

EDITORIAL: ARRIVE AND REVIVE?

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“You can’t revive until you’ve arrived, and if you’ve truly arrived, you don’t need to revive!” - Billy Joe Daugherty

The early years of my Christian walk, begun in 1980, were spent at Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, under the pastoral leadership of the late Billy Joe Daugherty (may his memory be eternal!). Though my journey has taken some changes in direction since then, I’ll always treasure those early days of my faith journey. Not having been raised in a Christian home, and having received Christ in my sophomore year of college at the University of Oklahoma, I was hungry and eager to learn and grow, and I count myself blessed to have been a part of Pastor Daugherty’s flock in those days. He was a model of genuine Christian love and humility, and even though it has been decades since I attended Victory, to this day I miss him being among us.

Why this reminiscence? Way back in the early 1980s, when Victory was meeting in a remodeled car dealership on south Sheridan Avenue, near the end of one Sunday morning service Pastor Daugherty mentioned that someone had recently asked him why Victory didn’t have revivals? The opening line of this editorial was his response: “You can’t revive until you’ve arrived, and if you’ve truly arrived, you don’t need to revive!” When I became a pastor in the 1990s, I quoted this line several times as justification for not organizing revivals in my rural Oklahoma pastorate.

I must confess, I do not know just how serious Pastor Daugherty was when he spoke this line (though I thought he was pretty serious at the time), nor do I know if he ever changed his views on revivals. But I have found myself recalling that line a lot in recent days.

As I write this editorial, another spontaneous revival has been ongoing at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky. The campus became well-known for its 1970 revival that transformed that campus and indeed had a tremendous influence over the nation, though that was by no means the only such revival in Asbury’s history. Others took place in 1905, 1908, 1921, 1950, 1958, 1992, and 2006. Given that the namesake of the university, Francis Asbury, was a part of Methodist revivalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this year’s revival should surprise no one.

My musings here are not meant to be a critique or analysis of the recent revival. Every report I hear about it is positive, emphasizing the simple, heartfelt, and student-led atmosphere of this move of the Spirit. It has attracted a lot of attention and drawn many pilgrims from around the nation and the world. I recall one alumnus of Oral Roberts University Undergraduate Department of Theology several years ago labeled himself a “God chaser,” traveling around the country to attend every wind of revival that was taking place. There’s just something about the excitement of such moments that makes many faithful people want to be there to experience it. Each person has his or her own reasons for wanting to be there, I’m quite sure.

I have read some reflections on this recent Asbury revival that wonder if there might be something missing in the course of daily Christian discipleship in local churches that makes people yearn for revivals of this nature to take place more frequently. Thus my recollection of Pastor Daugherty’s quip all those years ago. What can local church leaders learn from this most recent entry in the long line of revival movements to help those who have “arrived” not feel the need for these jumpstart moments to “revive” them? To be sure, a permanent state of revivalistic enthusiasm is not sustainable, nor should it be. An early name for the Christian movement was “the Way.” The Christian life is a way of being in the world that encounters and inhabits each moment with the presence of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit in a way appropriate to that moment. It is “going into every person’s world,” to borrow a phrase from Oral Roberts. Maybe the lasting legacy of this Asbury revival, and others like them, is not to provide us a memory of that great move of the Spirit, but to help us cultivate a sustained life in the Spirit that is manifest in love, service, worship, and witness in the world. In other words, is there a way for us to know a life of “arrival” that would make such movements of “revival” unnecessary?

That might be the proverbial “perfect world,” and we all know we don’t live in a perfect world. So these movements of revival are probably necessary times of healing and renewal for the faithful until we arrive into the full measure of the stature of Christ.

I teach a course in basic biblical hermeneutics to undergraduate students at Oral Roberts University. In an early lecture in that course I share a quotation from St. John Chrysostom about the importance of reading the Bible.

It were indeed meet for us not at all to require the aid of the written Word, but to exhibit a life so pure, that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls, and that as these are inscribed with ink, even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, come, let us at any rate embrace the second best course (*Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Homily I).

The golden-mouthed Saint here is saying that in that “perfect world” there would be no need for the Bible, because disciples of Jesus would be so imbued with the grace-filled presence of the Holy Spirit that we would not need a book to tell us how to live. But since that is not our world, we need to avail ourselves of the gracious gift of God in the Holy Scriptures to help us become more fully conformed into the image of Christ. Perhaps that is where we are with revival movements. Because we have not truly arrived, we need to be revived. And we thank God that he condescends to our need to provide us with the grace to continue in the Way.

Perhaps that is the proper way to understand Pastor Daugherty’s statement. We haven’t truly arrived, so we need to be revived on occasion.

In this issue, the first of volume eight of *Spiritus*, we have an assortment of articles that all address life according to the Way. The issue opens with two biblical studies, one for each testament. Bill Lyons looks at Isaiah 61:1–3 as quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18–19 to show that ministry to the oppressed poor is part of Jesus’ Spirit-empowered mission and thus is appropriate for the ongoing ministry of the church. Rebekah Bled employs Dialogical Narrative Analysis to ascertain how Jesus’ naming of Peter and Jesus’ statement to Peter, “On this rock I will build my church,” in the narrative of Peter’s discipleship help prepare Peter for his role as spokesperson on the Day of Pentecost.

Jeremy Wallace follows with a discussion of how philosopher Jacques Maritain’s thought on Traditional Natural Law contributed to the development of the United Nations’ formulation of a Declaration of Universal Human Rights. Wallace demonstrates Maritain’s conviction that universal rights must originate from a natural law grounded in divine reason for it to be obligatory and universal. Jonathan Cantarero examines Pentecostal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and discerns a variety of responses to issues that arose pitting religious freedom against public health. His survey reveals a wide variety of public responses that mirrors the diversity of Pentecostalism on other fronts, leading to the conclusion that more work needs to be done to formulate a more coherent Pentecostal theology of political engagement.

Allan Varghese provides a fascinating study of a key figure in the growth of Pentecostalism in the state of Kerala in India, Annamma Mammen (1911–2002). Noting the rarity of women’s leadership in Kerala Pentecostalism, Varghese argues that Mammen’s primary theological significance lay in her role as a songwriter, disseminating her theology through the lyrics in her songs. Bill Buker concludes the issue with a study of Jesus’ Farewell Discourse (John 13–17), from which he constructs a model of spiritual formation drawing on the imagery of “abiding in the vine” as fulfilling Jesus’ new command for his disciples to love one another. In such a model, the Spirit is granted access and freedom to work within us at a deep level for increased fruitfulness, reflected in healthy relationships and loving communities that last.

One last note, this one on a more cosmetic level. You will notice as you read these articles that we have moved from citations in endnotes to footnotes. In the early volumes of the journal, we were constrained by software considerations to use endnotes. We apparently just got used to using them, because even once the constraints were removed, we continued with endnotes. But Daniel Isgrigg had a moment of insight and suggested using footnotes beginning with volume eight. We think this will prove useful to readers who may wish more immediate gratification in their search for a citation.

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