministers began having nightly services in which to lead men to Christ. People were

converted, at times 10,000 people a week in New York City alone. Edwin Orr relates the story of a visiting merchant to New York City who was selecting goods when noon hour came. He requested the wholesaler to work through the noon hour so that he would be able to return to Albany by the evening riverboat, but the response was: "No! I can't help that. I have something to attend that is of more importance than the selling of goods. I must attend the noon-day prayer meeting. It will close at one o'clock, and I will then fill out your order." They both attended the meeting and the visiting merchant was converted. When he returned to Albany he immediately started a noon-day prayer meeting in that city.

The Revival Spreads

The revival movement spread throughout New England. Church bells would bring people to prayer at eight in the morning, at twelve noon, and six in the evening. In Chicago the churches had a waiting list for people who wanted to teach Sunday school classes. The revival spread all across America and pastors were baptizing 20,000 people every week. Baptists reported that so many people had to be baptized that they couldn't get them into their churches. So they went to the river in the cold of winter, cut out a square of ice and baptized people in the cold water! The revival spread like wildfire across the country. Bishop Charles P. McIlvaine (1799-1873), bishop of the Episcopal Church of Ohio wrote:

I rejoice in the decided conviction that this is the Lord's doing; unaccountable by any natural causes, entirely above and beyond what any human device or power could produce; an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon God's people, quickening them to greater earnestness in his service; and upon the unconverted, to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The 1857 Revival is barely remembered today by secular historians, but it was probably the greatest awakening ever experienced by the United States of America. It was estimated that in the period 1858-59 fully one million people were converted from a population of less than thirty million.

(From J. Edwin Orr, *Potent Answers to Persistent Prayer*, in *The Rebirth of America*).

Dr. Gerald Procee is the pastor of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Middelharnis, NL. This article was printed in the FRC Messenger and is republished here with permission.

Re: May there be a revival of prayer. and persistence..... the 1857 Revival in New Yo - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2019

May God do it again!

<https://youtu.be/zyoiM2rnjTw>

Re: - posted by EAGLEFLYING (), on: 2019/5/17 18:26

AMEN and AMEN... Revival is the only hope for America and I believe it must stop in NY..

Blessings.. Good utube tu for posting.

Our church is praying one day a week for revival.. Im hoping for more time and days Let it rain.. Let it rain..

in JESUS name.

Sister Frannie