

CHAPTER ONE

The 1904 Revival

There is a Divine mystery about Revivals. God's sovereignty is in them. I may not live to see it, but the day will come when there will be a great Revival over the whole earth.

Alexander Whyte

A blaze of evening glory at the end of the Great Century”—that's how the 1904 Revival has been described by church historian J. Edwin Orr. For good reason: By some estimates, more than five million people were won to Christ within two years. Aspects of this revival have become legends in the spiritual heritage of evangelicals the world over.

A Response to Prayer

As the nineteenth century came to a close, two evangelical ministries, the Moody Bible Institute in America and the Keswick Convention in England, called their two nations to prayer for revival. The large prayer movement organized by these ministries was

matched by an even larger, apparently unconnected movement of prayer worldwide. On mission fields as far away as India, the Far East, Africa, and Latin America, missionaries and national churches began praying for revival in their respective lands. Most of those praying had never seen revival on the mission field; many had never experienced revival themselves. Yet they prayed that God might do for them what they had read about in the stories of history's great revivals.

The Prisoner of War Revival

In response to this prayer movement, the first manifestations of revival began in a most unlikely place: among prisoners of war held in camps halfway across the world from each other. The Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa had pitted the Boers (Afrikaners), of Dutch ancestry, against the British. Some of the Boers taken prisoner were held on Bermuda (a British island colony off the southeastern coast of the United States) and some on Ceylon (an island in the Indian Ocean).

According to one observer, the Prisoner of War Revival, as it came to be called, was characterized "by extraordinary prayer, by faithful preaching, conviction of sin, confession and repentance with lasting conversions and hundreds of enlistments for missionary service." With the return of the prisoners to their homeland, revival swept through South Africa as well, which was in the grips of an economic depression.

Japan and Australia

A Japanese awakening began in 1900 as part of a decade-long intensive evangelistic campaign. Campaign organizers had called the evangelical church to prayer as preparation for the evangelistic effort. This prayer resulted in a revival in Japanese cities. The total membership of the churches almost doubled within the decade, despite the interruption of a war with Russia four years into the campaign.

American evangelists R. A. Torrey and Charles M. Alexander were surprised to find a widespread prayer movement during their highly successful campaign in Australia and New Zealand in 1901. The campaign produced more converts than ever before experienced by the churches of that region. When the American evangelist Wilbur Chapman replaced Torrey, revival continued.

British evangelist Rodney ("Gipsy") Smith saw the same results during his mission of peace in South Africa in 1901. The South African Awakening under Smith's ministry was so significant that Smith extended his ministry in that nation an additional six months, yet the greatest manifestation of the 1904 Revival was yet to come.

Wales

During this time a man named Evan Roberts felt impressed by God that revival was coming to his native Wales. He told a friend, "I have a vision of all Wales being lifted up to heaven. We are going to see the mightiest revival that Wales has ever known—and the Holy Spirit is coming soon, so we must get ready."

Though only a young student, Roberts claimed God would give him “a hundred thousand souls” if he were obedient, and before long his preaching was stirring great crowds. But that was only the beginning. Although Roberts became the acknowledged leader of the Welsh Revival, the revival itself extended far beyond his ministry. Churches were filled for two years across the entire nation. Just as he had predicted, a hundred thousand converts were added to the church.

The Rest of the British Isles and the Continent

News of the revival encouraged those praying for revival throughout Great Britain to intensify their efforts. The Archbishop of Canterbury of the Church of England called for a national day of prayer. When one bishop told of confirming 950 converts in a single country parish church, thirty others declared their support for the revival. Outside the Anglican Church, Protestants in England increased their number by 10 percent between 1903 and 1906. Revival swept through Ireland and Scotland as well.

The European continent also experienced an unusual movement of God in response to news of the Welsh Revival. The awakening begun under the ministry of evangelist Albert Lunde in Norway was later described by Norwegian Bishop Berggrav as “the greatest revival of his experience.” That revival spread through Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. Lutherans described the revival as “the greatest movement of the Spirit since the Vikings were evangelized.” Germany, France, and other European nations were also touched.

North America

News of the Welsh Revival provoked a similar response in America in 1905. Ministers gathered in various conventions to prepare for the coming awakening. In Philadelphia, Methodists soon reported 6,101 new converts in trial membership. The pastors of Atlantic City churches claimed there were only fifty unconverted adults left in that city. On a single Sunday in New York City, 364 were received into membership and 286 were converted to Christ.

The revival also swept through the South. First Baptist Church in Paducah, Kentucky, added a thousand people within a couple of months. Across the Southern Baptist Convention, baptisms increased by 25 percent in a single year.

In the Midwest, Methodists reported “the greatest revivals in their history.” Every store and factory in Burlington, Iowa, closed to allow employees to attend prayer meetings. When the mayor of Denver declared a day of prayer in that city, churches were filled by ten o’clock. At 11:30, virtually every place of business in the city closed as 12,000 gathered for prayer meetings in downtown theaters and halls. Every school in town, and even the Colorado State Legislature, closed for the day.

In the West, interdenominational meetings attracted up to 180,000 attendants. One evening in Los Angeles, the Grand Opera House was filled by midnight with drunks and prostitutes seeking salvation. In Portland, Oregon, the entire city virtually shut down between 11:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. for noon hour prayer meetings.

A similar movement occurred throughout Canada. Urban and rural churches alike organized prayer meetings and evangelistic campaigns. Thousands gathered nightly during Torrey/Alexander campaigns in major Canadian cities, including Winnipeg and Toronto. Among the converts of Torrey's Toronto meetings was a young man named Oswald J. Smith, who would one day become known as "the greatest missionary statesman of the twentieth century."

Out of these revivals grew Bible institutes and Bible colleges, and an intense movement to offer training in the English Bible to laypeople and those called into Christian service. The purpose was to equip people for lay service in the church and to educate candidates for church and missionary service.

India and the Far East

News of the Welsh Revival also encouraged those praying for revival in India to increase their efforts. The resulting awakening touched every province in that nation. The Christian population increased by 70 percent during the Indian Revival, sixteen times as fast as did the Hindu population. In many places, meetings lasted five to ten hours.

Missionaries in Burma reported an "ingathering quite surpassing anything known in the history of the mission." Among the Burmese ethnic group known as the Karens, two thousand were baptized in 1905, ten times the usual number. In a single church, 1,340 of the Shans, another ethnic group, were baptized in December of that year.

Korea experienced three waves of revival in the first decade of the new century, the best known being the 1907 "Korean Pentecost." Church membership quadrupled during the decade. One of those touched by the Korean revival was a Canadian missionary serving in China, Jonathan Goforth. He returned to Manchuria as a carrier of revival. The national awakening that followed doubled the Protestant population of that nation to a quarter of a million, despite the persecution surrounding both the Boxer Uprising and the 1911 Revolution.

The Pacific Islands, Africa, and Latin America

Revival swept through the island nations of the Pacific as well. In Indonesia, 100,000 evangelicals in 1903 became 300,000 strong within the decade. On the island of Nias, two-thirds of the population was converted to Christ. In Malagasia, Protestant church membership increased by 66 percent.

While the revival had limited effect in South America, both Brazil and Chile were exceptions to the rule. The growth of the evangelical church in those nations began during the revival and continued uninterrupted throughout the century. Approximately one hundred years later, both nations boasted more evangelicals than Roman Catholics attending church in what had once been predominantly Catholic nations.

According to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, "more progress had been made in all Africa in the first decade of the twentieth century than experienced hitherto." Between 1903 and 1910, the number of Protestants living in the African

continent increased from 300,000 to 500,000. Still, the full impact of the Welsh Revival in Africa was yet to be manifest. As revived missionaries made their way to Africa, the growth rate of the African evangelical church continued to be twice that of the general population for the following half century.

The Pentecostal Movement

As noted earlier, news of the Welsh Revival encouraged many in Southern California to pray to intensify their efforts. In 1907, a small church in Los Angeles saw the crowds grow at their meetings until the converted house in which they met collapsed. They moved into a vacated Methodist church on Asuza Street. During the revival that followed, people began speaking in tongues, a phenomenon that attracted international attention.

The Asuza Street church quickly became a revival center visited by Christians from around the world. The Pentecostal movement was born, and it became the fastest-growing Protestant movement of the century. In fact, religion writers in an Associated Press survey in 1999 voted the Asuza Revival as one of the hundred most important religious movements of the millennium.

This overview of the awakening that shook the world after the turn of the twentieth century should demonstrate clearly why we've included it among the top ten revivals in history. In terms of sheer numbers of conversions alone, it warrants attention, but the scope and fruits of this revival were extraordinary as well. Now we'll look more closely at what happened in some of the places where God's presence became powerfully manifested.

The Welsh Revival (1904)

At the annual gathering of the British Keswick Convention in 1904, those assembled experienced a growing sense that a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit was on the horizon. Many Keswick speakers reported that Christians were surrendering themselves more deeply to Christ and committing themselves to pray for revival. Among those speakers was Seth Joshua, an evangelist who conducted many of his meetings in neighboring Wales.

Christians in Wales had witnessed the rapid spread in their land of worldliness and humanistic philosophy, which produced a deadening effect in the churches. One church leader observed, "While the church sleeps, the enemy busily sows tares among the wheat. Nothing short of an outpouring of the Spirit from on high will uproot them, and save our land from becoming prey to atheism and ungodliness."

In response to the conditions around them, Welsh pastors began a season of intense prayer. As they prayed, a small group claimed to experience God's power in their preaching as they challenged their congregations. Among the group was pastor Joseph Jenkins, who led a church in New Quay, Cardiganshire.

Jenkins' New Quay Church was among the first stirred by a touch of revival. The pastor had organized a special conference in January 1904, in which many in his church had begun experiencing personal revival. The spirit of revival continued under the

preaching of Seth Joshua. Later that year, Joshua preached in the town of Blaenannerch. During his meetings there, students from the nearby Methodist Academy attended.

Evan Roberts

Evan Roberts was among the academy students who attended Joshua's meetings. At a pre-breakfast meeting on Thursday, September 29, the evangelist concluded, crying out in Welsh, "Lord, bend us." When Evan Roberts later recalled that morning, he explained, "It was the Spirit that put the emphasis on 'bend us.'"

"That is what you need," said the Spirit to Evan Roberts. Evans began praying, "O Lord, bend me."

The next meeting that morning was scheduled for nine o'clock. Several students prayed aloud when given the opportunity. Roberts himself knelt with his arms stretched out, perspiration soaking his shirt as he agonized over committing himself to God. Finally he prayed aloud, "Bend me! Bend me! Bend me!" Later that day, Joshua made an entry in his journal recalling the young man's cry.

Roberts felt himself overwhelmed by the love of God. A verse he had learned immediately came to mind: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

The motto of the revival in Wales was born out of Roberts' experience that day: "Bend the church and save the world." Though still young, this new evangelist was about to become God's agent to carry the spirit of revival throughout his homeland.

Although he was already twenty-six years old, Roberts had just begun his course of study to train as a minister. As a boy growing up in Loughor, Wales, he'd had a compelling desire to "honor God in every aspect of his life." He knew God was calling him into the ministry, but he resisted enrolling in a formal course of instruction, fearing the training might quench his zeal for souls.

That zeal intensified in the spring of 1904 following a unique encounter with God:

One Friday night last spring, when praying by my bedside before retiring, I was taken up to a great expanse—without time and space. It was communion with God. Before this I had a far-off God. I was frightened that night, but never since. So great was my shivering that I rocked the bed, and my brother, being awakened, took hold of me thinking I was ill. After that experience I was awakened every night a little after one o'clock. This was most strange, for through the years I slept like a rock, and no disturbance in my room would awaken me. From that hour I was taken up into the divine fellowship for about four hours. What it was I cannot tell you, except that it was divine. About five o'clock I was again allowed to sleep on till about nine. At this time I was again taken up into the same experience as in the earlier hours of the morning until about twelve or one o'clock.

According to Roberts, this experience lasted for three months.

Roberts' fellowship with God grew following the Blaenannerch Conference. He spent hours engaged in personal Bible study, prayer, and worship. The nervousness he'd previously experienced in preaching now seemed to pass.

In addition, Roberts began experiencing visions of large numbers of people coming to Christ. He felt a revival was coming to his native Wales and that he must prepare for ministry. He formed a ministry team with several friends, telling them God was sending a revival that would reach a hundred thousand people for Christ.

Roberts and his team conducted meetings in the area, but he viewed them primarily as preparation for something much larger to come. He knew the revival would come soon, and when it came, he would be busy. Before it arrived, he also knew he needed to return home to gain the support of his family and friends.

The Loughor and Gorseinon Meetings

At the end of October, Roberts took the train home to be with his family and conduct a week of meetings among the youth in his home church. From the train, he wrote various friends to tell them what he was doing and to solicit their prayer support. When he arrived in Loughor, he went to his pastor to request permission to conduct the meetings. The first meeting was scheduled, and he was given permission to speak to any youth who agreed to stay after the usual Monday evening meeting.

At the meeting, Roberts urged that "any who were unwilling to submit to the Holy Spirit" should be free to leave the meeting. As a result, only seventeen remained to hear him. For almost three hours, the zealous evangelist led the group in worship and prayer, calling on God to break down any hardness of heart that might hinder revival. During the meeting, each of those present, including the evangelist's brother and three sisters, experienced the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, confessed their sins, called on God for mercy, and magnified God in praise.

The results that evening convinced Roberts revival would come in its fullness to Loughor if he would remain faithful. Attendance at the meetings began to increase each night. By Friday, those attending Roberts' meetings included people from several other congregations in town.

Although he knew he had commitments as a student, the young man decided to continue the meetings a second week. Furthermore, he would expand the ministry beyond Loughor to other chapels in nearby Gorseinon. Without any formal publicity, by Wednesday people were crowding the church, and those who arrived late stood in the vestibule to listen through the open doors.

On Thursday evening, a service was held in Brynteg Chapel in Gorseinon. Many people went directly to the church from work to insure they would get a seat. A newspaper reporter wandered into the service two hours after it began. In his story, published in the Western Mail on Saturday, November 12, he reported:

The meeting at Brynteg congregational church on Thursday night was attended by those remarkable scenes which have made previous meetings memorable in the life history of so many of the inhabitants of the district.

The proceedings commenced at seven o'clock and they lasted without a break until 4:30 ... on Friday morning. During the whole of this time the congregation were under the influence of deep religious fervor and exaltation. There were about 400 people present in the chapel when I took my seat at about nine o'clock.... There is nothing theatrical about [Roberts'] preaching. He does not seek to terrify his hearers, and eternal torment finds no place in his theology. Rather does he reason with the people and show them by persuasion a more excellent way. I had not been many minutes in the building before I felt that this was no ordinary gathering. Instead of the set order of proceedings to which we were accustomed at the orthodox religious service, everything here was left to the spontaneous impulse of the moment. The preacher too did not remain in his usual seat. For the most part he walked up and down the aisles, open Bible in hand, exhorting one, encouraging another, and kneeling with a third to implore blessing from the throne of grace.

Seven and a half hours after the meeting began, the newsman noted,

In the gallery a woman was praying and she fainted. Water was offered her, but she refused this, saying the only thing she wanted was God's forgiveness. A well-known resident then rose and said that salvation had come to him. Immediately a thanksgiving hymn was sung, while an English prayer from a new convert broke in upon the singing. The whole congregation then fell upon their knees, prayers ascending from every part of the edifice, while Mr. Roberts gave way to tears at the sight.

When the reporter left about 4:30 the next morning, dozens of people still stood outside, "discussing what had become the chief subject of their lives."

The meetings continued that week, with evidence of the Holy Spirit moving mightily among those gathered. Evans wrote to a fellow student, telling him of his decision not to return to school. "Perhaps we shall have to go through the whole of Wales," he suggested. "If so, thank Heaven! What a blessed time!"

Two days later, Roberts was invited to preach at Bryn Seion Chapel in Trecynon, Aberdare. He immediately accepted and asked several friends from Loughor to assist him in the campaign. Once again, the Holy Spirit was poured out and the church experienced a significant reviving. By the time the campaign ended, powerful revivals were being reported throughout the nation.

Other Welsh Preachers

Roberts was not the only preacher in the Wales Revival. His friends Sidney Evans and Joseph Jenkins carried the revival to other communities as well. Seth Joshua also

experienced revival in his meetings. In one place, Joshua noted in his journal, "There is a wonderful fire burning here. The ground is very prepared, thank God.... Even in the morning a number were led to embrace the Savior. In the afternoon the blessing fell upon scores of young people.... Numbers confessed Jesus, but it is impossible to count."

As revival broke out across the nation, pastors saw their churches fill with people coming to Christ. In the village of Egryn, near Harlech, a farmer's wife named Mary Jones led more than seventy of her neighbors to personal faith in Christ. The revival continued for more than two years, even in places Roberts and others associated with him had not visited.

The Revival's Impact

With regard to the impact of the revival on the wider culture, historian J. Edwin Orr has noted:

Drunkenness was immediately cut in half, and many taverns went bankrupt. Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying that there were no cases of murder, assault, rape or robbery or the like to consider. The police became unemployed in many districts. Stoppages occurred in coal mines, not due to unpleasantness between management and workers, but because so many foul-mouthed miners became converted and stopped using foul language that the horses which hauled the coal trucks in the mines could no longer understand what was being said to them. (J. Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue: Evangelical Awakenings*, 1900 [Chicago: Moody, 1975], pp. 192-93)

Not surprisingly, news of the revival was widely published both within Wales and beyond.

Soon church leaders were coming from around the world to see for themselves. Common people were also drawn to the revival by the reports they read. Because of the spontaneous nature of the revival, many began their journey not quite sure about where they were going.

One man and his daughter went to the railway station and bought train tickets to attend revival meetings. When they asked the porter at the station how to find the meeting, he responded, "You'll feel it on the train. Go down that road and you'll feel it down there."

The Welsh by nature are a musical people, and they often expressed their new joy in the Lord in song. In many meetings, the people would gather just to sing. During the singing, the Holy Spirit would begin working, and revival would come even when there was no preaching.

The emphasis of Roberts' message could be summarized in four principles. First, he insisted Christians must put away any unconfessed sin. Second, he called on them to renounce any doubtful habit. Third, he told them, "You must obey the Spirit promptly." Finally, he urged people to confess Christ publicly.

Historian J. Edwin Orr describes the revival as “the farthest reaching of the movements of general awakening, for it affected the whole of the evangelical cause in India, Korea and China, renewed revival in Japan and South Africa, and sent a wave of awakenings over Africa, Latin America and the South Seas.” Visiting pastors from Norway, Japan, America, India, South Africa, and Korea were all deeply moved in the Welsh Revival and became carriers of revival to their nations as they returned home.

The Azusa Street Revival (1906)

William Joseph Seymour had come to Los Angeles to preach, but now the church doors were locked. He’d traveled from Texas to Southern California at the invitation of the pastor, but the message he preached had caused the pastor to change her mind. The views espoused by this African-American preacher were questionable at best, at least in the pastor’s mind. There was no way she would allow that message to be preached in her church. She couldn’t stop Seymour from preaching, but she could and would stop it from being preached in her church.

Still in his mid-thirties, Seymour was well acquainted with rejection. He began life as the son of recently freed slaves in Centreville, Louisiana. The South was in transition following the Civil War, but despite the liberation of slaves, in 1870 it was a society still steeped in class distinctions.

In those days, receiving a good education was nearly out of the question for an African American. If Seymour was going to learn how to read and write, he would have to teach himself. The fact that he did so is a commentary on his strength of will and determination.

Still, as a young man in his twenties, Seymour had had enough. He left the South and headed north to Indianapolis. For several years, he waited on tables in a prominent hotel. By the time he was thirty, he was living in Cincinnati.

Early in life, Seymour had been drawn into the Holiness movement then sweeping through the South. In Indianapolis he attended the local Methodist Episcopal church, a church that emphasized the ministry of Christ indwelling the life of the believer. By the time he was thirty, he’d been “saved and sanctified” through the ministry of a revivalistic group called “the Evening Light Saints.”

This latter group believed human history was coming to an end and anticipated Christ’s imminent return to establish his kingdom. Just before that happened, the group believed, there would be a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a “latter rain” (see Hos. 6:3). To prepare for this, the group encouraged Christians to leave existing denominations to become part of a pure and interracial church God was beginning to raise up.

Speaking in Tongues

Despite the attractive interracial idealism of the Evening Light Saints, Seymour soon found himself back in the South, in Houston, in a black church. He had little choice: In Houston at the turn of the century, if you were black and attended church, you attended

a black church. It was while in this church that Seymour witnessed something he'd never before seen: He heard a woman praying in what seemed like another language.

It was widely held by Holiness groups of that day that "speaking in tongues" was a sign that would accompany the arrival of the last days.

Seymour sensed this woman had something he longed for but hadn't yet found. He knew he had to talk with her.

When he met with Lucy Farrow, the woman who had spoken in tongues, he learned she had recently worked as a governess in Topeka, Kansas. Her employer had been a man named Charles Fox Parham, a white preacher who ran a Holiness Bible school, Bethel College, in the same city. Parham had introduced her to the experience he called "the baptism of the Holy Ghost," which led to speaking in tongues.

Before long, Seymour headed to Topeka to seek out Parham. When he found him, he begged to be admitted into the school. In making his request, however, Seymour was once again brought face-to-face with the realities of life in America at the turn of the century.

While Parham was always looking for students and welcomed the zeal of Seymour, Parham was also a Ku Klux Klan sympathizer. He wasn't sure he was ready to welcome a black student into his school. On the other hand, how could he turn him away? That just didn't seem to be the Christian thing to do, either.

Finally, Parham arrived at a compromise. He would allow Seymour to listen to his lectures from a chair outside by an open window. In the event of rain, Seymour would be allowed to move his chair into the hall, and the door would be left ajar so he could hear.

Seymour agreed to the terms established and began attending Parham's lectures. Earnestly he sought the "baptism of the Holy Ghost," but without success. He continued preaching at black missions while waiting on God for his own "second blessing," as the experience was also called. Seymour attended Parham's short term Bible school in Houston, Texas (after Topeka folded) in 1906.

On to California

A lady visiting from Los Angeles heard Seymour preach in one of those meetings and recommended him to her pastor back home in California. That recommendation led to an immediate invitation to preach in a little storefront church on Santa Fe Avenue. The church had been started as a split from a local black Baptist church over the doctrine of the second blessing. When the invitation arrived, Seymour saw it as his own version of the apostle Paul's "Macedonian vision" calling him to a new place of ministry (see Acts 9-10). He borrowed train fare from Parham and made his way west.

At his first meeting, Sister Julia W Hutchins, pastor of the church, recognized significant differences between the preaching of Seymour and her own views of the second

blessing. She considered Seymour extreme in his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, perhaps even heretical. It was clear the two could not continue to work together.

When Seymour later arrived at the church to preach at an afternoon meeting, he found the church doors locked. He was no longer welcome in the little storefront church on Santa Fe Avenue. Undaunted, he agreed to preach in a home on Bonnie Brae Avenue.

Several from Sister Hutchins' church attended the meeting along with others in the shabby neighborhood north of Temple Street. Most of the congregation was composed of domestic servants and women who took in laundry. As word of the home meetings spread, the crowds grew. People came to hear a preacher who had never spoken in tongues tell how the blessing of God would come soon when all would have this unique gift.

As Seymour was preparing to go to the meeting on April 9, 1906, an acquaintance named Edward Lee told him he'd received a vision. He claimed the apostles had come to him and told him how to receive the gift of tongues. Together the men prayed, then made their way to the meeting. That night, "the power fell" on those assembled and several, including William Joseph Seymour himself, began praising God in "unknown tongues."

The Apostolic Faith Mission

As news of the outpouring spread through the community, the little home on Bonnie Brae Avenue soon became too small. The weight of the crowd gathered on the porch outside was so great that the porch collapsed. While there were no serious injuries, everyone knew a more adequate meeting place had to be found.

An abandoned church building at 312 Azusa Street was available. It had most recently been used as a warehouse and livery stable. The building was swept out, and Seymour's Apostolic Faith Mission moved to its new home on Easter Saturday, April 14, 1906.

Seymour preached an apocalyptic message, assuring his listeners the end of the world was at hand. It was his view that Jesus was coming very soon to judge the world and establish his kingdom on earth. Prior to that coming, there would be a "latter rain" outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The evidence that the Spirit had indeed come would be "speaking in tongues." Everything seemed to be happening just as Seymour had said.

Then, on the morning of April 18, 1906, four days after the Apostolic Faith Mission had begun holding services on Azusa Street, nine days after the first manifestation of tongues in their midst, the earth itself shook. A major earthquake along the San Andreas fault almost completely destroyed the city of San Francisco. Its impact was felt throughout Southern California. As the ground shook beneath their feet, the lives of many who had ignored Seymour's message were shaken also.

Daily services at 312 Azusa Street quickly filled with both blacks and whites seeking salvation and "the baptism of the Holy Ghost." One white preacher from the South commented, "The color line was washed away by the blood" of Christ. As the young

church witnessed what they perceived to be evidences of the end of the world, their worship of God was noisy and enthusiastic.

A skeptical reporter with the Los Angeles Times heard about the meeting and attended. The next day, his report described “wild scenes” and a “weird babble of tongues.” He was the first of many to publish negative descriptions of the revival. But not all who investigated the story left as antagonistic. Before long, reports were being circulated in Pentecostal circles of those who “came to scorn and stayed to pray.”

News of the Azusa Street Revival soon began drawing others from across America and around the world. Seymour himself began publishing an occasional paper describing the progress in the spread of his Pentecostal message. *The Apostolic Faith* attracted readers across America and beyond. In it, Seymour described the doctrines of the movement and published reports of tongue-speaking around the world.

As many as 300 soon crowded into the forty-by-sixty-foot frame building. On occasion that crowd doubled, forcing worshipers to gather in the doorway and around the building outside. Many who came to investigate the revival were themselves touched and received the Azusa Street blessing. They became the pioneers of the Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century.

In their earliest days, the meetings at Azusa Street were multiracial in character. Though Seymour initially taught that speaking in tongues was the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he felt increasingly uncomfortable with Christians who spoke in tongues yet still harbored racial prejudice toward people of color. He soon began preaching that the dissolution of racial barriers “was the surest sign of the Spirit’s pentecostal presence and the approaching New Jerusalem.” Unfortunately, not everyone in the emerging Pentecostal movement agreed.

Concerns Over Race

Charles Parham, Seymour’s mentor in his pilgrimage to Pentecost, arrived in Los Angeles in October 1906 to investigate the revival for himself. Seymour welcomed the arrival of his teacher and invited him to preach in his pulpit. For years, Parham had preached about the need for a new dispensation of the Spirit, so he came to Azusa Street with great expectation. But what he saw there was far different from his own vision of the coming revival.

Parham shuddered to see blacks and whites praying at the same altar. When a white woman “slain in the Spirit” (that is, overcome by the power of God) fell back into the arms of a black man, he was horrified at what he called a “darkey revival.” When he began preaching, he accused those gathered of practicing animism and rebuked them for their disregard for racial distinctions.

The elders of the Azusa Street Mission, both black and white, rejected Parham’s condemnation. What Parham considered a work of the devil was perceived by them to be the work of the Holy Spirit. Parham was asked to leave and barred from returning.

Unfortunately, he wasn't the only white Holiness preacher sympathetic to the Pentecostal message who was unable to break from the cultural values of the day. Soon after the revival began, Pentecostal denominations began to be formed along racial lines. Yet even though they broke with Seymour and his vision of the social outworking of Pentecostalism, they didn't abandon the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues they had seen at Azusa Street.

Emerging Pentecostal Denominations

Several major Pentecostal denominations, including the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri, trace their historic roots to the impact of the Azusa Street Revival on their founders. Leaders of a black denomination who called themselves simply "the Church of God" attended the Azusa Street church for several weeks in June 1907; they returned home to transform their entire denomination into what is still the largest black Pentecostal denomination in America, the Church of God in Christ.

Another Church of God denomination, this one white, became Pentecostal when G. B. Cashwell, an Azusa Street convert, described the Azusa Street Revival at the national convention of that denomination. During that meeting, the General Overseer of the group of churches, A.J. Tomlinson, listened attentively. Then, suddenly, Tomlinson fell out of his chair and began speaking in tongues at Cashwell's feet. While a few churches left the movement, most embraced the Pentecostal message. By the end of the century, the Church of God of Prophecy was a fast growing white denomination in America.

The influence of the Azusa Street Revival spread far beyond the national boundaries of America. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada recognize their spiritual indebtedness to Seymour and the Azusa Street mission, especially in the earliest manifestations of charismatic phenomena in Winnipeg and Toronto. Many of their founding fathers first experienced the Pentecostal blessing under Seymour's preaching, or were mentored by him in their early Pentecostal experience.

The spread of the Pentecostal message to South Africa also grew out of the Azusa Street Revival. John G. Lake visited the Azusa Street Mission prior to taking the Pentecostal message to South Africa in 1908. Within five years he'd established 500 black and 125 white Pentecostal churches in that nation. Others took the Pentecostal message to Europe and Asia. The Apostolic Faith soon reported:

The Pentecost has crossed the water on both sides to the Hawaiian Islands on the west, and England, Norway, Sweden and India on the east.... We rejoice to hear that Pentecost has fallen in Calcutta, India.... We have letters from China, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, England, Ireland, Australia and other countries from hungry souls that want their Pentecost.... In Stockholm, Sweden ... the first soul came through tonight, receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost with Bible evidence.... In Christiana, Norway—God is wonderfully demonstrating His power.

In this way the Azusa Street Revival, rippling out across the globe, continued for about three years.

The awakening's views of race relations proved to be too much even for revived Christians at the beginning of the twentieth century. The emphasis on the imminent end of the world also hindered its ability to endure. When Seymour married Jenny Moore, a black leader in his church, some of his strongest supporters objected that marriage was unwise so close to the end of the world. They left to begin a rival group in Portland, Oregon.

Seymour himself died in 1922. The Azusa Street church was closed a few years later, demolished to make way for a new plaza, but the influence of the Azusa Street Revival has been felt around the world now for almost a century.

The Korean Pentecost (1907)

Although Korea was one of the last nations in the Far East to hear the gospel, a series of revivals early in the twentieth century quickly turned the Korean church into a powerful force for God. These awakenings transformed Korean culture and society and reached beyond its borders to other nations in Asia.

In 1890 Dr. R. A. Hardie, a Canadian Colleges medical missionary, arrived in Korea, a nation that was just beginning to hear the gospel from foreign missionaries. In 1898 he associated with the Methodists. About that time, missionaries first began reporting a turning to Christianity on the part of Korean nationals. While missionaries rejoiced in the interest shown, they lamented the fact that these new converts showed no evidence of conviction of sin followed by repentance and saving faith. It appears the first "converts" were entering the church "as interested disciples rather than regenerated members."

In August 1903, seven missionaries gathered in the city of Wonsan for a week of study and prayer. Dr. Hardie confessed he "had not seen any examples of plain, unmistakable, and lasting conversion" in his thirteen years of ministry in Korea. Believing the ministry was being hindered by his own failings, he confessed his faults before both the missionaries and the Korean congregation, with others making similar confessions.

Just a few months later, in October of 1903, missionary advocate Fredrik Franson arrived in Korea and was invited to preach. The meetings were marked by open confession of sins. Many admitted to theft and offered to make restitution. Church members insisted that restitution be made to the Lord rather than to themselves. As a result, funds were raised for evangelism in the area. During his stay in Korea, Franson impressed upon Hardie and his fellow workers the necessity of prevailing prayer.

In 1905, Japan's victory over Russia resulted in the Japanese occupation of Korea, provoking a new Korean nationalistic spirit. Christians looked to the church to organize resistance. Instead, missionary and church leaders preached forgiveness and forbearance. This preaching was followed by a second wave of revival in 1905 and 1906, described as "a spreading fire" and "a continuing religious awakening."

Hundreds were converted, more than in any previous year in the history of the Korean mission. In Pyongyang, 700 conversions were recorded in a two-week period. Still, the best was yet to come.

The blessing of God continued in 1906. In Pyongyang, a New Year's Day evangelistic crusade drew 4,000 people to the meetings, 20 percent of the city's entire population. A united evangelistic thrust in the nation's capital, Seoul, resulted in 1,000 conversions.

As had been their custom in recent years, the missionaries gathered at Pyongyang for a week of prayer and Bible study in August 1906. Speaker Dr. Howard Agnew Johnston told Korean missionaries of the Welsh Revival and other awakenings in India. Half of the missionaries then in the nation were Presbyterians and were deeply moved by accounts of revival among Welsh Presbyterians and Presbyterian missionaries in Asia.

News of the other revivals motivated missionaries to intensify their prayer for a similar outpouring in Korea. Throughout the fall of 1907 and the following winter, missionaries gathered in the church each morning at five o'clock to pour out their hearts to God. During one week together, the missionaries studied the First Epistle of John, which later became their textbook for revival.

The New Year's Day Bible Conference

It was the custom of the Korean church leaders to gather at Pyongyang each New Year's Day for a ten-day Bible conference. In January 1907, 1,500 men gathered together, representing the leadership of hundreds of churches. For almost six months, missionaries had been praying for a mighty movement of God among the Korean church, and anticipation grew as the meetings began.

On Monday afternoon, several missionaries gathered together for prayer. They pleaded with God to move among them. One of their number later testified, "We were bound in spirit and refused to let God go till He blessed us." That night as they entered the church, it seemed the entire building was filled with the presence of God.

After a brief message, Mr. Lee, a Korean leader, took charge of the meeting and called for prayer. So many men wanted to pray that Lee announced, "If you want to pray like that, all pray." Across the church, the whole congregation began praying at the same time.

The result was not the confusion one might expect, but rather, as one observer noted, "a vast harmony of sound and spirit, like the noise of the surf in an ocean of prayer." (Later this practice came to be called a "concert of prayer.") In the midst of the prayer, many of the men became deeply convicted of their sin. One after another rose to his feet in deep agony to confess his sins and cry out to God for his mercy.

On Tuesday, the missionaries gathered at noon to discuss what had happened the night before. Only a few had been present at the meeting. One who had been present expressed a personal concern, because it was common knowledge that two church leaders had a hostile relationship.

On Monday evening, a Mr. Kang had confessed his hatred for a Mr. Kim, but Kim had remained silent. Several missionaries were concerned about Kim's unwillingness to

reconcile. That evening, God answered the prayers of the missionaries in a most unusual way.

As the meeting progressed, Kim sat with the elders behind the pulpit with his head bowed. Suddenly he came to the pulpit. Holding it firmly, he confessed, "I have been guilty of fighting against God. I have been guilty of hating not only Kang You-moon, but Pang Mok-sa." Kim's animosity toward Kang was well known, but Pang Mok-sa was the Korean name of the missionary who had urged others to pray for him.

The revelation of hatred toward the missionary came as a complete surprise to all gathered. Turning to the missionary, Kim continued. "Can you forgive me?" he asked. "Can you pray for me?"

The missionary stood to pray in Korean. He began, "Apage, Apage" ("Father, Father"). That was as far as he got. "It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and the Spirit of God came down from heaven in a mighty avalanche of power among us," the missionary later reported. "I fell at Kim's side and wept and prayed as I had never prayed before."

Across the auditorium, hundreds stood with arms stretched out toward heaven calling on God. Others lay prostrate on the floor. Hundreds cried out to God for mercy.

While they had been praying for revival for months, when it came the missionaries were terrified. Many in the church were in deep mental anguish. Others struggling to resist God were seen clenching their fists and banging their heads against the ground.

Some feared that allowing the meeting to continue would result in some people going crazy, yet they knew they dared not interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. Finally, they agreed to end the meeting at two o'clock in the morning, six hours after it had begun. Throughout the rest of the conference, similar events were repeated daily.

The Impact of the Revival

The deep reviving of the Korean church leadership had an immediate impact on both the churches and the communities those churches sought to reach. The men returned to their homes as carriers of revival. When the story of the Bible conference revival was retold, a similar revival swept the churches.

As the churches were revived, they were gripped by a burning passion to reach the lost in their community. Everywhere, revived churches began to see "drunkards, gamblers, adulterers, murderers, thieves, self-righteous, Confucianists and others" transformed into new creatures in Christ.

The revival had an almost immediate impact in the nation's Christian colleges. Ninety percent of the students at Union Christian College in Pyongyang professed conversion in February 1907. Many also sensed God's call upon their lives as evangelists. They carried the revival beyond the city and into village churches throughout Korea.

From 1905 to 1910, the Korean churches recorded 79,221 additions in membership. That was more than the total number of Japanese church members after fifty years of missionary effort. It was also twice the number of Chinese Protestants after eighty years of missionary labors. By 1912, there were about 300,000 Korean Protestant church members in a nation of twelve million people.

The Korean Pentecost was quickly recognized as a movement of God by Christian leaders around the world. The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 declared, “The Korean Revival ... has been a genuine Pentecost, for Korean church membership quadrupled in a decade.”

The Student Volunteer Movement, an American voluntary association promoting world missions, cited six evidences of “the present day work of the Holy Spirit in Korea” the same year. These evidences included: “(1) the unity and cooperation which prevailed among Christians, (2) the remarkable numerical growth of the churches, (3) the wonderful religious awakening of 1907 which affected 50,000 converts, (4) the noteworthy interest in the Word of God, (5) the dedication of national Christians to service, including generous giving, and (6) the wonderful prayer life of the Korean Church.”

Although the Korean church represented only about 1 percent of the entire population in Korea, its influence in daily life was far greater because of two unique conditions imposed upon new converts. First, missionaries required illiterate Korean adult converts to learn to read Korean in a simple phonetic alphabet before they could be admitted to membership. Second, Korean patriots viewed Christians as Japanese collaborators because they cut their hair as the missionaries and Japanese did rather than in the traditional Korean style. To distinguish between collaborators and Christians, the patriots required Christians to recite chapters from the Bible to prove they were Christians. The result was a 100 percent literacy rate among Christians in a largely illiterate nation. Their ability to read made Christians the natural leaders of the Korean society.

Prayer and Fasting

The Korean Revival was born out of intense prayer, and prayer remained an integral part of Korean church life throughout the twentieth century. In many churches, “concerts of prayer” are still practiced in Sunday morning services, with the whole church confessing their sins to God and then calling on God in unison for his blessing. In what have come to be called the “Dawn Meetings,” many Koreans still gather every morning at their churches at five o’clock for prayer. Friday nights are devoted to all-night prayer meetings.

Fasting with prayer is widely practiced. More than 5,000 “prayer mountains” have been established—mountain retreats where Christians go for days or weeks of prayer. The prayer life of the Korean church remains a role model for Christians around the world. No wonder that by the year 2000, a third of the Korean population had become members of a Christian church.

The Manchurian Revival (1908)

If there was ever a man whose very life was defined by revival, it was Jonathan Goforth. As a student at Toronto's Knox College in 1887, his life was impacted by a college revival conducted by the American evangelist D. L. Moody. Later, when he was a missionary in China, news of the Welsh Revival created a deep hunger for a similar movement of God in his own ministry. Once he learned of the Korean Pentecost, he traveled to see it for himself. After Goforth returned to China, he became a carrier of revival who brought awakening to Manchuria.

As a young man preparing for ministry, Goforth read Hudson Taylor's book describing missionary work in China. He was already involved in work at an area rescue mission, but he was so impressed by what he read that he committed his life to serving God in China. Rather than join Taylor's China Inland Mission, Goforth and his wife Rosalind served under the sponsorship of their local Presbyterian church.

When they were assigned to serve in Honan Province, Goforth contacted Taylor to ask for advice. The China Inland Mission had tried unsuccessfully to establish a work in that province, so Taylor rejoiced to learn that another group was bringing the gospel to that part of the Asian nation. Knowing the work would be difficult, Taylor wrote back urging the younger missionary to "go forward on your knees."

The Boxer Rebellion

Much of Goforth's early ministry in China involved training hundreds of Chinese pastors and evangelists. He and other missionaries served at a time when many European businessmen were exploiting China. An indigenous movement known as the "Boxers" rebelled at the abuse China was suffering at the hands of these unethical businessmen. Unfortunately, the Boxers' hatred for foreigners didn't distinguish between missionaries and the unethical English businessmen.

On December 31, 1899, the Boxers murdered a British missionary. The empress of China issued an order that all foreigners should be executed. In the bloodbath that followed, over a hundred missionaries were killed. The Goforths were wounded in the uprising, barely escaping with their lives.

The world responded to the Boxer Revolt with military might, capturing Peking and crushing the old order. While the revolt had been directed primarily at foreigners, hundreds of national Christians also lost their lives at the hands of the Boxers. Their bravery in the hour of persecution and martyrdom later bore fruit. As peaceful conditions returned to China, the Chinese people began flocking to church to learn more about Christianity.

Three Phases of Awakening

According to J. Edwin Orr, the Chinese awakening occurred in three phases. From 1900 through 1905, a significant prayer movement emerged in many parts of the nation. These prayer meetings actually preceded the Boxer uprising, and many who were involved in the prayer movement became martyrs in the revolt. The years 1906-07 were marked by a widespread awakening as large numbers of Chinese nationals responded to the preaching

of the gospel. The third phase of the awakening, an extraordinary revival, began in 1908 and continued up to 1911.

In 1907 Goforth made a tour of Korea, something he'd wanted to do ever since he'd heard the first reports of the Korean revival. While there, he was deeply moved by what he experienced. He realized the movement in Korea was "no wild gust of religious enthusiasm," but rather a deep, moving work of the Holy Spirit. He was also challenged by the prayer life of the Korean missionaries and national church leaders. Believing God was "no respecter of persons," Goforth began praying for a similar outpouring of the Holy Spirit in China.

On his way back to Honan from Korea, Goforth stopped one evening in Mukden to share what he had seen in Korea with a group of missionaries. They were deeply impressed, and they asked Goforth to return the next February to conduct a special week of meetings.

When Goforth returned to Mukden for the scheduled meetings, things didn't look promising. The evening Goforth arrived, his host took the opportunity to speak critically of a friend of Goforth, claiming, "his theology is as old as the hills." After the service, Goforth learned that his host's wife had been so opposed to having the special meetings that she had arranged to visit out of town during the campaign. In addition, Goforth learned that no prayer meetings had been organized as he'd requested. As he prepared to go to bed that evening, he wept and cried out to God.

"What is the use of my coming here?" he asked. "These people are not seeking after Thee. They have no desire for blessing. What can I do?"

No sooner had he begun to pray when it seemed as though a voice came back to him, saying, "Is it your work or Mine? Can I not do a sovereign work?" Then a verse Goforth had memorized years earlier came to his mind: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jer. 33:3).

Confession and Reconciliation

The next morning, one of the elders of the church came to see Goforth before the scheduled morning meeting. As soon as the two were alone, the elder began to weep uncontrollably, telling his story:

In the Boxer year, I was treasurer of the Church. The Boxers came and destroyed everything, the books included. I knew I could lie with safety. There were certain Church funds in my keeping which I swore I had never received. Since then I've used the money in my business. Yesterday, during your address I was searched as by fire. Last night I couldn't sleep a wink. It has been plain to me that the only way that I can find relief is to confess my sin before the Church and make full restitution.

Following Goforth's message that morning, the elder made his confession.

Suddenly, a member of the group issued a piercing cry, but he wouldn't say anything. Others, however, moved to tears, one after another began praying and confessing sin. The conviction continued to spread the next day. An older missionary who had been part of the Scottish Revival of 1859 claimed he was seeing that revival reenacted in China.

On the fourth day, Goforth concluded his message with his usual invitation for the people to pray as God would lead them. When he did so, a man came to the front of the meeting place with tears flowing down his face. It was the elder who two days earlier had cried out, yet had resisted confessing his sin. Now the Spirit of God had broken through earlier barriers. He turned to face the congregation and began his confession.

"I have committed adultery," he confessed. "I have tried three times to poison my wife." Then, looking at the bracelets and rings he was wearing, he took them off and placed them in the offering plate. "What have I," he said, "an elder of the Church, to do with these baubles?" Then he reached into his pocket and took out his elder's card. He tore it in pieces and scattered them on the floor.

"You people have my cards in your home. Kindly tear them up. I have disgraced the holy office. I herewith resign my eldership."

Several others confessed sin and recognized their unworthiness before God. That morning, all the elders and deacons of the church resigned from their offices as they confessed sin they felt disqualified them. Then the pastor stood before his congregation.

"It is I who am to blame," he insisted. "If I had been what I ought to have been, this congregation would not be where it is today. I'm not fit to be your pastor any longer. I, too, must resign."

With the resignation of their pastor, the church felt it was time to begin a ministry of reconciliation in their midst. From different parts of the congregation came the cry to reappoint the pastor. It seemed as if the whole church was expressing its confidence in the pastor. He was restored to his office. Then the elders were also restored to their offices, as were the deacons.

The revival then spread from the church to the missionaries. During a prayer time the next morning, Goforth's host ran forward in the meeting, crying, "Oh, pray for us missionaries; for we need it more than any of you." The man's wife returned early and was also touched by the revival in the final days of the campaign.

On the last day of the meetings, a national pastor addressed the people. "You know how many elders and members of this congregation have drifted away," he began. "Oh! if there were only some way of bringing them back." Then the congregation rose to their feet in unison and began crying out to God for those who had drifted from the church. By year's end, hundreds had returned to the fold. Most confessed they had never been converted.

The meeting at Mukden was the first of several similar meetings conducted by Goforth throughout China. In two years, Goforth completed thirty campaigns in six

provinces of China. He never asked anyone to confess publicly, yet public confession of sin was common in the Manchurian Revival. He simply concluded his message with the statement, "You people have an opportunity to pray."

In many meetings that invitation was followed by open confession of sins. The list was long: idolatry, theft, murder, adultery, gambling, opium smoking, disobedience to parents, hatred, quarrelsomeness, lying, cheating, gambling, fraud, division, misappropriation of funds. Through such confessions, the revival led to deep and lasting change in the lives of those touched by it.

The revival also gave missionaries working with the usually stoic Chinese new insights into the people with whom they worked. One British missionary reported, "We know now that Chinese are emotionally susceptible in matters of religion. We know now that 'instantaneous conversions' may be seen in China as was seen in Chicago or London. We know that when people long for the filling of the Spirit, and they are willing to sacrifice all, God will revive them in Shensi, China, as in Keswick."

The Manchurian Revival also helped establish the indigenous Chinese church. Chang Ling-sheng, a Presbyterian elder active in the Shantung Revival, embraced the Pentecostal experience when missionaries from the Azusa Street revival came to China. He teamed up with two others to establish the True Jesus Church, an indigenous sabbatical Pentecostal denomination.

Years later, Nee To-sheng, better known outside of China as Watchman Nee, was influenced by a single British missionary, Margaret E. Barber. In 1909, Barber had submitted to believer's baptism and left her Anglican mission to become an independent faith worker. She conducted "breaking of bread" meetings similar to those of the Christian Brethren. Nee To-sheng organized the Little Flock, a Brethren-style indigenous Chinese denomination. The True Jesus Church and Little Flock soon had more adherents than all other mission-sponsored churches combined.

The Mizo Outpouring (1906)

When news of the Welsh Revival of the early nineteenth century reached India, many Christian missionaries began praying for a similar outpouring on their own field of service. As a result, a significant revival broke out in the Khasi Hills, which eventually brought an end to paganism in that region. It was news of that indigenous Indian revival that first stimulated interest in revival among the Mizo Christians in Lushai, India.

Early in 1906, ten dedicated young Christians hiked through a mountain jungle for two weeks to get to an outlying district church. When they arrived, they quickly became disappointed, because the entire ministry was in Khasi, a language which none of the Mizo Christians understood. They observed and sensed a strange power at work in the meetings, but with no one to explain what was happening, it had little apparent impact on their own life.

They left the meetings to return to their homes, pausing at the village of Chatlang to pray. During that prayer, they "felt their hearts filled with a strange joy." Some regard this as the beginning of the Mizo Outpouring.

When they got home, they gathered Christians every night to pray for revival. After a week of intense prayer, nothing had happened. "Perhaps God would not send revival after all," they reasoned. It was easy to assume God would withhold revival blessings because of the widespread paganism in their region.

Nevertheless, as the Mizo Christians were saying farewell to three friends, revival came. According to one observer, while the group sang the hymn "God Be With You Till We Meet Again," "the Spirit was poured upon them in a remarkable manner." Others living nearby joined them as they continued in a time of prayer and praise. God had not abandoned them. Revival had come!

The outpouring quickly spread throughout the region, "creating extraordinary interest." Missionary D. E. Jones prophesied that revival would break out in Phullen, a large village several days away. A teacher was sent to be a carrier of revival to Phullen. When he arrived, he discovered that the revival was already in progress. It apparently had begun about the time of the missionary's prophecy.

Difficult Days

This initial Mizo Outpouring resulted in an increase in church membership and inquirers. It was primarily marked by conviction of sin among church members and adherents. The awakening also helped prepare the church for difficult days that lay ahead.

Pagan village chiefs responded to the threat from the revival by severely persecuting the church. Christians were awakened at midnight and driven into the jungle by angry neighbors. The 1907 persecution was followed by a "revival of paganism" that mocked the Christian revival with its own pagan hymns and festivals. This antirevival, says one report, "spread like wildfire, with demonstrations in every village."

Church leaders despaired as they saw their congregations decline under intense persecution. Life for the believers in the hills grew worse before it grew better. In the winter of 1911-12, the flowering bamboo attracted hordes of rats. The rats devoured the stores of grain and the grain growing in the fields almost overnight. People subsisted on roots. Multitudes died of starvation, while others poured out of the hills to the plains, looking for something to eat.

Missionaries responded with help. Relief offerings were collected in Wales and distributed throughout the Mizo church. Despite the persecution they had experienced, the Mizo Christians chose to share their food ungrudgingly with their hungry pagan neighbors. These acts of kindness demonstrated in the midst of distress brought an end to the pagan revival and created a renewed interest in the Christian gospel.

In 1913, revival fires were rekindled. The Mizo church was once again energized for evangelistic ministry. Six years later, according to one account, "an even greater revival broke out," rapidly sweeping through the region and impacting the neighboring states of Tipperah and Manipur.

At the end of the twentieth century, Mizoram (formerly Lushai) is undoubtedly India's most Christian province. Despite its poverty, it is also the most zealously evangelical region in India. This province, first visited by missionaries only a hundred years ago, now sends out hundreds of its own missionaries to other provinces in India and neighboring nations throughout Asia. Commenting on the effect of the Mizo Outpouring, one observer notes, "The Hill Tribes set forth in indisputable evidence, the power of the gospel to transform a primitive people."

A Summary of the 1904 Revival

The authors judged this revival the greatest because these remarkable accounts from the early twentieth century demonstrate clearly that this awakening shook the world, and many of its influences continued throughout the century. In some ways, the First World War, coming a decade later, probably robbed the 1904 Revival of some of the influences on society it might have otherwise realized. Yet the effects were nevertheless considerable. In Great Britain, for example, it began to shape the morality of a generation. The changed lives of converts resulted in reductions in crime, drunkenness, and gambling, along with increases in honesty, truthfulness, and chastity throughout the nation.

A wave of improved moral behavior in America followed the awakening as well. It produced a revival of righteousness that culminated with the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages. Throughout the nation, political reform was effected as corrupt district attorneys, mayors, governors, senators, and assemblymen were replaced with those perceived as honest.

Many young people touched by the revivals went as student volunteer missionaries to foreign fields, where they established schools and hospitals on their various fields. The number of pupils attending Christian schools in India, for example, doubled in the two decades following the revival. Ninety percent of all nurses there were Christians, most trained at mission hospitals. In China, missionaries laid the foundations of that nation's educational and medical systems. The same was true in many nations throughout the African continent.

The Pentecostal Revival begun at Azusa Street continued to grow throughout the century, including within its wake the charismatic renewal in many denominations and "the signs and wonders" movement. It also led to the establishment of many new denominations.

For all these reasons and more, few would dare dispute the conclusion of historian J. Edwin Orr: This revival was indeed "the most extensive evangelical awakening of all time."

1-1-2000

The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever: from Pentecost to the Present

Elmer L. Towns

Liberty University, eltowns@liberty.edu

Douglas Porter

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/towns_books

Towns, Elmer L. and Porter, Douglas, "The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever: from Pentecost to the Present" (2000). *Books*. Paper 3.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/towns_books/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Works of Elmer Towns at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Books by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.