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Reformation
& **REVIVAL**
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FINAL THOUGHTS

John H. Armstrong

*I*t is my growing conviction that this periodical should directly focus upon renewing the church through missional apologetics that seek to spread the glory of Christ to the whole world. We will seek to do this through various means. Articles and occasional opinion pieces will be published in order that we can help the church lift its eyes to the harvest fields of the world.

The church in the West needs revival. No one can really dispute this. A truly revived church will be a missional church, and a missional church will be one engaged in theology, apologetics, and culture. A journal that truly deals faithfully with reformation must challenge the church with a theological vision that is rooted in the kingdom of God. A journal that truly deals with revival must challenge the church to pray and repent. We will seek to more faithfully do both in coming issues.

Writers are encouraged to submit ideas for publication. Shorter, readable, and academically solid articles are encouraged. Send samples, ideas, or proposals to:

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Henrietta C. Mears (1890-1963) was one of the brightest and most innovative missional Christian leaders of the twentieth century. She was not only a great Bible teacher but a marvelous Christian educator who served for decades on the staff at First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, California. At Hollywood Dr. Mears built one of the largest Sunday school programs in the world and wrote a curriculum that was in such demand that she founded the Gospel Light Publishing company in 1933. Her curriculum was innovative, being age-appropriate long before the idea caught on in churches. She also published a new style of Vacation Bible School curriculum and supported the distribution of gospel materials around the world.

Perhaps Mears' greatest contribution was the impact she had upon other leaders. She was a major influence in the lives of countless men and women, and that impact is still widely felt over forty years after her death. Some of her most famous students were Richard C. Halverson, Luis Evans, Jr., Bill Bright, and Billy Graham.

Henrietta Mears lived totally for Christ and his kingdom. She once wrote: "When God gives a command or vision of truth, it is never a question of what he will do, but what we will do. To be successful in God's work is to fall in line with his will and to do it his way" (Cited in E. L. Doan, 431).



Modern evangelicalism has moved so far from orthodox Protestant understanding of truth that its popular simplistic formulas, joined with historic American anti-intellectualism, have created a brew that is often toxic to real faith. This is what Daniel H. Williams writes about when he concludes that "the present a-historical and a-theological condition of evangelicalism is symptomatic of what scholars have been warning us about for over a decade now" (*Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 23).

A good friend, Colonel V. Doner, argues in a soon-to-be-published book that the problem is pretty simple. It is old

fashioned Gnosticism that has worked its way right into the center of our life and practice. I fear he is right, and I also fear that his warnings about how we have blended Gnostic dualism, neo-platonic perfectionism, mysticism, pietistic privatism, and enlightenment rationalism into a strange religious mix are quite correct.

Doner suggests that a new generation of leaders "possessing unquenchable passion for truth, love, justice, and mercy will also need to be called forth to systematically challenge evangelicalism's theological aberrations, as well as the ambivalence and cognitive dissonance that supports them."



One of the most remarkable articles I have read in recent years appeared in the May 23, 2005, issue of *The Weekly Standard*. David Gelernter, of the Shalom Center in Jerusalem notes that "America is fertile ground for Great Awakenings—mass movements in which large chunks of the population return to their religious roots. We haven't had one for awhile, we are overdue." Gelernter notes such awakenings are "big dramatic events that take off like rockets and burn out like rockets," but through them "people find in the aftermath that their life-trajectories have been changed forever."

Gelernter's main thesis is concerned with the growing biblical illiteracy in America. He believes we cannot understand our culture or history without the Bible. And he believes our future is in danger without this knowledge. But something more than a growing number of good programs for recovering Bible knowledge is needed. This is where Gelernter suggests that we need a new "Great Awakening." He writes:

My guess is that the next Great Awakening will begin among college students. College students today are (spiritually speaking) the driest timber I have ever come across. Mostly they know little or nothing about religion; little or nothing about Americanism. Mostly no one ever speaks to them about truth and beauty, or nobility or honor or greatness. They are empty—

spiritually bone dry—because no one has ever bothered to give them anything spiritual that is worth having. Platitudes about diversity and tolerance and multiculturalism are thin gruel for intellectually growing young people.

Gelernter fires my imagination and spirit with fresh wind when he concludes: "Let the right person speak to them, and they will turn back to the Bible with an excitement and exhilaration that will shake the country."