

## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHARISMATIC REVIVAL AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

by

J. Edward Crenshaw

Revivals are, by nature, a disruption in the church's status quo. The charismatic revivals of the 1990s, predominantly centered at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in Toronto, Canada, and Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, touched many churches. Historically, revivals have had the positive fruit of restoring the very necessary experiential aspects of the Christian faith. At the same time, revivals have also included aberrations, errors, and excesses. The charismatic revivals of the 1990s were no exception.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between pastors' perceptions of positive and negative impact of revival, and the church's ability to maintain its biblical mission and nature in revival. These variables were studied through a selection survey that elicited responses on degree of revival impact, degree of positive impact, and degree of negative impact. Semi-formal interviews were conducted with pastors with a tenure of at least ten years in churches of at least one hundred attendance and who agreed that their churches were significantly impacted by the revival. The operating hypothesis was that pastors of churches that were able to maintain a focus on their mission and biblical nature during revival would have a healthier perception of the impact of the revival. The hypothesis was based on the premise that revival is not an end in itself but a catalyst to enable the church to fulfill the purposes of God for the church. The study upheld the hypothesis and offered insights on healthy revival spirituality.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM**

#### **Background of the Study**

Revival creates difficulties, even under the best of circumstances, yet Christian leaders, especially in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, frequently issue the cry for revival. Christians in all theological traditions are increasingly aware that the church is in desperate need, both corporately and individually, for a vital, life-giving, and ongoing connection to Jesus Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Christians hunger for an experience of God. David expresses the longing of believing hearts: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Ps. 42:2, NIV). Even when Christians are not in touch with such deep thirstiness of spirit, they at least have a notion that something is missing in their lives that cannot be satisfied by a dead orthodoxy and lifeless institutionalism that too often characterize their church experience. Biblical Christians desire “seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, ASV). They desire revival.

Revival is inherently risky, however. It causes problems because religious routines are disrupted and institutional safe havens are shaken by revival. In the excitement of a revival, especially at the height of a revival in the Pentecostal/charismatic tradition, many strange things can happen. As the familiar gives way to the unfamiliar, leaders have difficulty knowing where to draw the lines in a church service. Leaders are forced to decide what behaviors are appropriate, authentic, or excessive. Some churches are orthodox in their beliefs but are spiritually dead. In challenging dead orthodoxy, some revival participants will be sure to push against and even go beyond the bounds of orthodoxy or true doctrine. In the challenging of lifeless institutionalism, some Christians

will be sure to undermine the legitimate institution that is the church. In giving vent to the emotions that result from a touch from the transcendent God, some inappropriate and perhaps demonic expressions will certainly be displayed. These are risks that have been associated with every major revival in the American church experience.

The revival that occurred in North America in the 1990s, fostered by the ministry of South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne and eventually associated primarily with the revival centers of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in Canada and Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, was no exception with regard to these risks. This revival was characterized by such notable features as laughter, shaking, jerking, and strange noises and, as a result, was subject to much skepticism and ridicule. The revival was, more importantly, noted for a fresh and powerful experience of the love of God the Father. As a pastor of an Assemblies of God church, I was hungry for something more and was willing to run the risks of embracing the movement. I did not want the experience just for myself but desperately wanted to see the church I pastor spring to new life.

In the spring of 1996, my church, Victory Christian Fellowship, an Assemblies of God church in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, invited revivalist Barry Perez to conduct a week of special services. My hope was that we would experience revival, and many of the church members had a high level of expectation. Several of us had been to revival meetings, and we wanted to see more in our own area. We had been praying and fasting for revival over the course of several months. What began as one week turned into five weeks of continuous revival, with services twice a day for six days each week. By the end of the five weeks, our small sanctuary was packed far beyond capacity with people from all around the region, including New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware. Even

after the revivalist left, we continued with revival meetings for five or six nights a week for the next six months, as was noted in an article that appeared in Charisma magazine in January 1997 (Cassidy 21). In the first few weeks, a number of people made commitments to Christ, and even more experienced new joy in their relationship with God. Revival was glorious; revival was also costly.

Unfortunately, not everyone at Victory Christian Fellowship was excited about the revival. Many of the people who came to the services from other churches had already personally experienced much of the strange phenomena of revival, and they were looking for an opportunity to give expression to that phenomena because their home churches were not as open to it. They threw caution to the wind with little sensitivity for those who might need time to adjust to revival. Also, I had overcome my initial skepticism about the movement. I was absolutely convinced that it represented a genuine and powerful work of the Holy Spirit, and as pastor I did not want to do anything that would cause us to miss out on what the Spirit wanted to do. Furthermore, political forces in our church that tended toward a Pentecostal legalism and rigidity gave little more than lip service to an ongoing, genuinely experiential Christianity, in spite of our doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some of these leaders saw an opportunity to capitalize on the confusion, and unfortunately used their considerable influence and business expertise to pull many members away to start a new church, which soon folded. Demonic attack on past revivals can be seen both in the excesses of the movement (J. Edwards, Some Thoughts 410) and in the ferocity of the opposition (Lovelace 41). Victory Christian Fellowship was not immune from such demonic attack, and the result was that revival had many problems. Thankfully, Victory Christian Fellowship continued to grow and prosper over the next couple of years despite the difficulties of revival.



Because we who remained at Victory Christian Fellowship were, for the most part, those who were actively pursuing the ongoing experience of revival, we now faced no major institutional limitations on our experiential pursuit. We wanted God. We wanted spiritual experience, and we wanted nothing that would stand in the way. The unfortunate result of this development was an imbalanced experientialism in which experience had become, for too many of us, what John A. Mackay calls an idol (59). Though the initial phases of revival resulted in the enhancement of many of our church's ministries, experientialism became the prevailing paradigm, and many of us failed to see the more routine works of the church and the Spirit as part of God's purpose in revival. My pastoral focus was not on leading, staffing, and equipping the ministries common to churches not in revival. Instead of developing ministries such as small groups, need-meeting ministries, and others, I focused on sustaining revival meetings, both in our local church and eventually in citywide campaigns.

Problems with this imbalance were not apparent, however, until the experiential elements of the renewal began to wane. As the renewal waned, the majority of our church's leadership team realized that we needed to be more intentional about fulfilling the purposes for which God had poured out his Spirit. Steps taken to fulfill these purposes were met with skepticism and a fear of limiting the Spirit through organization and programming. A large and influential group of people were afraid of a retreat to the institutionalism from which we had been freed—and indeed, historical warrant for this fear admittedly exists (O'Dea 31-32). Resistance to planning, strategizing, organizational leadership, and other inherently institutional issues was strong, even to the point of questioning the validity of our concept of the local church. A small group of key leaders, in their rejection of the "institutional" church, affirmed the house church model as the

only biblically valid model. A spirituality that was highly experiential and almost gnostically dualistic prevailed among those who thought of themselves as more in tune with the Spirit. The exercise of spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, took on a manipulative taint as certain individuals sought to direct the course of the life of the church as well as to enhance their spiritual stature in the eyes of others. Revival was becoming even more problematic.

Victory Christian Fellowship was not the only church in our region that embraced the revival to such a high degree. We were also not the only church to experience the negative aftermath of an overly experiential paradigm that left little room for equipping the church to fulfill its broader mission. A pastor whose church was a regional revival center noted that the revival had released a “spiritual toxicity” into the church (Latshaw). Another pastor of a church that wholeheartedly pursued and welcomed the revival of the 1990s recognized some of the harm that it produced and, at one time, expressed reluctance regarding any further revival experiences (Defrain).

### **The Problem**

The reluctance of a “revived” church to embrace further revival is not unusual and is paralleled by the history of the Assemblies of God, a movement birthed in a highly experiential revival but that has, for the most part, been resistant to subsequent revivals. Yet, when segments of the denomination have taken the risk to embrace fresh currents of revival, the denomination has grown, as was the case with the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s (Poloma, “Charisma” 22-23; Assemblies 212-42). Otherwise, the Assemblies of God in the United States has tended to plateau or decline, both numerically (except among the Hispanic population) and in terms of the proliferation among its adherents of the spiritual experience that remains doctrinally central (“Charisma” 42). So

while the negative repercussions of revival may produce an understandable reluctance to embrace fresh currents of revival, this resistance has not proven to be healthy.

Charismatic and Pentecostal churches are able to maintain their health and identity only insofar as they continue to embrace the experiential elements they espouse doctrinally. Historically, the institutions that have risen from strong, religious experience have subsequently tended to suppress the experiences that birthed them (Weber; O'Dea). Even charismatic and Pentecostal churches have to be aware of, and somewhat cautious of, this tendency. Pentecostal and charismatic churches must, therefore, remain open to revival, the "seasons of refreshing" that, from time to time, have breathed new life into Pentecostalism and furthered its expansion. Fear of aberrations and excesses should not cause pastors of Pentecostal and charismatic churches to distance themselves from revival movements, thereby missing their benefits. Great evangelical thrusts, including the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, have ridden waves of revival that came complete with powerful spiritual experiences, including some experiential aberrations and excesses. The experience of revival is too important to toss out or ignore, much less oppose.

At the same time, health in the Pentecostal/charismatic churches is not entirely dependent on experience. The institutions—specifically the churches—that have risen from the experiences, while in some ways posing a threat to those experiences, paradoxically serve a vital function in propagating the experiences. At their best, the symbols, rituals, practices, and even the organization of these institutions serve to convey and explain the essential elements of the experiences and to encourage others to receive them. Early Pentecostals understood the outpouring of the Spirit as the empowerment to be witnesses. From the beginning, Pentecostals have seen themselves as essentially a

missionary movement. In other words, the experience of the Holy Spirit is not for the sake of experience only, but to fulfill God's purposes for the Church. Pentecostal and charismatic churches, therefore, are healthiest when they maintain the balance between enabling the experiences that birthed them, while at the same time fulfilling the purposes of the experience itself and of the Church as a whole.

In the case of Victory Christian Fellowship, we failed to recognize and foster other purposes of the church during the height of our revival, even though in some cases those other purposes were most definitely enhanced during the revival. This imbalance, after the initial blessing of revival, caused great pain in our congregation. Other churches, however, experienced revival with healthier results. During the peak of revival in the 1990s, some churches wisely embraced the revival, while their leaders, such as Ron Burgio of Elim Fellowship, simultaneously kept other purposes of the church in balance with the experience of revival ("Revival Survival" 22).

### **The Purpose Stated**

The purpose of this study was to examine pastors' perceptions of the impact of the 1990s charismatic revival upon the mission and character of their churches.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were designed to ascertain the extent of revival involvement of pastors and their churches along with pastors' perceptions related to the purpose of the study.

**Research question 1.** What is the pastor's perception of his or her church's experience of the Pentecostal/charismatic revival of the 1990s?

**Research question 2.** What is the pastor's understanding of the mission and nature of the church?

**Research question 3.** In what ways was the church's experience of revival congruent with or contrary to the mission and nature of the church?

### **Definitions**

Most of the terms used in this study pertain to issues of revival and the church's mission in a Pentecostal/charismatic context.

**Revival.** Revival is essentially an outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in a season of heightened spiritual experiences, individually and corporately. Revival is different from the state of spiritual vitality that should be the ongoing norm for the church. This study required using a definition limited to the core experience of revival rather than broader definitions that include other purposes of the church.

The major, widely recognized and accepted historical revivals in North America are the First and Second Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with numerous other revivals occurring on a smaller scale. These smaller revivals have been characterized by heightened spiritual intensity and experiences, often with reports of increased numbers of conversions, though not always.

**1990s Pentecostal or charismatic revival.** The Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles at the beginning of the twentieth century marked the birth of the Pentecostal movement. This revival is ignored in many evangelical accounts of American revivals, such as Wesley Duewel's Revival Fire, probably partly because of its extremely experiential nature, the doctrines it birthed, and its relatively minor initial evangelistic impact. Nevertheless, the movement the Azusa Street revival birthed is now recognized as the largest Protestant tradition worldwide. The movement has primarily been distinguished by its doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues and has succeeded, to a great degree, in maintaining the experiential

aspects of this doctrine.

As this movement has matured and institutionalized, revivalistic movements have occurred within and emanated from this theological tradition, such as the mid-twentieth century Latter Rain and healing revivals, the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, which impacted mainline and Roman Catholic churches, and, most recently, the revival of the 1990s. This latest revival became centered primarily at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (formerly Toronto Airport Vineyard) in Canada and Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida. Even though this revival occurred among churches that already embraced the charisms of the Spirit, the experiential elements of this revival were not centered on these gifts. Many of the revival experiences were marked by a variety of manifestations.

Wesley Campbell lists, among other manifestations, trembling and shaking, falling in the Spirit, flailing, laughing, euphoria, being drunk in the Spirit, and trances (84-89). Many of these phenomena have occurred in other evangelical revivals, including the First Great Awakening. In the case of the Toronto revival, participants experienced such phenomena as laughing, crying, healing, shaking, jerking, falling, animal noises, visions, and other strongly emotional experiences. Brownsville Revival participants experienced many of the same phenomena with some notable differences, namely the absence of the laughter and animal noises. Both revivals emphasized greater intimacy with God.

**Mission of the church.** The basic mission of the church is to worship God, to develop a people who are being formed in the image of Christ, and to serve as witnesses of Christ's kingdom. Local churches are to embody this mission. Rick Warren explains this mission with five basic purposes to which he claims all churches are called: worship,

fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. The mission of the church has also included care for the poor, both within the church and outside it. Pastors of local churches may or may not appropriate all of these facets of the church's mission.

### **Context**

The pastors under study were long-term pastors, serving at least ten years in their churches, with an average attendance of at least one hundred and up to 1,450. The churches were all located in the Northeast of the United States and concentrated primarily in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. One was in Delaware and one was in Massachusetts. Each of the pastors interviewed indicated that their churches had been significantly impacted by the charismatic revival of the 1990s. All but three of the pastors were in either classical Pentecostal or charismatic churches at the time of the revival. Two of the exceptions belonged to mainline denominations, but they had already personally embraced the charismatic movement some years before the revival. The third exception was in the process of transitioning the church from fundamentalist to charismatic theology and experience at the time of the revival outbreak. All the pastors, therefore, were open to the proper exercise of spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, or healing.

Though the 1990s revival may be traced to the ministry of South African evangelist Howard-Browne, it was primarily spread through the influence of revival centers established in Toronto, Canada, and Pensacola, Florida. The Toronto revival broke out in what was at the time a Vineyard Christian Fellowship church in January 1994 and the experience it propagated became known as the Toronto Blessing. The Brownsville Revival occurred in an Assemblies of God church in June 1995. Both revivals, while maintaining certain distinctives, were characterized by a heightened sense

of God's presence accompanied by various phenomena, such as shaking, jerking, crying, and falling. As news of these revivals spread, pastors and church members from around the world attended revival meetings. Frequently, as was the case with many of the participants of this study, revival broke out in their home churches following their return.

Though some of the pastors surveyed indicated that revival impacted their churches apart from any influence from Brownsville or Toronto, all of the pastors reported very similar revival experiences in terms of a heightened sense of God's presence. The result was that many of these pastors conducted additional services with a revivalistic emphasis, or their Sunday services took on a revivalistic nature, with such features as manifestations, extended prayer time, increased passion, or more expressive worship. Some of the participants in these services had profound encounters with the Holy Spirit, often producing great joy and emotional pleasure. The revivalistic environment usually provided additional freedom, beyond the freedom already enjoyed by most Pentecostal and charismatic churches, to give expression to the heightened emotions of the experience.

As with previous revival periods, the 1990s revival was subject to emotionalism. Otherwise legitimate feelings and expression become emotionalism when the emotions of the experiences with God become more important than God himself. Emotionalism may also obscure other important aspects of an individual's relationship with God and may displace other aspects of the church's mission. Addressing this issue in the highly individualistic, subjective, postmodern environment of the North American church was no less important in the 1990s revival than in previous outpourings.

The period of revival intensity lasted from the mid 1990s until around the year 2000, even though no specific end date can be given. In most cases, however, churches



that had hosted additional revival services ended them within a year or two of 2000, even though in spite of much lower attendance Toronto and Brownsville continued to host revival meetings. Another strong indication of the waning of revival is that in 2000 Steve Hill, the resident evangelist and primary catalyst of the Brownsville Revival, permanently departed that revival center and also ended his “Awake America!” crusades that he had been conducting in cities across the United States.

This study was conducted several years after most of the revival intensity had waned. Of course, churches that were strongly influenced by that revival are still dealing with its impact. Because of their long tenure, the pastors who were surveyed have had time to reflect on their revival experience, to observe where they have continued to enjoy some of the benefits of the revival, and to ponder how they could have done some things differently. This study was an effort to learn from their experiences.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study was consistent with the purpose of examining the relationship between pastors’ perceptions of positive or negative revival impact and the impact of the revival upon the church’s mission and character. The pastors in the study were selected based on their perceptions, measured in a short initial survey, of a strong impact of revival in their churches. The primary methodology of this retrospective study was the interviewing of these revival pastors. The “open-ended format” of the interview provided the latitude necessary to examine information that would have been more difficult to attain by other methods (Wiersma 185). The interview results were subjected to content analysis, enabling an examination of a broad range of positive and negative experiences of revival.

## **Subjects**

The subjects of this study are the pastors of churches that were strongly impacted by the revivals of the 1990s. More specifically, the pastors who were interviewed are those who embraced, in a positive way, the revival movements, even if the subsequent evaluation of the revival is negative. These subjects were selected by a questionnaire sent to pastors on the mailing lists of two revival ministries based in the Northeast:

Philadelphia Renewal and Reconciliation and Firepower Ministries International.

Questionnaires were also sent to pastors of churches connected with the Brownsville Revival's Philadelphia Awake America! crusade. The subjects were primarily from churches that hosted revival meetings of some sort, even if not of the extended variety of Toronto and Brownsville. Many such churches invited revivalists to conduct series of meetings consisting of three to seven days, perhaps several times over the course of the revival. Other churches, in addition to hosting guest revivalist speakers, had regular, even weekly, services specially oriented toward revival experiences.

## **Variables**

The variables in this qualitative research project primarily emerge from the revival stories of the pastors of churches that were strongly impacted by revival. Other variables derive from the pastors' definitions of their church's mission and character, and the pastors' perception of the revival's impact on that mission and character. Variables pertaining to revival impact include experiences that work either congruent with or contrary to the mission and nature of the church. In light of the role of the Holy Spirit in revival, special attention is given to the role of the Holy Spirit in shaping and empowering the church for mission. For the purposes of this study, appropriate responses to the Spirit as conveyed in Acts 1 and 2 and 1 Corinthians are foundational. John

Wesley's multifaceted understanding of the appropriate response to the work of the Spirit in revival is also important. Additional variables pertain to the excesses typical of revival outlined in Chapter 2, the idolatries that correspond to Mackay's facets of Christian reality, and the destructive appropriation of culture.

### **Instrumentation**

The primary instrument of study was semi-structured, personal interviews with pastors whose churches were strongly impacted by the revivals of the 1990s. The subject pastors were selected based on their responses to an initial questionnaire measuring total impact of revival along with perceived strength of negative and positive impact.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

Many churches claim to be in continuous revival. Church historian Richard F. Lovelace's approach would indicate that continuous revival is the goal. Indeed, some local churches are able to maintain their spiritual vitality over some time. This study is particularly concerned, however, with the missional impact of revivals that, over the course of history, have been characterized by strong, subjective experiences, often with a high degree of physical manifestations. These experiences can be so strong and so captivating of revival participants' attention that they can pull church leaders and members away from the church's foundational mission and nature. Expectations were that churches that experienced the revival but maintained focus on the key areas of the church's mission and the institutional elements necessary to accomplish the church's purposes enjoyed an overall positive benefit from the revival.

The practical result of this study is to encourage churches, especially those already in the Pentecostal/charismatic movement, to be ready to receive the greatest benefit that coming seasons of revival will offer. Too often after a revival experience,

subsequent revival involvement is highly resisted, not just because of institutionalization, but because of bad experiences due to revival excesses. The bad experiences cause leaders to be so concerned about excesses that coming revivals are missed and the potential benefit lost. The key to gaining maximum benefits from revivals is not to be overly concerned with the excesses, even though excesses must be addressed. The key to maximum benefit, rather, is to keep the church oriented towards its mission and essential nature and to use the fresh spark of highly experiential revival to achieve its mission.

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter 2 establishes the need for revival along with the nature of revival. Both issues have to be addressed because a leader's stance on them determines the degree to which a leader is receptive to revival, and what the leader does with the opportunities that come from revival. Chapter 2 also examines the subject of excesses and aberrations in revival and sets forth the biblical, missional emphases that minimize the damage of the excesses and maximize the gains of the revival.

Chapter 3 presents the design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 gives the analysis of the findings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

No topic related to church life excites me more than revival. Having experienced revival in the 1990s, I just cannot settle for a business-as-usual approach to local church ministry. I long for revival. At the same time, probably nothing besides spiritual deadness itself causes me more concern with regard to church life than revival. The disruptive force of a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God is needed to shake the church out of its complacency. The strong spiritual experiences often associated with classic American revivals do not always ensure that revival participants fully comply with God's will for the church, however. The experience of revival is no guarantee that revival participants will do everything right. In fact, the explosive force of revival coupled with inevitable human shortcomings guarantee that a revived church will still do many things wrong.

A church's response to the disruptive force of revival, therefore, can often be harmful and disruptive in ways that are not intended by God. Cultural and institutional restraints can accumulate over the years and hamper the mission and purposes of the church. Revivals are periods in which God removes these restraints, yet individuals and communities still need certain restraints in order to live and work together for the common good and for God's greater purposes. In the zeal that accompanies spiritual revival, people can cast off legitimate restraints even as God is removing restraints that limit the effectiveness of his church. God's purposes for the church are not always in alignment with the members' intentions, even for a people in the midst of revival. God's purposes, then, may be wrongly identified as fetters to be cast off. A proper and healthy response to revival requires that the church receive the refreshing of the Spirit while remaining true to God's purposes. The purpose of this study was to examine pastors'

perceptions of the impact of the 1990s charismatic revival upon the mission and character of their churches.

### **Biblical Foundations of Revival**

Periods of renewed zeal and dedication to God occur throughout the Scriptures.

#### **The Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, Israel is shown to have experienced times of turning away from obedience to God followed by periods of restoration. The book of Judges particularly demonstrates a pattern of decline, followed by judgment. Judgment in turn is followed by crying out to God and a return to faithfulness, upon which God sends a deliverer to rescue Israel, only to have the cycle of decline and return repeated. During the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, God's people experienced periods of varying degrees of restoration. Many such periods are noted for the king's abolishment of idolatry and return to the worship of God. One of the most notable "revivals" occurred with the rediscovery of the Book of the Law and the succeeding reforms that took place under Josiah. "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses" (2 Kings 23:25, NIV).

In these periods of restoration, generally a judge, king, or prophet is the key figure. Although these revivals include strong signs of corporate involvement and repentance, as is the case with Ezra's reforms (Neh. 8), they are of an entirely different nature than those that are promised for the future by Israel's prophets (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Jer. 31:33; Joel 2:28-29). The people under the Old Covenant receive the promise but they never experience revival as a general outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

## **The New Testament**

The Pentecostal reception of the Spirit by individual believers is seen as the promise of Joel 2:28 that the Spirit would be poured out on all people (Acts 2:16). Many American evangelicals who seek revival see the general pattern of Acts 2, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent response of the church, as a pattern for revival today. Evangelicals disagree about what specifics still pertain, as evidenced by controversy over the place of speaking in tongues, for instance. The primary element, however, is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers who are thereby empowered to accomplish God's purposes for the church, such as worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. If Acts 2 provides the general New Testament pattern for revival, Acts 1:8 provides revival's primary purpose: to enable the church to be Christ's witnesses, spreading the message of Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth.

## **The Nature of Revival**

The question remains as to whether revival should be the norm for the church. Furthermore, other dynamics that suggest that revivals are appropriately cyclical in nature should be explored. An additional concern is whether the pattern for revival based on the book of Acts focuses primarily on the outpouring of the Spirit as the initiative of God. The response of the church in the book of Acts as a basis for understanding the purpose of revival must also be explored.

## **The Normal State of the Church**

Some elements of revival should be the norm for the church, particularly the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in a church that is vibrant and fully engaged in God's purposes by the power of the Holy Spirit. Revival as previously defined is different from the ongoing norm of spiritual vitality, however. Lovelace's understanding is that

Jonathan Edwards would disagree. Edwards is perhaps the most influential student and proponent of revival America has produced and was the central figure of the American experience of the First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. Lovelace relates Edwards' view of revival:

Revival, in his understanding, is not a special season of extraordinary religious excitement, as in many forms of later American revivalism. Rather it is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit which restores the people of God to normal spiritual life after a period of corporate declension. (40)

Even though Lovelace may be correct, Edwards himself describes God's activity in the Great Awakening as "surprising," indicating something out of the ordinary (Faithful Narrative). While spiritual vitality is always desirable, the notion that a state of revival should always be sustained raises other issues.

An outcome of the view that revival should be the continuous state of the church is a focus on how people can initiate and sustain revival. The assumption is that if the church does things right it can sustain revival indefinitely and revivals will end only because of human error. In this case revivals are not limited seasons of opportunity. Another logical outcome of the view that revival is necessitated only when the church first declines into "formal religion" before sliding into outright apostasy is that the church must avoid all formal religion. Indeed, institutionalization can be a major reason the church needs revival. Among the excesses and aberrations in revival, however, and characteristic of many extreme revivalist movements, is the attempt to avoid all formal religion. Though Paul warns against dead formalism in 2 Timothy 3:5, his concern is not so much with the "form of godliness" but rather the denial of God's power. Paul is not advocating the removal of all forms and structures; he is concerned about a lack of spiritual vitality. The removal of human sin and formalism from the church has a role in an understanding of revival, but other concerns still pertain. Revival is more than God's



response to the negative human condition in the church or to positive human initiative.

### **Seasons of Revival**

God's sovereignty and initiative are revealed in the timing and purpose of revival. Even prayer and repentance are the result of the sovereignty of God (Zech. 12:10). If revival is a sovereign work of God, then the fact that the church is not in continuous revival leaves open the possibility that revivals are intended to be limited periods of heightened spiritual activity.

Warren compares revival with the waves of the ocean that may be ridden by a surfer. A potential surfer can purchase a surfboard and other surfing equipment and can take classes on how to catch and ride a wave but will never be offered a class on how to make a wave. Likewise, the church can learn how to ride a wave of revival but cannot create a revival; only God can (13-14). Martyn Lloyd-Jones' definition of revival "as a period of unusual blessing" marked by increased activity of the Holy Spirit (100) implies that revival is not the norm for the church. Many Pentecostal and charismatic leaders wish that the leading of the Holy Spirit be as powerful and his presence as manifest as during revival, but such is not the usual case for the church.

If part of the reason for revival is to deal with the problem of institutionalization, then revival will result in the renewal of church structures. William J. Abraham, in discussing the institutional components of renewal, states that renewal leads to health and that once the church is healthy, the patient does not need to keep receiving medicine: "There is no necessity for renewal at all times in the history of the church. To put the matter bluntly, there are times when it is foolish and dangerous to call for ecclesial renewal" (5). Proponents of revival would be wise to recognize when that part of the revival cycle that addresses institutional decline has fulfilled its purpose. The fact that the

process of ecclesial renewal should come to an end at some point demonstrates that the cyclical nature of revival is part of God's plan and not just an accommodation to the church's fallen nature.

The phrase used by Peter in Acts 3:19 does not refer to one particular event, but to something that is repeatable, indeed, cyclical: "seasons of refreshing" (ASV). The term *seasons* or *times* is a word that connotes windows of opportunity, periods of time that have beginnings and endings. The New Testament usage of the word also tends to imply special times involving the sovereign activity of God (Kittel and Friedrich 389). Periods of revival that have occurred repeatedly through the centuries should be seen as divinely opened doors of opportunity for the church.

Without question the church should normally be more spiritually alive than the bulk of Christian history shows the church to be. In that sense, some elements of revival should be continuous in the life of the church. If, however, God's sovereignty is demonstrated in the cyclical nature of revivals, church leaders will recognize revival as a window of opportunity pregnant with God's purposes rather than simply a rescue effort of God to get the church back to normal. Leaders should not approach revivals with the primary concern as to why revivals end. The nature of "seasons of refreshing" (Acts 3:19) is to come to an end. The church's primary goal in revival should be to find out what God wants to do in that season and then respond properly to God's initiative, not just attempt to sustain revival.

God has called people into an amazing partnership with him. That partnership is particularly exciting during a season of revival. The believers in Acts, by joining together in prayer before Pentecost, put themselves in a position to receive the work of God that was a matter of God's planning and timing. Likewise, Christian leaders today want to

cooperate with God and in no way be responsible for cutting a revival short, but sustaining a revival is not the primary concern. The primary concern is, in addition to knowing, loving, and experiencing God, the fulfillment of the purposes of God in the window of opportunity presented by revival. Leaders must not make keeping revival going at any cost their goal when the truth is that people neither start nor sustain a genuine revival by their willpower.

### **Renewal or Revival**

*Renewal* is the label used by the leadership of the Toronto revival to describe what was happening in their church and, in this study, is used interchangeably with *revival*. The term was chosen based on an understanding that genuine revival should fulfill certain purposes such as “social transformation” and “constant conversions” (Stibbe 105-24). Some of these purposes were not immediately being fulfilled in noteworthy ways, so the Toronto leaders chose a term that limited expectations for the movement.

Paradoxically, the notion that large numbers of conversions should occur as a result of revival caused Toronto revival leaders, quite unintentionally, initially to undermine the evangelistic thrust of the Toronto Blessing. Right from the beginning, the Toronto leadership understood that the revival was for the purpose “that we may walk in God’s love and then give it away” (Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship); however, the experiences of the revival characterized by strong manifestations were so powerful that they drew most of the attention of both critics and proponents. Some of the proponents who focused on the manifestations attempted to explain them in light of the history of revival. Examples are Guy Chevreau’s Catch the Fire: The Toronto Blessing—An Experience of Renewal and Revival and Roger Helland’s Let the River Flow: Welcoming

Renewal into Your Church. Not until 1997, over three years into the revival, did Chevreau publish Share the Fire, emphasizing the evangelistic mandate of revival. The manifestations were the early focus of the revival.

In answer to the critics who pointed out the lack of mass evangelism, Toronto Blessing defenders countered that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they experienced was not a revival and was for the church only and that it would hopefully lead to revival. Helland describes an interview with John Arnott, pastor of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, home of the Toronto Blessing:

Asked by a reporter, “Where is this going?” John Arnott replied, “This has the potential to rescue the planet!” Many believe the goal is *renewal* [original emphasis] unto *revival* [original emphasis]. Christians and churches experience renewal *so that* [original emphasis] they will be empowered to take the gospel of the Kingdom to the world *unto* [original emphasis] revival. (206)

Obviously Toronto’s church leadership wanted the blessing to go forth into the world, and because the initial impact was centered on the church, they explained the discrepancy by calling their experience renewal rather than revival.

Unfortunately, as the revival spread, so did the understanding that what was taking place in that phase was for the church only. Instead of the church’s being challenged to reach the world, the unintended result was that many embraced the renewal experience while waiting passively for the evangelistically effective revival that would hopefully ensue. By repeatedly stating that the current experience of renewal was for the church, leaders lowered the expectations of participants to have the evangelistic impact they might have had at the height of the outpouring.

In actuality, the Toronto leadership had high expectations but too much humility about what was taking place. In a letter dated 8 July 1994, revival historian Richard M. Riss describes the problem with failing to call the movement a revival:

Some of the leaders of the current move of God prefer to refer to what is happening as renewal, not a revival. This would be incorrect, in my opinion, based upon what I have observed to be the characteristics of revival over the centuries. Ironically, this hesitancy has caused some confusion in some quarters.... I understand the concerns of the leaders. We have not seen a lot of evangelism or mass conversions. While these things have characterized many revivals, they have not characterized all of them. And in many cases, these things have taken place many, many months after the initial stages of revival. (“God’s Restructuring”)

A recognition that revival was actually occurring would have shifted the emphasis away from the experiential components of the move to more purposeful elements—even though the full manifestation of the evangelistic purpose was yet to come. Because the experiential components were part of a renewal for the church, more passivity than was healthy was inadvertently promoted. A survey conducted by sociologist Margaret Poloma indicates increased witnessing and mercy ministries activity by Toronto participants (“Letter to John Wimber”), but this activity was not enough to convince Toronto leadership to call the movement a revival. People were more ready than was assumed to be led into fulfilling other purposes of the church. Unfortunately, the broader message was that the church was not yet in revival.

As Riss observes, the evangelistic impact of a revival often occurs well after its peak (“God’s Restructuring”). Some currently see the spread of the Alpha evangelistic program to be a result of the Toronto revival. Not only was Alpha’s originating church a part of the revival, but the Alpha program itself has proliferated through networks of church relationships established through the revival. Through Alpha, over six million people have received a presentation of the gospel since the peak of the Toronto Blessing (“Did You Know” 9).

If leaders of future revivals are to make the most of them, they would be wise to recognize that the cyclical nature of revival means a revival offers only a limited window

of opportunity. During this window of opportunity, the church must lay hold of the purpose of revival. Leaders would also be wise to define and explain what is happening in a way that discourages passivity and increases the expectation that revival will enable the church to fulfill its more foundational purposes, including evangelism. At the same time, a sensible recognition that the bulk of the revival's impact might come later is needed.

### **Response to Revival**

If revival is initially characterized by a fresh experience of God's presence, following the pattern of Pentecost, then the results of a present-day outpouring of the Spirit should fit the pattern of the early Church's experience. The expectation of these Acts 2 characteristics is so great that they have been included in some definitions of revival. Instead of defining revival, these characteristics should be seen as the church's response to revival as defined by Lloyd-Jones. Mark Stibbe defines revival as "a season ordained by God in which the Holy Spirit awakens the church to evangelise the lost, and the lost to their dire need of Jesus Christ" (14).

According to Lovelace, J. Edwin Orr identified the elements of revival on the basis of Acts 1 and 2:

[Orr's elements of revival are] corporate prayer of dependence on the Holy Spirit, followed by the spiritual reenergizing of the church and the empowering of preaching and teaching ministries reaching out in evangelism and healing social ministry, leading to the conversion of large numbers both within and outside the church. (49)

Lovelace himself prefers to define the elements of revival on an Old Testament basis, incorporating into his definition the human response that prolongs revival and furthers its purpose (52). According to the definition of revival used in this study, however, some of the elements identified in these other definitions are more appropriately regarded as

responses to revival. In any case, revival should ultimately involve more than just an experience of fresh power. Whether a means of sustaining revival or simply fulfilling the purpose of revival in the window of opportunity it provides, more comes after the “divine visitation” or “spiritual reenergizing” that forms the core of the revival experience.

### **Experience of Revival**

Regarding the evangelical revival that paralleled the much more charismatic Latter Rain movement of the mid-twentieth century, Ethel May Baldwin and David V. Benson observe that “this keen sense of balance between communion with God and activity was one of the most instructive lessons to be learned from the 1947 revival” (qtd. in Riss, “Latter Rain Movement” 27). Even in the less charismatic and less experientially oriented revival associated with Henrietta Mears, revival participants had a profound sense of the need for an experience of personal communion with God. Nevertheless, participants also knew the experience called for a response. Mainstream evangelicals in revival understood the need for purposeful activity beyond the personal experience.

Given the long list of responses to divine visitation that can be derived from Acts 2, “balance” may not be the right word to describe the relationship between communion with God and the human activity that results. As previously acknowledged, the church must engage in action as a response to the increased sense of God’s presence. At the same time, an experience of divine visitation is necessary in order for revival to occur. This visitation is the initial and primary component of revival. Without the impetus that is derived from it, no amount of human activity can legitimately be called revival. Lloyd-Jones’ definition of revival establishes the premise that the experience of the Holy Spirit is indeed foundational for anything else that occurs in revival. No emphasis on human activity or response can diminish the importance of the foundational experience.

The term “balance” is inappropriate to describe the relationship between responses that coincide with the mission and nature of the church and the foundational revival experience because the experience involves personal engagement with the Holy Spirit. The proposition that a Christian can experience so much of God’s presence that it has to be balanced with human activity is untenable. Any further discussion about the purposes of the church or the purposes of revival cannot obscure the primary component of spiritual experience in revival. Revival is essentially a period of heightened spiritual intensity that enables the restoration of experiential Christianity.

### **The Necessity of Revival**

Revivals are necessary in the life of the church over the course of history. A number of issues, both within and outside the church, require a revival movement to reenergize the church.

### **The Necessity of Experiential Christianity**

From the human perspective, the central issue in revival is the desire of Christians to have a genuine experience of God’s presence. Christians can know and feel with certainty that God is with them. The human desire to know God’s presence corresponds to God’s intention to know people and be known by them. Psalm 42:1-2 expresses the spiritual thirst that often precedes or accompanies revival: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (NIV). David conveys the primacy of this spiritual desire when he says, “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). A passionate, loving relationship with God is the foundational requirement of all Christians. When Jesus is asked what is the greatest



commandment, Jesus' response is, "The most important one ... is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'" (Mark 12:29-30).

Christians are called upon by God to be in a relationship of love with him. The loving relationship God desires involves the totality of a person's nature, including soul, will, emotions, and body. This kind of all-consuming love cannot help but touch upon human experience as people sense God's presence and love for them.

Although revival is linked to other purposes explored later in this study, the component of experience cannot be diminished. Even though the experience of God's presence may be essential to the classic, evangelical concept of revival, the experience is even more central in revivals of the heavily experiential Pentecostal and charismatic movements under consideration. The Latter Rain revival had two chief emphases: the restoration of the gifts of the Spirit and a heightened sense of God's presence (Riss, "Latter Rain Movement" 2). The revivals at Toronto and Brownsville were also exceptionally experiential.

John Arnott's book The Father's Blessing, published a year into the Toronto revival, devotes the majority of its pages to a defense of revival manifestations. Arnott does, however, devote the first portion of his book to establishing the revival as primarily a return of the church to the experience of God's presence. In his book Feast of Fire, Brownsville Assembly of God pastor John Kilpatrick relates the start of that revival with his own personal need to experience the love of the Father during a time of exceptional spiritual dryness and discouragement.

The experience of God's presence is not just for revivals. Theologian Gordon D. Fee affirms the centrality of God's presence in Christian worship: "The gathered church

is the place of God's own personal presence, by the Spirit.... There is not a more important word [or message] in all the New Testament as to the nature of the local church than this one!" (Paul 19). In his understanding of Paul's theology of the Spirit, Fee does not regard the personal presence of God as something to be taken simply as a matter of faith, a matter to be believed without actually experiencing it:

The Spirit stands near the center of things for Paul.... The experience of the Spirit is the key to his ... eschatological framework; the Spirit is the essential player in the believers' experiencing and living out the salvation that God has brought about in Christ. (19)

Lovelace also affirms that "the apprehension of God's presence is the ultimate core of genuine Christian experience" (85).

No attempts to balance experiential Christianity can legitimately deny the centrality of the experience of God's presence without removing what is at the core of the gospel: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Instead of achieving balance through minimizing the experience of God's presence, a more sensible approach is to explore the full implications of the experience of God's presence in Christians' lives as individuals and corporately as the church. Fee closely associates the experience of the Spirit to the ongoing work of the Spirit who "both forms the church into God's new (eschatological) people and confirms them into Christ's image through his fruit in their lives; and the Spirit gifts them in worship to edify and encourage one another in their ongoing life in the world" (Paul 19).

The essence of experience with God is relational, to know God better. Christians should, however, go beyond just knowing about God's attributes. Experience and greater knowledge of God should lead to a fuller appreciation of and commitment to living for the purposes that derive from such attributes as God's holiness and mercy. The actions that spring forth should not come just from a focus on the moral demands of Christianity

but from an experience of the Spirit's presence (Lovelace 92).

Though an experience of God will necessarily involve human emotions, the experience is not about emotions. Some of the confusion about revival centers on this issue. Opponents wrongly assume that the experiences are simply emotions out of control. For some revival participants, the emotional release is so strong that they have difficulty focusing on anything else. In J. Edwards' later writings, which included correctives for revival, he "increasingly stressed that the core of the awakening was not an emotional experience but a Spirit-given apprehension of the reality of God which purged the heart and led inevitably to a meek and lamblike spirit and to an outflow of good works" (Lovelace 42). If revival means the restoration of spiritual health, then it means a strong experience of God that should ultimately take the church beyond personal experience while never taking it beyond its dependency on the presence of God's Spirit.

### **Institutionalization and Spiritual Decline**

If, in the initial phases of revival, people overemphasize personal experience and its more outward manifestations, the overemphasis most likely results from the paucity of genuine, spiritual experience enjoyed by the church in the period immediately prior to revival. "All pietistic movements (historical movements strongly concerned with individual spirituality) come into being in reaction to a tendency for the individual's relationship with God to get lost or swallowed up in some form of churchiness" (Fee, Paul 147). As troublesome as experiential extremes might be, the historical reality is that the church has more frequently tended toward the opposite extreme of excessive institutionalism and religiosity rather than excessive experientialism. A major catalyst for the Great Awakening was that Puritanism had drifted from its experiential foundations towards "theocratic efforts to enforce pure religion" (Lovelace 44).

Sociologist Max Weber labels the foundational experience of social and religious movements designed to meet transcendent needs as *charisma* (1112) and describes the institutionalization of that experience as “the routinization of charisma” (1121). With routinization, religious experience tends to be obscured or suppressed by the institutional, structural, doctrinal, and/or ritual elements of the religious community that springs forth from or otherwise identifies with the religious experience. The institutional or organizational components of the religious movement then displace, or at least threaten to displace, the spiritual dynamic that gave rise to the institution. Weber sees this decline as the inevitable result of the normalizing of the experience in everyday life. “When the tide that lifted a charismatically led group out of everyday life flows back into the channels of workaday routines, at least the ‘pure’ form of charismatic domination will wane and turn into an ‘institution’” (1121). Weber believes that the exposure of the religious experience to the dominant forces of everyday life, particularly the economic forces, will result in the eventual loss of the purity of the experience (1121-22).

Sociologist Thomas F. O’Dea also sees the heart of religion as essentially a matter of transcendent experience. O’Dea recognizes the paradoxical necessity of giving expression to a transcendent, spiritual experience through everyday terms and forms, that is, through institutionalization:

Since such institutionalization involves the symbolic and organizational embodiment of the experience of the ultimate in less-than-ultimate forms and the concomitant embodiment of the sacred in profane structures, it involves in its very core a basic antinomy that gives rise to severe functional problems for the religious institution. In fact this profound heterogeneity at the center of religious institutionalization constitutes a severe and unavoidable dilemma from which problems arise for religious movements and institutions that recur again and again and can never be finally solved. Moreover, since the religious experience is spontaneous and creative and since institutionalization means precisely reducing these unpredictable elements to established and routine forms, the dilemma is one of great significance for the religious movement. (31-32)

The dilemma cannot be escaped even in the most revivalistic of churches. Humans have an unavoidable need to embody the sacred in words, rituals, and institutions that fall far short of the experience itself.

Because God uses people, human speech, and human organizations to convey the experience of the sacred to others, some degree of institutionalization serves a vital function. In Scripture, God demonstrates an amazing willingness to work and reveal himself through the profane. God's self-revelation through the mundane is the very nature of sacramental theology, the Incarnation itself, and God's continuing incarnation in his Church. On the one hand, an experience of God's presence can drift into an overemphasis on experience. On the other hand, the forms and institutions intended to convey that experience can likewise displace the apprehension of God's presence. Because of the initial meaning and importance of these outward forms and the value people place on them, they can be accepted as a substitute for the experience of God. When forms displace the experience they represent, a revival of spiritual experience becomes necessary.

As a result of the deep entrenchment of institutionalism, the revivals that ensue can be disruptive to the status quo. Strong devotion to the forms and institutions can endure to the degree that they become more important than the experience they represent, and fresh experiences may even be regarded as threatening. In reaction to such institutionalism, the initial stages of a revival involve a high degree of spiritual and emotional intensity. The purpose of the intensity is to move the church back to a lively state, which should be the church's norm. The shock of revival is not the normal state of the church but is necessary to restore the ongoing, experiential nature of Christianity, just as the shock of a defibrillator is not the normal condition for a beating heart but is

necessary to restore life. Revival is not the norm but part of a cycle that restores the church to normalcy.

Whereas Jesus was perfect in his attention to the cycle of spiritual refreshing and ministry that defined his life, human beings are not nearly as adept in recognizing and adapting to the seasons in which they find themselves. Once the experience that should normally characterize the church has been routinized, further experience can be deemed threatening even if it does not portray the intensity of a revival. A revival of experiential Christianity can be even more threatening to the institutionalized segments of the church because people within institutionalized religion do not have an adequate understanding of the nature and purpose of experiential Christianity. The return to experience is more threatening because the lack of understanding, of course, leaves the door open to the excesses and aberrations in terms of human response to a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit. Where the necessary elements of a lively church have been missing, human nature swings too far in the attempt to appropriate those elements once again.

Even though some degree of organization and some symbols or forms will be necessary to propagate Christian experience, the problem of the institutionalization that has suppressed spiritual experience must be addressed. Addressing these needs goes far beyond encouraging individual experience with God. Most evangelical revivals focus on personal renewal, but the church as an institution must be renewed, also. Abraham states, "We need, however, to break loose from this sort of individualism and begin to think in terms of ecclesial as well as individual personal renewal" (3). Revival does not call for a wholesale dismissal of the church as an institution but should include organizational renewal and flexibility that enable the church to fulfill its mission. Part of the mission of the church is to enable people to experience God's presence.

## **Sin and Repentance**

Christians in a victim-conscious culture may be tempted to blame the institution for the need for renewal, but they cannot deny the fact that “we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isa. 53:6). Personal sin can indeed limit believers’ sense of experiencing God’s presence. Through sinful, unbelieving hearts, believers can shut themselves off from the experience of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7-12). The result is a need to deal with sin through repentance, even for believers. Repentance has historically been associated with revivals, whether as precursor or as a component.

Lovelace argues that an awareness of God will result in an accompanying awareness of personal sin and is a necessary precursor to revival (81-83). Many critics of Howard-Browne and the “laughing revival,” as well as of the Toronto Blessing, note a seeming lack of repentance. I personally heard the question, “Where’s the repentance?” many times. My personal experience of both Howard-Browne’s ministry and the Toronto Blessing was indeed marked by deep repentance; however, something can be learned from the critics.

When revival participants primarily emphasize experience and the Father’s love, they miss an opportunity for greater self-awareness in the light of God’s holiness, and thereby miss an opportunity for character development and growth in holiness. God’s greatest demonstration of love is the grace extended in Jesus Christ, and grace has little meaning unless people recognize the depths of their sin. Such recognition should result in repentance. Certainly some confronting of sin was existent in the renewal movement of the 1990s; some of the sin with which the church had to grapple was pride, religiosity, and overdependence on human power in service to God. Ironically, before the experience of revival at Victory Christian Fellowship, I had been strongly reprimanded by some of

the more legalistic members of the church for not preaching hard enough against sin. In the midst of revival, I began to deal with the sins of legalism and religious appearances and experienced strong resistance from these same members, who preferred I preach against someone else's sin. A valuable lesson in this illustration is that the sins confronted in revival, or as a precursor to revival, should not be just the sins of other people, whether of other individuals or of the institution of the church.

An accepted understanding of Toronto Blessing leaders was that the experience of renewal was for the church. If the 1990s revival experience was for an already-saved church, then participants could focus less on justification and the sin that necessitates justification. The primary emphasis on learning that Christians are loved by the Father and did not need to earn his love by religious works was a message very much needed in a culture starved for fatherly love. Unfortunately, without a corresponding understanding of sin revival participants were very much subject to the cultural emphasis on tolerance and acceptance. Even if not the intent of Toronto revival leaders, the result played into North American society's psychotherapeutic message that victims simply need love and acceptance. This result left little room for a traditional emphasis on holiness and sanctification.

On the other hand, the Bible-belt style revivalism of the Brownsville Revival took place in a church of the Assemblies of God, a denomination that had sprung from the holiness movement. In that context, the revival message tended much more toward repentance and holiness and only secondarily on experiencing the Father's love. As a difference existed between Toronto and Brownsville in this regard, so historical revivals have differed greatly in terms of their emphasis on holiness and repentance. Lovelace notes that the church began to drift from this emphasis, putting more stress on the



goodness of God so that in the Second Awakening, hell was scarcely mentioned.

Lovelace credits this shift with a corresponding shallowness in the impact of revival (83).

The question of what really comes first, repentance or revival, is pertinent.

Arguably, an individual is more likely to be aware of personal sinfulness after an experience with God and the accompanying revelation of God's holiness. In such a case, the experience of revival logically precedes repentance. Revival leaders need to be aware of the need to respond to an outpouring with repentance so that God's purposes may be fulfilled in Christians' lives. Scripture proclaims repentance as a necessary component of the Christian life and an appropriate response to the revelation of God's grace and holiness. Laying such a foundation before and in the earlier stages of revival will lead to a healthier appropriation of revival.

### **Cultural Issues in Revival**

Revival is not just a matter of resuscitating the church because something is wrong within the church. Brian Edwards' assertion reflects the view of many who see revival simply as a matter of correcting the church: "Revival is needed not because of the state of the world, but because of the state of the church" (38). Conditions in the surrounding community and world call for a special outpouring of God's Spirit to equip the Church to be effective in a rapidly changing cultural environment. During times of war and social upheaval, revival may be seen as the answer. David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Britain, said after World War I, "Nothing less than a great spiritual awakening among the nations could possibly enable the leaders to iron out the appalling difficulties harassing their minds day and night" (qtd. in Matthews 21). The interplay between the church and culture during a time of revival presents great opportunities for the church to fulfill more effectively its purpose of impacting the world.

## **A Changed Cultural Environment**

Where J. Edwards and Lovelace focus more on the issues of spiritual decline, William G. McLoughlin looks almost exclusively at the cultural causes for revival. McLoughlin does not focus on the internal culture of the church and its self-limiting institutionalization; instead, McLoughlin lists five major causes of the First Great Awakening in America, all of which pertain to the general cultural environment:

1. rapid social change,
2. the European Enlightenment,
3. sociological shifts associated with the expanding frontier,
4. the abandonment of simplicity and pietism by the wealthy, and
5. class conflict associated with the Industrial Revolution (52-53).

Even if the health of the church was good, rapid social change prior to the Great Awakening had produced “growing incongruence between prescriptive norms and prevailing circumstances” (52). The “prescriptive norms” that had worked under the old social order no longer worked in the new environment.

Again, the previous discussion as to whether revival should be the norm for the church is relevant. Some see revival as normal and blame the church for its failure to maintain revival. This viewpoint fails to recognize that even when the church maintains its spiritual vitality, revival can still become necessary. A fresh work of God becomes necessary to equip the church to impact a cultural environment that has experienced a radical shift. The church can appropriately provide a stable environment for its members during tumultuous times. Eventually, however, the older prescriptive norms that work so well within the church long after the surrounding cultural environment has changed are no longer as relevant to the new social order. In that case revival becomes necessary for

the church to articulate and demonstrate prescriptive norms in new ways that address the needs of the new social order. Problems internal to the church, such as institutionalization, are, therefore, not the only problems necessitating revival.

### **Additional Environmental Considerations**

While Lovelace deals primarily with spiritual issues and McLoughlin addresses primarily sociological causes, the need for revival involves both. The interplay among spiritual decline, institutionalization, and cultural changes beyond the church can contribute to a failure to address adequately the spiritual needs of the next generation of Christians. This generation gap occurs when a succeeding generation has not experienced renewal and accepts a sterile spirituality (Lovelace 62). Spiritual reality that goes beyond human culture can also account for the need for cyclical revival. Spiritual decline can cede territory that the church had taken from the powers of evil. The kingdom of God is advancing against Satan's kingdom, but nothing guarantees that the advance is taking place at a consistent, steady pace. Huge surges in spiritual vitality occur on occasion as, in God's timing, the church advances against the kingdom of darkness (68-69).

### **An Adaptable Church**

Arguably, a spiritually alive church should always be adapting to connect with the surrounding culture so that change in the environment will not catch the church by surprise. A church actively engaged in mission to its culture should be continuously aware of the changes taking place and then continuously adapt accordingly. Revival, at any rate, is a window of opportunity for the church to embrace creative change in order to be effective. "In periods of awakening, the church is all growth and movement as new and creative expressions of the gospel are shaped to communicate to the surrounding culture" (Lovelace 197).

Of course, according to the new standards of the ever-evolving North American culture, change is good—almost always good. Postmodern Americans practically abhor sameness and tradition, however meaningful they might be. In such an unstable cultural environment, the church gains advantage by engaging in limited adaptability—adaptable enough to stay relevant but stable enough to provide refuge in a time of confusion and to consolidate the gains enjoyed during a time of expansion. The same rapid changes that demanded the church change at the time of the Great Awakening, as presented by McLoughlin, also produced stress that could only be resolved by a degree of stability, particularly the stability that comes from God's presence in Christians' lives.

### **Enculturation**

Part of the trouble the church has in appropriating the changes necessitated by a changing culture is that people have difficulty distinguishing between those new elements of church life, including organization and ritual, that are mere cultural conditions or accommodations and those elements that are more genuinely a function of the restoration of spiritual life. People have difficulty distinguishing between the new outward, cultural forms and styles that are added to the life of the church and the transcendent spiritual reality they represent (Mackay 29-33).

I noticed this phenomenon in a prophetic conference in which the music was an extemporaneous jam session, considered to be led by the Holy Spirit. The sound was similar to an artsy, new age musical presentation. Critics might dismiss it as simply a new age infiltration into the church and, therefore, something to be avoided as demonic. Strong proponents, however, might confuse the cultural packaging itself with the work of the Holy Spirit, considering those who do not appreciate its form as spiritually closed and resistant. Certainly the Holy Spirit will use cultural packaging similar to that used by

non-Christian elements of society because for certain segments of the population that packaging is their accepted mode of communication and expression. Culturally appropriate communication enables people to appropriate God's activity in their lives in ways they could not through more traditional church packaging. The newness of the packaging used in the creative height of revival should not, however, be confused with the essential nature of God's work. In other parts of the church, God may be working simultaneously, but with a different packaging, at times with less emotion or free-style expression. Failure to be discerning in this regard may bring unnecessary strife and division to a church. Revival proponents may think of themselves as defenders of revival when in actuality they are merely defending a new outward form.

Historical revivals have been subject to great error by confusing outward forms with spiritual dynamics. In Luther's time, marked by great social and religious upheaval, some revival leaders became confused as to the nature of God's work. During Luther's period of absence from Wittenburg, a group of "prophets" from the city of Zwickau established themselves as the spiritual authorities, claiming direct inspiration from God so that they needed neither Scripture nor other human authority. Though Luther was fearless in standing up to the cultural institutions of his day, the Zwickau prophets went much farther, so far as to advocate the armed overthrow of civil authority as a part of their program of spiritual reform (D'Aubigne). Though the Zwickau prophets are an extreme example, they demonstrate that during a time of both cultural and spiritual transition, Christians can have difficulty determining what changes are more cultural, dealing with outward forms, and what changes are more essentially spiritual in nature.

Churches that experience revival today must be cautious about turning revival into little more than a glorified culture war. Furthermore, the institutional and cultural

needs for renewal can be so substantial and obvious that those who advocate revival fail to see their own shortcomings. Revival advocates put their spiritual health at risk when they focus on removing the specks from the eye of a supposedly dead church locked into an old, cultural pattern, only to ignore the logs of the new cultural reality in their own eyes. Of course, God is at work within the church and in the new cultural reality as well, and leaders should not force a dichotomy between God's work in both realms. Nonetheless, revival advocates should not confuse God's essence with the cultural clothing he might wear and should remain alert to unbiblical characteristics in the new cultural reality.

Whereas previous missions efforts confused the spread of Western culture with the spread of the faith, missiologists over the last century have recognized the need to spread Christianity through culturally appropriate forms. The same kind of missionary mind-set is necessary to be missional today within North America's changing culture. Revival enables the process of removing the cultural trappings that overlay the reality of Christian faith—a process called disenculturation. "Disenculturation through the full appropriation of life in Christ is vital to the church's missionary expansion" (Lovelace 199). Rapid social change necessitates this disenculturation and is, therefore, a catalyst to revival.

A missional mind-set not only recognizes the need to remove old cultural trappings; it also recognizes the need for expressing the Christian reality in ways appropriate to and understandable by the new culture. In that sense, some enculturation is needed, even though Lovelace uses the term "enculturation" exclusively in a negative way. This view represents a failure to realize that human beings are necessarily bound to some cultural system and, as a result, cannot have a pure spirituality that is completely

transcendent in nature and devoid of enculturation. The nature of the church's mission to the world requires working through cultural realities.

Recognizing the missiological dynamic of reaching people in their cultural condition again draws attention back to the purpose of revival and, more generally, the purpose of the church. The cultural forms should convey the essence of the gospel and the interaction between God and human beings. Failure to connect new forms birthed in revival with the mission of the church means that the church becomes culturally relevant without becoming spiritually relevant to the world. In such a case, one cultural form has merely been replaced by a new cultural form. Because of this potential, the church should diligently focus its attention on the main purposes of Christian and church life, such as evangelism, fellowship, service, and Christian formation.

In the midst of revival when the excitement of the new can distract Christians from their primary tasks, the church should remain focused on its purposes in order to maintain church health and help prevent imbalance. Leaders must be aware of the potential to disenculturate from the established order, only to re-enculturate in an unhealthy way. Unhealthy enculturation "is bound to recur in places where pop psychology and experiential froth are being substituted for biblical spiritual theology" (Lovelace 200). A culturally appropriate warning for today would also address the "pop spirituality" of America's religious landscape. Due to the decreasing influence of biblical Christianity in American culture, the cultural environment that demands revival can also damage the health of a revival that embraces the culture's spirituality. Postmodern American spirituality will produce unhealthy enculturation if it is allowed to substitute for the "biblical spiritual theology" that is needed.

### **Excesses and Aberrations in Revival**

The fact that God fulfills his transcendent, eternal purposes through temporal, finite means is an amazing truth of the Christian faith. In the ensuing partnership between God and humanity, however, human beings do not always properly fulfill God's purposes. In the excitement that comes with revival, people become confused about what is essentially God's action and what is a human response. In making the adjustments necessary to reach a changed cultural environment, the church can confuse the new cultural trappings with the essence of Christian faith. People inevitably make many mistakes in revival. Additionally, demonic forces opposed to the advance of the kingdom of God can work to produce havoc. Christians would be wise to stay attentive to the ways revivals can drift into excesses and aberrations that are counterproductive to the purposes for which God sends revival. "Renewal can go wrong in all sorts of ways.... The quest for renewal can be disastrous. It can all too easily lead to the killing of the patient" (Abraham 4). The patient in this case is the church, which can be harmed through revival excesses and aberrations.

In Luther's day, the Zwickau prophets dismissed scriptural authority because they preferred to be led by the Spirit rather than a mere book. Today's proponents of revival have to admit that Pentecostal/charismatic revivals, while theoretically committed to the authority of Scripture, can be subject to fanciful interpretations based on supposed prophetic insight. The excitement of revival brings an openness to change; that same openness can leave the church vulnerable to accepting falsehoods. Furthermore, revivals elevate the hopes of their participants. When revivals wane without having fulfilled the elevated hopes of its participants, the subsequent disillusionment can leave the church open to falsehoods that offer the promise of fulfilling those hopes.



Following the cycles of revival that occurred over the course of the Great Awakening, disillusioned Christians were subject to following false teachings because of the renewed hope they offered. “Fatigued by the psychological strain of years of disillusioning revivals and petty doctrinal squabbles among all denominations, many found [the] certainty [of Ann Lee’s Shaker teachings] refreshing and comforting” (Brewer 5). As refreshing as revival-weary Christians found her teaching, the primary problem was that Ann Lee was a false messiah (5). Other periods of revival have produced similar disillusionment that left adherents in a vulnerable condition. During the 1960s and 70s, “critics of the [Jesus] movement on the college scene ... complained of emotional ‘crashing’ on the part of converts unable to maintain the spiritual ‘high’ promised them by evangelists” (Lovelace 29).

### **No Perfect Revival**

Concern about excesses should not cause leaders to think that if people will just be moderate in their pursuit of revival, then they can have the perfect revival. As the church is not perfect because the church is people, and no perfect people exist, so revival is not perfect, either. Unfortunately, excess in revival is the primary fear preventing many church leaders from receiving the benefits that come through revival (Poloma, “Charisma”). Despite the fears, revival remains a necessity following periods of institutionalization and decline in the church and rapid change in the cultural context. The desire for health and balance in revival should not mean fearing revival.

Every major revival has been marked by excesses, usually involving extreme emotions and physical manifestations (B. Edwards 196-207). Though B. Edwards is conservative in terms of his willingness to allow commotion along with emotion, he nonetheless agrees that “these physical experiences in revival are too common and too

widespread to be dismissed either as all human or all satanic in origin” (203). J. Edwards, in his later, more corrective writing on revival, still affirms that unusual manifestations can be expected:

A great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, and darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected in the beginning of something very extraordinary, and very glorious in the state of things in human society, or the church of God. (Some Thoughts 318)

Even though J. Edwards sees the mixture of good and bad, especially in the beginning stages of revival, the benefits of revival are still worth the trouble:

If God intends this great revival of religion to be the dawning, or forerunner of an happy state of his church on earth, it may be an instance of the divine wisdom, in the beginning of it, to suffer so many irregularities and errors in conduct, to which he knew men, in their present weak state, were most exposed, under great religious affections and when animated with great zeal. For it will be very likely to be of excellent benefit to his church, in the continuance and progress of the work afterwards. (323-24)

In advocating for the church to be true to its purpose, leaders cannot be so fearful as to deny the church the very experience it needs in order to fulfill that purpose. In other words, if church leaders attempt to put out all the wildfire, the church will have no fire.

### **Reality and Appearance**

Mackay, ecumenist and president of Princeton Theological Seminary from 1936 to 1959, identifies four primary and necessary components of genuine Christianity, “the constitutive facets of Christian reality”:

1. God’s self-disclosure,
2. the transforming encounter,
3. the community of Christ, and
4. Christian obedience (23).

God’s self-disclosure centers on his revealing himself primarily through Scripture. Sound

doctrine properly articulates God's self-revelation through Scripture. The transforming encounter involves genuine, interpersonal experience with God and includes accompanying feelings expressed in worship. The community of Christ points to the necessity of involvement in the Church and human need for Christian fellowship and some degree of structure. Christian obedience centers upon action and service, which would include outreach and mercy ministries (23-29). The degree to which a church or movement incorporates each of these "constitutive facets" of reality may actually be a very good measure of health.

Mackay is not advocating, however, that churches or movements attempt to keep these four facets in balance. The thrust of his book is to warn against the idolatries or "shadows" that accompany each of the valid aspects of reality (23). Mackay designates these "betraying shadows":

1. theologism: the idolatry of ideas,
2. impressionism: the idolatry of feeling,
3. churchism: the idolatry of structure, and
4. ethicism: the idolatry of prescripts (23).

These shadows, the betrayers of reality, are common to all Christian movements, from liberal to fundamentalist to charismatic. While revival can be a rebellion against the idolatries that exist in an institutionalized church, the revival movement itself remains susceptible to its own idolatries in each of these areas. The shadow that receives the most criticism in revival is the idolatry of feeling, but the others also present dangers.

Part of what Americans experienced in the 1990s revivals were reactions to some previous imbalances. Revival proponents were reacting to theologism, churchism, and ethicism. Theologism prevailed even in Pentecostal churches, as some churches were

characterized by a dead orthodoxy. Truth was being proclaimed, but without engaging the Holy Spirit. Churchism was also being confronted by revival. Although Pentecostal and charismatic churches shunned denominationalism, they still maintained a program orientation. These churches frequently relied on methods without the accompanying empowerment of an ongoing relational experience with Jesus and his Spirit—a form of godliness with no power. Ethicism, in some circles, was characterized by Pentecostal legalism; in other circles, it was evidenced by an attempt to be good and moral by human effort. As the Pentecostal and charismatic movements had become increasingly acceptable in mainstream American society, what may at one time have been impressionism—the emphasis on feeling—had waned prior to revival. Subjective experience was the only area not being emphasized strongly enough before revival.

Because extreme emotions are hard to maintain without some outside stimulus, the church will probably only see the idolatry of impressionism when strong feelings are initially sparked by a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. The other “shadows” or idols are easily maintained by human strength. Also, when those idols are strong, impressionism has little chance to take hold. Because emotions have probably been too long repressed in the church, leaders can have great difficulty in recognizing when the genuine resurgence of emotion passes over into idolatry of feeling.

### **Opposition**

The opposition that revival faces because of the strong emotions and other phenomena that accompany revivals is itself often aberrational. The excesses of emotion are condemned by an opposition that is marked by religious pride and institutionalism. The opponents displaying these characteristics can be just as fleshly as the behaviors they oppose. Although opponents often reject revival on theological grounds, rejecting the

living reality of the Spirit's activity undermines sound theology (DeArteaga 53). The leading opponent of J. Edwards and the Great Awakening regressed from being the defender of Christian orthodoxy to playing a foundational role in Unitarianism (53). Lovelace, in fact, sees some persecution of revival as a demonic attack intended to discredit the move of God (41).

Opponents generally latch onto excesses and errors as the basis of their opposition but the real issue, according to J. Edwards, is their opposition to the realities of the spiritual experience (Some Thoughts 411). Because opponents cannot as easily attack the realities, they tend to give inordinate focus to perceived problems. The intensity of the assault itself may be evidence of the demonic nature of the opposition (Lovelace 257). The opposition's focus on manifestations, followed by revival defenses that also center on the manifestations, could be evidence of a demonic strategy to distract the revival from its more important purposes by having everyone consumed with secondary issues.

### **Demonic Attack from Within**

William DeArteaga gives credit for the demise of the Great Awakening to the frontal assault of the critics (45-60). J. Edwards, however, is more concerned that the devil defeats revival from within. Edwards observes that the proponents of revival attribute all opposition to the devil. He believes that this refusal to receive correction from critics of the revival actually gives the devil an advantage (Some Thoughts 410). Because no correction is heeded, the devil is then free to push revival participants to excess, thereby giving the opponents even more ammunition in their attack on revival and further discrediting the movement in the eyes of the public. Edwards believes that if the devil cannot hold back revival, he will push revival participants too far:

If we look back into the history of the church of God in past ages, we may observe that it has been a common device of the Devil to upset a revival

of religion, when he finds he can keep men quiet and secure no longer, then to drive 'em to excesses and extravagances. He holds them back as long as he can, but when he can do it no longer, then he'll push 'em on, and if possible, run 'em upon their heads. (410)

In revival, many participants desire to embrace the work of the Holy Spirit fully and to apply themselves to the movement without restraint. They tend to resist all restraining efforts as, at worst, demonic opposition and, at best, the stubbornness of dead religion. They would do well to heed Edwards' warning concerning the devil's primary strategy of assault from within the movement itself:

And it has been by this means chiefly, that he has been successful, in several instances, to overthrow most hopeful and promising beginnings: yea, the principal means by which the Devil was successful, by degrees, to overset that grand religious revival of the world, in the primitive ages of Christianity. (410)

Keeping the devil's primary strategy in mind, other specific errors that frequently accompany revivals should be reviewed.

### **Pride**

St. John of the Cross, in addressing problems with those who are "beginners" in the deeper spiritual life, notes the tendency toward pride among spiritual novices:

As these beginners feel themselves to be very fervent and diligent in spiritual things and devout exercises, from this prosperity,... there often comes to them, through their imperfections, a certain kind of secret pride, whence they come to have some degree of satisfaction with their works and with themselves.... They condemn others in their heart when they see that they have not the kind of devotion which they themselves desire.....

In these persons the devil often increases the fervour that they have and the desire to perform these and other works more frequently, so that their pride and presumption may grow greater.

Ironically, as this pattern is repeated in revivals of experiential Christianity, those who are supposedly escaping pharisaical religion can quickly develop their own pharisaism. Though opposition to revival can be schismatic, pride within revival has its own divisive nature. Abraham sees this tendency as the major fallacy of renewal movements:

The most conspicuous side effects of renewal are, in fact, judgmentalism and schism: those committed to renewal very quickly begin to see themselves as better than others, especially better than those others who do not share their vision of change, and they equally very quickly move to break up the body of Christ into factions and parties. (4)

Schismatic tendencies were evident in the renewal of the 1990s.

As the renewal waned, participants experienced an increase in expectation of, and prophecies proclaiming the coming of, a second wave of revival (Poloma, Main Street Mystics 156-63). Some prophecies foretold the separation of true believers—those who stayed with revival—from those who were lukewarm, those who not only resisted revival but who had experienced revival only to return to a pre-revival spiritual condition or church service style. Many of these prophecies were undoubtedly the product of divisive pride.

### **Anti-Institutionalism**

The fear of institutionalism is somewhat warranted, though as with any fear, too much caution can prevent the church from receiving the benefits of what is feared. Too much fear of revival excess, and the church has no benefit from revival. When people have too much fear of organization, recognized leadership, and other organizational issues pertinent to the church, the church loses the benefit of its corporate nature. Revival should not destroy the organization of the church but should enable the church as an organization to fulfill God's purposes for it. Structure, even in revival, remains important, even though the "organizational forms" are not "the essence of the church" (Guder et al. 71). A purposeful, missional church must take "seriously the organizational life of the church in its expressions of local missional congregations" (75). In the revival of the 1990s, however, many participants met any tendency to organize or to encourage putting forth of the church's best efforts in service to God with accusations of attempting to

organize the church out of revival.

The institutionalism confronted in the revivals of the 1990s is a product of the destructive enculturation of rationalistic ideals. The church should honestly recognize, however, that the anti-institutionalism of postmodern North American society can be enculturated quite readily, and quite destructively, into a revival movement. Much of the strong, anti-institutional feeling and diatribe among some elements of the revival is very similar to the antiestablishment radicalism of the 1960s, representing a spiritualizing of that radicalism as the 1960s generation gained influence in the church.

Avoiding excess, therefore, calls for recognizing proper, mission-oriented, flexible church structure in order to implement “the spiritual advantage” of the renewal (Lovelace 69). In other words, the spiritual power of revival must be properly channeled for maximum impact. Christian A. Schwarz’s study of church health, however, reveals that the tension between spiritualism, which includes most revival movements, and organization is actually by far the most controversial of the church health characteristics:

Spiritualists tend to be skeptical of structures, deeming them unspiritual, while those from the technocratic camp mistake certain structures for the very essence of the church of Jesus Christ.... One of the biggest barriers to recognizing the significance of structures for church development is the widespread view that “structure” and “life” are opposites. (28-29)

Schwarz, noting that the position against structure is a reaction against technocratic control, points out the problems that spiritualism has in maintaining balance between spirituality and the organizational needs of the church. “Its inherent weakness is not in its denunciation of the technocratic view of institutions, but in its attempt to do away with institutions altogether. This reveals its greatest defect, a damaged relationship to creation itself” (90). R. A. Knox blames this imbalance and other problems on an improper theology of grace. The overly spiritual view is that “grace has destroyed nature, and



replaced it” as opposed to the “traditional doctrine ... that grace perfects nature,... but leaves it nature still” (3). According to this overly spiritual position, grace and human nature, including organizational structure, are antithetical and cannot work together.

The rejection of institutions robs revival of the fullest possible impact. The common wisdom often heard from revival proponents is that previous revivals were cut short because they were “organized to death.” In actuality, revivals that have had the greatest long-term impact were those led and organized by clergy (Lovelace 49-50).

Revivalists frequently point to the fatal consequences of Uzzah’s touching the ark as a sign that people should not try to touch what God is doing. The real issue with Uzzah, however, was not a matter of overorganizing. David and his followers were attempting to bring in the ark of the covenant without following God’s organizational agenda (1 Chron. 13, 15). Another favorite revival theme of the 1990s was to get rid of “old wineskins.” Old wineskins were symbolic of the organizational structures of the church. The problem with this approach is that it fails to recognize Jesus’ concern for preserving the old wineskin, as well as his prescription for a new wineskin (Mark 2:22). As the wine requires the structure of the wineskin, so in revival some structure is still needed to preserve its benefits. An answer to the problem of the aberration of anti-institutionalism is to focus on the church’s mission. Functional, flexible, purposeful organizations that fulfill the will of God will counter all but the most extreme anti-institutional voices.

### **Discontinuity with Tradition**

Closely related to the issues of pride and extreme resistance to organizational forms is the failure to recognize the connection between today’s church and the church throughout history. Revival proponents too easily dismiss the continuous activity of God

and his people through the years as irrelevant to what God is doing today. Though the church has experienced major change over the centuries, it displays even greater continuity across times and cultures. The flexibility of the church has been evident from age to age and from culture to culture, yet the church retains certain essentials:

Amid all the changes through which the church passes and whatever its organizational shape may be, across all boundaries of culture and race, of ocean, mountain and forest, there are certain changeless centralities that must be observed by all members of the community of Christ. (Mackay 26-27)

The problem of failing to recognize the continuity of the church over time separates today's church from the "changeless centralities" that pertain to the mission and purpose of the church. When the church is separated from these vital centralities, it loses its effectiveness in addressing today's needs.

The early Church, the model to which most revival proponents appeal, built on the past and adapted existent structures to its mission:

The apostles were aware of the need for new wineskins, but they sought for these in the process of disenculturation, not in any radical reshuffling of polity. There is a principle of the *conservation of structures* [original emphasis] in the precedent they set, and there are many practical reasons why this principle needs to be followed today.... A dissolving of local congregations into house churches, independent communes or elite task forces would not only disrupt communication, it might create structures which do not by themselves have the power to carry the whole people of God forward through church history with the same effectiveness as parish churches. (Lovelace 208-09)

In revival much effort is made to get back to the original church. In that effort revival proponents often fail to see that the church, as institutionalized as it has become, still serves as a bridge from then until now and should not be disregarded. Today's church has a responsibility to the future of church history, as well as its past, to maintain the degree of continuity that will propel the mission forward. Abraham notes that major reasons for maintaining continuity are that the issues of today are more clearly understood in light of

the past, and many of the answers to the problems that the church faces today are found in its past. “Thus the resources for change come from within the church herself” (119).

Cultural principles working against maintaining this continuity are love for the new and disdain for the past. Christians in revival can too easily exhibit a chronocentric pride that is just as antithetical to the cause of revival as ethnocentric pride might be. The first 2004 issue of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship’s Spread the Fire magazine celebrated ten years of renewal. In an article entitled “I Remember ’94,” Mary Audrey Raycroft reflects on her church’s experience:

In hindsight it’s easy to see that He was breaking all of us out of our religious boxes. It’s as though He was saying, “Church, I’ve given you nearly 2000 years to get your act together, and now I’ll show you what I want!” (17)

Raycroft inadvertently dismisses two thousand years of church history preceding the Toronto outpouring as predominantly human-centered error that was only set aright by God at Toronto. However innocent the statement, it represents a way of thinking that can rob the church of the strength that comes with the unity that should include all those who have preceded this generation of Christians.

### **Doctrinal Sloppiness**

One of the problems that calls for revival, one of the shadows of Christian reality identified by Mackay, is idolization of doctrine. This idolatry is one of the legacies left to the church by Enlightenment rationalism, which caused the church to emphasize rational, propositional truth to the neglect of Christian experience. An overreaction to the idolatry of doctrine, however, will result in inattention to sound doctrine. Another favorite catch phrase of revival is, “Doctrine divides while Christ and the Spirit unite” (Lovelace 280). Theological challenges to wrong teaching are easily dismissed as unspiritual or divisive.

An extreme in historical revival involved the Zwickau prophets who claimed

direct revelation from God and, therefore, had no need for the Bible. During Luther's year-long absence from Wittenberg, the Zwickau prophets closed the Wittenberg schools because of the undesirability of academics. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne notes the irony of their attack on sound theology and the Bible: "Thus did these fanatics ... attack the fundamental principle on which the entire Reformation was founded—the all-sufficiency of the Word of God.... It was with weapons of theological learning that Luther had attacked Rome" and won his major battles in the Reformation.

Even during the Great Awakening, J. Edwards contended with this error:

Late experience in some instances has shown that the tendency of this notion is to cause persons to esteem the Bible as a book that is in a great measure useless.... As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct. (Some Thoughts 432)

While the concept of more direct leading from God has gained broad acceptance, even in non-charismatic evangelicalism, the problems Edwards identifies remain relevant.

Though in the revivals of the 1990s increasing emphasis was placed on prophetic revelation, particularly in the revival associated with Toronto, commitment to Scripture remained strong. Even some of the hard-to-defend manifestations were explained through Scripture. Among some of the more radical fringe, however, a number of people were still much more in tune with prophetic words and visions than with Scripture, even when contradictions were pointed out.

Sadly, theological shallowness undermines revival. "The purity of a revival is intimately related to its theological substance" (Lovelace 262). Interestingly, the revivals with the most enduring impact were those led by thinking men who were Bible scholars: Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. German Pietist leaders recognized that true revival "involved a revival of theology as well as a transitory wave of

conversions and enthusiasm, and that sound theology would be a decidedly major instrument in reviving the church” (58). According to Lovelace, the advance of sound theology, the theological consolidation of the movement, contributes to the depth of a revival’s impact, as well as its numerical reach (49-50).

For years Pentecostal growth was minimal. During that time, due to a disdainful view of academics, Pentecostals failed to advance a well-developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit, choosing instead to adopt fundamentalist theology with the simple addition of doctrines of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and healing (Poloma, Assemblies of God 236). The phenomenal numerical expansion of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement in recent decades followed a period of theological consolidation as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has received much more theological attention (Synan 381-414). Spiritual experience remains central in the spread of Pentecostalism, but its growth has been enhanced by more solid theological underpinnings. The return of a living pneumatology to mainstream evangelicalism provides the opportunity for the Pentecostal/charismatic movement to focus on its mission to the world rather than maintaining a defensive posture against the rest of Christianity.

If the goal of revival is to impact the church so that it can, in turn, impact the world, spiritual renewal cannot be separated from theological renewal. Theological renewal is not just a function of academia. The church does not have to choose between theology and experience, between academia and spirituality. In fact, theological depth should be reflected in the discipleship processes of the local church. The need for theological depth among Pentecostals and charismatics is apparent. According to statistics cited by the Assemblies of God, 90 percent of Assemblies of God students who attend secular universities leave the church (Huffman). Perhaps a major reason for this

loss is the lack of theological tools to address the questions presented by a secular culture. A goal of a revived church should be to give believers the doctrinal tools needed to live proper, Christian lives and to be able to address their surrounding culture with the foundational truths of the faith.

### **Experientialism**

Christians should not present a false choice between reason and experience, as though the two are mutually exclusive. Though sound reason is needed even in revival, “reason cannot establish a sure intellectual basis for accepting the reality of God, but the heart can experience God’s reality as a living presence with whom the soul can commune” (Mackay 51-52). As Mackay goes on to explain, however, experience itself can become an idol when the experience takes the place of God himself:

Just as ideas about God can become substitutes for the personal awareness of God’s reality, so an emotion, expressive of some form of religious experience but not necessarily involving meaningful contact with God, can become a substitute for a personal relationship with God and devotion to him. Religious emotions, like theological ideas, can become ends to themselves. When this happens, emotions become idols. Ceasing to be the creative instruments and spiritual accompaniments of a God-man friendship, they become psychological agents of a man-God divinization. When this happens, what alleges to be Christian experience manifests itself as a subjective ingrownness and dedication to aesthetic thrills. In a very subtle and paradoxical manner, the love of religious feeling can take the place of the love of God. (58-59)

Mackay strongly affirms the role of experience and very strong emotions in a genuine relationship with God. Yet Christians can wrongly replace the experiential reality with religious emotions. In revival Christians who encounter the presence of God feel strong emotions. These strong feelings become closely identified with God when actually the feeling itself does not emanate from God but is a human, emotional response to God. When the feeling becomes the focus, Christians have idolized the feeling.

Overemphasis on the experience of physical manifestations in revival can be a

slide towards the idolization of feelings and experience. “One of the dangers of revival is that the work of the Spirit can be so powerfully manifest that people start to focus on the revival phenomena rather than on Jesus” (Stibbe 127). John of the Cross, basing his thought on John 3:6, observes that a focus on experience above the giver of the experience can produce no good fruit:

Wherefore Our Saviour said in the Gospel: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” That is to say, the love which is born of sensuality ends in sensuality, and that which is of the spirit ends in the spirit of God and causes it to grow.

John of the Cross relates each of the seven deadly sins with some aspect of what have been called excesses and aberrations in later revivals. The idolatry of experientialism corresponds with what John of the Cross identifies as “spiritual gluttony.” He points out that this sin may lead to avoidance of the process of sanctification for the pursuit of spiritual pleasure, along with resistance to any authority that might in any way threaten the enjoyment of spiritual experience. This sin further corrupts the whole concept of God for people who have succumbed to experientialism:

For they go about clinging to their own will and pleasure, which they treat as though it came from God; and immediately their directors take it from them, and try to subject them to the will of God, they become peevish, grow faint-hearted and fall away. These persons think their own satisfaction and pleasure are the satisfaction and service of God.

Human nature is amazingly the same over the centuries. The emotional pleasures offered during the revivals of the 1990s hold no less an enticement to the idolatry of experience than in the time of John of the Cross.

An emphasis on the purposes of the church and the purposes of revival may help those in revival to avoid this idolatry. Being in right relationship with other believers, a commitment to discipleship and a devotion to the larger purposes of God beyond personal pleasure will enable believers genuinely to enjoy their relationship with God

without idolizing the accompanying feelings.

### **The Routinization of Feelings and Manifestations**

Another aspect of experientialism is the ritualizing of the feelings and the manifestations that frequently accompany revival. While the manifestations at first have a strong involuntary element associated with a particular feeling, revival participants later can begin to exhibit that manifestation voluntarily when they sense a particular feeling. They can even attempt to generate that feeling again by mimicking the manifestation. In this case not just the feeling, but the pattern associated with the feeling, becomes idolatrous: “A second aberration in the realm of religious feeling emerges when a person becomes emotionally committed to the realization of a religious pattern. The formal pursuit of a specific pattern of religious living can become one’s spiritual ultimate” (Mackay 62). In the revivals of the 1990s, the manifestations became something to which many people committed emotionally. Arnott stated in a March 1995 renewal service at Toronto, “Manifestations don’t have to happen, but I’d be concerned if they never happen.” Revival participants too easily ignored the first part of that statement and felt a worship service was not good unless certain things happened. They were vulnerable to missing God’s intentions if the service had the appearance of anything but a good renewal-style service.

Ironically, most renewal elements strongly eschew outward forms in favor of “spiritual reality” but then can quickly adopt new outward forms. These new forms may not seem “formal” in the traditional sense of the word, but laughter, falling, jerking, and shaking can become the new formalism.

Temporal forms such as rituals and organizational structure are necessary to convey the transcendent, but insecurity among people and before God contributes to



overreliance on the outward forms. People in revival often are reacting against evangelical legalism and formalism; they can just as easily, however, become legalistic and formalistic about the human responses associated with revival. In people's insecurity, they frantically cling to exuberant expressions as proof that God is working in their lives. During revival God works in a special way in people's lives, but in their insecurity people exaggerate their responses so that others, or perhaps they themselves, will be convinced that God is doing something extraordinary.

J. Edwards connects the adoption of an outward display of spiritual mannerisms with spiritual pride (Some Thoughts 421). Lovelace notes that this outward emphasis "can make people proud to be weird for Jesus and grateful for the persecution this provokes" (246). Much of the antagonism that the Azusa Street revival faced was a result of the pride associated with the revival. "Antagonism was engendered by the feeling that the Pentecostals saw themselves as a spiritual aristocracy. The Pentecostals acted as if they had received special insights regarding the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and the correct method of worship" (Synan 61). Spiritual pride provokes a ready separation from other believers who do not fit the new revival orthodoxy, including its outward displays of spirituality. At the heart of revival is a genuine work of God with strong human responses and experiences, but human shortcomings such as insecurity and spiritual pride work to the detriment of revival. "Spiritual pathology and psychopathology are closely intertwined in producing aberrant revival" (Lovelace 248-49).

Because genuine revival produces a strong experience, stifling the experience of revival, as some detractors would prescribe, is not the answer. Growth in discipleship, in the scriptural understanding of who Christians are before God through the justifying and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, should accompany the strong experience. In this way,

when the newness of the experience wanes (and the sense of newness probably will, even when the experience itself is maintained), Christians will not have to manufacture responses to prove their spirituality or to prove God's love. Furthermore, the evidence of a changed life should be promoted as a more sure evidence of God's work in a Christian's life than the display of outward manifestations (Beard 13).

### **The Value of Constructive Critique**

The excesses and aberrations that arise in revival as a consequence of fallen human nature, as individuals and as a society, are not to be squelched by resisting revival. The history of the Assemblies of God reveals a strong hesitation to embrace revivals, even though the most expansive growth has generally occurred in the places where revival has been experienced. Despite many similarities to the revival that gave them birth, the Assemblies of God resisted the Latter Rain revival because the excesses of a few "were taken as representative of the movement as a whole" (Riss, Survey 121), yet the denomination received a boost because of the revival.

Instead of overlooking revival excesses, and instead of rejecting the revival as a whole, the church is healthier when it appropriates the work of God while providing a healthy, generally supportive critique. The goal of the critique must be to help the church appropriate the full meaning of revival, not just its experiential aspect. This approach was eventually taken by J. Edwards, with tremendous results. "It is possible that the real awakening in America came, not in the firestorm of 1739-42, but in the later years as the church responded to Edwards' critique of the revival" (Lovelace 43).

J. Edwards affirms the value of the revival in spite of its excesses. He notes that excesses accompany the beginning of a revival and are to be generally tolerated in anticipation that the final result "is very likely to be of excellent benefit to his church"

(Some Thoughts 324). In that same paragraph, Edwards draws on the lesson of David's bringing the ark into Jerusalem:

They at first sought not the Lord after the due order, and they smarted for their error: but this put them upon studying the law, and more thoroughly acquainting themselves with the mind and will of God, and seeking and serving him with greater circumspection. (324)

In this statement Edwards emphasizes that recognizing the initial errors of revival should foster the diligent seeking of God's will for the church.

Though some Christians are disillusioned by their revival experience, they can benefit greatly by learning from the mistakes of the past. Overlooking mistakes will serve to keep the impact of the revival short and shallow. According to Lovelace, the Holy Spirit works in revival to help the church fulfill a purposeful agenda (75). If the agenda was neglected in the 1990s revival, the key to healthy revival is not attained just by suppressing aberrations but by pursuing the full purposes for which the Holy Spirit is poured out upon a church.

### **Biblical Principles of Revival Leadership**

True revival is a work of the Holy Spirit. As widespread as revival impact might become, at its heart is God's loving work in individual lives. As a result, revival experience can become quite subjective. Revivals have, in the course of history, become problematic when they fall prey to the subjectivism of their detractors or proponents. An understanding of the biblical role of the Holy Spirit will limit subjectivist responses in revival. Luke-Acts is especially useful for revival leaders because the mission and nature of the Church are strongly tied to the activity of the Holy Spirit in Luke's narrative. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is also particularly useful because of its further affirmation of the Church's nature and mission and its direct concern with the type of spirituality characteristic of revival movements.

## **The Role of the Holy Spirit**

The work of the Holy Spirit is meant to infuse the entirety of the Christian life, as individuals and as a community. The Holy Spirit is God's presence active on the earth today and, therefore, the agent of revival. The reviving work of the Holy Spirit individually and in churches will not be at odds with the other purposes that God's presence fulfills in every aspect of the church. J. Rodman Williams identifies three primary works of the Holy Spirit in the church: he guides Christians to truth, including the knowledge of Christ and the illumination of Scripture; he gives power for ministry, including effective witness with accompanying mighty works; and, the Spirit certifies, attests to, and seals Christians in their salvation (237-70). Williams sees the empowerment for witness as central: "Ultimately this is the concern of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement: to know the Holy Spirit and to move in His power in order to complete the task of worldwide evangelization" (247). While the three points above are the Spirit's mission, the results of his experiential work in Christians' lives are "the reality of God's presence," "the fullness of joy," "boldness in speech and action," and "the continuing praise of God" (307-21). In a healthy revival, the Spirit's mission should be advanced, and these results of his coming should be evident.

A revival that focuses only on the role of the Spirit in giving knowledge of Christ will fall short of the full purpose for the Spirit's reality in Christians' lives. Churches and individuals that seek empowerment but then fail to connect that empowerment to their witness still fall short. In the revivals of the 1990s, the results of the Spirit's work that received the most attention were joy, praise, and the reality of God's presence. Bold speech and action in witness were emphasized less.

The promise of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus in Acts 1:8 was for the purpose of

empowering the Christian community to be Christ's witnesses, spreading the message of his kingdom throughout the earth. The impact of the Holy Spirit in the forming of the early Church and the early Church's response to the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 serve as a model for understanding revival. The Holy Spirit is the agent of empowerment for ministry, including "mighty acts" and spiritual gifts. The Spirit's purposes are not just for individuals but are strongly linked to the community the Spirit has formed. Paul states that the gifts are for the building up of the church, not just for individual enjoyment (1 Cor. 12-14). Regarding Paul's emphasis on the role of the Spirit in building an eschatological community, Fee states, "Paul can hardly help himself: his focus and concern are always on the people as a whole.... God is saving a *people* [original emphasis] for his name, not a miscellaneous, unconnected set of individuals" (Paul 64).

### **Luke-Acts**

The early Church certainly did not need a revival, but they did need the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. A revival is basically a restoration of the work of the Spirit in the lives of individual believers and the believing community. Luke-Acts is, therefore, applicable to a revival setting because "Luke more than all other Gospel writers stresses the role of the Spirit in both his books" (Witherington, Acts 70).

**Empowered by the Spirit.** In a revival of the Spirit, the church is being restored to the basic nature and mission as portrayed in that part of the Bible that gives the clearest picture of the early Church, the book of Acts. Though attempts to imitate the exact form of the early Church are generally misguided, the principles of church life and mission conveyed in Acts are intended to apply to churches throughout the ages. Joel B. Green confirms Luke's ecclesiological concerns:

The purpose of Luke-Acts, then, would be primarily ecclesiological—concerned with the practices that define and the criteria for legitimating

the community of God's people, and centered on the invitation to participate in God's project. (22)

For Luke, God's project is obviously centered on the work of Jesus, whose work the church is to continue. Given Luke's emphasis on the role of the Spirit overall, not surprisingly he emphasizes the Spirit's role in the life and ministry of Jesus. In fact, Jesus' public ministry does not begin until being anointed with the Holy Spirit after his baptism (Luke 3:21-22). After this experience, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1) is immediately led by the Spirit into a time of testing by the devil (Luke 4:1-12). Upon completion of this test "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit" (v. 14). In Galilee Jesus goes to his hometown of Nazareth, enters the synagogues, and reads from Isaiah 61, applying to himself the claim, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me" (v. 18). Green emphasizes the importance of these actions of the Spirit initiated after Jesus' baptism:

Jesus' anointing by the Spirit ... is a pivotal experience for Jesus that (1) sets in motion the sequence of events to follow and, by implication, sets the course of his entire mission;... (2) is expounded as the event that determines his understanding of his divine mission and empowers him to perform accordingly;... and (3) **anticipates the analogous empowering of Jesus' followers in Acts** [emphasis mine]. (186)

Luke invites his readers to apply to the church the same principles that governed Jesus' experience with the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit's activity identified Jesus and affirmed God's claim upon him (184-87), so the activity of the Holy Spirit in times of revival can be expected to affirm the identity of the church as the people of God upon whom God has placed a claim for his mission.

An "analogous empowering" implies an analogous mission for the church:

In 4:18-19, Jesus interprets his baptism as a Spirit anointing for his mission, then outlines the content of his mission as God's Son.... The ministry of Jesus in Nazareth at the outset of his public ministry is of central importance to the Gospel as a whole, and thus also to Luke-Acts. (Green 207)

“For Luke the message of salvation in Jesus proclaimed by the church is in direct continuity with the ministry and teaching of Jesus” (Longenecker 214). Jesus’ own understanding of the purpose of his anointing, as conveyed by his use of the Isaiah 61 passage, is a strong indication of the nature of the mission of the church. The work of the Spirit in the church, including present-day revivals, is the continuation of the work the Spirit accomplished through Jesus, and should be characterized by the same purposes.

The Spirit-empowered nature of Jesus’ mission; therefore, the mission of the church involves reaching out “to form a people of all nations” by proclaiming release to the poor, very broadly defined as any who are “outside the boundaries of God’s people” (Green 208, 211-13; Luke 4:18-27). In simple terms familiar to American evangelicals, God’s Spirit-empowered mission initially modeled by Jesus and in which the church is invited to participate includes evangelism, building a community of believers, and caring for the poor. These themes, which are very strong throughout Luke-Acts, are interlinked in Luke’s account and not as easily separated as in the American church’s practice.

**Empowered for witness.** Recognizing the linkage between evangelism, community building, and caring for the least in society is not to say that Luke places equal emphasis on each component of the mission. I. Howard Marshall maintains that evangelism is Luke’s priority:

Moreover, for Luke mission means evangelism, the proclamation of the good news of Jesus, and the challenge to repentance and faith.... Luke stresses *the place of the Spirit* [original emphasis] in guiding and empowering the church for its mission.... The gifts of the Spirit are given for the purpose of mission and not for the private edification of the church or its individual members. (Book of Acts 50)

Acts 1:8 is a clear indication that Jesus’ intention was that his followers be filled with the Holy Spirit, as he himself had been, for the expressed purpose of being witnesses throughout the earth. The evangelistic results given in Acts 2:41, following the

outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and in Acts 4:4, following the healing of the crippled beggar, are indications of the Spirit's witness-empowering role. After Peter and John's release from their arrest by the Jewish religious authorities, who warned them no longer to speak about Jesus, the church gathered together in prayer (Acts 4). The church obviously understood the priority of their evangelistic mandate, as indicated by the content of their prayer in the face of threats: "Enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness" (Acts 4:29). In further affirmation of the Spirit's role in empowering the church's witness, Luke notes, "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (v. 31). The shaking was interpreted as a sign of the Spirit's activity in the midst of the church, but the sign by itself was insufficient to fulfill God's mission for the church:

The disciples' prayers were answered not just by a portent but by an empowerment—they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke God's word with boldness.... The issue here is empowerment for witnessing, not personal spiritual formation or growth. (Witherington, Acts 204)

As the Spirit continues to touch the church in special ways during seasons of revival, the mission of God remains, not just to offer signs but to empower witness.

**Empowered for community.** The goal of the Spirit's outpouring in Acts 4 includes the formation and edification of a community that in its corporate nature serves as a witness of God's grace. Not coincidentally, both Acts 2 and Acts 4 contain summaries of church life in passages that follow descriptions of the outpouring of God's Spirit. The connection between the Acts 2 and Acts 4 summary passages on church life should be recognized. F. F. Bruce characterizes the Acts 4 passage as "reminiscent of the description of what happened on the day of Pentecost" (100). The clear implication is that, while the empowerment for witness is primary, the ongoing work of the Spirit is not



just a matter of enabling verbal proclamation of salvation in Jesus. The Spirit's activity is evidenced by a community that experiences true *koinonia* that goes beyond sharing a common meal and prayer, or sharing in a worship service experience. Acts 2:44 says that "all the believers were together and had everything in common." Similarly, immediately after a verse describing the believers being filled afresh with the Spirit, Luke states, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32). These Spirit-inspired activities of the early Church not only were demonstrations of God's care for poor individuals, but were indications of the establishing of a community that in and of itself is a testimony of God's outreach to people who have been excluded from God's people. In Acts 10 the Holy Spirit is poured out on Cornelius' family in a dramatic fashion that was not just for their benefit but was evidence to Peter that these Gentiles are now included among the people of God (Acts 10:47; 11:17). Because Luke-Acts holds forth the invitation for all generations to join in with God's plan of redemption, including the forming and building up of the church, continued outpourings of God's Spirit in revivals are not just for individual edification but for the building up of the community of God's people.

**Empowered to care.** Closely tied to the summary passages describing the early Church's response to the outpourings of the Holy Spirit is concern for the poor, particularly the poor within the church community itself. The emphasis on caring for the poor is a continuation of the same ministry of the poor for which Jesus was anointed. Ben Witherington, III notes the continuity of this concern throughout Luke-Acts:

"We cannot tarry here to demonstrate to what lengths Luke goes in his Gospel to show Jesus' concern for the least, last, and lost, including women and the poor. Suffice it to say that when we turn to Acts we find relatively the same agenda" (Acts 70-71).

Acts 6 demonstrates the impossibility of separating more "spiritual" ministry from the

Spirit's mandate to care for the less fortunate within the church.

The care for one another within the church demonstrated in Acts 2 and 4 had become problematic, with the Greek-speaking believers complaining that in the daily food distribution their widows were being neglected in favor of the Hebrew-speaking widows (Acts 6:1). In response to the complaints, the apostles called for the choosing of seven men to oversee the distribution (v. 3). The fact that the apostles prioritized for themselves “prayer and the ministry of the word” (v. 2) easily gives rise to the notion that caring concern within the community was less important, or even less spiritual, than the ministry the apostles chose. While the apostles’ choice does demonstrate the church’s prioritizing of evangelism in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to deemphasize the need for the church as a community to care for the less fortunate among them would be a mistake. The activity of the Spirit demands both an evangelistic response and a caring response:

It is significant that the apostles were not prepared simply to ignore the problem; they seem to have realized that spiritual and material concerns were so intimately related in Christian experience that one always affects the other for better or worse.... Acts 6:1-6 is particularly instructive as something of a pattern for church life today. (Longenecker 330-31)

“Spiritual and material concerns” cannot legitimately be separated, whether in the early Church or in present-day churches experiencing revival.

Actually, Acts 6:1-6 should make clear that categorizing certain ministries as spiritual and others as material is misguided. Not only must the so-called “spiritual” ministries be combined with so-called “material” ministries, but material ministries must be recognized as inherently spiritual. Material ministries, as shown in the Acts 2 and 4 summary passages, both of which follow descriptions of the church being filled with the Spirit, are as much a response to the Spirit as prayer and proclamation of the word. All such ministries as depicted in Acts are Spirit empowered. Varying degrees of missional

priority do not necessarily denote varying degrees of spirituality or spiritual empowerment. Notably, the qualifications required of the men who were to be chosen for the food distribution were primarily spiritual qualifications. “Above all, they must be men of God, filled with his Spirit” (Bruce 121). If someone must be filled with the Spirit for this task, then part of the reason for being filled with the Spirit includes ministry to the poor—again, a major emphasis in Luke-Acts and an obvious continuation of the ministry for which Jesus was anointed, and for which he, in turn, anointed his church. Luke offers the results of the church’s decision not only to prioritize evangelism, but to continue the ministry of the Spirit to the poor: “So the word of God spread” (Acts 6:7). A church in revival will be anointed to continue this mission, vital to the ongoing work and witness of the Spirit to “preach good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

A church in revival cannot single out just the “spiritual” or experiential work of the Spirit based on the apostles’ priorities in Acts 6, and then neglect the kinds of ministry performed by the seven. This passage demonstrates that, in spite of the apostles’ self-separation from waiting on tables, drawing a line between spiritual and material is problematic, as is the distinguishing between developing the Christian community from within it and reaching out to those outside it. Acts 6, with its concern for the care of Greek-speaking widows within the church, demonstrates Luke’s emphasis on the expansion of the witness of the church in keeping with the pattern Jesus described in Acts 1:8. In this chapter Luke is setting the stage for the expansion of the church beyond its Hebrew-speaking base, which may have been more at home in Jerusalem (Marshall, Book of Acts 124). The church, because it has remained true to its nature as a caring community shaped by the Spirit, is poised for expansion. A church that is experiencing revival and desires to be shaped by the Spirit should also seek to integrate the

evangelistic and community-building priorities of the church, along with the spiritual and material implications of the Spirit's work.

**Manifestations of the Spirit.** Luke-Acts does not discount altogether the elements of the Spirit's work that garnered so much attention in the 1990s revivals, namely manifestations that were taken to be evidence of God's activity, and the personal touch of God in the life of an individual. Bruce touches upon both of these emphases in his comments on Acts 2:

It is true, as has frequently been pointed out, that Luke thinks of the receiving of the Spirit in particular relation to the impressive manifestations which commonly accompanied it in the apostolic age, but the gift which is promised in verse 38 to those who repent and are baptized is the Spirit himself. (71)

Marshall invites a comparison between the "visible manifestations at Pentecost" and the visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism (Commentary on Luke 153). In neither case are the manifestations the most important aspect of the events described, but they are nevertheless clear, visible evidence that God is at work. The same can be said about the manifestation of the place of prayer being shaken in Acts 4, and even of the speaking in tongues in Acts 10. In all cases the work at which the manifestations, or signs, pointed is of far greater importance than the manifestation itself or the mere fact that God was active. For the signs to have become the focus would be out of character with Luke's tendency to place sign seeking in a negative light (Green 79). God gives signs in evidence of his work, but the mission itself takes the focus throughout Luke-Acts. The work that is emphasized centers on evangelism and community building, both of which are characterized by a concern for the poor. By the same token, the manifestations that have historically accompanied revivals may be somewhat different than the specific manifestations of Acts 2, 4, and 10, but they should fulfill much the

same purpose if they are true evidence of the Spirit's activity. Manifestations are often exciting, clear evidence that God is at work and that supernatural activity is taking place, but they should point to the primary mission for which the Holy Spirit has come and should not become the focus.

**Personal experience of the Spirit.** In addition to the manifestations, personal experience was a primary focus of the revival of the 1990s. As with manifestations, Luke does not entirely discount the place of personal experience, either. Richard N. Longenecker points out that the benefits of salvation through Christ must be personally and individually applied by the Holy Spirit, who did not come just to give gifts for the purpose of the church's mission. The Holy Spirit is God's "primary gift" to each individual who receives the benefits of redemption in Christ:

The primary gift [of the Holy Spirit] includes a variety of spiritual gifts for the advancement of the gospel and the welfare of God's people. But first of all, it has to do with what God's spirit does for every Christian in applying and working out the benefits of Christ's redemptive work. (283)

The Holy Spirit himself is the gift of God to the repentant, believing individual (Bruce 71).

Revival as has been defined entails a renewed experience of and appreciation of this unparalleled gift that is of ultimate value to any individual who receives the Spirit. No attempt to put this renewed personal experience in perspective can minimize its importance to the individual. More is involved, however, than individual experience. Even with the initial reception of the Spirit, each individual who is privileged to receive the Spirit in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy as proclaimed in Acts 2, can be identified as belonging to a group that had previously been excluded from the family of God. The last days, which are announced, are not just about individual appropriation of the Spirit's presence, but about the completion of God's covenant purposes, including ultimately the

proclamation of the message to the Gentiles (Bruce 71). The promise proclaimed by Peter in his Pentecost sermon, therefore, goes far beyond the very important individual applications. Leaders in revivals, while rightly encouraging individual experience of a work of the Holy Spirit, should be careful to maintain the broader perspectives provided by the Spirit's work in Luke-Acts.

**Application to revival.** The attempt to apply principles of the initial outpouring of the Spirit to subsequent outpourings presents some difficulty, especially when the unique nature of the initial experiences of Pentecost for the church and reception of the Spirit by individuals is emphasized. Application to subsequent outpourings becomes easier when the broader missional principles of those experiences are recognized. The second of the outpourings described in Acts 2 and 4 is particularly relevant for discerning principles of revival leadership because the outpouring is subsequent to Pentecost, which is easily considered to be unique in its nature. While the outpouring of the Spirit is not a matter of restoring the church after a period of declension, and in that sense is not a reviving of the church, the outpouring does serve to empower the church to deal with changed external circumstances, in this case the increased threat of persecution. In any case, revival proponents cannot lay claim to the work of the Holy Spirit in a way that ignores the purposes of the community which is formed and empowered by the Spirit. Revival may be a restoration of experiential Christianity, but it should not be overly individualistic, nor should it neglect the mission in which God has invited the church to participate in the power of the Spirit.

## **1 Corinthians**

Moving on from Acts to 1 Corinthians, the emphasis shifts away from a more positive, forward looking approach to correcting a church's unhealthy response to the

work of the Holy Spirit.

**Limitations of applicability.** In some respects Paul's letters to the Corinthians have limited application to revival because the letters do not so much promote revival as correct aberrant behavior. The letters in their original context were not written to ward off possible aberrations and excesses but to deal with problems that were already in existence. Potential leaders of revival can take lessons from Paul's dealings with Corinth in order to be prepared for the problems that will arise in any revival, but a primary concern with correcting problems even before they occur will be detrimental to revival and contrary to the nature of 1 Corinthians. In other words, Paul is not promoting a problem-centered approach to pursuing the Spirit's empowerment for the mission of the church. On the other hand, a primary concern with promoting the positive values Paul commends as correctives is entirely appropriate to promoting a healthy response to an outpouring of the Spirit in a time of revival.

**Problem spirituality.** The Corinthian church did, however, display some of the same problems that have plagued subsequent times of revival. According to Fee, "the key issue between Paul and [the Corinthians] ... has to do with the Corinthian understanding of what it means to be 'spiritual' (*pneumatikos*)" (First Epistle 6). The emphasis on spirituality not only caused a rift between the Corinthians and their church's founder, Paul, but it also resulted in the splitting up of the church community into various factions (Witherington, Conflict 84). The Corinthians had failed to realize that being divided meant they could not possibly be spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1).

Paul's refusal to recognize the Corinthians' spirituality, especially after praising them for their giftedness in 1:4-7, was probably a shock to those who took pride in how spiritual they were. Their problem was the use of the wrong standards of true spirituality:

Other standards than Paul's seem to have been employed at Corinth. Gifts of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues or prophecy were taken to confer the status of "spiritual"; but such gifts when not accompanied by love (cf. xiii. 1-3) were no more than fleshly, that is, man-centered spirituality. (Barrett 81)

Paul nowhere denies the validity of the gifts or manifestations; he, in fact, encourages them (14:1). What had become the Corinthians' measures of spirituality were genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The problem was that they had selected only certain gifts, such as tongues, and had extracted those gifts from the broader purposes of God for the church. Individual, personal spirituality was measured simply by the ability to display certain spiritual gifts without regard to their benefit to the church's identity and mission.

Revival spirituality becomes subject to the same problems the Corinthians faced when a narrow range of manifestations, which may be genuine evidence of the Spirit's activity, become evidence of individual spiritual attainment. If genuine, biblical spiritual gifts can be so abused, then certainly other manifestations are just as subject to similar abuse. Fee asserts of the Corinthians that "speaking angelic dialects by the Spirit was evidence enough for them of their participation in the new spirituality, hence their singular enthusiasm for this gift" (*First Epistle* 573). In revival, certain manifestations such as laughter or shaking or falling can become evidence of a "new spirituality." When these manifestations are seen as such evidence, "singular enthusiasm" for those manifestations occurs. The manifestations come to be seen not as a simple by-product of a spiritual encounter intended for the benefit of others and the church, but the proof of individual spirituality. The result, as with the Corinthians, is excessive individualism, spiritual pride, and factionalism.

**Theological balance.** Paul's first approach to dealing with the Corinthians' problems is theological:



Paul addressed, in response to reports (1:11; 5:1; 11:18) or to their letter (cf. 7:1), at least eleven different, somewhat disparate concerns, ten of which are behavioral; only chap. 15 is theological as such.... But in every case his greater concern is the theological stance behind their behavior. (Fee, First Epistle 5)

Witherington agrees that though the problems Paul addresses are not primarily theological, “his primary concern is with ongoing behavior and the social and theological presuppositions that fuel it” (Conflict 81). Paul’s concern provides a major key to dealing with revival excesses. Even if the behavior itself is the most obvious problem, revival leadership should be more concerned with the theological implications of the behavior. Some revival behavior, even though it may be unusual when compared with behavior during less demonstrative times, will pass the theological test. Extended times of lying on the floor, for example, even though unusual, may pass the theological test of waiting quietly before God. Theological problems will arise with this practice, however, when excessive passivity prevents serving God and others, or gives rise to spiritual pride, elitism, or factions. Well-rounded theology remains important even in revival times.

The Corinthians were troubled not only by spiritual elitism, but by social elitism, as is evident from Paul’s confronting them on their observance of the Lord’s Supper in chapter 11 and his references to those who “remain hungry” and “have nothing” (vv. 21-22). The answer to both kinds of elitism was the same—grace as demonstrated on the cross:

Paul must establish this theology of grace at the very outset of his arguments [in 1 Corinthians 1:13] because it is on the basis of that theology that he will undercut all factors that promote factionalism. (Witherington, Conflict 118)

Paul confronts the Corinthians’ spirituality by lifting up the theological implications of the message of the cross of Christ.

In chapter 2, Paul deals with the Corinthians who think of themselves as wiser

than Paul. Paul makes the point here that the simple wisdom of the cross cannot be bypassed for something wiser or more spiritual. Revival spirituality can also present the same danger, fostering an elitist spirituality that somehow goes beyond the cross, which Paul claims to be the epitome of God's wisdom (v. 7). Paul concludes the chapter by placing himself in the position of being the spiritual one with whom the Corinthians dare not match wits. Paul cannot go beyond Christ and his crucifixion: "Indeed, whoever would pursue wisdom so as to avoid the story of the cross fares no better than the person who would commit the ultimate folly of thinking he or she could instruct the Lord himself" (Fee, First Epistle 119). Fee asserts that true spirituality makes people different, not from other supposedly less spiritual people in the church, but from people who are without the Spirit altogether (120). "Being spiritual does not lead to elitism; it leads to a deeper understanding of God's profound mystery—redemption through a crucified Messiah" (120).

In chapter 3 Paul urges the Corinthians to "appreciate the 'milk' for what it is, 'solid food'" (Fee, First Epistle 125). Paul moves on in chapter 3 to discuss further criteria for true spirituality. For Paul, the issue of spirituality must become an issue of a lifestyle characterized by grace, grounded in the theology of the cross, and resulting in building up the church in love. Furthermore, "the radical criterion of spiritual phenomena can be laid bare in a few words: it is the work of the Spirit of God to bear witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ" (Barrett 283). Neither the wisdom nor the spirituality of the Corinthians was sufficient in itself. Wisdom as a matter of rhetorical style devoid of real substance and purpose was insufficient for Paul (Barrett 17-18; Witherington, Conflict 82). Likewise, spiritual gifts such as tongues and prophecy had to be connected to God's purposes for the church in order to have real value. The same must be said of any other

phenomena of subsequent revival periods.

Relying on a solid theological foundation to address spiritual aberrations is not the same as relying on a “strictly cerebral” approach that also results in pride and factions (Fee, First Epistle 616). Paul is not promoting a cerebral versus spiritual theology. A purely intellectual resistance to a spiritual movement that can benefit the mission of the church cannot be justified by Paul’s theological dealings with the Corinthians. Paul redefines the Corinthian issues of wisdom and spirituality (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16), establishing that neither category as understood by the Corinthians is sufficient to embody the work of the cross. Depth of wisdom or spirituality is primarily a matter of understanding and prioritizing the implications of the basic truths of the cross, the result of which should build up the church in love.

**Building up the community in love.** The Corinthian understanding of spirituality was destructive to community and led to heightened individualism:

That many in Corinth exercised their gifts in the interests of self-development and even of self-display can hardly be doubted; this was contrary to the law of love which regulates all Christian behavior. (Barrett 327)

The “law of love” to which C. K. Barrett refers is strongly promoted by Paul in chapter 13, set in the context of his arguments in chapters 12-14 for upholding both the diversity of the church and its unity as the body of Christ. In this section Paul attempts to put the spiritual gifts of which the Corinthians were so proud in proper perspective. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” In 14:12 Paul says, “Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.” The key to functioning in spiritual gifts in an edifying way is love: “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts” (14:1). In chapter 13 Paul makes clear that spiritual gifts without love amount to nothing. Gifts that

function in love will benefit the Christian community and build up the church.

For Paul, then, the gifts are useful primarily in their function of building up the community, but the Corinthians apparently valued the gifts more for display, severely limiting the value of their public gatherings:

Their times of public worship must be for mutual edification, not for heightened individualistic spirituality, which in their case had become a false spirituality. (Fee, First Epistle 573)

Witherington says of the uninterpreted tongues Paul confronts in chapter 14, “It is an act of self-indulgence and public display” (Conflict 267). Likewise, the enjoyment of God in a revival setting can become self-indulgent and merely a display that fails to build up the church. Self-development, as opposed to self-indulgence, is not a bad thing, and Paul makes room for self-development in the proper context (1 Cor. 14:4). Revival experiences are also fine for self-development, but cannot be indulged to the neglect of the law of love, which must move toward the building up of the church.

The main point of chapter 13 is not to offer love as an alternative to spiritual gifts (Fee, First Epistle 625), which means that applying chapter 13 in such a way as to offer an alternative to other spiritual manifestations and activities is improper. Chapter 13 does, however, establish the proper context for spiritual gifts and spiritual activity in general (572). Again, if bona fide spiritual gifts are nothing apart from a context of love, which results in building up the church, then certainly other, sometimes more questionable, spiritual manifestations can have no value apart from building up the church in love, either. On the other hand, when a revival movement provides experiences and empowerment that can build up the body of Christ and enhance its mission, love dictates that revival be eagerly pursued.

**Order in the church.** Revivals through history, the 1990s revival included, have

generated criticism for lack of order in church gatherings. In chapter 14 Paul applies the principles of love and benefit to the community to the issue of order in church meetings. Fee summarizes Paul's approach under the heading "the need for intelligibility in the assembly," making reference to the use of uninterpreted tongues (First Epistle 652). The real issue, however, is not intelligibility just for the sake of intelligibility. Fee's own argument is that the issue is what is beneficial to others, including the church community and any unbelievers who may attend the church's gatherings:

In the gathered assembly the single goal of their spiritual zeal should be love (v. 1), which, as in 8:1, is expressed in the language of "building up" the church (vv. 3-5, 12, 17, 26). This latter theme is developed in two ways: by insisting on *intelligibility* [original emphasis] in the gathered assembly and by giving guidelines for *order* [original emphasis]. (653)

Clearly love and building up the church are the essential issues, not just intelligibility and order. Because the goals of love and building up the community are the essentials, then in revival order as defined by revival opponents or by an over-institutionalized, cerebral segment of the church may be sacrificed for the higher goals. Paul's correctives do not absolutize order. Paul instead absolutizes the principles of love and mutual edification. Some revival disorder can legitimately occur without abrogating these higher principles. In his comments on Paul's regulations for worship in 1 Corinthians 11, Fee points out the tendency for legalists "to confuse their own regulations with the eternal will of God" (491). Conceptions of order are usually culturally determined, and these conceptions can legitimately be challenged when the principles of love and building up others and the community of faith are maintained.

The main source of disorder in the Corinthians' case was speaking in tongues without interpretation; in revival, other manifestations have the potential of producing disorder. Paul's manner of dealing with the gifts is to put them "in proper perspective [so

that] they will edify the church” (Fee, First Epistle 40). With revival, putting manifestations in proper perspective does not mean to oppose those things that rightly used can help build the church. Unusual activities that build the church by pointing to God’s supernatural activity can play a legitimate role in the church’s life as they “bear witness to its supernatural origin” (Barrett 38). Revival manifestations may do little more than bear this witness because they generally fail to have the direct edifying effect that spiritual gifts have, but they can still have their place as limited by the law of love.

**Evangelism.** In chapter 14 Paul gives attention not only to the impact of church gatherings on the community of believers; he is also concerned with the evangelistic impact of the meetings (vv. 22-25). Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 2:4, Paul associates “a manifestation of Spirit and power” with his evangelistic preaching (Barrett 65). Paul reminds the Corinthians that, more than anything else, their changed lives were testimony to their experience of the Spirit’s power (Witherington, Conflict 125). In chapter 14 Paul expresses to the Corinthians his expectations that their meetings, when characterized by the power of the Spirit properly manifested, should have an evangelistic impact and not be detrimental to outreach.

In 14:25 Paul suggests that an unbeliever, in response to prophecy, “will fall down and worship God, exclaiming ‘God is really among you!’” Frequently in revivals, however, the manifestations have the same impact that Paul ascribes to the Corinthians’ use of tongues in their services, resulting in unbelievers saying that the believers are out of their minds (1 Cor. 14:23). In verse 20 Paul insists that the Corinthians “stop thinking like children,” and stop behaving so as “to drive the unbeliever away rather than lead him or her to faith” (Fee, First Epistle 682). In revival circumstances mature participants, in faithfulness to Paul’s principles, will consider the impact of behavior that is too easily

dismissed as craziness. Unfortunately, many revival-oriented Christians love the freedom of expression they enjoy in worship services, yet know that their unbelieving friends and family would reject their behavior as crazy, and the evangelistic potential of the services is never realized. In such cases, revival spirituality fails to accomplish a mission demanded by the law of love. Paul's evangelistic goal would be satisfied, however, by a legitimate spiritual manifestation that results in the same response that Paul suggests for prophecy, as has been the case in revivals. If unbelievers are being drawn to the power of the Holy Spirit, even with unusual manifestations taking place, Paul's concerns are not being violated. Paul is concerned with the evangelistic impact of the manifestation of tongues, not just on maintaining decorum.

**Appeal to Scripture and tradition.** In 14:21, Paul appeals to Scripture as a corrective to the Corinthians' behavior, attempting to warn them of the potential negative impact of speaking in tongues on unbelievers. Referencing Scripture to correct the Corinthians is used frequently in Paul's letters, affirmed by Witherington with regard to another such use earlier in 1 Corinthians:

He ends the section of an argument with a paraphrase of Scripture.... He uses this technique with some frequency in 1 and 2 Corinthians because he is attempting to ground the experientially oriented Corinthians more completely in the Word.... Even with a congregation in which the majority were Gentiles, Paul assumes that his audience will accept the authority of Scripture. Hence on more than one occasion he allows *the Word* [original emphasis] to have the last word. (Conflict 129)

The same principle of appeal to Scripture as the final word is valid in an experientially oriented revival. Scripture must be accepted as more authoritative than subjective spirituality.

Paul concludes his correctives of the excesses displayed in the Corinthians' meetings by appealing to general church practice. Earlier, in his salutation in 1:2, Paul

establishes the Corinthian connection to the general church (Witherington, Conflict 80). In 14:34 Paul refers to the practice of “all the congregations of the saints” as a basis for his authoritative perspective. He then challenges the uniqueness of the spirituality of the Corinthians by asking, “Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?” (1 Cor. 14:36). In the next chapter Paul continues to appeal to general church practice, pointing out the heritage of the church, passed down from the beginning (1 Cor. 15:37). Revival proponents do well to remember that spirituality does not mean independence from what God is doing and has done elsewhere.

**Spirit and structure.** Throughout revival history, people who elevate a more spiritual view tend to disregard the value of appropriate church structures. The Corinthians fit the revival mold in that sense also:

The problem is the Corinthians have the wrong vision of the leadership structure, of equality in Christ, and of how the two work together. They do not see how Spirit and structure are to be held together in tension without one eclipsing the other. (Witherington, Conflict 81)

Paul’s use of the body analogy for the church in 1 Corinthians 12 indicates that for Paul the church is more than just a hierarchical institution, yet its cohesiveness and its nurture remain important. The thrust of Paul’s contention with the Corinthians is that the unity of the church is more of an indication of spirituality than the manifestations in which the Corinthians took pride. Within that unity, Paul recognizes the importance of the function of all the different gifts available to the church through the Spirit, including leadership gifts. Therefore, part of Paul’s approach, conveyed in 1:10, 4:16, and 16:15, is to overcome the factionalism at Corinth through “the attempt to set up effective local leadership,” along with appeals to his own leadership (95). For the church to be effective in fulfilling its mission leadership remains important, even in a period of heightened spiritual experience. Revival does not nullify the need for effective church leadership, nor



does spirituality nullify the responsibility of members of a local church to respond appropriately to legitimate church leadership structures.

**Application to revival.** Barrett makes a direct application of 1 Corinthians to times of revival or “enthusiasm”:

Paul assumes the existence of a community in which the phenomena of inspiration were present, and indeed common. He neither denies the right of such phenomena to exist within the church, nor affirms that in themselves they are a proof of the presence and activity of the Spirit of God. That is, Christian “enthusiasm” is neither attacked nor defended, but presupposed and analysed. (279)

Witherington believes that “the Corinthians are a perfect example of how abundance, not just material abundance but even an abundance of spiritual gifts, leads to a loss of restraint and perspective” (Conflict 141). The 1990s revival in North America unquestionably involved both kinds of abundance. Paul’s principles of following the law of love, demonstrated primarily by seeking what is beneficial to others and the building up of the Christian community, therefore have very direct application to American revival issues. Paul does not just provide correctives for excesses; he provides a strong, positive focus that will enable a church experiencing spiritual abundance to fulfill its mission for the greatest glory of God.

### **John Wesley’s Revival Leadership**

Much of the literature of revival has focused on Jonathan Edwards because of his insightful writings dealing directly with the manifestations of revival. John Wesley, on the other hand, experienced strong manifestations in his revival ministry, but, perhaps more than any other figure of revival history, maintained a primary focus on the scriptural mission of the church as expressed in Acts 2 and 4 and 1 Corinthians 13. Wesley, therefore, merits specific attention regarding his leadership in balancing emphases on revival experience and the church’s mission.

## Wesley's Synthesis

Wesley's key to revival leadership was his ability to hold together a number of issues that are easily dichotomized:

Wesley's genius, under God, lay in developing and maintaining a synthesis in doctrine and practice that kept biblical paradoxes paired and powerful. He held together faith and works, doctrine and experience, the individual and the social, the concerns of time and eternity. (Snyder 143)

Howard A. Snyder goes on to describe additional components of what he calls "the Wesleyan synthesis":

1. divine sovereignty and human freedom,
2. doctrine and experience,
3. experience and structure,
4. the charismatic and the institutional, and
5. present and future salvation (144-52).

As a result of his balanced approach, Wesley faced criticism from those who promoted revival and from those who opposed it. Wesley did not shrink back from confronting both the works orientation of the traditional church and the "Antinomianism" of the revival extremists, knowing that "from those who lean to either extreme, I shall have no thanks" (Complete Works 2: 488). Wesley so passionately pursued spiritual renewal that he was derogatorily labeled an "enthusiast" by his opponents. At the same time, Wesley was so committed to the purposes of the church, and the structures that would enable the church to fulfill its purposes, that revival extremists questioned his spirituality. Knox, while maintaining a critical view of Methodism's beginnings, recognizes Wesley's remarkable composure: "The disconcerting fact about early Methodism [is] that its founder sympathized with enthusiasm in its most violent forms, yet was never himself carried away by it" (451-52).

## Theologian of Experience

Wesley actively pursued the spiritual liveliness that the church misses when it attempts to gain righteousness purely by works apart from personal experience of the love of God. Wesley was not so focused on the problems of the church, however, that he failed to gain from the church's heritage. While Wesley was obviously driven by a passion for God and a love for humanity that were the heart of his revival movement, he refused to let the shortcomings of the church drive him to extremes. Wesley strongly believed that the church had experienced spiritual decline early in its history, and that the church of his day continued in a largely fallen state (Snyder 80-81; Wesley, Complete Works 7: 191), yet Wesley maintained a sense of continuity in the life and history of the church that gave him great hope for the renewing power of God to make a difference in his day:

Wesley's confidence in the present working of grace gave him a dynamic and positive conviction concerning what God could accomplish through his people in the present order.... This dialectic between the fallenness of the church and the renewing work of the Spirit was basic to Wesley's outlook. (Snyder 82-83)

Wesley was so confident in the work of God's Spirit in the church of his day that he claimed that "no 'former time,' since the Apostles left the earth, has been better than the present" (Complete Works 7: 193).

Part of the reason for Wesley's confidence was the resurgence in the church of the sense of personally experiencing the love and presence of God. Personal experience was so central to Wesley's thinking and ministry that Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., says that "Wesley was, if nothing else, the theologian of experience" (53). For Wesley, even with his ability to maintain syntheses of various biblical paradoxes, personal experience was foundational to everything else. Wesley, as a theologian of experience, did not limit

experience to an interior religious concept, but he did maintain the priority of such interior experience. In 1751, Wesley reflects on the beginnings of the revival about thirteen years before:

All our preaching at first was pointed at the heart, and almost all our private conversation. “Do you feel the love of God in your heart? Does his Spirit reign there? Do you walk in the Spirit? Is that mind in you which was in Christ?” were frequent questions among us. (Complete Works 2: 251)

The emphasis on feeling and interior experience led to charges of enthusiasm, or religious extremism, against Wesley. Wesley defended against these charges on the grounds that religious feelings are naturally subject to criticism from those who have never experienced the feelings: “Whatever is spoke of the religion of the heart, and of the inward workings of the Spirit of God, must appear enthusiasm to those who have not felt them” (1: 277).

### **Manifestations of Revival**

The experiential emphasis of Wesley’s ministry resulted in many of the same outward manifestations that have accompanied other revivals, including that of the 1990s. Though Wesley had doubts about the manifestations at first, he came to recognize them as signs of God’s activity as people displayed strong physical and emotional responses to Wesley’s preaching (White 127-28). Wesley soon overcame his doubts, attributing God’s withdrawing of his Spirit to doubts about the manifestations:

He had justly withdrawn his Spirit from us, for our manifold unfaithfulness. We acknowledged our having grieved him ... above all, by blaspheming his work among us, imputing it either to nature, to the force of imagination and animal spirits, or even to the delusion of the devil. (Complete Works 1: 230-31)

Wesley had such a positive view of the manifestations that he prayed for them to occur in his ministry (White 127-28; B. Edwards 203). John White observes that Wesley

mistakenly pointed to the manifestations as signs of God's approval of his doctrine as opposed to Calvinism, even though the manifestations had happened among the Calvinists (126). B. Edwards, who agrees with White that Wesley too strongly sought manifestations in his ministry, nevertheless concludes that "it seems unnecessary to try to explain these things other than by the powerful effects of the work of the Holy Spirit on a bad conscience" (203). In that sense, the manifestations were evidence that God was at work in Wesley's ministry.

Wesley did not, however, pursue manifestations simply to gain personal affirmation in his preaching. Wesley's view lines up with B. Edwards' perspective, that God was working on the consciences of Wesley's hearers. For Wesley, the most important activity was not that manifestations were taking place, but that God was doing a work in people's hearts. Wesley, in keeping with his experiential emphasis on personal appropriation of God's saving love, emphasized that the outward activity was merely a sign of the more important inward working of God. As much as Wesley sought and expected the manifestations, he readily acknowledges that they were of limited value because they were God's way of accommodating human weakness:

Perhaps it might be because of our hearts, unready to receive any thing unless we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs of the very time when he wrought this inward change to be continually seen and heard among us. (Complete Works 1: 221)

As with revival leaders in the 1990s, manifestations were lifted up as evidence that God was at work in people's lives.

A major difference between Wesley and the leaders of the 1990s revival is the way they characterize the inner work to which the manifestations pointed. Wesley interpreted the manifestations as evidence of conviction or deep agony of the soul, and

consistently he would respond by praying with people until the agony ceased and joy was expressed as a result of receiving salvation (Complete Works 1: 214). In other words, the manifestations were primarily limited to unbelievers coming under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In the 1990s, many revival critics denied that the movement was actually a revival because the manifestations primarily involved believers who were experiencing a fresh work of the Spirit. Wesley accepts such a possibility with seeming reluctance, although he did witness it in his ministry:

We were soon after called into the garden, where Patty Jenkins (one of the same age) was so overwhelmed with the love of God, that she sunk down, and appeared as one in a pleasant sleep, only with her eyes open; yet she had often just strength to utter, with a low voice, ejaculations of joy and praise; but no words coming up to what she felt, she frequently laughed while she saw his glory. This is quite unintelligible to many; for a stranger intermeddleth not with our joy. (2: 558)

Wesley does acknowledge, however, that the manifestations first took place only within the meetings of the “private societies” (1: 221). Where the 1990s revival manifestations remained within the church for the most part, thereby providing critics arguments against the revival, Wesley’s approach to the manifestations, associating them with the initial work of God in a person’s life, ultimately lent the movement a more outward focus. Knox points out that, though they occurred throughout Wesley’s lifetime, the manifestations were primarily limited to the first few months of the advance of the revival into new territory (529).

### **Enthusiasm Confronted**

As much as Wesley embraced the manifestations as evidence of God’s work, he did not do so uncritically. In Knox’s view, Wesley simply interprets manifestations in favorable or unfavorable light based on whether or not they brought embarrassment to his movement (533). Wesley, however, endured enough criticism for his convictions that he

likely did not base his acceptance or rejection of manifestations purely on matters of embarrassment. Wesley's assessment of manifestations was derived from other, more substantial issues that should be considered in any revival that includes such manifestations.

Wesley obviously appreciated and welcomed the manifestations that accompanied the revival's spread as it touched and changed lives. He resisted the manifestations when they inhibited the revival's spread, or when they appeared to be routinized extremes practiced by believers, sought for no other reason than the experience itself. Wesley never uncritically embraced just any seemingly spiritual activity, even from the beginning stages of the revival. Early on Wesley confronted prophetic and quietistic extremes (Complete Works 1: 230, 306, 335). A few years later, Wesley expressed his view that the "wildest enthusiasm" was actually a result of departing from the basic teachings of the revival (2: 256). In 1755 Wesley laments the destruction to revival's work brought about by Antinomian and mystical extremes:

Most of the seed which has been sown for so many years, the "wild boars" have "rooted up"; the fierce, unclean, brutish, blasphemous Antinomians have utterly destroyed it. And the mystic foxes have taken true pains to spoil what remained, with their new Gospel. (2: 366)

In spite of the harsh words against the Antinomians, Wesley did not always attribute extreme behavior to the worst of human motives.

In 1763 Wesley received a report from Wales about church services in which extreme behavior predominated:

It is common ... for any one that has a mind, to give out a verse of an hymn. This they sing over and over with all their might.... Meanwhile the bodies of two or three sometimes ten or twelve are violently agitated; and they leap up and down, in all manner of postures, frequently for hours together. (Complete Works 3: 130)

Wesley believed these manifestations were in some sense a response to God, yet at the same time played into the devil's strategy to limit the impact of the revival:

They are honest, upright men, who really feel the love of God in their hearts. But they have little experience, either of the ways of God, or the devices of Satan. So he serves himself of their simplicity, in order to wear them out, and to bring discredit on the work of God. (3: 130)

Even though throughout Wesley's lifetime his ministry was marked by manifestations that he welcomed, he remained consistent in his recognition that Satan could work through extreme behavior. In 1786 he again affirms that people in their experience of God's love may come under Satan's influence, to the detriment of the move of God:

But even while they are full of love, Satan strives to push many of them to extravagance.... Just so do the French Prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bring the real work into contempt. (4: 364)

Wesley attributed some of the revival excesses to Satan, but he did not have an overly harsh reaction to the manifestations: "Yet whenever we reprove them, it should be in the most mild and gentle manner possible" (4: 365). Wesley neither ignored nor overreacted to revival excesses.

Wesley's corrections of revival excesses, or enthusiasm, emphasized the use of godly reason, adherence to Scripture, and pursuing love demonstrated by the good works that characterize the mission of the church:

Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm.... Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations to be from God. They may be from him. They may be from nature. They may be from the devil.... You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour, if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain, literal meaning of any text, taken in connexion with the context. And so you are, if you despise or lightly esteem reason, knowledge, or human learning.... The very desire of growing in grace may sometimes be an inlet of enthusiasm. As it continually leads us to seek new grace, it may lead us unawares to seek something else new, beside new degrees of love to God and man. (Plain Account 67-68)

Ironically, toward the end of Wesley's life and ministry his correctives had resulted in a



reduction of conflict with all parties except the most resistant extremists: “God has at length made our enemies to be at peace with us; and scarce any but Antinomians open their mouth against us” (Complete Works 4: 546).

### **The Authority of Scripture**

Wesley confronted his enemies, both the opponents of revival and the revival extremists, on the basis of Scripture. For Wesley, the problem with both sides was failure to adhere to Scripture, with unscriptural legalism producing unscriptural excess:

For generally speaking, they are the Pharisees who make the Antinomians. Running into an extreme so palpably contrary to Scripture, they occasion others to run into the opposite one. These, seeking to be justified by works, affright those from allowing any place for them. (Complete Works 5: 551)

Wesley’s confrontation of revival extremes was not limited to his later years. Early on Wesley confronted unbridled enthusiasm with the bridle of Scripture. He was not impressed by spiritual behavior and supposed prophetic inspiration that in any way contradicted Scripture (1: 196). Snyder notes that Wesley himself was accused of enthusiasm, yet he remained committed to the authority of Scripture:

He was roundly charged with enthusiasm or fanaticism because of his stress on experience and his openness to the expression of emotion.... But he was always clear as to the priority of Scripture, especially from 1738 on, and his experiential emphasis was guarded from pure subjectivism not only by his respect for Scripture but also by his emphasis on the witness of the Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit testifying to and confirming the Word in present experience. (71)

Wesley’s approach to scriptural authority is intricately linked to his approach to Christian experience. The Bible for Wesley is not a set of rules simply to be obeyed, but truths to be experienced and enacted by the same power who inspired them.

### **Scriptural Mission**

Not only is Wesley a theologian of experience, but he is a theologian of action. As

strongly as Wesley emphasizes personal, individual experience of God's grace, he does not stop there:

This is the original design of the Church of Christ. It is a body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation; and, afterwards, as far as in them lies, **to save all men from present and future misery** [emphasis mine], to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavor of every member of his Church; otherwise he is not worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ. (Complete Works 6: 174-75)

Wesley's vision for the mission of the church was grounded in the scriptural witness of the life of the early Church, particularly as depicted in Acts 2 and 4. Speaking of the outpourings of God's Spirit on the early Church, and the church's communal and missional response, Wesley affirms, "And wheresoever the same cause shall prevail, the same effect will naturally follow" (6: 256). "It was, of course, Wesley's intent to foment the 'cause' that would have this effect" (Jennings 112). In Wesley's view, the early Church was shaped into the community it became and was propelled into its mission by its strong experience of the Holy Spirit. As Wesley expounds on the communal life of the church as summarized in Acts 2, he deemphasizes mutual care as a result of a command; he instead stresses the inner compulsion of love (John Wesley's Notes 337). Based on his understanding of Scripture, Wesley could not conceive of a genuine revival movement that failed to result in the same kind of loving action described in Acts 2 and 4. Wesley sees the loving response of caring for one another as a necessarily universal response to a powerful outpouring of grace:

Great grace was upon them all. And it was the immediate, necessary consequence of it: yea, and must be to the end of the world. In all ages and nations, the same cause, the same degree of grace, could not but in like circumstances produce the same effect. (343)

For Wesley, love is the key to scriptural Christianity and is his primary corrective.

## Love as the Balance

Wesley strongly promoted spiritual experience but at the same time strongly resisted any experiential emphasis that deviated from love. Based on 1 Corinthians 13, Wesley speaks of revival excesses and the inferiority of any spiritual experience when compared with love:

Another ground of these, and a thousand mistakes, is, the not considering deeply, that love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love; and that all gifts above-mentioned are either the same with, or infinitely inferior to it.... There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, Have you received this or that blessing? if you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way.... Settle it in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom. I say yet again, beware of enthusiasm. (Plain Account 68-69)

Revival history shows that proponents of revival too easily become divisive in their pride. Wesley understood scriptural love to be the antidote to the spiritual elitism that frequently characterizes revival movements. On one occasion Wesley praises a particular group of extremists for their evangelistic zeal and then goes on to list a number of grievances. His greatest criticism, however, is their lack of love (Complete Works 3: 102). Love is Wesley's key authenticator of genuine spiritual experience.

For Wesley, love of God and love of other people involved interior experience. Love could not be reduced simply to an attempt to mimic the actions of the early Church, or even obeying the direct commands of Scripture. He knew that people could not love adequately without first having a deep, interior grasp of the unconditional love of God. Out of the inner experience of the love of God, love for people would flow and be demonstrated through loving actions. Loving actions and love for people would,

therefore, involve an inner disposition. Based on 1 John 5:3, Wesley repudiates the thought “that the love of God is not an affection of the soul, but merely an *outward service* [original emphasis] and that the love of our neighbor is not a disposition of the heart, but barely a course of *outward works*” [original emphasis] (Complete Works 5: 301). Wesley refuses to minimize the inner experience of love that is his primary measure of the legitimacy of the revival; he remains the theologian of experience.

### **Love in Action**

In keeping with Wesley’s ability to synthesize biblical emphases that are too easily dichotomized in church practice, Wesley certainly did not limit love to an inner experience, even though for him it begins there. As he further explains 1 John 5, he notes that while the first fruit of love is a disposition of the heart, love will produce additional fruit:

A second fruit of the love of God ... is universal obedience.... And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein, is, the being “zealous of good works”; the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to “spend and be spent for them,” for every child of man. (Complete Works 5: 301)

Wesley’s emphasis on the full, scriptural fruit of love prevented his emphasis on personal, inner experience from becoming too privatized and individualized, characteristics which were for him evidence of enthusiasm. For Wesley, “an inner experience of God in the soul which does not result in one’s ‘doing all the good you can’ is inherently suspect” (Snyder 147). One of the first revival issues that Wesley confronted was the passivist tendencies of the Moravians:

The first issue to become a focus of concern [for Wesley] was the “quietist” suggestion of the Moravians that one should await God’s justifying work in total passivity, because any spiritual disciples or other work [including good works done after salvation] would be an abandonment of faith. (Maddox 149)

Similarly, “in the middle years of the revival,” Wesley challenged the Reformed notion that good works would signify an abandonment of God’s grace in the lives of the elect in exchange for human activity: “Wesley’s fundamental convictions again led him to resist any counterposing of God’s grace and our response” (149). Wesley insists that “we are justified by faith alone, and yet by such a faith as is not alone.... Faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, and the fear of God.... Neither doth faith shut out good works, necessarily to be done afterwards” (Complete Works 9: 134). Wesley went so far as to deny the efficacy of a faith that did not result in good works: “If good works do not follow our faith ... it is plain our faith is worth nothing; we are yet in our sins” (5: 551).

A result of limiting the 1990s renewal to a refreshing, inner experience for the church was a high degree of passivity in relation to good works because many people who had previously been engaged in good works did so almost exclusively as a matter of outward performance. Wesley also had actively engaged in social outreach ministries from the time he was at Oxford as a young man, long before the revival movement began. The students of the Holy Club were involved in good works “essentially at four points: in the two city prisons in Oxford, among poor families, in the workhouse, and in a school for underprivileged children” (Marquardt 24).

Wesley’s early motivations for ministries of good works were the “outward service” and “outward works” he would later challenge, centering primarily on obedience and the gaining of eternal reward (Marquardt 25). To Wesley’s credit, his later discovery of the inner motivations that came in personal experience of the love and grace of God did not cause him to reject good works. Instead, the revival brought fresh impetus and power to the work Wesley already knew the church was commanded to do. Wesley came to realize that good works were not enough and that they could be a form of godliness

without spiritual power (Complete Works 1: 279), but he never downplayed good works as a matter of obedience to Christ's law. He simply added the higher motivation of the love of God poured out in his soul. "Shall we be less obedient to God from filial love than we were through servile fear?" he asks (5: 553). The major change for Wesley was that earlier he had striven to "attain blessedness in this life by carefully fulfilling the commandments given to [Christians]" (Marquardt 25). After his profound experience of the love of God, Wesley sought to obey the commands to love God and to love people because he had already attained the blessedness of knowing God's love personally. "Indeed, there is no theme more common or central to Wesley's theology than that the only thing which can enable us to love God and others is an assurance that God loves us" (Maddox 174).

Wesley's social ministries, far from getting lost in the excitement of revival, remained central for Wesley. In some respects, the revival was itself a form of social ministry, because Wesley's revival ministry most notably impacted the lower strata of society. Such is the case with Wesley's revivalistic field preaching:

When Wesley preached to the Kingswood colliers he was touching those most cruelly victimized by industrialization. Yet his response among the coal miners was phenomenal, and Wesley worked tirelessly for their spiritual and material welfare. Among other things, he opened free dispensaries, set up a kind of credit union, and established schools and orphanages. (Snyder 86)

Wesley did not limit himself to recognizing only the manifestations of people under conviction as the work of the Holy Spirit: "Benevolence and compassion toward all forms of human woe have increased in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world" (Complete Works 7: 192).

Wesley's revival emphases did far more than promote particular projects; they changed the conscience of the nation:

Wesley's most important contribution involving the poor's quality of life lay neither in ... individual projects (however exemplary), nor in his extremely beneficial comprehensive educational efforts. Instead, it lay in the changed consciousness that this now notorious preacher began to engender both among the affected poor and the higher strata of English society. (Marquardt 29)

The synthesis of inner experience with outward action enabled Wesley's movement to have profound societal impact over many decades:

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were staggering benefits of the revival in the social life of England, and some of the worst effects of the Industrial Revolution were avoided.... Revival gave the nation a social conscience and produced the men and women who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and brought the women and children up from the mines and the boys down from the chimneys; revival contributed also to a greater concern for prisoners and the insane, a reduction in the hours of work and a care for the living conditions of the poor. (B. Edwards 185-86)

Wesley's biblical synthesis of heart and action had a tremendous social impact, but his evangelistic fervor cannot be ignored.

### **The Good Work of Saving Souls**

As strong as Wesley's social impact was, his priority in the mission of the church was to save souls (Complete Works 6: 174). He did not, however, dichotomize between good works on behalf of the poor and proclaiming good news to the poor; instead, he emphasized a unified mission "to save all men from present and future misery" (6: 174). "Wesley ... held together the evangelistic and the prophetic dimensions of the gospel. There was no split between personal salvation and social engagement" (Snyder 86).

Wesley describes the aims of the Oxford Holy Club in the years before the revival began, acknowledging "no desire but to save souls from death" (Complete Works 6: 315). Again, Wesley's revival experience provided additional impetus and power to a priority that Wesley maintained even before the revival. He understood the saving of souls to be a scriptural command that he refused to set aside for the sake of spiritual

experience. Instead, he rightly understood that the experience of the Spirit he enjoyed was actually the key to proclaiming experiential salvation. Proclaiming this salvation was for Wesley the epitome of good works. Commenting on the claims of Christ upon his people, Wesley states, “He died ‘to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of’ *all* ‘good works’ [original emphasis]; zealous, above all, to ‘save souls from death’” (7: 153).

The law of love that was Wesley’s guiding principle in the revival propelled him into zealous ministry to relieve both temporal and eternal misery of all people. The mutual love and care described in Acts 2 and 4, and encouraged in 1 Corinthians 13, were not to be limited within the church only. According to Wesley’s understanding of “the original design of the Church of Christ” believers are first to secure their own salvation, then “to assist each other in working out their salvation” (Complete Works 6: 174).

Wesley seems to have left no room, however, for a spiritual experience just to be enjoyed by the church. “Wesley kept Christian experience from retreating into an inner world divorced from the problems and sufferings of daily life. Holiness involved making a present stand for the righteousness of the Kingdom of God and especially bringing the gospel to the poor” (Snyder 152). Even when Wesley promoted mutual love and care within the church, he maintained an outward orientation: “It is noteworthy that Wesley believed the adherents of other faiths would be converted by the Christian practice of pentecostal community of property and redistribution of wealth” (Jennings 114).

Once again, revival excesses were countered by Wesley’s strong missional priorities. His combined social and evangelistic emphases, based on his understanding of the scriptural mandate of loving God and loving others, were never set aside for the sake of experience alone. Instead, the experience provided an interior drive to fulfill what Wesley already understood to be the commandments of God for the church. Wesley



could, therefore, promote both radical revival experience that left him open to charges of enthusiasm and radical obedience to God's commission to all believers. Wesley did not allow the mission of the church to be co-opted by revival extremists. Neither did Wesley allow revival extremes to destroy the structural aspects of the church, the community being built by God's Spirit.

### **Structured for Revival**

The impact of Wesley's revival cannot be attributed solely to the evangelistic emphasis of the movement, nor to the development of a social conscience. A major reason for the revival's impact was Wesley's organizational ability. Wesley did not idealize or over-spiritualize the nature of the church. Again Wesley was able to develop a synthesis, in this case balancing the seeming paradox of charisma and institution (Snyder 151-52). Wesley could acknowledge the fallenness of the institutional church without rejecting it. "He saw the fallenness of the church, but also that it was still a channel of God's grace" (Snyder 89). Wesley's strong commitment to the church as a temporal entity being built by God's Spirit but established in history means he did not shrink back from addressing organizational or institutional issues.

McLoughlin credits Wesley's success to his preaching, his brother's hymns, and his creation of "a magnificent organizational structure for his movement" (95).

In terms of preaching and the charismatic elements of the revival, White believes that "Whitefield made an even greater contribution to the Great Awakening than Wesley" (176). White also recognizes that "Wesley ... never ceased to be a builder, and built carefully on the class and society structure.... It is universally recognized that his careful organizational structuring ... was crucial to the revival movement" (176).

The law of love was a key element in Wesley's devotion to the organizational

connection of the church, particularly the classes and societies. Wesley strongly resisted the experiential extremes that proved divisive due to pride and lack of love. His admonishments were not concerned with a lack of love generally, but specifically with a lack of love to those within a particular society. Wesley goes on to summarize what he sees as the problem with this lack of love within the society:

But what I most of all dislike is, your littleness of love to your brethren, to your own society,... in one word, your divisive spirit. Indeed I do not believe that any of you either design or desire a separation; but you do not enough fear, abhor, and detest it, shuddering at the very thought.  
(Complete Works 3: 102-03)

Obviously Wesley felt strongly about the unity of the class and society system and disliked anything that would disrupt that unity. Wesley even makes known his dislike of revivalistic meetings that would hinder the societies and their leaders and members from pursuing God's broader purposes, including those of the institutional church:

I dislike your appointing such meetings as hinder others from attending either the public preaching, or their class or band; or any other meeting, which the Rules of the society, or their office requires them to attend. I dislike your spending so much time in several meetings, as many that attend can ill spare from the other duties of their calling, unless they omit either the preaching, or their class, or band. This naturally tends to dissolve our society, by putting the sinews of it. (3: 103)

Wesley took a different approach from the 1990s tendency to establish revival centers with nightly meetings that provided experiences disconnected from the life of a face-to-face community.

Furthermore, Wesley was very conscious of the fact that the experience he propagated was strongly dependent on the support system provided by the societies, classes, and bands:

Never omit meeting your Class or Band; never absent yourself from any public meeting. These are the very sinews of our Society; and whatever weakens, or tends to weaken, our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community. As one saith,

That part of our economy, the private weekly meetings for prayer, examination, and particular exhortation, has been the greatest means of deepening and confirming every blessing that was received by the word preached, and of diffusing it to others, who could not attend the public ministry; whereas, without this religious connexion and intercourse, the most ardent attempts, by mere preaching, have proved of no lasting use. (Plain Account 71-72)

Wesley laments the spiritual coldness that can overtake those who were once on fire spiritually. He sees organizing people into disciplined groups as the key to conserving the benefits of revival experience:

I was more convinced than ever, that the preaching like an Apostle, without joining together those that are awakened, and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching there has been for these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection; and the consequence is, that nine in ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever. (Complete Works 3: 129)

Two days after this observation, Wesley again expresses his understanding of the value of the societies in preserving the benefits of revival: “I preached at seven to one or two hundred people, many of whom seemed full of good desires. But as there is no society, I expect no deep or lasting work” (3: 130). Without question Wesley’s leadership of revival resulted in a deep and lasting impact, and the principles he espoused, rooted in the biblical expression of the mission and nature of the church in response to an outpouring of God’s Spirit, remain relevant to revival movements to this day.

### **The Mission of the Church**

In the book of Acts the purposeful response to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit seemingly occurs spontaneously; however, the response is not all spontaneous. The issues of the ministry of the word and prayer, along with caring for the needy, require deliberate attention (Acts 6:1-4). The church’s formation as a community is not entirely spiritual, but also cultural. Israel is still quite theocratic in nature with a high degree of messianic

expectation and a cultural precedent of establishing communities bound together in messianic expectation. The early Church fit this pattern. The early Church also maintained continuity with its Jewish roots through its use of synagogue structure. God worked through the cultural context; however, human influence, if not intentionality, still comes into play.

Clearly, as the book of Acts progresses, the nature of the early Church shifts as evidenced by its neglect of the evangelistic mandate until Christians are scattered by persecution (Acts 8). The Church had not stayed intentionally focused on its mission. If the early Church needed to be reoriented in its purpose so soon after the outpouring of the Spirit, the same will be truer for today's church. Furthermore, North American culture provides a framework less suited for embracing the work of the Spirit in such a way that keeps the church oriented toward biblical purpose.

Most responses to revival appear to be culturally conditioned. Christians will always have to work at keeping revivals oriented toward God's purposes. North American churches have already become too accommodating to culture, which is a key reason why revival is needed in the first place. Christians are too willing to embrace the affirming aspects of a work of God's Spirit but more reluctant to embrace, especially after the waning of initial fervor, the more challenging components of God's agenda in revival.

**The purpose-driven church.** Thanks to Warren, the concept of the purposes of the church has received a great deal of attention. The genius of Warren's approach is its biblical simplicity without being overly narrow. In order to cooperate with God in his sending of revival, churches have to devote themselves to all five purposes, as the early church devoted themselves to the purposes outlined in Acts 2:42 ff. Warren's approach is

to achieve balance in the following five areas of the church's purpose: worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship (103-07).

The focus of the revivals of the 1990 was in the area of worship, which includes the experience of God's presence. For church health, and therefore revival health, a church must intentionally incorporate ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship.

**Natural church development.** Another well-known approach to church health is Natural Church Development, pioneered by Schwarz. Schwarz is very intentional about keeping a balance between what he calls spiritualist and technocratic paradigms (83-102). This balance is very much in alignment with Poloma's concept of the "dialectic dance" between institution and charisma, structure and experience, that produces the greatest church health ("Revitalizing American Pentecostalism"). Schwarz's eight quality characteristics necessary for church health and growth are

1. empowering leadership,
2. gift-oriented ministry,
3. passionate spirituality,
4. functional structures,
5. inspiring worship service,
6. holistic small groups,
7. need-oriented evangelism, and
8. loving relationships (15-37).

Schwarz absolutely insists on strength in all of these quality characteristics:

No church wanting to grow qualitatively and quantitatively can afford to overlook any one of these quality characteristics. For example, the widespread claim that "church growth is exclusively a matter of prayer" is simply not true. Such a statement absolutizes one element of the quality characteristic "passionate spirituality" at the expense of all others. (38)

As the one element of prayer cannot be absolutized, neither can spiritual experience be absolutized if the church is to have healthy revival. The individual Christian life and the church consist of more than just the experiences that capture the most attention in revival. As prayer and spiritual experience cannot be absolutized, neither should order in the church be absolutized. Order cannot be elevated to the point that the church resists revival because of the mistakes made in the excitement that comes in the initial stages of a powerful revival experience. The key to a healthy outpouring, as was discovered by J. Edwards, was not a censorious approach to the problems he perceived. Instead, he offered constructive insight, keeping the focus not on the problems but on the purposes for which God was sending revival. A focus on a healthy church by means of maintaining the mission of the church, even in the midst of an outpouring of God's Spirit, will fulfill the purposes of a healthy revival. If the church is to appropriate the purposes of the Spirit in revival, it cannot ignore the biblical purposes for the church as a whole.

### **The Passionate Pursuit of On-Purpose Revival: A Summary**

In April 1996, revival came to Victory Christian Fellowship, the church I pastor. At the height of our experience, an issue of Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship's Spread the Fire magazine had an article about Ron Burgio, a pastor and recognized leader in Elim Fellowship. The article describes Burgio's desire for the Spirit's work mixed with caution, offering "a list of renewal do's and don'ts" ("Revival Survival" 22). The admonitions included, "Don't forsake the goals of the church but let renewal strengthen and enhance them;... don't throw out other programs—look at renewal as a forum to enhance your ministries;... teach doctrine and foundational truths" (22); and, the most difficult for me at the time, "keep Sunday morning services 'business as usual'" (22). I disregarded the advice, thinking that what God was doing was so fresh and bold, nothing

could stay “business as usual.” In the excitement of revival, with the promise of all things being made new, I too readily jettisoned foundational principles and purposes essential for church health and revival health. I may have even unwittingly abandoned the mission.

God wants the church to live in the power of his Spirit. The church can bear no lasting fruit apart from a vital relationship with God. From time to time throughout history God has had to send revival so that the church can break free from lifeless traditionalism and institutionalism, or to equip the church to reach a changed cultural environment. In either case, some practices that have become detrimental to the church’s mission should be jettisoned, and perhaps only the explosive force of a revival will embolden the church to embrace the changes necessary for effective mission. Churches in revival must be cautious not to jettison the mission, however.

The biblical and historical principles of God’s mission to a lost and hurting world should be enhanced by revival, not lost in the rush of over-individualized revival experience. God’s mission includes building the body of Christ in unity. The revival experience of the love of God must generate not just love of the experience, nor just love for God alone, although it should ignite a blaze of passion for him. True, full revival experience must also ignite love for other believers. That love, the essence of true spirituality, must be demonstrated in godly character, in humility, in mutual submission, including proper accountability to established church leadership, and in practical care for the needy. A church that displays this kind of love is the kind of church God wants to produce through revival, and this kind of church is most fit to proclaim and demonstrate the message of the kingdom of God to those who are outside the church.

Based on this review, church leaders who want to maximize the benefits available through revival should expect to

- encourage genuine revival experiences,
- allow for revival manifestations,
- deal with revival excesses and aberrations,
- receive and offer constructive critique of revival problems,
- maintain biblical authority throughout revival,
- promote evangelism,
- advance need-meeting ministries in the church and community,
- maintain and enhance church unity,
- accept the necessary tension between charisma and “routine,” and
- attend to the necessary structural and organizational elements of church life, such as leadership development and small groups.



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

As important as revivals have been in the life and history of Pentecostal/charismatic churches, many of their leaders resist revival because of some of the problems frequently associated with it. While revivals have included aberrations and errors that are unhealthy, they have nevertheless served to help their participants develop a more fervent faith. Revivals tend to restore the experiential elements of Christianity to churches and movements that have become institutionalized or routinized and are facing decline. Resisting revivals because they include errors and aberrations can, therefore, be detrimental to a church's health and mission.

If revivals are usually necessary to reverse the impact of routinization, they should be embraced by church leaders. The question then becomes one of how to gain the benefits of revival while preventing the concomitant errors from exceeding the value of those benefits. Pastors and leaders who understand the nature and purpose of revival can maximize the benefits of revival not by focusing on squelching or preventing aberrations, though they must be addressed when they present themselves. The benefits of revival are maximized by directing the power of revival into the purposes for which God sends it. A focus on the aberrations, whether in opposition to or defense of them, is off the mark.

The aberrations consistently accompany revivals and receive much attention from critics and opponents alike, but God sends revivals for a purpose. The biblical record of outpourings of the Spirit suggests that the purpose of revival is to fulfill the mission of the church, which includes evangelism and conforming believers to the nature of Christ. The purpose of the study was to examine pastors' perceptions of the impact of the 1990s charismatic revival upon the mission and character of their churches.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions explored the extent of revival involvement of pastors and their churches along with pastors' perceptions related to the purpose of the study.

### **Research Question 1**

What is the pastor's perception of his or her church's experience of the Pentecostal/charismatic revival of the 1990s?

This study was intended to cover only those churches that experienced strong impact from revival, whether that impact was predominantly positive or negative or an admixture of both. The pastor and church must have welcomed the revival, even if at some point, whether before or after being impacted by revival, they rejected it or were skeptical. The pastors' responses revealed some of the unique features and emphases of their churches' experience of revival.

### **Research Question 2**

What is the pastor's understanding of the mission and nature of the church?

Pastors' descriptions of the mission and nature of a local church vary widely, including, omitting, or adding to the five purposes enumerated by Warren. This study sought to evaluate a pastor's perception of revival impact in relation to the purpose of the church as the pastor understood it, or came to understand it since the revival. Revival participants' understanding of what God was doing in revival may have been shaped by their own expectations or by the emphases of the local church pastors who were subjects in this study.

### **Research Question 3**

In what ways was the church's experience of revival congruent with or contrary to the mission and nature of the church?

If the revival participants understood revival only in terms of individual experience, then the fervor that accompanies revival may have resulted in the neglect of the mission of the church. On the other hand, revival participants may have applied themselves with renewed vigor to the church's mission. Revival participants' behavior and character may have enhanced or worked against the nature of the church as understood by the pastor. Of course, in any church at any given time, forces are at work that impact the church's mission and nature favorably or negatively. The nature of revival, with the restoration of personal spiritual experience coupled with aberrations and errors, allows for strong, simultaneous, positive, and negative influences on a church. The instruments used in this study had to allow for this possibility, giving the subjects the opportunity to describe how the revival worked for or against church health characteristics.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study was Pentecostal or charismatic pastors of churches that were impacted by revival in the 1990s. The criteria-based sample was limited to senior pastors of churches with over one hundred in attendance at their main weekend service(s), who have served their churches at least ten years, and whose churches were strongly impacted by the revival. The degree of impact of the revival was based on the senior pastors' evaluations. The sample was drawn from the church and pastor mailing lists of Renewal and Reconciliation, a Philadelphia-based revival network, the Brownsville Revival sponsored Philadelphia Awake America! crusade, and Firepower Ministries International, a ministry of New Jersey-based revivalist Jeff Beacham. Partly as a result of the revivals of the 1990s Beacham came to America from Australia in 1998 and has developed an extensive mailing list of predominantly Pentecostal and charismatic

churches.

A mailing or e-mail was sent to all pastors of Pentecostal and charismatic churches on these lists, limited to pastors residing in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts, and New York. This initial mailing, in addition to allowing for the determination of the selection characteristics, also gave pastors the opportunity to rate the overall strength of revival impact on their churches, the strength of the positives of revival impact, and the strength of the negatives of revival impact. The pastors selected for completion of the more extensive semi-structured interview were those with strong overall impact, regardless of whether that impact was positive, negative, or a combination of both.

The initial surveys to determine overall degree of revival impact, and the degree of both positive and negative impact, were sent by mail to 271 intended recipients who were on the ministry leader mailing lists of Philadelphia Renewal and Reconciliation, the Philadelphia Awake America! crusade, and Firepower Ministries International. Of the 271 mailings, thirty-three were returned as undeliverable due to bad addresses. Of the remaining 238 surveys mailed, responses were received from ninety-five individuals, a 40 percent response rate. Reminders were sent to individuals who did not respond to the first survey mailing. The e-mail surveys initially sent to approximately 350 leaders on the Firepower Ministries electronic mailing list generated only seven online responses, necessitating the use of Firepower's smaller postal mailing list, included in the 271 total mailings. In all, 102 responses to the survey were received.

Of the 102 initial survey respondents, thirty-two fit the selection criteria for the semi-structured interview. The selection criteria, drawn from demographic information gathered with the survey, were pastoral tenure of at least ten years, churches of at least

one hundred average attendance, and survey responses agreeing that the 1990s revival significantly impacted their churches. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all of the available qualifying respondents, twenty-eight of the thirty-two pastors.

### **Instrumentation**

This project was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode utilizing a very brief, researcher-designed questionnaire for criteria-based sample selection. A semi-structured interview was then used to solicit the pastoral evaluations that formed the basis of this study. Questions were designed to determine the subjects' understanding of and the revival's impact on the church's mission and nature.

### **Selection Questionnaire**

The initial survey included a minimal number of questions used primarily to generate the subject sample for further study (see Appendix A). These questions determined the church size, relevant information on pastoral tenure, and pastoral perceptions of the overall degree of revival impact, the degree to which that impact was positive, and the degree to which it was negative. The degree of negative and positive impact are particularly relevant to the conclusions derived from the study.

Pastors on the Renewal and Reconciliation list were expected to be more likely to respond to the initial survey due to my involvement with that organization. These pastors were sent a survey to be returned by a stamped, preaddressed envelope. Because Firepower Ministries International emphasized e-mail communication, pastors on the Firepower Ministries list were contacted through e-mail to complete a Web-based survey. To increase the response rate, the e-mail communication was subsequently followed by the mailing of a survey to be returned by a stamped, preaddressed envelope.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

A semi-structured interview for respondents who matched the selection criteria was conducted (see Appendix B). This study is concerned with a church's particular revival history, the pastor's understanding of the church's mission and nature, and the impact of the revival on that mission. Probing beyond what could be ascertained in a questionnaire was important. The interview was especially valuable for gaining an understanding of leadership approaches that dealt with excesses and aberrations while embracing revival in such a way as to maintain the church's mission.

The questions used in the interview were adapted directly from the three research questions. A fourth question was asked to determine if revival participants caused problems, and what the leaders did to address the problems.

### **Data Collection**

An e-mail including a link to an online survey was sent to all the pastors on the Firepower Ministries list. The online survey was brief and easy to complete. It included minimal demographic information and three revival related questions (see Appendix A). Pastors on the Renewal and Reconciliation and the Awake America! mailing lists received an identical survey on paper, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Additionally, due to the low response to the initial e-mail, pastors on the Firepower Ministries mailing list received the paper survey, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The thirty-two pastors who fit the selection criteria of church size and pastoral tenure and who indicated the highest responses in terms of general impact of revival, regardless of degree of positive or negative impact, were then contacted by my administrative assistant to make appointments for personal interviews. Twenty-eight

pastors agreed to be interviewed. Four pastors were unavailable due to travel or other scheduling concerns. My follow-up attempts to arrange interviews with these four pastors failed. I did one face-to-face interview and conducted all other interviews by telephone from my office within a ten-day time frame. All the interviewees except two were in their church offices for the interviews. The interviewees gave permission for recording the interviews. Technical difficulties prohibited the recording of two of the interviews. I took extensive notes during all interviews and reviewed the recordings after the interviews to expand the notes further. Most of the interviews were between thirty and forty-five minutes in length. The results of the interviews underwent content analysis, enabling the various revival experiences in the six categories suggested by the research and interview questions to “emerge from the data” (Wiersma 203).

### **Variables**

The variables in this qualitative research project primarily emerged from the revival stories of the pastors of churches that were strongly impacted by revival. Other variables derive from the pastors’ definitions of their church’s mission and character and the pastors’ perception of the revival’s impact on that mission and character. Variables pertaining to revival impact include experiences that work either congruent with or contrary to the mission and nature of the church. Revival excesses and errors, along with the pastors’ problem correctives or preventatives, were additional experiences analyzed to examine the relationship between these elements, the nature and mission of the church, and the pastors’ perceptions of the positive or negative impact of revival.

The initial survey enabled the division of the subjects into three groups based on their responses to the statement, “My church was very negatively impacted by the renewal or revival.” The two most disparate groups, low negative impact (LNI) churches

and higher negative impact (HNI) churches, were compared. The revival experiences emphasized by the study participants were placed on graphs comparing the percentage of pastors in each of these two groups identifying the experiences.

The interview responses suggesting various elements of revival cannot be considered as absolutes, giving the complete picture of a church's revival experience. A pastor's failure to mention a particular experience does not mean it was absent in that church. The fact that pastors included certain details and omitted others in recounting their revival experiences, however, can indicate which leadership tendencies, values, and emphases were important in determining whether that church's experience of revival included a high or low negative impact. The open-ended nature of the questions in the semi-structured interview may have been ideal for pointing to leadership characteristics that contribute to or mitigate the harm that can come through the impact of revival and that maximize revival's gains.

The pastors interviewed were not selected randomly; all available pastors fitting the selection criteria were interviewed. Determining levels of significance through inferential analysis of the different responses between the LNI and HNI church pastors is, therefore, not entirely appropriate from a statistician's perspective. Frequently in the social sciences, however, inferential analysis is applied to answers in nonrandom samples. In this study, the chi-square test with a level of significance of .10 was applied to enhance discussion of some of the revival experiences suggesting the biggest differences between LNI and HNI churches. Still, the study remains primarily qualitative, and the experiences displaying the largest percentage differences and possible levels of significance are not necessarily the only or most important issues. Content analysis and the evaluation of the differences between LNI and HNI church experiences are further



guided by biblical and theological emphases covered in the review of literature.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

This study was prompted by the understanding, through personal experience, that periods of revival offer a church an opportunity to enjoy an abundance of blessings but are also fraught with dangers to a church's mission and nature. The purpose of the study was to examine pastors' perceptions of the impact of the 1990s charismatic revival upon the mission and character of their churches.

Research Question 1 was concerned with pastors' perceptions of their churches' experience of revival. The findings relative to this research question are derived from the initial selection survey and the first question in the interviews of the subject pastors (see Appendixes A and B). Based on the initial surveys, the subjects were divided into three groups, enabling a comparison of the two most disparate groups in terms of negative impact. The first interview question elicited the pastors' revival stories.

Research Question 2, the focus of the second interview question, sought to discover the pastors' understandings of the mission and nature of their churches. Research Question 3 explored the ways revival worked in keeping with or contrary to the pastors' understanding of the mission of their churches. The findings relative to Research Question 3 produced four areas of discussion covering ways the revival worked congruent with the churches' mission, ways the revival worked contrary to the churches' mission, revival problems, and problem correctives and preventatives.

#### **Revival Impact Experiences**

This study was particularly concerned with the pastors' perceptions of degrees of positive and negative impact in churches that were strongly affected by the 1990s revival. I expected to determine whether differences in approach to mission and other aspects of

revival leadership would account for differences in perceptions of positive and negative impact.

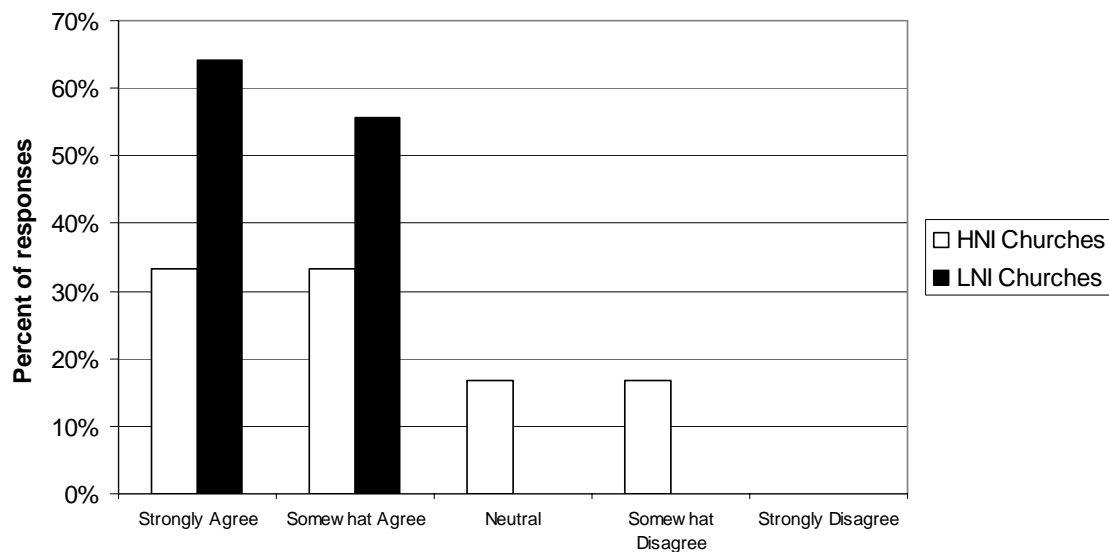
### **High- and Low-Negative-Impact Churches**

Only one of the twenty-eight pastors interviewed rated the negative impact of revival higher than the positive impact. He was also the only one who disagreed that the revival had a positive impact. Only three rated the negative impact of revival as equal to the positive impact, and only one neutral response regarding positive impact was given. Overwhelmingly the subject pastors perceived the impact of the 1990s revival as positive, with twenty-six agreeing or strongly agreeing that revival had a positive impact on their churches. This study did not, however, require pastors of churches with strong revival impact to perceive the impact of the revival as more negative than positive in order to observe differences between churches in their revival experiences. The important concern is that some churches did have a higher degree of negative impact than others.

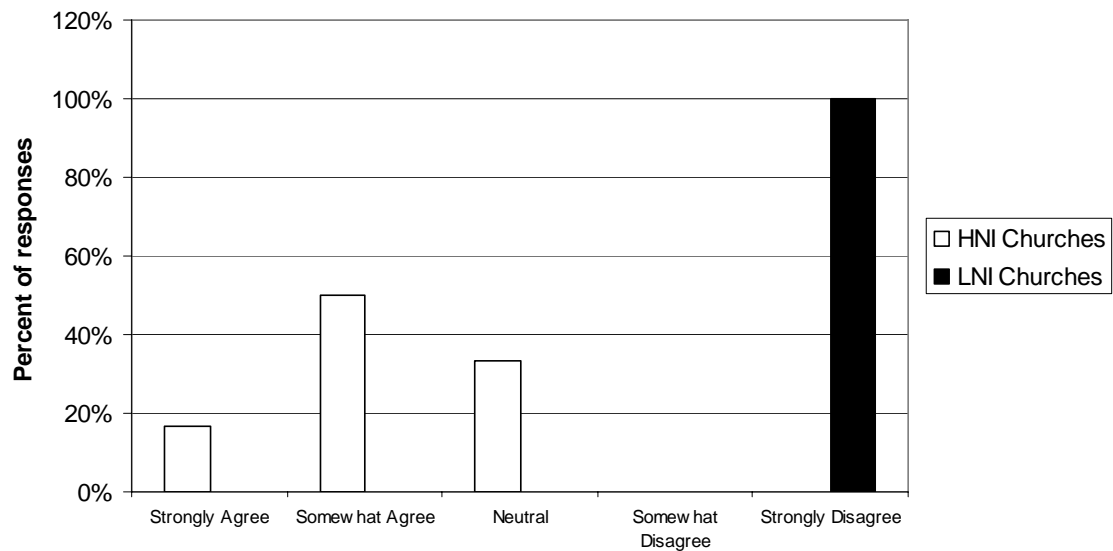
Seemingly, separating churches into two categories of high positive impact and high negative impact would have produced the starkest contrasts. The high degree of perception of positive impact from almost all respondents, however, makes such separation unfeasible. With only two exceptions, the subject pastors viewed revival impact as positive. Contrasting experiences are readily observed, however, when the respondents are separated into three categories, and the two most disparate groups are compared. One of these two groups is comprised of the fourteen pastors who strongly disagreed that the 1990s revival had a negative impact on their churches. The churches of the pastors in this group are designated as low negative impact (LNI) churches.

The other group is comprised of the six pastors who did not disagree with the statement, "My church was very negatively impacted by the renewal or revival." Four of

these six pastors agreed or strongly agreed with this statement regarding the revival's negative impact. The subsequent interviews revealed that two of these six pastors, even though their responses to the statement on negative impact were neutral, had negative experiences similar to the other four. One of the two explicitly stated that the revival was 75 percent positive and 25 percent negative. Because of the relatively low number of pastors agreeing that revival had a negative impact, the six pastors were grouped together. The churches of these six pastors are designated as higher negative impact (HNI) churches. The value of including these six pastors in one group and of comparing LNI churches with HNI churches is apparent when looking at the graphs presenting the results of the interviews. The average church size in both groups is approximately 330, decreasing the likelihood that differences can be explained simply in terms of church size. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the two groups' responses to the initial survey statements on positive and negative impact.



**Figure 4.1. My church was very positively impacted by renewal or revival.**

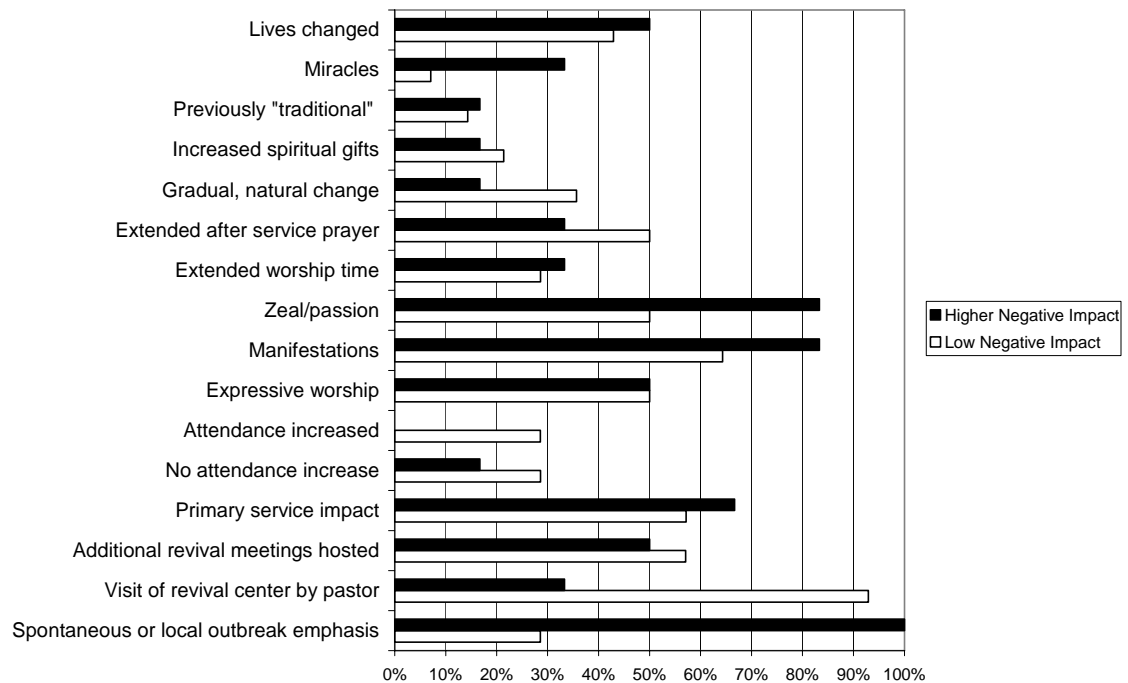


**Figure 4.2. My church was very negatively impacted by renewal or revival.**

Another group of pastors interviewed consists of those who disagreed, but did not strongly disagree, with the statement, “My church was very negatively impacted by the renewal or revival.” Though this group is not as helpful in terms of recognizing the differences that may account for high negative impact versus low negative impact from revival, they were helpful in identifying comparative revival experiences in each of six categories suggested by the research questions and the primary interview questions.

### **Revival Impact Stories**

The elements of the pastors’ revival stories were placed on graphs charting the percentage of pastors identifying them. The percentages listed side by side for each experience reflect the percentages in each of the two most disparate church categories, LNI and HNI churches (see Figure 4.3). The differences revealed may offer insight into reasons why some pastors perceive higher negative impact from revival than others. Some of the issues that seem to contribute to negative revival impact may be minimized in future revivals without losing the benefits of strong revival impact on a local church.



**Figure 4.3. Revival impact stories.**

As part of the selection criteria for the interviews, all of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their churches were significantly impacted by the revival. When asked to describe their churches' stories of revival, the interviewees described a variety of changes and experiences fostered by revival. At least half of the pastors in both the LNI and HNI churches stated that their Sunday morning services were impacted, that they hosted additional revival meetings, that revival participants displayed increased passion or zeal, and that they engaged in more expressive worship. More than half in both groups of pastors mentioned that phenomena such as shaking, falling, and laughing occurred in their meetings.

One pastor told of sponsoring a two-week, outdoor evangelistic campaign that had few results and was hampered by weather and conflict with neighbors. The evangelist who was conducting the campaign was too discouraged to preach and invited a friend to speak in his place. The friend began reading from Acts 2, stopped reading at the point it

says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and then reread the same portion up to that point again. The young man repeated this reading approximately ten times, at which point “the Spirit poured into the place.” People began crying out to God, confessing their sins, displaying certain gifts of the Holy Spirit, expressing great joy, and even experiencing a prolonged period of “a holy hush.” A similarly intense experience of the Holy Spirit continued over the next several nights of the campaign and ultimately brought major change to the church as a whole.

Another pastor spontaneously called for a week of nightly prayer meetings. On the second night, the pastor responded to what he felt was the direction of God to anoint the attendees with oil and pray for a spirit of joy in their lives. As a charismatic pastor in a non-charismatic, mainline denominational church, he had some misgivings. Wanting to obey the promptings of God, however, he proceeded to anoint the people in a liturgical fashion. Then the third person in the line “fell in the Spirit,” and after that others began doing the same. The pastor began to give deep, Spirit-inspired “words of knowledge” to a number of individuals. The next night, the number of participants grew from twenty to 120. Again, the presence of God came into the room, and as people received prayer they fell and remained on the floor, under the influence of God’s power, for an extended time. As some people were receiving prayer ministry, others could be seen in the lobby, visible through a glass wall, dancing. The pastor even reported that a visible haze, denoting the presence of God, came into the room where they were praying. The church has not been the same since.

One of the stories just described was in a low-negative-impact church and the other in a higher negative impact church. The accounts illustrate the fact that churches in both categories had strong revival experiences. The low negative impact indicated by

some churches cannot be explained away by denying that they were really influenced by revival. The experiences included in the revival stories of both LNI and HNI churches were very similar.

**The initial outbreak of revival.** The greatest differences between the two groups of churches concern the descriptions of the initial outbreak of revival in the churches. All of the HNI church pastors emphasized the spontaneous and/or entirely local nature of the outbreak of revival. Some did visit revival centers but did not emphasize the influence of those revival centers in the local church's experience of revival. Only 28.6 percent of the pastors of LNI churches emphasized that revival broke out spontaneously or locally. The LNI church pastors were far more likely to emphasize that revival took place in their churches as a result of the pastor's visit to a revival center such as the Toronto or Brownsville revivals.

**Zeal and passion.** In addition to the emphasis on the local nature of the revival's outbreak in their churches, the revival experiences most included in HNI church pastors' stories were increased zeal or passion, and the occurrence of revival manifestations.

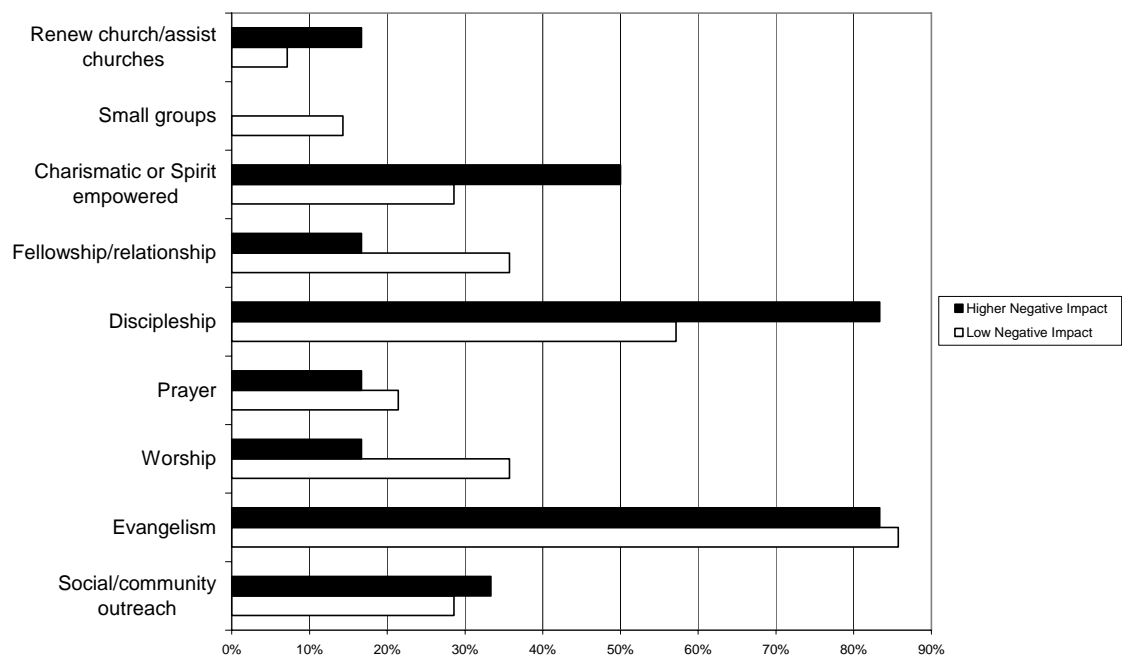
**A gradual approach to revival.** In the interviews, some of the pastors of LNI churches spoke more strongly of a gradual approach to revival, maintaining continuity with what was happening in their churches before revival. The percentage of pastors emphasizing this approach was not high but the emphasis was strong in those who did. Even though revival brought changes to the main weekend service in most of the LNI churches, the changes were not radical in these cases. One LNI church pastor accommodated revival by maintaining the normal order of service but then greatly extending the ministry time immediately after the service. Another LNI church pastor stated, "I can't emphasize enough that God *slowly* [original emphasis] changed who we



were. When God begins a work like this, you can either run with such a work, or you can nurture it and let it emerge naturally.” Still another LNI church pastor acknowledged risk but emphasized a slow approach: “You can be cautious without being unbelieving. God is patient and lets us approve and test what’s of God.”

### **The Mission and Nature of the Church**

The pastors interviewed were simply asked to give their understanding of the mission of the church. They could provide as many different aspects of their church’s mission as they desired. The number of different responses ranged from one to eight. The pastors of both LNI and HNI churches demonstrated a high degree of similarity in their descriptions of the mission and nature of the church. The application of the chi-square test to the emphases in this category reveals no statistically significant distinctions. The aspects of the church’s mission that rated highest in both groups of pastors were evangelism and discipleship (see Figure 4.4).



**Figure 4.4. Mission and nature of the church.**

## **Spirit Empowerment and Discipleship**

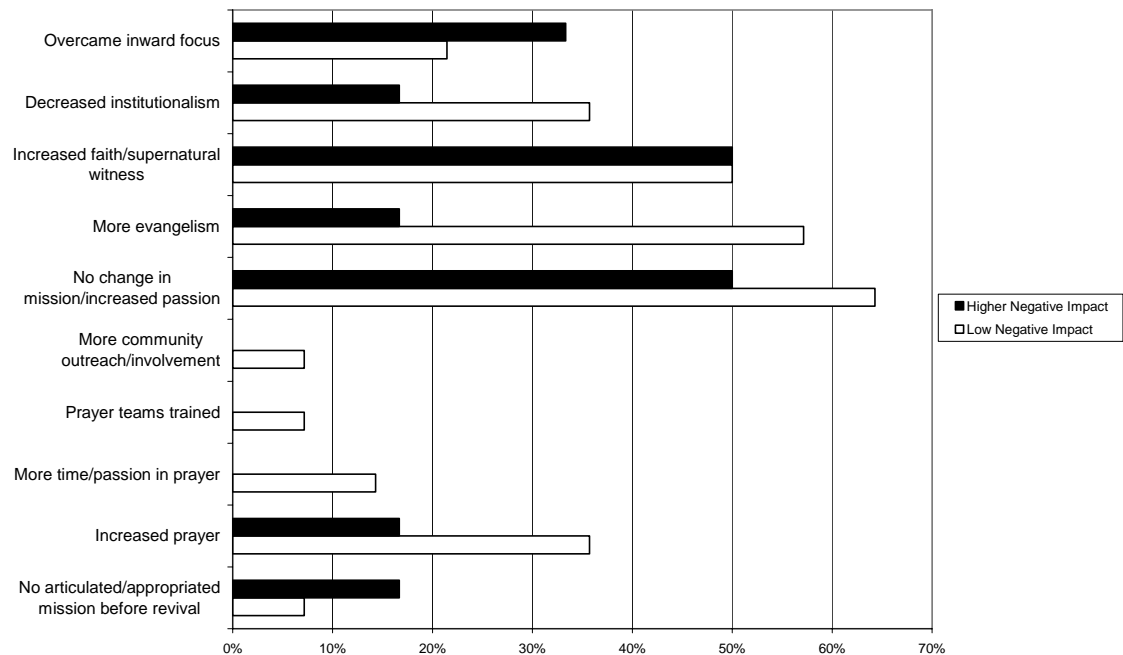
Half of the HNI church pastors, compared with 28.6 percent of LNI church pastors, mentioned that being a Spirit-empowered church or exerting spiritual influence is an important part of their mission. One pastor stated that his church's mission is to "change the spiritual atmosphere of the region." The other area representing the biggest percentage difference in the two groups of pastors is discipleship, with 26.2 percent more HNI church pastors identifying discipleship as part of the church's mission. A difference in discipleship emphases is not apparent simply by looking at the percentages, however. The HNI church pastors, in keeping with the higher degree of emphasis on leading churches with a more spiritual definition of mission, seemed to exhibit a more spiritual understanding of discipleship. The pastor who identified changing the spiritual atmosphere also emphasized discipleship that would enable Christians to understand Satan's activity in the region.

### **Revival Impact on the Church's Mission**

Research Question 3 was concerned with the ways revival worked in keeping with or contrary to the pastors' understanding of the mission of their churches. Four areas of discussion resulted from the findings: ways the revival worked congruent with the churches' mission, ways the revival worked contrary to the churches' mission, revival problems, and problem correctives and preventatives.

### **Revival Working Congruent with the Church's Mission**

The third interview question asked, "In what ways was your church's experience of revival in keeping with, or contrary to, the mission and nature of your church?" The pastors' answers resulted in two different categories, the first describing ways the revival worked in congruence with the church's mission (see Figure 4.5).



**Figure 4.5. Ways the revival experience worked in keeping with the church's mission.**

**Fuel for the mission.** Among the highest responses in both sets of pastors was that the revival did not really change the church's mission in any way. The pastors saw the benefit of revival as one of adding increased passion or depth to the mission of the church. Also reflected in this response are the responses indicating that church mission statements actually became a part of the church's identity. One pastor remarked, "Our mission statement became more than a mission statement; it became who we are." Another stated that revival "provided fuel for mission."

Pastors of LNI churches were especially strong in their insistence that revival did not change the nature of the church's mission. One of these pastors stated, "I still have a to-do list, essentials. Revival has not replaced anything we stood for before revival." Another insisted, "None of our principles were altered in the slightest." Another said that revival fit "hand in glove" with what they were already doing. Although HNI churches

rated highly on this response, LNI church pastors rated higher still, at 71.4 percent as opposed to 50 percent. The difference, along with the strong commitment not to change the church's mission with revival, may indicate that for LNI churches the revival increased passion and zeal for an already well-appropriated or understood mission.

**More prayer, less institutionalism.** Other experiences in this category showing the biggest difference in the ways revival worked in keeping with the missions of HNI and LNI churches were prayer and decreased institutionalism. Pastors of LNI churches stated in about 20 percent more responses that revival both increased the amount of prayer that took place, and decreased institutionalism or traditionalism.

**Increased evangelism.** The biggest difference in the two groups of churches, and the only difference that is statistically significant according to chi-square distribution, is the experience of increased evangelism due to revival. The HNI church pastors identified evangelism, more than anything else except discipleship, as the mission of the church, yet evangelism was an aspect of mission that was least affected by their churches' experience of revival. Over half of the churches of the other group of pastors, however, experienced increased evangelism as a result of the revival. One of the LNI churches experienced growth from 150 to four hundred average attendance during about four years of revival experience. Although most of this growth was by transfer from other churches, a fact of which the pastor stated he is not proud, 15 percent of the growth was by conversion.

Most of the increased evangelism seems to be the result of people becoming bolder in their witness, with only some increase through the direct impact of revival style meetings. A pastor of a low-negative-impact church that was already quite evangelistic, with 80 percent of its members gained through conversion growth, stated that they tried to make the revival meetings more evangelistic but were not successful. One of the HNI

church pastors, whose church did see an evangelistic impact from revival, described the revival as “a baptism of passion for lost people.” Obviously most churches in the HNI category did not connect the increased zeal and passion of revival with the evangelistic outreach of the individual revival participants.

**Increased faith in God.** The experience of increased faith in God, tied in with the witness of supernatural activity in revival, rated highly for both categories of churches. For the HNI church pastors, this experience rated equally as high as the experience of “no change in the church’s mission, but increased passion or identity with the mission.” These were the highest experiences in this category. For the LNI church pastors, the same percentage cited increased faith in God as a result of witnessing supernatural activity but it was ranked third in this category. One pastor said that for their church, revival was “an encounter with glory.” The participants in LNI churches were apparently more likely to connect the spiritual encounter of revival with the mission of the church, perhaps accounting for this group’s enhanced evangelism and decreased institutionalism as reported in this category. Revival provided “fresh fire for the work they had been doing—it had been humdrum.” Speaking of the witness of God’s supernatural activity among them, another pastor told of how the people of his church put their faith into action:

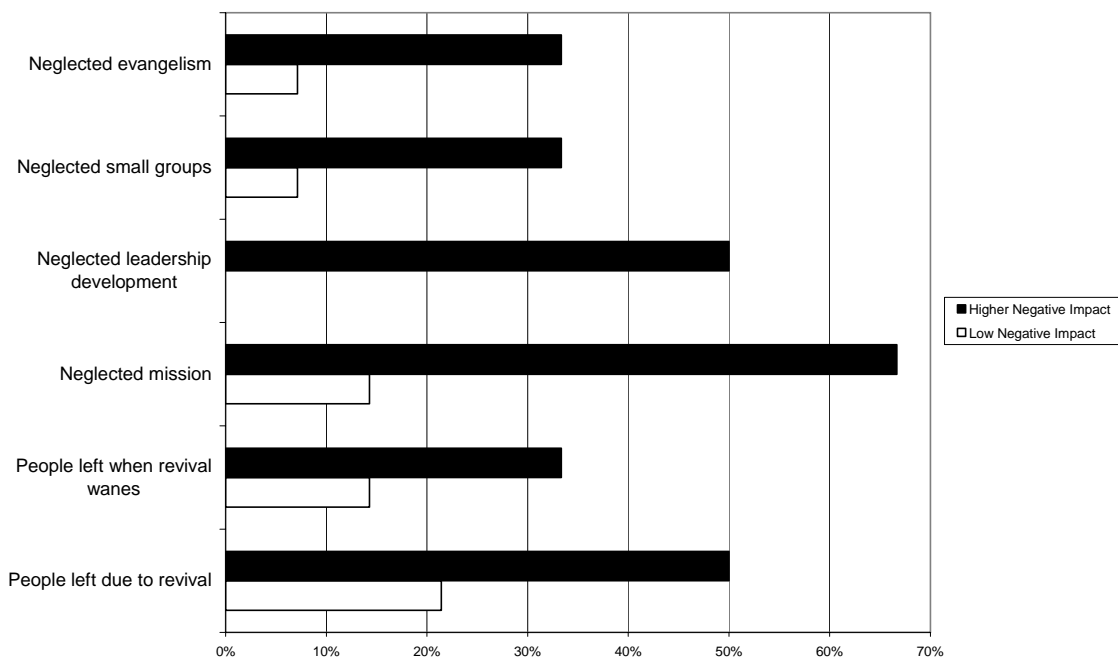
People experienced new and dynamic things in their lives. They became extremely aware of giftings of the Spirit of God and began to seek after the things of God. They had faith to believe—they would go after the worst of sinners to tell them about Christ, and expect God to do something.

The biggest differences in the relationship between revival and mission in low-negative-impact churches and in high-negative-impact churches do not pertain to the category of revival’s enhancement of mission. The biggest differences are in the ways revival worked

contrary to mission.

### Revival Working Contrary to the Church's Mission

The third interview question was not only concerned with how revival worked in congruence with the church's mission, but also how revival sometimes worked contrary to the church's mission. The pastors in the HNI church group reported higher levels of revival impact contrary to the mission of the church with every experience listed (see Figure 4.6).



**Figure 4.6. Ways the revival worked contrary to the church's mission.**

**People leaving the church.** One way revival worked contrary to the mission of the church was in causing people to leave the church. Half of the HNI church pastors stated that people left the church because of revival, and over 30 percent had people leave when the revival waned. Some of the LNI church pastors also mentioned people leaving as part of the negative impact of revival on the church, 21 percent because of people

leaving due to revival and about 14 percent mentioning people leaving when revival waned. HNI churches seemed to be more likely to lose people because of the disruption of a sudden impact from revival or other leadership style issues. They were also more likely to lose people when the churches were no longer able to provide the same level of excitement after revival waned. Most churches in both groups seemed to be accepting of the fact that some people would leave due to revival.

**Neglecting leadership development and mission.** In the category of revival working contrary to mission, the most significant differences between the two groups of churches have to do with the issues of neglecting leadership development and neglecting mission for the sake of pursuing revival. Over 60 percent of the HNI church pastors gave indications they had neglected their churches' missions, and 50 percent indicated a neglect of leadership development during the revival. By contrast, only 14 percent of LNI church pastors said they neglected the mission while pursuing revival, and none gave an indication that they had neglected leadership development. These differences represent the most statistically significant difference in the category. The neglect of leadership development equals the highest level of statistical difference in the entire study.

One pastor stated that the community aspect of the church's mission and nature were harmed because of the amount of people, numbering in the tens of thousands over the years of revival, coming just to attend the church's additional revival meetings. The pastor went on to explain that many of these people were from other churches and contributed to a type of spirituality that downplayed the role and mission of the local church. In this case, the pastor was able to maintain strong discipleship ministries but the church is still dealing with the negative repercussions of an "independent spirit" that undermines the mission of the local church. A different HNI church pastor described a

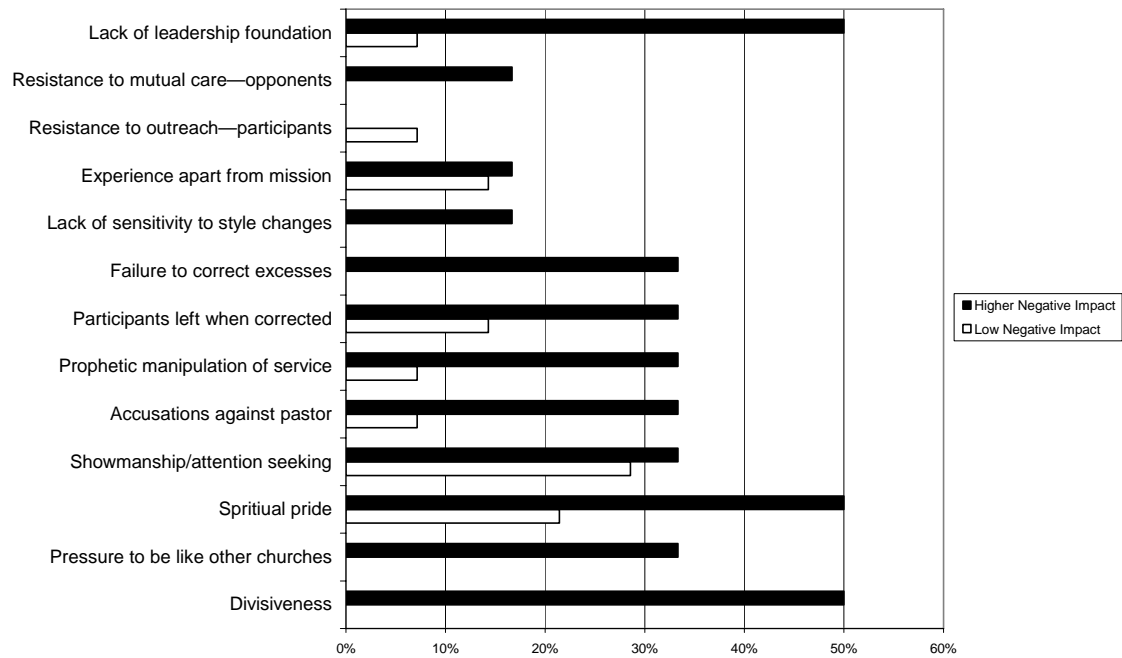
situation in which many revival participants felt “called into ministry.” The problem for this pastor was that the people had their sights set on ministries beyond the local church, and local church ministries were neglected. Unfortunately, the ministries to which people felt they were called were far beyond their training, abilities, or developed spiritual gifts, and their lofty ministry goals were not fulfilled either.

Another pastor said, “I got too caught up in the euphoria and did not recognize some things that needed to be dealt with; things just fell through the cracks.” This pastor admitted that in the atmosphere of revival, openness to new spiritual experiences caused the church to become open to extraneous mission emphases. Still another HNI church pastor, whose church has returned to its mission following revival said, “Revival gave us passion and zeal. Now we have to put the right ingredients back in.” Even one LNI church pastor looked back at his revival experience with the realization that failing quickly to reinstitute cell groups, which had been discontinued due to revival, was a mistake: “I should have brought them back after two months or so—a mistake I made.”

## **Problems**

Research Question 3, concerned with revival’s impact on the church’s mission, prompted additional interview questions pertaining to negative impact. The fourth interview question further probed revival problems, particularly those caused by revival participants. Naturally, if respondents to the initial survey indicated negative impact from revival, they faced problems. This area is, therefore, the category with some of the greatest differences between the two groups of pastors who have been the focus of discussion. Even when LNI church pastors spoke of the few problems they had with revival, they downplayed the impact of the problems (see Figure 4.7).





**Figure 4.7. Revival problems.**

**Divisiveness, spiritual pride, and lack of leadership.** The HNI church pastors had their greatest number of problems in three areas, all of which have much to do with the mission and nature of the church: divisiveness, spiritual pride, and lack of a leadership foundation for revival. The lack of a leadership foundation for revival could be a function of church size because the pastors who mentioned this problem are in the smallest churches in their category. In the LNI church group, however, none of the pastors of churches of similar size mentioned this problem. The only LNI church pastor to mention this problem is, in fact, the pastor of a much larger church. In two cases, pre-revival problems with key leaders in the church continued to hamper the church into and beyond the revival period. In the LNI church, the problem subsided with revival and resurfaced when revival waned. Revival by itself provided neither a leadership foundation nor the answer to leadership problems.

Divisiveness is tied with neglecting leadership development as the most

statistically significant experience in the entire study. Both divisiveness and spiritual pride strike at the heart of the church's nature as a unified body in which the members' relationships are characterized by love that builds up the church.

One of the HNI church pastors commented that the revival participants in his church were extremely judgmental of the other half of the church who did not attend revival meetings. "They were on their faces before God but rude and nasty to those who were not 'getting it,'" he said. Another pastor in the HNI church group remarked that spiritual pride caused revival participants to attempt to manipulate the direction of church services and to be unresponsive to correction: "A move of God should result in a teachable and humble spirit, able to follow the lead of a shepherd who is genuinely open to the Spirit and who is trying to protect them from some of the pitfalls."

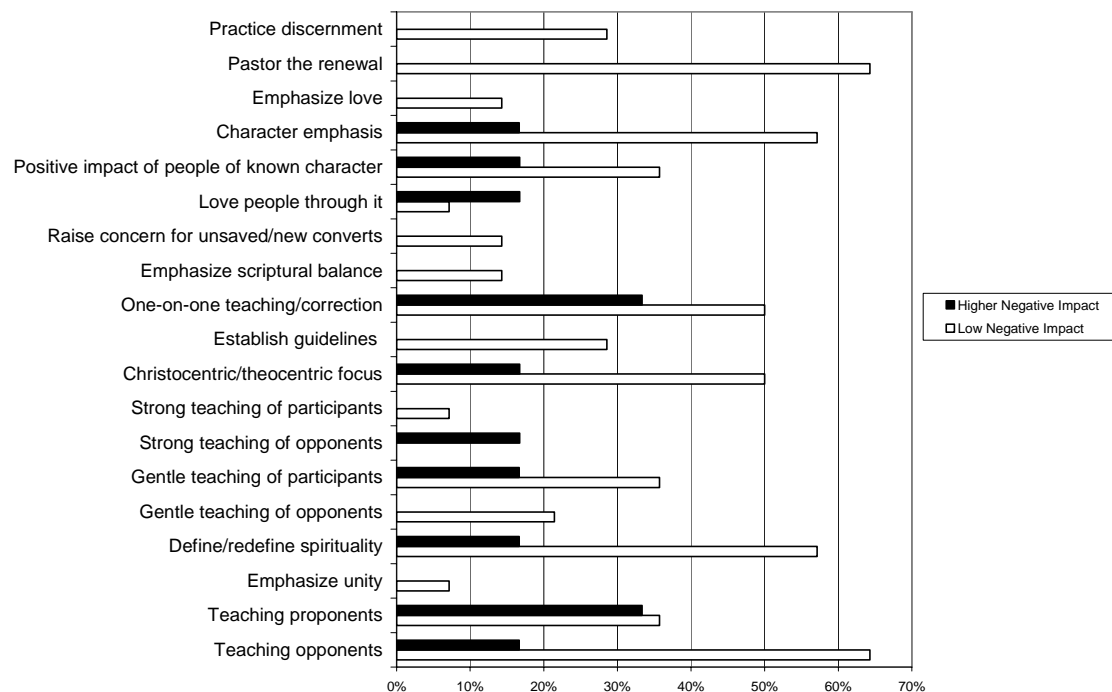
Still another said that spiritual pride prevented some of the revival participants from taking any correction. Their hearts were not right, as shown through their seeking attention through such things as manifestations and prophecy. Then, because their hearts were not right, they left the church when corrected.

**Failure to correct.** Though pastors in both groups had people leave the church when they were corrected, only HNI church pastors failed to mention measures to correct excesses. Aside from divisiveness, the other two problems of greatest statistical difference in this category are failure to correct excesses and pressure to be like other churches. Even though they are not in the top three problems for HNI church pastors, they may represent key differences in revival leadership pertaining to the mission of the local church. Both of these problems could possibly be issues affecting revival participants' focus on and commitment to God's call upon their particular local church. Some of the LNI churches also had a high degree of revival manifestations that can

appear excessive, and some of their pastors expressed a commitment to giving wide latitude to revival manifestations, but the pastors tended to exercise authority as needed. The issue of problem corrections and preventatives is further examined in the next category.

### **Problem Correctives and Preventatives**

The fourth interview question, which arose from Research Question 3 dealing with the revival's impact on the mission of the church, was concerned with problems that occurred with revival and gave pastors the opportunity to explain how they handled problems. Some pastors took the opportunity to explain how they prevented problems. The pastors who strongly disagreed that revival had a negative impact had a much lower problem rate in their churches. At the same time, these pastors had a much higher rate of applying measures to correct or prevent problems. This category, in fact, equals the problems category in the number of experiences that suggest statistically significant differences between the LNI and HNI church pastors. Citing the number of corrective measures or problem preventatives, or even looking at their possible statistical significance, fails to convey the conviction of the pastors whose churches had a low negative impact from revival. Their responses brimmed with confidence about their role in leading their churches in and through revival. The answers did not seem to be off the cuff but were well considered. Many of these pastors expressed a strong commitment to allowing the Spirit of God to move in their churches yet understood that the Spirit's call on them to be leaders of congregations meant they could not abdicate leadership. These pastors did not seem to disconnect the Spirit's activity in their leadership from the Spirit's activity in revival (see Figure 4.8).



**Figure 4.8. Problem correctives or preventatives.**

The problems attendant to revival may come through revival participants or revival opponents. Pastors in both of the groups being compared faced ungovernable extremes among participants and opponents alike. The LNI church pastors, however, were more likely to mention problem correctives or preventatives, demonstrating greater degrees of decisive leadership, unwillingness to abdicate leadership, patience, or gentleness.

**Pastoring the revival without abdicating authority.** The experience in the problem correction and preventatives category that displays the greatest differences between LNI and HNI church pastors is the emphasis on pastoring the revival and not abdicating leadership. The LNI church pastors not only discussed more problem correction and preventative measures, they were much more likely than HNI church pastors to specify that revival has to be pastored. They were much less likely to give evidence that they had in any way abdicated their authority in the church. One of the LNI

church pastors, who has seen a number of seasons of revival in his many years of ministry, simply said, “You have to keep an eye on it.” Another pastor explained that pastoring the revival provides a sense of safety, a zone in which plenty of freedom is allowed:

The senior leader has to walk the church across thresholds of change. You can’t delegate this to others. Pastors have to lead and cannot surrender leadership to others. People want to know if it is safe, and if the pastor is concerned about their safety, and if they can trust the pastor to look after their safety, emotionally and spiritually.

For some of the LNI church pastors, part of providing a safety zone was providing guidelines for the exercise of spiritual gifts or the display of manifestations: “Keep boundaries where there need to be boundaries—but not around God. Keep boundaries around emotions and things that can be harmful.” On the issue of exerting leadership in revival, a pastor who was in neither the LNI nor HNI church group made a statement that expressed very well the sentiment of many of the LNI church pastors: “If leaders do not lead in revival, the less qualified will step in and wreck it.” Even a pastor who is otherwise a good leader of a rather large and growing church experienced negative impact from allowing outside leadership without a vision for the local church to exert too much influence. Of course, the fact that HNI church pastors did not emphasize pastoring the revival, or they otherwise indicated abdicating leadership in revival, does not mean that they failed to lead in revival at all. In the interviews they were simply not forthcoming regarding the principle of needing to exercise and maintain leadership in revival. The majority of the LNI church pastors strongly made this point.

**Teaching resisters of revival.** Another strong point for the LNI church pastors, with an equal percentage as the previous one, was teaching opponents, or potential opponents, of revival. This emphasis represents another great difference in the revival

leadership styles of LNI and HNI church pastors. Because of desires to maintain church unity and help a greater number of people experience the benefits of revival, LNI church pastors expressed a greater tendency to try to teach people who were resistant to or opposed to revival. Some of these pastors appealed to historical precedent, such as the writings of Jonathan Edwards, to validate the revival manifestations that brought the greatest confusion or concern to those who did not readily embrace revival. One of the pastors produced a pamphlet explaining revival phenomena. Another said, “Keeping people educated was the key.” By contrast, one of the HNI church pastors said that he was “a little foolish and emotional” in the way he handled traditionalists who resisted revival.

One of the LNI church pastors had a group of revival opponents in his church. They had read some negative reports about the Brownsville Revival and expressed concern to the pastor about a church group going to visit the revival. The pastor encouraged them to wait and see the results of the trip before making any judgments. When the group returned and the revival opponents saw the positive changes in people’s lives, they softened their stance. Another pastor emphasized the importance of teaching gently and not taking on a “thus saith the Lord” mentality but giving God an opportunity to work in the lives of people who were resisting revival. Still another LNI church pastor said, “I tried to explain things and teach people, to take people through things slowly. If God’s moving, you want to embrace that, to catch the wave. But you can’t beat the people and drive them into that. You *can* [original emphasis] teach them.”

**Defining or redefining spirituality.** Two other experiences demonstrating the most significant differences between the LNI and HNI church pastors are defining or redefining spirituality for the revival participants and emphasizing character development

as the fruit of revival. A much greater percentage of the LNI church pastors not only tried to teach resisters of revival about the manifestations, they also tended to teach revival participants about the manifestations' relationship with true spirituality. One of the LNI church pastors stated, "Manifestations have nothing to do with spirituality," a view apparently shared by most of the pastors in that group.

A pastor in the LNI church group recounted his teen experience in the highly liturgical church in which he was raised. The pastor said that as a teen he recognized that much of what he saw in church obscured the central reality of Christ. When this pastor saw the manifestations of revival, he immediately placed them in the same category as the outward manifestations of a highly liturgical church. These manifestations were not bad but they were "outward forms that were not to be pursued as something of intrinsic value." The manifestations, which were dramatic and frequent in his church, were never lifted up as something to pursue. Spirituality was defined in Christocentric terms: "Everything that distracts from Christ is either a dilution or pollution of the central focus." Another LNI church pastor similarly stated, "I explained this as a focus on Jesus, a manifestation of Jesus. Manifestations were not a sign of spirituality, just evidence of God's love for all humanity." Spirituality was more likely to be defined in terms of character.

**Emphasizing character development.** Closely related to defining or redefining spirituality in relation to the manifestations, the fourth major difference in this category is the emphasis on character development in revival. Pastors of LNI churches were much more likely to have stated in the interviews that they emphasized character development in their revival leadership. One of these pastors said about the manifestations and character, "It's not here just to make goose bumps but to show us something about Jesus.

It's not something you repeat over and over to get the same feeling every time, but to help you know Jesus and be more like Jesus." A second pastor in this group said, "We never made a connection between manifestations and spirituality because of our emphasis on character." Still another in the LNI church group emphasized humility and honesty as the fruit of revival:

That's when the Lord can really use us. In every revival there are excesses, but when God touches you there will be some manifestation. But we didn't focus on that. We didn't see manifestations as the proof that God was here. Change in life and fruit were the evidence that God was at work in our lives.... Experiences were awesome, but I taught that God wanted the experience to affect the way we live, that we were not to be selfish. He was blessing us to be a blessing.

One LNI church pastor appealed to character issues, especially those involving love and unity within the church, to encourage strong revival proponents to consider the concerns of the reluctant.

### **Summary**

Six different categories resulted from the research questions and interviews. The pastors' responses described a number of elements within each category. Pastors who did not disagree with the statement, "My church was negatively impacted by the renewal or revival," were compared with those who strongly disagreed with the statement. The churches pastored by these two groups of interviewees were designated low negative impact (LNI) churches or high negative impact (HNI) churches. Within the six categories, eleven responses had a difference of greater than 40 percent between the percentages of HNI church pastors and LNI church pastors. Two additional responses were statistically significant. These thirteen responses are listed in Table 4.1.



**Table 4.1. Revival Experiences with Greatest Differences**

<b>Revival Experiences</b>	<b>% HNI</b>	<b>% LNI</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>p≤.10</b>
Spontaneous or local outbreak emphasis	100	28.6	71.4	.0034
Pastor the revival/do not abdicate leadership	0	64.3	64.3	.0081
Pastor visited revival center or conference	33.3	92.9	59.6	.0316
Neglected mission	66.7	14.3	52.4	.0191
Neglected leadership development	50	0	50	.0041
Divisiveness	50	0	50	.0041
Teaching opponents	16.7	64.3	47.6	.0509
Lack of leadership foundation	50	7.1	42.9	.0281
More evangelism	16.7	57.1	40.4	.0954
Define/redefine spirituality	16.7	57.1	40.4	.0954
Character emphasis	16.7	57.1	40.4	.0954
Pressure to be like other churches	33.3	0	33.3	.0227
Lack of correction of excesses	33.3	0	33.3	.0227

The differences between the two groups represent differences in the pastors' answers to open questions about revival experience, leadership, and problems. The answers are not absolutes; a failure to mention an experience in the interview does not mean the experience was not influential in a church. The answers do, however, represent leadership emphases or revival experiences that may have been important in determining whether a church had a high degree of negative impact from revival or if it would experience a greater benefit from revival.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY**

The stories of revival covered in this study are each fascinating and exciting. Every single pastor had a testimony of the experience of God's presence and power at a heightened level of intensity. All the pastors saw evidence of God's life-changing grace. Unfortunately, a few of the stories also included elements of sadness and pain. Every church's experience of the 1990s revival was different; however, enough commonalities exist—in the nature of church life, in leadership issues, and in God's dealing with humanity—to enable some degree of comparison and analysis. The two groups that were most scrutinized, the higher negative impact (HNI) church pastors and the low negative impact (LNI) church pastors, demonstrated a number of commonalities within their groups. This study also revealed a number of differences between the two groups.

#### **Revival Spirituality and Human Instrumentality**

The purpose of the study was to examine pastors' perceptions of the impact of the 1990s charismatic revival upon the mission and character of their churches. My desire was to discern principles that may help leaders in revival minimize the negative impact that comes with every revival and maximize revival's benefits. The differences between the emphases revealed in the interviews of the LNI and HNI church pastors point to some of these principles.

The most important difference can be summarized in terms of spirituality and human instrumentality. The churches with higher negative impact tended to display a spirituality that diminishes the importance of human instrumentality in fulfilling God's mission for the church. The problems did not result because of spirituality that was experiential. Both groups of pastors described a high level of experiential Christianity,

which is the nature of revival. The problems developed from what one pastor described as an “esoteric” spirituality that was highly individualized, often resulting in greater unteachability, pride, and divisiveness. This problematic spirituality negatively affects the mission of the local church because it is disconnected from the human instrumentality through which God builds the church. Knox identifies this spirituality with a distorted view of grace and sees it as the root cause of revival excess. Though Knox has little sympathy for any kind of enthusiasm, pastors who want maximum benefit from revival can learn from a critic of revival. With this kind of spirituality, the positive impact expected on the basis of the biblical and historical foundations examined in this project is decreased. Furthermore, the problems associated with historical revivals are exacerbated with this spirituality. The pastors in the LNI church group demonstrate that highly experiential spirituality does not have to detract from the mission and nature of the church.

Evidence of spirituality that diminishes human instrumentality in fulfilling the mission of the church can be seen in each of the categories derived from the interviews. The pastors of HNI churches were much more likely to emphasize that revival broke out spontaneously in their local churches, without outside influence. Over half of the LNI church pastors emphasized that revival occurred after they had visited a revival center. They did not tend to view the revival as less pure because God used a human instrument in bringing the revival movement to the church. If the higher negative impact pastors tended to have lower esteem for human instrumentality and preferred to emphasize the purely local nature of the revival, they may have invited more problems from revival participants. If human leadership and interdependence are presented as unimportant or unspiritual, then the leaders’ own roles in the church may have been diminished in the

eyes of the revival participants. Some of the HNI church pastors who emphasized the local nature of revival may have distanced themselves from outside influence and leadership that could have helped them grapple with the complexities of revival change.

### **The Nature and Mission of the Church**

Problem spirituality is also suggested in the category in which the pastors defined the nature and mission of the church. The areas of greatest difference between the two groups of pastors were discipleship and having a spiritual influence, sometimes stated simply as being charismatic or Pentecostal. Discipleship in general was also very important to churches with a low negative impact from revival. Some of the definitions of discipleship for the HNI church pastors were expressed in more highly spiritual terms, such as helping Christians understand spiritual reality. The difference in the areas of discipleship and spiritual influence may indicate that higher negative impact churches emphasized priorities that are more easily spiritualized or individualized.

### **Revival Working Congruent with the Church's Mission**

In the category discussing ways the revival experience worked in keeping with the church's mission, LNI church pastors were much more likely to emphasize that evangelism increased and that zeal for the mission of the church increased. The heightened spirituality of revival was not rejected or minimized in any way but put in the service of the church's mission. This result would be less likely with a spirituality that diminishes the role played by people in fulfilling God's mission for the church. Being more likely to activate the human instruments of mission, however, does not necessarily mean less dependence on God. In fact, the LNI church pastors were slightly more likely to emphasize that prayer played an increased role in the church's life after revival.

Perhaps the people in the LNI churches understood that prayer was one of several human

roles to which God has called the members of the church.

### **Revival Working Contrary to the Church's Mission**

The next category, ways the revival worked contrary to the church's mission, further confirmed the huge disconnect between revival spirituality and the church's mission for HNI churches. Less emphasis on the roles necessarily filled by people not only resulted in much higher neglect of the mission by HNI churches but also a greater neglect of leadership development. In hindsight, some of the pastors realize they needed more help with leading and caring for church members even in revival. Just as revival did not automatically result in evangelistic outreach, revival did not automatically take care of the needs of the people and the development of the congregation's leaders. The excitement of revival may mean that the needs of the church are seemingly less urgent, but as was the case with the LNI church in which leadership problems resurfaced after the revival period ended, the needs remain. God's scriptural plan for meeting human needs, in the church and outside it, clearly involves human instrumentality. John Wesley's revival leadership provides a superb example of the understanding of human responsibility, delegated by God, to meet needs as God's people give witness to the kingdom of God.

### **Problem Correctives and Preventatives**

The problem correctives and preventatives category revealed a much higher degree of human instrumentality for the LNI churches in the leadership of revival. Two of the problems that caused the most difficulty in the HNI churches are directly related to esoteric spirituality: divisiveness and pride. The other major problem was lack of a leadership foundation, even before revival. These were also the primary problems that Paul had to confront in the Corinthian church. Paul's solution to the problems was to

emphasize the unity of the church with Christ at the head and to redefine spirituality in terms of love that builds up the church. Paul also affirmed the authority of local church leadership to deal with the problems at Corinth. Leaders of the LNI churches more consistently displayed confidence that they were not being more spiritual if they abdicated their leadership responsibilities and authority. Again, these pastors did not downplay revival experience. Their rather low-key responses to questioning about revival problems reveals that these pastors did not have a problem orientation in their approach to revival. At the same time, however, they were keenly aware of leadership responsibility that minimized problems. They were confident about their churches' God-given mission. They also seem to have fostered a kind of spirituality that was enhanced by revival and that, in turn, enhanced the mission without causing too many problems. They usually gave great latitude for revival manifestations but they put the manifestations in perspective, defining and redefining spirituality in terms of love, character, and focus on Jesus.

### **Trust in God's Grace**

In spite of all their confidence in God's use of human instruments for his plans, some of the LNI church pastors demonstrated remarkable trust in God's grace to keep the church on track. They exercised leadership as their responsibilities required but with a sense of submission to and trust in God. One of the LNI church pastors was careful to define manifestations properly yet had a policy of keeping his hands off when they occurred, even when they were bothersome to him personally. When asked if he was concerned that the manifestations would have a negative impact, he replied, "I didn't care if it had a negative impact. My goal was to be open to the Lord. I had confidence that if we went too far, he had grace and would turn us back where we needed to be." Another

LNI church pastor expressed trust in God's grace from a position of greater caution as a leader. He acknowledged that openness to revival means risk but he trusted in God's grace to overcome his caution: "You have to step out and risk, and you can be cautious without being unbelieving. God is patient and lets us approve and test what's of God." This pastor, whose spirituality conveys a strong understanding of God's work through humanity, emphasized that because God took on our humanity he is understanding and will keep people on track as they trust in him.

Revival is an outpouring of the Spirit of God to put the church on track. At times the church needs revival to be effective in reaching a radically changed environment. At other times revival is needed because the church has become mired in traditionalism and institutionalism. Pastors in both of the groups being discussed mentioned that church life had become routine before revival and that revival took them out of a routine approach to the church. In the LNI churches, the mission of the local church and the use of human instrumentality were not confused with lifeless traditionalism and institutionalism. These churches were able to experience the life-enhancing force of a revival outpouring with great openness. They cannot be said to have avoided revival problems by avoiding or rejecting revival, as is the case with many churches caught up in traditionalism. The LNI churches were not traditional or institutional in that sense but they did uphold the mission and nature of the church as an institution established by God for his purposes.

### **Implications for the Existing Body of Knowledge**

In the revival literature written in the 1990s, much attention was given to explaining the manifestations and encouraging openness to the move of God. The writings that depended heavily on Jonathan Edwards tended to deal with the personal, psychological dimensions of revival spirituality in addition to the manifestations.

Writings that approach revival from a sociological perspective focus on such issues as societal trends or the routinization of charismatic movements. This study adds to the revival literature that focuses on the implications of revival for mission. Many of the definitions of revival used in such literature include missional elements. For the purposes of this project, revival is not defined by its missional impact. Instead, revival is defined in terms of the core experience of the presence of God. The study proceeded under the assumption that a genuine experience of a revivalistic move of God will produce human responses that can either be in keeping with or contrary to the church's nature and mission. As a result of this approach, the understanding of local church revival experience and leadership is enhanced. In revival as in other aspects of church life, human instrumentality and intentionality remain important, even while the church depends on grace and is built upon the foundation of the experience of God's presence and love.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The greatest limitation of this study is in its nature as retrospective research, conducted so long after the initial experience of revival. Some of the experiences may simply have been forgotten. The interviews suggested that the negative impact of revival may have been higher than the initial survey revealed. Over the course of time, negative experiences may have become sanitized in the pastors' memories. Pastors' viewpoints may also have changed, as was the case with the subject who had immediately after the revival seen the experience as negative but who eventually saw the results as positive. The study is also possibly limited by the fact that pastors may be reluctant to share their leadership shortcomings and failures. Some pastors may think that admitting a high degree of negative impact from revival reflects negatively on their leadership. The open-



ended questions of the interview process, while perhaps ideal for revealing leadership emphases and values, may have caused some revival experiences to be omitted.

### **Seeds for the Future**

This study was conducted up to twelve years after the initial outbreak of revival in some of the churches observed. During those portions of the interviews relating to revival and the mission of the church, several of the pastors discussed the unfolding of that mission in the years since revival waned in their churches. Some of the pastors believe that they are enjoying the fruits of revival well beyond the years of revival intensity. One of the pastors has enjoyed such fruit from the revival that he has changed his opinion on the value of revival. Though his survey response placed him in the category of LNI churches, years ago he expressed to me in a personal conversation that he wanted nothing more to do with revival because of the attitudes of some of the participants. When I asked him about this apparent change of heart, he said, “I had seen revival as negative but now I see where we are as part of the purpose of revival. The traditional stuff we had before was gone with revival.” This pastor believes that as a result of the revival his Pentecostal church was much more open to outside influence, including the 40 Days of Purpose spiritual growth campaign. Since the revival, his church’s weekend attendance has grown from 450 to eight hundred.

Another pastor had a similar experience. His survey response placed him in the HNI church group, and he is still reluctant to credit the revival with the positive changes the church has enjoyed since then. When the additional revival meetings were stopped, many of the revival participants left the church. The people who stayed, however, have become increasingly outreach oriented and are more involved in evangelistic and need-meeting ministries. The pastor said, “We are still in revival in the sense of learning how

to flow with the Holy Spirit.”

One pastor said, “Revival was not the culmination of things but a deposit of seeds, potentials, and calling still being walked out today.” The church led by this pastor is one of the smallest in the study but the ministries of people changed or saved during the revival period are today influencing hundreds of people. Another pastor said about the work of God in revival, “God is doing something in the moment, but he’s doing something bigger than the moment.” Still another pastor spoke of a broader understanding of the work of revival:

With revival you have to think organically. What God is doing today might not be for today, but preparation for tomorrow. Revival builds a testimony for future purposes. It’s more about the future purposes than the present purposes.... Sometimes you don’t know what God is doing, sowing in our hearts to be harvested later.

God’s ongoing grace should mean that even churches that experienced a higher level of negative impact than others can expect that because they also experienced a genuine work of revival, good will eventually come of it. As J. Edwards says about God’s intentions to bring good out of revival, even when accompanied with great tumult, “It will be very likely to be of excellent benefit to his church, in the continuance and progress of the work afterwards” (Some Thoughts 324).

### **Recommendations for Application to Ministry**

At the beginning of this study, the importance of revival is emphasized. I still believe that revivals are necessary, and I know that nothing in my seventeen years of pastoral ministry has been as exciting as a period of intense revival. I am living in expectation of another wave of revival. I expect revival “to be of excellent benefit.” An implication of this study, however, is not to expect too much from revival.

When the explosive force of revival, along with festering church politics and my

own leadership shortcomings, caused many of our church's members to leave, the longest-term members remained. When asked why they had not left with some of the others, they said something such as, "We've seen revivals come and go, and we knew this was nothing to get too worked up about." Almost sixty years of Pentecostalism had given them some perspective. Some of us in our church were worked up in a positive sense. We thought that revival was the culmination of individual and corporate experience. Other people in our church were worked up in a negative sense and in their opposition to revival prevented many other people from receiving its blessings. Neither group should have been as worked up as we were.

Revival is not the culmination of church life or individual experience. Biblically, the kingdom of God is the culmination of church life and individual experience, and revival should help propel the church toward its kingdom mission. If revival is to have this effect, however, the church should already be oriented toward its kingdom mission. This study affirms that revival tends to propel the church further along in the course toward which it is already oriented. If the church is oriented toward individualized, esoteric spirituality before revival, revival itself will not correct the course. Instead, the revival movement will probably appropriate this kind of spirituality, and even if the movement produces great benefit the negative impact will be higher than it should be.

Pastors should not expect revival to be the answer to their leadership problems. Pastors must be prepared to lead, before, during, and after revival. Part of a pastor's leadership responsibility is to cast a kingdom vision for the church, and to help the members of the church to understand the biblical nature and mission of the church. If pastors do not have a clear understanding of their churches' mission, the need for gaining clarity is urgent. In the intensity of revival, if the church's actual mission is not at the

forefront, then some other, perhaps less biblical mission will come into play. Revival intensity must be channeled into biblical purposes, and the channels for that intensity must be in place. Of course, in the years since the 1990s revival Warren's The Purpose Driven Church and his 40 Days of Purpose spiritual growth campaign have enabled many churches and pastors to discover their purposes. Warren's approach does not replace a thorough, biblical understanding of the church's mission and nature but it is a very helpful supplement.

Pastors must also have leadership in place for revival. Revival should cause people to become more aware of their spiritual gifts and God's call upon their lives, and as a result more leaders should arise in revival. These people, however, will need to be trained, equipped, and led, and leadership and ministries to guide the process should already be in place as much as possible. Furthermore, not only will revival raise up new leaders, it will hopefully attract people who come into the church with many problems. Some people already in the church will begin to deal with the problems they have accepted in their lives. God will miraculously bring about changes in some people's lives. Some of those miracles, however, will take place through human instrumentality, such as ministry to needs, counseling, relational ministry, and so forth. Two of the biggest problems faced in the churches with the most negative impact were lack of leadership before revival and failure to develop leaders in revival. Pastors who are really expecting revival would be wise to put good leaders in place and to establish leadership development ministries in their churches.

Pastors who are expecting revival would also be wise to define true, biblical spirituality for their churches. In Pentecostal and charismatic circles, emphasis on spiritual experiences frequently causes a misunderstanding of true spirituality. People

mistakenly gauge spirituality by the intensity or drama of experiences such as dreams, visions, prophecy, or speaking in tongues. Biblically, these experiences are of no value when they function apart from caring for one another and building up the church in love. Biblical spirituality, because of its demand for mutual love and edification, simply cannot be detached from human instrumentality and human benefit. In their teaching on biblical spirituality, pastors who are expecting revival should not neglect to foster a genuine openness to spiritual phenomena. They should be prepared to guide gently people for whom revival phenomena appear strange and confusing. Leading people who may want to go too far and too fast with the manifestations, while at the same time leading people who are fearful because of the manifestations, means developing a Christ-centered biblical spirituality. The goal of true spirituality will be to build up the entire body.

The low-negative-impact churches identified in the study for the most part exhibited the characteristics included in the summary of the review of literature. One characteristic was glaringly absent. A biblical evidence of the outpouring of the Spirit is great concern for people's physical and material needs. Jesus' own ministry demonstrated this concern, and the early Church showed this care for each other. Wesley's revival ministry had remarkable social impact. The review of literature indicated that revival should have helped propel churches into need-meeting ministries for people in the church and in the community at large. Just as low-negative-impact churches experienced increased evangelism, the expectation from the literature is that these same churches would have experienced increased levels of care for people's needs. No pastor in the study, however, mentioned an increase in mutual care within the congregation. Only a couple of the pastors mentioned a concern for strong need-meeting ministries, one from the LNI church group and one from the HNI church group. Most churches in all

categories failed to mention social ministries as a mission of the church.

Perhaps more churches have strong social outreach and mutual care ministries but these ministries were certainly not emphasized in the interviews. Until recent years, the general understanding in American Protestantism is that liberal churches are concerned with social needs, while evangelical churches are concerned with spiritual needs. The 1990s revival experience appears to be a reflection of that trend, further illustrating the tendency for revival to propel the church in the direction that it is already going. A recommendation before the next revival is for pastors who want revival and who want the revival to make a big impact outside the church to begin to put social outreach and need-meeting ministries in place.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

A difficulty with studying revival is that revival does not occur according to a researcher's schedule. Revival does come in cycles, though. If an outbreak of revival were detected early enough, a longitudinal study that measures revival experiences, attitudes toward spirituality, and understanding of and commitment to the church's mission could be conducted. The study would be enhanced by surveying congregants along with pastors.

### **Personal Reflections**

I have already acknowledged that my denomination was birthed in revival, that its leaders often cry out for revival, but in our history we have frequently and strongly resisted revival movements. My hope is that pastors who are aware of this study, and who might otherwise be reluctant to go after the benefits of revival, will embrace the next move of God. All of the risks cannot be removed but God can be trusted to keep us on track. I also hope that no pastor who becomes aware of this study misunderstands it and

assumes a problem-oriented stance toward revival. In the history of revival, however, the greatest benefits have come when correctives are applied. Perhaps some of us will be much more prepared for the next wave of revival, not rejecting or resisting it, nor being headstrong and foolish, but leading in and through revival for the glory of God and the building of his church.

## APPENDIX A

### Revival Impact Survey

The renewal or revival of the 1990s had an impact on many churches in our region. Your name has been brought to my attention as a pastor whose church may have participated in the renewal or revival frequently associated with the Toronto Blessing or the Brownsville Revival, among others. The church I pastor also participated in that movement, and I am now working on a Doctor of Ministry project designed to study pastors' perceptions of how the renewal, or revival, influenced the health of their churches. Your participation in this study would be very greatly appreciated, and my expectation is that it will also advance the cause of Christ.

In His service and yours,  
Ed Crenshaw  
Senior Pastor  
Victory Christian Fellowship  
Trooper, PA

Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

Church name:

Your position in the church:

Length of time in your current position:

Average weekend worship attendance at main service(s):

Below are three statements that may describe your observations of your church's experience of the renewal or revival that impacted many churches in the 1990s. Please write in the box following each statement the number that corresponds to the answer on the scale provided. PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION.

5 – strongly agree; 4 – moderately agree; 3 – neither agree nor disagree; 2 – moderately disagree; 1 – strongly disagree	
My church was significantly impacted by renewal or revival of the 1990s.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My church was very positively impacted by the renewal or revival.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My church was very negatively impacted by the renewal or revival.	<input type="checkbox"/>



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

#### **Primary Questions:**

1. Describe your church's history with renewal/revival: in what ways did the church embrace renewal?
2. What is your understanding of the mission of your church?
3. In what ways was your church's experience of revival in keeping with, or contrary to, the mission and nature of your church?
4. Did revival participants cause problems? If so, please describe the problems and how you dealt with them.

#### **Follow-Up Questions:**

1. What was God's purpose for the renewal, and did you and your church fulfill that purpose?
2. What were the greatest benefits and challenges of renewal?
3. Did you discontinue any ministries as a result of renewal? Did you develop any new ministries as a result of renewal?
4. Did renewal impact your leadership emphases? If so, in what ways?
5. Did renewal change the use of your time as a leader? If so, in what ways?
6. Did your preaching change with revival? If so, in what ways?
7. Were you more likely to preach on outreach before revival, in revival, or after revival? What about the topic of prayer? Discipleship? Fellowship? Worship? Service?
8. Did you draw attention to the manifestations or shift your focus pastorally on those who were most demonstrative?

9. Did you shift your focus away from equipping those who were not fully involved in revival?
10. Did you pay attention to organizational issues? More or less than before revival?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Categories and Revival Impact Experiences**

#### **REVIVAL IMPACT STORIES**

- Spontaneous or local outbreak emphasis
- Visit of revival center by pastor
- Additional revival meetings hosted
- Primary service impact
- No attendance increase
- Attendance increased
- Expressive worship
- Manifestations
- Zeal/passion
- Extended worship time
- Extended after service prayer
- Gradual, natural change
- Increased spiritual gifts
- Previously “traditional”
- Miracles
- Lives changed

#### **MISSION AND NATURE OF THE CHURCH**

- Social/community outreach
- Evangelism
- Worship

- Prayer
- Discipleship
- Fellowship/relationship
- Charismatic or Spirit empowered
- Small groups
- Renew church/assist churches

#### WAYS THE REVIVAL EXPERIENCE WORKED IN KEEPING WITH THE CHURCH'S MISSION

- No articulated/appropriated mission before revival
- Increased prayer
- More time/passion in prayer
- Prayer teams trained
- More community outreach/involvement
- No change in mission/increased passion
- More evangelism
- Increased faith/supernatural witness
- Decreased institutionalism
- Overcame inward focus

#### WAYS THE REVIVAL EXPERIENCE WORKED CONTRARY TO THE CHURCH'S MISSION:

- People left due to revival
- People left when revival wanes
- Neglected mission

- Neglected leadership development
- Neglected small groups
- Neglected evangelism

REVIVAL PROBLEMS:

- Divisiveness
- Pressure to be like other churches
- Spiritual pride
- Showmanship/attention seeking
- Accusations against pastor
- Prophetic manipulation of service
- Participants left when corrected
- Failure to correct excesses
- Lack of sensitivity to style changes
- Experience apart from mission
- Resistance to outreach—participants
- Resistance to mutual care—opponents
- Lack of leadership foundation

PROBLEM CORRECTIVES OR PREVENTATIVES:

- Teaching opponents
- Teaching proponents
- Emphasize unity
- Define/redefine spirituality
- Gentle teaching of opponents

- Gentle teaching of participants
- Strong teaching of opponents
- Strong teaching of participants
- Christocentric/theocentric focus
- Establish guidelines
- One-on-one teaching/correction
- Emphasize scriptural balance
- Raise concern for unsaved/new converts
- Love people through it
- Positive impact of people of known character
- Character emphasis
- Emphasize love
- Pastor the revival
- Practice discernment

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