

THE SIXTH IN A SERIES ON REVIVAL

REVIVING the Academy

BY KEN HORN



“The state of religion is gloomy and distressing; the church of Christ seems to be sunk very low.”
(Devereux Jarratt, Virginia, 1790)

That quote is a fitting description of the church prior to revival. Jarratt was an exception in his day — a dynamic Episcopal minister who was a zealous and effective evangelist during a period of spiritual declension. That spiritual downturn was rife at the close of the 18th century in young America’s churches and in colleges that had been established as Christian institutions during the colonial era.

Unfortunately, America has a history of Christian colleges abandoning their roots. The trend began in the 18th century and has continued to the present day.

Our Pilgrim forefathers never conceived of any institution of higher learning devoid of spiritual impact or emphasis. Of the nine colleges that dotted colonial America, six came into existence directly as the result of revivals. It is hard to believe today, but Harvard, Princeton and Yale were actually founded to train young men for ministry. The University of Pennsylvania had its beginning as a revival center, built with the help of Benjamin Franklin for George Whitefield, the leading evangelist of the first Great Awakening.

The following is inscribed on Whitefield’s statue that stands in a courtyard of the university: “The University of Pennsylvania held its first sessions in a building erected for his [Whitefield’s] congregation, and was aided by his collections, guided by his counsel, inspired by his life. Zealous advocate and patron of higher education in the American Colonies. The Charity School of 1740, the beginning of the University of Pennsylvania, was a fruit of his ministry.”

Multitudes of later institutions of higher learning had similar beginnings.

Awakening at Yale

But colleges born in revival can break loose from their spiritual moorings. By the time Timothy Dwight, grandson of revivalist Jonathan Edwards (a contemporary of Whitefield who briefly headed Princeton), became president of Yale in 1795, he found an institution where neither faculty nor student body claimed to be Christian. Leaving a thriving pastorate to, as he wrote, “build up a ruined college” was to him “a difficult task.”

But he did not shy away from the task, and charged into combat — both academic and spiritual.

In the face of great opposition, Dwight taught and preached an uncompromising gospel message and precipitated a move of God. But it took time. The Yale awakening began with the conversions of two students in 1802. By the end of the year, half of the student body had come to Christ. Soon, students at the school were more likely to attend prayer meetings than sporting events.

Awakenings continued at Yale through 1815. And Yale’s influence reached many other schools, notably Dartmouth and Princeton. A century and a half later, Yale became part of the charismatic renewal among colleges in the 1960s.

“Knowledge on Fire”

The spiritual outpouring at Yale under Dwight was part of the Eastern component of a revival movement known as the Second Great Awakening, which continued well into the 19th century. Since that time U.S. history is filled with accounts of the founding of Christian colleges — and of powerful moves of God on campuses.

Unfortunately, our history is also riddled with accounts of

Christian colleges turned secular. It is common today for students to attend such schools and never hear about an institution's deep religious heritage or theological underpinnings. (Chi Alpha functions as a godly presence on many of these campuses.) That's why Christian colleges, too, must feel the wind of revival. Solid doctrine and scholarship are no substitute for fresh fire.

The motto of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, "Knowledge on Fire," puts this in perspective. More than a slogan, this is really a definition of what genuine Christian academics should be. This knowledge is not just theoretical; it is also practical. While doctrine is important, Christian truth should lead to action. And active Christians also help define revival. To revive is to bring back to life. Revived teachers and students of the Word don't just teach or believe truth; they live it!

Many current schools — including those of the Assemblies of God — have kept Jesus the focus, and have continued to experience times of spiritual rekindling.

Colleges with spiritual staying power

I received my undergraduate education at Bethany Bible College (now Bethany University) in Scotts Valley, Calif. Revival influenced the academic landscape. Former General Superintendent Ralph Riggs, who had been present at the formation of the Assemblies of God in Hot Springs, Ark., in 1914, taught us Pentecostal truths. President Cordas C. Burnett challenged us forcefully to live a vigorous Christianity. As a result, many of my fellow students at Bethany

have been used by God all over the world ... and are continuing to make an impact today.

I have a vivid recollection of a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Bethany. It began when God swept through the student body during a regular chapel service. Students began to seek God fervently, meeting informally that night in the chapel to do just that. That was the first of a series of evenings when students congregated in the chapel with no one in charge and no agenda other than to wait on God. Night after night, students were filled, healed, reconciled, restored, and called to full-time ministry.

Bethany is the oldest of the institutions of higher education in the Assemblies of God. Founded in 1919 as Glad Tidings Bible Institute, it approaches a century of existence and serves as evidence that Christian schools can maintain their spiritual fervor over multiple generations.

Higher education in America has its roots in revival. As a whole, U.S. colleges and universities stand in the same desperate situation they were in when Timothy Dwight became a spiritual catalyst on Yale's campus. Today Christians must do all they can — by prayer, ministry and other action — to assure that the Spirit's flame will continue to burn in schools where God is still exalted, and will ignite the many campuses where He has been forgotten.

God is willing and able to spread revival across the academic landscape of our nation. **tpe**

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This series began in the Jan. 11 issue.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

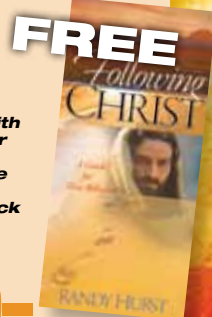
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

1-800-4PRAYER

Assemblies of God National Prayer Center



Keeping the Cross in crossover

Nearly 15 years after founding Mercy Me, the Dove award-winning worship band is celebrating the 10-year anniversary of "I Can Only Imagine." Recently, Assistant Editor Jennifer McClure caught up with the band, comprised of Bart Millard (lead vocals), Mike Scheuchzer (guitar), Nathan Cochran (bass), Jim Bryson (keys), Barry Graul (guitar) and Robby Shaffer (drums).

tpe: In what ways do you see the Lord using the ministry of Mercy Me?

COCHRAN: We hear stories all of the time of how songs of ours have helped people through rough times — songs like "I Can Only Imagine" or "Homesick." We're also moving into a new phase right now where we're trying to do things that are a little more global, I guess you could say. We're just trying to make a difference wherever we can.

tpe: Tell us more about your new global mind-set and about Imagine A Cure.

MILLARD: We started an organization called Imagine A Cure about two years ago because of my eldest son's diabetes. It is our desire to find a cure for juvenile diabetes just as fast as possible. When I told my son Sam about Imagine A Cure, the only thing he ever said to me was, "Aren't there more kids sick out there than just me?" Because of his idea of what Imagine A Cure should be, we started partnering with Compassion International and different organizations to send doctors to other parts of the world to give medical attention to kids who don't have it.

tpe: What is your heart as a band?

SCHEUCHZER: I think we've always said that we have a heart to worship, and if we can lead people into worship every night through what we do, that's what we're going to be about.

tpe: Two years after "I Can Only Imagine" hit Christian radio stations nationwide, it crossed over into mainstream airwaves. Is there a place for worship music on secular airwaves? Is it pertinent to a non-Christian audience?

COCHRAN: Absolutely. In the Bible, Paul and Silas were in prison and they were worshipping the Lord and an earthquake happened. It was the unsaved jailer who came to them and said, "What must I do to be saved?" The Word never returns void.

tpe: What are your thoughts on the struggle to keep the focus on the Lord, on worshipping Him, and not on creating a hyped-up emotional experience?

SCHEUCHZER: I think it's the same struggle that any of us face any day of the week when we're trying to keep our focus on God and not on the things of this world. An emotional experience or trying to boost our own

egos — it's really no different than focusing on the temporary things of this world in any other part of life. That one hour on stage is certainly the least significant part of our spiritual walk — or hopefully should be. The biggest part is our own quiet times with God and with our church bodies at home being discipled or discipling others. Hopefully, if we're getting it right everywhere else, then we should be getting it right there too.

tpe: Is there anything in particular you do to stay focused in your personal relationship with God?

SCHEUCHZER: I think it's the same as it is for any other believer. Whether you're a mechanic



or Billy Graham, you still have to be in the Word and you still have to be taught by people who are wiser than you and pour into people who are younger than you. I think it's the same answer either way no matter what your job is. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.