

The Holy Spirit Worked Mightily In Our Midst! By Mary K Crawford

Classic Christian Writings:

For several years there had been an increasing hunger in the hearts of most of us (missionaries of the North China Mission) to see more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our work. We had been taught in our seminaries that if we ever got any souls saved, it would be through the work of the Holy Spirit. We knew the doctrine of the Acts of the Apostles, but we were not experiencing it as we knew we should. After the Chinese Southern Army came in during the year 1928, and so much of our work showed up as “hay and stubble”, most of us were willing to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt us in due season” (1 Peter 5:6).

Revival Born Out Of Prayer

It seems needless to say that the revival that came to Shantung was born out of prayer groups who were asking definitely for revival. Several stations had prayer bands. For years there had been a prayer group of women in Tsinan. As far back as 1925 there was one home where choice friends were invited to dinner and the place cards were prayer pledges, reading, “O Lord, revive Thy church, beginning in me.”

In the summer of 1930 a group of five hungry missionaries went to Summer Conference hunting a new experience in the Lord. Miss L. never stopped stressing in prayer and laying upon the hearts of the others the fact that there were seventy odd “dead churches” in the North China Association. During the summer a definite prayer list was made on which it was agreed to pray for revival in Tsinan, Tsining and Hwanghsien.

In the fall of 1930 Miss Marie Monsen (a Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran missionary) came for meetings in Tsinan. She had the reputation of going about and asking people if they were born again. It was even reported that she asked missionaries themselves, “Have you been born again?” She held meetings at Hwanghsien, and imagine our surprise and, in spite of joy, shock, to hear that one of our own missionaries had been “born again.” The leaders in Tsinan were ready and willing to have the church exposed to the question, “Have you been born again?”

Miss Monsen was a quiet speaker, but any one with any discernment at all could see and feel that she was depending upon the promises of God in a remarkable way, and most especially upon the promise given in the Gospel of John 16:8, “And when He (the Holy Spirit) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” He, Himself, the Holy Spirit, will convict of sin.

The Word of God concerning sin was given in a quiet, unassuming manner, and it became “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

“But was not grace and the cross preached?” you ask. Yes, God’s grace had been preached for years, but so many had accepted God’s grace as an outside coat of whitewash, and had covered their sins in their naturally depraved hearts.

The members of the Tsinan congregation were exposed to what the Bible says concerning definite sins, one sin discussed at each session—not the fact that we are all sinners jumbled into one sermon. For example: After the foundation fact “Ye must be born again” had been well rubbed in, one day was taught the sin of hate and what the Bible says about hate, what hate does to men’s hearts and the freedom that comes when Christ changes the heart and hate is forgiven, then the next session the sin of lies, then the sin of stealing, covetousness, the whole Decalogue, yes, even adultery.

With the boldness and power which only comes from a heart continually cleansed by the Blood of Jesus, what the Bible teaches about each sin was given in a vivid, forceful manner. At the close of each session the speaker took her stand at the door and put the question, “Have you been born again?” to individuals as they met her. The evasion, the doubt, the conviction was terrible. In some places, if there was a back door, the victims under conviction would escape through it. With all the preaching of what the Bible says about sin, there came the most terrible conviction of the righteousness and holiness of God, with the surety of judgment.

One missionary wrote: “We have suddenly been brought to our senses as a result of Miss Monsen’s messages on sin. Our best (?) church members have been brought under deep conviction of sin. They have come weeping and confessing sins which they have kept hidden all these years. So we have been having an ingathering of ‘born again’ ones from among the church members as well as the outsiders.”

She also said that not one of the deacons of the church was clear on the new birth. After the first meeting they and the teachers began to try to teach and preach the not know what they were talking about. Some said that one could not know till death, but the bright, happy faces of those who had been freed convicted them. There began a searching of the Scriptures and a confession of sins that brought assurance.

One deacon was so anxious about his condition that he said that it made no difference whether he had his supper or not—he wanted to bring his Bible and get straight. When asked if he believed all the Bible he had no difficulty there, but when asked if his name was written in the Book of Life, he just said, “No, I am not sure, because I don’t think my sins are open and confessed.”

Why The Confession? Why The Stress On Sin?

Confession was not stressed and public confession was not allowed except in a few extreme cases as mentioned, or where confession concerned the public. But the speaker was resting on the promise in John 16:8: “He, (the Holy Spirit) when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment.” Praying with a personal worker was encouraged because it frees.

In personal interviews only Bible verses were given that the convert might stand on God’s word for assurance. After conviction and confession, the stress was upon the cleansing power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There was never a message given that did not also point the way to the Cross. The messages were mostly given in circles where God’s grace had been preached for years.

Why all the stress on sin? If you had heard some of the sins confessed you would not have to ask. You would have been grieved to have heard the answers which the “best” church members gave to the question, “Have you been born again?” Some of the characteristic answers were: “I’ve preached for years.” “I’ve been baptized.” “I have dreamed so and so.” Or, “One cannot know till death.”

As for whether there was emotionalism, the only answer is “No.” It was a work of deep faith, relying upon the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. In the first revival meetings in Shantung, there was very poor singing, no altar calls, no chance given for public confession, but only the pressing home of the quiet question, “Have you been born again?”

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“In the revival here in Hwanghsien last spring the N. China Baptist Theological Seminary and Bible School came in for a great blessing. Every one of the faculty got a distinct blessing, and nearly every one of them was filled with the Holy Spirit. It has made a new school.

“Evangelistic Work: It is a new day for us. Every month or so all the churches and outstations have had special revivals held by missionaries or special evangelists, and the results have been greater than many previous years put together....One blessed result of the outpouring of the Spirit is that He sends people to ask the Way.

“Warren Memorial Hospital: The hospital was mightily blessed during the spring. Many of the personnel were saved and some filled with the fullness of the Spirit.

“Tsinan: More people have been saved the past year than perhaps in any year in the history of the work here. The churches have never been on such a high plane spiritually as now. Practically all the preachers, teachers, Bible women and missionaries have had a blessed experience in the deeper things of the Holy Spirit, and have more real victory and power than they had ever known before.

“Tsining: Our people have become of one heart and mind in the Lord Jesus as never before....We feel that the year has led us on to new spiritual heights.

“Laichow-Laiyang: This has truly been one of our very best years spent in China....It is absolutely beyond the power of human tongues to express the sheer joy and rapture of this new, marvelous, intimate fellowship into which we were brought with the glorified Redeemer Himself....On that night there began the most wonderful revival ever witnessed in that little church.

“Chefoo: In place of having difficulty in finding teachers who would be willing to suffer the reproach of being

superstitious and unpatriotic, we have had to refuse applicants sufficient to restaff the schools.

“Pingtu: God has been adding daily to His church. The general estimate is that three thousand souls have been saved this year. There have been about nine hundred baptisms, with others waiting. “The Acts of the Holy Spirit” are being re-enacted in a remarkable way right here in our midst”.

Another Missionary Shares

“This revival has come as a result of EARNEST PRAYER, FAITH IN GOD, BIBLE TEACHING and MUCH PREACHING on sin and kindred subjects. Numbers of Christians and churches are being revived; restitution of money is being made; tithes of the Lord held back are being brought forward; sins confessed to God and to those who have been wronged; sick are being healed; devils cast out; men and women, boys and girls are preaching with a power hitherto not known; hundreds are crying for mercy and are being saved. The devil is also at work, but there is great blessing and rejoicing in many places. Missionaries and Christians are marveling at the wonderful works of God.

“During a quiet series of meetings held in Tsinan, the capital of Shantung, people were led to examine their hearts, for the searching message of the leader was: “Are you saved; have you been born again?” This simple question asked publicly and privately throughout North China and Manchuria, has put many to thinking. Church members apparently unsaved--and leaders among them--confessed their sins, and were marvelously saved.

“Then other meetings were held in Tsinan. Each time the people moved closer to the Lord. Joy following the forgiveness of sins, love for Christ and concern for the lost took possession of the saved, and has spread like fire there and elsewhere in that region.

“There were wonderful results among the students of the Shantung Christian University. This fine institution adjoins the Baptist compound at Tsinan, a hundred being saved the past year. Many were led to the Lord by a professor, also blessed in these meetings.

“Missionaries, pastors and others, willing formerly to work only as average Christians, became dissatisfied, put themselves on the altar anew, were filled “with the Spirit, and now see the Lord in a different way. They have a new joy in the Lord and a vigor in their work hitherto not known.

“The revival there, as at other places, began with the leaders. Some missionaries found that they were not without sins, and so did other leaders. These confessed their sins to God, even though this often meant ‘loss of face’ (embarrassment). The result is that many are being saved.

“God’s power came mostly during prayer services, while studying earnestly the Holy Spirit and His work, by men and women who met separately in rooms of the church. People were broken up and wept for their sins. There were then special manifestations of the Spirit’s power and great rejoicing. Nothing like it has been seen in old Tsinan.

“A young man, for years only a nominal Christian, came forward confessing his sins and placed on the table ten dollars which he had wrongfully received. Others also brought money which did not belong to them, and a number brought funds which should have been given to the Lord. A wealthy man who had been only an average Christian, has become a great leader, and so have others. These have now gone out in the city and country churches, some of which were almost dead, to conduct meetings. The churches are being revived and many saved.

“The big gospel tent unused for two years for lack of funds and workers, is now being taken over the country by earnest Christians, these bearing the expense and doing the preaching. The Tsinan Church now pays all its pastor’s salary, supports three theological students in the Seminary, and has made other advances in self-support.”

In The Country Districts

Speaking of the revival in the country districts of the Tsinan field, one of the missionaries said: “Our country work has been revolutionized. Last year we decided to discontinue work at two places and go on to others because the people seemed hardened, but now it is different. The few old Christians there have been revived. They have power and are now doing the preaching themselves. It would all seem a dream did we not realise it is

real.

“A man at another place thought himself saved, but then realized he was lost and prayed in great agony for forgiveness. He is now saved, and also his wife. They have revolutionized their village. Another layman who was saved recently has rented a place to be used as a preaching hall. Numerous Christians have confessed their sins and gotten right with God. Unsaved who scoffed at the gospel are now coming for salvation. What we call the ‘Model Church’ recently built by the people themselves in one of the villages, a result of the revival, is the best building in the town and is crowded. From fifty to sixty are awaiting baptism there.

Written To Supporters In The Homeland

“In the densely populated county of Pingtu, Shantung, where the revival began and the churches have been greatly revived, there are now villages in which every family has one or more saved persons, and in some villages nearly everyone has accepted the Lord. Is this not glorious news to all who love God our Savior? Even during wheat harvest, meetings went right on. Some coming into the meetings at night fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, desiring rather to pray than to rest.

“At one of these villages a missionary dared not stay overnight a few years ago, for local bandits were expected to attack at any time, which meant looting and burning of the village and possible carrying away of missionary and leading Chinese for ransom or death. But since the revival began, that whole community is different. Recently this same missionary slept there safely with doors open and walls down. One could not ask for more peace than now reigns in that region. Forty-odd were baptized in the village this spring.

“Another story is told of a gospel tent which was not being used for lack of funds and workers, now repaired and being used by laymen in Pingtu County, as at Tsinan. An organized band of desperate robbers planned to break up the meetings and take the tent. The brethren were advised to move elsewhere in order to save the tent, but replied, ‘No,’ preferring to pray earnestly for salvation of these robbers.

“The result was that the young bandit leader was stricken blind and a swelling came upon his face. This frightened him greatly. He realized it was from the Lord and came to the tent confessing his sins and asking for prayer. Converted, his sight was restored and the swelling left. Later he went to Pingtu City and joined a Bible class. His life has been wonderfully transformed. This man had heard the gospel in a Christian day school when a child, but resisted and has served the devil rather than God. Those who know him believe that now he will give the remainder of his life to preaching. There have been between two and three thousand conversions in Pingtu county this year. No less than one thousand have been baptized.”

Other Reports

For years there have been programs in China such as “Every one win one”, and “Five years program,” and efforts were made to “put them over.” But now that ordinary Christians, and even boys and girls are being filled with the Spirit, the soul winning program goes on spontaneously. Hundreds of ordinary people have been filled with the Spirit and have turned to soul winning.

When young Chang was saved his mother persecuted him, and at meal times told him to go into the yard and ask his Jesus for food. Later he was filled with the Spirit and became a power. He and a teacher went out to one of the villages and held meetings and there were many saved. He was just a high school student then. One day the missionary heard him in the church praying, earnestly lifting up his family one by one. His father and mother were the hardest ones. They too had found him in the church praying and were too disgusted even to scold him.

His father was an opium eater, and his mother had exhausted herself during twenty-five years of trying to manage him, said she had to sin, lose temper, to keep her husband in order. There was never any money for needs for it all went for opium. His sister had made a bad marriage of a widower who gambled and drank. Altogether the family was hopeless and dark with sin, but young Chang never gave up and now the whole family, father, mother, sisters, brothers, wife, and brother-in-law are all saved.

The mother repented in tears and said, “The worst thing a person can do is to separate parents and child, and that is what I have been trying to do, separate the children of the Heavenly Father from Him!” Young Chang is now in the Seminary at Hwanghsien and the parents have turned to soul winning, the family once “dead in sins, quickened together with Christ.”

Searching the Scriptures

Besides the individual Bible study which has greatly increased, there is a great demand for Bible classes. In one station there is a very living group of people who cannot go to regular Bible school, but can give a few months or weeks to special study, or else as the local people do, go about their regular work of teaching, nursing, trading or whatever walk of life during the day, and attend the night classes. At present this group is led by a Spirit-filled young woman, Seminary graduate. Those who can study during the day, have Bible study in the mornings and go out after souls during the afternoons.

In some cases a little child leads them. In the country a girl, saved and filled with the Spirit, saw a vision of Jesus on the cross for her sins. She became so concerned for the souls of her parents and immediate family, some nominal Christians but not born again, that she cried out as if her heart would break. The missionary gave her the promise of Acts 16:31, and she took it by simple faith. Within a few days her parents and immediate family were all saved.

The revival has gripped all three hospitals. In one in particular there was early a great work of grace, all the nurses in the Women's Hospital saved and filled with the Spirit. Even the scrub women went about their work beaming and singing praises to the Lord. The sick were saved daily. On a visit to this hospital the writer was inspired and convinced of the power from on high which caused an atmosphere of radiant souls freed from sin and rejoicing.

In a number of cases the servants have turned to witnessing. In one station two of the missionaries had special services for the servants. After several had been filled with the Spirit one remarked, "We never thought the fullness of the Spirit was for us! We thought it was only for teachers and preachers." They all started witnessing and one sent for his family to come a long distance from the west in order to get them saved. In one school the old woman cook is filled with the Spirit and spends her days in praise and prayer, but never fails to get the meals on time. She is toothless and not pleasant to the eye, but the joy she has in the Lord has inspired others of higher station. On Saturdays she goes out with the girls to the villages witnessing.

We are reminded of the household of Cornelius: Peter remarked, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons....While Peter spake....the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:34,44).

Other Marks Of Revival

Another marked witness to the depth of the revival is the difference it has made in Communion services. I have heard this from not one missionary but many. Recently the Lord's Supper in the revived churches brings about a season of the memorial of the Cross and what it means in man's relation to God that is almost too sacred to try to describe. One young widow told me, "My eyes were streaming tears the whole time; it was not that I was sad or glad; it was simply that I was broken before the Lord."

In some cases sins are confessed before taking the cup which shows a new consciousness of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, sins such as Sabbath breaking. There is a new sense of the holiness of God, and the necessity for pure hearts "as He is pure." One missionary remarked, "I had never been so blessed in my life as when taking communion with Spirit-filled Chinese brothers and Sisters in Christ"

The most telling and sure evidence that the revival is from God is the evidence of changed lives: opium given up, idols torn down, quarrels of long-standing made up, village hoodlums turned into humble men of prayer and soul winning, many giving up home and land and going out to the lost around.

A Challenge To Each Reader

"Dear reader, are you having your part in revival? Won't you hunt out the promises of revival in the Bible and claim them for the world? There is no greater force in the spiritual Kingdom than prayer. Our young evangelist said, "Prayer is the blood-bought way to the Throne of Grace."

"We are truly thankful for what we have seen and heard of revival here in Shantung, but we are not satisfied. We want more souls saved, more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and in each Christian. We want an all-China revival, to be a part of an all-world revival. We are praying for world revival. Are you praying for world revival?"

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Arranged from The Shantung Revival edited by Mary K. Crawford.