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Review of Indonesia Revival: Focus on Timor

George W. Peters, *Indonesia Revival: Focus on Timor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 120 pages.

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Abstract

*News of spiritual stirrings in the Christian church attract attention. Believers around the world are encouraged by such reports. These accounts hold out the hope that it can happen in other places and may prompt some to pray for just such a divine visitation. In the later part of the twentieth century Indonesia was the setting for one of these moves of God. A number of people have written about this revival, George W. Peters is one of them. In his book, *Indonesia Revival Focus On Timor*, he looks at the factors that he believes contributed to it as well as its strengths and weaknesses.*

Keywords: Book Review; Indonesia Revival

The revival that took place in Indonesia in the 1960s attracted the attention of some in the United States. Even before the days of email and the various social media outlets that we have today, the news reached our shores. A number of books which dealt with the revival were published. I own a number of them. Two of the books *Like a Mighty Wind* and *The Gentle Breeze of Jesus* were written by an Indonesian, Mel Tari. Others were written by people from outside of Indonesia. This present volume is one that was written by a man who is not an Indonesian. However, George W. Peters, who wrote the book, did not research the revival from a distance. He actually traveled to Soe, on the island of Timor in Indonesia in order to investigate it. His research focused on Timor and for the most part on one church there, the one in Soe that belongs to The Evangelical Church of Timor, where the revival began (pages 10-11). As part of his research he spoke with people who witnessed the revival (page 15). This book is his assessment of what he learned.

The revival on the island of Timor is not the only one that Indonesia has had. Peters mentions an earlier one, the Nias Revival, which took place from 1916 to 1922 on the island of Nias which is located off the coast of the island of Sumatra (pages 9, 46). In fact, Peters says “Some of the most prominent revivals outside of the West have taken place in Indonesia” (page 9). As one reads the book it becomes clear that the author has some reservations about certain things that have been reported about the revival on Timor. However, in spite of these reservations he says that the “Revival in Timor is real – in spite of the way we humans have decorated it” (page 10).

Peters feels that there were some factors that paved the way for the revival in Timor. He lists four contributing factors: the healing ministry of J. A. Ratuwalu, the visions of two people, some special sermons by Pastor Manuain, and Detmar Scheunemann’s ministry (pages 17-20). The healing ministry of J. A. Ratuwalu resulted in the deaf, blind, mute, lame, and mentally ill being healed (page 17). The visions of the two people and messages by Pastor Manuain created spiritual desire and awakening (pages 18-19). Detmar Scheunemann’s ministry resulted in people breaking their ties with the occult, this was evidenced by their destruction of things like amulets (page 20).

Once the revival broke out it came in waves (page 20). It was marked by a number of significant features: dreams and visions, prophecy, the public confession of sin, team ministries, and miracles (pages 26-33). The miracles included people being raised from the dead, water being changed into wine, and people walking on water (page 32-33). These are all miracles that we can find in the New Testament. However, there were some other unusual events that we find no Scriptural accounts of. These include stones singing and statues bowing down (page 33).

Peters believes that the revival had the potential to transform all of Timor if the other churches there had been supportive of it and “had the movement been grounded in the Word of God” (page 34). Nonetheless, the Commission for Evangelism of the Evangelical Church of Timor “acknowledged the revival movement as the work of the Holy Spirit” (page 35). But they also felt that the people involved in it needed training (page 35). Key leaders who made positive contributions to the revival were Dr. Middelkoop, Pastor M. E. Daniel, and Pastor Benjamin Manuain (pages 40-44).

The author is skeptical about some aspects of the revival, namely the numbers of conversions that were reported and the miracle accounts. Peters notes that three authors who wrote about the revival reported that it resulted in 200,000 conversions between the years 1965-1970 (page 94). He feels that this number is inflated. He goes on to explain why he

feels this way (pages 94 ff.). He also questions some of the miracles accounts. On this point Peters seems a bit conflicted. He affirms the possibility that God can do miracles such as He did in the book of Acts, but he hedges about the probability that He did on the island of Timor (page 62). He especially questions nature miracles (pages 62-63). These would include things such multiplying food for the multitudes and changing water into wine (page 62). While we do not find the early believers doing things like this in the New Testament I don't think that we should totally rule out the possibility because Jesus said His followers would do the works that He did (John 14:12), and He did these things.

As we have seen above Peters questioned some aspects of the revival. In addition he also identified what he perceived to be some of its weaknesses (pages 100-103). But he was also able to see some of the positive fruit of it. Near the end of the book he lists a number of the positive results of the revival. Here is the list. The church in Timor had a vibrant life, loved the Lord and the Bible, had great fellowship, had a group of Christian workers, was open to the Holy Spirit, and had significant impact (pages 86-98). These are all commendable qualities. It cannot be denied that God moved in a powerful way in Indonesia in the 1960s, Peters and other writers have confirmed this. May it happen again.