

Patroness Of Revival

The First Great Awakening brought major social and religious changes to England that quickly spread to the colonies in America. At a time of great moral and spiritual darkness, evangelists began to preach that all must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But this far-reaching spiritual revival might never have been propagated except for the efforts of one woman—Lady Selina Shirley Huntingdon.

Lady Selina was born into an aristocratic family in England in 1707. As a child she was a quiet, religious girl who was often melancholy. During her adolescence however, she blossomed into a charming, outgoing young woman who was at home in high society.

At the age of 21, she married the Earl of Huntingdon. From the beginning their marriage was blessed, and they had four sons and three daughters. Lady Selina and her husband were active in the Church of England, but despite her religious work and her immense popularity at court, she felt a deep emptiness inside.

A spiritual battle raged within her. But her sister-in-law, Lady Margaret, was a good friend of the Wesley brothers. She told Lady Selina about her own glorious conversion and urged her to put her faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross.

For weeks, the spiritual struggle within Lady Selina continued. Finally, in July 1739, she surrendered her life to Christ. Instantly peace flooded her soul.

News of Lady Selina's spiritual awakening soon spread among her aristocratic friends. She shared her faith with her servants as well as her friends. She sent for John and Charles Wesley and became an advocate of their Methodist movement, a newly formed society that emphasized personal faith in Christ

instead of following the doctrines of a specific denomination.

The society was often persecuted because their message—that all were sinners—was offensive to many of the elite. During a time of history when class standing opened doors, Lady Selina's high social standing and wealth were a great support to the Methodist preachers.

Lady Selina invited George Whitefield to her mansion to preach to her noble friends and became one of Whitefield's main supporters when he carried the torch of revival fire throughout England and America. After her husband's death in 1746 she supported dozens of other preachers and built as many as 67 chapels.

Without her support, the Methodist revival might have never gotten off the ground. But because of her generous giving she became known as the "Patroness of Awakening." She died in 1791, leaving a worldwide awakening behind her.