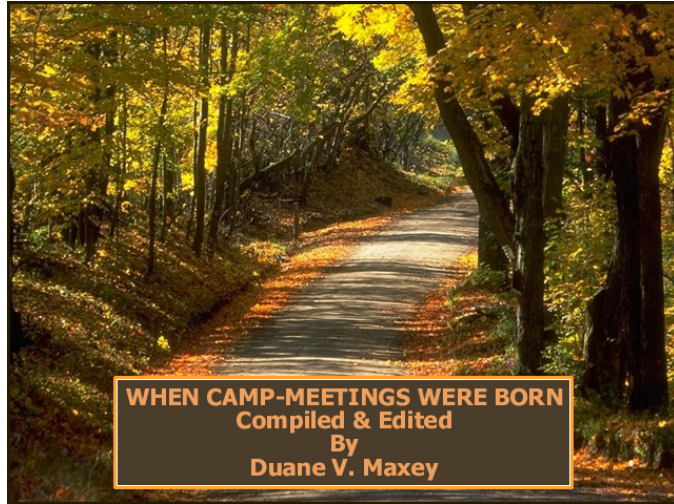


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WHEN CAMP-MEETINGS WERE BORN
Compiled and Edited By Duane V. Maxey
From "Old Time Religion"
By S. B. Shaw

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly all of the following material was taken from a book titled "Old Time Religion" by Solomon Benjamin Shaw. Below, you will read of "When Camp-Meetings Were Born," and after reading this account those Christians who know much about the true condition of today's Church will quickly discern that while

meetings called "Camp-Meetings" are still being held, to a great extent they are void of the mighty spiritual Power that was present when that name was born. Mighty, Holy Ghost visited "Camp-Meetings" were born at a time when, to quote one writer: "our country seemed all coming to God." Today, sad to say, the name "Camp-Meeting" still exists, but now at a time when our country seems nearly all drifted far, far away from God. Still, if the same conditions are met which brought about the birth of those first Camp-Meetings, it is possible that the re-birth of such mighty meetings could occur. -- Duane V. Maxey, Holiness Data Ministry, Surprise, Arizona, November 27, 2010.

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SCRIPTURES

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:8).

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

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When Camp-Meetings Were Born

In the very beginning of the nineteenth century this country was blessed with one of the most glorious outpourings of the Holy Spirit known in the history of the Christian church. The work broke out in Kentucky and is often spoken of as "The Kentucky Revivals" and as the "Great Revival in the West" although in the immediately succeeding years it was manifest to a great degree over the entire land. Foreign Missionary Societies, The American Bible Society, and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, have been recognized as a part of the blessed results of that "time of refreshing." After that revival Dr. Baxter declared Kentucky to be the most moral place he had ever seen.

Rev. B. Helm, in his recent work, "Allie in Beulah Land" tells us: Rev. David Rice, one of the pioneer Presbyterian ministers of Kentucky wrote of that revival:

"(1) It has made its appearance in various places without any extraordinary means to produce it The first symptom has been a praying spirit in a few pious people among them. They prayed, incited others, organized praying societies, that

they might meet, encourage and assist others. The revival appears to be granted in answer to prayer.

"(2) As far as I can see there appears to be in the subjects of this work a deep heart humbling sense of the great unreasonableness, abominable nature, pernicious effects, and deadly consequences of sin; and of the absolute unworthiness of the sinful creature of the smallest crumb of mercy from the hand of a holy God. There appears to be in them a deep mourning on account of their own sins, and the sins of their fellow professors, and of the careless and profane, especially their ingratitude to God.

"(3) There seems to be deep and affecting views of the condescension and love of God in giving His Son for the redemption of man; and of the love of the Redeemer in redeeming them.

"(4) They have a deep longing for the conversion of souls, and of their worth, and of love to them. Perhaps the ardency of their love sometimes hurries them into indiscretions, which excite the prejudice of those for whose salvation they are pleading.

"(5) A great number of individuals seem to me greatly reformed in their morals -- yea, some neighborhoods, noted for their profane and vicious manners, are now as much noted for their piety and good order.

"(6) Family worship is established.

"(7) The subjects of this work seem to be very sensible of the necessity of sanctification, as well as justification, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord: to be very desirous that they themselves, and all who name the name of the Lord, should depart from all iniquity, should recommend the religion of Jesus Christ to the consciences of their fellowmen A heaven of perfect purity, and the full enjoyment of God appears to be the chief and ultimate desire and object of their pursuit. Now I have given you my reason for concluding the morning has come, and that we are blessed with a real revival of the benign, heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ, which demands our grateful acknowledgment to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

Of this great work we give a brief account taken from "A Century of Revivals."

"From about 1790 to 1800, religion was at a very low ebb in the United States. There was only about one church member to thirteen of the population. French infidelity had over-run the land, undermining the faith and morals of the people. Many of the church members were unconverted, and the dry doctrinal preaching of the pulpit had no power to arouse the church from its lethargy. In fact, the pulpit was thought to be largely unconverted. From 1792 to 1798 Methodism had been

losing ground. In one year it had lost one-tenth of its membership from the U. S. Conference, owing, in part, to the O'Kelly controversy. In 1796 official calls were made for fasting and prayer by presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly. Ohio presbytery held a monthly fast day all through the year 1796, to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Written covenants were drawn up in Pennsylvania to pray for a revival.

"The revival began, as might have been expected, in the church that had so sought revival. McCready, a Presbyterian preacher in Logan county, Kentucky, drew up a solemn covenant for his congregation. Every Saturday evening, every Sabbath morning, and one whole Sabbath of each month, for a year, were to be observed as a season of special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Logan county, and throughout the world. In May, 1797, in Gasper River congregation, in Logan county, Kentucky, the grand work began. For a year McCready's members had been coming to him about their spiritual condition. The preaching of the most of the preachers of his denomination consisted of dry, formal treatises on doctrines. One writer says that during the fourteen years that he sat under Dr. Craighead's ministry, he had never heard a sermon on repentance, regeneration and faith that either tended to awaken a sinner, or teach a penitent how to find peace. McCready had been a revivalist in North Carolina, and his preaching awakened his people to their condition.

"In 1898 a more general awakening occurred. Secular business was forgotten. Men spent days alone in the woods, praying. When there was no preaching, godless church members spent much time talking of the startling discovery of their unsaved state. Such was the case all over McCready's field, without any protracted services.

"In 1799 the interest was still deeper, especially in Gasper congregation. The sacramental meeting was a time of victory to some. Men overwhelmed by conviction fell to the floor, and though they were entirely conscious, as they afterwards testified, yet they remained prostrate and motionless for an hour. When they arose, there were shouts of victory on their tongues. This strange exercise drew vast crowds to McCready's meetings.

"One family, just from North Carolina, came in their wagon and 'camped.' McCready seized upon the campmeeting idea from this 'first camp-meeting of Christendom,' as Rev. John McGee, of Methodism, styled it. McCready now published far and near that the sacramental meeting, July, 1800, of Gasper would be a camp-meeting. Some members of the Shiloh, Tennessee, congregation came home from the former meeting converted, and shouting the praises of God. Elder Robert King said he would send Rich, a son educated for the ministry; they could not fool him with 'fox-fire.' But Rich came home converted; and 'Fox-Fire Rich' spread it till twenty were converted ere a meeting was held. Then a camp-meeting was ordered, and over one hundred were converted in the face of his anti revivalist father.

"In 1801 McCready invited the Methodist preachers, and especially John Page, powerful in the pulpit, and popular among Presbyterians, to attend.

"It was three miles north of Peter Cartwright's home. The meeting was in a grove. They camped. Men slept under the wagons, women in them, while some stayed with the neighbors. Peter Cartwright was there, a guilty sinner. He says, "I went with weeping multitudes and bowed before the stand, and earnestly prayed for mercy. In the midst of a solemn struggle of soul, an impression was made upon my mind as though a voice had said to me, 'thy sins are forgiven thee;' divine light flashed all around me, unspeakable joy rose in my soul. I arose to me feet, opened my eyes, and it seemed as if I was in heaven; the trees, the leaves on them, everything seemed praising God."

Such was the conversion in a Presbyterian camp-meeting of this remarkable character in Western Methodism. For the Holy Ghost submerges denominational channels wherever His overflow occurs, and if the disciples were always filled with the Spirit there would be no schism in the body; but the ecclesia, or church of God would be one, as Jesus prayed it might be.

During 1801 and 1802 the revival fire spread over Tennessee, the Carolinas, and the Northern States. In Yale College of 230 students, were converted. Said Dr. Gardiner Spring:

"From the year 1800 and 1825 there was not a month in which we could not point to some village, or town, or seminary and say, 'Behold what God hath wrought.' Yet there were opposers. In Kentucky there was the anti-revival party called Old Side, while the revival party was called New Side."

Says Dr. Spring, "I marvel not a little that, after all our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, there should be a good many among us who look with suspicion upon these days of mercy, and who do not rather hail them as the harbinger of that predicted period, when 'the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven days.'"

In Western Pennsylvania, after several sacramental meetings of great blessing, a greater concourse of people than was ever seen at such assemblies gathered at Upper Buffalo meeting house, in the congregation of Rev. John Anderson. There came about ten thousand. Many came in wagons, or with tents. Fifteen ministers of the Synod of Pittsburgh were there. Extraordinary divine power attended the services. Preaching, exhorting, prayer and praise continued alternately throughout Saturday night in the meeting house, and also part of the night in the tent. The Lord's day saw communion service in the house, and preaching services in the tent for sinners. This night was spent, as the former had been, only more were visibly pierced to the heart, and made to cry out, "what shall we do?"

Between midnight and daylight, after a short intermission of services, an exhortation was given the distressed, pointing them to Christ and His grace to meet their needs.

On Monday the whole assembly was addressed by one speaker. After the benediction many were smitten down in all parts of the congregation, and many more sat silently weeping over their sins and misery. Rev. McCurdy delivered a most powerful exposition of the second Psalm from a wagon. Said Rev. T. Hunt, who was with him in the wagon, "it was like the close of a battle, when every tenth man was wounded." It was called McCurdy's War Sermon, for after its close men fell on every side as if shot.

I find the revival fires were kindled in Upper Kentucky in 1801-1802 when McKendree was the Methodist presiding elder in the West. A Presbyterian minister, McNamara, heard him preach on the extent of the atonement, and salvation by faith. He said to himself "This is the doctrine calculated to do good." So he began to preach on these themes, and the mighty power of God came down on him and his congregation. Many fell to the floor, among whom was McNamara. Some of the Methodist began to talk to those in distress: but some of the Presbyterian elders still on their feet said, "If it is the Lord's work, let the Lord do his own work." But they persisted, saying, "The Lord works by means." As there was some crowding among those that were down, one said, "Don't tread on Mr. McNamara." He heard it, and cried out, 'Yes, let them tread on me, for I deserve it. Oh, if I and my congregations had been carried to judgment a few weeks ago what would have become of us?"

Peter Cartwright wrote of this revival: "in the year 1801, in the upper part of Kentucky, at a memorable place called Cane Ridge, there was appointed a sacramental meeting by some Presbyterian ministers, at which meeting the mighty power of God was displayed in a very extraordinary manner. Many were moved to tears, and bitter, loud cryings for mercy. The meeting was protracted for weeks. Ministers from almost all denominations flocked in from far and near. The services were kept up by night and by day. Thousands heard of the mighty work, and came on foot, on horseback, in carriages, and wagons. It is supposed there were in attendance, at times, from 12,000 to 25,000 people. Hundreds fell under the mighty power of God, as if slain in battle. Stands were erected in the woods, from which preachers of different churches proclaimed repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was estimated by eye-witnesses that from 1,000 to 2,000 were happily and powerfully converted to God during the meeting. It was not unusual for from three to seven preachers to be addressing the listening thousands at one time from different stands. The heavenly fire spread in almost every direction. It was said by truthful witnesses that at times more than a thousand persons broke out into loud shoutings all at once, and that the shouts could be heard for miles around."

Since Pentecost, says a writer, "there has seldom if ever been such a revival. It kindled a flame that spread all over Kentucky, and throughout many other states."

Says one, "I have seen a hundred sinners fall as dead men under one sermon, and I have heard more than five hundred Christians shouting aloud the praises of God at one time. I venture to assert that thousands were awakened and converted at these camp-meetings, where Methodists and Presbyterians worked together. They held such campmeetings every year. Sinners mocked, old dry professors opposed, some of the old starched preachers preached against these exercises, but still the work went on, and spread in almost every direction, gathering additional fire, till our country seemed all coming to God."

Someone set forth the following thoughts in a tune called "Old Camp-Meeting Time":

Long ago when but a boy at old camp-meeting time,
How my heart did leap for joy to hear the old bells chime,
Callin' all the saints of God into the house of prayer--
Oh such prayin', singin', shoutin' for the Lord was there!

I like the old time
Preachin', prayin, singin', shoutin,'
I like the old time readin' of God's Word;
I like to hear those old time, Hallelujahs, glory!
I like the old time worship of the Lord.

* * *

Preachers in those good old days were filled with holy flame,
Preachin' for the souls of men and not for worldly fame;
Under such old fashioned preachin', sinners fell to pray
And the Lord wound save 'em in the good old fashioned way.

I like the old time
Preachin', prayin, singin', shoutin,'
I like the old time readin' of God's Word;
I like to hear those old time, Hallelujahs, glory!
I like the old time worship of the Lord.

* * *

In these latter days they say that there's no use to pray--
All we need is to think religion, 'tis a better way,
But I'm glad to tell you brother, Jesus saves from sin;
In the old time way He saves me now -- He dwells within.

I like the old time
Preachin', prayin, singin', shoutin,'
I like the old time readin' of God's Word;

**I like to hear those old time, Hallelujahs, glory!
I like the old time worship of the Lord.**

**Again, when the same, Scriptural means are used that brought about the
Birth of Camp-Meetings, we might still see "The Re-Birth Of Camp-Meetings." May
God bring it to pass.**

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THE END