



The open-air amphitheater at Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

The morning of August 9, 1886, dawned with nothing unusual in the popular summer resort community of Old Orchard. At the edge of town people gathered in the open-air amphitheater for the mid-morning Bible hour at the convention called by A. B. Simpson. No one would have suspected the dramatic results that were to follow the service of this morning.

The speaker for this occasion was W. E. Blackstone, a Chicago business man turned preacher. He had already become a household name among evangelicals with the public of his book entitled *Jesus Is Coming*. That morning he addressed the convention on the subject "The

The Legacy of Old Orchard



Need of the World and the Work of the Church." Blackstone related the second coming of Christ to world evangelism in such a way as to electrify the audience. After shocking his hearers with a well-documented presentation of the millions without Christ, Blackstone said, *"Let us look now a little at the hopeful side. There is an era of peace and righteousness to come. The gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to all the world, and then will the end come; that is the end of the dispensation. It is to be preached as a witness. The world is to be evangelized, though not converted, before the coming of Christ. It is the business of the church to be a witness and proclaim the gospel. Oh, for a tongue and power to wake up the church to her duty. Brethren, be not discouraged at the great work. Put yourselves in line with God and trust Him for results. He will bring them around in His own good time."*

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The echoes of that dynamic sermon soon died out in the grove, but its spiritual impact lived on. When people gathered one year later for the second Old Orchard Convention the missionary enthusiasm generated by Blackstone's sermon took on a concrete form. The Christian and Missionary Alliance was born that summer at Old Orchard. The urgency of world missions that characterized those first Alliance people still lives. The spiritual echoes of that Blackstone sermon still reverberate in the ear of the Alliance people in 2003.

A century has passed and the reports are not all in yet. Today more than 1,100 missionaries labor in more than 66 countries and territories and the greatest harvest of souls in Alliance history is going on right now.