

Thursday #1 Revival in the Late 1800's

by J. Edwin Orr

J. Edwin Orr's sermon explores the historical significance and impact of revival movements in the late 1800s, emphasizing the role of prayer and evangelism in renewing spiritual life in the church.

Duration: 27:40

Scripture: Psalm 78:4, Psalm 145:21, Daniel 6:16, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37, Acts 2:41, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Revival History"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of sharing the stories of God's work with future generations. He also mentions two significant awakenings that occurred in the United States, one after the Revolutionary War and another before the Civil War. The speaker shares a story about evangelist D.L. Moody and his powerful preaching, as well as the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions that was inspired by a young man named Robert Wilder. The sermon emphasizes the need for another great awakening in America and highlights the beginning of a movement in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Transcript

The scripture says we must tell our children's children what God has done, that we might set our hope in God and forget not his commandments. And then, to conclude the meeting, I tried to expound the word as simply as possible. Some teaching of scripture that deals with the awakening of the spiritual life.

Now, I told you about the great awakening that took place in this country just after the Civil War, after the Revolutionary War. And last night I told you about the great awakening that spread throughout this country just before the Civil War, touching all denominations. During the Lenten season, 1858, all the churches in New York were packed out.

In Brooklyn, Roman Catholic Parish services with 5,000 people, there seemed to be a movement towards God all over the country. Now, the question has been asked me many times, does the tide have to go right out before it comes in again? The answer is no. It's true that before the days of John Wesley, conditions were deplorable.

And before that second great awakening in the wake of the American Revolution, conditions in this country were deplorable. But sometimes a wave of renewed blessing comes in on top of one that's already there. You say, well, how do you find these things out? Well, I was reading the American Home Missionary Journal for the year 1830.

Now this Home Missionary Journal represented the home missions of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches when they were working together in the plan of union. And to my amazement, in an editorial it said, it's with gratitude to God we speak of a great awakening all over our beloved country. So many points of light are coming together that it's like the pathways of the Spirit being lighted up with the glory of God.

It's the first I knew of it. So I began digging into all the records I could find, and I found, truly enough, 1830 there was a general awakening all over the United States. Now, a very famous Methodist church historian in 1972 wrote an article in favor of the Key 73 program.

You may remember in 1973, ten years ago, there was a United Evangelistic effort all over the United States. The line he took was, if we don't get behind this effort as mainline denominations, God will work outside our ranks, among the Jesus people or somebody, therefore let's get behind it. It was a very good article.

But the title of his article was, Will the Third Great Awakening Miss the Churches? So I wrote him a nice note, thanked him for his insights, but I said, What did you mean the Third Great Awakening? The Third Great Awakening swept United States 1830. Your own denomination increased in two years from 580,098 communicants to 1,137,131. I got no answer.

I went down to the public library and got his private address, and wrote the same letter again to him at his private address. I got no answer. I went to a Methodist member of our faculty in the School of World Mission, Pasadena, and I said, How do you make a scholar answer a serious question? He said, Publish, man, publish.

But I didn't want to publish. If I were to goof in a book of mine, I'd rather somebody--for instance, last night I mentioned a couple of counties around here in Maryland that were really in Northern Virginia. Two people came up and told me about it.

I'd rather have that than somebody write an article in the Washington Post about it. But I had an idea. I prepared an article as if I were going to publish it.

And I sent it to him, and I wrote on, Not yet published. And he wrote back a three-page letter. I was amazed.

He said, What does it matter whether it was number one, two, or three awakening? Now if President Reagan, or if General Vesey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, let's mention him, were to say the trouble with American preparedness is that we haven't fought a war since 1812, I'd say, What's wrong with the man? What about the Mexican War? What about the Civil War? What about the Spanish-American War? What about the World War I? What about World War II? What about the Korean War? What about the Vietnam War? Could you imagine a military man not knowing of those wars? And here was a professor of church history that had actually said the tragedy of American life was that the last great awakening ended 1820. I noticed he was to speak at a church in Los Angeles, Paul's Church. I wasn't sure where it was, looked it up.

I went along, found it was a Roman Catholic Church. There were 300 nuns there. I was the only non-nun in the meeting.

I paid five dollars to get in. He was witty. He described an atheist as a man who didn't care whether Notre Dame or Southern Methodist won the game.

But again he said the tragedy of American life is that the last great awakening to move this country ended in 1820. I went up and gave him a copy of my book describing the awakening of 1905. I just happened to have a copy handy.

Now the movement began in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Not on the frontier the way some of the scholars say. It's a kind of pejorative attitude, what we call a revival, as something begins among the ignoramuses on the frontier and then is brought to town and made respectable.

No, no, it began in the suburbs of Boston, and Boston has always claimed to be the intellectual capital of the United States. It spread throughout the country in an amazing way. When it got to Kentucky and Tennessee, where there had been so many extravagances during the frontier revival, people fainting and screaming and dancing for joy, it was a great stillness and solemnity.

This movement was effective for twelve years, ran from about 1830 to 1842. It broke out across the Atlantic. One of the great movements was the revival in Scotland under William Chalmers Burns.

There isn't time to go into all the details, but this was effective in many parts of the world. For example, in Hawaii in the 1830s, 1835, there were only 577 professed believers. The missionaries were congregational from New England.

They had a session of prayer and they prayed for an awakening in Hawaii. They wrote to their friends in the States and said, We'll pray for you if you'll pray for us. The revival came in 1838, and it came in a very strange way.

There was a very godly man, his name was Titus Cohen, C-O-E-N, C-O-A-N, from New England. He was appointed to be minister of the First Church in Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. There was in Hilo a Hawaiian called Pua Aiki.

He had been born deformed. His own mother buried him alive. His uncle dug him up.

He became court jester to King Kamehameha of Hawaii. He was the funny man. But when Hawaii turned towards Christianity, there was no room for him as jester anymore.

He became the leader of a prayer movement. He was called the leader of the praying ones, and he prayed that a moment of awakening would come to Hawaii. And sure enough, that is exactly what happened.

It was in 1837 the prayer movement began, and 1837 was when Titus Cohen began preaching. People flocked in, it was like a camp meeting went on for months. At that one church in Hilo, Titus Cohen, after six months probation to see whether or not they were genuine, took in 1,705 candidates.

In his church in Hilo, 7,557 in one church during the movement. And twenty years later, 19,000 or more of the converts of that movement were still in standing. Now that same sort of thing happened in Tonga in the South Pacific, Tonga is a Christian kingdom today, and this was the movement that helped evangelize Fiji, which was the world's worst for cannibalism.

The king of Fiji, King Tanoa, was such a cutthroat that when one of his own kinsmen who had offended him, fell at his feet and asked for mercy, he refused forgiveness, chopped off the man's arm and began

eating it in front of him. Fiji was a hellhole of cannibalism. It was the missionaries from Tonga, native people, who went to Fiji and helped win that kingdom for Christ also.

Now there was another, I call this a resurgence, because the tide didn't go out before this. This was like a second tide coming in. But in 1882 there was a similar movement.

Now we've all heard of Dwight Lyman Moody. Moody was not an educated man. He couldn't spell to save his life.

He spelled Philadelphia with an F. He spelled orthodox, O-T-H-E-D-E-X, orthodox. Now you say, well, you read Moody's sermons today, you don't find that. That's true, they're all edited very carefully.

The Victorians took the attitude to print Moody as he actually spoke. It wasn't glorifying to the Lord. So they changed it all so that you don't know this.

But John Pollock's biography of Moody brings this out. He was not an educated man, but a great man of God. He spoke the language of the people.

However when he went to England, he was invited to hold a preaching mission at Cambridge University. Now Cambridge, like Oxford at that time, was a university for the sons of the noble, and the sons of the rich, and the sons of the clergy. When they heard that an illiterate American was coming, they were outraged.

They determined to show him his place. And there's no one quite like an upper-class Englishman for showing you your place. Moody arrived, preached in Great St. Mary's, he called upon the vicar, Anglican vicar, to lead in prayer.

The students flocked in, a thousand of them. They punctuated the prayer with Hear, Hear. That's all right for Parliament, but it's very rude in church.

They were making fun. Sankey sang one of his solos. They sang a parody along with him.

Moody preached on Daniel in the Den of Lions. I don't know whether he had chosen that topic specially. Maybe that's how he felt.

But as he preached, he brought the husk on every few minutes. The Hebrew word Daniel has three syllables. Dan-ee-yal.

The English word, too, Dan-ee-yal. What the American in those days only one. Have you ever heard of Daniel Boone? Have you ever heard of Daniel Webster? That's how they spelled it.

D-A-N apostrophe L, and they pronounced it as one syllable. And every time Moody would say, then Daniel cried to the Lord, the students clapped their hands and clamped their feet and shouted. And it took him five minutes sometimes to get silence again.

But he was no coward. When he got home that night to his lodgings, he said to Sankey, Sankey, I have no hankering for that crowd. But next night, the attendance dropped to 100.

They'd had their fun. They'd made fun of the American. But on Wednesday morning, the maid where he was staying brought a visiting card.

Mr. Gerald Lander of Trinity College. That's the most aristocratic Cambridge College where Prince Charles studied. If Mr. Lander of Trinity College wished to see Mr. Moody, he said, bring him in.

And the young man came in. Moody's thought was one of the leaders of the riot. He said, what can I do for you, sir? The Englishman said, Mr. Moody, I was one of theirs who thought that you were singularly unequipped to speak to gentlemen.

But sir, he said, as I observed you on the platform, I came to the conclusion that you were the only gentleman in the meeting. We who prided ourselves on our English breeding behaved like cats, sir. I wish to apologize.

Moody held up his hand. He said, I'll forgive you if you come to the rest of the meetings. They shook hands on it.

Gerald Lander sat in the front seat. Moody wisely waited until Friday before he gave any kind of invitation for them to respond to. The first man forward was Gerald Lander, who became Bishop of Hong Kong.

Another man forward was Stanley Smith, chief oarsman of the Cambridge rowing crew. There were two brothers called Paul Hill Turner, aristocrats, converted, athletes as well. Sir Montague Beecham, nephew of Lord Radstock, was converted.

W.W. Castles, son of a wealthy importer, became Bishop of Sichuan in China. Perhaps the best known of what was called the Cambridge Seven was C.T. Studd, the Babe Ruth of English cricket, and these men turned the British universities upside down. Now, Moody was so successful that in London in the 1880s, they built a huge tabernacle to seat 25,000 in North London.

Moody held forth for a month. While he was holding forth for a month, they were building a tabernacle in South London. He moved there for the next month.

They moved the tabernacle in North London to another suburb of London. When he finished that month, he went to another one. Then they wanted to preach simultaneously.

Even Moody couldn't do that. So he pinch hit with friends. One night he would preach.

Next night, some worthy person, he would be on the other tabernacle. One night in South London, Moody called on a Presbyterian minister to lead in prayer. This man had never prayed before 25,000 before.

He got rather carried away. He prayed, and he continued to pray. You know, if a man prays for three minutes, you pray with him.

If he prays for another three minutes, you pray for him. If he prays for another three minutes, you pray against him. This good man was praying right through the minor prophets.

When Moody suddenly got up and said, while our brother is finishing his prayer, let's sing hymn number 11. There was a young atheist in the meeting. He said, there's an honest man.

There's no hypocrisy about that fellow. I'm coming back tomorrow night. He had just come out of curiosity.

When he came back, Moody wasn't there. But the Cambridge Seven were there, and he was converted. He became Sir Wilfred Grenfell, the great missionary collaborator.

You may not remember the name, but when I was a boy, he was an honored name. One of the great pioneers. Now, when Moody got back to the States, his student friend said, now what about us in the American universities? Moody had kept away from universities.

He was afraid of making a fool of himself. Now, the leader of the Christian associations in the state universities was a young fellow called Luther Wishart. His associate, by the way, in the Philadelphian Society at Princeton University was T.W. Wilson.

That sounds familiar. T.W. Wilson. You say, you mean Billy Graham's associate? No, no.

Billy has two good friends, T.W. Wilson and Grady Wilson. They were boys together. I saw both of them the other last week.

But I mean T. Woodrow Wilson. He became president of the College of New Jersey, then he became governor of New Jersey, and then he became president of the United States. But at that time, he was a student evangelist.

Wishart and Wilson said, now what about American students? Moody was still nervous, so he said, well, let's have a Christian conference first. How about up near my place? So up at Mount Hermon near Northfield, Massachusetts, they had a student conference. Two hundred and fifty students came.

Moody was nervous, so he invited President McCosh of Princeton, a Scotsman. He invited Henry Drummond of Edinburgh and others to be speakers, and he was sort of master of ceremonies. But he found the students loved him, although they knew he was not an educated man.

A young fellow came to Moody and said, Mr. Moody, please, could I speak to the students? He said, I'm sorry, young fellow, we've got a full program. But he insisted, so he said, all right, you can speak to them over at the dinner tables. This young fellow told the students, my father was one of the students who sat under the haystack at Williams College in Massachusetts, went out to India to be a missionary.

He's come home retired. He's come home to die. But he's praying that a thousand university students will go to the mission field.

He spoke so powerfully that one hundred of the two hundred and fifty volunteered. Instead of going into law, this young fellow, his name was Robert Wilder, visited all the universities, colleges, theological seminaries, and two thousand volunteered the first year. Didn't all go the first year.

But this started a movement called the student volunteer movement for foreign missions. In a long generation, more than 30,000 of the cream of the crop went to the mission field. And Kenneth Scott LaTourette attributed to them some of the greatest advances in the mission field ever.

That came out of that time of revival. Revivals in other places, one of these movements of revival began spontaneously in Japan, 1883. And the evangelical churches increased from about 5,000 to 25,000 in seven years.

There was also a great movement in the Congo, a great movement in southern Africa. Now these were movements of renewal. I remember well, when I was studying, I went to a Jesuit university librarian, and I said, could you give me some books on revivals among Roman Catholics? He thought for a moment that he should come with me.

He took me to a whole shelf of books. He said, have a look at these. Then I noticed each one dealt with the formation of an order.

Renewal movements in the Roman Catholic Church have generally given birth to orders. From the Dominicans, the Franciscans, from the work of St. Francis, right on down to Holy Ghost Fathers, to the Marian Old Fathers, and so forth. Generally, a movement of renewal brings about an order.

But among the evangelical churches, the movements have been grassroots, from the laity. And until the time of John XXIII, there was little or no sharing across the lines. Now, things have changed, I would say blessedly changed.

Last year, I had a week of meetings in St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary in India, the largest Roman Catholic seminary in Asia. But I was telling Father Aldo tonight earlier that when I was a chaplain in the Air Force, I anticipated John XXIII by quite a number of years. I discovered that Pope Pius had given permission.

If Catholic men were going into battle and there was no priest to minister to them, another Christian minister could minister. So I used to conduct services for them on the landing ships out in New Guinea. So I've always had good fellowship.

Now, these movements of revival have been movements of the renewal of Christian people. Primarily, movements among professed Christians. It's true that some denominations, as I've mentioned before, use the word revival for an evangelistic outreach.

But that's a misuse of the term. A revival is the coming of life again to those who possess life. It results in an awakening and it results in evangelism.

The best definition of evangelism that I know was the one coined by Canon Max Warren, a dear friend of mine who died two years ago. He was at Westminster Abbey. To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit that men may come to put their trust in him as Savior, and to serve him as Lord in the fellowship of his Church and in the vocations of the common life.

That's the best definition of evangelism I know. Billy Graham's work is evangelism. All that's built around his campaign is to enable him better to present the gospel to those who need to hear it.

But revival, what we're discussing, is the renewal of life in the Church. In New Zealand some time ago, I met a Presbyterian minister. I don't know why so many of my illustrations are Presbyterian.

I'm staying in a Presbyterian home and maybe it's the food that I'm eating makes me think of this. But this was a young, up-to-date Presbyterian minister, and he said he had no use for mass evangelism. I found he didn't like Billy Graham.

He never had heard Billy Graham, but he didn't like Billy Graham, just the way some just think that's the fashion. So I said, what do you like? Well, he said, I'm completely sold on visitation evangelism. With tongue-in-cheek, I said, how does that work? Well, he said, you train your people, and they go on ringing doorbells, they talk to people in the doorstep.

If they're invited in, all the better. We tell them how to approach the subject tactfully. If they run into difficulties, then we have a panel to help them, you know, come along, deal with a problem.

Or if they'll come to church, all the better. And he told me all about it. So I said, how is it working? And he gave a rather embarrassed laugh.

He said, I can't get them to do it. There's your problem. We need a revived church to do these things.

We can have the biggest schemes in the world, but if people don't feel impelled by the Spirit of God to do it, they won't do it. That's why ministry to the church is so necessary. Now, tomorrow night, I'm going to tell you one of the most thrilling stories of revival.

I knew Evan Roberts, the Welshman whom God so singularly used in Wales, 1904. That was one of the most astounding movements of all time. You read the papers, you find the Anglo-Catholics and the Roman Catholics spoke highly of this movement because it so demonstrated the power of God.

Tomorrow night, I'm going to tell you how that movement swept the United States. I wrote to a prominent church historian on the East Coast. The time I was researching this, he said, could you give me any clues on the great revival that swept the United States in 1905? He said, I never heard of such a movement.

I doubt very much that such a movement could have occurred in the 20th century. He said, if you find anything interesting, let me know. That movement swept the United States from coast to coast.

The ministers in Atlantic City reported of a population of 60,000. There were only 50 adults professedly unconverted. And as I said once before, in Portland, Oregon, 200 major stores closed from 11 to 2 each day for prayer, to enable their customers and staff to attend meetings of prayer.

I'll tell that story tomorrow night. If you're interested, well, whether you're interested or not, I'll tell it. I'll tell it.

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