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BORN IN A REVIVAL

*‘Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?’*

(PSALM 85:6)

Revival, eh? There have been numbers of great ‘Awakenings’ in Christian history when the windows of Heaven seemed to open in an unusual way – with a visitation of God’s power and blessing so great that there seemed not enough room to contain it (Malachi 3:10). My long-standing next-door neighbour, Dr John Stott, once suggested to me that no revival was greater than the mighty 16th century Reformation that swept Europe, under the preaching and writing of such giants as Luther, Calvin, Wycliffe – and noble martyrs such as Tyndale, Archbishop Cranmer, Ann Ashdown, Latimer and Ridley.

But there have been numbers of further awakenings in the last three hundred years, associated with Wesley and Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney and D. L. Moody; Evan Roberts in Wales, Willie Nicholson of

Northern Ireland and Duncan Campbell of the Hebrides.

In the pages ahead, an exciting look-back on these – and many other names and places from around the world – awaits us, but always from the thrilling story-line of the Bible, and the fire and power of Heaven itself. And oh – the stories!

SIX THOUSAND FEET UP!

My own first awareness of God’s awakening power was when the East African Revival of the mid-20th century touched my early life in Kenya, where I was growing up within the family of our missionary parents, Cecil and Sylvia Bewes.

My parents had first been on the front line of evangelism and church planting in the remote Kenyan area of Kabare, facing – as they were – the animistic beliefs of East Africa, together with the hold that the *mundu-mugo*, the witch doctor, had upon great swathes of people. For them and their African colleagues, it was prayer, the Bible and the steady proclamation of the Cross that would ultimately overthrow the powers of darkness. And revival? As my saintly mother would later laugh, “Revival couldn’t really come to Kabare until after we’d left!”

It was at my second African home, in Weithaga – 6,000 feet up, and on the lower slopes of Mount Kenya – that I first sensed the power of the Cross touch great numbers of people. Under the red corrugated iron roof of our bungalow we were without running water, sanitation, gas or electricity, and there were no shops, doctors or hospitals anywhere within the region. It was only ‘Auntie Lorna’ – a single missionary of uncertain age – who, though not a qualified nurse, held a somewhat tenuous authority to

dispense iodine, bandages and the occasional injection from her minute dispensary nearby.

My dad's missionary car was the only available form of transport. Indeed, within the battered box-body of the Ford V8, a small Kikuyu baby was, one day, prematurely born – and delivered by Dad. Later the grateful mother celebrated the birth by naming her little boy '*Motoka*'.

TROPICAL HAZARDS

It was inevitable that I would grow up bilingual, and even to this day I can sing you 'Blessed Assurance' in the Kikuyu dialect! Certain care had to be negotiated against a variety of tropical hazards. Before the development of pesticides, vast locust swarms – fifty miles in length – would sweep down from the Middle East along East Africa's great Rift Valley. The sky could become black as night, as umpteen million of the voracious insects descended on the fields and crops. We would hear the branches of trees cracking under their weight. Car drivers had to stop when their windscreens became blotted out. I can recall seeing my dad vainly trying to beat off a terrifying swarm with the aid of a single tennis racket. How my heart swelled with pride in him!

Or there were the *siafu* – the 'safari ants,' which would devour anything living in their path as they marched in solid ranks through villages and homesteads. Oh, the shock, when one morning it was discovered that a line of ants had gone through our hen house, and had entirely consumed a single hen sitting dutifully upon her eggs, leaving only a bare skeleton behind. 'Jiggers' (in the toes) and tarantulas (in the shoes) had to be reckoned with, while poisonous puff adders could be a menace to livestock and