

The beginning of the great Argentine revival.

Or the rap on the table that started the revival

From the book. 'The secrets of the great Argentine Revival' by Dr R Edward Miller

An End

In January of 1949, I came to what appeared to be the bitter end of my missionary career. With another missionary, Robert T., we went to a town named Lavelle (the valley) that lay in the foothills of the great Andes Mountains. Our purpose was to hold a Gospel crusade in a town where, to our knowledge, the Gospel had never been preached before. We fully believed that in that totally churchless town, we would be privileged to see the mighty wonders and see the power of the Holy Spirit manifested before our eyes and see a great spiritual impact on that town. We fully expected to see manifestations such as had happened in the days of my childhood in the old Baptist Church in Ashland, Oregon.

With great anticipation we prepared a tent with what we considered to be proper evangelical accouterment. We labored happily in the hot Andean sun. We dutifully filled the air with recorded music and faithfully visited every home in the community, distributing tracts and Gospel portions. We prayed many hours daily and prepared fine messages for the great congregation we expected to come. Night after night we held a find service, but . . . not one single person attended – not even a child came to see if the tent might be a circus. Then came the torrential rains and flooded us out, but we still kept on. Yet in spite of all our efforts, witnessing, testifying and preaching, we still had a zero congregation. The strong man of Argentina ruled contemptuously over every city, large and small.

After two weeks of expense and labors, we were forced to retreat in bitter disappointment and failure. We had absolutely no fruit for our labors. For me, that defeat marked the end of a long trail and the beginning of a new one.

A New Way

Frances Thompson wrote in his majestic poem, The Hound of Heaven, "I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind." Those words could well describe my relationship with

God up to that time. There had always been plenty of plausible excuses for the lack of harvest and the want of results in my ministry. True, in my childhood and teenage years, I had often witnessed mighty manifestations of the power of God under the ministry of such leaders of God as Dr. Charles Price, Aimee McPherson, Smith Wigglesworth and other mighty men of power in the Holy Spirit, as well as the ministry of my own father.

However, the truth was that these manifestations were completely lacking in my own ministry. Excuses, reasonings, rationalizations, all convenient places to lay the blame, provided me imaginary refuge from the searchlight of God's truth.

Always, the reason for my relative fruitlessness lay somewhere outside of myself. In one place the people were too hard, in another it was not harvest time yet, or it was necessary to sow the seed first, or the people had no faith. From one pastorate to another, from one mission field to another, the excused multiplied. True, a certain work for God had been done so that in the eyes of man and of my contemporaries there was no need to feel ashamed. After all, no other missionary was doing any better, but in my own secret heart was knowledge that there was a better way.

The ever faithful Spirit of God did not let complacency and excuses continue to hide the truth in my own soul, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where was the God of glory, of power, of miracles? Where was the God of convicting power and of saving grace so often seen in my childhood and youth?" It was impossible to deny that Elijah's God accompanied the men and women of God that had ministered in power only a few years before.

Lavalle was a town which had never heard the Gospel before; it was not a Gospel – hardened, burned-over territory. The people were not hostile, nor the town rebellious; nevertheless, the God of my early life was definitely not in Argentina. Stark reality judged my ministry and efforts, found them wanting and counted them a total defeat. It was necessary to meet the harsh reality of my own failure. Even with every condition favorable, with missionary equipment complete, with competent missionary evangelist companion – still Lavalle was a failed enterprise.

It was clearly evident that in spite of excellent ministerial training and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit received as a child, there still was an obvious and deadly lack of power in my ministry. At long last the long road of excuses came to a dead end, and the flight from the truth finished. God caused me to take inventory of my ministerial career and the result was

devastating disillusionment. No longer was self-deception possible. Our very best efforts of daily prayers and evangelistic efforts had absolutely failed.

Bitterly defeated – all defenses and excuses destroyed – God brought me to admit the total inadequacy of my abilities to succeed as a missionary. With that confession, and in light of all that was happening, came the decision to quit playing the missionary game. Nothing was left but to leave the ministry, return to my own land, get a job and admit that somehow I had mistaken the call of God and did not belong in that profession.

Yet, God continued to challenge me, “Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit . . .” He reminded me that it was not by my efforts, but by His Spirit. But still the answer remained elusive. How was it possible to have His Spirit work for us? After all, we both had already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and obviously that was not sufficient; there was nothing more known for us to do. Still God kept challenging for me to surrender of both flesh and the works of the flesh. Good as flesh works were, they were unacceptable. God was offering a new way – a way of power – an operation of the Holy Spirit Himself released in the ministry of deliverance, but ignorance and darkness still remained firmly entrenched.

“Then He answered and spake unto me saying, ‘This is the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts’”  
Zechariah 4:6

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses (horses represent the works of the flesh), and trust in chariots (chariots represent clever inventiveness of men), because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!”  
Isaiah 31:3

### A Way – A Highway

“There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.”  
Job 28:7-8

As my desperate thinking continued, a large circle revolved in my thoughts and would ever return to a place in that circle where God would challenge me to lay every missionary activity down and give myself over entirely to prayer. This I did not want to do, so the circle

of reasoning, excuses and blame would begin again only to return to the same place, “Try prevailing prayer.”

The terms God laid down for my surrender were to spend a minimum of eight consecutive hours daily with Him in prayer and in His word. He reminded me that a man must work eight hours a day to earn his bread, so then a minister could pray as long. Finally and grudgingly, His terms were accepted with the promise of an entire week of fasting and prayer, but no more; surely that was enough to prove the point of my inadequacy.

Some of my colleagues openly expressed their disapproval, questioning my sanity. They concluded that no one who spent most of his time in prayer, and not in the traditional missionary activities, had a right to receive a missionary's pay. Yet there must not be taken one step more in deceiving myself and fleeing from God; the challenge had to be accepted.

There was a small, vacant attic room over the garage of the adobe church in Mendoza where I was serving as a pastor at the time. It was there I decided to retire in fasting and prayer to seek the Lord. It was imperative for me to find God's answers for revival and the moving of His Spirit in Argentina, to have divine intervention such as was written in the book of Acts and to find a manifestation of the Spirit of God according to His promises; or else, I must abandon the whole missionary project in Argentina.

If a week of fasting and prayer would not do it, then I was free from the missionary responsibility, because I had accepted the challenge of fasting and praying for a week. If nothing changed, I would be free to quit the mission field, go home and find a job – which, honestly, at that time seemed to be by far the most desirable thing to do.

In that week many challenging thoughts were pondered. Was this idea of fasting and prayer merely wishful thinking? Was it truly possible for an ordinary man, without any special qualifications or charisma and having no more from God than a call to the ministry, to meet God in such a way that it would bring tangible results and visible fruit? Did God even challenge men: Could man accept such a challenge? Could time accept the challenge of eternity? Were all the mighty saints and prophets of history special sovereign creations of God or were they just ordinary men who accepted the challenge of God?

Then at the end of my circle of rationalizations there would come a gloomy realization, “If not . . . if my concepts are wrong, then am I at the end of the road of no return?” If there were no answers, then there loomed ahead of me an abysmal disorientation – shattered dreams and illusions long held in sacred secret. I still held the belief that if one ever truly wanted to meet God, then the answer could be found by a week or two of fasting and prayer. Surely someday I would do that . . . but the when never came. If the answers were not found, then the glory and reality of a prayer answering God could never be found. Certainly, trying again to find the desired road to Heaven’s Throne of Grace was hopeless.

### “Seek Ye My Face”

In the Scriptures, God adjures man to seek His face; however, He never gives any directions as to how it is to be done. Was seeking God the prerogative of a select few; a limited group of mystics who were equipped from birth to climb high on prophet’s mountain? Many unanswered questions led me to one main question, that somehow this time I had to settle or abandon the project.

Could a most ordinary man – with but the most ordinary talent and preparation, without any special gifts of mysticism or genius – find the personal, intimate Presence of the God of Jesus and find Him in a satisfying reality? Was reality available for such a cloddy, earthy, practical, unmythical individual? Could such a one have a vital, personal encounter with the Lord of Glory? A careful search of the Scriptures from Abraham to Nehemiah, from Elijah to Peter, encouraged me to believe that it might truly be possible.

Being practical and materialistic by nature and more comfortable in shop or field than at a student’s desk or a prophet’s chamber, I, nevertheless, had to find an answer. The answer had to be both spiritual and practical, dynamically real, as well as scripturally authentic. The spiritual and the material just had to come together; after all, Jesus came out of a carpenter shop.

After seven days of prayer and fasting, there still was no answer. Doubts, questions and fear marked the long passing hours. Where was God? The walls echoed back the barren question. Turmoil wrestled within. Was such a demand on God human impertinence? The days crept slowly by and still no answer, save on the penultimate day, the Spirit of God drew near and questioned me as to what I was doing. My answer, “I am fasting and praying for revival.” Then there came a strange Word from the Spirit, which was, “An empty stomach is not the coin of Heaven . . . but rather the Blood of Jesus.”

The week ended and what a relief! I had accepted the challenge and no fruit resulted from it; therefore, I was now free to leave the mission field and to retire to a more fruitful work. But then . . . ahead loomed an apparently dead-end street. An ever deepening dread of defeat threatened me – a defeat so final and abysmal that terrified me. There came a sudden realization of the devastation this defeat would produce in my life. My faith in God would slowly evaporate; my heart would never again believe that the God of others would ever become my God. The God of Elijah, of Peter and of many of God's men I had known, would never become my God.

This terrifying realization became a strong motive to continue past seven days, for I could not, dared not stop until obtaining at least some kind of answer. Seven weeks went by, and still I dared not abandon my search, for every day defeat seemed more horrible to contemplate. If this search ended without victory, it would take my very God out of Heaven. Weeping, waiting, meditating, searching the Word, walking, kneeling, standing and again being prostrate on the floor . . . Silence! No posture, no fasting, no tears, no cries could pierce the silent, invisible barrier which so oppressively closed in upon my being. The days slowly passed, lengthening into weeks.

God was in no hurry to uncover the secrets of His mysteries. He, who had so carefully hid the diamonds deeply in the Earth for only the most persistent of seekers, did not hurry to reveal His hiding place to one who aspired to visit His treasury. The seeking and digging was necessary. Two months passed – an eternity seemed to slide into time. Not a breeze stirred in the spiritual world, not even a tiny cloud the size of a man's hand appeared.

However, though I did not find God during that time, certainly the devil was there. The enemy brought an almost continual barrage against my seeming ridiculous attempt. It was against all reason, rationality, good sense and sanity, the friendly enemy warned. And surely it was doomed to defeat as if an elephant tried to fly. By then I had gone too far and could not turn back.

It occurred to me to set God a date. Surely by now a mistake was made. There was no use going on definitely. Accordingly a date was set, "God, if by the end of the week, Saturday evening at five o'clock, You do not manifest Yourself in some tangible way, then it will be known that I am mistaken. I will go out with tracts and return to the conventional missionary routine." Surely God, knowing my sincere decision, would be forced to move out from His hiding place – this was my clever, hidden reasoning.

But still no breeze stirred. In infinite wisdom and patience, God held his peace and the end of the week drew near. The five o'clock arrived and still God had done nothing. With unutterable bitterness of soul, with tears of frustration and defeat welling up from depths within, I filled my pockets with tracts and slowly walked down the long hall which led to the street. God had not answered.

At that moment, in God's precise timing, a local pastor arrived with his unconverted teen age son. During the visit the pastor poured out his troubles at great length. Minutes became hours. It became impossible to do the proposed house to house visitation and tract distribution because of the lateness of the hour. As the two visitors prepared to leave, I asked the boy a searching question. One word led to another until the young boy was on his face sobbing his way through grace to mercy, and asking for forgiveness of his sins.

The two finally left. In the darkness of the hall, with the door scarcely closed, a gentle, quiet voice within said, "You see, son, when I wish, I can bring souls to you. Now return and continue in prayer until I tell you it is time to leave."

Suddenly a Voice . . .

So back again into that little attic room for more weeks of wrestling, prayer and the Word. Weeks went by until time lost all its meaning. Then one day, a day no different from all the others that had gone on before – without any advance warning whatsoever – suddenly a voice, so overwhelming, so penetrating, so sweet, resounded into the very air of that room. A word as spoken; that word vibrated powerfully into the depths and out again into the heights. Accompanying that word came the dynamic overwhelming Presence of God that seemed to fill the whole world around me.

In a voice that seemed fully audible, He spoke a special message in penetrating power that passed through all barriers into the most interior of my soul. The separating veil was rent; the windows of Heaven were opened. Glory shone all around and I was catapulted into hitherto unknown realms of glory in the Spirit.

My question was answered. God had come to just an ordinary mortal man. In inexplicable waves and into realms of glory and power that passed far beyond my highest anticipations, He had come to bring forth His high purposes and His divine will in Argentina. The reality of His manifested Presence and His all powerful Word fully vindicated His promises. The windows of Heaven remained open – windows that have never again closed – and in the Spirit I was things unlawful to be uttered.

## Revival Begins

Other missionaries chided me for my actions and asked if I thought it was God's time for revival in Argentina. My answer was that I did not know if it was time for Argentina or for Mendoza or for my little church, but one thing I truly knew was that it was time for me to have revival, because I did not have tomorrow. My personal revival had now come and I was reveling in it.

Six more weeks passed by as I waited and basked in the wonder and glory of that heavenly atmosphere. Then, one morning, quite unexpectedly, again that inaudible – audible voice sounded within my being. A strange order was given, "Now I will pour out My Spirit upon the church. Go tell the people to begin prayer meetings. Tell them to begin Monday night and to come prepared to stay from eight o'clock until midnight. If they are not prepared to stay the entire four hours, they must not come at all," the voice said.

I thought it a strange order from the Lord. Just a little while previously I had chosen a most convenient hour for prayer meetings, but no one had come. And now, at a more inconvenient time, with four long hours demanded, they were requested to attend a prayer meeting. I thought to myself, "Who of these indifferent folk will be responsive enough to come a meeting that demands hours of prayer so late at night?" Not even the city busses ran at that late hour, so they would have to walk home.

The divine order was undramatic, yet clear; it demanded obedience. Honestly I did not expect a single person to obey. Naaman, the leper, had expected the prophet Elisha to at least approach him and strike his hand over the place of his affliction. He anticipated a dramatic appearance of some kind, not a mere order, "Go wash seven times in Jordon." I had expected revival to begin in some spectacular way, not just to call a prayer meeting. However, I soon discovered that it is not the order, but he One who gives the order that makes all the difference.

God's ways are definitely are not our ways. He gave this command and He expected it to be obeyed literally. I must confess that I had many doubts. I know my few church people, their lethargy and lack of interest in the things of God. If there were to be any response at all, I knew it would have to be God.

God was beginning to teach me the importance of simple, explicit obedience. In Eden, it was not the quantity of fruit consumed that brought such chaos; it was the quality of deliberate disobedience that revealed a willful choice to reject the rule of God over their lives. Disobedience is what sundered man from a relationship with his God. Implicit, simple obedience is the only way which leads back into the Presence of God and restores a right relationship with Him.

Come and Pray

The invitation made to the little church group the following Sunday was most unusual; obedience to it would be difficult to fulfill. The cold winter weather, an unheated building and lack of transportation after the midnight hour all combined to make it difficult to respond to such a call. Nevertheless, to my surprise, three individuals indicated their willingness to attend the proposed prayer services.

Three people came that Monday night – a timid servant lass, a backslidden Christian worker and his shy young wife. Not one of the three had ever seen anyone filled with the Holy Spirit or had heard much about Him. The small church, and many like it in Argentina at that time, had never experienced any manifestations of the Holy Spirit. They did not know how to receive the Holy Spirit, nor what it would be like when He came. We spent some time the first night instructing them according to the Scriptures. Then all five of us knelt before the Lord in prayer. The total absolute silence reigned supreme. Whether they slept or prayed, I know not.

I led out in prayer, praise and song, but none joined me; they merely waited in silence. When the four interminable hours had passed, I asked if anyone had received any impulse or direction from the Lord that would call for any cooperation on one's part. Had anyone any impulse to pray aloud, to praise the Lord, to sing a song, in fact to do anything at all?

Everyone answered in the negative except the young wife; she very shyly admitted to a strange desire to walk to the table in the center of the room and hit upon it. However, that was entirely too preposterous for her to do. She was far too proud to even consider such a thing. She merely commented, "Oh, it would be too foolish!" Nor could she be persuaded to even try it. On this note, the first prayer meeting ended.

Again I went before the Lord; I had fulfilled His command and nothing had happened. What should we do now: But the Lord only said to wait and gather again for prayer. The next night the same group returned to seek the Lord. The second night was an exact repletion of the night before. During the four silent hours, not one felt the slightest impulse from the Lord, save the same woman who confessed to the same strange desire as the first night. She felt like she should go to the table and hit on it. But as happened the night before, she was too ashamed and could not be persuaded to do so. The meeting ended in such dismal failure that I was certain no one would return the following night.

I was attacked with many doubts. Was this yet another failure? Could this be of the Lord – a thing so strange and so out of the ordinary as that desire to rap on the table? What earthly good could that do? Nothing like it had ever been mentioned in the Bible. Why had God not come to us as I had expected? Was hitting on a table the sort of thing God inspired? What possible relation with revival did thumping on a table have? Why did He delay if He had given the command to gather to pray, promising that He would manifest Himself? Many questions and doubts zeroed in upon my heart and mind. In fear and trembling I awaited the next service.

The third night the same three joined my wife and myself for another evening of prayer. The result was another evening of silent waiting – another evening of no response to any urging or prompting of the Holy Spirit. When the service was nearly over, I called to the timid wife and asked her if she still felt like banging on the table. With much shame and blushing, in her timidity she admitted that she did; however, in no way could she be prevailed upon to do so.

How difficult it is for man to learn to know the voice of God! Thrice God called Samuel and thrice Samuel thought it was the voice of Eli. Only the fourth time did he learn that it was God speaking. Several times God spoke to this young wife. Somehow I knew it was God speaking; after all, He had ordered these prayer services. Would He then not fulfill His promise to manifest Himself? But the woman would not obey.

Thursday night everything continued as on the previous evenings until eleven o'clock when I asked everyone to get up from their knees and be seated. I called the young wife by name and asked, "Do you still feel like hitting the table?" In shame and reluctance she confessed to the same strange desire, but she absolutely refused to get up and do it. So I asked everyone to sing a chorus and we all marched around the table. One by one each one gathered courage to hit the table. All, that is, except the one to whom God gave the order. Fifteen minutes passed with all of us singing a chorus and marching around the table and four of us hitting on it. Finally, the young wife that God had singled out for this act took courage and reaching out, banged on that table.

### The Wind of the Spirit

When her hand hit the table, immediately it was like a rushing wind swept through the room from one corner to the opposite corner. In seconds, the retiring, timid servant lass was on her feet worshipping the Lord in great ecstasy. Her hands were raised in the air and her face was transformed. She radiated the joy and glory of the Lord as she spoke in an unknown language.

The backslidden, rebellious man, who had consistently resisted the call of God over his life, fell under the table and there began to worship the Lord in another tongue as the Spirit gave utterance. His young, reluctant wife, seeing what was taking place with the others, cried out in a loud voice, all timidity now gone, "I too, Lord! Please don't pass me by!" She feared that the Spirit would not bless her. However, in but moments the River of the Holy Spirit flowed upon her and immersed her in the glory of His Presence, and she broke forth in a strange tongue.

We did not realize it at the time, but that day was the beginning of the coming of the Holy Spirit, not only to us, but to the whole of Argentina. It began as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would in time reach out into the farthest corners of that great country.

An act of simple obedience had been the last key that opened the door. That day God set in motion the forces to change a vast, idolatrous, unbelieving country and make of it a Christian nation. The move of God, for which so many had prayed, had come. Faith had triumphed. All the prayers, tears, longings and countless hours of wrestling with the enemy had at last prevailed. Faith changed into sight and many had longed and prayed – yet had not seen, Others had laid down their lives in faith, not having received the promise; nevertheless, He came- just as He had promised.

The wisdom of God put to naught the wisdom of men. The act of obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit removed the last obstacle to the flow of the mighty River of God. It was early June, 1949, that the River from Heaven began to flow out into the city of Mendoza in Argentina. Precisely, it was the same city, and the only city in Argentina, that one hundred years earlier had accepted and listened to Allen Gardiner and his band who laid down their lives for Argentina. That city, Mendoza, a century later, was the place the seed, planted so long before, began to sprout and flourish.