

DR STUART PIGGIN is Master of Robert Menzies College and Fellow of the School of History, Philosophy and Politics at Macquarie University. He graduated in history from Sydney University and had a PhD from the University of London and a BD from Melbourne. His books include Making Evangelical Missionaries (1984), The St Andrews Seven (1985), Faith of Steel (1984) and The Mt Kembla Disaster, published in 1992 by Oxford University Press. He is currently researching the history of Australian Evangelicalism and the history of and prospects for revival in Australia.

Studies in Australian Christianity
Volume 1

Re-Visioning Australian Colonial Christianity:

New Essays in the Australian Christian Experience 1788-1900

(Editors: Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion
Sydney Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity 1994)

Chapter 8: The History of Revival in Australia

Stuart Piggin

Introduction

The Australian environment was at first so hostile, so inhospitable, to Evangelical Europeans that they could not envisage how it could ever be the scene of revival. A missionary to the aborigines, Lancelot Threlkeld, said in 1828: There is 'no moving on the tops of the mulberry-trees, no shaking of the bones; but all dry, dry, very scattered bones, in the midst of a waste howling wilderness'.¹ The image of the dry bones is a reference to Ezekiel 37, the most celebrated Old Testament passage on revival. The image of the wind in the mulberry trees is a reference to 2 Samuel 5.23-24. It, too, was a favourite image of revival among those who were products of the great revivals which swept Britain and America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The picture is of the heavenly host of the Lord going into battle or of the wind of the Spirit blowing in the treetops. In a revival of religion both things happen: the heavenly host moves against the powers of darkness, and the Holy Spirit blows with Pentecostal power

The Methodist minister, Sir Alan Walker, perhaps Australia's best-known Christian in the second-half of the twentieth century, once had an experience of the Holy Spirit which recalls this image of the wind in the treetops. He was about to commence one of the most successful evangelistic campaigns in Australia, the Mission to the Nation of 1953-4. He was then in his early forties, and, in giving him sole charge of the campaign, the Australian Methodist Church had entrusted a relatively young man with an awesome task:

As the day of the opening came near I was filled with anxiety and fear. I walked into the stillness and gathering darkness of the Australian bush. Beneath the towering gum trees I lay on the ground, on the dry autumn grass, and tried to pray. Presently, in the stillness, an evening breeze stirred. I could hear it rustling in the leaves of the gum trees above me. Suddenly I was far from Australia. There came into my mind the picture of Jesus speaking to Nicodemus in Jerusalem. I could see them, in a room, as Jesus tried to explain the mystery of the 'new birth', the mystery of how the Spirit comes into a man's life. I imagined a wind sprung up there too. Jesus walked to the window. The breeze could be heard in the [olive] trees,

outside. Jesus quietly said to Nicodemus: 'The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit'.

As I thought of it all there came to my mind, there in that Australian bush, a simple sentence. The wind is in the gum trees! The wind is in the gum trees! It was to me a promise. I knew that God would bless the Mission to the Nation. We would hear the wind of the Spirit blowing across Australia.²

The desire for revival has been a relatively frequent characteristic of Australian Christianity, especially, as this experience of Alan Walker's suggests, of Australian Methodism. The phenomenon of revival has not been as common as the desire for it. In fact one of the many stereotypes about Australian Christianity is that there has never been a religious revival in Australia. Such a stereotype is typical of the stereotypes about Australian religion in its negativity. In this lecture I want to give you four positive propositions about the history of revivals in Australia. We need to have a few myths to allow the demythologisers a target. I wish them happy hunting. My four 'myths', or propositions, are as follows:

1. Revivals have been relatively frequent occurrences in Australian history;
2. Although revivals in Australia usually have been localised, their genuineness may be demonstrated from surviving sources of evidence;
3. Past Revivals in Australia have raised the moral standards of whole communities;
4. Revival has come as a form of social salvation to the marginalised, minority and underprivileged groups in our society.

The critical faculty rushes in to put another side to each of these propositions, but too many unseen facts and little-rehearsed experiences get trampled in the rush. We have had so many people speaking to us of late about revival in Australia that we thought we would devote our next conference to it.³

Before I launch in to my four propositions, just a couple of prolegomena. First, revival is a good subject to study at an interdisciplinary conference. Apart from the historical aspect, revivals raise significant theological, sociological, and psychological questions. Sometimes revivals have been on such a scale that they assume cultural significance. In serious histories of Australian religion there has yet been little attention paid to the impact of revival on the formation of Australian culture. This paper begins to explore the place of revival in Australia's social and cultural history. Second, let me offer the following definition of a revival. Theologically, revival is a work of God which consists of an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon large numbers of people at the same time. Empirically, it is *occasionally* preceded by an expectation that God is about to do something exceptional; it is *usually* preceded by an extraordinary unity and prayerfulness among Christians; and it is *always* accompanied by the revitalisation of the Church, the conversion of large numbers of unbelievers, and the diminution of sinful practices in the community. In the light of this, we are in a position to deal with each of our four propositions about the history of revivals in Australia.

Revivals have been relatively frequent.

J Edwin Orr, late Professor at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, argues that three waves of evangelical awakenings have swept

across Australia: in 1859-60 there were revivals linked with the missions of William Taylor and Thomas Spurgeon; there was an 'Australasian awakening' between 1889 and 1912 associated with the missions of John MacNeil, Reuben Torrey and Charles Alexander, Florence Young, and J Wilbur Chapman; and that of the 1950s, featuring the crusades of Orr himself, Alan Walker, Oral Roberts and Billy Graham.⁴ At first sight this claim looks unlikely, but it should not be dismissed without a careful review of the extensive evidence bearing on his claim.

For a start we have unearthed data on about 70 revivals in nineteenth century Australia.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>State</i>
1834	Hobart	TAS
1835	Sydney	NSW
1836	Hobart	TAS
1839	Albion Park	NSW
	Launceston	TAS
1840-41	Parramatta	NSW
	Windsor and Castlereagh	NSW
	Bathurst	NSW
1843	Melbourne	VIC
1844		WA
1847	Bathurst	NSW
1851	Cobbety Paddock	NSW
	Bourke Street	NSW
1852/3	Rylestone	NSW
1853	Bendigo	VIC
1858	Bathurst	NSW
	Manning River	NSW
1859	Great Brighton	VIC
	Little Brighton	VIC
	Moorabin	VIC
	Melbourne	VIC
	Ballarat	VIC
	Goulburn	NSW
1860	Bendigo	VIC
	Geelong	VIC
	Castlemaine	VIC
	Manning River	NSW
	Goulburn	NSW
1860-62	Maitland	NSW
1860	Burra	SA
	Geelong	VIC
1862	Moonta	SA
	Adelaide	SA
1864	Hobart	TAS
	Kiama	NSW
1869	St. Arnaud	VIC
1870	Manning	NSW
1871	Goulburn	NSW
	Brisbane	QLD
1873	Bendigo	VIC
	Geelong	VIC
	Warwick	QLD
1874-5	Moonta	SA
	Walleroo	SA

1875	Ballarat East	VIC
1875-6	Kangaroo Flat	VIC
	Forest Street	VIC
	Inglewood	VIC
	Bendigo	VIC
	Ballarat	VIC
1877	Toowoomba	QLD
	Bulli	NSW
	Wagga Wagga	NSW
	Kentishbury	TAS
1879	Taree	NSW
	Manning River	NSW
1880	Taree	NSW
	Cobar	NSW
	Glebe	NSW
	Marrickville	NSW
1881	Ballarat	VIC
	Marburg	QLD
1886	Armidale	NSW
1887	Geelong West	VIC
1891	Launceston	TAS
	Geelong	VIC
1894	Maitland	NSW
	Waverley	NSW
	Bendigo	VIC
	Port Pirie	SA
	Broken Hill	NSW
	Moonta	SA

Then the new century began with the largest evangelistic campaigns in Australia's history. R A Torrey arrived in Melbourne (April 1902) following successful evangelistic tours in Japan and China. The Melbourne Mission was preceded by prayer, work, and unity. Every house in Melbourne was visited twice:

Within a few weeks the Spirit of God laid hold of the Christians, and there was a conscious assurance that the city and its suburbs of nearly five thousand population was going to be moved as never before... Whole families were brought to Christ, as well as infidels, publicans, and actresses... A policeman averred that since the mission opened in his district, he and his fellow constables had practically nothing to do. Theatrical managers declared that if the mission continued they would have to close their establishments.

...Do you wonder? God's people were in earnest, the Holy Spirit was given His way and sway, and believers greeted each other with: 'The big revival has begun. Glory to God.'⁵

Attendances totalled a quarter of a million each week when the population of the whole of Victoria was only one million. Meanwhile, in 1902-3 a tent mission crusade throughout 200 country towns of New South Wales reported 25,000 inquirers.

Missions between the wars reflected the trauma of war – there were healing missions, and adventist and pre-millennial missions. Occasionally these missions saw little revivings. In the 1920s there were rather spectacular revivals associated with the rise of Australian pentecostalism. In 1925 a revival broke out in the Melbourne suburb

of Sunshine. Hundreds came under conviction of sin, were filled by the Great Baptizer, and created such excitement that people came from all over Australia to receive blessing. Out of this was formed the Pentecostal Church of Australia, which was to flow in 1936 into the Assemblies of God movement.

The 1930s, the decade of the African revival, witnessed scenes of considerable spiritual vitality in Melbourne. Out of the convergence of the activist evangelicalism of C H Nash, H P Smith, the Melbourne Bible Institute, Upwey, the Bible Union, and other lay-led evangelical societies, grew the League of Youth, which began in Melbourne in 1928.⁶ Max Warren, a leading missionary statesman of the twentieth century, said: 'From the League of Youth in Australia and New Zealand has come a stream of recruits for missionary service which has no parallel in the church life of those countries'.⁷ All this resulted in a mini-revival in the 1930s, which was the apogee of Keswick teaching. Howard Mowll was overheard to remark that the weakness of the Diocese of Sydney in its commitment to Keswick spirituality compared with Melbourne was a great concern and disappointment.⁸

In Melbourne, too, the Methodist Local Preachers Branch was very vigorous and had an impact on evangelical life in Australia. Teams of these local preachers went all over Australia and New Zealand. For many years it held a Holiness Convention each King's Birthday weekend in Melbourne. It was conducted entirely by laymen. A Baptist minister, George Hall, who trained in America under R A Torrey and Campbell Morgan, and who knew evangelical life in the USA intimately, said the Methodist Local Preachers Melbourne Branch Holiness Convention was the greatest spiritual force he had ever experienced.⁹

The 1930s saw scenes of revival in Queensland, especially connected with the pentecostal branch of Methodism. There were revivals at Woombye and Toowoomba, and just below the border in New South Wales at Kingscliff. One person used in this work was Booth Clibborn, grandson of William Booth. Other effective evangelists were Gavin Hamilton, Hyman Appleman, and Garry Love. Rodney Minniecon, an aboriginal evangelist who claims to have witnessed a dozen revivals, was a product of the same movement. It is clear that the nourishing of the evangelical movement which came out of this strand is very much more significant than we have hitherto recognised.

Post-World War II Methodism was particularly vigorous, becoming the third largest religious denomination ahead of Presbyterianism. Its congregations grew as did its youth work, especially the Crusaders and Christian Endeavour movements. Alan Walker's 'Mission to the Nation' evangelistic crusade did impressive work. The fifties was a decade of remarkably fruitful evangelistic parish missions and conventions. There was a movement of revival, associated with Norman Grubb, out of which the World Evangelization Crusade College was established in Launceston in 1956.¹⁰ The 1950s culminated in the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade, when Australia came closest to a general awakening – one quarter of the entire population attended the crusades and 1.25 percent accepted Billy's invitation and came forward to receive Christ.

There were revivals associated with the name of Geoff Bingham in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, some remarkable occasions associated with the Jesus movement, particularly among young people in Melbourne, and, of course, revival broke among aborigines on Elcho Island in April 1979.

Australian Revivals: local but genuine

Consider the revival at Kiama in 1864 under the ministry of the Rev Thomas Angwin, a Methodist. His sermons revealed a knowledge of ‘the deep things of God’, and congregations and prayer meetings grew in number, swelled by Presbyterians and Anglicans who sought a richer fare than they were receiving in their own churches. On ‘one of the later Sundays’ in July the revival came:

The arrows were sharp in the hands of the King’s messenger that night. They were straightly aimed, and shot with all the intensity of a love baptised with the compassion of the Christ... The next night there was almost equally as large a congregation at the prayer meeting. Then began what the good old people called ‘a breaking down’. The communion rail was crowded with seekers. Some hoar-headed men were amongst them; a storekeeper in the town, notorious for his fearful temper and furious conduct when under its influence, some gentle-spirited women; a number of senior lads from the Sunday schools... Night after night for the rest of the week and into the middle of the next, the meetings continued... It was a revival which gave workers to the Church, teachers to the Sunday School, local preachers to the circuit plan and ultimately several ministers to the Australian Methodist Church.¹¹

Revival in Australian Methodism in the second half of the nineteenth century is mainly associated with two outstanding Methodist ministers, John Watsford,¹² the first Australian-born Methodist clergyman, and W G Taylor.¹³ Strong emotion accompanied Watsford’s ministry wherever he proclaimed his Wesleyan message of entire sanctification and the duty of evangelism. Indeed, Watsford’s experience of revival began before he started training for the ministry. The 1840 revival at Parramatta had its roots in a prayer meeting convened by two local preachers who, together with John Watsford, resolved to pray three times a day for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Watsford explained what happened:

At the end of the fourth week, on Sunday evening, the Rev. William Walker preached a powerful sermon. After the service the people flocked to the prayer-meeting, till the schoolroom was filled. My two friends were there, one on each side of me, and I knew they had hold of God. We could hear sighs and suppressed sobs all around us. The old minister of the Circuit, who had conducted the meeting, was concluding with the benediction, ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God’ – here he stopped, and sobbed aloud. When he could speak he called out, ‘Brother Watsford, pray’. I prayed, and oh! the power of God that came upon the people, who were overwhelmed by it in every part of the room! And what a cry for mercy! It was heard by the passers-by in the street, some of whom came running in to see what was the matter, and were smitten down at the door in great distress. The clock of a neighbouring church struck twelve before we could leave the meeting. How many were saved I cannot tell. Day after day and week after week the work went on, and many were converted.¹⁴

In Ballarat in the 1860s, in Parramatta, in the inner city suburbs of Surry Hills and Balmain, and in country towns such as Windsor and Goulburn, Watsford was used to ignite the fires of revival. Of a service in the Bourke Street Methodist church, Sydney, in 1860, Watsford reported:

To a congregation which packed the building I preached from ‘Quench not the Spirit’. What a time we had. The whole assembly was mightily moved,

the power was overwhelming; many fell to the floor in agony, and there was a loud cry for mercy. The police came rushing in to see what was the matter; but there was nothing for them to do. It was impossible to tell how many penitents came forward; there must have been over two hundred. The large schoolroom was completely filled with anxious inquirers.¹⁵

In August 1969 a mission entitled 'Free Indeed' was held at Wudinna, 250 kilometres west of Port Augusta on the Eyre peninsula in South Australia. The meetings were addressed by Geoff Bingham in the little Methodist church there, in which Dene Metheringham was minister. A large turn-out at the opening meeting startled the organisers and they moved to a hall, but even there many hearers had to stand outside and listen through the open windows. The addresses were Bible messages on the bondage of man to sin and Satan and the powers of darkness and of flesh and the world, and the true freedom which Christ gives from such powers. The atmosphere was one of heightened expectancy, the listening was intent, and many attended who were not thought to be at all interested in Christian things. There was a sense of the presence of God brooding over the whole geographical area. A farmer who had not been coming to the meetings, although his wife was, was out on his tractor ploughing, when great conviction came upon him and he got down in the dust and gave his life to the Lord. Another unconverted local farmer was very reluctant to attend the meetings. He resisted long enough to arrive late, and was therefore placed right up the front under the preacher's nose. However he later reported,

In the wisdom of God that's where you get a good look at the conviction of the messenger! I was convinced that he knew God. If he could know God like that then maybe I could as well.¹⁶

The reality of God's presence in the meeting overwhelmed him, and he found himself unable to resist the truth of one of the songs they sang:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days, all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, and I shall feast at the table set for me.¹⁷

A woman believed she was healed of a kidney complaint in one of the meetings, and tests at the hospital the next day showed that there was no longer any problem with the kidney. Another woman, characterised by her husband as a chain-smoking hard-swearing harridan, gave up smoking, swearing, and anger. Many were converted and healings were interspersed throughout the mission. Many nominals, pew-sitters for years, were brought to their knees in tears and repentance, and received forgiveness, new life and unimaginable joy. There was also great opposition. One night Bingham could hear strange noises going on in the meeting. He could see no lips moving, so concluded it was a demonic presence, the likes of which he had witnessed in Pakistan. So he said, 'Satan, in Christ's name we rebuke you, and command you to leave this meeting'. There was a loud bang. The people present were astonished, but no-one spoke a word and silence reigned, which is the only appropriate response to the presence of the living God. The sense of wonderment came to characterise all the meetings. Crowds of people would just sit silently in wonder for half an hour without moving or saying a word. Trevor Faggotter, a student at Flinders University, described the last meetings like this:

The last meeting on the Sunday afternoon was quite incredible. There were well over 400 at the meeting. People came from as far away as Ceduna and

Cummins. Many have said it was like the first Pentecost, but without the tongues. Of the final night, Bingham said 'like a great rain of beauty and silence and joy, it just descended on the whole congregation. It was quite remarkable. I'd have called it a very gentle but a very powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I can remember the joy in the worship and the praise that night.'¹⁸

Revivals in Australia and community moral standards.

The 1902-3 tent meeting crusade in rural New South Wales, which resulted in the conversion of 25,000, was nowhere more wonderful in its manifestation than in the coal-mining villages of the Illawarra. There, some 2735 (or some 15 percent) of the region's population, professed conversion. The fire of the Spirit fell on each coal-mining village in a work described as 'gloriously monotonous': at Mt Kembla, 131 professed conversions; at Mt Keira, 214; Balgownie, 183; Bulli, 292; Helensburgh, 234 and so on. At Mt Kembla 'an intense emotion with an evident assent to the Preacher's burning words were imprinted on every face and feature'.¹⁹

But what about the impact on the moral tone of the community? At Mt Kembla, the Worker's Club, which was a key drinking spot, lost many of its members. At Balgownie, the local dancing salon lost its grip on the young. At Mt Keira swearing disappeared and the pit ponies in the mines stopped work as they could no longer understand their instructions, a phenomenon also reported in the Welsh revival three years later. Asked what was the evidence to 'the man in the street' that the revival was genuine, the Rev D O'Donnell replied that the question was a very proper one, since there should be 'works meet for repentance'. He catalogued four evidences:

First, [the revival led to] the payment of debts. Tradesmen report the settlement of accounts they had long regarded as bad. Second pure language... It is said that in the Mount Keira pit an oath has scarcely been heard since the Mission... Third, a fair day's work. The proprietor of one of the mines told me that the biggest day's output of coal they ever had, followed the Mission. Fourth, attendance at Church. All the churches report greatly increased congregations and increase in the membership.²⁰

The great revivals of the past have always resulted in a decline in national illegality and immorality. The same can be said of the Billy Graham Crusades in Australia in 1959. The number of convictions for all crimes committed in Australia doubled between 1920 and 1950 and then doubled again between 1950 and 1959 when the population increased by only one-quarter. Then, in 1960, 1961, and 1962, the number of convictions remained fairly constant, resuming its dramatic upward trend in the middle and late 1960s. Something which happened at the same time as the Billy Graham Crusades slowed, even stopped, the further decline into criminality of community behaviour.

When the illegitimate birth-rate is also investigated, as a rough index to non-criminal community standards, one is at first struck by the gigantic change for the worse which overtook Australian society in the later 1950s and 1960s. Ex-nuptial births as a proportion of total births had fallen in the 1940s and early 1950s to an historic low of about 3.9 per hundred. They then began to climb fiercely in the middle and late 1950s, heralding the permissive 1960s. In the period 1955 to 1965, this index rose every year to almost double the 1954 figure, *but the year it rose slowest* (.06 percent) was in 1960. The illegitimate children not conceived in 1959 were not born in 1960! Again, one can

argue that something happened in Australia at the same time as the Billy Graham Crusade which almost stopped the rot: not from existing, but from becoming more rotten.

Turning to alcohol consumption, the Bureau of Statistics supplied the following figures.

Annual Per Capita Consumption of Beer in Australia in Litres

1958.59	111.01
1968.69	113.5
1978.79	133.2

This also reveals the same deteriorating trends as we have seen in all the other social indicators. It is therefore striking to learn that the figure for 1960-61 is 100.1, that is 10% lower than the 1958-59 figure, an unexpected and dramatic fall. Something happened in Australia at about the same time as the Billy Graham Crusades to cause a 10 percent reduction in the consumption of beer.²¹

Revival is a form of social salvation to the socially-marginalised.

Today's Australian Aboriginal people, who number about 150,000, are experiencing revival, with some of their own movements emerging. This is an exciting development because new expressions of the Christian faith (sects and denominations) are said to be virtually non-existent in Australian history. This ongoing revival among aboriginals began in the Uniting Church in Elcho Island (now Galinwin'ku) in March 1979. This revival, too, was preceded with an expectation that God was about to visit this people in a special way:

... people were starting to feel that something strange was happening, through dreams, through being woken up at night and seeing something wonderful. Some people were just going and praying for sick people and those people were being healed. They were starting to wonder.²² Then Kevin Rrurrambu, an effective evangelist, and his wife had a vision of many people each with a light above his head. They shared the vision with some friends who praised God and enjoyed an unprecedented happiness. A few days later about thirty of these people gathered with their minister, Terry Djininyini, who thanked those few who had been praying for renewal and he said that he too had been praying for revival. He describes what happened next:

I then asked the group to hold each other's hands and I began to pray for the people and the church, that God would pour out His Holy Spirit to bring healing and renewal to the hearts of men and women, and to the children. Suddenly we began to feel God's Spirit moving in our hearts and the whole form of prayer-life suddenly changed and everybody began to pray in spirit and in harmony. And there was a great noise going on in the room and we began to ask one another what was going on. Some of us said that God had now visited us and once again established His kingdom among His people.²³

Nightly meetings were now held with upwards of 200 in attendance. Few on the island were left untouched. Worship became more spontaneous and meaningful. Backsliders and fence-sitters fell on their knees and implored those who had been liberated to pray for them. The 'free' ministered effectively to those around them.

Not only was the worship sweeter, but – and this is my reason for mentioning this revival – there was also a change in the tone of the community: less drunkenness, petrol sniffing, and fighting; greater conscientiousness in work; an increased boldness in speaking out against social injustices. Males took over leadership of the Church from women, and of the singing in worship, restoring the traditional Aboriginal pattern:

It was not only in the camp but in the church and the community as a whole, in fact the relationships with the church, the council, with the departments, the foreman, the bosses, and the workmen, the family and the village life with wives, husbands and children, were effected. It just swept through as though God had turned on a tap and was cleansing out the power of darkness. All the time we could hear singing; people would go past talking about it and at night we could go to sleep hearing people still singing Christian choruses. It was just like Pentecost.²⁴

Using the facilities of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship, the Elcho Islanders spread their good news all over Arnhem Land, and north and north-western Australia. ‘When we read the Scriptures,’ explained Terry Djininyini, ‘of Peter and others when they received the power of the Spirit, they didn’t stop, they went out. This was revealed to us and we started to minister to other communities.’²⁵ At the Anglican Roper River Mission (Ngukurr) which had been reduced to a social disaster area by the granting of a liquor licence, the revival came as a form of social salvation. Sister Edna Brooker exclaimed:

New life has come to Ngukurr... half the population say they have turned to Christ and the transformation from alcohol, petrol sniffing and immorality is very wonderful.²⁶

A Wiluna crime dropped to zero and the local publican had to put on free beer to entice people back into his pub. Again, revival came as a form of social salvation to a needy people.

From this brief survey of Australian revivals, a number of questions may be posed. First, since revival was mainly a Methodist phenomenon, what was it about nineteenth-century Methodism which so fostered revival? Arnold Hunt, while maintaining the cool conclusion that the history of Methodism in Australia is one of ‘many missions, no revivals’, nevertheless argues that the Methodists came closest to revival because they were the denomination most confident that the Church of Christ must grow and that God was at work in their movement. They were the sort of movement which they were confident God would bless.

- i. They were a successful missionary organisation,
- ii. They had a message which they believed was pure gospel,
- iii. They were a spiritual rather than a bureaucratic or liturgical movement
- iv. They were a warm fellowship in which laity as well as clergy were expected to evangelise.

Second, the relationship between revival and that offshoot of Methodism, pentecostalism, needs to be teased out. On the one hand, research reveals that the nourishing of the evangelical movement which came out of the pentecost strand is very much more significant than we mainliners have hitherto recognised. Many prominent Australian religious leaders in mainstream denominations have had charismatic

experiences. Revival and pentecostalism should not be too readily identified, however. Australian revivals appear to have stemmed mainly from the holiness movement, which came to characterise evangelicalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. But most holiness teachers in Australia rejected the tongues movement which was then creating so much interest in Australia. In so doing they attached to the main holiness movement in Britain.²⁷ Another difference between Pentecostalism and revival is that in the latter, the role of the Holy Spirit is not always emphasised. More commonly, revivals emphasise the Son and even the Father. Pentecostalism speaks more of revival than any other denomination of Christians, but this probably flows from an attempt to take over a part of the Christian tradition which might not always fit perfectly.

Third, like many other features of Australian culture, revivals have often been imported from overseas. There were clerical and lay immigrants who had experienced revival in their home countries before coming to Australia. In 1838, August Kavel, for example, arrived in South Australia with a group of German Lutheran settlers. Kavel had been pastor of Klemzig in Prussia from 1826, and there his Pietistic preaching had been used to promote a spiritual awakening. People came from parishes many miles away to be saved and the local ale houses were deserted.

The Welsh revival of 1859 was also exported to Australia. This was done partly through the pages of a newspaper, *The Revival*, established by R C Morgan and published in London. Starting with a run of 8,000 copies, demand for it rocketed to 80,000 within months. It is said to have brought into a single focus many of the scattered rays of information about the Holy Spirit's operations all over the globe. The focus was sufficient to ignite further fires in yet other parts of the globe, for some of its readers started to send it to their friends abroad, including Australia. There workingmen read of amazing scenes of revival in what must have seemed the most unlikely places. It was reported, for example, of a lead mine in Wales in 1858:

Many prayer meetings were held underground at Frongoch Mine. Not an oath was heard within the confines of the mine. At the name of Jesus every knee bowed of 'things under the earth'. One morning a prayer meeting was commenced as usual on reaching their work at six. Heaven penetrated into the pit and earth was forgotten. When the worshippers awoke from that sacred trance, they found it was two o'clock in the afternoon.²⁸

An Australian journal, the *Christian Pleader*, also published news of revivals overseas. In its editorial, 'Call to Prayer', it said:

It will be a happy day for Sydney and New South Wales when a similar influence visits us here.²⁹

A serialised account of the revival in Ireland followed, and, the next year, a lecture on revival was published as a supplement.³⁰ The result? Combined prayer meetings, known as Union Prayer meetings, flourished throughout all the colonies without exception.³¹ They were held on Fridays in Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches and were so well supported that the *Christian Pleader* enthused:

It is said that in some of the places of worship in Sydney, the prayer meetings have become thronged with an attendance so unwontedly large as to indicate a movement prefatory to some great design of God.³²

In the revivals in the Victorian goldfields, miners from Cornwall and Yorkshire remembered the revivals of earlier years and joined with the preachers in earnestly beseeching the divine outpouring. These revivals, it is said, 'followed the pattern of the Irish Revival, with prayer meetings every night in the churches, with all the phenomena of the Ulster movement, except prostrations'.³³ The 1902 revivals in Australia were fired by news of the success of the Simultaneous Mission in England. Evangelicals worked and prayed for a similar evangelistic effort in Australia.³⁴ Sydney's Simultaneous Mission was held in 1901. Up to 200 open-air meetings were held every night for a fortnight. Several thousand professed conversion.³⁵ The results were surpassed by the Melbourne Simultaneous Mission of 1902 where missionary, Walter Geil, was joined by Reuben Torrey.

Fourth, it is evident that the involvement of women in Australian revivals will repay attention. In 1907, for example, a female evangelist, the Rev R L Warheim of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Denver, visited Australia. She preached entire sanctification. Invited to conduct a mission in a small church in Wyee, New South Wales, she so impressed one Elliot John Rien that he arranged a Holiness Convention at his property the following Easter – hence the birth of the 'Bethshan Holiness Mission'.³⁶ When the history of Australian revivalism is written it will include the contribution of some very remarkable women indeed. The Jewish Christian, Emilia Baeyertz, addressed very large evangelistic gatherings in the 1870s and 1880s in the Australian colonies and went on to acquire an international fame. Florence Young was the energetic founder of the South Seas Evangelical Mission.³⁷ Janet Lancaster was the founder of Australia's first Pentecostal assembly. The extraordinary Canadian-born, Los Angeles-based Aimee Semple McPherson caused a sensation when she visited Australia in the 1920s, and the pugnacious Irish Protestant evangelism of Monica Farrell continued to bring hundreds to the Lord after the Second World War.³⁸

Fifth, comparison and contrast is always a useful way of identifying a phenomenon more clearly. It is particularly instructive to compare Australian and American evangelicalism.³⁹ American Christianity is of British derivation transformed several times by great awakenings. Australian Christianity is also of British derivation, but largely untransformed by revivals, although more frequently touched by them than we may have thought hitherto. This may help to explain why Australian Christianity appears to be so unAustralian and why a much lower percentage of Australians than Americans attend churches. The high American statistics for church going and other indicators of religiosity probably reflect the fact that, due to their heritage of revivalism, Americans, when confronted with a survey or poll, feel obligated to claim Christian beliefs in excess of their actual belief. Because they feel guilty about their actual belief they hope that by stating what they should believe they will be moved closer to that ideal. Australians, unwashed by repeated waves of revivalism, are not so motivated by guilt in matters of religion. Apathy, the habit of the unrevived mind, is the prevailing Australian mood.

In America, then, popular or majority religion has been nurtured in the hot-house of revivalism. Indeed, revivalism has been described as 'an Americanisation of revival'.⁴⁰ American history is a succession of religious revivals and declensions with corresponding oscillations in the American sense of national identity and destiny. In Australia, popular religion has not often been penetrated by revival. There have been great movements of revival in Australian history, but these have not transformed the majority. In America, revival has been more than once a psychic earthquake. In Australia, in religion as in geology, we have experienced only a few tremors.

The revivalism which we have had has been very American: it was American in that it was pre-millennial, Arminian, and pietistic. The first and the last meant that it was not likely to contribute greatly to our national life, since both have to do with the private expectations of the chosen people of God. Indeed George Shaw, the biographer of Bishop Broughton, has speculated that Protestants turned to revivalism at the end of the nineteenth century in Australian history because they were so frustrated about being used by politicians who refused to give them what they wanted in terms of social legislation.

This revival experience of Australians was clearly far less intense than the American experience. There has been no burned-over district as experienced in western New York State in the Second Great Awakening. This helps to explain the absence of indigenous religious movements in Australia, such as the Churches of Christ, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Mormons, who were products of intense revivalism. It is true that the time of greatest religious excitement in Australia (say 1870-1910) coincided with our most creative time politically and socially. The conditions which produce the one, produce the other. But revival was not sufficiently full-blown in Australia to enable the Australian people to envisage a different world as it did in pre-revolutionary America.

It should also be recognised that the revivalism of the last four decades of the nineteenth century was very different to the 1740s revival in Britain and America. It was a less exacting religion than the undiluted Calvinism of Edwards or the astringent emphasis on holiness and discipline in the Arminianism of Wesley. Long doctrinal sermons and catechising gave way to bright, simple, sentimental preaching. It was bound, together with rationalistic anti-supernaturalism compounded with Darwinism, to eat into the foundations of the strong reformed formulations of the faith stemming from the reformation and the seventeenth century, as represented most clearly by the Westminster Confession. The child of the one, fundamentalism, and the child of the other, liberalism, were themselves to produce sickly offspring: theological illiteracy and indifference. We have more to gain, methinks, at least in the Church, from studying the revivals of Jonathan Edwards than the revivalism of Finney and his heirs.⁴¹

DR STUART PIGGIN is Master of Robert Menzies College and Fellow of the School of History, Philosophy and Politics at Macquarie University. He graduated in history from Sydney University and had a PhD from the University of London and a BD from Melbourne. His books include *Making Evangelical Missionaries* (1984), *The St Andrews Seven* (1985), *Faith of Steel* (1984) and *The Mt Kembla Disaster*, published in 1992 by Oxford University Press. He is currently researching the history of Australian Evangelicalism and the history of and prospects for revival in Australia.

1 ¹ *A Statement chiefly relating to the Formation and Abandonment of a Mission to the Aborigines of New*
2 *South Wales, 1828, 29*
3 A Walker, *Breakthrough: Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1969, 53f
4 The Conference 'Revival and Revivalism' was held at Robert Menzies College on 14 and 15 July 1994. A
5 book based on papers given at the conference will be published in 1995
6 J Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas*, Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, 1976
7 W Warren, 'The Genesis of the Australian Revival,' *The Missionary Review of the World*, 26 March 1903,
8 202-3
9 David Renshaw to Margaret Lamb, 4 October 1990, CSAC Archives, Robert Menzies College
10 G Cutler, *The Torch*, Lilydale, 1976, 7
11 Len Abbott to Margaret Lamb, 11 October 1990, CSAC Archives, Robert Menzies College
12 Leonard Buck to Margaret Lamb, 14 December 1990, CSAC Archives, Robert Menzies College
13 Arthur L Davidson, *High Adventure with God*, Living Books for All, Manila, [1974], ch 27
14 J E Carruthers, *Memories of an Australian Ministry*, 1922, 32
15 John Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs*, London, 1900
16 W G Taylor, *The Life-story of an Australian Evangelist*, London, 1920
17 Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs*, 22
18 Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs*, 123f
19 Trevor Faggetter, 'An Episode of Christian Life at Wudinna', student essay in the Australian Religious
20 History course, Flinders University, 1992
21 *Ibid*
22 *Ibid*
23 Stuart Piggin, *Faith of Steel: A History of the Christian Churches in Illawarra, Australia*, University of
24 Wollongong, Wollongong, 1984, 136
25 James Colwell, *Illustrated History of Methodism*, Sydney, 1904, 630
26 Stuart Piggin, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959 – Was it Revival?', *Lucas*, October 1989, 2-33
27 Terry Djinyinini, cited in Max Hart, *A Story of Fire: Aboriginal Christianity*, New Creation Publications,
28 Blackwood, 1988, 4950
29 Jeanette Boyd, 'The Arnhem Land Revival of 1979: An Australian Aboriginal Religious Movement',
30 unpublished paper, October 1986, 5
31 Hart, *A Story of Fire*, 50-51
32 Hart, *A Story of Fire*, 51
33 Cited in Boyd, *The Arnhem Land Revival of 1979*
34 E T Rien, *A Challenge to Holiness*, Wyee, nd, 53-7
35 Quoted in Eifon Evans, *Revival comes to Wales: The Story of the 1859 Revival in Wales*, Evangelical Press
36 of Wales, Bryntirion, 1959, third edition, 1986, 56
37 *Christian Pleader*; 10 September 1959
38 *Christian Pleader*; 15 and 22 October 1959, 18 February 1860
39 *Christian Pleader*; January 1861; *Australian Evangelist*, 22 August 1860, 18 July 1861
40 *Christian Pleader*; 21 January 1860
41 J Edwin Orr, 'Evangelical Revival in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century', lecture, Pasadena, 1968
W E Geil, *Ocean and Isle*, Melbourne, 1902
Geil, *Ocean and isle*, 167f
E T Rien, *A Challenge to holiness*, Wyee, nd; Arthur Deane, *The Contribution of the New Evangelical*
Movements of the late Nineteenth Century to Evangelical Enterprise in Australia, 1870-1920, MA thesis, Univ of
Sydney, 1983, 37,38
Stuart Piggin, *Helpmeets and Heroines: Women and the History of Australian Evangelicalism*, University of
Wollongong, Wollongong, 1988
On these and other prominent Evangelical women, see Brian Dickey (ed), *The Australian Dictionary of*
Evangelical Biography, published for the Evangelical History Association of Australia, Flinders University, 1994
Stuart Piggin, 'The American and British Contributions to Evangelicalism in Australia,' ch 14 of Mark A
Noll, David W Bebbington, George A Rawlyk, (eds), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular*
Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990, Oxford University Press, New York,
1994, 290-309
W W Sweet, *Revivalism in America, Gloucester, Mass.*, 1965, quoted in J D Bollen, *Religion in Australian*
Society: An Historian's View, Leigh College Lectures, Sydney, 1973, 24
This is the thesis of Iain H Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American*
Evangelicalism, 1750-1858, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1994