

## ***SPIRITUAL RENEWAL***

Point 12 in the series, *Twelve Points of Light*, focuses on spiritual renewals in the United States. It seemed appropriate to end the series with a discussion of the Third Great Awakening, the Laymans' Prayer Revival (1857 - 1859). This renewal movement greatly impacted the spiritual condition of needy people across America. Could this be a movement God could use to impact our lives, our church, and our community today?

The Laymans' Prayer Revival was quite different from the first two awakenings in America. As the title indicates, it was led by laymen not noted evangelists or preachers. It was not promoted through large gatherings but in rooms with men and women seeking renewal in their lives. It was not based on evangelistic techniques but fervent prayer.

Estimates of conversions were listed at between 300,000 and 1 million. There was almost a universal lack of emotional excesses that so deeply characterized the Second Great Awakening. Yet, there was a deep movement of God in the hearts of people. According to the New York Times (March 20, 1858):

*It is not often that the Daily Press feels called upon to chronicle the spiritual movements of the public mind. The great wave of religious excitement which is now sweeping over the nation is one of the most remarkable movements since the Reformation...In this city we have beheld a sight which not the most enthusiastic fanatics for church observances could have ever hoped to look upon: we have seen in a business quarter of the city, in the busiest hours, assemblies of merchants, clerks, and working men, to the number of some 5,000, gathered day after day for simple solemn worship. Similar assemblies we find in other portions of the city, a theatre is turned into a chapel; churches of all sects are opened and crowded day and night.*

The impact of this movement of God reached from the largest cities to the smallest towns. It spread from the United States to numerous countries around the world. The import of this movement to me is way God uses ordinary people who desire an unusual relationship to God, realizing how holy God is and how unholy they are. Such people God uses to touch lives, churches, communities, the world.

Do I have a desire for a deeper relationship with God? Is renewal a need in our churches and our communities today? I must speak for myself and say, "Yes!" Renewal is the responsibility of the redeemed. May we be men and women seeking God's deepening work in our lives and community.