

Church History Part 6

The Methodist Revival of the 18th Century

Revelation 3:1-2

“thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

The End of Persecution and Religious Tolerance

In our last study on the Reformation, we ended with the tragic scenario of True believers Persecuting true believers.

We had seen Pagan Roman Emperors persecute believers

The Papal System persecute believers

Now Protestants persecuted those who felt the Reformation had not gone far enough.

Zwingli & Luther Persecuting the Anabaptists on the continent

Church of England Persecuting the Covenanters in Scotland

Church of England Persecuting the Puritans in England

Peace however began to return to the Church

1648 The Peace of Westphalia bringing an end to the 30 years war between Catholics and Protestants in Europe.

1662 the Great Ejection, when 2000 godly ministers from the Church of England, who refused to consent to the Act of Uniformity. Those that were ejected were called Non-Conformists or Dissenters. Formed Congregational Churches or Baptist Churches.

Famous names include Philip Henry [Father of Matthew Henry], John Bunyan, Joseph Alleine, Richard Baxter, Isaac Ambrose, John Flavel, Stephen Charnock etc.

These men lost their Churches, income, housing and could not assemble within 5 miles of their former parish Churches, could not attend Oxford or Cambridge or hold political office.

1689 The Act of Toleration ended this, after the Revolution of William and Mary had expelled King James II from the monarchy at the request of the English Parliament.

Dead Formality sets in

Lutheranism lost its vitality, as membership became regional and nominal, if you lived in Southern Germany and Austria you were Catholic, if you lived in North Germany and Scandinavia you were Lutheran.

Puritanism settled down to a cold Calvinism, more concerned with a Pure Church purged of every vestige of Catholicism than the plight of a lost world.

Other factors to take into consideration!

Advance in Science [The Age of Reason]

Sir. Isaac Newton 1642-1727 Discovers the Law of Gravity. Although a believer himself and author of books on Daniel and Revelation. His discovery began the movement of natural law. The Age of Enlightenment, religious superstition being swept away and now there is a natural explanation for everything. Science become the new infallible religion.

Deism began to flourish, instead of God being directly involved in nature, He is still acknowledged as creator, but basically got it all going, set up natural laws and left it to play itself out. He is not involved or needed. This flourished in the 1700's and the Ivy league schools became hotbeds of Deism. Darwin would follow in the next Century and say God was not even needed to get it going or keep it going.

The Age of Revolution

1776 the American Revolution

1789 the French Revolution –storming of the Bastille

In the Notre Dam Cathedral in Paris, the statue of the Virgin Mary, is replaced by a Prostitute, Reason replaces Virtue!

1760 the Industrial Revolution –Urbanization, Capitalism causes Class Division and discontent.

The scene is one of bleakness and instability.

Renewal & Revival

John Wesley 1700-1791 A man whose life spans most of the 18th Century and was perhaps the man of the Century!

The son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, both were children of Non-Conformity, who had reacted against the cold formalism of the Calvinistic upbringing, and entered the Church of England. John was the 15th of 19 Children.

As a 5 year old he was saved from a fire at the rectory, a brand plucked from the burning, Susanna believed God had a special purpose for this child.

She taught her children Latin and Greek and spent a full hour per week with each child, going over the things of God with them. John would later say, he learned more of God on his mothers knee than from all the theologians in England.

He was educated at Charter house school and then at Oxford.

The Holy Club – members included George Whitfield, Charles Wesley, John Wesley and Benjamin Ingham. Take communion, read the Greek New Testament Daily,

Committed to prayer, visiting the poor, preaching to prisoners and holding one another accountable morally.

Mocked by their fellow students and called Methodists, because of their disciplined methods. None of the club members were saved.

John and Charles went to the the newly found colony of Georgia, to minister to the English settlement in Savannah and reach out to the Indians.

On the Journey over a storm at sea, he feared for His life! Moravians on the ship sang hymns and were completely calm. John realized, I am going to convert the Indians but who will convert me! His time in Georgia was an abject failure and he returned to the UK a failed and disillusioned missionary.

On 24th May 1738 he attended a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate street London

Wesley's noted "Aldersgate experience" of 24 May 1738, at a Moravian meeting in [Aldersgate Street](#), London, in which he heard a reading of [Martin Luther's](#) preface to the [Epistle to the Romans](#), revolutionised the character and method of his ministry.

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine,

while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

All night Prayer meetings with Whitfield and other Holy Club members now converted and the power of God falling upon them!

THE METHODIST PENTECOST The Methodist Revival was born in the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley records: "Jan. 1, 1739. Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingrham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love-feast in Fetter Lane, London, England, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord." Of this love-feast Whitefield said, "It was a Pentecostal season indeed." And he adds, concerning those meetings, that, "sometimes whole nights were spent in prayer. Often we have been filled as with new wine, and often I have seen them overwhelmed with the Divine Presence, and cry out, 'Will God, indeed, dwell with men upon earth? How dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of God, and the

gate of heaven!' ”

Field Preaching!
Circuit Preaching –Itinerant Evangelism

Visited Ireland 21 times – total of 8 years if you add it all up

Tireless Energy

Arose at 4:00 am-went to bed at 10:00 pm never wasted a minute

Christian Perfectionism

Falling Away Doctrine

Gripped the nation – avoided a similar fate to the French Revolution

Others – trained Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland in Wales

Gideon Ousley in Ireland

Lessons to be learned

1. Holiness of Life and Discipline
2. Prayer

3. Evangelical Preaching
4. Accountability & Discipleship –class meetings

All of these were God’s answer to a society in ferment!

What do you suppose God’s answer would be for our generation?