

## Essential Church History

# 9

## To the Ends of the Earth

The world scene of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was one of dramatic change. It was a scene of revolutions. France had a political revolution (1789-1799), England had an industrial revolution (1733), and America had the War of Independence (1776-1783) and a civil war (1861-1865). Charles Darwin published his *Origin of the Species* (1859) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) introduced the Communist revolution. Yet in the midst of this setting, as we saw in the last study, God began to “awaken” his Church. One of the great effects of these revivals was to open the eyes of the Church to the needy state of the world around her.

### Results of the Awakenings

The Awakenings had tremendous effect upon the Church, bringing her out of spiritual deadness and spiritual impotency. As well as seeing lives transformed by the preaching of the Gospel, Christians also took hold of a passion to address the needs of the world and to overthrow the social injustices of a corrupt society around them. As Winkie Pratney explains:

“[T]rue revival always changes the ‘moral climate of a community’; when God finds someone with the courage to pray, preach, and live a life before Him of holiness and compassion, He can literally change the face of a nation.”<sup>1</sup>

This is exactly what happened as a result of the Awakenings. Laws were changed, a standard of human rights was established, and social conditions were improved. Due to the impact of the Gos-

**The Incredible Spread of the Gospel**

**The Living Church**

**The Seeds of Decline**

**Leaven, Leaders and the Word**

**The Dark Ages**

**The New Dawn**

**Truth on the March**

**Waves of Awakenings**

**To the Ends of the Earth**

**The Church of the 21st Century**

## Eyes on the Community

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were marked by a renewed vigor to reach the community for Christ.

### ***The Clapham Sect***

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the French Revolution in full sway across the channel, a group of English Christians, belonging mostly to the upper classes, began to meet together for prayer and Bible study. They held their meetings in Clapham, the neighborhood where most of them lived, and so became known by historians as “The Clapham Sect.” William Wilberforce (1759-1833), a parliamentary statesman, was their leader.

The Clapham friends were men of strong influence: James Stephens Sr, Under-Secretary for the Colonies; John Shore (Lord Teignmouth), the Governor General of India; Charles Grant, Chairman of the East India Company; Thomas Clarkson, an abolitionist leader; Zachary Macauley, editor of the *Christian Observer*; and others. They took hold of the words of Jesus in **Matthew 25:35-40** and James in **James 2:15-16**. What they achieved through their devotion to the Lord, their practical compassion and their missionary zeal is amazing. Bruce Shelley describes some of their tireless activities:

“A host of evangelical causes sallied forth from quiet little Clapham: The Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor (1796), The Society for the Reformation of Prison Discipline and many more.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Abolition of Slavery***

The abolition of the slave trade was a major cause taken up by evangelical Christians in general and the Clapham Sect in particular. Bruce Shelley writes of the spirit that pervaded their activities:

“The Evangelicals secured petitions; they published quality abolitionist literature; they lectured on public platforms; they campaigned on billboards. They used all the modern means of publicity. Nonconformists rallied in support, and for the first time in history women participated in a political contest. The Evangelicals ‘fanned the flame,’ then they carried the fire to Parliament where Wilberforce and four colleagues from Clapham – the ‘Saints’ in [the House of] Commons – tried to arouse complacent leaders to put a stop to the inhumane slave trade...Finally, victory crowned their labors.”<sup>3</sup>

Wilberforce took up the issue of slavery in Parliament. He had received a letter from John Wesley, four days before Wesley died, urging him to “go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.” John Wesley himself had published his *Thoughts on Slavery* in 1774, and was an outspoken advocate of the abolition of slavery. Renwick and Harman describe what resulted from these concerted actions of Christians such as John Wesley and the Clapham Sect:

“It was largely through their help and their enthusiasm that the agitation for the abolition of the slave-trade was successful. Zachary Macaulay had seen the evils of it while managing an estate in Jamaica. From 1787 onwards they kept the matter before Parliament. William Wilberforce took up the question with untiring energy and finally persuaded William Pitt to promote a Bill for the total abolition of the slave trade in 1807. In 1833 all slaves in British territory were emancipated.”<sup>4</sup>

The Clapham Sect stands in history as a great example of how a handful of people with devotion and obedience to God can change a whole society.

### ***The Sierra Leone colony***

The Clapham Sect also founded the Sierra Leone colony in West Africa. Their vision was threefold, as *The History of Christianity* reveals:

“The colony had three aims: to provide a haven for freed slaves; to prove that economics did not dictate the need for the slave trade; and to be a base for missionary operations in Africa.”<sup>5</sup>

The capital of the colony was named Freetown. After the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, slave-ships from all over West Africa were intercepted and diverted to Sierra Leone where the freed slaves landed. It was believed that “the most effective way of combating the slave trade was to provide an attractive commercial substitute. The development of the export of raw materials from Africa, instead of the export of labor, would in turn involve developing in Africa commercial agriculture and the appropriate technologies.”<sup>6</sup>

Sierra Leone did indeed become a base for missionary outreach. From the colony came a people who would play a vital role in spreading the Gospel in West Africa. *The History of Christianity* describes how this came about and what eventuated:

“Eleven hundred people of African descent were brought there from America in 1792, to form a ‘province of freedom’ in Africa. They came as Christians, bringing their own churches and preachers with them. To these people were added the ‘recaptives’ rescued from slave-ships after 1809 – uprooted, disorientated people from all parts of West Africa. It was from these that the first mass movement towards Christianity in modern missionary history took place. Sierra Leone became a self-consciously Christian community, and a literate one.”<sup>7</sup>

Many of the Christians of the Sierra Leone colony found their way back to their original homelands as traders. It was on the initiative of African Christians that the local missions were launched in Nigeria in the 1840s. By the time the first missionaries arrived, they discovered an indigenous Church already thriving.

“Over the next half century, the tiny Christian population of Sierra Leone produced dozens of ministers, missionaries, catechists and agents for the rest of West Africa, and particularly the Niger territories. Dozens more Sierra Leone Christians, as traders, clerks or workmen, first introduced the Christian faith to other places.”<sup>8</sup>

## Social Needs Met

The Awakenings had a tremendous impact on British society. Not only were lives transformed by the preaching of the Gospel, the practical care shown to the poor and needy made a great impression on the community. England became aware of its social obligations. Renwick and Harman describe the conditions:

“The Industrial Revolution was raising many problems, and Christian statesmen, such as the great Lord Shaftesbury, were zealous in promoting Bills to ameliorate the hard lot of factory workers, especially women and young children, to stop the opium trade, to protect the Lord’s Day, and to put an end to flogging in the army. All such movements were symptomatic of the new life which had come to the churches through the Evangelical Revival.”<sup>9</sup>

Here are just a few examples of the social transformations brought by the Church:

- **Ministry to prisoners** – John Wesley advocated prison reform, encouraging John Howard in his crusade for this, and the Clapham Sect worked towards it.
- **Ministry to the poor** – Wesley showed his concern for the poor by personally contributing to their needs. He also raised funds to help them and commissioned his societies to distribute food and clothing to the needy. *The History of Christianity* tells of other aids that were made available to help the under-privileged: “A lending bank was opened by Christians in 1746. Legal advice and aid was made available. Widows and orphans were housed. This Christian concern for the under-privileged led to the birth of the Benevolent or Strangers’ Friend Societies in 1787. They quickly established themselves as agencies of poor relief and bridged the gap until finally the state took over.”<sup>10</sup>
- **Ministry to orphans** – Thomas Barnardo was converted in 1862 through the influence of the Third Great Awakening. Much of the philanthropic activity during the revival was directed towards helping children and Barnardo established his orphan homes with the same earnestness and vitality that was expressed at the time. As the century progressed, many other charitable societies were also founded, directed particularly toward the physical and spiritual welfare of boys and girls. George Mueller, whose great example of faith in the provision of God influenced missionaries such as Hudson Taylor, is another great example of this ministry.
- **Ministry to the sick** – Medical dispensaries were set up to treat those who were sick and special care was provided for the ill.
- **Ministry to the unemployed** – Jobs were created to help the unemployed. For example, one Methodist meeting-room in London was turned into a workshop.
- **Ministry to youth** – The Young Men’s Christian Association was founded in 1844 by George Williams, a young draper’s assistant. It ministered to

the youth during the revival and its branches both grew and were enlivened by it.

- **Ministry to the uneducated** – In England, Christians felt strongly about the need to educate the illiterate and bring relief to the ignorance and suffering of the poor. They wanted schools to have a Christian foundation rather than to be governed by the State. In 1811, the Anglicans founded the Foreign School Society and the Nonconformist British and Foreign School Society was founded three years later. State education was later founded on the foundation they laid.

The ministry of education, in particular, was a significant result of the Great Awakenings. In Scotland, following the reformer John Knox's admonition that there should be 'a church and a school in every parish,' a large number of schools were established by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The introduction of Sunday Schools throughout Britain in 1769 brought a new dimension to Christian education. Hannah Ball, a Methodist, started the first Sunday School, and Robert Raikes, an Anglican, developed them. The Sunday School Union was founded in 1803. It was the movement of the Sunday School which opened the way towards free education for all.

In America, too, the Church was at the forefront of education.

## The Salvation Army

One of the great results of the Third Great Awakening (1857-60) was the founding of the Salvation Army in 1865. William Booth and his wife, Catherine, were stirred by the horrific needs of society. In his book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, published in 1890, Booth graphically compared the social darkness in England to David Livingstone's description of the spiritual condition of "Darkest Africa." Bruce Shelley details the social conditions as reported by Booth:

"In London, in one year, he reported 2,157 people had been found dead, 2,297 had committed suicide, 30,000 were living in prostitution, 160,000 had been convicted of drunkenness, and more than 900,000 were classed as paupers... The whole picture was one of dire need."<sup>11</sup>

William Booth withdrew from ministry with the Methodist New Connection to go out into the streets where the poor were. "We can't get at the masses in the chapels," claimed Catherine Booth. In 1865, they opened their own Christian Mission in a tent in Whitechapel and preached on the streets in London's East End with amazing results.

By 1875, Booth had established thirty-two stations working among London's destitute, evangelizing and meeting their social needs. The ministry was called The Salvation Army – the workers were organized as a military units, with Booth as the General. By 1888, more than one thousand British corps had been established and patrols had been sent out to many other parts of the world.

## Churches & Movements Grow

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Out of the three waves of awakenings many new churches and church movements were born. As a result of the Third Great Awakening, for example, the Keswick Movement arose. Challenged by the importance of the Spirit-filled life, a number of evangelical leaders resolved to call a Convention at Keswick every year for special teaching on the subject. Outworking from this, similar Keswick Conventions have come into being all over the world.

Renwick and Harman describe the growth of churches following the surge of evangelism springing from the three Great Awakenings:

“Shortly after John Wesley’s death the separation of Methodists from the Church of England took place and in spite of divisions in their ranks they grew fourfold between 1800 and 1860. Methodism was essentially a middle-class movement, and by 1850 it was exerting a strong influence both religiously and politically. Other Non-Conformist bodies, such as the Congregationalists and Baptists were also growing...evangelical Anglicanism remained strong...the revivals which occurred throughout the English-speaking world in 1857-60 injected new vigor into Protestant church life, and because of the large numbers of conversions, many came into the fold of the Christian church at the time...The Baptist church, in particular, grew quickly as a result...and Baptist preachers such as Spurgeon in London and Maclaren in Manchester drew vast congregations.”<sup>12</sup>

## Dwight Lyman Moody

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One very important result of the Third Great Awakening in America, which was subsequently to impact the whole world, was the conversion of Dwight Moody in 1857. Moody had been employed as a clerk in Holton’s Shoe Store in Chicago, and one of the work requirements was attendance at the Mount Vernon Congregational Church. To Moody, however, church seemed boring, and it was only the encouragement of a Sunday School teacher named Edward Kimball that kept him coming. Finally, on one Saturday, Kimball walked into the store and found Moody wrapping shoes. He said, “I want to tell you how much Christ loves you.” At Kimball’s clear presentation of the Gospel, Moody knelt down where he was and accepted Christ as Lord. He later told of how he felt at the moment of conversion:

“I was in a new world. The birds sang sweeter, the sun shone brighter. I’d never known such peace.”<sup>13</sup>

In the summer of 1858, Moody began teaching children along the shores of Lake Michigan, using pieces of driftwood as chairs. He was dubbed “Crazy Moody” at the time. Later he began his own Sunday School class with thirteen street urchins in an abandoned freight car, but the class soon overflowed the makeshift classroom, and Moody took over an abandoned saloon. Within four years, the class had increased its enrollment to fifteen hundred. The school became so large that it needed new premises, and the former mayor of Chicago gave Moody the hall over the city’s North Market, rent free.

Two years after starting this Sunday School ministry, Moody felt the pull of God's call so strongly, he resolved to give up his employment and set out as a traveling evangelist. When his employer asked him how he would support himself, he replied: "God will provide for me, if he wishes me to keep on; and I shall keep on till I am obliged to stop."

In 1875, he held his first city-wide crusade in Brooklyn, holding his meetings at the Clermont Avenue Rink, which seated 7,000. Only non-church members could gain admission, and as many as 20,000 were turned away at the doors. Over 2,000 people committed their lives to Christ during these meetings.

Next came Philadelphia. Moody's meetings were held in an unused freight depot and attracted nightly crowds of 12,000. His ushers were well trained, capable of seating 1,000 people per minute, and able to vacate the premises in four minutes if needed. The doors were opened one and a half hours early and in ten minutes all 12,000 seats were taken. On one night, President Grant and some of his cabinet attended. A total of 4,000 people decided for Christ.

During these rallies, Moody would preach the Gospel, purely and simply from the Bible, and then call people to "come to the altar." In fact, Moody pioneered the "altar call" approach that is used in evangelistic rallies today. Over the course of his ministry, he preached to more than one hundred million people and saw over one million first-time conversions to Christ.

D L Moody was buried in his hometown of East Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1899. Just before he died, he declared:

"Some day you will read in the papers that D L Moody of East Northfield, is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal— a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever."<sup>14</sup>

R A Torrey, one of Moody's closest friends, writes his conclusions in his book, *Why God Used D L Moody*. He described Moody as:

- A man fully surrendered to Christ
- A man of prayer
- A student of the Word of God
- A humble man
- A man free from the love of money
- A man with a consuming passion for the lost
- A man with a "definite endowment with power from on high"

Few men have had such a far reaching impact upon the world. Not only was Moody to speak to more people about Christ than any other man in history up to his time, but many of those who were to respond to his message would, in turn, travel to the unreached regions of the earth with the glorious Gospel of Christ.

D L Moody played a key role in preparing the Church for the greatest shift in thinking since the days of the church at Antioch in the first century. After three centuries of reformation and revival, the Church was ready to reach out to the unreached peoples beyond the borders of Christianized Europe and America.

## Eyes on the Unreached Nations

The Pietists were the first Protestants to reach distant peoples with the Gospel. The Moravians, based on Zinzendorf's land, organized the Moravian Missionary Church in 1732 and in twenty five years sent out eighteen missionaries to different parts of the world. In 150 years, they had sent out 2,170 missionaries. However, with this exception, and with the exception of a few missionaries going out to the new colonies, very little missionary endeavor had been undertaken prior to the 1790s.

From the last decade of the eighteenth century, however, the waves of revival became waves of missionary activity. Within one hundred and twenty years, the spiritual landscape of the world had changed beyond recognition.

This was the result of a new passion to preach the Gospel to the "heathen" springing out from the Awakenings in England and America. It would be at the cost of many lives, with disasters abounding, but by 1910 the Church would be firmly rooted in every continent. Bruce Shelley describes the situation:

"At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Protestant Christianity scarcely existed outside Europe and America. Asia was almost untouched by the gospel, except for small traces in India and the East Indies where the Dutch had taken over from the Portuguese. Africa was the 'dark continent' except for the ancient Copts in Egypt and Ethiopia. After eighteen centuries Christianity was far from being a world religion. It is a different story today...The greatest era of Christian expansion was the 19th century...For sheer magnitude the Christian mission in the 19th century is without parallel in human history."<sup>15</sup>

## The Father of Modern Missions

William Carey (1761-1834) is rightly called the first missionary of modern times. He was the most unlikely candidate to be a trailblazer for missions – an English cobbler outside whose shop hung a sign, 'Secondhand shoes bought and sold.' But inside hung a map of the world on which he had written information from the voyages of world travelers like Captain James Cook. He was convinced that Christ's great commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" was a call to all Christians. A consequence of his urging Christians to "expect great things from God" and to "attempt great things for God" was the creating of the first foreign missionary organization to come out of the Awakenings. In October 1791, the Baptist Missionary Society was founded.

The Moravians' missionary focus was on individuals and their aim was to reach those without Christ in some European colony. The Christian groups that came out of their ministry were like "tiny islands in the surrounding sea of 'heathenism.'"<sup>16</sup>



But William Carey's vision was grander, and Bruce Shelley describes what compelled him:

“William Carey introduced Christians to missions on a grander scale. He thought in terms of the evangelization of whole countries, and of what happens when whole populations become Christian. He held that the foreign missionary can never make more than a small contribution to the accomplishment of the work that has to be done, and that therefore the development of the local ministry is the first and greatest of all missionary considerations. Above all, he saw that Christianity must be firmly rooted in the culture and traditions of the land in which it is planted. For all these reasons and more, Carey gained the title, ‘Father of Modern Missions.’”<sup>17</sup>

## **The Birth of the Missionary Society**

The First Great Awakening stirred within Christians the desire to see the Gospel preached to the *whole* world. It led to the creation of missionary organizations which would multiply at the close of the eighteenth century.

In 1786, the Wesleyan Conference took on the goal of extending overseas, approving the plan of Thomas Coke to take the Gospel to India. Then, following the establishing of the Baptist Missionary Society with William Carey in 1792, the interdenominational London Missionary Society was founded in 1795. In the next year, the General Methodist Society, the Church of Scotland Missionary Society and Secession Church Missionary Societies were all founded, followed by the Church Missionary Society in 1799.

In North America, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was founded in 1810. The missionary challenge to reach native Americans with the Gospel had long been present, but this was the first American society specifically designed for worldwide mission.

In Europe, voluntary missionary societies began in Holland almost as early as they did in Britain, with the establishing of the interdenominational *Nederlandse Zendelig Genootschap* in 1797. In the years following the Napoleonic wars, missionary societies sprang up across continental Europe.

Other societies were also inspired by the Awakenings. Thomas Charles, from north Wales, was deeply concerned about the unavailability of Bibles in Welsh and so, in 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was established. Its purpose was “to encourage the wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment.” Bible Societies soon sprang up throughout the British Empire, America, Russia and Europe. The Religious Tract Society (now called the United Society for Christian Literature) was also established in 1799.

## **The Missionary Vision Catches On**

The example of William Carey and those who joined him was contagious. There arose a new determination among Christians to take the Gospel to the whole world.

The list of missionary pioneers is long. They are the Church's heroes of faith:

- Robert Morrison in China
- Henry Martyn in India
- John Williams in the South Pacific (martyred on Eromanga Island)
- Adoniram Judson in Burma
- Alexander Duff in India
- Allen Gardiner on Tierra del Fuego
- Robert and Mary Moffat in South Africa
- James Chalmers in Rarotonga and New Guinea (where he was killed by cannibals)

Many others gave their lives for the Gospel, succumbing to malaria or some other tropical disease, some killed by savage tribes. Here is just a small sample of these heroes of cross-cultural evangelism.

### ***David Livingstone***

David Livingstone (1813-1873) wrote in his journal:

“I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity.”<sup>18</sup>

A F Wallis records his missionary explorations:

“As an explorer, Livingstone ranks with the greatest. He walked further – across what is now South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania and Eastern Zaire – and recorded better than most of his contemporaries. He held to his early belief in the ultimate unity of all truth, biblical and scientific. But a mastering motive for his journeys was that they could help drain ‘the open sore of Africa’, the Arab slave trade.”<sup>19</sup>

His journey opened the heart of Africa. But David Livingstone's cause was far greater than exploration. His desire was to bring the light of the Gospel to darkest Africa.

### ***Hudson Taylor***

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) first went to China in 1853 with the Chinese Evangelization Society. In 1865, he founded the China Inland Mission, the first missionary group to work by the “faith principle” and the first foreign missionary organization that was truly interdenominational. Many others would follow his example. His vision was to bring the Gospel to every province of the Chinese Empire.

### ***C T Studd***

D L Moody's meetings at Cambridge University in 1882 produced wonderful results from what, at first, seemed a disaster. In Moody's own words: “There never was a place I approached with greater anxiety...Never having had the privilege of a University education, I was nervous about meeting University men.”<sup>20</sup> Winkie Pratney describes what happened:

“Seventeen hundred students noisily crowded into a hall that first evening to hear the ‘hick’ American evangelist...They ‘drowned out seventy brave undergraduates who tried to join in the hymns with vulgar songs.’ They yelled, ‘Hear, Hear’ to Vicar John Barton’s opening prayer, shouting derisive ‘Encores!’ to Sankey’s solo, and greeted Moody’s one-syllable pronunciation of ‘Daniel’ by ‘bringing down the house with cheering, jeering, clapping, and stamping.’ Yet Moody bravely hung in there. Only a hundred came the next night, but one was Gerald Lander of Trinity college, who (so embarrassed by the ‘civilized’ behavior of his colleagues the previous night) apologized to Moody. God touched Lander; he later became Bishop of Hong Kong. Over half of the audience responded to Moody’s appeal that night. The next night a hundred or more waited behind for counsel. The final meeting drew eighteen hundred and launched a worldwide interdenominational movement. Handley Moule, kneeling beside Moody on the platform, heard him say, ‘My God, this is enough to live for.’”<sup>21</sup>

Moody also challenged for missions and the impact on the students was powerful. One who was greatly affected was C T Studd, the popular captain of England’s champion cricket team.

Studd had recently inherited a small fortune, but in response to the message of the Gospel he gave away his wealth, gave up his cricket and went as a missionary first to China, then to India and finally, upon founding the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, went to Africa. His motto was:

“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Student Missionary Movement***

Seven graduates from Cambridge (C T Studd being the best known) formed what became known as “The Cambridge Seven.” They were all from upper-class families and caused an upsurge in student interest in missions when they offered to go to China as missionaries.

This was the beginning of the student missionary movement, for not only was Cambridge impacted by the Gospel and the challenge to missions, so was Oxford and the Scottish universities. Renwick and Harman write of this student movement:

“Informal meetings of students had long been a feature of university life, but student Christian societies



**The Cambridge Seven**, in traditional Chinese attire. From the top left: C T Studd, M Beauchamp, S P Smith, A T Podhill-Turner, D E Hoste, C H Podhill-Turner, and W W Cassels.

were organized at Cambridge (1877) and Oxford (1879), and soon Christian Unions in other British universities and colleges were formed. A national grouping of these unions occurred with the formation in 1894 of the British College Christian Union (the name was later changed to the Student Christian Movement)...The part played by students in the area of missions was enormous, and the formation of the Student Volunteer Movement in 1886 brought an organized arm of missionary enthusiasm into existence in both North America and Europe.”<sup>23</sup>

D L Moody’s impact on the missionary vision of students was not only felt in Britain but also in America. It was following a conference over which he presided in Massachusetts that the Student Volunteer Movement came into being. As a result of that conference, a hundred students offered to serve on the mission field. Through the Student Volunteer Movement, thousands of students would eventually become missionaries, traveling to almost every corner of the earth.

Winkie Pratney describes further what was happening in America:

“In [the Student Volunteer Movement’s] first International Conference of 1891 in Cleveland, they had 352 schools and colleges represented; within a generation, they involved forty thousand students in seven hundred campuses. The list of young leaders that came out of the revival spirit on these campuses reads like a ‘Who’s Who’ of world missions: John R Mott, E Stanley Jones, Robert Wilder, Samuel Zwemer and Robert Speer. Nobody laughed when they spoke their watchword: *“The evangelization of the world in this generation.”*”<sup>24</sup>

## **Twentieth Century Awakenings**

As the Church entered the twentieth century, a new wave of awakenings began. The Holy Spirit moved amongst people in different geographical areas at the same time, but totally independently from one another. An example of this phenomenon is given by J Edwin Orr:

“The first manifestation of phenomenal revival occurred simultaneously among Boer prisoners of war in places ten thousand miles apart as far way as Bermuda and Ceylon. Missionaries and national believers in obscure places in India, the Far East, Africa, and Latin America seemed moved at the same time to pray.”<sup>25</sup>

This global wave of revival was accompanied by “extraordinary praying, faithful preaching, conviction of sin, confession, and repentance, with lasting conversions and hundreds of enlistments for missions.”<sup>26</sup>

### **The Azusa Street Revival**

In 1906, an African American preacher by the name of William Seymour, hungry for more of God, began a home prayer meeting. Amid a ten-day fast, Seymour and others found what they were seeking: an outpouring of God’s Spirit, manifesting particularly in speaking in tongues. *The History of Christianity* relates the significant results of those days:

“This three-year-long meeting was the launching-pad of twentieth-century Pentecostalism. Many hundreds of Christians from all over North America and then from Europe and the Third World visited Azusa Street and took its message back with them. The fire spread rapidly, resulting in the formation of many new churches.”<sup>27</sup>

In the many years since that time in Azusa Street, the Pentecostal movement has spread throughout the world, becoming the fastest growing movement in modern Christian history.

### ***The Welsh Revival***

One of the areas impacted by the glory of God in the first decade of the new twentieth century was Wales. One contemporary report describes what was happening:

“A wonderful revival is sweeping over Wales. The whole country, from the city to the colliery underground, is aflame with Gospel glory. Police courts are hardly necessary; public houses are being deserted, old debts are being paid to satisfy awakened consciences, and definite and unmistakable answers to prayer are being recorded.”<sup>28</sup>

A visiting journalist reported the revival with these words:

“The scene is almost indescribable. Tier upon tier of men and women filled every inch of space. Those who could not gain admittance stood outside and listened at the doors. Others rushed to the windows where almost every word was audible. When at 7:00 the service began...two thousand people must have been present. The enthusiasm was unbounded. Women sang and shouted till perspiration ran down their faces, and men jumped up one after another to testify. One told in quivering accents the story of a drunken life. A working collier spoke like a practised orator; one can imagine what a note the testimony of a converted Gypsy woman struck when, dressed in her best, she told of her reformation and repentance. At ten o'clock the meeting had lost none of its ardor. Prayer and prayer went up...time and again, the four ministers who stood in the pulpit attempted to start a hymn, but it was all in vain. The revival had taken hold of the people...”<sup>29</sup>

One man and his daughter read about what was happening and decided to visit the area. On finding out from the porter at the station which train to catch they then inquired as to which way to go once they were off the train. “How will we know?” they asked. “You’ll feel it on the train,” he replied, “Go down that road and you’ll feel it down there.”<sup>30</sup>

“With less than a score of intercessors when it burst, the churches of Wales were crowded for more than two years; one hundred thousand outsiders were converted, drunkenness cut in half, and many taverns driven into bankruptcy. Crimes were so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying there were no cases of murder, assault, rape, robbery, or the like to consider. The police became ‘unemployed’ in many districts. Coal mines stopped

work with transport difficulties. The pit ponies didn't understand commands any more. They couldn't recognize their owners' redeemed language!"<sup>31</sup>

Not only did the Welsh Revival affect the local community; it had dramatic affect around the world. The Church had entered into the twentieth century with a wave of the Spirit sweeping through many nations. Winkie Pratney reports:

"The after-effects of the Welsh revival swept Ireland and Scotland...a great revival in Norway affected Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. Lutherans there called it "the greatest movement of the Spirit since the Vikings were evangelized." It broke out in Germany, France, and other countries of Europe, marked by prayer and confession...India in 1905-1906 saw awakening in every province, with meetings in many places five to ten hours long. And the Christian population jumped by 70 percent, sixteen times faster than the Hindu population...In Burma, Southeast Asia, the same year the ABMU (American Baptist Missionary Union) baptized 1,340 of the Shans in December alone...[H]uge conferences of ministers met in New York, Chicago, and other cities to discuss what to do when it began in the US. They met just in time. The Methodists in Philadelphia soon had over six thousand new converts in trial membership. The ministers in Atlantic City claimed there were only fifty adults left unconverted in a population of sixty thousand! Churches in New York City took in hundreds on a single Sunday, one recording 286 new converts...The 1905 Awakening 'rolled like a tidal wave through the South, packing churches for prayer and confession, adding hundreds to membership rolls...In the Midwest churches were suddenly flooded by great crowds of seekers...In the West...[u]nited meetings pulled crowds of 180,000; the Grand Opera House was filled at midnight with winos and hookers seeking salvation ...Orr records that church membership in seven major denominations jumped by 870,389 in 1906 alone; in five years it was 2 million and growing..."<sup>32</sup>

### ***Evangelistic Ministries***

After World War II, God raised up a number of mass evangelists, bringing great impact in the last half of the twentieth century.

#### **Conventional evangelism**

This style of evangelism centered on the straight preaching of the Gospel, using the rally methods pioneered by D L Moody. The best known of these evangelists are Billy Graham and Luis Palau, whose evangelistic "crusades" have seen hundreds of thousands respond to Christ.

#### **Healing evangelism**

The middle of the twentieth century also saw the rise of a new style of evangelism, focused on the healing evangelist. Although a uniquely mid-twentieth century phenomenon, healing revivalism was pioneered by men like Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947) at the turn of the century.

"Always smiling, never without a Bible (the only book he ever read), [Wigglesworth] saw almost every kind of healing miracle in his ministry, including fourteen raised from the dead, one of which was his wife Polly...In common with

other early healing revivalists, he was concerned for purity as well as power. ‘I want to move you,’ he said, ‘to a greater hunger for holiness and purity’... Glorifying Christ and utterly self-effacing, he was bold to the point of roughness.”<sup>33</sup>

But it wasn’t until the middle of the twentieth century that the practice of praying for the sick, through the laying on of hands, was “revived on a scale hitherto unknown.”<sup>34</sup> It was during this time that healing ministries such as William Branham, Oral Roberts and T L Osborne rose to prominence.\*

### ***The Charismatic Movement***

During the 1960s and 1970s came a new wave of the Holy Spirit – a phenomenon called the Charismatic Movement. The beginning of the movement is usually dated at April 3, 1960. On this day, Father Dennis Bennett of St Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, announced to his congregation that he had experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit, accompanied by “speaking in unknown tongues.”

From this event, the phenomenon of “charismata” – the gifts of the Holy Spirit – spread beyond the traditional boundaries of Pentecostal churches into mainline denominations, both evangelical and non-evangelical. Even the Catholic Church was greatly impacted by the Charismatic Movement.

“Thousands in traditional churches became interested in the charismatic message; hundreds of thousands...were searching for a more dynamic experience ...[F]or millions God spoke to them during this outpouring and used it to bring genuine life, joy, and a heartfelt desire for godly experience and truth.”<sup>35</sup>

### ***The Jesus Movement***

During the 1970s, a movement parallel to the Charismatic Movement began to surface. Disillusioned by the “sex, drugs, and rock and roll” culture of the hippie movement, many young people found a better alternative in Jesus. Winkie Pratney describes what happened as large numbers of hippies came to the Lord:

“Rejecting a caricature of Christianity that had estranged them from more orthodox avenues of faith, the new converts simply called themselves ‘Jesus People.’ Full of zeal, often with strange ideas and interpretations, not always of unquestionable purity or orthodoxy, they nevertheless exploded across the nation, forcing most of the traditional churches to either re-examine their approaches or react in horror.”<sup>36</sup>

The positive effect of the Jesus Movement upon the Church was to cause a re-evaluation of evangelistic efforts to reach the younger generation. Movements such as Youth With A Mission (YWAM) were established, which mobilized young people in great waves of evangelism and missionary activity around the world. Once again, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the goal of “reaching the world in our generation” became the catch-cry of young people the world over.

\* Many, however, in both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal circles, viewed these healing revivalists as fringe extremists. This was due not just to the emphasis on miracles and healing. William Branham, for example, digressed into serious theological error. Furthermore, his revival meetings attracted what many saw as a “personality cult.”

## **Moving into the Twenty-First Century**

The last three centuries have seen a series of awakenings. At the beginning of each wave of revival, the Church had generally become stagnant and inert. Yet into this deadness, the breath of God's Spirit blew, reviving the embers and creating a raging firestorm that swept across the Church.

Each generation has seen, in one form or fashion, the move of God's Spirit. Not all of the movements that arose out of such awakenings, however, stayed on track. Although many maintained a purity of Christ-centered holiness, some moved into theological error. Others eventually stagnated, as Christians settled into the status quo of the very society they sought to reach.

Although the Holy Spirit frequently moves upon his Church, revival itself is not what God is after. He revives for a purpose – to awaken and equip his Church for the mission of reaching the world in her generation. For this to happen, four things are needed:

- **A return to God's Word** – There has been a tendency, particularly in recent decades, to emphasize a subjective Christian experience at the expense of the objective foundation of God's Word, upon which such experience must be based. The Spirit and the Word must go hand in hand.
- **A revelation of the Gospel** – Error enters the Church when there is a lack of understanding in the Gospel. Each significant revival has seen a return to the truth of the Gospel. It has involved firstly a return to the Gospel *within* the Church and then a preaching of that Gospel *to* the world.
- **A restoration of New Testament principles** – Ever since the Reformation began, God has been “reforming” his Church, bringing about a renewal of structures, a restoration of truth, and a return to the vitality of the New Testament Church.
- **A reaching out to the world** – Although God does bring times of refreshing to his Church, his aim is not just to bless Christians. He blesses us so that we may be a blessing to the world. For this reason, any revival must result in the Church reaching out to the world – going beyond the blessing of God to the purpose of God. Genuine revival does not make us inward-looking, but outward-looking.

The wave of God's Spirit is building again. As we move into the next study on “The Church of the Twenty-First Century,” we will follow this wave and see how God, moving by his Spirit across the world, has prepared the way for what he is about to do in our own generation.



- <sup>1</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1994), p.117.
- <sup>2</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.367.
- <sup>3</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.367.
- <sup>4</sup> A M Renwick and A M Harman, *The Story of the Church* (Leister, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), pp.178-179.
- <sup>5</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.562.
- <sup>6</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.566.
- <sup>7</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.568.
- <sup>8</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.566.
- <sup>9</sup> A M Renwick and A M Harman, *The Story of the Church* (Leister, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p.183.
- <sup>10</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.452.
- <sup>11</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.411.
- <sup>12</sup> A M Renwick and A M Harman, *The Story of the Church* (Leister, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p.195.
- <sup>13</sup> Webzonecom, "Dwight Lyman Moody," <http://www.webzonecom.com/ccn/bio/moody1.txt>.
- <sup>14</sup> Wholesome Words, "Quotes and Notes: Echoes From Glory," <http://www.wholesomewords.org/echoes/moody.html>.
- <sup>15</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.373.
- <sup>16</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.374.
- <sup>17</sup> Bruce L Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), p.374.
- <sup>18</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.564.
- <sup>19</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.564.
- <sup>20</sup> Dwight L Moody, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.116.
- <sup>21</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.116.
- <sup>22</sup> WEC International Homepage, <http://www.wec-int.org/intro.htm>.
- <sup>23</sup> A M Renwick and A M Harman, *The Story of the Church* (Leister, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), pp.196-197.
- <sup>24</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.117.
- <sup>25</sup> J Edwin Orr, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.134.
- <sup>26</sup> J Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.134.
- <sup>27</sup> *The History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 1994), p.646.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ram's Horn*, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.135.
- <sup>29</sup> A journalist's report, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.146.
- <sup>30</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.146.
- <sup>31</sup> J Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.135.
- <sup>32</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), pp.136-142.
- <sup>33</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.163.
- <sup>34</sup> John T Nichol, quoted by Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.163.
- <sup>35</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), pp.167-168.
- <sup>36</sup> Winkie Pratney, *Revival: Its Principles & Personalities* (Lasfayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers), p.170.

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