

# VISION FORWARD



## REVIVAL AGAIN: STORIES TO FEED THE FIRE (BY ROBBIE EVANS)

I like to read. Ever since I was a small child I have loved to read and have learned so much from reading over the last sixty years or so.

One of my favorite topics over those years has been that of revival in the church. I can still remember the first book I ever read on revival entitled, “A Survey of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival Movements in North America” by Richard Riss. I don’t remember where or when I bought the book, but it was a real eye opener. It opened my eyes to two things. First, that God has continued to visit His church throughout history, and secondly, it showed me what my true roots were in Christianity. I had been born into the gospel during the Jesus Movement, discipled in a Pentecostal Church, and had been fellowshipping ever since with Charismatics around the world, including Roman Catholic Charismatics.

Although I have read many books on the theme of revival, there are five that are my favorites, although they are not the most popular works on the market. The

reason that these five stand out to me is because they are sober narratives of five different moves of God in the 1800’s and 1900’s and they are not given over to either sensationalism or a denominational spirit. They simply tell the truth and display the glory of God.

I will name them in the order that I have read them.

“The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney” by Charles G. Finney. Although Finney has been a bit of a controversial figure throughout the years, there can be no doubt as to his evangelistic ability. I am particularly attracted to him due to the fact that his greatest revivals occurred in upper New York, in cities such as Utica, Rome, Rochester, and others during the 1830’s. I attended Elim Bible Institute in Lima, NY, and was impressed to find out that the original campus was built because of the number of people volunteering for ministry after Finney’s revivals in Rochester in 1830-1831. By the way, he was converted in Adams, NY, just a little over 40 miles north of Oswego, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1821.

The second book that really impressed me was, “I Saw the Welsh Revival”, by David Mathews. He was a Welsh

musician who was not a believer until the revival swept through Wales in 1904-1905. In his book he relates how, as an unbeliever, he attended one of the revival meetings conducted by Evan Roberts and that during the meeting someone had a vision about a leprous man. At first, he wondered who it could be and then he realized that it was him. He was the leprous man, and the reference to leprosy was not about his physical condition, but his spiritual condition. His life had become completely corrupted by sin. That night he was converted and preached the gospel for the next forty years of his life. I also am partial to the Welsh Revival since the family tradition is that my father's side of the family immigrated from Wales to the U.S. in the 1880's.

The third book that really struck me is a book entitled, "By My Spirit". It was written by Jonathan Goforth, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary in China during the 1880's and 1890's. Due to the Boxer Rebellion, he and his wife Rosalind had to flee China, but after the rebellion was put down, they were able to return. After they returned to China, Jonathan went through a deep period of spiritual discontent and soul searching. During that time of discouragement three things happened that brought light to him. First, news of the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905 reached his ears, thus greatly encouraging him. Second, a copy of Charles Finney's book, "Lectures on Revival", fell into his hands. The third, and perhaps most decisive thing that happened to him, was that together with another missionary he was able to travel to Pyongyang, Korea, where a great revival was under way at the time. The visit to Korea transformed him. Upon returning to China, he began a long series of revival meetings in different cities in the Manchurian region of China. In his book he gives a play-by-play account of the revivals in the different cities where he preached. His stories remind me of the book of Acts. He narrates conversion after conversion of the Chinese to Jesus Christ. There is no attempt to impress the reader with his own person or importance. It is all about Jesus and the spread of the gospel. I liked that book so much that a couple of years ago I made forty copies of it and passed it out to our pastors. They still refer to it today.

The fourth book that shook me was also out of China and is entitled, "The Shan Tung Revival" by a woman named Mary K. Crawford. It is the story of a powerful revival that shook the Shantung Region of China in the 1930's. It is even more interesting because it began with a healing. The main figure in the beginning of this revival was a

Baptist missionary named C.L. Culpepper. His wife was losing her sight due to an eye problem and there seemed to be no remedy for her situation. However, a special time of prayer was set aside for her by the missionary community and others with the result that she was totally healed of her problem. This was the spark that lit the fire and a revival of true repentance, healing, and reconciliation spread through the entire Shantung province. Unfortunately it was stamped out a few years later by the Chinese communists.

The fifth and last book is my wife's favorite book on revival. It is entitled, "Revival in the Hebrides". It describes the labors of the Scottish evangelist Duncan Campbell in the Hebrides Islands off the coast of northern Scotland. The revival began with the prayers of two elderly women named Peggy and Christine Smith. They had become exceedingly burdened down about the spiritual condition of their church on Lewis Island. The church had become cold and there was not even one young person in the congregation. These two women were prayer warriors. Christine was 82 and paralyzed due to arthritic condition. Her sister Peggy was 84 years old and blind. In spite of their limitations, they began to pray and intercede for their church and island, Lewis Island. They asked God in His mercy to visit their church and eventually were able to convince their pastor to pray with them. It is a longer story than I have space for, but their prayers resulted in an invitation to the above-named evangelist, Duncan Campbell. He was delayed in his coming, but he finally arrived with a commitment to be at the church for ten days. Because of the intensity of the ensuing visitation, he didn't leave until two years later. The revival itself lasted from 1949 to 1952 and during that time thousands were converted to Christ.

As I mentioned above, I have read many books on revival, but these are my favorites. Why? Because they are sober, down to earth, God-glorifying books about God and what he can do in a city or a nation, if His church seeks Him. Every fire needs a bit of wood and these stories have been wood on my fire of revival. I mention them in the hopes, that you also, in them, can be enthralled by the same hope and glory with which I have been enthralled. We need a new, life-changing, genuine visitation from God. Only He can do it, but the good news is that, not only can He do it, but He *wants* to do it. We would do well to make His desire our own. If we do that, we shall surely see the glory of God revealed upon us.