



Does this Church Renewal Favor the Fisher and Fishing ...or just more strange phenomenon?

By Kurt von Schleicher

World evangelization in this generation!

—The Urgent Cry of the Student Volunteer Movement

Surely there can be no deeper joy—no greater blessing—no better experience than that of prayerfully rescuing souls! I feel concerned about all the trendy new renewal movements in the Church, whether they will give way to a biblical impetus for world evangelization or just more froth, glitz, fluff, excessive spending and worthless fu fu.

The different renewal movements that our generation has witnessed in the last few decades, have motivated hundreds of thousands of people the world over in to an "Emmaus road" type of personal encounter with Christ and this in turn spawned more evangelistic fervor that led Christians into fishing for other souls. The scales fell away from sinner's eyes and the beautifully amazing, resurrected Christ has been freshly revealed to so many people that would have never heard the Gospel had it been otherwise.

But are we now turning away from the Gospel to fads in the church? Today we have so much politically correct humanism and post modernism within the church of America it makes me sick. We see many Seeker Sensitive churches and the Emergent Church Movement preaching a feel good message devoid of the basics of the Gospel and biblical repentance. Where is the turning away from evil in this nation? Abortions are still happening by the millions yearly! Why is the church so radically anemic?

There have been many so called new revivals of God like we observed at the Airport Christian Fellowship in Toronto, or in Brownsville and Pensacola, Florida and it's hard to even keep track of these type of things anymore. And maybe at first glance these movements along with ones since then have appeared as if God was restoring the holy heartburn of His Spirit as He did on that road to Emmaus. I love to see a first-love passion in believers, but were and are these things biblical? Have these revivals headed towards harvest? Have they been about sheep-transfer? We Christians shouldn't be so quick to accept everything that comes down the pike in the name of Jesus! We are called to be like the Bereans in the book of Acts and test everything in the light of Scripture. We are called to Christ first, and then to win souls not to Christian celebrities!

Hey, I totally rejoice with you if you were born again in one of those trendy new Christian fads, but it's time to ask where do we go from here?

Some Christian leaders including respected apologetics experts, harbor valid concerns about these so called outpourings—especially about the strange looking, and sometimes non-biblical spiritual manifestations that come with them. I believe in Christian liberty, but you've got to admit that not everything with Jesus' Name tagged on it today is truly liberating. I believe in cutting Bible hungry brothers and sisters some slack, and I also want to see where all this stuff is headed. It is time to ask an appropriate question. What's going to happen in the near future as a result of what has happened in the near past?

Will the Church of Jesus Christ along with these new movements cross the line and become a legitimate revival or spiritual awakening? Many Christian evangelical cult watchers are totally sound and we need these people. Many of the arguments that our evangelical cult watchers have leveled against so called Spirit-filled movements are so justifiable? Sure we are here to please God rather than man and go by the Bible ahead of what Christians say, but true revivals and true spiritual awakenings are so righteously influential that they leave a permanent mark on society at large.

You might seriously abhor those circus-like televangistic abuses (not that everything said and done on TV in Christ's name is wrong or abusive) that we've all seen just like I do. You really should, as the late night comedians and those in the world sit and scoff at us. But face it; the Pentecostal revival of the 1950s paved the way for a greater receptivity to the ministry of God healing needy people and as a result many people flooded into the Kingdom through repentance and faith in Christ. The charismatic renewal of the '70s also triggered a greater openness to the employment of all the gifts of the Spirit and towards personal evangelism. Did we make our zealous but foolish mistakes? Sure, but do we throw out the baby with the bath water? No way. Let's just stick with and learn from the Word. There is no spiritual growth apart from the Word of God!

Where are the current "moves of revival" as they are called, leading us?—back to all the counsels of God in the Bible, back to closer relationship with Christ in intercession for the nations?—back towards godly character and the fruit of love? We must look at and study biblical revivals and awakenings of the past in the light of Scripture. When authentic revivals and awakenings began to wane—as all eventually do—what will be residual? Froth, worthless fluff, glitzy fu fu or God's full-on fire for winning lost souls? Fishing for souls wisely is the natural outgrowth of imported spiritual strength from God. It needs to happen or you can call it "revival" until the cows come home, but it wasn't. Lukewarm Christians that are revived by God are revived with red-hot evangelistic passion until Gospel truth is expressed outwardly! Continue to pray for biblical revival as I intend to do, but now is the time for all of us to make the decision as to where this all will lead!

"The love of Christ constrains us. There is no other motivation for missionary service that is going to survive the blows of even the first year. You do it for Him."
—Elisabeth Elliot

"I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."
—Psalm 119:46

"The church that does not evangelize will fossilize." —Oswald J. Smith

You remember Mr. Josiah don't you? He was the man who became a king when he was only 8 years old, a true seeker at age 16, a biblical reformer at age 20 and a very humble servant of God at age 26. His personal growth and spiritual leadership resulted from listening to God's Word and then simply obeying what he heard.

While God's temple in Jerusalem was being renovated and purified, the long-neglected Book of the Law was actually found and publicly read aloud to young King Josiah. And when Josiah heard it, he immediately humbled himself, tore his long robes, and wept in repentance before the presence of almighty God [see 2 Chronicles 34:19,27]. King Josiah suddenly realized the wickedness of the sins of those who had led the nation before him, but he didn't stop there. He decided in his heart that deep and lasting change had to begin with him. His public commitment to the covenant and His commitment to follow the Lord closely and in keeping God's commands ignited a literal revival that swept that entire nation [w.31-33]. It left a long-term mark on society and resulted in changed lives!

Having a hard heart didn't do it. It took a brave person who was willing to bow the knee, repent and acknowledge what was wrong first. It took a *forgive-us-and-let-revival-start-with-me* attitude and application. Today, when it is becoming more and more popular for the Church to ditch Bible terms and concepts like repentance, what would be best for the Church would be a returning to the Bible and doing what the Word says. This is what Josiah did. If we want Bible results, we've got to get back to the Bible pattern. The Word says, ***"Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God, I also have heard you"*** (2 Chron. 34:27).

Check out God's encounter with the prophet Isaiah in the temple [see Isa. 6]. The prophet's personal life and ministry were profoundly transformed in ways because of his phenomenal relationship with the living Word.

Isaiah received a clear vision of the Lord and was challenged by holy fear. *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a very high throne. His long robe filled the Temple. Heavenly creatures of fire stood above him. Each creature had six wings: It used two wings to cover its face, two wings to cover its feet, and two wings for flying. Each creature was calling to the others: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD All-Powerful. His glory fills the whole earth." Their calling caused the frame around the door to shake, as the Temple filled with smoke. I said, "Oh, no! I will be destroyed"* (Isa. 6:1-5a ncv).

Isaiah didn't get hung-up with inordinate self introspection due to his vision. He wanted to look upward and then outward.

Isaiah was arrested in a sense by the Lord's fierce holiness. You see, immediately on the heels of this display of glory, however, a stunned Isaiah lamented: *"I am not pure, and I live among people who are not pure, but I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful." One of the heavenly creatures used a pair of tongs to take a hot coal from the altar. Then he flew to me with the hot coal in his hand. The creature touched my mouth with the hot coal and said, 'Look, your guilt is taken away, because this hot coal has touched your lips. Your sin is taken away'"* (Isa. 6:5-7).

Encountering the fierce holiness of God would help the North American Church steer away from dual spiritual dangers that we so often see – the ecclesiastical sins of sterility and ugly carnality.

Isaiah was entrusted with the Lord's Commission for the sake of others. Not only were Isaiah's heart and mouth cleansed by his reviving power-encounter, but his ears were opened to hear the Word of the Lord. Has it come to this with you? *"Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, 'Whom can I send? Who will go for Us?'"* (see Isa. 6:8-9). I love that "Us" because it speaks of the Trinity and the unity of purpose within the Godhead. Isaiah's vertical response was *mucho rapido*: *"So I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'"* Then what did the Lord say to him? *"Ok, Isaiah, I send you to go get in-touch with your inner child, with your feelings and to gain more self esteem?"* No! God said, *"Go and tell this to the people..."* God cares about getting his truth out to others. When Christ saved you He had others in mind too. *JOY* is what we experience when we have *Jesus first, others second and yourself last. In giving of ourselves [especially evangelistically], we manifest the essence of Jesus' lovely character, for it has always been Christ's nature to think more about others than He thinks of Himself. Why else would He humble Himself and become "obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:8)?

In our western culture, the natural tendency is to consider our own interests first—to look at everything from the inverted perspective of our own needs and wants. But with Jesus' help we can unlearn that dreadful habit. We can begin to think of the best interests of others—their wants, their concerns, their needs—their greatest need [salvation].

"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4).

*"I reached for God's hand full of blessings, because I was needy and sad;
And, oh, what a shower He gave me from all the rich treasure He had!"*

—Simon

"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?"

(Ps. 85:6).

The more you love the Lord, the more you will want to spend time with Him, and the more you will love and reach out to others. The more spiritually maturation you develop in the Spirit, the more missionary you will become! That Isaiah passage is timely. It shows us what revival is to be about – God's global fishing purposes of evangelism, not our local non-fishing blessings of comfort. Yes, the real purpose of revival is not for personal entertainment, it is to empower the church for fishing—to bring closure on Christ's Great Commission. There is no time for the distracting, excessive psychobabble in the church. What would have happened in Israel had Isaiah not properly resounded to the Lord's call?

Renewals, awakenings and revivals unfortunately all pass with time. But their residual positive influence can potentially continue to change lives and nations if prayerful witnessing thrusts repeatedly emerge. If we truly have been changed by experiencing God's glory and holiness, then holy goose bumps and some liver-quiver won't be good enough. We will want to listen intently to the Word of God daily and then obey the Word when He appeals to us, "***Who will go for Us?***"

Jesus said, "***Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature***" (Mark 16:15).

The Bible teaches, "***It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment***" (see Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-13).

With love, sensitivity, urgency, and fearless confidence we are to "***Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter***" (Proverbs 24:11).

There wasn't any worthless froth, foam or fu fu with Isaiah's personal power-encounter, because he allowed it to evangelistically sensitize him to the greatest need of the hour. Will you take heed and do the same? Experiencing the touch of a soul-saving Deity, should spawn like-passion for reaping. It should make you desire to reach for your pole, hooks, bait, net and then hungry sinners. If it's a true renewal-work of God, it should thrust wise Christians out to boldly witness. [Are you born again](#) and ready for this? It should motivate fishers of people towards going to the missionary fields of the world with a zealous urgency that just won't quit!

