

Article reprinted from *Cross†Way* Issue Winter 1989 No. 35

(C)opyright Church Society; material may be used for non-profit purposes provided that the source is acknowledged and the text is not altered.

WHY WE NEED REVIVAL

By George Curry

I am indebted to the Revd. John J. Murray of Oban for much of what follows. Recently he published a leaflet entitled *Do we need revival?* In it he sets out reasons why we need revival. Below I reproduce those reasons in adapted and enlarged form.

Why do we need Revival?

1. *Because it is a long time since we enjoyed a season of refreshing.* There has been no major revival in England this century. The last was in 1859. Revivals have occurred in Wales (1904-5), Northern Ireland (1922) and on the Isle of Lewis (1949-53), but not in England or on the Scottish mainland.
2. *This century has seen a great moral and spiritual decline.* Humanism and secularism now hold sway. In national life the teaching of the Bible is ignored. Homosexuality is regarded as acceptable. Divorce is widespread. Abortion is, in all but name, on demand. And capital punishment is no longer practised.
3. *The church is no longer respected.*
4. *Christianity and Christians appear ineffectual and powerless.*
5. *Many congregations are formal, worldly and dead.*
6. *True conviction of sin is lacking.* The first work of the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord Jesus Christ, is to convince 'the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement' (John 16.8).
7. *We do not mourn over our sins* (Zech. 12.10). The broken spirit and contrite heart, which God does not despise (Psalm 51.17), are rarely evident today.
8. *Many of us 'have forsaken our first love'* (Rev. 2.4). We lack commitment, warmth and zeal.
9. *Zeal for the glory and name of God are missing.* We do not grieve over the way God is dishonoured in both church and nation.
10. *We are not deeply moved by the sight of multitudes passing into eternity without Christ.* The reality of hell and eternal punishment do not affect us.
11. *In many pulpits the Gospel is buried out of sight.* Sinners are flattered and encouraged in nominal Christianity. The message is 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace' (Jer. 6.14).
12. *Trust in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible is undermined.* The distinction between truth and error has been lost.
13. *Expository preaching is in decline.* There is a famine of hearing the Word of God. God's people do not hunger for the Word (Amos 8.11).

14. *There is widespread ignorance of the basic truths of the Gospel.* People do not know what it means to be converted. They do not realise that ‘unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God’ (John 3.3).

15. *Evangelism has become centred on man and his felt needs.* The fact that man is a rebel in need of a Saviour is not clearly presented.

16. *We are not seeking God and his glory.*

17. *Family life and family worship are in decay.* The undermining of the family threatens the very fabric of our society.

18. *The Lord’s Day is neglected and desecrated.* We forget that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2.27). It is a creation ordinance (Genesis 2.1-3).

19. *There has been a decline in church attendance.* This downward trend has existed for some decades and has not been halted or reversed. If things continue as they are by the year 2050 the Church of England will no longer exist.

20. *The peoples of our cities, towns and villages do not fear God.* In many ways both he and his will are openly defied.

21. *We are ignorant of what God has done in the past* (Judges 2.10). Church history is despised by some.

22. *We are sinning against great light.* God has greatly blessed our nation in the past.

For many and various reasons, then, we need a season of awakening and revival. Our prayer at this time should be: Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! (Isaiah 64.1)

How apt today are those words of Jonathan Edwards:

It may be observed that from the fall of man to our day the work of redemption in its effects has mainly been carried on by remarkable communications of the Spirit of God. Though there may be a more constant influence of God’s Spirit always in some degree attending his ordinances yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work always has been by the remarkable effusions at special seasons.

George Curry is vicar of St. Stephen’s Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne and Chairman of Church Society Council.