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Two Australian Spiritual Awakenings: Moonta Mines 1875 and Loddon River 1883

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'THERE HAS NEVER been a religious revival in Australia.' This was the dogma on which I was raised and which reinforced the greater dogma that Australia is the most secular nation on earth. Both dogmas are false. How I came to question the former dogma is curiously related to the Welsh revival of 1904/5 which this number of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* is designed to commemorate.

In the late 1970s I was engaged in research on Australia's biggest peacetime land disaster, the Mt Kembla mine disaster of 31 July 1902.[1] In studying the period immediately before the disaster in the local press, I was astonished to discover that a very remarkable revival indeed had occurred in the village of Mount Kembla and in the surrounding district just months before the disaster, and 25,000 were added to the church throughout country New South Wales. It was a discovery which set me looking for other local revivals in Australian history, and because of its fateful proximity to the disaster, it also set me speculating on the divine purpose in sending revivals prior to events of considerable human suffering.[2]

But what has all that to do with the Welsh Revival? It was reported in the local press[3] that at the coal mines

1 Stuart Piggin and Henry Lee, *The Mount Kembla Disaster* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992).

2 Stuart Piggin, *Firestorm of the Lord: The History of and Prospects for Revival in the Church and the World* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), pp. 140-147.

3 *Illawarra Mercury*, 26 February 1902.

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swept by the 1902 revival, swearing disappeared and the pit ponies in the mines stopped work as they could no longer understand their instructions. It would be hard to credit were it not reported in the secular press. The same phenomenon was reported in the Welsh revival,[4] and has become legendary, but it is interesting that it occurred in New South Wales two years before it was reported in old Wales.

It is a little incident that raises questions about just how unique the Welsh Revival was. In a recent article on the Welsh Revival, the author seeks to demythologise it, but, in endorsing Tudur Jones' claim that it was 'the starting point of an immense spiritual movement',[5] he may have failed to demythologise it sufficiently to entertain the possibility that it might have started elsewhere, perhaps on the other side of the world. Even historians intent on demythologisation will not be able to demystify revivals entirely!

In this article, however, I would like to report on earlier revivals in two other Australian colonies, the relatively well-known revival in the copper mining town of Moonta in South Australia in 1875, and the never-before reported revival on the Loddon River, Victoria, in 1883. We will describe what happened, then reflect on what happened, and then draw some lessons to be learned from them.

Revivals at Moonta and Loddon River

Moonta is on the western coast of the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. Just over a kilometre from the township of Moonta was the settlement known as Moonta Mines. Eighteen kilometres to the North of Moonta is Wallaroo and eighteen kilometres north-east is Kadina. The population in the triangle bounded by the copper mines at Moonta, Kadina and Wallaroo in the 1880s was about 20,000. Most came from Cornwall in south-west England and the area was known as 'Little Cornwall' and was reputed to be the largest Cornish settlement outside of Cornwall. The mines closed in 1923, but from the early 1860s until then—a period of sixty years—Cornish culture and Cornish religion reigned, and Cornish religion was Methodism: Wesleyan Methodism, Primitive Methodism and Bible Christian—and Cornish Methodism meant frequent revivals, of which that in 1875 was the most remarkable.

Three deaths seem to have been the sparks which ignited the fires of this revival. On 15 March 1875, Hugh Datson, a mine manager or 'captain', was fatally injured in a rock fall at Moonta. He had been brought to saving faith in Christ through the preaching of Matthew Burnett, an evangelist from Yorkshire. Datson had been a model Wesleyan, never failing in his attendance at class meetings and prayer meetings. He would pray to the point of exhaustion for the conversion of sinners. His funeral service was attended 'by gracious evidence of God's saving power',[6] and, for a week after his

4 J C Pollock, *The Keswick Story* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), p. 123.

5 Robert Pope, 'Demythologising the Evan Roberts Revival, 1904-1905', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57, no. 3 (2006), p. 527.

6 *Methodist Journal*, 26 March 1875.

funeral, services were held daily in the Wesleyan church and a number of conversions were reported.

Then the action switched to the Bible Christian church at Moonta Mines. On Sunday evening, 4 April, a funeral service was held for Kate Morcombe, a young woman from the Sunday School. In the prayer meeting following the sermon, fifteen souls, affected by the early death of a much loved friend, were won for Christ. Meetings were held daily in the ensuing week and a further 45 were converted. Then on Sunday, 11 April, the evening prayer meeting was accompanied by cries for mercy and much distress and the determination to break the chains of Satan and flee to Christ. Forty more were added to the church. A circus was in town that day, but no-one was interested in attending. Much greater excitement was to be found in church. The circus left the next day.

Revival returned to the Wesleyan church the following Sunday, 18 April, when the death of a third person was the focus of the service, and in the ensuing week 90 more claimed to have found forgiveness through Christ. Most of the converts were men and women aged between 16 and 25. In the same week a further 60 came to Christ in other Wesleyan churches in little Cornwall. By Sunday 25 April the river of life was flowing freely, and 'the penitents were seeking salvation from early morning to late at night',[7] and by now the congregation at the Primitive Methodist Church was experiencing the same blessing. By 9 May 198 new members had been added to the Bible Christian church, doubling its membership.

The revival river was still flowing in Moonta a year later. It flowed through Penang, a farming community nearby, and there several Aboriginal people were saved: 'It was pleasing to see these poor blacks on their knees, and hear them cry for mercy. Black and white all one in Christ… Glory to God.'[8] The number of conversions in all the churches was estimated by the Bible Christians to be 1,250 and by the Wesleyans to be 1,550.

The Loddon River revival in Victoria occupied much of 1883. An unusually full account of this revival among farming communities on the plains north of the gold-mining town of Bendigo has survived and has never been published.[9] The early 1880s had witnessed exceptional growth in rural Victorian Methodism. Revival was endemic. The year 1883 was characterised as 'this year of grace, so memorable for the extensive revivals of religion throughout Victoria'.[10] There was in that year 'a great ingathering of persons to the fold of Christ'.[11]

7 *Methodist Journal*, 30 April 1875.

8 *South Australian Primitive Methodist Record*, January 1876.

9 C. W. Kentish, *The Story of the Kentish Family in Australia*, unpublished typescript., 1940?. It was written by Cecil Kentish for the benefit of his family. The account is vague on dates as it was written about sixty years after the revival he here describes when Kentish was about 76 years of age. Nevertheless, it preserves, in the best tradition of oral history, accounts of many remarkable and therefore unforgettable incidents.

10 W. L. Blamires and John B. Smith, *The Early Story of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria* (Melbourne: Wesleyan Book Depot, 1886), p. 195.

11 Blamires, *The Early Story*, p. 195.

Ebenezer Taylor, appointed superintendent of the Wesleyan circuit north of Bendigo and west of Echuca on the northern river plains of Victoria, was a deeply spiritual man. He sensed that the area, made up of farmers' families on new selections, was ripe for revival. So he arranged for a mission to be held there. Three farmers—Edward Holloway, a wealthy squatter, Mr Baker, a poor selector, and Walter Kentish, another selector's son—offered to help with the mission. In the event the 1883 mission lasted for a year. There were so many centres to visit (14 permanent centres, each with its own church, and other more temporary centres) and so considerable was the response in each centre, and so great was the conviction of sin from which the convicted sought relief at any time of the day or night, that the three local preachers had to roster themselves—two on duty, one off—in order to get sufficient rest.

They held meetings every night of the week except Saturdays, and the meetings were usually crowded, and the harvest abundant as the people came expecting to meet with God. The three local preachers did not bother to preach for very long before inviting seekers to the penitent bench, which often was so full that they were soon asked to vacate the bench and make room for others. When the meetings were over it was necessary to remove the detritus of the pre-converted life which the penitents left behind: tobacco, playing cards, unsavoury literature and gaudy jewellery. 'They forsook their idols to serve the true and living God', observed the wondering evangelists.

The atmosphere of those meetings is embalmed in the memories of Walter Kentish's younger brother, Cecil. There was the illiterate convert who was so keen to read his testimony at such a meeting that he learned how to read and write in 'an incredibly short time'. His crudity was only equalled by his effectiveness. In appealing to parents, he said: 'Now, here is the penitent form, it is for you to show an example to your children and come forward. You have seen an old sow going across the paddock to the waterhole and her young ones following, so, mothers, it is for you to set the example'. At this a young boy called out, 'Go on mother', and so she went forward, followed by some of her children. A bullock driver, a bachelor with a reputation for dishonesty, held out for longer than most before surrendering to Christ. When he did, he attended no more meetings, but immediately saddled his horse, and with cheque book and swag, set off on a hundred mile trek to make reparations to those he had exploited financially. A group of five young men, all reputedly over six feet tall, attended a number of meetings, and held each other by the hand so that they would be able to restrain each other from going forward. But the Spirit descended on them all at once, so they all went out together, still holding hands. Remarkable!

The most remarkable of all the conversions in Cecil's experience was of a young woman of about twenty years of age who was the only member of a numerous family to remain undecided. For months, her anxious family took her from one church to another, following the course of the mission, that she might find Christ. After months of searching, the change came in a flash. At the invitation in Cecil's own church

she suddenly jumped to her feet and, when she turned to face the audience from the penitent's seat, her face was shining, like that of Stephen the first martyr, because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. 'Her face was shining like wax and appeared as though there was a light beneath her skin, and rays of light seemed to radiate from her face.' The congregation knew that they were in the presence of eternity, and the silence deepened. Then she raised her arms and cried out, 'I've found the Lord! I've found the Lord!' Joyful tears flooded the church.

Edward Holloway, at the Annual Wesleyan Conference for 1883, speaking of a part of the circuit known as Canary Island, a large part of the district where the Loddon river divides and then rejoins, reported that the cry had gone up 'the whole island for Jesus'.[12] Twice in his account, Kentish insists that practically all the 'non-Christians', the 'unsaved', in the entire circuit were gathered in.

Reflection

In the 1891 census, 80% of the population of South Australia's little Cornwall identified itself as Methodist. The largest group were the Wesleyans, closely followed by the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians. Between them they had built at least 31 churches in the area. The largest of them, the Wesleyan church at Moonta Mines, which still stands, could seat 1,200. The congregations were not wealthy. Employment in the mines was episodic, subject to downturns and booms, and, in the low times, the miners struggled to make a subsistence wage.

But there were wealthy Wesleyans, those who had learned well from John Wesley how to make the best of both worlds, and who heeded his advice not only to make all they could and save all they could, but also to give all they could. The best-known of the Wesleyan plutocrats was Henry Richard (Captain) Hancock. Throughout the week he was the superintendent of both the Moonta and Wallaroo mines. On Sundays he was the superintendent of the Sunday School which, for thirty years, with over 600 members, was the largest in the colony. The Wesleyans to their credit allowed gifted laymen to exercise their gifts in the organisation of the church.

Captain Hancock was gifted in leadership. He once called the entire mining community together—about 1500 of them—and shared with them that the mine was in peril because of a downturn in trade. Expecting to hear the bad news of numerous retrenchments, they heard him instead outline his visionary plans for expansion and putting on more staff so that new ore bodies could be opened up which would lower the average cost of production and therefore make their product more saleable. They were aware that their destiny was in his hands and they knew how to defer to him. When Captain Hancock and his family entered the church, it is said that the congregation stood out of respect. The managers under Hancock, also known as captains, a title going back to Elizabethan days, wore coat tails to chapel

12 Robert Evans, *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia, 1880-1914* (Hazelbrook: Research in Evangelical Revivals, 2005), p. 136.

and took up the collection. Methodism, as E. P. Thompson, the Marxist historian, observed, was the religion of both the exploiter and the exploited.

But this is too solemn a judgement arising from the Marxist conviction that there is no greater or more pervasive sin than social control. In practice, the controllers were not allowed to be out of control in their control of the controlled! Both controllers and the controlled were under the control of Jesus. They were Methodists, and the Captain of their salvation was superior in rank to Captain Hancock, whose humble subjects, even if they attended 'the boss's chapel', the Wesleyan church at Moonta Mines, would not let him minister to them in areas for which he was not gifted. Captain Hancock's attempts at preaching were not acceptable to them because he could not preach extempore sermons. His habit of writing out his sermons beforehand and reading them was dismissed as 'Not fitty!'

Cornish Methodism was the most emotional expression of evangelicalism in Australia probably because it had to be. The life of a miner was always at risk through danger of accidents and the slow death of inhaled dust. It was also hard and tedious work. Methodism offered dramatic relief with the wholehearted singing of its choirs and congregations and the fervent oratory of its preachers. It offered fun and laughter: church services were not dour affairs, and preachers, who were expected to preach for fifty minutes without notes, did not have to be educated, but they had to be enthusiastic and entertaining. Their gaffs were forgiven, but not forgotten. 'Let us not forget the words of the good old Book,' one of them declaimed. 'Hingland expects that every man will do his dooty.' James Jeffrey, for forty years a Wesleyan local preacher of Cornish quaintness, gave the Lord this interesting challenge at Moonta: 'We thank thee, Lord, for what little spark o' grace we do possess; oh, water that spark!'[13]

Cornish Methodism offered solace and mutual support in times of death and suffering. It also offered a way of dealing with the conflicts between masters and miners through nerving the men to stand up for their rights during times of industrial disputation. In 1874, the year before the great Moonta revival, the miners went on strike and then formed the Moonta Miners Association. The leaders of this trade union were Methodist local preachers. They were not Marxist revolutionaries. They wanted social justice without socialism. Their Methodism was displayed by their call for prohibition and by their holding a service of thanksgiving at the end of the strike. The Union president was Dicky Hooper, a Wesleyan local preacher, who in 1891 was elected to the House of Assembly to represent Wallaroo.

The most celebrated of little Cornwall's Methodist politicians was 'Honest John' Verran. He was a Primitive Methodist local preacher with a reputation for charismatic oratory. He was elected to parliament in 1901 and was Labor Premier of South Australia from 1910 to 1912. On becoming premier, he travelled to Moonta, and to a crowd of 2000 he gave credit where it was due

13 O. Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1962), p. 170.

by announcing that he was an MP because he was a PM (Primitive Methodist). From all parts of the crowd came cries of 'Amen' and 'Glory'.[14]

Revivals are easily criticised. They are too emotional, it is said, and their converts do not stick. They are unreliable ways of growing churches since they cause membership to fluctuate wildly. They are chiefly a means for strengthening Christians, not for converting the unchurched. Revivals did grow churches more by strengthening members than by adding to their number. There were two classes of chapel goers: professors and adherents. Revivals, more than anything, promoted adherents to professors. That was not without value. Those who were converted from within the church tended to stick. It was the unchurched who happened to find themselves caught up in revivals who tended to fall away. It was of the former that John Verran observed: 'Some come back for a coat of whitewash every time a revival broke out, but in the great majority of cases the change was permanent.'[15]

Revival was not required, either, to translate the district from a sink of iniquity to a holy community. It was already holy in the conventional sense. It was no place to make a fortune as a hotelier as the majority of the population were teetotallers. A temperance demonstration on New Year's Day 1873 started with 700 supporters and ended with a thousand. True, the sport of kangaroo and wombat hunting sometimes extended over Saturday night and trespassed on the Sabbath, but this was widely held to be a violation of God's law before revival reinforced the conviction.

The fact that the 1875 Moonta revival was sparked by three deaths suggests that the real value of revivals must be looked for in terms of their power to make sense of human extremity. Revivalistic Cornish Methodism was ideally adapted to helping mining populations to cope with the challenges of hard labour, economic stringency, danger, suffering, and death. In the hothouse of revival strong communities were forged with a surprisingly rich culture in spite of isolation. The strength of these communities may be attributed to the shared experience of religious intimacy. Jesus had visited and cleansed each soul personally and tangibly, the Holy Spirit was the greatest power in a world where powerlessness and vulnerability were too often felt, and God's will was sovereign over the powers of darkness and death. The shared experience of a palpable God was celebrated in exuberant community hymn singing and in fervent prayer in capacious chapels or in the even more capacious open air.

With the closing of the mines in November 1923 following the boom years produced by the demand for copper in the First World War, the population of the district evaporated, and so did the conditions which made this style of Methodism so successful. In other places and other times in other conditions, evangelical Christianity had to turn itself into something else to win the hearts and commitment of the community in which it was placed. But it rarely did it as effectively as the

14 Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p. 130.

15 Ibid, Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p. 107.

revival-minded Methodists of little Cornwall had done in the six decades from 1862.

Concerning the Loddon River revival, gold fever had abated by 1883, but the gold rushes were displaced by the land rushes. Up until then, settlement had been limited to Melbourne, some coastal centres, and the gold districts. But there was such pressure brought on these centres by population growth that the cry went up to unlock the land. Large areas of land in different parts of Victoria were made available for free selection under the 1869 Land Act. The Wesleyan Methodists, habituated to taking advantage of every new opportunity, formed home missions to allow their work to expand with the population. In 1875 the Home Mission reported to the Annual Conference:

> We have an opportunity of doing a blessed work among the thousands who are selecting land in almost every part of the country…. From Kerang, on the north Loddon, through the Terricks to Echuca, a distance of about 60 miles, all the land is taken up by free selectors.[16]

This area is around the Loddon River and its tributaries, and I have therefore called this the Loddon River awakening. In the early 1870s many hundreds of selectors, took advantage of the new land laws to settle on 320 acre-blocks on well-watered land ideal for wheat growing. The Wesleyans appointed in 1875 a missioner, John Clarkson, to organise ministry to the settlers. He was ideal for the job. He was tall and strong and, best of all, experienced in things of the bush. Among his greatest supporters was George Holloway, a wealthy squatter who did not oppose the advent of the selectors. He rather welcomed them and did all he could to support the Methodist cause. It also helped that many of the selectors also in the district were good Methodists: the Kentishes, Woods, Midgleys, Neales, 'and many others'.[17]

Only then did the work settle down into 'the usual order'. Why did the blessing not continue? wondered Kentish. Some years later the class meetings were abolished, and he believed this was a retrograde step and was sure that the majority of the Methodist people agreed with him. No longer were the Methodist people under the responsibility of witnessing to their faith, and the luke-warm were no longer challenged to move from being adherents to professors.

Lessons

One of the perennial issues which historians and theologians of revival love to debate is the extent to which they may be produced by human means. The Calvinists, led incomparably in their thinking by Jonathan Edwards, thought of revivals as always 'surprising works' of a sovereign God. It was a belief still strong in the Welsh Revival, and Eifion Evans enthused over its supernatural character: 'In its origins there so much of God's presence, in its

16 Irving Benson, *A Century of Victorian Methodism* (Melbourne: Spectator Publishing Co, 1935), p. 172.

17 Blamires, *The Early Story*, p. 246.

extension so little of man's design; its effects were so evidently supernatural, its fruits so patently holy, that none could reasonably deny its divine source.'[18]

But by the time of the Welsh Revival, for many Charles Finney had long displaced this understanding by a more mechanical one, the product of the use of the appointed means. By the time of the Moonta and Loddon River revivals the Methodists believed that they knew what was involved in producing revivals, and in their zeal for souls, they were faithful in acting out their belief. They were in the vanguard of evangelical Christians in colonial Australia and exploited opportunities vigorously. They realised that social and demographic changes are most positively approached if viewed as providential, that they are always opportunities for strategic ministry. Gold and Land Acts in Victoria, and copper mining in South Australia, were opportunities for ministry to be exploited immediately, energetically and strategically.

Their revival strategy was to send in the shock troops first as soon as the propitious opportunity was identified. Methodist local preachers—'brave hearts and tender spirits'—started to evangelise in new areas very soon after they were opened up. Then ministers were sent in to co-ordinate the work, but they still worked with the local preachers and the committed, experienced lay men and women, trained for evangelism and schooled in prayer in the Methodist class meetings. So the church became a large army of revival troops, headed by well-trained generals and experienced captains. Revivals come, Methodists demonstrated, when a significant proportion of the church membership expect them and work for them. Or to change the metaphor, to quote a Methodist historian reporting on a notable revival on the Victorian goldfields in 1866/7, the 'harvestmen, clerical and lay, rejoiced to gather in the sheaves'.[19]

Another lesson we learn from these two revivals is that while revivals are caught rather than taught, theological orientation may not be irrelevant. Methodists of the second half of the nineteenth century believed in the sufficiency of Christ's grace, and the universality of his atonement for human sin, to hold out the offer of life to the most unlikely. Each person is looked on as the blood-bought property of Jesus, and is embraced in the promise of pardon, even if he or she has given the prime of life to Mammon, and has left only the poor dregs of life to give to God.[20] Methodists never gave up on anyone because they were utterly convinced that Christ had died for everyone.

The theology which is consistent with revival sets no limits on the power of the Spirit or the breadth of the gospel, and it is a theology which is felt viscerally as well as believed in the mind. To touch the hearts and move the will of those whose lives are hard,

18 Eifion Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1989), p. 199.

19 Blamires, *The Early Story*, p. 185.

20 Ibid, *The Early Story*, p. 182.

impoverished, or dangerous, felt experience and emotion are necessary. Souls in extremity, souls under stress, need dramatic relief which is provided by wholehearted singing and the fervent oratory of preachers who are on fire. And, contrary to the advice of the great preacher, Martyn Lloyd Jones, jokes are in. Weary folk need fun and laughter. Church services must not be boring. Genuine support in times of death and suffering will be offered by any church on the road to revival.

The sort of faith which begat these revivals bridged the divisions created by capitalism. The wealthy, the bosses, the people of influence in the community, shared the same faith as the workers, the employees and the needy. Revivals lift the eyes of all above the class struggle to see the reality which is more real than materialism. They make people happier than materialism and pleasure can, because they give engagement (deep fellowship) and meaning (living to please Jesus and glorify God).

The historic irony of revivals, which like all irony is difficult to grasp, is that revivals normally come to people who are aware that they are in some form of extreme need, yet they come from:

- churches which are not cold dead, but which are near boiling point,
- church members rather than from those outside the church,
- churches which are alongside other churches which have caught fire,
- within communities which care a lot about morality and standards, that is from holy communities rather than unholy ones.

Such churches and communities create the cultural plausibility in which revival fires can be ignited and take hold and the infrastructure and support to maintain those who have been converted. It seems incredible to us today that there could be whole geographical districts where all the unsaved are brought into the Kingdom, but in the Loddon Valley of Victoria this became plausible to those with the eye of faith and the evidence coming from experience of the power of God.

The Moonta and Loddon revivals well illustrate the proposition that precisely because revivals meet the deepest needs and are responses to stress and suffering, they usually pass when the need and the stress pass. They cease when the social and cultural conditions which made them so beneficial also cease.

Revitalisation

The two revivals here studied do illustrate well the theory advanced fifty years ago by anthropologist, Anthony F. C. Wallace, that revivals are good examples of 'revitalisation movements'. Such movements can have political or economic motivations, as well as religious. Politically the New Left was such a movement in the early 70s or the environmental movement a decade later. Why such movements capture the hearts and minds of significant numbers of people is that they address some widespread anxiety in the community. Wallace contended that all 'revitalisation movements'[21] go

21 Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements", *American Anthropologist* April 1956. This article has been republished repeatedly in anthologies on the anthropology of religion.

through a process. Of necessity, processes have a beginning and an ending. It is not surprising that revivals cease. The process is fivefold:

1. The community is in a steady state. Looking back on this, the revived regard this as deadness.
2. There is a period of increased individual stress. Revivals often begin with individuals.
3. There is a period of cultural distortion—the community is generally disrupted. Accounts of Revivals often report that whole communities become distressed and concerned about the things of another world.
4. There then comes the period of Revitalisation. Wallace argues that this involves:
   (a) 'Mazeway reformulation', that is the development of new world views, new mental models of the world around them—in a revival this is a new theological insight into what matters to God;
   (b) communication—here's where powerful preaching kicks in—so often preaching seems to follow from rather than initiate revival;
   (c) organisation—the facilitating structures for the revival, eg. the nightly meetings, the penitents bench
   (d) adaptation—going with the flow of the river of the Spirit; accepting new ways and the legitimacy of the role of emotion
   (e) cultural transformation—revived churches are never the same as they were
   (f) routinisation—Wesley's class meetings, the channels for maintaining as much of the flood tide as possible.
5. A new steady state. 'the usual order' as Cecil Kentish described the Loddon valley after the revival.

So, our two revivals help us to answer another question which interests all students of revival: Why do revivals come to an end? What is the best one can hope for after a revival? That there will be no 'after'—that it will just go on? No. One cannot reasonably expect ongoing revival. It is an achievement to attain a steady state again. Revival is God's way of bringing stability again to a disrupted community. The challenge, and this is the best that you can hope for, is that this steady state will be a new steady state, and that the newness will reflect more of the values of the Kingdom of God.

The Methodists had the opportunity to deliver such to the lasting benefit of Australia in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. They started well. Their revivals brought harmony and progress to mining and rural communities alike, and to the cities they gave that strong instrument for the relief of the sufferings of the inner-city poor, namely the Central Methodist Missions. They initiated a labour movement which created and manned labour unions and labour parties. But they lost the initiative in the withering fire of class conflict when they retreated to middle-class respectability, and then World War, when they identified the glory of dying for one's country with the glory of God and the death of each young man as an expression of that greater love which put Christ on the cross.