

Talk 1: Gdynia

Revival and Renewal Movements: 1. Revival in the Protestant World

Revival is an important word for Evangelical Christians. It is not much used by Catholics. Although there were some reports of local revivals before the 1730s, the events of the 1730s represented a significant turning point in Protestant history. An important preparation took place on Count Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony, where the Moravian exiles constructed their own village, named Herrnhut, on Zinzendorf's land. A Pentecost-type event occurred there in the summer of 1727, as a result of which a continuous prayer meeting for revival began which lasted for 100 years. The Protestant missionary movement really takes off from this point. A few years later in the 1730s, John Wesley had his "heart-warming" experience in London and began his 60-year long ministry, and then followed the Great Awakening in the American colonies, at first centring on Northampton, Massachusetts. Several historians, rightly I think, regard these events as the origin of the Evangelical movement in the Protestant world.¹ It is with the Evangelical movement that the word revival enters into regular usage and "revivalism" is born.²

What is distinctive about the Evangelical movement? By comparison with the older Protestant currents of Puritanism (in England and in the American colonies) and Pietism (on the European Continent, especially in Germany and the Netherlands), Evangelical Christianity has a new confidence: both in the teaching on assurance of personal salvation and in their focus on evangelism and missions. Puritanism and Pietism were more introspective, focusing on the inner state of the Christian soul. The key components of Evangelical Christianity from the beginning were:

- a focus on the cross of Jesus and the doctrine of atonement
- an insistence on the need for each person to experience a personal conversion
- the absolute authority of Holy Scripture
- the primary obligation of the born-again to testify and bear witness to others³

What do Evangelical Christians mean by Revival?

Here are some samples: "A revival is a sovereign outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon a group of Christians resulting in their spiritual reviving and quickening, and issuing in the awakening of spiritual concern in outsiders or formal church members"⁴

¹ The established Protestant Church in present-day Germany was known as the "Evangelical Church". So in German, there is a difference between *Evangelisch* (ie mainline Protestant, most often Lutheran) and *Evangelikal* (corresponding to the English-language use of the term "Evangelical").

² The French speak of *réveils* and the Germans of *Erweckung*, in Dutch *Opwekking*.

³ The British historian, David Bebbington, has identified as the key characteristic of Evangelicalism what he calls: 1. Conversionism; 2. Activism; 3. Biblicism; and 4. Crucicentrism (*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*: London, 1989), pp. 2 – 17.

⁴ R. E. Davies, *I Will Pour Out My Spirit* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), p. 15.

“A revival may be described as the reviving of believers, an awakening as the winning of the related community”⁵

“Revival ... means God’s quickening visitation of his people, touching their hearts and deepening his work of grace in their lives ... essentially a corporate occurrence”⁶

All Evangelicals mean by Revival a conversion/repentance of large numbers of people such that an area, larger or smaller, is strongly affected. There was a controversy in the 1820s over the teaching of a revival preacher, Charles G. Finney, in the Eastern USA. His teaching was that you could plan revival through the application of certain spiritual principles. Finney’s opponents said, No, you cannot plan revival, you can only pray them down from heaven. These positions were closely related to the Calvinist – Arminian arguments in Evangelical circles.

Thus the focus of the term “Revival” is focused on individual conversion but on a large scale. But revival is not seen as resulting from corporate action by church leadership but as the fruit of many personal conversions occurring in the same place/area at a particular point in time. The focus on Revival reflects the Evangelical emphasis on personal conversion and the necessity for each person to have a personal knowledge of the one Saviour Jesus Christ. It was recognized that Revivals can transform a society. Reports of the Welsh Revival of 1904 speaks of a big decrease in crime in South Wales and a big drop in the sales of alcoholic drinks and of drunkenness.

There was a recognition that revivals are occasional. They do not just continue for years and years. But Evangelicals have had a concern that the fruit of revivals if not dissipated and that it flows into the ongoing life of the church communities.

The citation from J. Edwin Orr above refers to the use of the English terms revival and awakening. In some language there is only one word used: as with *Erweckung* in German and *Opwekking* (Dutch). In English, the term revival is always used to refer to particular outbreaks of the Holy Spirit, as e.g. the Welsh Revivals of 1859 and 1904, the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 – 09. The term awakening is used in Evangelical history to describe something of somewhat longer duration: the First Great Awakening in New England from the 1730s, the Second Great Awakening particularly centred in Tennessee and Kentucky around the first years of the 19th century. In this usage, Awakening is linked with Revival in the first sense but is also usually stimulated and spread by outstanding preachers: e.g. John Wesley with the British Awakening from the 1730s and George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards with the First Great Awakening in North America. In the outpourings called Revivals, preachers were active, but the Revival is not attributed to their preaching: hence the use of the word “sovereign” in definitions of revival. But preachers have much to do with the lasting fruit of Revivals. Often today people use the term “Revival” to describe a particular church promotion: e.g. “Revival Time”, “Revival Night” that can be seen on the publicity for Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations. But the scholars of revival would disapprove of this usage.

⁵ J. Edwin Orr, cited in Davies, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶ J. I. Packer cited in Davies, op. cit., p. 16.

The Relationship between the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements

Among the historians there is a wide consensus as to how the Pentecostal movement arose. It is generally agreed that:

1. the Pentecostal movement arose as a further development within/from the Holiness movement and groupings of the second half of the 19th century. The Holiness movement arose within the Evangelical world, but focused on the deeper sanctification of the already converted. The Holiness movement had two main expressions: one found more in Britain and Germany as well as in New England, which saw sanctification as victory over sin (“the overcoming life”) and as a continuing process, even though there were break-through experiences; the other trend was found more in the frontier states of the USA and understood sanctification as an eradication of sin, so that the Christian would sin no more. This transformation was understood to be a decisive experience happening at an identifiable moment, a “second blessing” after conversion. Both currents appealed to John Wesley’s teaching, the former having a greater familiarity with Wesley’s works. Holiness advocates began to describe this “second blessing” as baptism in the Spirit (from the late 1850s on, but increasingly in the 1880s and 1890s). From the 1880s, the Methodist Church turned increasingly away from the Holiness people, with some Methodist advocates leaving to form new Holiness denominations.
2. The Pentecostal movement touched more than any other groups both the Holiness currents. The Pentecostals coming from the “eradication” tendency, mostly from the Southern States, formed Pentecostal Holiness denominations, teaching three decisive experiences: conversion, sanctification and the Pentecostal baptism. The Pentecostals coming from the overcoming tendency believed in two decisive experiences: conversion and the Pentecostal baptism. They formed themselves into different denominations, of which the Assemblies of God became the largest. In the first decades of the Pentecostal movement very few people came from the older historic church backgrounds (HC circles were mostly unaware of the PM). A few more came in Europe than in USA; Alexander Boddy in England and Jonathan Paul in Germany both stayed in their Churches but without making any real inroads. Many of the first Pentecostals came from Holiness backgrounds, having already acquired a thirst for more of the Holy Spirit. Quite a number had been Baptists.
3. The Pentecostal movement soon experienced another division: between the Trinitarian Pentecostals and the so-called Oneness Pentecostals. The Oneness Pentecostals were and are not Unitarians, that is people who deny the Divinity of Jesus. They are more what in early centuries were called Modalists, that is confessing Father, Son and Spirit as three modes of the one God without their being distinct persons. Although over the decades, there was little fellowship between the Oneness and the Trinitarian Pentecostals, the latter have always recognized the former as being within the overall Pentecostal movement.
4. The Pentecostal movement began largely among the less-educated sectors of society

(“on the other side of the tracks”) and with a generally anti-intellectual mentality. Pentecostals were activists, out to win the world for Jesus before his soon-return. So Pentecostals typically did not go to institutes of higher education and did not produce theologians (but apologists). However, when Pentecostal denominations were formed, they needed to produce some kind of statement of faith. What we find is that they typically borrowed Evangelical formulations, and then added a couple of Pentecostal distinctives (baptism in the Spirit witnessed by the sign of tongues; and divine healing in the atonement). Later the question will arise: “Was this trying to fit new wine into old bottles?”.

5. For a few decades, there was tension between Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The fiercest critics of the Pentecostals were almost always the Evangelicals, especially the Holiness groups that rejected the Pentecostal: the Berlin declaration of 1909 (“nicht von oben, sondern von unten”). Pentecostals were described as “holy rollers” and as “tongues-speakers” (‘the tongues movement’). However, by the 1940s there was a major change: in the USA, the National Association of Evangelicals was formed (1942) and many Pentecostals joined, including the Assemblies of God. As the ecumenical movement became more organized, Pentecostals normally sided with Evangelicals, who regarded ecumenism as compromise and a human effort to form one super-church.
6. It is only in the last 30 years that the Pentecostal movement has begun to produce top-level scholars, who have often studied in mainline universities, and to turn Pentecostal colleges into universities. This process is most developed in North America, but can also be seen in many other places, especially in East Asia. With the rise of this Pentecostal scholarship – with which denominational heads are often not familiar – the question of Pentecostal distinctiveness has clearly emerged and a major debate on “Is there a distinctively Pentecostal hermeneutic?” has been raging.

The issues can be summarised in this way: Is Pentecostalism a sub-section of Evangelicalism or is it a new gestalt that the Holy Spirit has been forming (yes, with many Evangelical influences) that is different from all previous historic models? Does coming under the Evangelical banner do justice to the full creativity of the Holy Spirit? Is Pentecostal faith a work of the Word and the Spirit compared to a Word-based Evangelicalism that treats the Word in too rationalist a way? Many Pentecostal scholars are saying today that there is a distinctive Pentecostal hermeneutic that is based on an interaction between the Word, the Spirit and the [Church as] community of faith in the Spirit.

7. In my view, the distinctiveness of the Pentecostal and the charismatic movements lies in this symbiotic relationship between the Spirit and the Word. This finds its clearest expression in the charisms or spiritual gifts that are more directly poured out by the risen and glorified Lord Jesus. They express the sovereign Lordship of Jesus over the Church in a way that is complementary to the ongoing regular ministry of preaching, teaching and pastoring.

8. There are clearly many levels of affinity between the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements. I believe that it is selling the Pentecostal movement short to regard it only as a sub-section of Evangelicalism, or as Evangelicalism with a particular emphasis. Maybe the Holiness movement could be seen in that way, but not the Pentecostal.