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THE NEXT CAMPUS REVIVAL

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A PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION

The purpose of this paper is to explore what another spiritual awakening on university campuses could look like. Considering the teaching of scripture, the record of history, and the trajectory of current trends, this article will encourage campus ministry workers, students, and professors to pray more fervently, expectantly, and longingly for God to pour out an unusual work of his Spirit.



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WHITE PAPERS

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A Prayerful Consideration

By Randy Newman

Campus ministry thrills and chills. On some days, you can't help but rejoice at seeing students come to faith, commit themselves to holiness, or devote their lives to the Kingdom of God. On other days, well...it's hard to see signs of the supernatural.

However, we can find encouragement from hearing how God has worked in the past. Specifically, hearing about times of refreshment or "revivals" has lifted the eyes and spirits of many in ministry over the years.

The purpose of this paper is to explore what another spiritual awakening on university campuses could look like. Considering the teaching of scripture, the record of history, and the trajectory of current trends, I hope to encourage campus ministry workers, students, and professors to pray more fervently, expectantly, and longingly for God to pour out an unusual work of his spirit.

Specifically, I hope to show that the next awakening on college campuses:

- must be shaped by scripture
- will fit with prior history
- will include extraordinary prayer
- may be met with opposition and problems
- should encompass more than individual salvation decisions

- will involve a wide array of races, nationality, and ethnicity.

Before beginning, some clarification of terminology is in order. J. Edwin Orr observed that "the study of revival and revivalism has often been befuddled in American research, as well as in pious literature, by a sad display of semantic imprecision." Some applied the word revival to just about any effort to evangelize, regardless of effect. They believed revival could be programmed, scheduled, and manufactured. Orr recommends that mass evangelism simply be called just that – "mass evangelism" – and the term "revival" should be reserved for an unusual work of God's spirit upon his people to make them responsive as well as upon lost people to bring them to salvation. Revivals should also include substantial effect upon the society around the church.

I. The Next Awakening on College Campuses Must Be Shaped by Scripture.

We begin our brief consideration of the Bible's teaching about revival with the observation that, at certain points in time, God chose to work in ways that stood out as extraordinary or unusual. One thinks of the rediscovery of God's word under the reign of Josiah (see 2 Kings 22) and similar dynamics under the leadership of Hezekiah (see 2 Chron 29-31). Even if we

grant (rightly so) that these outpourings were primarily to correct disobedience, lethargy, or rebellious sin, the point remains that these workings of the spirit were not routine.

While seemingly not as dramatic, this pattern continues into New Testament times. Church historian Richard Lovelace contends, "...both the cyclical experience of Israel and the experience of continuous renewal in Acts are coherent with one another, and that both patterns are latent in the entire biblical witness." He further explains, "Thus spiritual awakenings comprise both punctiliar moments in history in which the Spirit is outpoured and also succeeding periods, often decades long, in which the spiritual advantage so gained is implemented in the destruction of the works of darkness, the purification of the church and the ingathering of the elect."

Scripture also offers specific instances where people prayed for God to work in unusual ways. Habakkuk cried out, "LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2). The sons of Korah asked, "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" (Ps 85:6). And Peter spoke of "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19) that could come after repentance. The oft-quoted 2 Chron 7:14 also has relevance for any people in need of renewal, forgiveness, and healing. Notwithstanding the observation that many have thoughtlessly applied this verse to America with little consideration for the differences between ancient Israel and our modern state, the principle remains that special circumstances call for special solutions from a God who works in both the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Perhaps a parallel can shed light on this discussion. The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells someone at the point in time of their conversion. "Having believed" they are "sealed," as Ephesians 1:13 puts it. Later in that same epistle, Paul implores people to "be filled" with that same Spirit. The implication, grammatically and logically, is that filling is both a completed act and an ongoing reality. We were filled with the spirit when we were sealed with the spirit. We continue to be filled, on a moment-by-moment basis, as we ask the Lord to do that gracious work of renewal. Thus, we stand on solid Biblical ground to employ Jonathan Edwards' vocabulary such as "unusual" and "surprising" to describe

the work of God we pray for, long for, and even boldly expect. We are wise to reject Charles Finney's claims that "true Christianity is the work of humanity. It is something we do." Finney believed revival was the ordinary, everyday experience of the church and was "not a miracle." Finney boldly exclaimed, "revival stops whenever the church thinks it will." One searches in vain for any support from scripture to these kinds of assertions.

The challenge, then, for those who want the scriptures to shape their ministries, is to pray for the unusual while working diligently at the usual. We must blend a contented gratitude with dissatisfied petitions. We "devote ourselves to prayer," resisting the temptations to quit while also remembering to be "watchful and thankful" (see Col 4:2). We do not disdain the everyday activities of teaching, praying, evangelizing, discipling, along with administrative details. But we do not settle for the everyday as if a fuller expression of the kingdom isn't on the way.





The challenge, then, for those who want the scriptures to shape their ministries, is to pray for the unusual while working diligently at the usual.

II. The Next Awakening on College Campuses Will Fit with Prior History.

Here is one of the most important application points from this paper: We must hear and tell the great stories of what God has done in the past. Just as the LORD told Joshua to put up twelve stones to act as memory prompters of God's works of deliverance (see Joshua 4), we need to weave into our messages, Bible studies, and discipleship appointments illustrations of what God chose to do in days not that long ago.

Consider just one story as an example. All Christians probably know of Billy Graham. They know he held big crusades. Some may even know he held some pretty big gatherings in New York City. But the historical details are worthy of delineation.

After several successful crusades in other cities, Graham and his leadership team decided to hold a series of meetings in New York City. They reserved Madison Square Garden for six weeks, beginning in late May of 1957. One should pause to ask why a venue such as Madison Square Garden was empty *every night* for six weeks but such was the case. The first night drew a crowd of close to 20,000 and that size remained the norm for the next six weeks. The New York Times even published the text of Graham's sermons – often on the front page!

It can be tempting to think that times were different then and New York was more likely to respond to a Christian gathering than they are today. To be sure, our entire country is more religiously diverse than it was in 1957 and New York City probably led the way. But the difference between then and now may not be as dramatic as one might think.

Graham recorded, "One reason New York would be so challenging was its incredible diversity, with some sixty major ethnic groups in its population – more Italians than Rome, more Irish than Dublin, more Germans than Berlin, more Puerto Ricans than San Juan. At least one out of every ten Jews in the world lived there as well. Protestants were a distinct minority, making up only 7.5 percent of the population; many of them were only nominally committed to the Christian faith. According to our findings before the Crusade, 58 percent of New Yorkers claimed no religious identity at all."

When the Crusade's original timetable began to come to its pre-determined end in mid-July, Graham and his team held a "final" rally at Yankee Stadium. A crowd of 100,000 people crammed into the house that Ruth built, in 93 degree heat, with another 20,000 outside because the fire marshals wouldn't allow any more inside. So they decided to extend the Crusade for as long as Madison Square Garden would allow them to meet there, which was for another six weeks until Labor Day.

"So many people were coming forward that we found we were not equipped to process the number of decision cards we were getting," Graham remembers. Many more details about the summer of 1957 need to be read, remembered, and recounted. A whole new generation needs to know of the remarkable, unprecedented (unless you go all the way back to Pentecost!), and surprising work of God. When Graham and his team finally drew the Crusade to a close, on Labor



Day, they held an outdoor event at Times Square where an estimated crowd of 60,000 to 70,000 New Yorkers came to hear a North Carolina dairy farmer’s son wave his Bible in the air and tell them they must be born again.

Countless other stories need to be told as well, especially ones about revivals on college campuses. J. Edwin Orr’s numerous books on revival need to occupy prominent places on our bookshelves. His *Campus Aflame* focuses on university revivals. His other books are well documented and even-handed in their historical diligence. Most recently, Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge have compiled “revival stories that stretch and stir” in their publication, *A God-Sized Vision*. Their accounts include contemporary events and cover a wide range of geographic scope.

III. The Next Awakening on College Campuses Will Include Extraordinary Prayer.

The Bible seems to indicate that one of the most common temptations, when it comes to prayer, is to quit. Paul tells us to “devote ourselves” to it (Col 4:2) and to do so “without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). He described prayer as a kind of “wrestling” (Col 4:12). Jesus told a parable to show his disciples “that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). The internal struggles displayed in the Psalms (e.g. “earnestly I seek you” – Ps 63:1) also lend support to the notion that prayer is a struggle.

Perhaps this is because the essence of prayer involves physical, time-bound creatures imploring an invisible, eternal God

to work in time to alter eternity. Even without an adversary whispering lies about the pointlessness of such activity, the best of us might wonder why we should continue to engage in such a seemingly useless discipline.

Another common pitfall is to simply include prayer as a minor component in our ministry activities as a request for divine approval on what we have already decided we can accomplish, given our current resources. There is little of the supernatural in this kind of prayer.

But prayer as it is portrayed and prescribed in scripture taps a supernatural resource that defies human comprehension. Prayer has been used by God to bring about inexplicable advances of his kingdom. Given that Jesus included “thy kingdom come” as one of the core essential requests we should make, it is no wonder that prayer is a wonder! We need to believe God for bigger results than we could produce simply by putting into practice excellent marketing, thorough strategies, and carefully tuned performances.

There is ordinary prayer – regularly scheduled prayer meetings, daily quiet times, and routine insertions to our daily activities. These are good and worthwhile and must not be demeaned.

But there is also a kind of extraordinary prayer when God’s people cry out for something dramatic to change the course of history. There have been and there needs to be seasons when people

do things that probably could not be sustained for long periods of time but nevertheless, for a season, become part of the life of a church, a campus, a city, or larger group of God’s people.

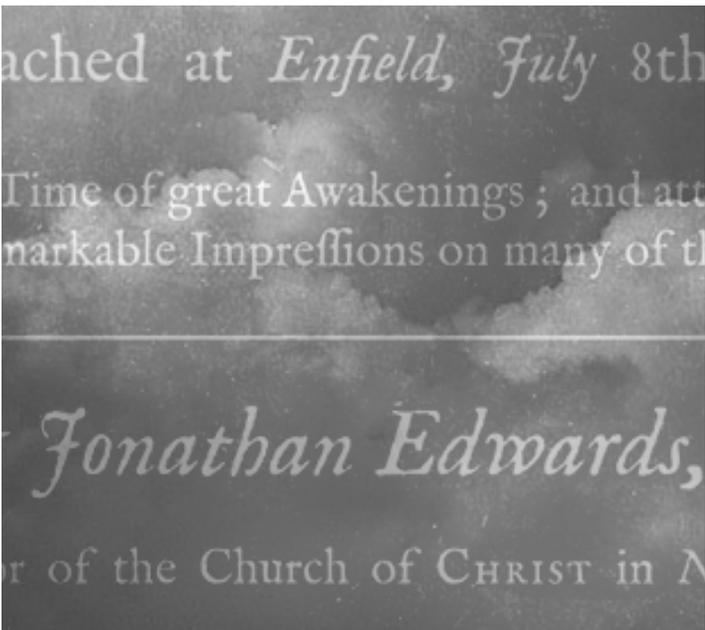
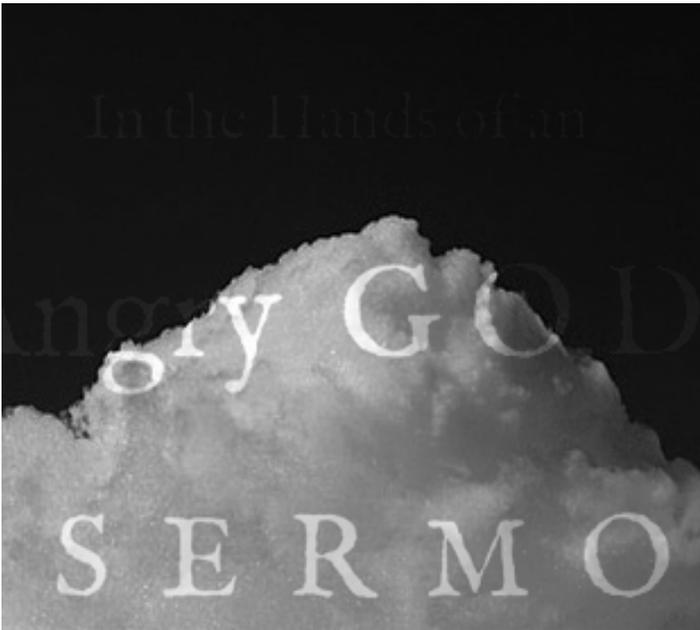
Jonathan Edwards called for just such a movement of prayer in an essay whose title conveys much of the entire piece. The shorter version of the title is “An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time.” Note especially the use of the word “extraordinary.”

Extraordinary prayer should not only be unusual in its frequency or intensity. It should also be extraordinary in the scope of what it requests. Is there any reason why we should not pray for thousands of students on our campuses to come to faith, for hundreds of professors to find the Savior, for entire moods of our schools to shift from skepticism to honest inquiry, from exaltation of self to exploration of the divine, from pushing God to the periphery to seeing him as the center? Are there factors, which should limit our petitions for the reversal of the sexual revolution, the turning back of homosexual exaltations, or the revival of morals, manners, and humility in academia?

J. Edwin Orr tells a story of the Welsh revival when economic slowdown occurred in coal mines because workers

stopped using profanity. It is theorized that mules, which were used to pull coal wagons, could not understand the newly converted workers because of the radical change in their vocabularies. It was only after these beasts of burden learned the language of Canaan that the coal wagons started flowing smoothly again. (You can listen to Orr’s lectures online at: <http://www.jedwinorr.com/audio.htm>). Much of the academic world would suffer slowdowns in the production of journal articles, dissertations, and research, if the notion that absolute truth actually did exist. But once the tide shifted, the rescue of the academy could follow.





Again, it would be tempting to think that things are worse on campus than ever before and that revival is less likely today than in the past. But this would be far from accurate. Consider Lyman Beecher's account of life at Yale at the end of the 18th century:

“The college church was almost extinct

Most of the students were skeptical, and rowdies were plenty. Wine and liquors were kept in many rooms; intemperance, profanity, gambling and licentiousness were common. I hardly know how I escaped. That was the day of the infidelity of the Tom Paine school....most of the class before me were infidels and called each other Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, etc. etc.” Hansen and Woodbridge go on to recount no less than three revivals that followed these dark days, so that the Christian population at Yale went from almost non-existent to over one third the entire student body. Outpourings of prayer preceded each of these campus awakenings.

Like those times and all times that our Lord categorized as a mixing of both wheat and weeds, we conclude with Edwards, “Thus, although it be a day of great apostasy and provocation, yet it is apparently a day of the wonderful works of God; wonders of power and mercy; which may well lead us to think on those two places in Scripture: ‘It is time for thee, LORD, to work, for they have made void thy law; (Ps. 119:126) and ‘that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare’ (Ps. 75:1).”

IV. The Next Awakening on College Campuses May Be Met with Opposition and Problems.

Most, if not all, revivals have included opposition, counter attacks from the devil, false caricatures of true revival, and numerous other problems. This should neither surprise nor deter us. There are some who will want to discount a work of God simply because it is not doctrinally, ethically, or methodologically pure. We should not succumb to such pressure. The gospel's essence, that of a holy God regenerating and redeeming fallen, rebellious creatures, implies that any advance of the kingdom will be met with flaws and attacks.



“Though revival is supernatural, it is not magical. It does not solve all the church’s problems. In fact, revival can create new ones”

The so-called “First Great Awakening” came with “tensions between the generations,” violent reactions by people who seemed to be attacked by the devil, including at least one suicide, and overestimations of genuine conversions. Historian George Marsden notes, “Real indications of the Holy Spirit’s presence remained, but other evidence suggested that many apparent conversions were the devil’s counterfeits.”

Problems have found their way into many other revivals. The so-called “Second Great Awakening,” which had Charles Finney at center stage, came with bizarre physical components like shakes, jerks, and loud wailings. Should we conclude, as some have, that such signs invalidate any recorded conversions or growth in church memberships, or outpourings of conviction of sin? Such a response, I believe, is an overreaction.

Thus, one of Edwards’ most important works, for those seeking revival in any age, is his *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. Careful discernment may be more critical in days when people report awakenings than at other times. Edwards warns against two easily made mistakes – equating mere emotion or demonic counterfeits for true revival and failing to embrace valid displays of extraordinary works of God.

It is safe to conclude, along with Hansen and Woodbridge, “Though revival is supernatural, it is not magical. It does not solve all the church’s problems. In fact, revival can create new ones as Satan counterattacks God’s people.”

V. The Next Awakening on College Campuses Should Encompass More Than Individual Salvation Decisions.

The scope and purpose of this paper does not allow for an extensive discussion about the tragic split between evangelism and practical service (what is sometimes called social-justice). Suffice it to say, in my opinion, such a split never should have occurred.

Much of it can be traced to the fundamentalist-modernist split of the early twentieth century. When modernists denied basic

fundamentals of the faith (e.g. the inspiration of scripture, the virgin birth, etc.), they replaced evangelism with social-justice efforts. By contrast, fundamentalists emphasized people’s lost condition apart from Christ and seemed to say that verbal evangelism was all the church needed to do. In the end, both groups suffered, presenting a truncated gospel. (It must be added, however, that fundamentalists did not completely exclude social justice, as they are often unfairly portrayed

Before that tragic period of time, when revivals came, social change accompanied evangelistic fruit. The sequence generally went like this: 1) God revived the church. 2) The church proclaimed a message of salvation. 3) People’s lives were changed. 4) Christians included care for other needs besides spiritual ones in their attempts to connect with, display the gospel to, and proclaim salvation to all. The results brought about changes regarding slavery, poor treatment of women and children, gratuitous violence, economic inequality, and many other social ills.

For example, Rodney Stark’s *The Rise of Christianity* recounts ways the early church helped women as part of their mission. Both abortion and infanticide were standard practice in a society that exalted men over women. Abortion allowed men to have sex with women without the need to take responsibility for resulting pregnancies. Infanticide insured that more male babies than female ones would live. But Christians refused to go along with such barbaric behavior and helped women have babies and keep them.

Jonathan Edwards believed a split between evangelism and care for social concerns was unhealthy, just as he believed a split between intellectual and affective engagements with God was harmful. Richard Lovelace quotes Edwards’ *Religious Affections* to support his hope for healing this cleft. “Some men shew a love to others as to their outward man, they are liberal



of their worldly substance, and often give to the poor; but have no love to, or concern for the souls of men. Others pretend a great love to men's souls, that are not compassionate and charitable towards their bodies. The making a great show of love, pity, and distress for souls, costs 'em nothing; but in order to shew mercy to men's bodies, they must part with money out of their pockets. But a true Christian love to our brethren, extends both to their souls and bodies."

Perhaps an illustration of a doctor may help those who insist that we only need to concentrate on evangelism. Their argument often comes down to this: What difference does it make if we help people with social projects if it just makes them more comfortable on their way to hell?

A Christian doctor (who believes that all people need to trust

in Christ for eternal salvation) still helps people with their medical needs. She would prescribe medication or perform surgery to improve her patient's quality of life. She would never say, "Well, what difference does it make if I write this prescription? You're still going to die. What I can do for you is show you this booklet that tells you how you can go to heaven."

Perhaps that doctor would want to engage in evangelistic activities that might be suitable for her office and practice (e.g. have evangelistic literature in her waiting room, provide a presentation of the gospel as part of her website or introductory literature, etc). But it would be unloving, to say the least, if she were to withhold medical aid simply because we're all going to die eventually.

The full picture of a doctor's calling does include the reality

that her work improves the quality of people's lives, adds years to their earthly existence (thus giving them more opportunity to respond to the gospel), and reflects the Biblical worldview that affirms that God created us as whole persons with both eternal souls and physical bodies.

The debate about how the two aspects of the church's ministry, evangelism and social action, fit together must be left for another discussion. For this paper, suffice it to say, they do belong together and deserve careful attention and deep thought.

I must differ with Lovelace and others who that, "authentic spiritual renewal inevitably results in social and cultural transformation." I think the word "inevitably" is problematic. It simply is not true, historically, that increased numbers of converts automatically changed cultures. James Davison Hunter presents a convincing and condemning case to disabuse us of that notion. If cultures or societies are going to be changed by Christians, it will occur "through dense networks of elites operating in common purpose within institutions at the high-prestige centers of cultural production."



Unfortunately, Hunter is not as good at prescribing alternatives as he is at critiquing past efforts. His much-acclaimed book *To Change the World* is rather anticlimactic as it concludes that we should be a "faithful presence within" our surrounding culture. After almost 300 pages of attack, he offers less than 10 pages of constructive suggestions of what "faithful presence" might actually look like. One has to be just a little bit fearful, if one remembers that the social-gospel liberals of the 1920s used that same wording ("faithful presence") and they also failed to change the world. In fact, a strong case could be made that *they were changed by* the surrounding non-Christian world.

Thus the task remains for us to formulate strategies that live out our salt and light callings to both proclaim the gospel verbally and incarnate love for our neighbors practically. A few seminal suggestions are worth considering at this point:

- 1) We should stop using the word "inevitable" and stop assuming that cultural or societal change will automatically flow from evangelistic fruit. We should give as careful thought, prayer, and planning to those efforts as we give to evangelistic ones.
- 2) We should recognize different gifts for different aspects of church life and kingdom advancement. Some people are more gifted towards verbal proclamation of the gospel message. Others have gifts that work better in service ministries. It would seem unlikely that the same person or group of people would have both sets of gifts. Thus, we should stop

heaping guilt upon those who are less verbally gifted because they do not do as much evangelism as others.

3) Following on that, we need to emphasize, through our teaching and actions, the concept of the body of Christ working together for multifaceted ends.

4) We must be very careful not to pit these two aspects of kingdom building (evangelistic proclamation and social-justice-culture-change) against each other, as if one was more important than the other. It is high time to start thinking of them as two wings of the same airplane and eschew such damaging clichés like, "Deeds, Not Creeds" (which is itself, by the way, a creed!).

5) On the other hand, we must be extremely careful to protect the uniqueness of the gospel message and hold up its verbal proclamation as distinct from social action. While I believe both are important, it is confusing (at best) and potentially damaging to speak of feeding the hungry, for example, as "the gospel." It is not. It may flow from, build credibility for, and live out the gospel. But it is not the gospel. It is best, therefore, to think of both verbal proclamation and social action under the banner of "loving our neighbor." It would not be loving to only preach the gospel to someone if they have obvious physical needs. Nor would it be loving to feed them food but fail to tell them the good news of salvation.

But what does it mean to "love our neighbor" on a modern American



university campus? What first comes to people’s minds about “meeting physical needs” hardly seems fitting. Handing out free bottles of water does not meet a real need for most students. Telling students we *just* want to meet their needs and that’s why we’re handing them a bottle of water may be seen as deceptive, insincere, naïve, or foolish.

Instead, we need to wrestle with what are the most dire needs of students today and seek to meet them. One proposal is that students are starving for relational integrity. They need friends who will be accepting and loyal. They need relationships with those of the opposite sex that are not manipulative or sexually exploitive. One could even make the case, with little risk of exaggeration, that students are “starving” for this kind of “food.” Their thirst for sexual healing, purity, and sanity may be as severe as the woman Jesus met at the well. (see John 4).

VI. The Next Awakening on College Campuses Will Involve a Wide Array of Races, Nationality, and Ethnicity.

Philip Jenkins, a professor of history and religious studies, wrote, “...we are at a moment as epochal as the Reformation itself...Christianity as a whole is both growing and mutating in ways that observers in the West tend not to see.” This shift encompasses geographic as well as moral changes. Geographically, Jenkins notes, “In the global South (the areas that we often think of primarily as the Third World) huge and growing Christian populations—currently 480 million

in Latin America, 360 million in Africa, and 313 million in Asia, compared with 260 million in North America—now make up what the Catholic scholar Walbert Buhlmann has called the Third Church, a form of Christianity as distinct as Protestantism or Orthodoxy, and one that is likely to become dominant in the faith.”

The shift is expected to continue at an increasing rate because, as just one of several examples could show: “The growth in Africa has been relentless. In 1900 Africa had just 10 million Christians out of a continental population of 107 million—about nine percent. Today the Christian total stands at 360 million out of 784 million, or 46 percent. And that percentage is likely to continue rising, because Christian African countries have some of the world’s most dramatic rates of population growth. Meanwhile, the advanced industrial countries are experiencing a dramatic birth dearth.”

Morally speaking, these growing southern majorities are significantly more conservative than their western counterparts. Attitudes toward cohabitation, abortion, and homosexuality stand in stark contrast to the now almost universally tolerated norms of America and Western Europe.

What does this mean for potential revivals on American college campuses?

First, we should expect our campuses to become increasingly international. The world has always come to American campuses but we should expect this pattern to continue and



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increase dramatically.

Second, we should expect that a significant percentage of these incoming, international students will already be Christian. Their brand of Christianity will most likely be theologically conservative and more experientially charismatic.

Third, we should anticipate that those who are not Christian may be strongly committed to other religions. It could be that nominal, non-religious, or secular students may become the new minorities.

Fourth, we must approach outreach on campus with a multi-pronged strategy that addresses different students in different ways. It would be naïve to think that an entire student body would all respond to just one style of outreach, one speaker, one piece of literature, one website, etc. The campus, like the rest of the world, does not care to homogenize.

Fifth, a welcome change in students' views of different religions may be around the corner. We've all heard the vacuous claim that all religions are the same. "They're just different roads that go up the same mountain," people parrot to us, repeating what they've been told thousands of times. That claim, as baseless and simplistic as it always has been, may start getting less and less support. It is here that we can show them the uniqueness of Jesus, the contrast between grace and works, the superiority of the gospel over religiosity, and the inclusive nature of the cross that calls all to repent and saves all who do. In the days ahead, by God's grace, we may see the revival we've longed for and now pray for. May it be!

The Author

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