

Revivals And Church History :: An Example of Revival

An Example of Revival - posted by teamtoucan (), on: 2006/6/2 23:29

Here's a bit of history:

Soon after my arrival at the town of Auburn in 1826, a circumstance occurred, that was so striking, that I must give a brief account of it. My wife and I were staying as guests in the home of Dr. Lansing, the pastor of the church. The church was very worldly, and they were accused by the unconverted of being leaders in dress, and fashion, and worldliness. As usual I directed my preaching firstly towards the reform of the church, to get them into a state of revival. One Sunday I had preached, as searchingly as I was able, to the church, in regard to their attitude before the world. The message took deep hold of the people.

At the close of my sermon, I asked the pastor to pray, as was my usual practice. He was much impressed with the sermon, and instead of immediately saying a prayer, he made a short but very earnest talk to the church, confirming what I had said to them. At this moment a man arose in the gallery of the church, and said in a very deliberate and distinct manner, "Mr. Lansing, I do not believe that such remarks from you can do any good, while you wear a ruffled shirt and a gold ring, and while your wife and the ladies of your family sit, as they do, at the front of the congregation, dressed as leaders in the fashions of the day." It seemed as if this would kill Dr. Lansing outright. He made no reply, but leaned across the pulpit, and wept like a child. The congregation was almost as much shocked and affected as he was. They almost universally dropped their heads onto the seat in front of them, and many of them wept. With the exception of the sobs and sighs, the meeting was profoundly silent. I waited a few moments, and as Dr. Lansing did not move, I arose and offered a short prayer and dismissed the congregation.

I went home with the dear wounded pastor, and when all his family had returned from church, he took the ring from his finger--it was a slender gold ring that could hardly attract notice--and said, his first wife, when upon her dying bed, took it from her finger, and placed it upon his, with a request that he should wear it for her sake. He had done so, without a thought of its being a stumbling block to other Christians. Of his ruffled shirt he said, he had worn them from his childhood, and did not think of them as anything improper. Indeed he could not remember when he began to wear them, and of course thought nothing about them. "But," said he, "if these things cause offence to anyone, I will not wear them." He was a precious Christian man, and an excellent pastor.

Almost immediately after this, the church wanted to make to the world a public confession of their backsliding, and of their lack of Christian spirit. Accordingly a confession was drawn up, covering the whole matter. It was submitted to the church for their approval, and then read before the congregation. The church arose and stood, many of them weeping while the confession was read. From this point on the work of revival in the church and in the town went forward, with greatly increased power.

The confession by the people of the church was evidently a work of the heart and not a sham; and God most graciously accepted it, and the mouths of critics of the revival were shut. The fact is that, to a great extent, the churches and ministers were in a low state of grace, and those powerful revivals took them by surprise. I did not much wonder then, nor have I wondered since, that those wonderful works of God were not well understood and received by those who were not in a state of revival.

The above quotation is from Charles Finney's biography. (Some language has been modernised.)