

## Reactive Concurrence: A Prescriptive for Revival Leadership R. York Moore, 2018

### Introduction:

Revivals and their associated social phenomenon, awakenings, have always been a conjoint work derived from human striving, yearning, longing and sacrifice coupled with divine condescension and expressions of power. All revivals begin and are sustained through the concurrent reactive interaction between human and divine agency. Like a dance that plays itself out over time, revivals are based on cycles of response, from us towards God and from God towards us. Within these cycles, revival leaders play a pivotal role in receiving the divine work of revival, sustaining that work, and eventually seeing it to its conclusion. Here, I offer a brief treatment of revival and awakening conceptually, barriers to such, and the role revival leaders need to play to help mature revival towards awakening.

First, revivals are punctuated moments in history where our physical, intellectual, sociological, and cultural realities align with the future coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Revivals occur as a result of the colliding of our human 'realm' with the 'divine' realm. The ancient Jewish understanding of 'apocalypse' was the collision that occurred when one time and space invaded another time and space. Revivals are small expressions, foreshadows, of the ultimate apocalypse that will occur. Revelation 11:15 expresses the beginning of that ultimate apocalypse where we read, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever." This declaration, which occurs after the seventh end-time trumpet blast, announces the beginning of the actualization of Christ's reign of power. We hear this in the response to this announcement from the 24 elders in v. 16, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have *taken* your great power and have *begun* to reign."<sup>1</sup> (emphasis added). All revivals and awakening are a foretaste of a time when Jesus will *take* His power and *begin* to reign universally over all peoples.

### What are Revivals:

**In short, revivals are those punctuated moments in history where our physical, intellectual, sociological, and cultural reality aligns with Christ's future coming Kingdom in our current context.** Revival is by necessity both rooted in the Kingdom that HAS come in the person of Christ and in the Kingdom that WILL come in His return and reign. Revivals are breaks in time that establish new a Kingdom normal where the experienced reality of the few becomes the experienced reality of many. They are punctuated moments that are born from disruption and themselves cause disruption. Revival is demonstrative of God's ultimate apocalyptic intent to draw all ethnic peoples and their associated linguistic and cultural manifestations together under the loving reign of Jesus. Revivals very frequently have this contour demonstrated in unity in specific groups where distinctive disunity was commonplace. In the famous Azusa Street Revival, for example, what was of greater note than the conversions and miracles was the fact that Black, Latino, Asian and Whites from across socio-economic boundaries were found living into a new, radical community of faith and worship. Unfortunately, these were the same factors that brought a premature end to this revival.

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<sup>1</sup> (1984)

## What Revivals are Not:

South African revivalist, Mark Shaw explains, “Revivals understood in the fullest sense must incorporate spiritual, structural and social transformation. Revivals are more than people movements, they are movements of charismatic people gifted by God, recipients of His unique work of grace in revival.”<sup>2</sup> Because of these contours, revival leaders should resist over-simplified definitions of revival, specifically ones that relegate the phenomenon of revival to mere expressions of signs and wonders. While supernatural signs and wonders are often a part of revival or the fruit of revival, Shaw and others have demonstrated historically that revivals are much more than these expressions. Miracles, signs, and wonders have been wrought through the Church since its inception and even when these have been common-place in faith traditions, all too often the other ‘contours’ of revival have been missing. Tribalizing the concept of revival to bend to our particular tradition is common for leaders. For those who champion the cause of evangelism, we make revival about mass conversion. For those who champion the miraculous, we make revival about signs and wonders. For those who champion doctrinal truth, we make revival about theological reformation. For those who champion personal piety, we make revival about personal holiness. True revival and its associated phenomenon, awakening, possesses all of these Kingdom contours and others. As the apocalyptic collision of Christ’s Kingdom overtakes the realm of humanity, revivals touch all aspects of the human experience and the institutions that contain those experiences.

## Contours of Revival:

**Most** revivals are:

- Opposed by established religious leaders and secular powers who benefit from current realities.
- Occur during times of great social shifting and/or the displacement of people.
- Impact systemic injustices within a context (e.g. racial tensions or economic disparity).
- Spread from an epicenter (they aren't merely local).
- Revolve around preaching and prayer.
- Include an emphasis on the word of God.
- Change social behavior and relationships.

**All** revivals

- Have a localized epicenter (they can be named by their point of origin).
- Are a mix of God's work and the counterfeit work of demonic powers.
- Have an end and their impact fades over time.
- Set people free from bondage.
- Incorporate spiritual warfare.

Revived people:

- Are personally liberated: Both leaders and followers are liberated from personal sin and bondage.

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<sup>2</sup> (Shaw 2010), p. 24.

- Have a greater apocalyptic vision: Mark Shaw demonstrates historically that a shift in values occurs in these people groups making them motivated to act out of the realities of God's Kingdom breaking in to current realities.
- Commit to radical expressions of community.
- Express a normative posture of evangelism and activism in their context.
- Engage systems and structures that stand in opposition to the Kingdom-reign of Jesus.

### **Awakening:**

Awakening is derived from revival and it is quite possible to have a localized revival that never bears the full fruit of awakening. There are many reasons for this but one simple one is that revival leaders underestimate the power of revival for social transformation. Because of this, often those leading revival are unaware of the normative fruit revival is to bear, namely awakening. **Awakening is the transformation that happens on a macro-level within a people group and through the cultural containers or institutions of that group.** Awakening can be said to be occurring as a people group becomes collectively responsive to the in-breaking apocalyptic manifestations of revival. This responsiveness begins to change the culture and the social structures that contain that culture. Where revival is experienced in individuals and communities, largely of faith, awakenings are experienced in people groups collectively. Awakenings impact the seven culture-making institutions of society, namely law, commerce, government, academia, the family, medicine, and leisure. Awakening is the fruit of revival and while a people can experience revival without awakening, there can be no awakening without revival-it is the social fruit emerging from revival. Awakening is more than mass conversion. Awakening produces the needed energy to reform, renew, and re-establish broken and lapsed social structures. These renewed social structures transform a people into a Kingdom vessel. Social transformation is foundational to awakening. **Awakening happens when, through the social agency of culture-making institutions, the reign of Christ is actualized and the Kingdom transforms the structures and systems of a people.** In short, awakening is a glimpse into the theocracy to come. In Rev. 12:10, as a result of the overthrow of anti-Christ systems and structures, Heaven rejoices, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah."

### **Reactive Concurrence: A Prescriptive for Revival Leadership**

Because revival begins and is sustained through an interaction between God and His people, those leading revival should have a reactive posture towards the work of the Spirit. As revival begins to manifest and develop, there is 'concurrent' reactions being made between God, God's people, and God's leaders. Revival leadership is primarily about *enabling* the Spirit's work during these punctuated times in ways that are not normative when revival is not occurring. As revival emerges and evolves, the following prescriptives ought to be indicative in those entrusted as leaders during revival:

1. Preach and promote preaching the gospel with emphasis on repentance.
2. Instill a longing for greater revival through revival-centric prayer.
3. Send those responsive to revival out to promote revival more broadly.
4. Send new believers out to promote social transformation.
5. Confront systemic injustices and spiritual 'truce' lines within cultural contexts.

6. Allow for and promote radical community during revival.

7. Inspire an apocalyptic vision by focusing on eschatological passages of Scripture.

Promoting revival is the core responsibility of revival leaders but also watching for and correcting barriers to the expansion of revival is key to allowing the work of God to evolve. There are common barriers to every revival.

**Barriers in the Church:** Often, there is a resistance to integration in local and denominational bodies. Traditions favor certain aspects of revival. For instance, evangelistic traditions want revival to exclusively focus on mass conversion whereas justice-oriented faith traditions want to focus on engaging systemic injustices. Church traditions can often cloud the holistic, integrated Kingdom-work of revival. Revival leaders need to be 'both/and' leaders, demonstrating how the unique work of revival engages people and systems. Additionally, in the American context, cultural assumptives like materialism, personal and privatized rights and property, and 'Kingdom building' are common threats to revival. Revival leaders ought to preach and pray against such things and call for repentance in these areas specifically. Demonstrating leadership in this area should also include public, symbolic acts of repentance to inspire revival communities towards similar expressions of repentance.

**Barriers in Culture:** In the American context, there is resistance to dependence and community both inside and outside the Church. Revival leaders ought to preach and pray against the normative hyper-individualistic way in which we interpret our rights and identity as Americans. From individual sexuality, property, and religious experience, Americans are prone to resist the radical new cultural norms revival brings. Continually focusing on these specific areas and calling for repentance from those we preach the gospel to is important in the enfolding of non-believers into the revival community. Revival leaders need to call for repentance and belief in Jesus for salvation along with a call to pursue a new and authentic kind of Kingdom vision that rivals the aforementioned cultural assumptives.

**Barriers in Individuals:** Because of the real cost to revival, revival leaders need to encourage individuals to be open to a new normal, to resist the status quo, and long for something more. We need to help people realize they are prone to resist revival because of cultural and individual idolatry. The normalization of hyper-individualism and the specific American idolatry of materialism and sex require the promotion of repentance in public, symbolic ways. Praying for revival, celebrating revival, and preaching an apocalyptic-centric message that rivals these idols is important to sustain and grow the work of revival.

**Barriers in Leaders:** Revival leaders almost always clash with 'established' leadership. Mark Shaw documents this throughout the world. He explains that early in revival, there is a struggle for interpretive power. He says that 'old light' or established leaders resist new paradigms, new leaders, and new expressions of community. In addition to this, leaders in general present a barrier to revival because of their toleration of small dreams and vision, acceptance of progressive and incremental unrighteousness, and general lack of faith. Power and wealth associated with established leaders make them unwilling to join God in ways that require sacrifice. Revival leaders should resist these temptations themselves but also stress to other established leaders the necessity of 'deliverance' or watershed moments which represent a clear break with pre-revival organizational and personal norms.

1984. *The Holy Bible : New International Version, containing the Old Testament and the New Testament*. Textbook ed. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Shaw, M.R. 2010. *Global Awakening: How 20th-Century Revivals Triggered a Christian Revolution*: InterVarsity Press.