

World Changing Revival

Hosanna



Religion is up and morality down. Evangelicals in America and England were similarly frustrated in 1730. They, too, had failed to reform their societies after decades of political and social effort.

But within a decade the greatest evangelical awakening since the Reformation broke out across America, England and Europe. The political and social cultures of the Anglo-American world were “Christian.”

In the 18th century there were three massive revivals, the Great Awakening in the American colonies, the English Evangelical Revival led by John Wesley and George Whitefield, and the revival of continental Pietism under Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

These great revivals, and lesser ones they encompassed, had 10 common characteristics:

1. Revivals were preceded by corporate prayer. Early in the century it was accepted that revival usually followed God's outpouring of a spirit of intercession for revival. So in the 1720s and 30s, American and British evangelicals turned to prayer for such an anointing. Then, first in 1734-35 in Connecticut, led by Jonathan Edwards, then in place after place, prayer preceded revival.

Zinzendorf's Moravian community had started a round-the-clock watch of corporate prayer in 1727. It continued for 100 years.

In 1743 Rev. John Sutherland started three revival prayer groups in Scotland. A year later, revival fell. In 1743 Edwards suggested a “Concert of Prayer” for world wide revival. It was implemented by churches in Scotland, England, and America four times a year.

2. Revivals had strong leaders. 18th century evangelicals believed God would raise up extraordinary leaders for special times of outpouring of the Spirit. In 1740, Whitefield preached more than 175 sermons in 45 days in New England to crowds of up to 20,000. Wesley traveled, mostly on horseback, the equivalent of 10 times around the world.

3. Revival leaders denounced “legalism” and “rationalism,” emphasizing justification by faith in the atoning death of Christ, and the absolute necessity of the New Birth. Terror was preached before grace by ministers in the Connecticut Valley.

4. Revivalists were determined to challenge their hearers to respond now. They scarcely used notes, relying on the Spirit.

5. Revivalists preached at non-traditional times in non-traditional places.

6. Music contributed greatly.

7. Revival leaders often faced fierce opposition. Wesley often had rocks thrown at him, and was sometimes mobbed and beaten. Edwards' own church ejected him.

8. Stories of revival spread revival.

9. The revivalists believed the Spirit's presence would be manifest. Edwards believed he could be discerned, that he moved people “by a mighty invisible power,” and He sometimes caused a “visible commotion.”