The Revival of 1858 in Mid-America

by Howard Fenimore Shipps

The Revival of 1858 was a very unique manifestation of the power of God which moved with marked effect throughout the whole continental United States, and ultimately into other lands. It seems to have been overlooked, or at least lightly considered, by many major historians. No doubt its great and lasting influence upon the social, religious, moral, economic, and political life of this Nation deserves a more careful investigation. It is hoped that this study may suggest some relationships in which the Awakening of 1858 has played a major role in the genuine enrichment of the total life in America.

I. Causes or Circumstances Preceding the Revival.

Historians and philosophers as well as theologians continue to differ concerning the causes and conditions by which a revival of religion is brought to pass. From the position of Jonathan Edwards, that it is a peculiar manifestation of the power of God working by divine control in the minds and hearts of men, to the extreme opposite position, which is held and taught by Charles G. Finney, that revival is possible whenever God's people actually do meet those conditions which are prescribed in the Word of God. There are many modified positions all along the way between these two extremes. And it is not the purpose of this paper to debate this issue, at least for the present. However, it is within the realm of our discussion to recognize that usually a revival is preceded by certain conditions of shorter or longer duration, which seem quite surely to have prepared the way. These conditions may be in the world or church, or both; as they may also be the activity of God or man, or both.

As to the causes of the Revival of 1858 most historians are in general agreement. While some may place greater emphasis upon one cause and others would find another more important, no major conflict would ensue.

A fairly complete list which has been initiated by himself or accepted at the suggestion of other historians, has been prepared
by Beardsley\textsuperscript{1} in his *History of American Revivals*. The list of fourteen follows:

1. A period of financial embarrassment over the nation.
2. Wild pursuit of wealth.
3. Unprecedented material development.
4. Rapid settlement of the Western States and opening up of their resources.
5. Immense immigration from Europe.
6. Discovery of precious materials in the territory acquired from Mexico.
7. Spirit of speculation, and wasteful, extravagant living.
8. Distinction between the church and the world generally obliterated.
9. A mania for greed and gain.
10. Dress, extravagance, show, dissipation, debauchery, heartless selfishness, waste and its follower want, marked the era after the war with Mexico (1850-57).
11. Intense political excitement.
12. A time of spiritual declension.
14. Church attendance scarcely a tenth of what it had been.

These fourteen conditions which nearly everyone would agree did exist in the nation and the church are situations which simply suggest the desperate need for revival, and may not in themselves be properly considered as positive causes. So, at best these should be looked upon as conditions which led men to see their own misery and helplessness; and incited many to begin to call upon God to look upon the nation in mercy, and to manifest His saving power among all classes of society.

Occurring simultaneously with these negative causes were those of a positive character. Ministers in conventions at New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and elsewhere were spending much time in prayer among themselves and calling upon their parishioners to do likewise. As J. Edwin Orr\textsuperscript{2} observes, “From tiny springs of prayer in New York and preaching in Hamilton came a flood soon to envelope the world.”

There appeared in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*\textsuperscript{3} under date of April

\textsuperscript{3}*Bibliotheca Sacra and Biblical Repository*, vol. XVI, London, 1859.
1859, an article by the Reverend A. P. Marvin of Winchendon, Massachusetts entitled "Eras of Revival in the United States." In this article the author deals somewhat at length with three eras of revival in America, indicating the years of occurrence as 1740, 1797, and 1830-35. Following the major portion of his discussion he adds a fourth year 1858 and briefly analyzes this Revival as he does the former three.

The treatment proceeds as a theological and philosophical discussion. It is affirmed that each of the Revival Eras had several elements in common. Each one had marked characteristics, each had its own special type, each was modified by a variety of circumstances, and each had a doctrinal peculiarity or emphasis.

At this point we will deal only with the last of these four elements, namely, the Revival’s doctrinal emphasis. This is believed to have had an important influence upon the cause or origin of the Revival. Marvin sees that the doctrinal emphasis of each revival was an evidence of the providence and sovereignty of God; that the great need of the church at a given time in history is the recovery of some neglected teaching of the Word; and that God in mercy by the leadership of his Holy Spirit and through the instrumentality of his chosen servants, is proclaiming this neglected good news.

In 1740 the preaching of Edwards, Whitefield, Bellamy, Parsons, and the Tennents had its dogmatic peculiarity of doctrine the teaching of Justification by Faith and the New Birth. This was intended to counteract the ideas of the essential goodness of man and his hope of acquiring salvation by a diligent obedience to the law. This was a generation characterized by seeking salvation by good works; and the providential proclamation to it was, we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.

In 1797 the era of Griffin, Mills, Hallock, Robbins, and Strong had its dogmatic peculiarity of doctrine in the teaching of Divine Sovereignty. The great achievements of the Revolutionary War had made many Americans proud. They had been able to form a national union and a federal government. The country was prosperous, but as a by-product of the War its piety had declined. Among some politicians and men of leadership with the philosophies of French infidels, atheism and deism, attempts were made to discredit the Bible and to destroy Christian institutions. As Marvin contends, the great effort was to dispel the idea of God
as a moral governor. In the midst of this kind of thought and purpose, it is evidently in the good providence of God that the Holy Spirit should be directing his messengers to proclaim the doctrine of divine sovereignty.

In 1830-35 the dogmatic peculiarity of doctrine was Duty, the duty of immediately giving the heart to God. That which led to the need of this emphasis was a perversion of the Biblical teaching concerning the sovereignty of God. The idea, begotten of Satan, increased in the land that since God is sovereign, therefore there is little or nothing that man can do to effect the salvation of the world. Therefore, let God work when and how he will and thus the world will be saved. This attitude led to an awakening within the church which began to declare the duty and responsibility of man to act. The passages of Scripture which declare this human duty became the chartered texts of this Revival.

The author insists that the great sin of the church which created the necessity of the Revival of 1858 was worldliness, a materialistic mind-set which threatened to engulf the church. The nation's increasing wealth is described thus:

The power of man over nature has increased to an astonishing degree, since the revival of 1797. . . Steam has been applied to navigation, and to some extent to manufacturers. . . Our ocean steamers, commercial as well as naval, have scarcely ceased to be a novelty. Machinery, in a thousand ingenious forms, has come to the aid of man in producing wealth. Nor is there any assignable limit to the progress of invention and discovery. Chemistry, in its application to agriculture, will increase the productiveness of the earth, in the process of time, until swamps and sandy plains will become as gardens. In the meantime the gold mines of California and Australia have been laid open to the search of that great race which is foremost in commerce, and in manufacturing industry. . . . The church had already begun to feel its corrupting power. The Christian world needed a new enforcement of the words of the beloved disciple: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.' As the danger grew out of increasing wealth, it is easy to see where the corrective must be applied. The church needed to learn how to make a right use of riches.

Most religious awakenings are secured by the instrumentality of men, but the present need found the ministry unable to meet it

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and quite unprepared for the crisis. They had been caught in the spiritual disease of loving the things of the world. Thus one sees in this situation the general cause of the Revival of 1858 being a lay movement. Ministers had felt the spirit of worldliness in common with other Christian families; and if they had had the courage to raise a prophetic voice of warning, the appearance of their own families would have laughed them to scorn.

It needs to be said, however, in all fairness to the ministry of this era that there was well-nigh a unanimous spirit of cooperation with the Revival. What is being observed here is that the leadership of the Revival did not originate within the clergy.

Professor Orr\textsuperscript{5} observes that upon the eve of the awakening there was the dovetailing of three significant events; namely, (1) October 1-8, 1857, the prayer meeting which proved to be the center of the movement was changed from a weekly to a daily occasion, (2) October 8-15, the Revival swept the city of Hamilton, Ontario, and (3) October 8-15, the great financial panic broke. He concludes by saying it is impossible not to connect these three events, for in them was demonstrated (1) the need of religious revival, (2) the means by which to accomplish it, and (3) the provision of Divine grace to meet the situation.

II. Its Extent, Geographically, Racially, Numerically.

As far as the United States was concerned this Awakening geographically seemed to have very little, if any limitation. Though finding its outbreak in New York City, within weeks it was appearing among at least twenty states; to the north as far as Maine and Minnesota, to the south as far as Virginia and Tennessee, to the west as far as Missouri and Nebraska, and in the not-too-distant future, to the east it was moving with mighty effect across the Atlantic to Ireland, England, and Scotland.

Likewise racially and socially it advanced with little restraint. Conant\textsuperscript{6} in his \textit{Narratives of Remarkable Conversions} reports:

At Louisville, Kentucky, the daily union prayer-meeting numbers 1000 in attendance. One writer says, 'The Spirit of God seems to be brooding over the city, and to have produced an unusual degree of tenderness and solemnity in all classes. Never since our residence in

\textsuperscript{5} Orr, \textit{The Fervent Prayer}, p. 5.

the city have we seen so fair a prospect for a general and thorough
work of grace as is now indicated,' and

In St. Louis, Missouri, an unusual interest has recently been mani­fested in the churches and in the business circles of the city. Daily
prayer-meetings are held, which are well attended by all classes
of people, and great seriousness exists; all the churches are crowded.
All classes of society appear to feel the influence. A lady of wealth,
and heretofore among the leaders of fashion, was lately converted,
and united with the Baptist church.

It should also be noted that the effects of this Revival are not
confined to any single national or ethnic group. The evidence that
a genuine work of God is thoroughly destructive of any spirit of
class or caste is clearly seen in the interracial and ecumenical thrust
of this redemptive power working among persons of many and
varied national descent. A survey of the success of the Revival
among the German people throughout the whole area of South­western Ohio is made by the Reverend J. A. Klein, Presiding Elder
on the Ohio District of the Cincinnati Conference of German
Methodism. In the *Western Christian Advocate*\(^7\) of February 3,
1858 he reports the following:

We had a Revival at most every place. Some blessed triumphs were
enjoyed at several places, particularly at Portsmouth, Chillicothe, and
Furnaces Mission. Here at Portsmouth, where the prospects have
been very dark for years, it begins to dawn. The meetings are well
attended by strangers.

And, the Reverend J. Rothweiler, Presiding Elder on the
North Ohio district, North Ohio Conference of German Methodism,
writes: "The work is progressing at Bucyrus, Delaware, and Marion.
In these three places 57 have united with the M. E. Church, and
still more experienced religion."

Likewise the Revival was clearly at work among the Negroes. Candler\(^8\) reminds us that

\[^7\] *The Western Christian Advocate*, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1858.
\[^8\] Warren A. Candler, *Great Revivals and the Great Republic*, Nashville,
1924, p. 224.
war and great help in the solution of the ‘race problem’ since 1865. Never in the history of the race were so many Africans brought to Christ.

The Revival further shows its breadth of appeal interdenominationally by such reports as have been made by *The Mobile Advertiser*.⁹ Services in 1858 were being held daily in the Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, and other churches. And within nearly all the congregations of this deep-south city of Mobile the converts within a few weeks were unusually numerous.

One of the most unusual characteristics about this Revival is its commanding persuasion among the Jews. Conant ¹⁰ reminds us that many Jews participated in the operations of this movement. He continues thus:

They have been in attendance at nearly all the meetings in the various parts of the city (New York), and have presented numerous requests for prayers in their behalf. In the Twentieth Ward quite a number of Jews, of both sexes, have gone over to the profession of the Christian faith. One convert is about to go forth as a missionary among his own people. Many Jewish families have sent their children to Christian Sunday schools. At a meeting in Burton’s old Theatre, a few days ago, a Jew complained that the seed of Abraham had been neglected in the prayers of his Gentile brethren. He said that a class numbering as many as thirty-five or thirty-six thousand souls in the population of this city surely had a high claim upon the interest of Christians in heart. He begged that in the future they be prayed for at every meeting. In Brooklyn an entire family of Jews were recently led to embrace Christianity.

The Revival seemed to have a widespread and wholesome effect upon the cultured academic community. This spiritual dynamic was successful in reaching not only students and youth, but presidents and professors also were among those who responded to the call of the gospel. It is also of some importance to notice that such a Revival was bringing healing to the town-gown conflict, which has been with our Western World so universally from the early Middle Ages; and with which nearly every modern college community seems to be constantly plagued. From the pages of the *Western Christian Advocate* for February 24, 1858,¹¹ we read:

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¹⁰ Ibid., p. 411.
¹¹ *The Western Christian Advocate*, February 24, 1858.
We are enjoying good times in the St. Paul's charge, in Delaware, Ohio. The altar has been filled with penitents nightly for a month past, and more than a usual number of heads of families and citizens have united with the church. Both the University and Female College have shared largely in the benefits of the meeting, and the presidents and professors have been heartily in the work. I think there have been over 100 conversions. Seventy have united with this charge [St. Pauls], a number have joined Williams Street Church, some have united with other denominations; and the work is still progressing. [There were] several conversions last night.

The universality of this Awakening was also shown in that it showed no rejection because of age. In an article entitled "The Great Revival" by Sylvia Penn of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, April 13, 1858 as a part of The Christian Advocate and Journal, appeared the following paragraph:

Could the history of each conversion be written, how interesting would be the detail. They are from the unknown and the well-known; the farmer in his field, and the sailor on the wide sea; the princely merchant, and the humble artisan; the old man of three-score years, and the little child whose voice is so well attuned to the songs of Zion.

Further we observe the rapid extension of the Revival in the multiplication of genuine conversions and the steady increase in church membership. The Western Christian Advocate at Cincinnati, Ohio features a series of Revival Reports in each weekly issue almost without exception during its publications of 1858. This well read weekly which served Methodism and her constituency throughout mid-America for many years of the nineteenth century, makes special announcement in the January 27 issue concerning its unusual policy of giving such large and prominent place to the news of Revival throughout the land. The explanation of this procedure is stated thus, "We devote a large space, this week, to reports coming in from all quarters of excellent revivals in progress." A brief sampling of such reporting may be seen by the following:

P. V. Ferree and P. A. Crist write from Richmond Circuit, Ohio Conference, January 12. 'On Christmas day we commenced a meeting at

\footnote{The Christian Advocate and Journal, New York, April 13, 1858.}
\footnote{The Western Christian Advocate, January 27, 1858.}
Londonderry. The result of our labor, in connection with the upbuilding of the old membership, was the addition of 25 members to the church, and many conversions. On January 2, 1858, we commenced a meeting at the Cincinnati Furnace. Twenty-four were added to the church. At Londonderry, of those who joined on probation, there was a distinguished lecturer on spiritualism and his wife.

Such accounts are without number throughout the entire year of Revival, and for the most part these are from country churches and circuits with very small memberships. A survey account by the Advocate\(^{14}\) is made for the month. January 6th, more than 1300 accessions; the 13th, 900 accessions; the 20th, 1800 accessions; and the 27th, the number will reach over 2000 accessions, making a total in four weeks of 6000+ who have united with the M.E. Church within the bounds of the Advocate's circulation.

### III. Its Characteristics.

All genuine revivals must be "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," and are empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. However, each moving of the Spirit of God in history seems to have had some distinguishing characteristic the same as each person. Thus each revival may have a few or many uniquenesses, and that of 1858 seems to have more than a few. Let us briefly describe some of them.

1. **Leadership of the Holy Spirit.** It appears that nearly every historical narrative of this revival emphasizes the place of leadership of the Holy Spirit almost to the exclusion of human agency. This is not to deny or belittle His Presence and power in every awakening, but rather to suggest that such a Presence seems to be more clearly seen and comprehended in this revival.

   This emphatic recognition of *His Presence* in the person of the Holy Spirit gave to the movement a new unity. As one writer has expressed it, "Minor differences are laid aside, and a union beautiful and strong is the result. It is no longer, 'stand aside, I am holier than thou,' but, 'come with us and we will do thee good. Let us go to the house of God in company.' It is the day of the Lord's power, and Satan with his emissaries are alarmed."

As the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*\(^{15}\) (England) concluded

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) The *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for 1858*, Part I, p. 502. Published by John Mason, London 14, City Road.
concerning the Revival of Religion in the United States, "The revival is evidently and confessedly the work of the Holy Spirit."

2. Prayer. Prayer rather than preaching was more prominent throughout the movement, and the prayer meeting became the primary human instrument. As Professor Sweet \(^{16}\) says in his brief description, "An unusual revival began in 1857, as a result of a Wall Street panic, in a prayer meeting on Fulton Street in New York City, and soon the nation was on its knees."

3. Lay Leadership. What little leadership may have been required it was given for the most part by laymen who automatically rose up to meet the need. Again as Sweet \(^{17}\) has observed, "It was in this quiet laymen's movement that Dwight L. Moody began his religious activities which in the years following the Civil War made him the outstanding revivalist of his time."

The 1858 Revival brought laymen into service. This is no doubt one of its most apostolic likenesses, and confronts our contemporary Christianity with one of its most needed changes. Candler \(^{18}\) says

The Revival of 1858 inaugurated in some sense the era of lay work in American Christianity. Wesley's system of class leaders, exhorters, and local preachers had done much at an earlier date in the same direction, but now the layman's day fully dawned on all the churches. No new doctrine was brought forward, but a new agency was brought to bear in spreading the old truth through the efforts of men who, if they could not interpret the Scriptures with precision or train souls to perfection, could at least help inquiring sinners to find the Lord by relating how they themselves had found him. Since Christianity is a religion of experience, this lay element was a power in the Apostolic Church, of whom were St. Stephen and St. Luke. But it dropped out of the church when Christianity, ceasing to be an experience, was practiced only as a pompous system of priestcraft or taught as an abstruse philosophy of religion. It now returned in the regeneration of a nation.

4. A Quiet Revival. Beardsley says, \(^{19}\) "Revivals have been compared to spring freshets, but this revival could be compared


\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Candler, Great Revivals, pp. 222, 223.

\(^{19}\) Beardsley, A History of American Revivals, p. 234.
more appropriately to a May shower, gentle in its influence, but refreshing and far-reaching in its consequences."

*The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*\(^\text{20}\) observes, "This Revival was marked by a quietness,—a freedom from extravagance in measures, manner, and spirit,—a depth of earnestness on the part of Christians,—a respectful consideration on the part of the world,—peculiar to this work, as compared with those of former years."

5. Ecumenical. "The unsectarian character of the work" (says the *New York Observer*)\(^\text{21}\)

is one of its marked features. In the prayer-meetings, and in the preaching services, the clergy and laymen of various names are found in the work associated as brethren, and not from any effort or arrangement to secure such a result, but as a natural operation of the influences at work. In the pulpit the ministers of neighboring churches labour together in delightful harmony, praying and preaching; and their people in the pews enjoy the common ministry of the word, with increased satisfaction, that it is presented in such a spirit. Sectarian influences may be at work, and doubtless are, in the several spheres of individual church-action; but we venture to say, that no revival was ever known before, where Christians of various church-relations were more happily and generally united in its promotion.

6. No Elaborate Machinery. Such organization and machinery which is the norm for the modern revival campaign was completely unthought of in 1858. There were some efforts in preparation on the local level; such as visitation throughout the parish, and the appeal to church members to invite unbelievers to the meetings, but certainly no over-all plan. After the prayer meetings began to multiply and the need for leaders and rules became apparent, such were adopted by common consent in each locality. Thus leadership and organization were locally adopted as the need arose.

7. From Its Inception, It Was Clearly the Work of God. Only with rare exceptions, either in the church or the world, could any be found who doubted that this movement was genuinely divine.


As Bishop McIlvaine\textsuperscript{22} of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in his annual address before the Diocesan Convention of Ohio, said,

As for myself, I desire to say that I have no doubt 'whence it cometh.' So far as I have had personal opportunities of observing its means, and spirit, and fruits; so far as I have had opportunity of gathering information about it, from judicious minds, in various parts of my own Diocese, and of the country at large, I rejoice in the decided conviction that it 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.

8. It Changed the Nature of Men and Communities. This is one of the essential marks of genuine revival. In such a revival God by the power of His Holy Spirit not only changes the nature of the individual so that he becomes a new creature, and thus lives like a child of God; but that same power moves upon and so changes the social, business, industrial, and political corporate life of a community, that the laws of God in the total life of a city are highly esteemed, respected, and obeyed. Such changes were not uncommon during this season while the Spirit of God was at work.

IV. Its Results and Evaluation.

In summarizing the results of this Awakening, Candler\textsuperscript{23} borrows the opinion of another witness. In his \emph{Handbook of Revivals}, Reverend Henry C. Fish gives a pen picture of the work, which he extracted from one of the religious journals of March, 1858. The writer says:

Such a time as the present was never known since the days of the apostles for revivals. The prostration of business, the downfall of mammon—the great god of worship to the multitudes in this land, both in and out of the church—the sinfulness and vanity of earthly treasures as the supreme good, have come home to the hearts and consciences of the millions in our land with a power that seems ir-


\textsuperscript{23}Candler, \textit{Great Revivals}, p. 222.
resistable. Revivals now cover our land, sweeping all before them as on the day of Pentecost, exciting the earnest and simultaneous cry from thousands, 'What shall we do to be saved?' They have taken hold of the community at large to such an extent that now they are the engrossing theme of conversation in all circles of society. Ministers seem baptized with the Holy Ghost, and preach with new power and earnestness, bringing the truth home to the conscience and life as rarely before. Meetings are held for prayer, for exhortation, and for conversion, with the deepest interest and the most astonishing results. Not only are they held in the church and from house to house, but in the great marts of trade and centers of business. In New York there is a most astonishing interest in all the churches, seeming as if that great and populous and depraved city were enveloped in one conflagration of divine influence. . . . The large cities and towns generally, from Maine to California, are sharing in this great and glorious work. There is hardly a village or town to be found where a special divine power does not appear to be displayed. It really seems as if the millennium were upon us in its glory.

1. Renewal of the Church. An analysis of the Minutes of the Miami (Ohio) Association of Regular Baptists for the three successive years 1857, 1858, and 1859 indicates the dynamic effect which the Revival had upon many of the individual churches of this Association.24

In 1857 the Middletown Church states, “We can not report any special work of grace.” But a year later in 1858, its report says, “God has blessed us in the conversion of many sinners, and thus has encouraged and strengthened us, . . . Our congregations are large and attentive, and our prayer meetings are well sustained.” And the third year’s report says, “This church continues to have good prayer meetings, and the conversion of many souls during special services.”

The First Church at Dayton in 1857 reported that, “It had enjoyed another year of internal quietness and fellowship. But the state of religion in our midst is low.” However in 1858 there is a marked change, “The past year has been one of great mercy to us, and we are permitted to report a general brightening of our prospects. During more than half of the year we have been in a

24 Minutes of the Miami (Ohio) Association of Regular Baptists, Held at Middletown, Ohio, September 30-October 1, 1857; held at Cincinnati, Ohio, September 29-30, 1858; held at Dayton, Ohio, September 28-29, 1859. Published at Cincinnati, 1859.
pleasant state of revival. The effects of the work were most apparent in the awakening of the church. We were also favored with a precious ingathering of souls.” And again in 1859, the good news continues from the Wayne Street Church at Dayton, thus, “We have had a gracious revival, a time of refreshing from the Lord. . . . Many souls were brought to Christ and 51 were baptized.”

The report from Lockland in 1857 says, “The church has not that fervent zeal which would cause them to abound in the work of the Lord.” But a marked change is indicated in 1859 saying, “The Lockland Church held last winter a series of meetings which resulted in the conversion of sinners, the restoration of backsliders, and the strengthening of God’s people. . . . They have rebuilt their house of worship.”

In 1857 the Franklin Church summarizes its activities for the year as, “having nothing of particular interest to report, though some expressions of desire have been heard for the conversion of sinners.” But in contrast for the year 1859 it rejoices that “in a protracted effort souls were converted, and the church revived.”

The Church at Hamilton in 1857 is “not able to report great prosperity, or even one soul redeemed to Christ. The people lament their spiritual apathy and neglect of duty.” However by 1859 the picture is radically changed. “The First Church at Hamilton has been blessed most richly. About the middle of February they began to hold daily morning meetings for prayer, in which a few met regularly, and prayed for a revival of religion. Four or five weeks were thus spent with great profit, after which they commenced a series of meetings in the evening for preaching. Soon anxious enquirers were found asking for the prayers of Christians. Such requests continued to be made for several weeks. They feel much encouraged to go forward in hope and confidence for the future.”

Ernest T. Thompson, in his work, Presbyterians in the South, says that in 1854 the Committee on the state of the church had reported to the Synod of Virginia that weekly meetings for prayer had been sustained in towns and villages, and in some country congregations, but that in many instances the attendance was irregular and thin. The next year (1855) the committee reported more optimistically that prayer meetings were conducted in many churches, especially those that were in towns or cities, but that several presbyteries complained of their non-existence in some

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churches, and the absence of the male members of the church from their exercises in nearly all cases. This same year the Synod of Nashville lamented that "the prayer meeting is in many instances almost deserted, or if attended at all, it is expected the pastor will do the praying." Five years later, however, the year of the great Revival, in which laymen played a leading part, there was an improvement:

In most of our churches weekly prayer meetings have been organized, and the lay members who have hitherto shown but little interest . . . are coming up to a more noble discharge of their duty.

By 1860 Holston Presbytery (NS) was able to report that "the prayer meeting is in one sense the life of the church."

Thompson observes further concerning the place of prayer in the Revival, saying,26

In 1857-58, on the very eve of the Civil War, occurred America's last nationwide revival. . . . Valuable accessions were reported by numerous churches in the Synod of Virginia in the fall of 1857, particularly in Lewisburg, growing out of a prayer meeting established by the 'pious young men of the Village and vicinity.' There were between 100 and 150 conversions in this single community, and a total of about 800 in the Synod as a whole. The following year (1858) the Synod stated that 'in all, except one, of our Presbyteries, very precious, and in some instances extensive revivals. . . . have been enjoyed. . . . Private and social meetings for prayer have likewise been multiplied.' In Richmond three daily prayer meetings were continued throughout the year: one at 6:30 a.m. for young men; a second at noon, conducted by laymen—both of these in the Y.M.C.A.; and a third at 5:30 p.m. conducted by the ministers of the various evangelical denominations. All of these churches reported large accessions to their rolls.

Further the Synod of South Carolina27 in October 1858 said:

In the year now closed. . . . [God's] operations have been likened. . . . to the rising of the tide. . . . Lands long dry have been filled with moisture. . . . It should be recorded here as it has been already in many other regions that revival has connected itself signally with social prayer. The labors of our lay members have been remarkably

26 Ibid., p. 469.
27 Ibid.
blessed. . . . A prayer meeting begun in the halls of the Young Men's Christian Association and removed as the increased attendance demanded to a larger room, finally filled the most capacious church in Charleston overflowing for many successive days. . . . Large displays of the Spirit's power and goodness have befallen numerous churches in different parts of the state. . . . Some of our schools and colleges . . . . have been blessed. . . . New churches have been founded and some that had long been declining are beginning once more to flourish.

The conclusion of the evaluation of the Revival is presented by Thompson as follows: 28

The revivals spread to towns in every Southern state—as far south as New Orleans, as far west as Houston, Texas. On September 2, 1858, it was reported that 600 had been added to the churches of Natchez, Mississippi, one tenth of the total population, a larger proportion than reported for any other city in the United States. In the following spring The Central Presbyterian stated that the daily prayer meetings continued in most of the larger cities of the South and generally with unabated interest.

A column entitled "Good News from the Baltimore Conferences" in the Christian Advocate and Journal, 29 the editor says,

Such is the rapid extension of revivals in the country, and the abundance of revival news sent to us, that the whole columns of the Advocate would be filled with the latter, should we publish them in detail. . . . We have blessed news from the Baltimore Conferences. Reverend William H. Young reports a glorious revival at Sharp-Street and John Wesley Station (colored people). It has lasted since the first of October [1857]. 175 have joined the church on probation, and I suppose nearly 200 have been converted to God. We have now from 10 to 15 seeking the pearl of great price.

A report from Milesburg, Maryland says,

the Lord has favored us with a most gracious outpouring of his Holy Spirit on the Bellefonte Circuit the present year. Full 300 souls have been converted since our last conference, 230 of whom have passed from death unto life the last few weeks. We have two meetings now in progress, at both of which sinners are coming in crowds to the altar.

28 Ibid.
2. It Provided a Great Opportunity for the Minister Who Was Awake to the Peculiar Movings of the Holy Spirit. A remarkable illustration of this is the ministry of the Reverend Alfred Cookman, who during the Revival of 1858 was stationed at the Green Street Church, Philadelphia. Concerning his ministry here his biographer says: 30

It is doubtful if Philadelphia Methodism has known in its whole history a pastoral term of two years more signally fraught with proofs of the divine favor and the stable results of evangelical ministrations than these of Mr. Cookman at Green Street. The scenes under his preaching—the perpetual blaze of Revival, the marked cases of conversion and sanctification—were more like the occurrences of primitive Methodism, and showed conclusively that the ancient glory had not departed from the sons of the fathers. At the close of the second year he reported seven hundred members and one hundred and fourteen probationers—a net gain of two hundred and thirty-five persons—with large advances in all the collections for benevolent objects, especially in that for the missionary cause.

An awakening seldom paralleled pervaded all classes of society and churches of every communion, extending from the cities to the country districts, until there was not a hamlet, however remote, which did not feel its power. Waves of divine blessing, in rapid succession, rolled over the land; religion was at the flood—it was the theme on every lip; men turned aside from the busy mart at the hour of noon, and thronged the places of prayer; the workshop, the drinking saloon, the theatre, the highway, became consecrated places, where the voice of singing and of supplication from earnest penitents and exultant converts was heard; the sanctuaries were crowded with men and women, asking what they must do to be saved; not alone the women and children, but men—strong, wicked men, who hitherto had neither regarded man nor feared God—mourned for their sins, and rejoiced in the freedom of forgiveness; ministers whose popularity had declined were invested with new favor, and the different denominations, that had been until recently either antagonistic or indifferent, were suddenly fused into a thorough union and co-operation.

3. Rebuilt Family Altars. The Christian Advocate and Journal,31 in a column entitled "A Thorough Revival" reports "as a result of three weeks effort in the work of God at Yonkers, from

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31 The Christian Advocate and Journal, January 28, 1858.
80 to 90 persons have professed conversion, 80 of whom have joined the Church." In listing other results it says the neglected family altars are being repaired, and new ones are being built by the converts who are the heads of families. Also there is abundance of testimony which is given each night that religion is the surest promoter of domestic happiness.

4. It Brought the Laity to a New Place of Importance in the Church. Under the faithful leadership of the Holy Spirit, and the understanding of that leadership by thoroughly converted and renewed persons, it seemed to be quite a natural thing that all believers should become living witnesses and spokesmen for God. Therefore together the clergy and laity participated in the leadership of the church, each one according to his own several abilities as being consecrated to the Lord.

5. Recognition of the Place and Power of Prayer. The most comprehensive record of God's miraculous answers to prayer as a part of this Revival has been made by Samuel Irenaeus Prime. This work was done in three volumes; the first in 1859, the second in 1864, and the third in 1882. The first volume was hailed with wonderful interest in the States and abroad. It was republished in England and Scotland; widely circulated in Wales and Ireland; two translations were printed in France, and another in the East, and more than a hundred thousand copies distributed and read. In many places in America and other countries, public meetings were held and chapters read from it, to quicken the desire and faith of Christians, and to encourage them in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In this initial work and the two subsequent volumes there are countless numbers of answers to prayer in behalf of all kinds and conditions of people. Even fifteen years after the Revival's beginning daily miraculous answers of God's promises continued to be fulfilled.

It may also be noted that a part of the theological contribution of the Revival is an article entitled, "The Efficacy of Prayer" by Professor Samuel Graves of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Here is one

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of the finest brief Biblical, theological, and practical interpretations of the meaning and power of prayer which has appeared in the Christian context.

6. All Classes of Society Were Influenced. It was clearly evident from the beginning of this manifestation of divine power that God was moving among all classes of society; rich and poor, the elderly, middle-aged, youth, and children, farmers, housewives, clerks, and servants. It was seen that God's grace could change the heart of the banker, the merchant, the statesman, or the judge, as easily as the heart of the child.

7. It Fostered a Strong Spirit of Unity and Fellowship Among Denominations. Beardsley\textsuperscript{34} observes that,

Hitherto the various denominations had viewed one another with feelings of mutual suspicion and distrust. But in this work of refreshing there was no room for sectarian strife or jealousy. Arminian and Calvinist, Baptist and Paedo-Baptist, Congregationalist and Episcopalian, the Methodist in his glowing zeal and the Friend in his quiet conservatism, all had been blessed. Sharing thus the fruits of the revival, they could not but magnify the things which they held in common, in contrast to the differences which kept them apart.

8. Recognition of Its Worth by the World. It seems to be generally agreed that this Revival commanded much respect from the world. As the \textit{Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for 1858}\textsuperscript{35} says,

The absence of all opposition to the movement is remarkable, . . . the disposition of men of business to leave the most pressing calls, and spend the best hour of the day away from their daily avocations, and in a prayer meeting, is a striking sign of the times. But, more than all this, the attention given to the revival by the secular press is the most extraordinary evidence that the world, as distinguished from the church, is engaged in the present religious awakening.

There was another who looked with careful and critical eye at this relation of the secular press to revival. Conant\textsuperscript{36} says in his \textit{Remarkable Conversions},

\textsuperscript{34} Beardsley, \textit{A History of American Revivals}, p. 238.
\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for 1858}, Part I, p. 503.
\textsuperscript{36} Conant, \textit{Narratives of Remarkable Conversions}, p. 440.
We all look for a time when the Press will be sanctified, with all its incalculable influence, to the cause of Christ's kingdom; when the authority of public sentiment will claim its active support to pure religion, as already to the conceded principles of morality. Never before this year has such a significant and encouraging modification been seen in the tone of the secular presses on religious affairs. The following exhortation from the *Springfield Republican*, a secular paper, conducted with an eye to the doing of good as it meets opportunity, illustrates some of the ways in which the everyday press may exert a becoming influence for Christ:

It is not our province to preach, or to exhort, but we very frankly express the opinion, that the more of our people who put themselves in the way of the influences which now prevail, the better. We have yet to see the first man who has sustained damage by becoming at heart, and in life a Christian. You old sinners, who have led a hard and careless life, put yourselves in the way of good. Go into the prayer-meetings. They will not hurt you. You young men, upon whom life is opening—your whose characters are forming, it will not harm you to incorporate into your life the Christian element. On the contrary, it will do you a world of good. You men of middle age, you hard drinkers, you swearers, you licentious men, you scoffing men, you double-dealing men, all of you, look in upon the prayer-meeting and see how it affects you. Your friends in other places are doing it, and declare themselves benefited. Our opinion is, that it will benefit you. Try it and see.

What a bold word of truth from the secular press! No doubt it was heard and heeded by many who read these lines.

9. Pivotal Conversions, Such as Dwight L. Moody and Hannah Whitall Smith. Beardsley\(^{37}\) suggests that one of the results of the Revival was the organization of the laity for aggressive service; and therefore served as a great training school for laymen. It was this instrument of preparation which brought to light the abilities of such men as Dwight L. Moody, who has left a lasting impression upon the history of Christianity in America.

A recent paragraph from the *Cliff Witness*\(^{38}\) indicates the important role which Moody had played in the Keswick Movement.

The largest Christian Convention in Britain at Keswick in the Lake District is one of the far-reaching results of the Revival of 1858.

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This interdenominational gathering, which now covers two weeks in July, is presently celebrating its centennial year. It stemmed from the quickening of the Spirit in Britain touched off by the 1858 Revival and the impact made by Moody and Sankey, campaigns from 1873-1875. Its aim is to promote practical holiness and its motto is 'all one in Christ.' Nowadays there are national and local 'Keswicks' all over the world.

Noble, in his *Century of Gospel-Work*,\(^{39}\) says,

The church in Philadelphia seemed to be thoroughly aroused, and the public interest excited to a degree unknown before. Among the conversions, none awakened more interest at the time, and none perhaps had led to more important results, than that of Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith, a lady of high social position, who going to Jayne's Hall from mere curiosity, was deeply convicted of sin, and soon afterward hopefully converted. Since that time she, as well as her husband, has been actively engaged in evangelistic efforts, both in this country and in Europe, where their services at London, Oxford, Brighton, Genoa, Berlin and other places, attracted unwonted attention, and their labors were spoken of as 'the most remarkable of any kind or period.'

No doubt the Christian literary classic of Mrs. Smith is the volume so well known through the modern church, entitled, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*.\(^{40}\) The Revell publisher says,

Her generation bought it, read it, kept and treasured it next to the Book of books itself. Posterity loved it, too; printed first in 1870, nearly two million copies have been sold. It has outlived the years, not for its holy optimism alone, but more because there is nothing shallow or shadowy in its optimism. It is a rock of a book, solid and immovable, built upon the inexhaustibility of God and the unfolding of His everlasting truth.

This must surely be one of the continuing streams of God's life-giving grace, which finding its source in the early part of the Awakening of 1858, has, and still continues to refresh so many thirsty souls throughout our western world.

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10. Providential Preparation for the Civil War. The Richmond Christian Advocate, writing of the work, said: 

Not for years has such a revival prevailed in the Confederate states. Its progress in the army is a spectacle of moral sublimity over which men and angels can rejoice. Such camp meetings (military) were never before seen in America. The bivouac of the soldier never witnessed such nights of glory and days of splendor. By the end of the war at least 150,000 soldiers had been converted, and more than a third of all the troops had become praying men. Again, this work of such power and fruitfulness in the face of insuperable difficulties marked the movement as the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

As the revival in the northern states during 1857 and 1858 had prepared that section of the nation for the terrible conflict which had threatened the disruption of the union, so this powerful awakening among the southern armies prepared the south for the desolations which followed their defeat. The men went home after the war to wasted plantations, poverty stricken homes, and a desolated land. Schools and churches alike had been destroyed. Bitter hatreds were aroused by the cruel treatment meted out by some of the unscrupulous politicians from the north. Only the Christian faith and the spiritual consolation found through the war-time revival sustained these men of the south through the severe trials and adversities which followed the war.

The spiritual life and deepened faith produced and nurtured by these revivals helped to heal the wounds of the bitter conflict, and slowly to weld north and south together again into one Christian nation. United prayer and the power of the Spirit of God in this mighty movement gave the nation courage for the trying days of reconstruction, and prepared it to meet the challenges of the days ahead.

The Revival in the Southern Troops was a praying Revival just as the Revival of 1858 had been. A correspondent of the North Carolina Presbyterian states that as a result of prayer-meetings held every night for two or three weeks in the Third Regiment of North Carolina State Troops, seven of the soldiers had applied for membership in the Methodist and four in the Baptist Church. “We sometimes feel more as if we were in a camp-meeting than in the army expecting to meet the enemy.”

The statistics provided by Thomas L. Livermore indicate

Fred W. Hoffman, Revival Times in America, Boston, 1956, p. 120.

that the conversions in the Southern Armies during the war exceeded those among civilians during the revival. Among civilians there was approximately five percent of the population, whereas among the Southern Troops there was above twenty-one percent of the total troop population.

Conclusion

An article from *The Congregational Quarterly* entitled, "The Religious Progress of the Past Year" constitutes the reports of the great religious bodies of the United States for the year 1859. In the summary Henry M. Dexter affirms that this seems to have been a year of considerable ingathering to the visible Church and continues as follows:

There is every reason to believe that the number added by profession to the Evangelical communion in the United States during 1859, has been beyond the average of former years. And it can hardly be a question that the first Sabbath in 1860 gathers around the table of the Lord a larger number of confessors of the Christian faith than has ever gladdened the gaze of the Great Head of the Church, as, from his throne on high, he overlooks the fortunes of his followers.

The past year [1859] has been a year of great harmony and quietness. While here and there, a community and a church have had sad cognizance of the pernicious ways of those whose hearts are exercised with covetous practices, who speak great swelling words of vanity, and promise liberty while themselves are servants of corruption, the general experience of the churches has been one of brotherly love, and harmonious cooperation, and mutual helpfulness. Instead of the Pentecostal occurrences of the former year [1858], or the drought and barrenness, or bitterness, of other times, we have had that experience which is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (1:31) when the churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

This being a general report from the churches throughout the land and evaluated by one who was in close proximity to the movement both chronologically and geographically, it may properly be considered as a reliable evaluation.

Resulting from these times of refreshing one sees quite clearly

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throughout the church a new understanding of the meaning of prayer, and a more effectual application of its practice. The church in large measure has recovered the power of prayer as an instrument for changing the world. Likewise there has appeared a new understanding of the availability and a more general acceptance of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The church has been endowed with new life by the power of the Spirit, and thus its vision is much enlarged and its missionary enterprise is infused with new and holy activity. There is a marked uniting of Christian forces across denominational lines, which gave some evidence that the prayer of the Saviour, “that they may be one,” was being answered. Further one must notice a general restraining influence upon wickedness in high places.

And so it was that these and many other evidences of the wonderful works of God were so clearly and generally manifest, that there were not a few leaders within the church who were surely convinced that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

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