

Revivals And Church History :: Renewed enthusiasm in reformations (just a theory)**Renewed enthusiasm in reformations (just a theory) - posted by intrcssr83 (), on: 2007/4/16 23:37**

Just an idea I had:

I was just reflecting upon the biographies of those who were involved in Awakenings and reformations throughout church history.

Here's my theory: The church (e.g. Catholicism at the time of Luther, The Church of England for the Wesley Brothers and Whitefield, the "Puritans" and Presbyterians for Jonathan Edwards) gets to the point where it is in a spiritual drought. Structures are rigid to the point of extreme traditionalism, preaching has no power and the community's response is either licentiousness or legalism.

Now, I've noticed a pattern when the key individuals get the "wake up call": At first, they don't desire to create a schism in their parent church. If anything, there is a greater love and joy towards what what originally seemed dry and lifeless because they have finally caught onto something real and tangible. That being, the grace of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the word of God.

Let's continue: they continue to pursue their religious duties with their peers, albeit while they do so out of obligation, the reformer/revivalist does so out of a joyful sense of privilege and leisure e.g., when it comes to singing hymns, the revivalist sings every lyric from his heart with honest meaning while those around him are in a flat monotone.

What causes the rift is when the revivalist sees that others just aren't catching on when he tries to share his passion. Eventually, the revivalist is set apart, both spiritually and naturally, and hence the dead church and the revived church go on in their respective tangents.

The point I'm trying to get at is that one of the first signs of personal revival seems to be renewed sense of enthusiasm to joyfully carry out what others who are lukewarm are having to force themselves to do out of habit.

Examples:

Jonathan Edwards. Calvinism in his day seemed to be rather pessimistic, yet his writings seemed to reflect an incredible sense of wonder towards the Reformed concepts of sovereignty. While others seemed to have squirmed at the idea of election, Edwards saw it as pointing towards the glory of God.

The Methodists had the Holiness Club, which at first tried to find spirituality through rigid obedience towards what the Church of England was teaching. Yet once Whitefield and the Wesleys discovered grace, Holiness took on a whole new, practical meaning evident in their preaching.

Martin Luther never wanted to rebel against the Catholic church originally, if anything he loved the church and was concerned about its integrity. But as he weighed his insights against the corruption from the local parishes through to the Vatican, his distancing (and ex-communication) was inevitable.

So, to wrap up, it all seems to start in infancy with a newfound enthusiasm, but as it matures, the greater truths which cause divisions begin to grow out of it to the point that the revival/awakening/reformation is completely separated from the host body and operates independently within the truths it now has.

This is all just a theory, I could be completely wrong. But I'd like to know everyone's thoughts.

Ben