

Classics

True Revivals and the Way God Works

By Horatius Bonar



The world is still sleeping its sleep of death. It has been a slumber of many generations; sometimes deeper, sometimes lighter—yet still a slumber like that of the tomb, as if destined to continue till the last trumpet sound, and then there shall be no more sleep!

Yet God has not left it to sleep on unwarned. He has spoken in a voice that might reach the dullest ears and quicken the coldest heart.

The multitude has always slept, but there has always been a little flock awake. Even in the world's deepest midnight there have been always children of the light and of the day. In the midst of a slumbering world some have been in every age awake. God's voice had reached them, and His mighty power had raised them, and they walked the earth, awake among sleepers, the living among the dead.

The history of the Church is full of these awakenings, some on a larger and some on a smaller scale. Many a wondrous scene has been witnessed from the day of Pentecost downwards to our own day, and what better deserves the attention and the study of the believer than the record of these outpourings of the Spirit?

The Way God Works

As an illustration of how remarkably the work was of God and not of man, we quote the following passages from A Narrative of Surprising Conversions by Jonathan Edwards [related to the Revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, beginning in 1737].

“It is observable how, at this remarkable day, a spirit of deep concern would seize upon persons. Some were in the house and some walking in the highway; some in the woods and some in the field; some children and some adults and some elderly persons. They would sometimes of a sudden be brought under the strongest impressions, from a sense of the great realities of the other world and eternal things.

“But such things were usually, if not always, impressed upon men while they were in some way exercising their minds upon the Word of God or spiritual objects. For the most part, it has been under the public preaching of the Word that these lasting impressions have been fastened upon them.

“A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages. All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things, was soon thrown off.

“The involvement of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid. It appeared in their very countenances. It was then a dreadful thing amongst us to be out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell. What peoples’ minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives and fly from the wrath to come!

“All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls, and would very often meet together in private houses for religious purposes. There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of eternity.

“The work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more. Souls come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvelous light.

“Those among us that had formerly been converted were greatly enlivened and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomings of the Spirit of God. Many who had before labored under difficulties about their own spiritual condition, had now their doubts removed by a more satisfying experience and more clear discoveries of God’s love.”

Amazing Heaven and Earth

When God would do a marvelous work, such as may amaze all heaven and earth, He commands silence all around, sends for the still, small voice and then sets some feeble instrument to work and straightway it is done! The Creator, in the silent majesty of power, noiseless yet resistless, achieves by a word the infinite wonders of omnipotence!

In order to loose the bands of winter and bring in the fresh greenness of the pleasant spring, God does not send forth His angels to hew in pieces the thickened ice, or to strip off from the mountain’s side the gathered snows or to plant anew over the face of the bleak earth, flowers fresh from His creating hand.

No! He breathes from His lips a mild warmth into the frozen air, and forthwith, in stillness but in irresistible power, the work proceeds. Such is God’s method of working, both in the natural and in the spiritual world—silent, simple, majestic, and resistless!

Is the Lord’s hand shortened that it cannot save, or is His ear heavy that it cannot hear?

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