

# **The Outpouring of the Spirit in Revival and Awakening and its Issue in Church Growth**

**J Edwin Orr**  
**D Phil (Oxon)**



**British Church Growth Association**

*Reprinted and released by the BCGA February 2000*

*Distributed by Church-Growth-Modelling.org.uk November 2003 by kind permission of BCGA*

During the 1980s the BCGA were in correspondence with Edwin Orr on reprinting and publishing two of his booklets in England. He agreed to update them and as far as we know was working on them at the time of his death.

We have not been able to find or obtain any updated version and so we are now releasing a number of his original papers in a simplified form. Very few changes have been made to the original wording and spellings. We hope you enjoy reading them.

This edition © BCGA 2000

This version has been re-formatted and redistributed by  
Church-Growth-Modelling.org.uk in 2003  
with kind permission of the British Church Growth Association  
[www.HealthyChurch.co.uk](http://www.HealthyChurch.co.uk)

It may be redistributed provided no changes are made in content, and that no charges are made, except those to cover printing costs.

# The Outpouring of the Spirit in Revival and Awakening and its Issue in Church Growth

J Edwin Orr

## Foreword

How does revival influence the growth of the churches? From the beginning of the Church Growth Movement this has been a key matter for research, and J Edwin Orr has led the way in seeking an answer. While much information on revival and church growth can be found on the pages of his many published volumes, Orr has done his readers a favour by summing up the available information in this significant essay. Here at a glance one can see what a massive influence spiritual awakenings have had on the growth of the church in all parts of the world.

A great deal of technology for church growth has been developed over the past thirty years. The technology is important, but it is no substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.' Donald McGavran acknowledged the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in his classes and in his published works. In *Understanding Church Growth* McGavran said that the gift of the Holy Spirit through revival, 'enables men to confess sin, make restitution, break evil habits, lead victorious lives, persuade others of the available power, bring multitudes to Christ and cause the church to grow mightily' (p193). While this theme has been part of the Church Growth Movement for years, it has been gaining in prominence in the decade of the eighties, a process helped immeasurably by J Edwin Orr. As McGavran says, 'No man knows more about revivals or has studied them across the world and written more extensively about them than J Edwin Orr' (p187).

The pages which follow weave a fascinating story of spiritual power, human response and God being glorified through the church, the bride of Christ.

C Peter Wagner

*The Donald A McGavran Professor of Church Growth,  
Fuller Seminary School of World Mission, Pasadena, California*

1984

## Introduction

*The chief value of every great work of the Holy Spirit is to be sought, of course, in the number of souls that have been converted, and in the increase of spiritual force in the Church of Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

The major thesis of this brief treatise is illustrated by historic facts: in Canada and United States, by the early summer of 1857, a widespread concert of prayer for spiritual revival had begun, followed by what was very generally called an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This first appeared in Canada before the disastrous American Bank Panic of October of 1857, then among the black slaves of Virginia and the Carolinas, then in churches from the Atlantic to the Missouri and to Texas, and then in 1858 by a multiplication of businessmen's prayer meetings. So great were the numerical gains in Methodist and Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian, Episcopal and Lutheran and other denominations, that 4,000,000 church members added 25% within two years; and the Awakening had effect throughout the Civil War and till the end of the century. Contemporaries, such as Moody, looked back upon the movement as the greatest of their experience; and in recent times, Perry Miller of Harvard called it 'the event of the century', and Timothy Smith of Johns Hopkins, 'annus mirabilis.'

From current events, one other illustration may be chosen. In Nagaland, an autonomous state of north-eastern India, following one year of prayer, another of counsellor training, and another of missionary promotion, a phenomenal revival commenced in 1976. Baptists, the Christian majority, numbered 132,495 members (adults) in 1975. Gains during the next twelve-months, before the revival, were 2,187 (1.65%). In 1977, the first year of revival, gains were 27,318, more than 20%; in 1978, 17,047, more than 10%; in 1979, 9,732, more than 5%; and in 1980, 20,603, more than 10%. Total membership in 1982 was 220,617, an increase better than 66% in four years, the Christian community 509,453, 75% of the population.

*Under certain conditions, revival may be said to cause growth. Under others . . . apparently revival occurs without growth and growth without revival.<sup>2</sup>*

McGavran's statement is very fair, but it must be qualified: its first part - in which he rejoiced - that revival causes church growth, is the norm; the second, that some revivals fail to do so, seems to be due to great persecution, caste antipathy, tribal antagonism, or to deficiencies in revival leadership due to human prejudices, all regrettable handicaps which hinder the declared purposes of God. This is the exception. But before the historical record is examined, terms and meanings must be defined.

## The Outpouring of the Spirit

For dialogue, discussion or debate, a clear definition of terms is needed. We begin by quoting the Prophecy of Joel, 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men dream dreams . . . and they that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' The Apostle Peter insisted that the events of Pentecost, the general outpouring of the Spirit on believers, fulfilled in part

<sup>1</sup> A P Marvin, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume XVI, Andover, 1859, pp 292ff

<sup>2</sup> Donald A McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1970, p 163

the prediction of Joel. History has shown that such happenings have been repeated in the Great Awakenings, not always in every detail but always in the major manifestations of prayer, conviction, repentance and the like.

The question must be asked: 'Is the outpouring of the Spirit the work of God or the work of man?' The Lord Jesus observed that 'the wind blows wherever it pleases . . . you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going . . . so it is . . . with the Spirit.' Neither denomination nor organisation, nor pastor nor evangelist, can organise an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Reviving of the Church**

We cannot see the wind, but can observe what the wind can do. The effect of the outpouring of the Spirit, whether at Pentecost or subsequent outpourings such as at Herrnhut or in similar visitations since then, is first seen in the reviving of the body of believers, the 'times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord'. Is revival a work of God, as Jonathan Edwards insisted, or a work of man, as C G Finney proposed? The biblical answer is clear. 'Will you not revive us again?' cried the Psalmist - 'Revive your work, O Lord!' requested the prophet; and both petitions were addressed to God. Nowhere in Scripture is any suggestion of plan or programme for self-revival. The Hebrew words used, 'chaya' and 'chadash', signify a renewal of life already enjoyed. Revival produces an extraordinary burden of prayer, an unusual conviction of sin, an uncanny sense of the presence of God, resulting in repentance, confession, reconciliation, and restitution, with great concern for the salvation of sinners near at hand and far away.

## **The Awakening of the People**

During 1956 - 57, I directed a team of evangelists through 105 towns and cities of New Zealand and Australia, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian, and the redoubtable Corrie ten Boom. The team had adopted an explanatory slogan, 'The evangelisation of the world through the revival of the Church', certainly true. But it is not the whole truth. The Apostle Peter preached with power on the day of Pentecost, and 120 believers became 3,120 overnight, which is what Dr Donald McGavran considers 'very satisfactory church growth'. What was the secret? He was filled with the Spirit and preached the Word. So one preaching the Word and filled with the Spirit will enjoy satisfactory church growth? Not necessarily so. Stephen the evangelist was filled with the Spirit and preached the Word as faithfully as did Peter, but instead of adding 3,000 to the Church, he suffered the loss of his own precious life. It seems clear, therefore, that intercessors should pray not only for revival of believers but for an awakening of the community in which they live. The eighteenth century Evangelical Revival in Britain and the Great Awakening in America were not only a reviving of believers but an awakening of the people among whom they dwelled. Scripture promised that, when the Paraclete is come, 'He will convict the world of sin.' In a nominally Christian country, hungry unbelievers seek the familiar means of grace by flocking to churches, without discriminating. In a non-Christian country, the hunger produces a folk movement.

## The Sequence of Events

Outpourings of the Spirit are exclusively the work of God; but revivals are the work of God with the response of believers; awakenings are the work of God with the response of the people. The work of man, besides praying and preaching appropriate truths, lies in evangelising and in teaching, the former in the call for repentance and conversion, the latter in making known the commandments of the Lord in all respects of life. This is the great commission, truly the commanded mission of the Church which, if not accomplished by disciples of Christ, will not be done at all. The work of revived and regenerate men, by many or by few, is also to engage in the reforming of society. This has often been initiated in the past by committed Christians, but, if they will not fulfil this commended ministry of the Church, others will. So, because certain conservatives confuse evangelism with revival and certain liberals social action with evangelism, it seems wise to cite a widely accepted definition of evangelism, 'To evangelise is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, that men may come to put their trust in God through Him as Saviour and to serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of His Church and the vocations of the common life.' An evangelistic campaign is not revival; social action is not evangelism. This is said without diminishing the importance of the ministry of evangelism, teaching, or social action, particularly to those so called of God. So it must be said that recent amendments to dictionary definitions of 'revival,' primarily 'an awakening in or of (evangelical) religion', but now 'also, a week of meetings, especially in the South,' are illogical. Movements such as Evangelism-in-Depth, organized to such a degree that even the prayer meetings are subordinated to the objectives of the campaign, are not necessarily an outpouring of the Spirit nor a revival. But when an evangelistic campaign produces revival, we rejoice.

*In the history of religion, no phenomenon is more apparent than the recurrence of revivals . . . Large numbers then become awakened.<sup>3</sup>*

## The Testimony of History

The Lollard movement and its offshoot the Hussite movement, the Reformation in its Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican and Anabaptist streams, and even the later Puritan movement with its political developments, must be considered movements of reform, although with elements of revival and awakening.

*It was due largely - although by no means entirely - by revivals that Christianity spread [in the latter part of the eighteenth] and through the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>*

## The Awakening of 1727 Onward

Even with incomplete records, there is agreement that the Evangelical Revival in Britain and the Great Awakening in the United States was a revival-awakening, attributed by its champions to the outpouring of God's Spirit rather than to man's organising. Lacking statistics of the Established Church of England, one must consider those of dissenting Free Churches. In 1740, at the time of the emergence of Wesley and Whitefield, the number of permanent places of worship used by Free Churches had dwindled to 27 and temporary chapels to 506.

<sup>3</sup> James Burns, *Revivals: Their Laws and Leaders*, 1909, reprinted 1960, p 21

<sup>4</sup> K S Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Volume 111, p 216

At century's end, after sixty years, 27 had increased to 926 (an average 56% per annum) while the 506 had increased to 3,491 (an average 112% a year). True, these statistics run through a severe recession into the revival and awakening of 1792 onward (specifically, the Great Awakening in New England added more than 30,000 to Congregational churches). But this mid-eighteenth century Evangelical Awakening produced little missionary enterprise in the revived Protestant churches. Roman Catholic critics were still able to jeer that lack of a missionary vision was proof that Protestants were heretics. The best that could be said was that that a beginning was made, that a revival had produced pioneer enterprise in India.

### **The Awakening of 1792 Onward**

Statistics are easier to assess for the next great, unstructured movement of the Spirit, beginning with the prayer movements of the 1780s in the British Isles, of the 1790s in the United States, the revival-awakening of 1792 onwards. Wesleyan Methodist church growth dropped to less than 1% following the French Revolution, but following the outbreak of a phenomenal revival in 1792 and 1793, reached an unsurpassed figure of more than 13% in 1793. The reaction of churchly-minded authorities in Wesleyanism against revival provoked several secessions and reduced church growth figures below zero, until the denomination repented. The only Baptist statistics of the period show that, from a low-point in 1791, membership increased with the waves of revival. In the United States, Methodist statistics show a loss of members in the 1790s, but a vast increase in the years of revival that crested just before 1800. Great growth following decline was reported by all Protestant Churches, attributed to revival rather than immigration.

It will not be disputed that the Revival-Awakening of 1792 onward provided the main recruitment and sending of evangelical pioneers to the mission fields. That forward thrust was in direct proportion to the intensity and continuance of the Union or Concert of Prayer, in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere, the denominations most affected being the leaders in the missionary outreach. In most places, there was much hard work but little church growth.

### **The Resurgence of 1830 Onward**

With little or no recession, another revival-awakening swept all the United States in 1830, lasting a dozen years. It immediately added a hundred thousand to church membership and, in 1840-42, increased the number of Methodists from 580,098 to 1,171,356. This movement affected all denominations, including the German-speaking hitherto little moved. Its transfer to Britain encountered a measure of resistance, even among Wesleyan Methodists, but benefited those who received James Caughey and a prophet's reward. In Scotland, statistics of the recognised gains in the 1839 Revival (under W C Burns) are difficult to come by. Extension of the movement worldwide has provided illustrations of the effect of the work of the Spirit in revival and awakening upon church growth in mission fields, in transcultural circumstances.

## Revival and Growth on the Mission Field

*'In 1834, the 'baptism from above' came'. . . Only two things can account for this: on the divine side, the approval of God: and on the human side, the attitude of expectancy of the missionaries . . . Then came the great year 1834 when the full membership jumped to 7,451<sup>5</sup>.*

Not until the Resurgence of 1830 were there any startling statistical proofs that revival-awakenings on the field were producing significant growth. In Tonga, in Polynesia, power encounters were followed by a turning of the people from idols to God, then the phenomenal revival of 1834 - a revival which doubled (Methodist) full membership, from 3,456 to 7,451, a quantitative as well as a qualitative gain. Just as striking were the gains from the Revival of 1837 in the Hawaiian kingdom. The 1830s began with only 577 members of Protestant (Congregationalist) churches in all of Hawaii. In 1835, a movement of prayer for revival commenced, answered in 1837 with an outpouring of the Spirit at Hilo. After a prescribed period of probation, the Hilo church received 7,557 converts, 1,705 in a single Sunday. Between 1837 and 1842, about 27,000 were received in Hawaii, of whom 19,679 remained in good standing after twenty years' natural attrition.

## The Awakening of 1858-59 Onward

The movement of 1858 in the United States, already cited, obviously began as a movement of prayer. Believers baptised, certificated or examined for membership by the Old School Presbyterians increased from 26,391 in 1857 to 36,520 in 1858 and 41,496 in 1859, New School Presbyterians gaining likewise. In 1858 alone, Methodist Episcopal churches added 178,855, or 14%. Baptists won 188,000 converts in 1858 and 1859, and built 320 churches each year, doubling the 1857 figure. Most authorities agree that a million or more joined the churches in a two-year revival period in the United States, population about 27,000,000. The United Kingdom had about the same population at that time. Taking longer, the revival added approximately a million converts - 100,000 to Baptists, 135,000 to Congregationalists, 200,000 to the Methodist bodies, 400,000 to Presbyterian churches, although (of course) statistics are difficult to compile for Anglican and Presbyterian Established Churches, where unconverted church members usually did not resign and rejoin on their conversion. Population statistics, 1857-64, showed Australian Protestant denominations growing, from 20% for Congregational to 70% for Methodist. Reformed Churches in South Africa noted great gains, and Methodists reported a 'glorious revival of religion'; in Jamaica there was such an ingathering that the London Missionary Society withdrew from the field; in Tamilnad (India) a great revival began in 1860 and later spread to Kerala. The Revival also sent pioneers to Mexico, Brazil, Japan, the Congo, and elsewhere.

*The spread of the Gospel on new ground frequently occurs through people movements to Christ . . . though these are often called revivals, since they involve the turning of multitudes of non-Christians to Christ, they should not be . . . . People movements have some superficial resemblance to revivals . . . have great dissimilarities to revivals.<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> Alan R Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia*, 1971, pp 92 & 94

<sup>6</sup> Donald A McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1980, pp 172-173



## Post-1858-59 Revival Folk Movements

While in India, in the 1860 revival period, there were classic revival movements in areas long since evangelised, it is noteworthy that folk movements to Christ among castes or tribes generally occurred in post-revival periods and in answer to revival-related intercession. In Andhra, there were two examples of such a relationship. The prayers of an Anglican missionary in 1859 were soon followed by a folk movement among the Malas. John Clough, engineer, a convert of the 1858 Revival, maintained in India the Week of Prayer for Revival begun during that Revival. His prayers were answered in a folk movement of outcaste Madigas, of whom he baptized 9,606, after a calculated delay. Most of the folk movements in India had antecedents in revival praying or post-revival outreach.

*Revival, while absolutely necessary, is not the only factor in the growth of the Church. The more the ardent Christians and revived congregations know about what modes of growth in their populations God has blessed and which signally He has not blessed, the more likely, their preaching of the Word will bear fruit . . . the Holy Spirit will find them more amenable to His leading; and when He points out those now receptive to the Good News, they will obey more promptly.<sup>7</sup>*

## The Resurgence of 1882 Onward

In the early 1880s, there arose a wider movement of revival and missionary outreach which bore the same relation to the Awakening of 1858-1859 that events at the church of Antioch bore to those at Pentecost in Jerusalem - the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions with its slogan of 'the Evangelisation of the World in Our Generation,' effective in many countries and for forty years.

In the same period, local revivals and subsequent folk movements occurred on various mission fields. A revival occurred in Japan in 1883, with all the marks observed in western societies: tears, brokenness, confession, restitution, and reconciliation. Standard histories of Christianity in Japan describe 'Rapid Growth, 1883-1888', with an increase in adult membership from 4,000 to 30,000, a movement among the Samurai, according to one speculation. In the mid 1880s, the prayers of Henry Richards resulted in a great ingathering, 'Pentecost on the Congo', it was called. In 1893, an Indian tract on the work of the Holy Spirit provoked a reviving in Uganda, increasing the number of communicants from 230 to 18,041, catechumens from 230 to 2,563, and baptized Christians from 1,140 to 62,716.

## The Revivals of the Early 20th Century

The movements of the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrate the same results, phenomenal revival and extraordinary church growth. In 1900, an unusual spirit of prayer fell on Japanese Christians, who had suffered a setback in the previous decade. Meetings to revive the spiritual life of believers followed in early 1901, then an evangelistic campaign in May and June, 11,626 attending prayer meetings, 84,247 evangelistic meetings, with 5,307 making profession of faith in Tokyo alone, more than 15,000 inquirers in all Japan as the movement spread. How did this affect church growth? In a short space of time, 17,939 were added to the churches, and Japan's 40,000 Evangelicals added 25,000 within a year. 'Taikyo

---

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p126

Dendo' preceded and continued through the Russo-Japanese War. Following the Anglo-Boer War, a widespread revival awakening, Methodists gaining 2% in 1903, 85% in 1904, 14% in 1905 (revival) and 8% in 1906, 30% in three years.

### The Welsh Revival, 1904-1905

A prayer movement in Wales began in 1900. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit began late in 1904, with extraordinary meetings which filled the churches night and day for many months, every evening for years. There is no doubt that this great movement was a classic example of an evangelical revival (in Swansea, I was told by the pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church that extra seats were being brought in for twenty years, and in the 1930s, I personally found that the effects of the Revival were significant in the membership of the churches). Did the Welsh Revival cause unusual church growth? A critic of the movement in 1909 complained that, after five years, only 75% of additions to four denominations (80,000 in five months) were still in their membership, only 75%! But even this figure neglected emigration, mission halls multiplying, and the appeal of Pentecostalism to converts. Currie, Gilbert and Horsley's 1977 study of church growth in Britain provided updated answers regarding gains in membership of Welsh churches:

Year	Anglican	Baptist	Congregational	Methodist	Presbyterian
1903	(108,899)*	113,597	165,218	34,958	153,350
1904	(114,344)*	116,310	167,181	35,958	173,310
1905	125,234	140,443	180,482	40,600	189,164
1906	138,964	143,584	176,632	40,525	187,768

*\*proportionately calculated, laxer tests before 1905*

It can be calculated from these statistics that, in three years of revival, the five historic denominations in Wales together increased 20%. In the next three years, the total membership decreased from 687,473 to 676,873 in 1909, a loss of less than 2%. It was during these three years that Pentecostalism spread in Wales, mission halls multiplied, and thousands of Welsh folk emigrated. Church Growth experts cited have noted that while the Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists in Wales increased 31.55%, 17.93% and 20.52% in Wales, their increase in England was only 9.51%, 10.40%, and 9.29% - not mentioning that, within two years of 1905, the Free Churches reached an all-time high-water mark exceeding communicant membership in the Church of England for the first and only time.

## The 1905 Revival and Church Growth Elsewhere

It is difficult to obtain meaningful statistics in countries which possess a state church. In Norway, the parliament permitted licensed Lutheran laymen to offer communion to multitudes for whom the clergy could not provide. Revivals were effective in Scandinavia, and in many European countries. In the United States, the 1905 Revival pushed Southern Baptist membership over two million in spite of Landmark secessions of the time; Methodist additions doubled in 1905 and in 1906. Protestants increased 150% as fast as Roman Catholics, despite an annual Roman Catholic immigration averaging 750,000.

## The 1905 Revival on Asian Mission Fields

*In the Khasi Hills . . . God had ripened populations. In them, when the missionaries and congregations they had raised up heard the news from Wales and asked God's blessing and turned single-mindedly to reaping, great church growth followed.*<sup>8</sup>

Phenomenal revival was relayed directly from Wales to the Khasia Hills, in Assam, where membership rose from 6,180 to 9,013 in three years, and continued to grow. Much the same occurred among the Mizos in the Lushai Hills, and the Naga tribesmen shared in the movement. [Incorrectly, Dr McGavran added: 'But in hundreds of mission stations whose populations were not ripe, the news from distant Wales did not lead to ingathering'. After this was published in 1970, Serampore University Senate, India's oldest institution of higher learning, awarded a premier doctorate for Orr's India dissertation documenting a hundred mission fields in India that notably experienced revival following the 1904 Welsh Revival - an exception difficult to find].

India's Christian minority grew sixteen times as fast as the Hindu majority during the decade of revival, which swept every linguistic province. A specific instance may be taken from the Northwest as well as the Northeast. The Chuhra folk movement in the Punjab had risen from 7,000 members to 9,000 in ten years before the 1905 Revival, but 11,000 in 1905 became 31,000 in 1915, according to Frederick Stock's graph. Statistics of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) provided more specific details for the Ludhiana mission field concerned: 1,590 members in 1895 became 3,114 in 1904, the annual increase 150; after the 1905 'Sialkot' Revival, 3,450 baptized members in (1906) became 16,025 baptised communicants and catechumens in 1915, converts reclassified after 1912 because of stricter tests, the annual increase 1,250. This revival, prepared for seven years by Praying Hyde's Punjab Prayer Union, was a classic revival, with conviction and confession of sin and unusual conversions. In South India, the Revival affected Andhra, Tamilnad, Kanara, and Kerala where the Mar Thoma Church constituency doubled.

*. . . when God the Holy Spirit came, He accomplished more in half a day than all of us missionaries could have accomplished in half a year. In less than two months more than two thousand heathen . . . then He came as flood. Since then their numbers have increased manifold.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p 196

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Goforth, *When the Spirit's Fire Swept Korea*, 1943, pp 12 & 16 [quoted by McGavran]

Throughout the Orient, revival and church growth marked the 1900s. In Burma, 1905 was ‘a notable year’ - the revival heralding an increase of 73 churches and 11,748 members in three years. Greater progress was made among the tribes than among the resistant Buddhist Thai. Prayer unions in 1903 marked the start of revival in China, with sweeping movements in 1905 and phenomenal awakenings in 1908. In this period, China Inland Mission stations increased from 394 to 1,001, chapels from 387 to 995, and communicants from 8,557 to 23,001, 2,720 baptized in 1907 alone.

*Without question, the most important influence in the life of the Church, at this time and for many years after, was . . . the Great Revival . . . a movement which swept the country and affected the entire Christian movement as a whole. The origin of the revival may be traced to a meeting in 1903 . . . in Wonsan . . . in 1904 with even greater outpouring of blessing.<sup>10</sup>*

### **The Misinterpretation of the Korean Revival**

Edinburgh delegates in 1910 were informed that in Korea ‘a genuine Pentecost’ had quadrupled membership in a decade, an opinion shared by all Korean historians. In five years of rapid growth, from 1906 to 1910, the net gain by the Korean churches was 79,221. But the effect of the Korean Awakening upon church growth has been often misinterpreted, and widely. My esteemed former colleague, Dr Roy E Shearer, produced a graph showing a slight rise in the additions to communicant membership in 1903, an accelerated rate of growth in 1905, extraordinary growth in 1907, followed by a sharp decline in 1910. He conceded that it was a common opinion the revival was the cause for the great growth of the Korean Church. He proposed that, as the 1907 Revival had occurred while the churches were already growing substantially from 1903 onwards, the Revival could not have been a cause of the church growth. His position was dislocated by facts, for, following seven years of slow but steady ingathering, a prayer movement began in 1903 (accepted as the beginning of revival by historians) and followed in 1905 by ‘a spreading fire, continuing awakening’, with thousands ingathered. This undigested mass of converts from heathenism was moved by an extraordinary Revival of 1907 onwards, a catharsis of the church, and church growth accelerated. But it declined after 1910, when the Million Souls Movement won only 15,805 converts, a disappointment that showed that the best-organised efforts of committees do not compare with the Spirit’s outpouring. Undoubtedly, there was a folk movement in the 1900s, in response to the Divine outpouring, after which there was a recession in 1910, due partly to human regimentation, partly to political turmoil. Some who had cited Shearer also quoted Orr saying that ‘Not only were some congregations revived, but an acceleration of church growth occurred’, not explaining that this referred to the first phase of revival (1903), not the third phase in 1907 (as noted by Shearer) which moved every last congregation and vastly accelerated the already great growth of 1905-1906. Missionary and national consensus confirms the view that the three-phased movement caused church growth.

*By far, the greatest progress of Christianity in Africa has been achieved in the last decade [1901-1910]<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> Allen D Clark, *History of the Korean Church*, 1961, pp 130-131; cf. all standard texts

<sup>11</sup> World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910, Volume 1, p 40

## The 1905 Revival in Africa

The worldwide movement of awakening during the early 1900s also affected South Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and West Africa, and continued into the next decade with striking results. 'The fact is', declared the statistician David Barrett, 'since around 1910, Africa has been the only one of the world's six continents in which the entire Christian community has expanded uniformly at a rate over twice that of the population increase.' The Malawi Awakening is well-documented, likewise the Congo Revivals, with great gains; in Uganda, a 'cycle of prayer' led to revival and a 33% increase in church attendance; in Cameroon, revival and church growth were reported from 1906 onward; in West Africa, the 60,000 Anglican communicants and 130,000 adherents became 80,000 and 250,000 between 1904 and 1908. These were marked by prayer, conviction, confession, and restitution, followed by conversions, and developing folk movements.

*'A movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ' . . . thus depends on the initiative of Almighty God, (but) it is usually granted to those who pray earnestly for it . . . The multiplication of churches nourished on the Bible and full of the Holy Spirit is a sine qua non in carrying out the purposes of God<sup>12</sup>*

## Post World War I Revivals

There were not many revival movements in the western world between Wars. As a boy, the writer witnessed the Revival of 1921 in Northern Ireland. The number of 'first communicants' reported by the Presbyterian denomination showed marked increase, 4,741 (1920), 4,935 (1921), 6,360 (1922 after revival), 6,059 (1923), and back to 4,967 (1924). The Presbyterian majority gained 6%, Methodists 9%, and the minority Baptists 33% in active membership. The Awakening in Norway in 1934-35 presented no statistics, as typical in a state church. But there were statistics for the great revival-awakening in the Soviet Union, for the less than 200,000 active Evangelicals in the USSR in 1917 became 2,500,000 in 1929, doubling each year, an excuse for the intensive persecution of 1929-1941. During the Awakening of 1927-1939 in China, communicants increased from 402,539 in 1924 to 567,390 in 1936, the movement continuing until World War II. It was a typical revival - the writer participated - with extraordinary prayer, conviction of sin, confession and restitution followed by outright conversions and a wide evangelistic outreach. In East Africa, in the 1930s, a remarkable revival began in Rwanda and spread to all countries round about. It had powerful effect among nominal Christians, but everywhere it enlisted thousands into active membership. The Mexican Revolution, during the 1930s, threatened Roman Catholics and Evangelicals alike, but in 1935, a movement of prayer began in the capital, revivals in many states, Evangelical Christians increasing from 50,000 to 250,000, in ten years.

*A revival consists in the return of the Church from her backslidings, and in the conversion of sinners. The fountains of sin need to be broken up.<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> McGavran, 1980, pp 6, 186, and passim

<sup>13</sup> Charles G Finney, *Revivals of Religion*, Edition 1928, p 7

## Post World War II Revivals

The effects of spiritual awakening from 1949 onwards on church growth among Americans has been recognized but not well documented. More remarkable were the movements in Latin America, in Cuba before the Revolution, after Colombia's sad Violencia, in Chile, everywhere. Having shared in the Reaviamento Espiritual Brasileiro, I must recall those exhilarating times and cite the latest studies on the 1952 Revival in Brazil. According to Read's graphs, the denomination of the better class, the Presbyterian, trebled its intake of converts in 1952, its greatest gain in fifty years. The largest body therein, Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, cited 67,695 members in 1951, 69,599 in 1952, 74,632 in 1953, 74,959 in 1954, and 76,307 in 1955, and Pierson cited doubling in seminary enrolment. Believers' baptisms reported by the Baptists in 1952 increased by 66%, while additions to membership (4%) increased to 6% and so remained for three years. The denomination of the poorest classes, the Assemblies of God, reporting only in rounded figures because of far too rapid increases, estimated 130,000 active adult members in the year 1952, but 307,525 in 1955, and Philip Hogan declared: 'Brazil truly is a land of revival, and the results of evangelism have been phenomenal'. William R Read, church growth expert on Brazil, made no mention at all of the Brazilian movement of 1952, though even the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A selected it for a special commendation, and literature of Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil was full of details of the movement.

### Organized Evangelism or Spiritual Revival?

During the Evangelism-in-Depth campaign in Bolivia in 1965, annual church growth slackened from 15% to 12%, said by some to be due to 'programmed revivalism'. The Oxford Association for Research in Revival has repudiated this terminology for super-organised evangelism or follow-up. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is never programmed, nor is the reviving of the Church, Finney notwithstanding.

*One of the chief reasons why churches grow anywhere is . . . obedient relationship to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has descended and revived men and churches. This cause of church growth is so important that it will be treated by itself in another chapter . . . The dynamic of revival is so great and the potential for church growth so tremendous that all concerned with mission must be deeply interested . . . The same God brings both revival and church growth.<sup>14</sup>*

### Revival in the 1970s

To update this treatise, a passing mention of recent movements seems in order. In Viet Nam, an unusual revival broke out late in 1971 at Nhatrang Theological Seminary, triggering a movement among the tribal churches. It was marked by an outreach to non-Christians. Baptisms had been increasing 283 annually; in 1972, 1,070; churches increasing 9 in number annually, in 1972, 103; tens of thousands were converted. But misuse has been made of very incomplete reports of this revival in Viet Nam, resulting in an impression that the movement was disappointing. The revival was felt, it was stated, in 81 churches. No mention was made of an ethnic antipathy between Montagnards and Vietnamese; nor of handicaps of war; nor of missionary and national opinion that pastors of long experience had opposed the work be-

<sup>14</sup> McGavran, 1980, pp 125, 201

cause it had started among young people and so grieved the Spirit of God; not a single member was added to membership in 26 (30% of the 81); 44 (or 50%) added only 8 average, but these were small churches and the gains averaged 10%; only 11 (or 15%) added substantially to membership, from 10% to 50% - so it was said.

Thomas Stebbins, Christian and Missionary Alliance Vietnam field chairman ten years ago, not only noted phenomenal revival but stressed outreach to the lost as the major emphasis, hundreds of believers added and new churches begun. Doan-van-Mieng, national church president, set an unprecedented goal of 25 new churches for the year following revival; results tabulated, more than 50 were reported, attributed by Stebbins to revival impact, answered prayer and effect of war. Truong-van-Tot in a few months incompletely reported 2,333 converts in Dalat (Koho), Bao-loc (Ma), Loc-thien (Mnong & Koho), Soc-be (Stieng), and Quang-doc (Mnong Gar); but he stated that Vietnamese leaders opposed a counting of new converts and dared not tell exact numbers. Missionaries stated (1984) that tens of thousands in tribes had been converted in revival.

Exact membership was last counted in 1967. Organized churches reported showed 9 as the average annual gain 1967-71, but in 1972, the increase was 103; baptisms incompletely reported 1967-71 showed 283 as the average increase, whereas in 1972 it was 1,070. In 1970-71 (before revival) registered inquirers averaged 15,285; but in 1972 the total was 30,114, remaining high until persecution made counting impossible. Thirty Evangelical Church pastors fled from Viet Nam, but 500 elected to stay, a minority collaborating with the Communist government. Many Vietnamese churches were closed. 90 pastors in re-education centres, and some executed. Some older pastors, who opposed the revival, have since fallen by the way, whereas younger revived men emerged as spiritual leaders. In the South, 130,000 Evangelicals were reported, in the North 13,000, an inflated figure checked against detailed reports. Nhatrang Theological College, Bible schools, and most tribal churches were closed, about 100 pastors imprisoned or silenced - but the tribal churches continued to grow. In 1975, in Pleiku, there were 7,000 tribal Christians; in 1979, 11,000 meeting in scores or more, and today early morning prayer meetings sustain the revival. In other areas, the believers took to the jungled mountains. But in Saigon, 1978-83, a single church in sustained revival reported more than a thousand converts a year, hundreds baptized, until it was closed down.

*Great growth of the Church following revival will come where all conditions are right, so right, in fact, that people are not conscious of them . . . No practical priority on earth is higher than that of discipling out to its fringes a people which under the leading of the Holy Spirit turns responsive.<sup>15</sup>*

What impact does revival have on folk movements? It has triggered them or, if underway, has accelerated them, for the Lord of renewal is the God Who makes strange peoples receptive. On evangelism? In times of revival, the whole Church engages in evangelism, while able evangelists are recruited by the Spirit for a lifetime of service, as seen from Whitefield to Graham. On missionary outreach? Societies have been formed and pioneers sent out; on the field, self-centred believers have developed a concern for strangers near and far. On social reform? Immediate effect on personal morality, gradual effect on social morality. There is no doubt that the outpouring of the Spirit is the greatest factor in the extension of the Kingdom of God.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p 203

The **British Church Growth Association** is pleased to be able to reproduce this booklet as an Occasional Paper as a resource to the church in the UK.

A section of this paper was reproduced in the journal of the BCGA the *Church Growth Digest* Volume 21 No 2 the theme of which was 'Revivals – Past and Present?' Copies of this are available for £1.50.

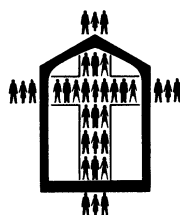
A limited number of a second much longer paper (50 pp)

by Edwin Orr on

**The 1859 Revival and the Church of England**

is also available at £6.00.

In addition to running a full Church Growth Book Service (over 400 titles) which includes a number of Church Growth co-publications with major publishers, the BCGA also publishes its own series of booklets on allied subjects. Some of these have been the major addresses from conferences it has run and a selection from those run by the European Church Growth Association. These are not available elsewhere but a full list will be sent on application.



Further information from

British Church Growth Association

The Park, Moggerhanger, Bedford, MK44 3RW

Telephone 01767 641001; Fax 01767 641515 E-mail [info@bcga.org.uk](mailto:info@bcga.org.uk)

(registered charity no 285577)

*This re-formatted version is available online from*

[www.church-growth-modelling.org.uk](http://www.church-growth-modelling.org.uk)

*email: [jhayward@churchmodel.org.uk](mailto:jhayward@churchmodel.org.uk)*