

TIMOR REVIVAL: A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE GREAT TWENTIETH-CENTURY REVIVAL IN INDONESIA

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1. Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, churches in Indonesia enjoyed a rapid growth. Indonesia Bible Society reported that between 1963 and 1966, the adherents to Protestantism increased dramatically from five million to seven millions.¹ In the following years it was reported that there were still many people who converted to Protestantism. Even though the political situation might have a significant contribution to this rapid growth,² it cannot be denied that there were spiritual awakenings scattered all over Indonesia, such as in Java, Toraja (south Sulawesi), Minahasa (north Sulawesi), Borneo, Toba, Simalungun, and Karo Batak (north Sumatra), Moluccas, West Papua, and Timor.³

Timor by far is the most well-known but controversial revival in Indonesia.⁴ According to Orr, “the problem was not a lack of information

¹ J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), p. 178.

² In 1965, Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party) tried to take over the official Government, but failed. The following episode was the most terrible thing in the history of Indonesia. Thousands suspected communists were slaughtered by Muslims. Later there was an official pressure on all Indonesian citizens to have an active religious affiliation. This prompted many people embracing Christian faith in many parts of Indonesia.

³ See Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, pp. 180-87.

⁴ Colin C. Whitaker, *Great Revivals* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1984) enlists Timor revival as one of the greatest revivals in the twentieth century; R. E. Davies, *I Will Pour out My Spirit* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), p. 213 mentions Timor revival as one of the later twentieth-century revivals in Asia. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 188 considers Timor revival as

but a surfeit of it.”⁵ Critics may pose questions about the reliability of some miracles being reported, but the authenticity of the revival with its signs and wonders as well as its abiding fruit cannot be doubted. Even George W. Peters, a dispensational theologian and a professor of world mission at Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote, “Some of the most prominent revivals outside of the West have occurred in Indonesia...and more recently the Timor revival. Certainly God has been at work in this land; His manifestations are many and remarkable.”⁶

It is the purpose of this paper to examine data which are available regarding Timor revival and present them as accurately as possible. This requires choosing and weighing carefully available sources. Thus, more scholarly works (such as, dissertations, theses, journals, books—both in English and Bahasa Indonesia), rather than popular works, will be consulted.

However, the purpose of this paper does not stop at the academic level—that is, a purely historical report on Timor revival. It has also a pragmatic purpose, *viz.* to remind my fellow-believers (especially those who live in Indonesia) that the living God who came down into the stream of human life and history in Bible times is still active through the Holy Spirit today.

2. The Location of the Revival

2.1 Indonesia

For many years Indonesia has been known as the “the emerald of the equator” because of 13,677 “green islands” lying between 6 degree north and 11 degree south crossroads of the continents of Asia and Australia. This strategic position has greatly influenced its cultural, social and economic life.⁷

“the most controversial and sensational movement in Indonesia in the latter half of the decade of 1960s.”

⁵ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 188.

⁶ George W. Peters, *Indonesia Revival: Focus on Timor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 9.

⁷ See Shirley Hew, *Cultures of the World: Indonesia* (Singapore: Times Book, 1990), p. 7.

The most important islands in Indonesia are Java, Sumatra, Borneo (Kalimantan), Sulawesi and West Papua. Beside those, there is a group of islands, about 930 miles east of the island of Java, known as the Lesser Sunda Islands. One of the islands, which makes up the Lesser Sunda Islands, is Timor.

2.2 Timor

2.2.1 Geography

Timor has an area of 13,071 square miles and is divided into West Timor (one of the provinces of Republic Indonesia), 5,764 square miles and East Timor (Timor Loro Sae), 7,307 miles. In the Western part, about 60 % of the total area is “rugged hills, high plateaus cut by deep valleys, and loose soiled terrain mostly covered in grass.”⁸

2.2.2 Climate

In Timor dry season is longer than wet season. Heavy rains fall only between November and February, and the rest of the year belongs to the dry season. During the dry season, rivers and wells dry up, soils crack, and wind blows all the day along, creating a barren land and uncomfortable atmosphere. While the average temperature is 27, 6 C, the maximum temperature can reach at 33 C.

2.2.3 People

There are two major groups of people living in Timor. The first is Suku Dawan or the Atoni. They are short with dark brown skin and frizzy hair; the second is Suku Belu or Tetun. Besides these two major groups of people, there are minorities such as, Suku Helong, Suku Buna, and Suku Kari. Each group has its own dialect.⁹

2.2.4 Religion and Beliefs

Unlike other parts of Indonesia, Islam has not been so dominant in Timor. Most of people adhere to Christianity (Protestantism or Catholicism) as their official religion. However, it cannot be denied that the indigenous elements, viz. belief in spirits (animism), belief in the

⁸ Bill Dalton, *Indonesia Handbook: Special Eclipse Supplement* (Chico, CA: Moon Publishing, 1983), p. 228.

⁹ See I. H. Doko, *Timor Pulau Gunung Fatuleu “Batu Keramat”* [Timor: A Sacred Rocky Island] (Jakarta: PN Balai Pustaka, 1982), pp. 98-104.

power of sacred objects (dynamism), and animal worship (totemism) have still played significant roles in their daily lives.¹⁰

2.2.5 General History

Formerly Timor was divided between the Dutch in the West (Timor Barat) and the Portuguese in the East (Timor Timur). When Indonesia became independent in 1945, automatically the whole portion of the Western Island became a part of the Republic of Indonesia while the eastern part remained with the Portuguese. When the Portuguese Governor, Lemos Pieres, left East Timor and went to the small island, called Atauro in August 25, 1975, there had been a power struggle among several groups of people (especially between Uniao Democratica Timorese [UDT] and Frente Revelocionaria de Timor-Leste Independente [Fretellin]) resulting in a terrible bloodbath in East Timor. In the midst of political turmoil, Indonesia took over the government and included East Timor as the 27th province of the Indonesian Republic in July 17, 1976.¹¹ However, a referendum given by B. J. Habibie, the third President of the Indonesian Republic on August 30, 1999, resulted in the formal separation of East Timor from Indonesia.

3. A Brief Overview of the History of Christianity in Timor

The history of the Christian church in Timor begin in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese Dominicans brought Catholicism to Timor from their centers in Goa (India) and Malaka. The first recorded baptism took place in 1556 under the ministry of a Dominican priest, Antonio Taviera. He baptized 5000 people in Timor and many other people in Larantuka Flores and its neighborhood. By the end of the sixteenth century, about 25.000 people had been baptized. At that time Solor in Flores became the center of Catholicism.¹²

¹⁰ Doko, *Timor Pulau Gunung Fatuleu*, pp. 104-107.

¹¹ "Timor Timur," in *Profil Propinsi Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Bhakti Wawasan Nusantara, 1992).

¹² Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 1: Sejarah Gereja di Indonesia 1500-1860* [The Story of a Yeast 1: The History of Church in Indonesia 1500-1860] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987), p. 87; John Mansford Prior, "Towards a New Evangelization among the Nusa Tenggara Peoples of Eastern Indonesia," *Asia Journal of Theology* 10:2 (1996), pp. 291-315 (296).

In 1613, the Dutch took over Solor from the hand of Portuguese and then restricted the Catholic mission to East Timor and Larantuka and Sikha in Flores. The reason behind the restriction is political. To be a Catholic seemed to be pro-Portuguese and anti-Dutch. Even though the Dutch sent two missionaries to work in Timor as early as 1614, there was no remarkable achievement before 1740. In 1670 two local princes were converted and baptized. However, the number of Protestant Christians was still small (50-80 people). In 1719 the number had increased to 460. When the Portuguese planned to invade Kupang in 1749, a pastor who was ministering in that place uttered a prophetic voice. He quoted Judges 7:9 and encouraged the whole people in Kupang (including the unbelievers) to drive out their fear and believe in God. The result was tremendous. A “miracle” happened! The Portuguese failed to take over Kupang. That event brought much respect to the Dutch and their “religion”—Protestantism, resulting in a remarkable growth of Protestantism in Timor and other areas in Nusa Tenggara. In 1753, it was reported that there were 1300 Protestant Christians in Timor and thousands became Christians in Rote.¹³

Unfortunately, the Dutch did not seriously take care of this remarkable growth. Kupang and its neighborhood were left without a pastor until the beginning of eighteenth century. A regular ministry in Timor was carried on only since 1819 under the direction of R. le Bruijn, a supposed-Mollucan missionary sent by Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap (NZG). However, this ministry ceased when NZG decided to withdraw all of its missionaries from Timor in 1850.¹⁴ When the last NZG’ missionary left Timor, there were about 2000 Christians in Timor. Since then, they were officially ministered to by pastors from Indisch Kerk (Dutch Reformed State Church).¹⁵

From 1910 on, people came to the church in large numbers from interior regions of Timor, Rote, and Sawu. This happened because there was a significant change in evangelistic methods. Before 1910, Dutch missionaries carried on most evangelistic activities. They were rather unsuccessful because they were using Malayan, an official language that

¹³ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 1*, pp. 91-93; Prior, “Towards a New Evangelization,” p. 296.

¹⁴ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 1*, pp. 183-85.

¹⁵ Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita 2: Sejarah Gereja di Indonesia 1860-an sekarang* [The Story of a Yeast 2: The History of Church in Indonesia 1860-Present] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1989), p. 97.

was not understood very well by most Timorese. After 1910, many Timorese began to evangelize their people. They utilized cultural elements, such as visiting and praying for the sick and festivals, as well as the local dialect to communicate the gospel.¹⁶

However, those who baptized and ministered among them were still using Malayan as the official language. This made the Timorese churches suffer because most of the people spoke Timorese, the mother tongue language. Also, the Bible was only available in Malayan.¹⁷ All of these made a powerful and effective communication of the gospel in Timor impossible.

The new era came, when Dr. Pieter Middlekoop (1895-1973), a Dutch missionary, arrived in Timor in 1922. Middlekoop believed that one of the crucial keys to an effective communication of the gospel in Timor possible was to transmit the gospel in the Timorese language. Such conviction then led him to take up the study of the Timorese language (*Dawan*). After mastering the language, Middlekoop produced a considerable amount of literature in the Timorese language: Stories from the Book of Genesis (published in 1938), *Si Knino Unu ma Muni* (a collection of Psalms and hymns—published in 1948), and the New Testament (published in 1948). The Old Testament translation was completed but has not yet been published.¹⁸ The fruit of his labor was significant. Pieter notes that Middlekoop's translation of Exodus 20: 3, 4 "became the basic motivation for the Christians' large scale destruction of their fetishes and similar objects of divination, magic and dark powers."¹⁹ Van den End reports that during Middelkoop's ministry in Timor (1922-1957), the adherents of Christianity grew significantly in number, from 500 to 80,000.²⁰

In October 31, 1947, the Timorese churches officially separated themselves from Indische Kerk and founded Gereja Masehi Injili Timor (GMIT) or the Christian Evangelical Church in Timor. After going through a "transitional period" (3 years), the leadership finally was given

¹⁶ Van den End, *Ragi Carita* 2, pp. 98-100; Th. Muller Kruger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia* [The History of Church in Indonesia] (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1966), p. 139 notes that evangelism in Timor was not so successful if ministers ignored local languages.

¹⁷ See Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸ Van den End, *Ragi Carita* 2, pp. 110-11.

¹⁹ Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 42.

²⁰ Van den End, *Ragi Carita* 2, p. 111.

to Rev. J. L. Ch. Abineno, a Timorese in 1950. Since then, it can be said that GMIT has been totally independent from Indische Kerk.²¹

Timor revival is one of the major events in the history of Christianity in Timor. It started from a GMIT congregation in SoE, a cool mountain town that is situated 68 miles from Kupang (the capital province) in September 1965. From that place the fire swept over the whole island, even to some islands nearby. That revival became one of significant factors contributing to the amazing growth of GMIT, from 200,000 in 1948 to 517,000 in 1971.²²

4. The Sporadic Movements of the Holy Spirit Before 1965

Before the outbreak of the Timor revival in 1965, there had been sporadic movements of the Holy Spirit in Timor and its surrounding islands. David Royal Brougham mentioned at least six major sporadic movements of the Holy Spirit in his dissertation.²³

4.1 Kisar in 1921

Starting in the capital island, Wonreli, the minister's wife, Nyora Wattimena asked people to repent because the judgment day was near. This prophetic message was catalyzed by famine, pestilence and rumor of war (World War I) which hit Kisar in 1919. The Dutch Government finally suppressed this movement because it created some problems in the society.²⁴

²¹ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 111.

²² Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 114.

²³ David R. Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Church Growth as Seen in Selected Indonesian Case Studies" (D. Miss. project, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988), pp. 154-55.

²⁴ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 102 notes that there were many groups of people went out to evangelize others in 1921. They forced people to repent and "persecuted" people if they were unwilling to confess their sins. Their weird behavior later was tolerated by people in Kisar because they convinced them that they might have received the Holy Spirit through "persecution." When two people died because of that persecution, the Dutch government suppressed this movement. G. F. Brookes, "Spirit Movements in Timor—A Survey" (Th.M theses, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1977), p. 8 provided a more detailed description of such persecution: "The emotional urgency of the movement called for a

4.2 Pene, Manifio, and Noinoni Poetain Emonitas in 1923

These whole villages turned from paganism to Christianity.²⁵

4.3 Bele in 1939

People experienced an awakening.²⁶

4.4 Nunkolo in 1942-1945

A wave revival and church growth took place which in many ways was similar to the movement in the mid-sixties. However, it did not spread widely because of suppression by the Japanese occupation forces and synodical opposition. This movement was reported to bring some 40,000 people into the church.²⁷

4.5 Niki Niki in 1945

People experienced the movement of the Holy Spirit, when the new rajah (king) embraced Christianity and many people followed him.²⁸

4.6 Baumata in 1948

This area also experienced a revival after Rev. Sine began to preach the gospel in the vernacular language and emphasized the necessity of prayer. Signs and wonders accompanied this revival.²⁹ One of them which was significant is “the sudden bursting forth of a new spring with a high

complete confession of sins.... Those whose confession were judged to be incomplete were forced to lay on the floor where they were kicked in an attempt to force complete confession.... Not a few people were beaten, knocked to the ground and harshly treated.” Two people finally died because of such a treatment, one at Tara and one at Huru.

²⁵ See also Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 50.

²⁶ See Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 50.

²⁷ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 188.

²⁸ See also Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 50.

²⁹ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” pp. 3, 32-33.

flow rate as an answer to persistent prayer. This new spring has turned Baumata into one of the most prosperous areas in Timor.”³⁰

5. Some Important Factors or Events Which Made the Timor Revival Possible

Here are some important factors/events, which converged and made the great Timor revival possible:

5.1 Inside the community of Believers

5.1.1 *A Deep Spiritual Hunger for New Vitality*

The condition of pastoral ministry leading up to and into the sixties was extremely terrible. Brookes describes the situation as follows:

Preaching was in sad state. Ministers wrote their sermons and read them in monotone, not even glancing at congregation.... Serious pastoral care was never exercised. Ministers, generally speaking, did not visit their members.... There were almost no Bible study groups or prayer meetings. There was an almost complete absence of work amongst youth, Sunday Schools, where they existed, had no materials.³¹

Such conditions then created “a hunger and thirst for righteousness; a shortage of living water and the bread of life required for man’s spiritual well being.”³²

5.1.2 *The Healing Ministry of Johannes Ratuwalu*

In 1964, Johannes Ratuwalu, a teacher on Island of Rote, received a vision. The Holy Spirit told him to travel to Timor and to hold a healing ministry there. His father, a pastor, first resisted, but finally accepted that vision and anointed him for his ministry. His ministries were successful. Between October and December 1964 he conducted a healing campaign in the town of SoE and Kupang. Many people were healed. Even though Ratuwalu did not preach a sound biblical teaching and did not display

³⁰ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” p. 33.

³¹ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” p. 40.

³² Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” p. 40.

Christ-like character, his ministry roused the great hunger of God within Christians in the town.³³

5.1.3 *The Ministry of the Student Team from Batu, Malang*

The Institut Injili Indonesia (now Sekolah Tinggi Teologia I-3 or I-3 Advanced School of Theology) in Batu, Malang had experienced a season of divine visitation in early 1965 when they gathered together in a special prayer meeting. The Holy Spirit gave specific direction through prophecies to the teachers and students in regard to where each was to conduct his or her summer ministry. Accordingly, teams were formed and one of them was directed to go to Timor.³⁴

Under the leadership of Detmar Scheuneman, a senior lecturer, the student teams came to Timor in July 1965. They emphasized repentance, regeneration and sanctification through the Holy Spirit. And the result was tremendous. Many were set free from the powers of witchcraft, superstition and spiritism. Amulets, charms, and fetishes were burnt. Even, Ratuwalu, the healing minister, was led to a closer understanding of the Lordship of Jesus.³⁵

5.2 Beyond the Community of Believers

5.2.1 *The Years of Upheaval*

By late 1950, there was political tension in Indonesia. Moslems and communists were grappling for control of political power. During 1965 tension mounted and a crisis appeared inevitable. Later, we know that in the end of September 1965, Communists tried to take over the government through a coup, but the scheme backfired. What followed was the most retaliatory bloodbath in modern history. Indonesia was in chaos. In Java, as many as a half of a million people, predominately ethnic Chinese, died because of murder. Thousands of others were

³³ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 155; See also Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970), pp. 122-24; Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 189, writes that Ratuwalu succumbed to excesses pride; Frank L. Cooley, "The Revival in Timor," *Southeast Asia Journal of Theology* 14:2 (1973), pp. 78-93 (83) states that Ratuwalu succumbed to the excesses pride, women and money.

³⁴ See Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 164.

³⁵ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," pp. 155-56.

imprisoned without trial. Tragically, many of them were not really communists.

In Timor, the members and sympathizers of the Communist Party were hunted down, imprisoned, and sometimes executed at numerous places. Brookes notes that thousands, including many GMIT members, were slaughtered.³⁶ Viewing from a negative point of view, such a condition indeed had created a general feeling of terror, uncertainty and apprehension in the whole island. However, viewing this from a positive aspect, this situation paved the way for the gracious visitation of God. Daniel, pastor of the Timorese-speaking congregation at SoE, said: "the Lord used the coup to make the people seek the Lord, and revived the church to gather in the people."³⁷

5.2.2 *A Great Economic Difficulty*

Since 1963 Timor had experienced an extraordinary light rainfall resulting in the food crises due to the failure of good harvests. In 1965 the crisis mounted creating widespread famine.³⁸ A local pastor, Daniel, described that situation vividly in a letter sent to Dr. Pieter Middelkoop, dated in December 1965:

The number of the inhabitants of the area of Amanuban is about 200,000 to 225,000, among whom about 170,000 are famine-stricken. The cause of this famine is the fact that the rains came pouring down very early, in August, where it is usually late October or the first half of November when the rain-monsoons begin, Nobody has prepared his plantation, nowhere had the necessary burning of the wood before the rains come down taken place. In consequence of the continuous rains people planted Indian corn in unprepared soil. After a few weeks the rain stopped again and the dry monsoon set in. Consequently the new crop perished. Many people planted twice or three times. Those who planted for the third time reaped a very limited crop. The prices of food are increasing enormously.³⁹

³⁶ Brookes, "Spirit Movements in Timor," p. 38.

³⁷ As recorded in Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 56.

³⁸ Cooley, "The Revival in Timor," p. 84; Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 53.

³⁹ A letter of Daniel Manuain (?) to P. Middelkoop (December 1965) quoted in Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 53.

A massive inflation that took place between 1951 and 1966 in Indonesia further worsened the situation. During that period, the cost of living increased dramatically (170,355 percent) resulting in prices that were much higher than earnings.⁴⁰ Such a terrible condition placed people in a very desperate and hopeless situation and forced them to open their lives to divine help.

5.2.3 *A Comet in the Eastern Sky*

One additional phenomenon which seems to play a significant role in the Timor revival is a visible comet which appeared every morning between 3:30 and 5:30 in the Eastern sky of Timor from October 25 to November 8, 1965.

For the Timorese this appearance was significant. First, as Brooke said, "Elderly Timorese believe that a comet is a sign heralding much bloodshed, particularly in warfare." Second, Christianity, to which the majority of the people adhered, interpreted the appearance as a sign of the end times (*parousia*). The combination between the traditional and Christian interpretation undoubtedly forced people to open their lives for spiritual matters.

6. The Beginning of the Revival

Just before the team from Institut Injili Indonesia left to return to East Java on September 1, 1965, the leader of team, Detmar Scheuneman, delivered a farewell sermon. His message seemed to be prophetic. He said,

God will raise up teams to preach the word of the Gospel, and they will not only fill the half of the islands with their message but the Portuguese as well. How and when this will take place I do not know. But the one thing I am certain that God is at hand and ready to fulfill these words.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Brookes, "Spirit Movements in Timor," p. 37.

⁴¹ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, pp. 124-25.

On Sunday night of September 26, 1995, this prophecy was fulfilled. About 200 people of all ages gathered together for prayer that night. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came just as he did on the day of Pentecost. Mel Tari testified,

And that night, as I was sitting next to my sister, I heard this mighty rushing sound. It sounded like a small tornado in the church. I looked around and saw nothing.... Then I heard the fire bell ringing loud and fast. Across the street from the church was the police station and the fire bell. The man in the police station saw that our church was on fire, so he rang the bell to tell people.... When they got to the church they saw the flames, but the church was not burning. Instead of natural fire, it was the fire of God.... After that, people started to stand all over the church, worshipping the Lord in different languages. Heaven came down at that night, and it was wonderful.⁴²

According to Kurt Koch, a wave of repentance had fallen upon the congregation on that night. The following event occurred: as the young disciple had called upon the people to dedicate their lives for Christ, many of the young people present came forward. On that night, the first team of lay people for reaching out was born.⁴³

Frans Selan, a leading figure in Timor revival who later became a Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) minister in West Papua says that 200 people from his church were born-again and filled with the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, they went out to witness.⁴⁴

During the first three months after that event, it was reported that about seventy groups of laymen were going out and preaching the gospel from village to village. And when they went out, great signs and wonders followed them, and thus the Timor revival started.⁴⁵

7. Several Characteristics Found in Timor Revival

⁴² Mel Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation, 1972), pp. 24-25, 27.

⁴³ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, p. 128.

⁴⁴ See Rodger Lewis, *Karya Kristus di Indonesia: Sejarah Gereja Kemah Injili di Indonesia Sejak 1930* [The Work of Christ in Indonesia: The History of Christian Missionary Alliance in Indonesia since 1930] (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 1995), p. 308.

⁴⁵ Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind*, p. 29.

7.1 Transformation in Christian Living

Just like other great revivals, the Timor revival was also marked by an unusual presence and holiness of God resulting in repentance and a holy life. People who had an animistic background confessed their sins and then burnt publicly all their fetishes, amulets and even their cheap novels and sheets of pop music.⁴⁶ One of the most dramatic events that describes this is recorded by Edwin Orr of Fuller Theological Seminary:

One such, Nahor Leo by name, received a vision in which he was commanded to surrender all his fetishes to Pastor Daniel, moderator of Presbytery in SoE—and his uncle. This led to surrender of many such charms at a service of Holy Communion.⁴⁷

There was also a transformation of Christian life, from “dead religion” to vibrant spiritual life. George W. Peters who came to Timor to question the objectivity of some miracles never denied the fact that the Holy Spirit has brought new dimension in the lives of the people on Timor. He testified,

Approximately 50 percent of the adult membership have been affected by the revivals; the church simply is a newborn body of believers. You feel this vibrancy of life in the greetings of the Christians, you sense it in their fellowship, you see and hear it in their singing. You are aware of it in their public prayers. Seldom I have been touched as I was by their singing of “What a friend We Have in Jesus” when more than one thousand people were present for an evening service. The special group music revealed the same vitality. I was lifted into the presence of the Lord to experience reality as I have rarely felt it before. Yes, the reality of God was present. It is a “different church.”⁴⁸

Peters also said that the church has a new dimension in reading the Scripture. Those who were not illiterate conducted family Bible studies. That is what he said,

⁴⁶ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, pp. 127-28.

⁴⁷ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 189.

⁴⁸ Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, pp. 86-87.

Family Bible study means more than listening to the father read a portion of God's word and pray. Each member of the family has his own Bible and reads a portion of Scripture, usually something that has gained special meaning for him.... After such study for about thirty minutes, the family kneels in prayer.⁴⁹

7.2 Empowered for Witness

Timor revival was not an "introverted" movement; it was an "extroverted" movement. The Holy Spirit works not only in soteriological dimension (by bringing salvation and sanctification) but also in missiological dimension. Many young people in the church were challenged to share the beauty and wonder of the gospel to the others. Some of them went not only to near-by places, but also to other islands, such as Rote, Sabu, Alor, Flores,⁵⁰ Sumba,⁵¹ and Sawu.⁵² They also crossed the border into Portuguese Timor (East Timor).⁵³ According Peter Wongso, with twenty-eight young men, went into Kalimantan, South Sumatra and West Irian as missionaries supported by their friends and churches in Timor. This continued on until 1972.⁵⁴ Some even went to the other countries. One of them, later, became the famous evangelist

⁴⁹ Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 191.

⁵¹ See Lewis, *Karya Kristus di Indonesia*, p. 308.

⁵² Lewis, *Karya Kristus di Indonesia*, pp. 312-13 notes that in October 1967, two laymen from Sumba crossed the Sawu Sea and began to evangelize in Sawu. One month later, several High-school graduates, Robert Raba, Lukas Gilimangi, Williams Dju, Robert Mangi, Rekson Uli and Nona L. Gabriel followed their steps. They finally were able to build two churches in Teriwu and Wadumaddi.

⁵³ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 191; There was also a significant but never documented revival taking place in East Timor during 1970s. In Atauro, a small island nearby the main island (Timor), the Spirit of God worked mightily resulting in thousands of people there turning from paganism or folk-Catholicism to Pentecostalism (Assemblies of God). When I visited Atauro in 1995, I still found "the echoes" of that revival. A vibrant worship, even though without musical instrument, was still there. A community marked with godliness still existed. It is unclear whether there is connection between the two revivals (West Timor and East Timor Revival).

⁵⁴ Peter Wongso, "The Awakening of the Church in Indonesia" (a class paper for Orr's course, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976), p. 13, cited in Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 170.

in America, Melchior Tari, who often preaches the gospel on a worldwide scale.⁵⁵

7.3 Manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit

A various manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, such as gifts of discernment, knowledge, and revelation through visions and dreams,⁵⁶ and speaking in tongues,⁵⁷ was reported during the revival. Brougham who analyzes the manifestation of all kinds of spiritual gifts during the Timor revival comes to the conclusion that:

The practice the of gifts of the Spirit had one purpose: to glorify God and help teams fulfil their task of evangelism, deliverance and edification. In this way, they received supernatural guidance on where to go and revelation of whom to minister to and what sins these people needed to confess and forsake. They were told by the Lord about hidden idols and fetishes as well as being instructed on how to act in certain situations.⁵⁸

7.4 Biblical-parallel Miracles

Some observers of the Timor revival report some remarkable biblical-parallel miracles which accompanied the revival, such as:

7.4.1 *Water Turned into Wine*

This phenomenon is recorded by Don Crawford in his book, *Miracles in Indonesia*. He is a trained reporter sent by Tyndale House Publisher to verify the objectivity of signs, wonders and miracles. This is what he wrote,

Another team, desiring to celebrate the Lord's supper but having no wine, was in similar fashion instructed to use water from a nearby

⁵⁵ Also see John Rhea, "Tari, Melchor ("Mel")," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 841-42.

⁵⁶ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 167; Brookes, "Spirit Movements in Timor," p. 55.

⁵⁷ Brookes, "Spirit Movements in Timor," p. 59; Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 168.

spring. As at the wedding Christ attended in Cana, the water, when drunk for the communion celebration, had become wine.⁵⁹

Kurt Koch, a German scholar, was given a report that on October 5, 1967 the congregation in SoE had experienced a miracle as water turned into wine. Later on, the miracle was repeated seven times. Koch also claimed that he himself experienced the miracle water turned into wine while he was visiting Timor.⁶⁰

Rev Benjamin Manuain, the pastor of Indonesian speaking congregation Gereja Maseh Injili Timor (GMIT, Evangelical Christian Church in Timor) in SoE between 1960 and 1996, testified that in 1965, a lady, called Mrs. Liu-Feto, became God's instrument to bring the miracle water turned into wine. Since then, for one-and-a-half years, the SoE congregation celebrated the Lord's Supper with this kind of wine.⁶¹

7.4.2 *The Blind Received Their Sight*

The Holy Spirit uses an illiterate girl, called Anna, to perform this wonderful miracle. One day she entered a house and met a blind woman. After Anna had shown her the way of the Lord, the Spirit commanded her to pour some water into the woman's eyes that she might see. Anna followed this instruction. The result was that the woman received her sight. According to Kurt Koch through the ministry of Anna, ten blind people received their sight. It is amazing (cf. John 9). And all of those events took place after the blind people confessed and repented of their sins.⁶²

Rev. Benjamin Manuain testified of a similar miracle. Someone who was physically blind (proven by the absence of pupil and iris in his eye balls) was brought into his house. Amazingly, he could see as clear as one who had normal eyes. He was one of those who received their sight during the Timor revival.⁶³

7.4.3 *The Food Multiplied*

⁵⁹ Don Crawford, *Miracles in Indonesia* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1972), p. 26.

⁶⁰ Koch, *Wine of God*, pp. 28-39.

⁶¹ Interview with Benjamin Manuain by Charles A. Bessie, SoE, March 21, 2001; Manuain' testimony is confirmed by Johana Fallo-Nomleni, one of the eye-witnesses of the miracle water turned into wine, interview with Johanna Failo-Namleni by Charles A. Bessie, SoE, March 20, 2001.

⁶² Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, p. 137.

⁶³ Interview with Manuain (March 21, 2001).

God has never forsaken those who work for His glory. Kurt Koch reported how God met the need of one of the Timor evangelistic teams by multiplying food they had (cf. Matt 14:14-21).

Once when the team was working in the village, just as they were about to leave, they were given nine bananas to eat on their journey. The team, though, consisted of 15 members. When they stopped later to rest and the bananas were distributed, everyone received a whole banana.⁶⁴

7.4.4 *The Dead Being Raised*

This is the most controversial issue in the publication of the Timor revival. On one hand, George W. Peters argued that people being raised from the dead, were not really dead. He said they had experienced resuscitation. Thus, no such miracles happened.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Kurt Koch seemed to be defending the truth of the miracles.⁶⁶ On one specific occasion, he wrote,

Another instance was confirmed by the missionary Mr. Klein. A child had been dead for two days. Ants were already crawling about over its eyes and body. The parents, however, instead of burying the child on the first day, as is the usual custom in the tropics, called for mother Sharon. Two days later she arrived. After a time of prayer the child was restored to life.⁶⁷

Koch's position seems to be more reliable. The reason threefold. First, this is biblically possible. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:41); Paul raised Eutichus from the dead (Acts 20:9-12). Second, it is not likely that the believers in Timor exaggerated what was happening

⁶⁴ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, p. 134.

⁶⁵ Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 83; Cooley, *The Revival in Timor*, p. 93 even considers the report as a hoax.

⁶⁶ Besides Koch, Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 157 also includes Bob Little's report to his mission, World Evangelization Crusade, in the U.S.A., of how nine people had been raised from the dead. Benjamin Manuain, the pastor of Indonesian speaking congregation in SoE (1960-1996), interview by Charles A. Bessie, March 21, 2001 testified that during the revival there was someone who attempted to prevent or, at least obstruct the work of the evangelistic team. That person suddenly fell and lost his breath for 4-5 hours. After the team prayed for him, he was raised from the so-called "dead."

⁶⁷ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, p. 141.

because they were concerned more in the raising of those spiritually dead rather than physically dead. Crawford reported this phenomenon in his book, *Miracles in Indonesia*, "To many observers the fact that the dead boy is alive today represents a miracle. But to the believers in SoE the miracle lies rather in how the event was useful in bringing many animist worshippers to faith in Christ."⁶⁸ Thirdly, we should be aware of George Peters' theological bias. He is a dispensationalist who usually believes that miracle, signs and wonders belong to the apostolic age only, therefore we can expect his perspective that all accounts about modern-day miracles, signs and wonders are hoax.

7.4.5 Other Reported Miracles

Other biblical-parallel miracles reported during the great revival in Timor are: 1) physical translation from one place to another place in just a twinkling of an eye⁶⁹ (cf. the experience of Philip in Acts 8:39); 2) the deaf was healed⁷⁰ (cf. Matthew 11:5); 3) poison becomes harmless⁷¹ (cf. Mark 16:18); 4) crossing of deep rivers⁷² (cf. John 6:15-21); and 5) power over serpents (poisonous snakes, crocodiles, etc.).⁷³

Whether those reports are accurate or not is difficult to determine. However, the fact that miraculous events did occur during the Timor revival cannot be denied. What might have drawn a lot of people, those who were still living in the 'pre-modern' era such as in Timor⁷⁴ in the mid-sixties, to come closer to God?

⁶⁸ Crawford, *Miracles in Indonesia*, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁹ Koch, *Revival in Indonesia*, p. 145.

⁷⁰ Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, p. 138.

⁷¹ Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind*, pp. 42-43.

⁷² Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind*, pp. 43-47; Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 116; Koch, *Wine of God*, p. 151.

⁷³ Tari, *Like a Mighty Wind*, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁴ Cooley, "Revival in Timor," pp. 82-83 states, "It is necessary in trying to understand such phenomena as these to know in some detail the environment and atmosphere in which they occurred. This is particularly true for the Christians in the West where the environment and atmosphere of the modern world are so different from that of Indonesia in general and Timor in particular.... The atmosphere in the Timor villages is almost wholly traditional, tribal, only half a century out of a completely indigenous ("animistic") religious sphere, and 94.36% of the people live in villages. In the indigenous situation belief and

Was it a theological treatise? Was it eloquent preaching? The most likely answer seems to be the demonstration of the power of God in the form of miraculous events.

8. The End of the Revival

After glowing for several years, the revival began to cease. Brookes and van den End seem to attribute the weakening of the revival to the Synod of the Evangelical Christian Church of Timor (GMIT).⁷⁵ The Synod, even though not diametrically opposing the revival, apparently was reluctant to create a conducive atmosphere to sustain the revival. The reason for this is clear! On the one hand, the Timor revival was a movement within the traditional church energized primarily by young, inexperienced laymen blessed with the spiritual gifts and power. On the other hand, many experienced ministers and elders of GMIT had never been blessed with such gifts and power.⁷⁶ Thus, as Coley has noted,

The work of teams in the congregation often has been seen as a criticism or challenge to church leadership. When their authority was called into question, one way of defending themselves was to refuse to allow the teams access to their congregation.⁷⁷

Such attitude certainly in one way or another contributed to the weakening of the revival since it lessened the degree of cohesion within GMIT that had been experiencing the revival.

Moreover as Brookes has noted, “theological, educational, and pastoral challenges presented by the spirit movement has never been

practice of miracles, the visible, physical acts of the spirits and demons, the vivid manifestation of power in curses and blessings, the unquestioned authority of functionaries related to the world of the spirits and demons were practically universally held and experienced.

⁷⁵ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” pp. 62-63; Van den End, *Ragi Carita* 2, p. 116.

⁷⁶ Jonathan M. E. Daniel, the pastor of Timorese speaking congregation (GMIT) in SoE during the revival, interview by Charles A. Bessie, March 21, 2001.

⁷⁷ Coley, *The Revival in Timor*, p. 89.

seriously taken up by the church, and so the Holy Spirit has had little opportunity to refine, and burn away... the demonic... the fleshy... the spectacular.”⁷⁸ Thus, many undesired excesses had occurred. Consequently, the movement lost much of its original support and favor, and finally came to an end in 1969.⁷⁹

9. The Fruits of the Revival

The great revivals always demonstrate abiding fruit. That is also true in the case of the Timor revival. The following paragraphs describe the fruit of the Timor revival.

9.1 A Remarkable Church Growth

The spiritual breakthrough in Timor really contributed the growth of the church quantitatively. That is described in the church growth data below.

Year	Membership
1948	223,881
1858	300,000
1964	375,000
1965	450,000
1967	650,000
1972	517,779 ⁸⁰
1975	526,341 ⁸¹

What observations can be made? First, that the years immediately following the revival (1965-1967) showed the largest additions. The explanation for this is that the Holy Spirit made a spiritual breakthrough that had drawn the people to the church. Secondly, during 1967-1972, the growth rate declined. Brougham explains this by saying that at that time

⁷⁸ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” p. 72.

⁷⁹ Van den End, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 116.

⁸⁰ Peters, *Indonesia Revival*, p. 93.

⁸¹ Frank L. Cooley, *The Growing Seed* (Jakarta: Christian Publishing House BPK Gunung Mulia, 1982), pp. 70-71.

the church lacked pastoral care and had poor shepherding.⁸² However, the growth rate increased again between 1972 and 1975. The explanation of this is that at that time the church had already had enough man-power to take care of pastoral care and shepherding. Some of Timorese Christians, who left Timor to be trained for Christian work at the Institut Injili Indonesia in Batu-Malang, East Java, have already come back to their place and served there.

9.2 The Unity of the Church

Frank Cooley, who is rather skeptical in regard to reported miracles, cannot deny that one fruit of the revival is the unity of the church. He testifies,

In two areas, South Belu on Timor and Thie on Rote, I sensed a strong clear sense of unity in mission and church life amongst the congregations. In the past both these regions have been noted for their problems and difficulties.⁸³

9.3 Impact on Society

Besides causing a rapid church growth, the revival had also affected society. David Brougham said, "There was a greater impact on the public life in Timor, more than any organized social effort could have achieved."⁸⁴ Petrus Octavianus, the former principal of Institut Injili Indonesia in Batu-Malang, testified that the police on the island of Rote ran literally out of work because people had stopped drinking.⁸⁵ The door of jail in the area that was notorious for cattle thieving was open because there were no inmates there. They were not stealing cows anymore.⁸⁶

9.4 Democratization of Ministerial Responsibilities

⁸² Cooley, *The Growing Seed*, p. 172.

⁸³ Cooley, "The Revival in Timor," p. 88.

⁸⁴ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 167.

⁸⁵ Brougham, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 167.

⁸⁶ Whitaker, *Great Revivals*, p. 157.

Another abiding fruit of the Timor revival is the democratization of ministerial responsibility. This means the whole community of believers, not only the clergy, get involved in preaching the gospel and in serving the spiritual needs of people. Frank L. Coley even considers this as one of the most significant effects of the Timor revival:

Yet another effect on the witness of the Church was the fact that perhaps for the first time, certainly never before on such scale, laymen, women, young people and even children were actively and devotedly participating in proclaiming the Gospel and in serving the spiritual needs of people. This will surely have long-term influence as well as immediate effects in the life of the Timorese Church.⁸⁷

9.5 The Presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches

Brookes notes, “The inability of the Church (GMIT) to give a real place even to the genuine, well-balanced evangelists resulted in the formation of several evangelistic associations which, although consisting almost entirely of GMIT members, nevertheless stand outside of GMIT.”⁸⁸ Some of these evangelistic associations later joined with Pentecostal/Charismatic groups, such as the Assemblies of God.⁸⁹ Today in SoE, there are several Pentecostal churches including AG ones, and many Charismatic prayer groups.

10. Conclusion, Lessons, and Challenge

10.1 Conclusion

There may be dissonant voices regarding the miraculous and spectacular phenomena accompanying Timor revival. However, there must be consonant voices regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the area of soteriology and missiology. Most observers note that confession of sin, changed lives, vibrant worship, empowerment for witness resulting

⁸⁷ Cooley, “The Revival in Timor,” pp. 87-88.

⁸⁸ Brookes, “Spirit Movements in Timor,” p. 62.

⁸⁹ Rev. John Adu, the District Superintendent of Assemblies of God in Nusa Tenggara Timur-Indonesia, e-mail to the author, February, 2001, explains that he, himself and many of his fellows had to step out GMIT since the church had no real place for them.

in remarkable church growth are common features of the gracious work of God found in the so-called Timor revival. Thus, as Edwin Orr says, "...questioning or discrediting of the more sensational reports has not invalidated the corroborated accounts of an unusual awakening on Timor."⁹⁰

10.2 Lessons

First, the study of the relationship of Timor revival with historical contextual condition affirms Yoon-Ho Rhee's tentative theory of revival—"that revivals, both biblical and historical, usually occur in a context of crisis, whether religious or non-religious (i.e., political, social, or economic) and result in general church growth."⁹¹ Thus, when a local or nation-wide crisis takes place, we should be encouraged, not because of the crisis itself, but because of the greater opportunity that may be given by God to see a revival in our lands.

Second, the great Timor revival also testified to the significant role of the Bible school—Institut Injili Indonesia in Batu Malang served as a catalyst of the outbreak of the great Timor revival in 1965. While pursuing an academic excellence, our Bible schools and seminaries today should remember that an academic ivory tower is not an end itself, but provides tools for cultivating a vibrant spirituality, not graveyard spirituality.

10.3 Challenge

It is a fact that the God who came down into the stream of human life and history in the Bible times is still active through the Holy Spirit today. He is forever willing to see refreshment among His children. However, a question is raised, "Are we willing to see the revival in our times?" If the answer is, "No, we are not," I think God may not intervene forcefully. Why? Because the Bible says that though God is sovereign, He also respects the free will that He has given to man. If the answer is, "Yes, we are," this begs the next question: "Are we willing to pay the

⁹⁰ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 193.

⁹¹ Yoon-ho Rhee, "Toward a Theory of Revivals: A Case Study of the Biblical and Korean Revival" (Th.M thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, Pasadena, CA, 1988), p. 10.

price?” Shall we not cry for a revival? As the psalmist says, “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs” (Psalm 126:5).