



## The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Revival



- *“In the sense of a spiritual movement this mighty work of God deserves a place in Christian thought alongside the Reformation, and as an evangelical revival it must be considered the greatest since the Apostles”*
- Arnold Dallimore, “George Whitfield”, Vol 1

### What was England Like? 1. The Church

- Saw the great spiritual work of the Puritans
- The religious liberties bought by the blood of many martyrs in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- Violent rejection of Puritanism in 1660s – restraint cast off – drunkenness, gambling, godlessness
- Ejection of 2000 ministers (Act of Uniformity, 1662)
- Led to prayerfulness in God’s people
- Rise of Deism – earth “wound up” by God; left to run
- Used their “logic” to prove unreasonableness of supernatural Christianity



- Miracles likewise fancy, Jesus simply an earnest but deluded man
- Man not held responsible for his actions
- No judgment day
- Welcome to those who had cast off moral restraint
- Plunged even further into decay
- Church responded to Deism but as skillful as some of this work was, it was purely defensive, intellectual and based on cold logic and not on a warm, living faith
- Church also weakened by aftermath of the ejection
- This description of the clergy in mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century:

■ *“The collective body of the clergy, excepting a very inconsiderable number, consists of men whose lives and occupations are most foreign to their profession -courtiers, politicians, lawyers, merchants, usurers, civil magistrates, sportsmen, musicians, stewards of country squires, tools of men in power, and even companions of rakes and infidels, not to mention the ignorant herd of poor curates to whom the instruction of common people is committed, who are, accordingly, in religious matters, the most ignorant common people who are in any Protestant, not to say in any Christian society upon the face of the earth.”*  
Archdeacon Blackburne

- Accordingly, Deism made inroads into the church
- Cardinal tenets of Christianity seen as debatable
- The Church a “useful branch of the civil service”, maintaining loyalty to government and crown.
- But mere empty formalities that were now outworn



- Believing the wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century had been caused by excessive religious fervor, all such “enthusiasm” was now feared
- Non-conformists fared somewhat better but were still engulfed in the lethargy of the times and there was much discord and disunity
- A few non-conformists are worthy of mention:

## Isaac Watts 1674-1748

- Early aptitude for verse, to excess.
- Asked why he had his eyes open at prayer:  
*"A little mouse for want of stairs  
ran up a rope to say its prayers."*
- Receiving corporal punishment for this:  
*"O father, do some pity take,  
And I will no more verses make."*
- Attended Dissenting Academy 1690
- Pastored large chapel in Stoke Newington, London
- Tutored Sir Thomas Abney's children, Hertfordshire
- Moved with Sir Thomas's widow and children to London manor house on Sir Thomas's death 1722
- Spent time in beautiful grounds, writing hymns, poems
- Credited with 750 hymns, argued for use in Church



## Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

- Ran a Dissenting Academy in Northampton
- Pastored a church,
- Wrote "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul", several hymns and a Bible commentary
- John Gill (1697-1771).
  - Converted age 12, mastered Greek at 11!
  - Also studied Latin and Hebrew.
  - For 51 years, pastored the baptist church in London that would later become the Metropolitan Tabernacle
  - Wrote many books, including a commentary



## What was England Like? 2. Society

- The Gin Craze. Importation of liquor banned in 1689 – home brewing began.
- Within a generation, every 6<sup>th</sup> house in London was a gin shop and the nation was in the grip of alcohol abuse
- The people became "cruel and inhuman" – e.g. sports involving cruelty to animals (banned by the Puritans) were now delighted in.
- The licentiousness ushered in by the Restoration had not been the source of unending pleasure it was promised to be
- Crime was rampant and grew despite increasingly severe punishments – many hangings for relatively minor offences – 160 crimes were punishable by death

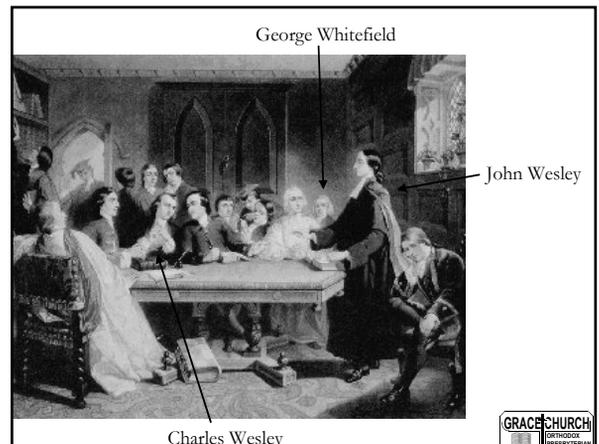


- Prisons were filled with people of all ages and hardened criminals were put with first offenders
- Open sewers sometimes ran through the jails and the conditions for the prisoners were miserable
- The press of the day was full of profanity, scandal, schism, obscenity, published for monetary gain
- Some joked that Parliament intended to take "not" from the 10 Commandments and insert it in the creed
- Several attempts made to improve affairs – hospitals, schools, societies. No perceptible change resulted
- No human agency seemed able to stem the tide
- Against this background, the revival began



## The Holy Club

- Began 1728 in Oxford. Bible study ("Bible Moths") and good works, fasting. Planned to use every moment of the day profitably – "Methodists"
- But did not understand the grace of the Gospel – works-oriented approach
- The aim was to earn salvation through holy living – worked to improve themselves
- Leaders in 1729 – John and Charles Wesley
- Whitefield introduced in 1733. 10-11 devoted members and a similar number of associates



## John Wesley 1703-1791

- Son of Anglican minister at Epworth
- 1720, Christ Church College, Oxford
- 1725, ordained deacon in the C. of E.
- 1726, elected Fellow of Lincoln College
- 1727, obtained Master of Arts
- Served as his father's curate for 2 years before returning to Oxford to take up duties as Fellow.
- 1734 – sailed for Georgia to serve as a missionary. Met Moravians on board ship and came to realize that he, himself, was not saved!
- *I left my native country to teach the Georgia Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? What I the least of all suspected, that I who went to America to convert others was never converted to God myself.*



- *I diligently strove against sin, I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful. I omitted no occasion of doing good; but could not find that all this gave me any assurance of acceptance with God.*
- *On shipboard it pleased God of his free mercy to give me 26 of the Moravian brothers for companions, who endeavoured to show me 'a more excellent way'. But I understood it not at first. I was too learned to be wise, so that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness wherein no flesh can be justified.*
- Back in London from Georgia, he attended a Moravian meeting-house in London where a man read from Martin Luther's preface to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in which he stresses that justification is by faith alone.



- *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; and I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart*
- 24th May, 1738. Wesley was almost 35 years old.
- Charles Wesley (John's younger brother) was in London at the same time, and had been converted himself just 3 days earlier!
- He wrote a hymn to celebrate his conversion and sang it with John the night he was saved
- In all, wrote around 7000 hymns



## Charles Wesley's "Conversion Hymn"

- *Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
A brand plucked from eternal fire,  
How shall I equal triumphs raise,  
Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?*
- *O how shall I the goodness tell,  
Father, which Thou to me hast showed?  
That I, a child of wrath and hell,  
I should be called a child of God,  
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,  
Blessed with this antepast of Heaven!*



## Wesley's Preaching Ministry

- The conversion experience of the Wesley's overflowed into their preaching:
  - Conviction of the Spirit leading to a conversion experience
  - Regeneration and subsequent sanctification by the Spirit
  - Forgiveness through Christ's atonement
  - Justification by faith in Christ
- Wesley preached for over 50 years
- Pulpits were closed to him (enthusiasm) so (at Whitefield's urging, who had gone before) Wesley preached in the open air – first time was April 2 1739
- Visited Moravians at Herrnhut also in 1739
- Rose at 4.00am, often preached first sermon at 5.00am
- 2-3 more sermons a day



- Targeted main population centers
- Especially strategic locations: Newcastle, Bristol
- Much success among poorer sections of society
- Traveled 250,000 miles, preached 40,000 times
- He and converts sometimes were persecuted
- Filled his days with other activities.
  - Edited grammars (in 5 languages)
  - Wrote commentaries
  - Prepared library of 50 volumes of extracts of other authors
  - Even a book on how Methodists could stay healthy
- Methodism began with no intention of separation from C of E but coolly received by Bishops and clergy.



## Methodist Organization

- Initially, “societies” were formed but as the movement grew, the societies were arranged into “classes”, led by “lay preachers”
- Preachers itinerated around “circuits”, spending as little as 3 months in each before moving to the next
- Gradually Wesley had to assume powers reserved for Bishops – ordination of preachers
- Methodists became a church within a church, Wesley and followers remained within C of E.
- Though seeds were sown for separation –
- Broke with Moravians in 1740
- Broke with Whitefield on predestination
- Renounced apostolic succession (held by C of E)
- Breach happened in 1795, 4 years after his death at the age of 87



## Methodism in the USA

- Methodist contact with the USA was initially through Whitefield, whose doctrine was more palatable in New England.
- 1767 Philip Embury (“local preacher” from Ireland) forms a class meeting in New York
- Methodist Societies multiplied from that time on, spreading to Pennsylvania and Maryland
- By 1772, Francis Asbury had been commissioned to administer American Methodism – which had its base in Baltimore.
- 1776 War of Independence was a trial – Wesley a staunch monarchist; Americans were now republicans.
- 1784, Thomas Coke sent to be Asbury’s assistant and the title of “Bishop” began to be used, but not with Wesley’s



- *Men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content. But they shall never by my consent call me bishop*
- There are many other events and people of this period that are worthy of mention. We shall deal with some when we look at George Whitefield. Reading his biography by Arnold Dallimore is very valuable.



## Conclusions to Part 1

- Thousands and thousands were saved under the preaching of Wesley, Whitefield and others.
- This movement of God’s Spirit probably saved England from a revolution like that in France. Methodists were loyal servants of the powers instituted by God. Prayed for the King and his government.
- Methodism also breathed life back into the C of E. Some were changed by its impact who had no desire to leave the established church



Any Questions?

