

## ~Other Speakers M-R: Revival Email List:

"Fasting For Renewal, Revival And Power In The Church"  
-by R. Maurice Smith, M.A.

[ Please go to this web-site to read the rest of it -  
[http://www.parousianetwork.com/fasting\\_introduction.htm](http://www.parousianetwork.com/fasting_introduction.htm) ]

Fasting is a God-appointed means to achieve a goal. That goal is personal renewal, revival in our churches and a new spiritual awakening in the world. We fast in order that we, our church and our nation might know God, that we might discover His Kingdom purposes, and implore Him to forgive our sins and to pour out His healing power upon us, our churches and our land.

It has been nearly 100 years since America (and by inclusion, Europe) last experienced a national revival. In the 100 years from 1804 to 1904 America experienced a movement of such spiritual power that church historians, such as Kenneth Scott Latourette, refer to the period as "The Great Century" of Christian expansion. No less than four great waves of the Spirit of God broke upon America and the world within a span of roughly 100 years. The first of these visitations came in 1799-1811 in what church historians now call the 2nd Great Awakening; the second wave broke in the 1830s and encompassed the evangelistic ministry of Charles Grandison Finney; the third broke in 1857-1859 in the great Prayer Revival in Manhattan and continued in the evangelistic ministry of D.L. Moody, the greatest American evangelist of the 19th century; and the fourth wave broke in 1904 in what I refer to as the Great Welsh Revival of 1904. It was as if a spiritual dam had burst, and the river of the Spirit of God of Ezekiel Chapter 47 flowed deep and wide for over 100 years, redeeming millions and launching a world-wide missions movement that continues to this day.

But the years since 1904 have not been characterized as years of great revival in the Church or awakening among the masses.[i] Rather, we have lived through one of the most violent and bloody centuries in the history of mankind. Over 10 million people died in World War 1 and another 50 million perished in World War 2. According to former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara some 160 million people died in the many wars of

the 20th century. As we enter the 21st Century our society appears to have openly rejected Biblical values and morality. Christianity is specifically excluded from public activities and is either ridiculed or vilified by the media, while New Age spiritual non-sense is the "hot topic" of alternative talk radio. The River of God's Spirit gives every outward appearance of being exhausted and drying up in the world today (but looks can be deceiving, so read our discussion of the river of Ezekiel 47 in Chapter 6!).

What exactly is the state of the Church in America and Europe as we enter the 21st Century? The Church of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the 21st Century is enjoying a prosperity unlike that of any prior generation in history. Our buildings are often new (and expensive), our brochures and magazines are slick and colorful, our music is contemporary and professionally orchestrated. Never in history has the evangelical Church in America and Europe been better funded, its staff better paid or its attendees more affluent. And never has the organized Church been less effective than it is today in its primary Commission to win the lost and to turn them into disciples.

According to Christian Sociologist and trend-watcher Dr. George Barna, his research has revealed that in recent years, a majority of the people who

made a “decision” for Christ in one of our evangelical churches “were no longer to be found in a church context within eight weeks of having made such a decision.” Contrast that with the Great Welsh Revival of 1904 when approximately 5% of the population of the nation of Wales professed Christ for the first time and united with the Church. According to critics of the revival, of the 100,000 people who professed Christ and joined the Church in the first six months of the revival, seven out of ten (70%) were still in the fellowship of the Church after five years. What is the difference between losing converts after eight weeks or keeping them in fellowship after five years? Perhaps it is the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in genuine renewal and awakening and the work of man in some new evangelistic program.

In his book *The Second Coming of the Church*, Dr. Barna summarizes much of his recent research and describes the state of the American church in terms of two potential outcomes. Here is his description:

“In fact, having spent the last two decades studying our culture, the American people and Christian churches across the nation, I believe that within the next few years America will experience one of two outcomes that will dictate the course of events and the tenor of life for at least the next half century.

“One of these possible outcomes is massive spiritual revival. People are desperately seeking meaning and purpose in life. They have tried materialism, sexual promiscuity, careerism, drugs, pop psychology and hyper-leisure, but none of these pursuits have filled their inner void. Now, millions are exploring spirituality to see if perhaps the faith realm holds the key to satisfying their needs.

“The other highly possible outcome in our society is moral anarchy. This means that America would devolve into a society in which people refuse to recognize or live in obedience to any laws, rules, regulations, customs, traditions, courtesies or norms unless they feel like doing so”

“As a committed Christian, I am urgently praying for revival. As a rational social scientist confronted with a warehouse of behavioral and attitudinal data, I am expecting moral anarchy.”

“At the risk of sounding like an alarmist, I believe the Church in America has no more than five years - probably less - to turn itself and this culture around.[ii]

Dr. Barna’s assessment of the Church in America is sobering. My purpose in presenting it is not to speak negatively of the Church, either as an organization or as the body and bride of Christ. Rather, my purpose is to highlight the desperate nature of our need, and to emphasize the fact that only a fresh divine visitation from on high can meet that need. Evangelistic programs are good, but a movement of the Spirit of God to awaken the masses and to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) is better by far. How far? By the difference between 8 weeks and 5 years (see above).

Historically, times of spiritual decline in the world and desperation in the Church are two characteristics of the periods leading up to times of great revival? Why desperation? Perhaps God waits until we have exhausted all of our own strength and means so that the renewal which follows cannot be attributed to human effort and ingenuity. God is jealous and will not share His glory with anyone.

In his history of 19th century revival movements Dr. J. Edwin Orr described

the bleak situation that confronted the Church at the close of the 18th century with words that could have been written in A.D. 2000 to describe the condition of the Church today :

“The new rationalism - like evangelicalism - claimed to be vitally interested in the welfare of man, equally ready to grant him liberty, equality and fraternity. Its greatest lack lay in its inability to satisfy him in the things of the spirit. It offered bread, but forgot that man could not live by bread alone. Its appeals were heeded, and the multitudes turned away from the things of the spirit. Evangelical Christians knew that they faced defeat. They began to pray the prayers of desperate men.”[iii]

One of the signs of desperation in the Church is fasting. Fasting is a sign that the saints of God are praying desperate prayers. It is the purpose of this book on fasting to remind and teach the people of God how to fast, and how to pray the prayers of desperate men in the deep conviction and assurance that such prayers will be kindly heard and graciously answered by our great prayer-hearing God.

I believe it can be said, with little fear of contradiction, that nearly every great national (and international) revival in the history of the Church was both preceded by and accompanied by the earnest prayer and fastings of God’s people. If we are to have renewal in our churches and an awakening among the masses, then I believe it will come only as the people of God approach the Throne of Grace with desperate prayers, fasting and humbling themselves, imploring our great and awesome prayer-hearing God to forgive our sins and to heal our land.

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[i]It is not my intent to deny or minimize the importance of 20th century renewals or revivals. There have been numerous localized movements that could be variously described as revivals or church renewal movements. These include the post-World War 2 Pentecostal Healing Movement (particularly of the 1940s & 50s), the Charismatic Movement of the 1960s & 70s, the Jesus Movement of the 1960s & 70s... But not since the great outpouring of 1904-1907 has a movement of the Spirit of God touched both the heart of the Church and the spiritual life of the nation, resulting in renewal and awakening at home and around the world).

[ii]George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Word Publishing, 1998). You can visit Dr. Barna’s website on the internet at [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) .

[iii]J. Edwn Orr, *The Light of the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 20.