

REVIVAL

THE NEED AND  
THE POSSIBILITIES

CYRIL C. B. BARDOLLY

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AND THE POSSIBILITIES

BY

CYRIL C. B. BARDSLEY

WITH A FOREWORD BY

THE BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

## THE WAY OF RENEWAL

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## FOREWORD

This little book is the fruit of much thought, of wide experience, and of many prayers. It comes from the writer's heart, and it speaks to the hearts of its readers. It is sent out at one of the most critical moments in the history of our nation. It will, with God's blessing, help to prepare the way for the proposed National Mission in October and November in the current year, to which so much thought and prayer is being given at present. It is at once an Appeal to Repentance and a Message of Hope to the Church.

Throughout the world there is distress of nations with perplexity. Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. All the foundations of human society seem out of course.

And in this great Day of God, which is most certainly a coming of the Lord, God Himself seems for the moment to be hiding Himself from His Church. The Word of the Lord is rare, there is no open vision. But there is one hopeful sign, one certain proof that the Spirit of God is still working amongst us. His people do not

love to have it so. They are filled with a divine dissatisfaction. They are looking for, longing for, and praying for a revival of true religion. Everywhere the prayer is going up, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live."

To the sad but expectant Church this little book is sent. With complete self-restraint but with intense feeling, the writer unfolds the nature, the condition, the methods, and the results of true revival. He insists that it must begin with the individual Christian. The Church can only be revived through the revival of its members one by one. The history of Christianity from its earliest days until now unfolds the conditions of a great spiritual awakening and its working. As we read we are conscious that our own hearts are being searched, and our own short-comings brought home to our consciences. Out of his peculiarly wide knowledge of the working of the Holy Spirit in heathen lands, the writer kindles our expectation and braces our faith. What God has done, God is doing, and will do. We are not straitened in Him but in ourselves. When the dissatisfaction which possesses us has found a voice in more fervent and united prayer and has led us to a deeper penitence and renewed trust in God; when self-surrender takes the place of self-will; and prejudice, and suspicion,

and jealousy, are lost in love; when we are ready, like Saul of Tarsus, to ask, with heartfelt submission, "What shall I do, Lord?" then the long looked-for revival will come. God will send a gracious rain upon his inheritance and refresh it when it is weary. There will be "showers of blessing," and a revived Church will awaken the world.

F. J. LIVERPOOL

March 1916

*Amn.*

# REVIVAL

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS REVIVAL?

REVIVAL is no unfamiliar word. It is used in many different connections. The revival of learning is a classic instance of its use, and we read of the scientific revival of the last century, of revivals of national spirit, of art, and of trade. The word is constantly on our lips, but at the present time one particular use of it is uppermost in the minds of very many. Increasingly men are realising the need for spiritual revival, and are speaking of revival of religion as the outstanding need of the country.

In its general sense the word "revival" means that some particular activity has entered on a new phase of development; it implies that something previously existing has become revitalised. In the religious sense also revival connotes new life, it means that spiritual life has become deeper, truer, fuller, that there has been a fresh inflow of the life of God.

† The idea is not new. From the earliest times down to the history of our own day there have been times when man has entered more fully into the heritage of the divine life, when the things of God and of eternity have stood out as the most vital considerations that can possibly occupy the minds of men. Again and again in the Old Testament we read of such times. The revivals in the days of Josiah and in the time of Ezra are two illustrations. The psalmist praying, "Wilt thou not quicken us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee"; Ezekiel in his vision crying, "Come, from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live"; the prophet looking forward with longing to the day when God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; all these voice the deep longings of men for the times of God's unveiling, for fuller spiritual life. Each in turn interpreted the yearnings which are always in the hearts of the few, and which seem, from time to time, to possess the hearts of the many. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, goes back in thought to those past times when God visited and restored His people; and again the thought is in his mind when in those first days of the Church's story he says, "Repent therefore, and reform your lives, so that the record of your sins may be cancelled, and that there may come seasons of

† revival from the Lord."<sup>1</sup> It has been said that the story of the Christian Church is very largely the story of its times of revival, when after a gradual weakening of the hold on spiritual realities, Christians have seemed to get a new grip of things spiritual and the Church has received fresh impetus and new energy for her task.

What, then, is revival? Whence and how does it come, and whither does it lead? These questions are being asked to-day by many who, a short time ago, would never have thought of using the word in this particular connection. These questions it is the purpose of this little book to try to answer. We may come to a clearer understanding of its meaning as we think of it under different aspects, and consider some of the figures which men have used in trying to show to others that great mystery—the receiving by man of the life of God.

Revival is a return to God. Only when men are in close touch with God can they be partakers of His life. Again and again in God's Word the need for this is insisted upon. God's blessing can only be upon those who are in fellowship with Him. Sin means forsaking Him, departing from Him, loss of contact with Him, separation from Him. When men leave God they forfeit His guidance, His upholding power, His peace. Sooner

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 19, Weymouth's version.

or later they are in evil plight and they learn the penalty of sin.

This was the truth which burnt itself in upon the consciousness of the prophets of the Old Testament. With intense clearness of insight they saw that the life of their nation depended upon a turning away from sin and a coming back into true relationship with God. Again and again they summoned Jehovah's people to return to Him. They rebuked and they pleaded too. They told of a God who was reluctant to punish and quick to restore. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."<sup>1</sup> "Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? . . . Turn yourselves, and live."<sup>2</sup> Again and again the burden of the prophet's message is, "Repent," "Return." In the prophecy of Amos there is a terrible catalogue of the woes which had fallen upon the sinful people, and with the enumeration of each one the sad refrain, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," whilst further on comes the oft-repeated appeal, "Seek me, and ye shall live." In the book of Malachi the returning of the people and the coming of God are definitely linked together in the words, "Return unto me, and I will return

<sup>1</sup> Is. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxiii. 31.

unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts."<sup>1</sup> Again, the prophet Hosea appeals to the people in the same figure, "Come, and let us return to the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live before Him."<sup>2</sup>

This love that wearies not nor grows faint was exquisitely pictured by our Lord in the parable of the prodigal son. When men turn again to God they have hardly set foot upon the path of penitence before He runs to meet them. "While he was yet afar off, his father saw him."<sup>3</sup> Revival does not mean that God loves man more, but that man learns more of the love of God; not that God comes closer to men, but that men come closer to God.

Times of revival are times of refreshing for God's people. "The wilderness and the parched land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing."<sup>4</sup> This is the inspired picture representing the Inspirer of hope. Again and again the coming of the Lord to His people is described as the coming of showers of water to a thirsty land. "He shall come to us as the rain, as the latter rain that

<sup>1</sup> Mai. iii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Hosea vi. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Is. xxxv. 1.

watereth the earth."<sup>1</sup> All that the showers meant to the Eastern husbandman, that revival means to the people of God—new life that suddenly springs to birth, new growth, and fruitfulness, new beauty and joy. All through the Church's story the coming of the Lord has meant the refreshing of His people. The Church has drooped and withered, it has been as a plant whose leaf fadeth, as a garden that hath no water, and then, at the coming of the Spirit, the Life Giver, its branches have once more shot forth and borne fruit.

Another word which is sometimes used to describe these times of new spiritual power is "awakening."<sup>2</sup> "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee."<sup>2</sup> Awakening presupposes sleep, and awakening out of sleep is a return to the ordinary powers of waking life. One of the terrible effects of sin is its numbing, deadening power. Men become blinded to their true condition, insensible to their danger. They lose their way, they stumble and fall, and then they are awakened as a man out of sleep. They see their danger, they realise their need, they cry for help, and they are restored and filled with new power. So this figure suggests that, in one sense, and that a very true one, there is nothing abnormal about revival. It is only a return to those powers

<sup>1</sup> Hosea vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 14.

which are ours by right, to that which Christ came to make the possession of every one who would receive Him—the right to become the sons of God, with all that is involved in that sonship, the benefit of a Father's love, and later, of a Father's home.

Life in Christ is God's plan for every man, not a life of poverty but of riches, not of want but of sufficiency, not of weakness and sorrow, but of power and joy. Revival is the realisation of our spiritual assets, the recovery of long disused powers and privileges. When a man awakes out of the sleep of sin to the realisation of these blessed truths, all things become new. Well-known facts are seen transfigured with a new light; doctrines which have been mechanically professed for years suddenly appear as intimate realities and are invested with a new and wonderful wealth of meaning; worship becomes communion; prayer and praise, from being formal utterances of the lips, become the expressions of the overflowing desire and adoration of the heart. Membership of Christ is realised to be the closest tie which can bind men to one another, and the knowledge that we are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, becomes a truth full of wonderful inspiration and life. Revival in the Church is a vitalising of familiar truths,



the discovery of possibilities already possessed, a readjustment of well-known factors, until the whole structure of Church life becomes transformed and glowing—instinct with the presence of God.

Awakening leads to discovery, and revival is discovery—the discovery of Christ, first by individuals who can say, "we have seen the Lord." Then, as with freshness of conviction and intensity of faith, witness is given, the veil that hides Him from others is taken away. Such discovery transforms men's conceptions of Christ, and their whole relationship with Him. He Whom they have known by name from childhood, Whom they have formally professed faith in, worshipped and served, is now beheld in His unspeakable love and power. Relationship with Him is found to be vital and life-giving. All that they possess in Him begins to be comprehended, appropriated and enjoyed.

In the last resort revival is utterly intimate and personal, for it depends upon the relation of man's soul with God.

"Newness of life was the poignant experience of the first Christians. The sense of freshness, of hitherto unknown levels of being, which comes into every lover, pervades the whole thought of St Paul, and in some form or other has been the mark of every vital era in the history of the Church."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Figgis, "The Fellowship of the Mystery."

But this is not to say that revival is mere individualism. It is an experience, but it is a collective experience. What is always happening to individuals here and there happens to a great number of people at once, and the result is proportionately startling. For life cannot be hidden, true vitality cannot be suppressed. It must find an outlet. The awakened soul must discover a use for its new energies. So the times when the Spirit of God is moving among men are times when they are possessed with the spirit of evangelism, with an intense desire to pass on the new knowledge that has been given. It is out of their own experience that souls teach others; man cannot communicate what he does not possess.

It has recently been said that the power of the new life is a matter of fellowship and of following. It must needs come by a kind of contagion, and pass from Christians to others also by contagion. Those who are in close touch with Christ cannot fail to make Him felt by others. The great revivals of history, whatever form they may have taken, and whatever immediate circumstances may have given rise to them, have all been the result of a new personal devotion to Jesus Christ, a deep, intimate and glowing experience. The wonderful words that have been uttered, and the great deeds that have been done have all been the result of the power of a personal relation.

which has transformed the whole life. Christ has become so obvious in the lives of His disciples that others cannot but be attracted to Him. And so revival spreads.

The discovery of Christ involves the discovery of the greatness of His cause. When men find Christ they see that all their highest ideals are summed up and found in all their fulness of perfection in Him. Then they are ready to give Him all their love and devotion, and to lose themselves in His cause. To the man who has seen Christ "Thy Kingdom come," ceases to be a mere phrase and becomes a glorious challenge to all that is best and noblest in him. The cause of Christ is seen in all its wonder, fascination and romance. When Christ stands out before men as the Saviour, the Leader, the Friend, His service, despite hardship and drudgery and suffering, becomes the most glorious thing in the world, a share in the work of His kingdom the highest privilege of man. All that thrills the hearts of men and women and inspires them to great deeds and true endurance is seen to be involved in the discipleship of Jesus Christ, and the constraint and the joy of His service possess them. One reason why the Church has failed to touch great and noble sections of our people to-day is because religion has too often been made to appear as something petty and small, instead

of a cause which is splendid and all-embracing in its completeness. A leader in the Church was once asked what led him to give up his profession and devote his life to the ministry. He said, "It was the time of the great Moody revival. Religion then seemed large, and we felt that we must identify ourselves with this great cause." When Christianity is seen apart from the adventurous circumstances with which it is associated in the minds of only too many, it looms up as a "big thing"—but it needs the power of the Spirit of God to show us the things of Christ in such a way that we gain this sense of proportion.

This discovery of Christ brings with it a new reality. We know so much, we profess so much; as members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are in a position of immeasurable potentiality. But all this is conventional and unreal to many. Revival means a more uncompromising discipleship of Christ on the part of His own people, those who bear His name, and stand for His honour before the world. It means that the Christian does not mingle with the people of the world merely as one of them, but as one who is in touch with a higher order of reality, which governs all his actions and in the power of which his whole life is lived. It means amongst other

things, that God's people are no longer ashamed of Him.

And it means more than this. For when men and women act as though they belonged to Christ and were not ashamed to let that fact be known, things happen in many spheres of life. Within the Church is represented almost every human relationship. When these are all touched and purified by and instinct with the mind of Christ the result may be world-wide. In reality, social, industrial, and political reforms all depend for their motive power upon the Spirit of Christ working freely in the lives of men.

It is impossible for any class of men and women to have new conceptions of life without interpreting them in their relations with their fellow-men. Revival must affect the relation between employer and employed, between landlord and tenant, between class and class, nation and nation. Pure disinterestedness is impossible where Christ is not, but in His presence self-interest must go. So revival means the solution of many problems which, apart from Christ, are frankly admitted to be insoluble. It means the Spirit of Christ touching the whole of life, permeating every relation of life, ennobling and beautifying every aspect of man's manifold and complicated activities. It means nothing less than *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* written across every phase of life.

There is in revival an element of adventure. When great forces are at work there is always the possibility of the unprecedented happening. So when men are strongly moved by the Spirit of God they may be led to do unexpected things. Let us frankly admit it, there is somewhat of a revolutionary tendency in revival. When the existing order of things has become lifeless and hardened the new life may break out in a desire for reform, in efforts to make current Christianity into something more worthy of the name it bears. Very many people are to-day praying for revival without realising all that is involved in their request. How many of these people would like their prayers to be literally answered? An uncompromising following of Jesus Christ, a life lived directly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, would upset very much to which we have grown used. We often wonder why Christianity is so ineffective as a force in the world. Is it that perhaps in the bottom of our hearts we are afraid of it, and have therefore never really given it a chance? We sing, and we think we sing it with all sincerity, "O come, great Spirit, come," but how many of us would be surprised and possibly not best pleased at what would happen if that Spirit really did have full sway within us? We cannot expect new power in the Church unless we are more ready to surrender ourselves to the control

of the Spirit of Christ and to abide by what follows upon that surrender. Then indeed the Church might become a force in the world, and the disciples of Christ might once more be known as the men who are turning the world upside down.

The consideration of revival under these different aspects shows us one most important fact—that there are two sides, as it were, to revival—God's side and man's side. On God's part, revival is a gift, on man's part it is the receiving of that gift.

We dare not forget that spiritual life is the gift of God, and that what we call revival is the result of the unfettered working of His Holy Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Man cannot ordain or control the goings of the Spirit of God. It is true that the energy of the Spirit may be released by the action or the desire of man, but whether it comes to the individual soul, producing what we call conversion, or whether it sweeps over a multitude of souls at one time, gathering them all up into a great spiritual movement, it is, none the less, a gift of God. Life must be received before there can be the manifestation of life. Revival is the work of God the Holy Ghost. He and He alone can convict men of sin; He it is Who takes the things of Christ and shows them unto men; He takes the live coal from off the Altar and enables men to witness

to Christ with new power. He is the Author and Giver of life. "The Life Giver is the Giver of Christ, Who is our Life." From first to last, revival is the revealing of His Presence and His power.

At the same time it would be utterly fatal to forget that man has an all-important share to take. God gives, man receives; but man's attitude must be no effortless waiting for the blessing to come from God. Man must make ready to receive, must put himself into the position where he can receive.

Charles Finney, who did a wonderful work in England and America at the beginning of last century, said:—

"Revival is the result of the *right* use of the appropriate means. . . . But means will not produce revival, we all know, without the blessing of God. No more will grain, when it is sown, produce a crop without the blessing of God. It is impossible for us to say that there is not as direct an influence or agency from God to produce a crop of grain, as there is to produce revival. What are the laws of nature according to which it is supposed that grain yields a crop? They are nothing but the constituted manner of the operations of God. In the Bible the Word of God is compared to grain, and the results to the springing up and growth of the crop. Revival is as naturally the result of the use of the appropriate means as a crop is the result of the use of its appropriate means."<sup>1</sup>

The receiving of the power of the Spirit is the

<sup>1</sup> C. G. Finney, "Revivals of Religion."

result of obedience to the laws of the Kingdom. To this the whole study of the subject bears witness. The human and divine factors in revival are inseparably connected, but none the less one cannot take the place of the other. Man cannot produce revival, but he can prepare for it; he cannot make it happen, but he can make it almost inevitable.

But the other side of this solemn truth needs to be remembered, that man can not only help to bring revival, but he can also hinder it. By unbelief, by failure to obey the heavenly vision, by the spirit of strife amongst Christians, by unreadiness to follow where Christ would lead, the Spirit of God can be grieved and a spiritual movement checked.

The present time is one of deep solemnity; there is a widespread consciousness that the heart of the nation is not right with God, and that only a revival of true religion will really save the country. There is a new stretching out of the hands of many towards God. History shows that in such an hour in a nation's story some of the most remarkable spiritual awakenings have taken place. We are near so much, and we may miss so much. Vast spiritual possibilities may be realised, or they can become a tragedy and a judgment.

The actual form which revival has taken in the

past has largely been dependent upon the circumstances out of which it has arisen. For instance, in times of controversy new vitality and power may come through the simple presentation of some fundamental doctrine in a form that people can grasp and understand—a clear issue when minds are bewildered by discussion. Instead of a variety of possibly conflicting ideas, each of which is preached as the all-important and essential pivot of faith, the great central facts of our religion stand out in such a way that people can see nothing else.

“Ever and anon a trumpet sounds

From the hid battlements of Eternity;

Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then

Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.”

So wrote Francis Thompson, describing the soul's moments of insight. These times of insight come to the Church as a whole; the mists are dispersed that too often hide the great peaks of the faith, and they stand out clear and vivid in all their grandeur and beauty.

Sometimes the gradual declension which has led to the need for revival has meant that the clergy have become notoriously unfit for their task, have arrogated to themselves great powers and scandalously neglected their duties. At such times revival has centred very much around the reformation of existing conditions in

the Church, and has contained a powerful democratic element, whilst affirming man's right of direct access to God. Or again, if a spiritual movement has arisen at a time when social evils are particularly glaring, and industrial and labour problems unusually pressing, it has shown strong tendencies towards social reform. Again, when questions of doctrine are much in evidence and Christianity is at a high stage of intellectual development at the expense of intimate personal religion, the emotional side of revival has been more strongly emphasised.

This is not to say that all true revival does not partake of many different elements. It does, only they are found in greater or less degree according to the varying circumstances. For as a true spiritual experience embraces the whole of a man's nature, spirit, soul and body, so a real and deep spiritual movement must touch life in all its forms and activities. But as in the individual, according to his surroundings and temperament, one element must needs be uppermost, so too in that collective spiritual experience which we call revival.

None the less a spiritual movement needs the contributions of every type of mind, for it is as many-sided as life itself. The thinker, the scholar, the theologian, the reformer, the social worker, as well as the evangelist and the mystic,

have all their part to take in it, and all must take it if revival is not to be unequal or unbalanced, or worse still, fleeting, evanescent, and without lasting result.

Many people are to-day frankly nervous about revival. They read of the strange extravagances that have sometimes characterized spiritual movements in the past; they find that only too often such a movement has fallen away into weakness or even heresy, and so they dread any talk of revival, and would rather continue as in the past, than venture out on to new and untrodden paths, however inviting these may seem.

It is perfectly true that it is dangerous to venture in a strange country without a map or a guide book, and the man who does so runs great risk of losing himself. Revival may be to us as a strange country, but we have one very sure means of finding our way in it. The only safe guide in these matters is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. If we keep simply and clearly to the truth there set forth we need not fear for the future. It is when men leave behind the great historic facts of the Christian revelation that they get into strange paths and come to grief. Revival that is based firmly upon the great facts of God's revelation to man as revealed in the Bible, cannot fail to bring with it strength and blessing; but to think of a spiritual movement apart from

such a firm foundation is to court the gravest dangers. Adventure there must be, discovery there must be, but neither adventure nor desire for discovery must lead us away from the truths that God has made known to us in His Word. Only by faithfulness to the broad facts of revealed truth can there be any assurance of a spiritual movement that will remain sane and strong and uplifting.

As we go on to think of revival and its possibilities, let us remember that in dealing with such a subject we have great need of reverence, for we are treading on holy ground. That which concerns the relations between God and man must ever be handled as something infinitely sacred. And we must too, have open minds, a readiness to see things from, it may be, a new point of view, and a willingness to allow liberty of thought to others who approach the subject in different ways. We must have humility to be willing to learn new things from God, and receptiveness to make them our own. Above all let us remember that we are not considering this subject in a detached and theoretical way, but as a question of burning importance, a question which demands our immediate consideration, for it concerns not ourselves alone, but also our Church, our nation, the great world itself. It is intimately related to the coming of the Kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SIGNS OF ITS COMING

The more the whole subject of revival is studied the more clearly is it seen that though its appearing may be sudden it has been prepared for and led up to by a host of converging forces. Just as in the individual conversion the whole life may be raised to new levels and new powers become available, and this within a very short space of time, so in the days of spiritual awakening the things for which men have longed for years suddenly come to pass, and that which years of effort have failed to achieve is given in a moment. But as we know how, in the life of the individual, circumstances apparently trivial and influences which may even appear to have been adverse, have been leading up to and fitting in with the final experience, so too in the history of the great spiritual movements we can see the way being prepared long beforehand; in the outward conditions of the time; in the restlessness of men's minds, ever on the search for some better thing; and as time goes on, in the definite desire for, and effort to bring about, a spiritual awakening.