

**IRISH REVIVALS. THE
ULSTER AWAKENING:
ITS ORIGIN, PROGRESS,
AND FRUIT. [1860]**

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Irish Revivals. The Ulster Awakening: Its Origin, Progress, and Fruit. [1860] by John Weir

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IRISH REVIVALS.

THE ULSTER AWAKENING:

Its Origin, Progress, and Fruit.

WITH

NOTES OF A TOUR OF PERSONAL OBSERVATION
AND INQUIRY.

BY THE REV. JOHN WEIR, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DUBLIN, AND AUTHOR OF "ROMANISM: LECTURES
FOR THE TIMES."

WITH

A PREFACE BY THE HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, M.A.



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PREFACE.

THE following work upon the Ulster Awakening needs no preface from me, nor can I pretend to add anything to its worth; but my friend, Dr. Weir, having asked me to write a few lines, I thought it my duty to comply. So great a work of grace ought to be known by its contemporaries, and to be chronicled for future generations.

When God displays His power and love by saving multitudes, He calls all the world to examine His work and to adore His goodness. This book is wanted because no connected narrative of these transactions has yet appeared: and its author has various qualifications which may recommend it to his readers. He belongs to that Christian body in Ulster, in the congregations of which God has chiefly displayed His grace. He is a native of the province, was for some years the pastor of a church within it, loves its people, feels deep interest in their spiritual progress, is acquainted with many of their ministers, has visited the places which have been blessed, and has conversed with numbers who have witnessed the remarkable scenes which he has described. On the other hand, as a minister of Christ in London, he has doubtless, while rejoicing in the happiness of Ulster, not forgotten the welfare of England.

Having myself visited some of these towns in Ulster, where I saw something of this great work, and having read much about it, I rejoice to know that God has "drawn" some thousands to Jesus, who are now manifesting, by all the "fruits of the Spirit," the reality of their conversion. Converts in every part of Ulster have a simple faith in Jesus, love God for His "unspeakable gift," love the Saviour for redeeming and saving them, love each other as brethren, and feel great compassion for the unsaved. They prize the means of grace, flock eagerly to the house of God, industriously use the Sabbath, love the Bible, delight in prayer, abound in praise, dread sin, and do their duty. Thankful, and full of hope, they have entered on the road to heaven; and are an invaluable addition to the company of Christ's servants, who will, with their ministers, labour to promote the glory of their Master, the triumph of the Gospel, the conversion of the unconverted, and the happiness of all around them.

May the reading of this book lead many to work and pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon England; and may God speedily bless our efforts and accomplish our prayers.

B. W. NOEL.

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THE ULSTER AWAKENING.

PART I.

THE ORIGIN, EARLY HISTORY, AND PROGRESS OF THE
AWAKENING.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

As a native of the province of Ulster, long familiar with its people, and as one who was a minister for thirteen years of that branch of the Church of Scotland, which, more than two centuries ago, was planted among those who settled as colonists in the North of Ireland, I venture to ask the attention, and to claim the confidence, of my readers. I shall endeavour to lay before them the leading facts and features of that Ulster Revival which is still arresting general attention, and which has provoked much severe animadversion on the one hand, as well as elicited hallowed joy and devout thanksgivings on the other.

I write as a firm believer in the truth of Christianity, and this, both in respect to its great facts, and its distinguishing doctrines. I espouse and hold fast the views common to Evangelical and Protestant Christians; and while differing with many of them on questions of church government and discipline, I am emphatically one with them in faith and sympathy, on all points essential to life and salvation. I believe that Christianity, rightly interpreted, teaches first, that man is guilty before God; and that, in order to deliver him from the everlasting penalties of his sin, there has been provided for him a Saviour, trusting in whose atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness, a man is "justified" before God, he is freely forgiven, and he becomes, by adoption and grace, a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, I believe that Christianity teaches the entire corruption and moral helplessness of human nature, in consequence of the

Fall; and that it also reveals a remedy for this, in a supernatural Agent and agency. In other words, I hold that the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, is the "Lord and Giver of life;" that He imparts, sustains, and consummates this spiritual life in accordance with the Father's eternal purpose, and through the mediation of Jesus Christ. This Spirit, therefore, quickens those who by nature are "dead in trespasses and sins," and also "creates anew unto good works," those who are "very far gone from original righteousness:" so that thus the sinner saved, is not only "justified by faith," and "has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," but he is also sanctified by "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

This Holy Spirit, moreover, I regard, as operating upon the intellect in its spiritual enlightenment; on the conscience in waking it up as a faithful witness and accuser, so as to lead to the conviction of guilt, and of rebellion before God; and acting also upon the affections so as to turn them towards Christ (already trusted in), as their magnet and their cynosure, as the one object of the heart's supreme regard. And while I believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are most eloquently expressive ordinances, the one, of the grace of the Holy Spirit in cleansing the heart from its filthiness, and the other, of the body and blood of a crucified Saviour,—and while I believe also that these are something more than mere signs, that, to all who believingly receive them, they are also *seals* of Divine favour, and are thus the pledges and assurances of eternal life,—yet I do earnestly reject that Ritualistic theory, which teaches that *ex operé operatú* Baptism, administered by priestly hands, is regeneration; and that the Eucharist is a real sacrifice offered on an altar, "impetratory" in its character, and essential to the application of that blood of atonement which was offered on Calvary "once for all."

Finally, I hold that the Holy Spirit is the sole author of a religious Revival, and this by the instrumentality of *scriptural truth*. Revelation, I regard as completed, in the Canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. I reject all pretensions to new revelations, under the names of Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, "and unwritten tradition;" and also those mistaken applications of Old Testament prophecies, which have been said, by a very few persons, to find their fulfilment, in the alleged "prophecies," or "visions," and "sleeps" (or "dreams"), of "young men and maidens" in Ulster. Moreover, with regard to cases of physical agitations and persons "struck down,"—such as I have myself seen,—while treating of these affections more fully afterwards, I wish now to express my conviction, that as an eminent philosopher, the Rev. Dr. M'Coah, regards

them, these are but "the *physiological accidents*" of the Revival in Ulster. He says, "I do not form my belief that it is a genuine work, on the bodily manifestations;" for "this would be as contrary to Scripture as to science. Scripture sets no value on 'bodily exercise;' and nowhere points to any bodily effect whatever as a proof or test of the presence of the Spirit of God." And from three weeks' close and constant personal observation and inquiries over the greater part of Ulster, I can also heartily, and with a good conscience, accord with Dr. McCosh, when he adds: "Nor have I ever heard any one who takes an enlightened interest in this work, ever appealing to this evidence."

By every believer in Divine Revelation, I shall be permitted to speak of the fruits of this Revival as including not only *social* results and a great moral reformation, but also those spiritual fruits which are indicated by a holy apostle (Gal. v. 22.), and which, if Christianity be a reality, are the primary and essential results of the presence and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. I know that many persons speak of "Christian experience" with scorn, and consider the language employed with regard to it, even though it be scriptural, as "conventionalism and cant." But, notwithstanding this, and cheerfully admitting that there is often a use made of scripture terms, which, as Foster indicates, is a stumbling-block to "men of taste,"—yet still it is never to be forgotten that the New Testament *does* speak of a Divine and supernatural change as "conversion," as "turning to the Lord," as being "born again," as receiving the gospel, "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance" of "love, joy, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, goodness, faith;" as well as of "joy and peace in believing;" of "abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," and "singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord," of "praying in the Holy Ghost," of a "life of faith in the Son of God," and of "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." If, therefore, our tests, when applied in due time, shall bring out illustrations of all these spiritual exercises, and graces, in connection with the movement in Ireland,—then we may logically and fairly claim, that without controversy and without scorn, its Divine origin shall be at once admitted by every one, who would not class himself amongst those who virtually reject the inspiration of the Bible, and who treat the language of Christ and his apostles, as well as the recorded experience of the early Church, as the jargon of imposture, or the ravings of fanatical folly.*

* "Christian experience may be regarded as genuine—1st. When it accords with the Revelation of God's mind and will, or what he has revealed in his Word. Anything contrary to this, however pleasing, cannot be sound, or

We do not, then, expect sympathy with our views and feelings from those who adopt and maintain ritualistic and sacramentarian views on the one hand, nor from the sceptic and unbeliever on the other. But from all who are willing that the Ulster Awakening should be tried by what prophets have taught us to expect in the last days, by what began to be realized on the day of Pentecost, we *do* claim a candid consideration of those facts, and those scriptural "fruits," which, in all truthfulness of statement, and honesty of purpose, we shall in subsequent chapters place before them.

CHAPTER II.

The Model and Conditions of a Genuine Revival—Pentecost and the Early Church—Periodical Outpourings of the Spirit—Historical Illustrations of Revivals—Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio, and the Ulster Awakening.

REVIVAL, strictly speaking, implies that spiritual life is already possessed. And just as the fading flower, the drooping plant, the parched cereals, by the gentle shower and the gladsome sunshine, are resuscitated into fresh life—so, by the fresh communications of his heavenly grace, the Holy Ghost restores from a languishing condition that inner life which he had previously bestowed. But, as commonly understood, Revival means not only the enlargement and advancement of the work of grace in the regenerate, but the impartation, by the quickening Spirit, of a divine life to those hitherto dead in trespasses and sins.

It was thus that Christianity itself, was ushered in by a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God, in connection with the preaching of the Gospel,—not by the Gospel without the Spirit, nor by the Spirit without the Word, nor yet by the gifts of tongues, otherwise as attestations of the divinity of the work, and especially as essential to the *universal* proclamation of the truth by its appointed heralds. The apostles, and those with them who were already Christ's true disciples, were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem till they should receive "the promise of the Father," and "power from on high." They were taught that, without the promised Spirit, they must

produced by Divine Agency. 2nd. When its tendency is to promote humility in us; that experience which produces humility in us, and subdues pride, must be good. 3rd. When it teaches us to bear with others, and to do them good. 4th. When it operates so as to excite us to be ardent in our devotion, and sincere in our regard to God. A powerful experience of the Divine favour will lead us to acknowledge the same, and to manifest our gratitude by constant praise and genuine piety."—BUCK'S *Theological Dictionary* by Henderson.