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# The 1859 Revival (Particularly in Glasgow)

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## 1. Introduction

The year 1859 was an auspicious one. In the area of natural science, it saw the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* which had such a dramatic effect on views of nature, and was subsequently such a stimulus to a new atheism and evolutionism which has predominated in the century and a half since then. That year, however, also saw a fairly widespread revival of evangelical religion, in the USA and the United Kingdom, especially in Ulster and Scotland. In 1859 and the years that followed there was arguably the last largely Church-based widespread awakening experienced in this country.

In this paper I intend to look at the 1859 Revival especially as it affected Glasgow. It was, in fact, quite widespread throughout Scotland, though more marked in some areas than in others. It is of more than passing interest to consider something of the impact of this movement within the largest urban conurbation in Scotland. First of all, however, we will reflect on what is meant by *revival* in this context.

## 2. Revival – what is it?

In human societies, revivals are usually understood in terms of an unusual progress of the gospel in the hearts and lives of men, women and children at any given time. When many people are at the same time affected by the Word and profess to be saved by Christ, that is often taken to be a time of reviving. It naturally derives from such periods of unusual responsiveness of people to the things of God. This is evident at

various times in both the Old and New Testaments, as for example recorded in the Books of Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Acts of the Apostles. In Psalm 85 the Psalmist cries: “Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (verse 6). We read in Habakkuk: “O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (3:2). Thousands, of course, were saved at Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4). Shortly afterwards there was a great ingathering at Samaria: “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip” (8:5-6).

Perhaps one of the best definitions of revival has been given by William Hetherington in his preface to *The Revival of Religion*, issued in 1840 and comprising addresses from ministers who had been involved in a notable awakening in Scotland in the 1839-40 period: “When, therefore, men use or hear the term, *a revival of religion*, it ought to be understood to mean, – *an unusual manifestation of the power of the grace of God in convincing and converting careless sinners, and in quickening and increasing the faith and piety of believers.*”<sup>1</sup> Or, as he puts it another way: “It is the life-giving, life-imparting, quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit, converting the hardened sinner, and the reclaiming the backsliding and dormant Christian.”<sup>2</sup>

In relation to revival it is the manifestations of such things in a notably widespread and powerful way that is striking. More recently Dutchman Willem Van Vlastuin defined it – reasonably – as “an unusual manifestation of the power of God’s grace by the enlivening of faith and godliness in God’s children and by the conviction and conversion of indifferent sinners”.<sup>3</sup> This, certainly, is what occurred in the revivals of 1859-62. It is thought that 300,000 people were touched by the power of the gospel at that time in Scotland.<sup>4</sup> To put these numbers in perspective we should note that at that time it is reckoned that 70% of the total population of Scotland comprised adherents of the three main

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<sup>1</sup> *The Revival of Religion* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1984 [first edition 1840]), p. x.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Drs. W. Van Vlastuin, *Revival* (Trowbridge, The Bunyan Press, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> J. Edwin Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain* (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1953), p. 5. Around that same time it is reckoned that the revival touched as many as 1,000,000 souls in the United States.

Presbyterian Churches alone (Established Church, Free Church and United Presbyterian Church).<sup>5</sup> The population of Scotland at the 1861 Census was just over 3 million, just under 400,000 being in Glasgow and around 200,000 in Edinburgh. Considering, then, that so many people would have been professing faith and attending Churches, the fact that there were around 300,000 professed converts at that time indicated a distinct and widespread spiritual awakening.

### 3. How and where did the Revival begin?

News of a revival of Christian faith and life in the United States of America in 1858 provoked much interest and an active hope among many that the Lord might also do such a work on this side of the Atlantic. To that end the more zealous and exercised ministers, congregations, and denominations set themselves to pray for such an outpouring of the Spirit here. United prayer meetings were held across the deno-minational front. Bear in mind that the differences were not so great then, either in doctrine or worship. In the providence of God there were also laymen of great ability raised up as evangelists. Such men as Brownlow North, men of aristocratic background, were greatly used in these days in addressing the claims of Christ in the gospel to large gatherings.<sup>6</sup>

In May 1859, before the outbreak of revival in Scotland, North had been formally recognised as an Evangelist by the Free Church of Scotland in their General Assembly. He was thoroughly examined by a committee of men of impeccable orthodoxy, men like William Cunningham, John Duncan and James Gibson.<sup>7</sup> Alexander Moody Stuart in his own house once heard John Duncan<sup>8</sup> say to North, “You are an untrained theologian”. “Very untrained,” said Brownlow North. “You mistake me, sir;” replied Duncan, “I laid the emphasis not on ‘untrained’ but on ‘theologian’.”<sup>9</sup> Some of the “gentleman-evangelists” were greatly used in the revival work of 1859 and the years that followed. In his *Diary*

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<sup>5</sup> Orr, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> On Brownlow North, see Kenneth Moody Stuart, *Brownlow North – His Life and Work* (London, Banner of Truth, 1961 [from the 1904 “popular” edition]).

<sup>7</sup> Moody Stuart, op. cit., p. 82ff.

<sup>8</sup> Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at New College, Edinburgh. Duncan was usually known as “Rabbi” Duncan.

<sup>9</sup> A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of the Rev. John Duncan, LL.D.* (Edinburgh, Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), p. 179.

Andrew Bonar commented on a sermon of North's in his congregation at Finnieston Free Church, Glasgow, as early as 1857: "A solemn message from Brownlow North; he speaks because he believes. His address was like the flash of a sword, and then the thrust."<sup>10</sup> The following Sabbath in Bonar's church, North was again preaching. Bonar remarked: "The church crowded in every part to hear Mr. North, and the lower part left full when he asked any to remain who wished to be spoken to. It has been a day when God seemed dealing with men in unusual earnestness." Even then, this raised for Bonar the question, "Are these the beginnings of revival times?"<sup>11</sup>

However, the real catalyst for the spiritual awakening in Scotland in those years was the evident quickening that had been taking place in Ulster from as early as the spring of 1858. In his diary entry for Sabbath, 3rd July 1859, Andrew Bonar bemoaned the deadness he felt he faced in his Glasgow charge. He wrote:

I have come to this again and again these two years: that unless the Lord pour out His Spirit upon the district, nothing will bring them out to hear and attend; and now we hear that this is the very thing which God is doing in the towns of Ireland. O my God, come over to Scotland and help us! O my Lord and Saviour, do like things among us in this city!<sup>12</sup>

As the year wore on news started to emerge from many parts of the land that the Lord was coming in power. One thing that news from America had done was stir within the hearts of exercised men to establish prayer meetings; some, initially, held among office-bearers, and others, open to all on an inter-denominational basis, were organised as "united" meetings. Of all the things that were instrumental in the movement, under God, prayer was surely the key. This became very evident as time went on.

It has to be borne in mind that many of the older folks – and ministers and elders – had experienced the revivals around 1839-40 and longed for such a quickening as had been experienced then. This is what Professor George Smeaton of New College, Edinburgh, wrote in the New Year of 1860:

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<sup>10</sup> Majory Bonar (ed.), *Andrew A. Bonar: Diary and Life* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1960 [1893]), p. 187.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 194.

I cannot disconnect the present time of blessing from the sowing in tears which preceded. The harvest-time has come, but: a long seed-time of preaching, expectation, and prayer, went before it. Seventeen years ago [i.e. 1843], there was a distinct anticipation among us that a time of Revival, greater than was enjoyed in 1839, was about to dawn. The seed has been scattered broad-cast over the land, and it has not been lost. The outpouring of the Spirit on America and Ireland has everywhere increased an expectation and confidence which have not been put to shame: the kingdom of God is coming. In our day, as we hear from one place after another, a mighty power is *breaking forth* from the kingdom of God, and with resistless force, sweeping over the community, bringing salvation to some, and imposing awe on others.<sup>13</sup>

This was the sort of preparation that was the occasion of the revival which came to Scotland in the autumn of 1859. As early as February 1859 a “Society for promoting United Prayer for Revival of Religion [in Scotland]” had been established. The fruit was about to be seen throughout most areas of Scotland, and not least in the City of Glasgow.

#### **4. The Revival as it touched Glasgow**

The news of revival work in Ireland had proved a stimulus to prayer meetings for revival in Glasgow. The fact of reports in the press – notably the *Glasgow Herald* and *North British Daily Mail* as well as the *Scottish Guardian* and the new *The Revival Records* fuelled interest in Scotland. The Revs. James Begg (Newington Free Church, Edinburgh) and Julius Wood (St. George’s Free Church, Dumfries) attended the Irish Presbyterian Church General Assembly in Dublin in the first week of July, 1859. They expressed the hope that “what was going on in Ireland would extend to Scotland”. In late July and early August many notable Scottish Presbyterians, such as prominent Glasgow Free Church ministers Andrew Bonar (Finnieston), Dugald McColl (Wynd), Alexander Somerville (Anderston) and Jacob Alexander (Stockwell), travelled to Ireland to experience for themselves the awakening going on there. Such men returned in enthusiastic mood and began holding special gospel

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<sup>13</sup> George Smeaton, *The Improvement of a Revival Time* (Edinburgh, James Taylor [c. 1860]), pp. 4-5.

meetings which attracted large crowds and witnessed many conversions. Kenneth Ross says of Andrew Bonar that he “hurried across the water [to Ireland] and brought the flame back to Scotland”.<sup>14</sup>

The first real mention of a popular movement appeared in the *Scottish Guardian* of 26th July in an article entitled “Symptoms of a Spiritual Awakening in Glasgow”. This spoke of open-air meetings on the Glasgow Green on Sabbaths 14th and 21st July. It was reported that “A serious influence possessed the whole crowd. . . . Working men rose up and poured out their hearts in most fervent supplications to God.”<sup>15</sup> Significantly the number and frequency of prayer meetings were said to be increasing. “An . . . awakening,” said the same article, “appears to have begun in this city. Many have already been seriously impressed. . . .”<sup>16</sup> Sabbath 24th July seems to have been a key day for the revival work in Glasgow. It related not only to what was happening on Glasgow Green, but also in Wynds Free Church. That Sabbath the minister, Dugald McColl, was actually speaking at the East Gorbals Free Church, but he gave an intimation for his own congregation to the effect that the next Sabbath he would give an account of his experiences of the great work of God he had been privileged to witness in Ireland. Meanwhile in his own congregation an Irishman from Coleraine, a Mr. Horner, gave his own personal experiences. This had a powerful impact on the congregation and apparently scores of people came under great distress of soul. “Many were seen weeping (said the *Scottish Guardian*) . . . between fifty and eighty remained when an invitation was given to anxious souls.”<sup>17</sup> We should note that there were not then the appurtenances of modern campaign evangelism of the Moody and Sankey and post-Moody and Sankey sorts. There was no “Invitation System” as such. Evangelism was not then afflicted by an “easy-believe-ism” or “ministry of music” which became all too common in later “revivals” or campaigns. It was simply that any with concern or anxiety for their souls were invited to remain behind to speak with the minister or elders. That day, 24th July 1859, seemed to be the beginning of the revival work in Glasgow.

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<sup>14</sup> K. R. Ross, “Andrew Alexander Bonar”, in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1993), p. 84.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford James Marrs, “The 1859 Religious Revival in Scotland: A Review and Critique of the Movement with Particular Reference to the City of Glasgow” (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1995), p. 219.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 221.

Subsequently in week after week at the Wynds Free Church great religious interest continued to be manifested. For a time the congregation was thronged on a daily basis. One report from a bit later in the year provides a flavour of the sort of experiences that became common in Wynds Free Church at that blessed time:

A young man from Tillicoultry, who had been recently converted by means of one of his companions, who had himself only been recently brought to Jesus through the instrumentality of the Wynds Mission nightly prayer meeting, said: "Like many others, I thought I was all right, that I was going to heaven. I attended church, prayer meetings occasionally, and family worship. . . . On hearing that my companion had been converted at the Wynds Church, I began to think, Well now, suppose my companions be saved, and I lost, what a terrible thing it will be to see them pass away and I excluded for ever; nay, more, shut up in that place of torments where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. On Saturday evening, in company with a companion, I went to visit a young woman who was anxious about her soul; and although my companion spoke to her of the love of Jesus, and his willingness to save, yet I could not open my mouth. I could not tell of the love of one whose love I had not experienced myself. I felt all was not right with me. I attended a young men's prayer-meeting next morning. I was called upon to pray, but it was no prayer. I only spoke to please the young men, not to plead with God. That evening we had family worship as usual. We proposed to sing the eighth verse of the thirty-fourth psalm:

'O taste the see that God is good;  
Who trusts in Him is blessed.'

"I said, 'I cannot sing that verse until I can sing it not only with the understanding, but with the heart'. We went down on our knees, and it was then I received the new life. A flood of light rushed into my mind; I could see that Jesus was my Saviour, and that being connected with him I was an heir of glory. Oh, what a happiness I felt. I cannot tell what I felt. I could not rest that night without calling in my neighbours and telling them what great things the Lord had done for my soul. We sat up till between two and three in the morning, singing and reading together. At the close, a minister came forward and said that that was the way he would

always like to preach, like the apostle, ‘weeping’. I would like to undergo a second conversion, so that anew I might consecrate myself more unreservedly to the service of my dear Redeemer.”<sup>18</sup>

There is no question but that the work was associated with evident conviction of sin and a quickened concern for prayer in connection with the work of the gospel. It is not without the utmost significance that at that time by and large there were a large number of strong evangelical ministries which combined impeccable Calvinistic theology with energetic evangelistic zeal.

If what happened at the Wynds Free Church was the spark, it is clear that very soon the spark spread a fire. No doubt there were “sparks” all over the place in Glasgow, given the fact that the norm among the Churches was earnest evangelical preaching. It bore fruit. In effect the revival work was to cut swathes through nominal attachment and formalism within Churches. But as souls were saved, so many non-Church-goers were also reached, not least through the great rallies which were regularly held, through open-air preaching, and through the quickened concern to address the gospel with simplicity to sinners, and not least to the un-churched. The *Scottish Guardian* reported (2nd August) that:

In this city . . . many remarkable cases of awakening have occurred in different districts. . . . The Holy Spirit has been manifesting his gracious power in a remarkable manner . . . during the last few days . . . attendance(s) have been decidedly on the increase, and anxious souls frequently remain at the close of the services to seek counsel and direction. Christian men and women appear to be attaining to greater faith in the power of prayer. . . .<sup>19</sup>

On Sabbath 7th August there was evidence of awakening in Argyll Free Church, a Gaelic congregation, of which the minister was Archibald Macdougall. The *Scottish Guardian* reported:

There have been many signs of a gracious reviving work in this congregation. . . . The first symptoms of the present awakening appeared on Sabbath, 7th August, when the minister, the Rev. Mr. Macdougall, gave a full account of what he had seen and heard during his sojourn of nearly four weeks in Ireland. . . . The

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<sup>18</sup> Marrs, op. cit., pp. 346-348.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 222.

congregation in general is marvellously stirred up, so that fresh vigour, life, and anxiety are everywhere visible. Prayer meetings have been multiplied . . . and are numerously attended. . . . Evidently the Holy Spirit is leading souls to Jesus. . . .<sup>20</sup>

By the middle of August it was clear that Glasgow was in the throes of a movement of God's Spirit. Awakenings also became evident at that time in Stockwell Free Church (whose minister was Jacob Alexander, an Irishman), and Anderston Free Church (whose minister was Alexander N. Somerville, colleague and friend of the Bonars, McCheyne, Smeaton, and so many others who had sat at the feet of Thomas Chalmers and later graced the Scottish Church so conspicuously through powerful and spiritual ministries). Isn't it a thought that on 15th August a special meeting of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow was convened " . . . for the purpose of prayer and conference on the subject of the present religious awakenings . . . "? It was agreed to submit to the next Presbytery ordinary meeting, " . . . for their adoption, certain resolutions relative to the appointment of prayer meetings . . . for . . . an outpouring of the Holy Spirit".<sup>21</sup> Wonderful to have Presbytery meetings with such items on the agenda! On 19th August a public meeting was held on Glasgow Green at which it was calculated that 20,000 people attended, "crushing and pushing to hear the speakers".<sup>22</sup> The meetings began at 6.30 p.m. and continued till after 10 p.m.

And so the revival continued to be felt – in Churches (of various denominations – see below), in work-places, and in Sabbath Schools. At Andrew Bonar's Finnieston Church, for example, of the Sabbath School of 300, over 100 " . . . remained for prayer and conversation . . . in anxiety about their souls". In all these situations many people came to know peace with God and came to profess their faith in their congregations. Another great meeting was held on Glasgow Green on Wednesday, 24th August. The *North British Daily Mail* reported: " . . . prayers and addresses were characterised by great earnestness, appealing chiefly to the wretched condition of the unconverted, and exhorting them to fly from the dreadful doom which awaited them by seeking the pardon of God."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 223

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>22</sup> Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> Marrs, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

And so by the end of August 1859 the revival had taken root in Glasgow. *The Revival* reported:

The interest in the Lord's work is deepening in this city. The prayer meetings are increasing in numbers and fervency. There is a spirit of inquiry abroad among the people which is truly encouraging. The out-door meetings have been during the past week attended by large numbers of serious, attentive hearers, and deep impressions have been made on several . . . the . . . [progress] of the revival movement here at present is very cheering.<sup>24</sup>

Such was the impact of the revival in Glasgow that by the end of 1859 daily prayer meetings were begun by workmen of the Glasgow and South-Western Railway (70 attending) as well as other Railway companies. Likewise workmen in the Kingston Saw Mills held a prayer meeting after working hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Post Office officials and police personnel too, gathered in their workplaces for devotional purposes.<sup>25</sup>

## 5. The Revival as it continued after 1859

That there was a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit in Glasgow and beyond in 1859 is very evident. But it was no “flash in the pan”. The work continued unabated through 1860. Edwin Orr commented that “after a year of the movement, Glasgow was still enjoying ‘times of refreshing’.”<sup>26</sup> He went on to say that “. . . the interest wakened by the Glasgow Revival of 1859 was not on the wane twelve months later. Just as ‘approximately 20,000’ had gathered on the Glasgow Green at the beginning of the movement, a similar-sized crowd gathered on 6th September 1860.”<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile in 1860 the congregation of Bridgegate Free Church had been planted as an off-shoot of the Wynd Church and the minister, Dugald McColl, and several office-bearers and members were transferred to the new Church. The Church had been built – believe it or not – with a stone pulpit *outside* (there was of course also a pulpit *inside!*), specially provided for open-air services! Here is one report of what happened at Bridgegate at that time:

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>25</sup> Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

Every Sabbath evening since the Bridgegate Church was opened, the crowds around the stone pulpit have been increasing, until on Sabbath evening last, there could not have been fewer than 7,000 hearers, and probably more. . . .

At the close of the open-air service, an invitation is given from the pulpit to all who wish to come to a decision in the matter of religion to attend the prayer meeting. . . . Within ten minutes the church is generally packed, and, being seated for 900, it will receive probably upwards of 1,100 when thus crowded.

About ten o'clock, the meeting was brought to a close, and those only were asked to remain who wished conversation with the minister and other friends. About 500 waited including, of course, the friends of those who were in distress. This meeting continued till a quarter from twelve o'clock.<sup>28</sup>

In May 1860 all the General Assemblies or Synods of the main Presbyterian Churches made reference to the awakening of the 1859-60 period. In the Free Assembly, the Moderator, a Glasgow minister, Dr. Robert Buchanan, addressed the Assembly:

Two years ago, our Assembly was deeply stirred by the intelligence of what God was doing in the United States of America. One year ago the impression was deepened . . . the pregnant cloud had swept onwards and was sending down upon Ireland a plenteous rain. This year, the same precious showers have been and are now falling within the limits of our own beloved land. We as a Church accept the Revival as a great and blessed fact. Numerous and explicit testimonies from ministers and members alike bespeak the gracious influence on the people. Whole congregations have been seen bending before it like in a mighty rushing wind.<sup>29</sup>

The United Presbyterian Synod that same month “ . . . resolved to recognise the hand of God in the measure of new life poured upon our churches, and appointed the second Sabbath of July as a special Day of Prayer for the Revival”.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1860), p. 9ff. Quoted in Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> *United Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 4 (1860), p. 326. Quoted in Orr, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

The Revival touched all the Protestant Churches, though not all equally. Clifford Marrs has observed from his study of the situation in Glasgow that,

although all the denominations in Glasgow, apart from the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, were supportive of the movement, not all churches were involved. . . . In total throughout the duration of the movement 28 of the 40 Free Churches in the city, 13 of the 38 United Presbyterian Churches, 4 of the 6 Congregational/Independent Churches, 3 of the 39 Established Churches, 3 of the 6 Baptist Churches, 2 of the 3 Methodist Churches and 2 of the 3 Reformed Presbyterian Churches were used. None of the 4 Episcopalian Churches and none of the 7 Roman Catholic Churches were involved.<sup>31</sup>

These statistics are interesting. It is interesting how many Free Church congregations were involved, and of the other evangelical churches. The small number of Established Churches involved indicated just how “moderate” or “nominal” and “non-evangelical” their congregations generally were, even then. However, though some congregations of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches may have had little *direct* involvement, yet this does not mean the other congregations were not touched in some way by the general Revival movement. Marrs comments that 13 churches in Glasgow were used throughout the whole period of the Revival – from July 1859 to August 1861 – of which 10 were Free Churches, including the congregations of the Disruption ministers, Andrew Bonar at Finnieston and Alexander Somerville of Anderston.

After 1860 the concern for the continuing outreach of the gospel in Glasgow (and elsewhere in the country) was fuelled less from local ministers, congregations and evangelists, than through invited preachers from outwith Scotland. Not all were “untrained theologues” or laymen like Brownlow North – C. H. Spurgeon visited Glasgow for meetings in early 1861 – but most of them were. Notable among them was American E. Payson Hammond, who addressed many meetings in Glasgow and elsewhere in the spring of 1861. He addressed meetings in the churches most days – a daunting schedule. Included among these were Partick Free Church (minister, Rev. Henry Anderson), Bridgegate Free Church,

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<sup>31</sup> Marrs, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

Hope Street Gaelic Free Church, Duke Street Free Church, Milton Free Church, and one or two Established and United Presbyterian and Independent congregations.<sup>32</sup> The work of Hammond effectively “carried on” the revival movement. “E. P. Hammond,” reported the *Scottish Guardian* on 2nd March, “has been addressing revival meetings in Glasgow for the last ten days with manifest tokens of blessing . . .”.<sup>33</sup> Hammond is said to have spoken “. . . with terrible impressiveness . . . of the awful condition of the lost in hell”.<sup>34</sup> Much of this work was *in-reach* to existing church members or attendees. Bear in mind that church attendances in those days were considerable, not least in urban areas. However, one of the evident fruits of such *in-reach* was the bringing of spiritual life into congregations and mobilising many to engage in effective personal evangelism among the un-churched. Of Hammond’s work Jacob Alexander (Stockwell Free Church) is reported to have said to the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow that,

. . . during the last three weeks the good work has assumed quite a new aspect. . . . Formerly the religious awakening in Glasgow . . . [was] local, and confined almost exclusively to the humblest and poorest classes, but now it is a vast general religious movement, such as [has] . . . never [been] seen before, extending to all ranks, even to the wealthiest and the best educated in the West End . . . chiefly owing, under God, to that interesting and gifted stranger, Mr. Hammond, who has come lately among [us] . . . eminently owned of the Lord, especially among the more refined and educated circles.<sup>35</sup>

Apparently everyone who spoke at that Presbytery of 3rd April concurred. Some concerns, however, were expressed at over-dependence on “foreign help” in the Revival, with a reliance on visiting evangelists such as Payson Hammond, Reginald Radcliffe, Henry Weaver and William Carter (the last three from England). The *Wynd Journal* of 13th April commented very interestingly:

Most of the churches to which Revival has come are as yet too dependent on foreign help. It has been in connection with the

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<sup>32</sup> See Marrs, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 287.

addresses of certain evangelists or converts that the awakening has commenced with them, and there is a danger of continuing to rely too exclusively upon these. There is, perhaps, also too much of advertising the men that are to take part in the meetings. There is a possibility of collapse when these remove. A great work went on in Edinburgh while . . . Radcliffe and . . . Weaver were labouring there, but immediately on their leaving the work seems, like a tide raised unusually high by a storm, to have retired within the old land marks. We are in danger of a similar result here. . . . We respectfully urge, therefore, upon brethren the necessity of carefully looking out, and cautiously making use of resources among themselves that may continue with them when temporary helps are withdrawn.<sup>36</sup>

This identifies a perennial problem with the work of the gospel in local churches and even denominations – the failure or inability to generate help from within congregations – a failure *in* congregations of willing service in evangelism – and a reliance upon people from “outside”, or simply the ministers themselves (and perhaps their families). There is no doubt, however, that one way or another, there were encouraging attendances throughout 1861 and a continuing responsiveness – and appetite and thirst – for the hearing of the gospel in large multi-denominational gatherings. Many were added to the Lord also that year.

As yet the Churches were not afflicted or infected by the liberal and modernist attitudes that came in the wake of the critical movement in biblical studies in the last quarter of the century and which effectively undermined in the public mind – and in their effect – the normative authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture as the infallible and inerrant Word of God. Liberal theology and modernism, with their critical views of the Bible, can demolish Churches, but cannot build them up. Who can base evangelism on doubts as to the authority of Scripture, especially on questions about the historical accuracy of the record concerning Christ and the nature of His person and work? It is simply not possible. In the later evangelistic work associated with Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey after their first visit to Scotland in November 1873, men with a liberal view of Scripture and a loose view of confessional subscription,

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 289.

such as Henry Drummond (1851-1897), associated with such efforts at evangelism. The trouble was – and is – that downgrade, of which Drummond was actually himself an instrument, does not sit well with evangelism. They are incompatible. Historically speaking, theologians in the “transition” of doctrinal downgrade who tried to maintain the evangelical religion not based upon the authority of an historically accurate Scripture have been the most dangerous of all influences in the Church. Such, for example, were Henry Drummond, George Adam Smith and James Denney in Scotland towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In a note in *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Iain Murray makes reference to C. H. Spurgeon’s view of Henry Drummond’s book, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, first published around 1880:

Spurgeon commends a criticism of Drummond’s book, entitled *The Strangest Thing in the World*, by Charles Bullock. ‘Mr. Bullock thinks that the strangest thing in the world is “*The Gospel with the Gospel omitted*” – and he rightly judges that the Drummond teaching is precisely that. . . . Mr. Bullock has done grand service by laying bare the device of deleting the atonement of Christ with the idea of promoting the imitation of Jesus.’<sup>37</sup>

Such subtle – if unwitting – undermining of evangelical religion in Scotland at least was not present in the earlier period of awakening we are considering here.

Such meetings, in churches and public places in Glasgow, continued through 1861 with considerable interest. United prayer meetings were still common and the interest in salvation and eternal things was, apparently, still obvious and notable and continued, though with some abatement, into 1862. Five years after the initial outbreak of Revival it is clear that its effects and fruits were still being felt and experienced. One Presbytery report of late 1864 stated:

- (1) The Awakening had continued throughout the years and was not so much a completed period of Revival but rather the beginning of a better state of things in the spread of vital religion.
- (2) All classes came under its influence, and only at its earliest stages was it accompanied by much excitement.

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<sup>37</sup> Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (London, Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), p. 188. The quotation is from the *Sword and Trowel* (1891), p. 340.

(3) The agency was both lay and clerical, and the method both united prayer and expository preaching.

(4) The Revival had resulted in the quickening of believers, the increase of family religion, the decrease of cases of discipline in all the congregations since 1859.<sup>38</sup>

These are very real evidences of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. The work was largely church-based; it was not accompanied with extreme or charismatic phenomena, nor the attractiveness of musical performance or entertainment. There was a significant emphasis throughout on man's miserable state in sin, the necessity for deep conviction and repentance for sin, the realities of death and eternity, heaven and hell, and the free offer of Christ as Saviour was pressed upon sinners as the way of peace for their souls.

## **6. Strengths and weaknesses in the Revival**

Someone has said that where the Lord builds His Church the devil erects a Chapel! In July 1862 the *Wynd Journal* reported that “. . . it must be confessed, [that] a wide-spread disposition to go back to the old order of things, to less earnestness, fewer prayer meetings, [and] diminished expectations . . . [has set in]”.<sup>39</sup> Though the “Revival” in terms of real quickened interest in the soul's salvation and claims of the gospel of Christ might be said to have come to an end, there is no reason to doubt the true fruitfulness for the gospel in that period of great ingathering in the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland. It was not some light, superficial movement. Work went on in the Churches afterwards, though it was arguably true in Scotland what was true in the generation after Joshua's death: “there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim” (Judges 2:10-11). A. B. Davidson, the architect in Scotland of the newer biblical criticism, became a teacher in Old Testament in the Free Church College in Edinburgh in 1863. A new day would dawn under the influence of such as Davidson which would undermine the whole fabric of evangelical religion in the land, though not of course all at once, but bit by bit. But what can we say about

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<sup>38</sup> Orr, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Marrs, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

strengths and weaknesses from the Revival work of 1859-1862? There are several areas to look at:

**(1) *The acceptance of lay preachers***

There was – and is – a danger in this, no doubt. Yet what William Cunningham said to Brownlow North on his acceptance as evangelist at the Free Assembly of 1859 appears to be perfectly sound:

The General Assembly has come to this decision, I believe, in full knowledge, and on deliberate consideration. I concur heartily with the grounds on which this judgement has been adopted. I never could see the warrantableness of any Church of Christ venturing to lay down a resolution that she would not see, and would not recognise, gifts for preaching or for the ministry, except in men who had gone through the whole of the ordinary curriculum. No Church has a right to lay down that rule. The Church has not laid down that rule, and I trust never will. The Church must lay herself open to exceptional cases, to mark God's hand, and to make a fair use and application of what He has been doing.<sup>40</sup>

This appears to have been a widespread view in Scottish Church history from Reformation times both in urban and, perhaps especially, in rural areas. The allowance of gifted elders and other lay missionaries to “stand in the breach” where there was a shortage of ordained ministerial supply has been common practice within the Scottish Church and not, it has to be said, without evident divine blessing.

**(2) *The issue of ecumenism***

It might also be argued that the co-operation among Churches that became such a feature of the Revival period encouraged a “casting of a blind eye” upon theological differences between the Churches. That might have been the case. Though some might argue that it acted as a spur in the moves for union between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church from 1863, the observation has been made that “It should be noted that the ecumenism which did occur was only amongst evangelically-minded, pro-revival churchmen”, and “with respect to the union negotiations entered into by the FC and UPC in 1863, no primary or secondary source identifies the revival as influential”.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, it is

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<sup>40</sup> K. Moody Stuart, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>41</sup> Marrs, op. cit., p. 341.

notable that some of the Free Church men in Glasgow who were so happy to co-operate with evangelical brethren from other Churches, were strongly opposed to the union moves mentioned. Such, for example, were Andrew Bonar (Finnieston), Samuel Miller (St. Matthews), Alex Cumming (Gorbals), and Alexander S. Patterson (Hutchesontown), to name but a few. It cannot therefore be said that any “ecumenism” of the Revival movement was instrumental in the progress of the union movement. At the same time there was a common recognition that where the bases of the Churches’ positions were genuinely biblical and evangelical such a Revival work would not be confined to one Church over against another.

### **(3) *The question of theology***

It is true that there were no great theological issues or disputes in connection with the Revival of 1859-1862. There was at that period greater consensus than there was later at the time of the Moody-Sankey missions. Moody and Sankey could not be said to be overt Calvinists, though Andrew and Horatius Bonar seemed happy that they were orthodox enough. In that opinion they were arguably a bit naïve. As Kenneth Ross commented: “Historically the judgement of [Horatius] Bonar that Moody’s teaching was thoroughly Calvinistic may well seem naïve since the campaign now appears to have been a turning point in the transition from the old Calvinism to a less doctrinal Evangelicalism with quite different emphases.”<sup>42</sup> Drummond and Bulloch suggested that the Free Church among the Scottish Churches was “most affected” by the Moody/Sankey campaigns, and further suggested that “the campaign revealed that the reign of Calvinism in the Free Church was ending and a less doctrinal and more emotional evangelicalism taking its place”.<sup>43</sup> But such as the Bonars were hopeful that that work might “turn the tide” of downgrade in evangelical religion which so burdened them. They would not have calculated that that work would loosen the historic Calvinism to which they were committed. In relation to the earlier 1861-2 period there was, however, a tendency towards a “big names” approach to speakers at revival meetings. This perhaps set an

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<sup>42</sup> Kenneth R. Ross, “Calvinists in Controversy: John Kennedy, Horatius Bonar and the Moody Mission of 1873-74”, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1991), p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Church in Late Victorian Scotland, 1874-1900* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 14.

unfortunate trend for the future, notwithstanding that the gifts of men for speaking in such situations does require to be acknowledged. In more recent times Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones, for example, always had great “drawing-power” for rallies in the 1950s through to the 1970s in our post-War period. But as far as the earlier revival work was concerned, it is interesting that in 1860 in a preface to the second edition of a volume on the American Evangelist Asahel Nettleton (1783- 1844) – *Nettleton and his Labours* – Andrew Bonar wrote this:

Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, have been, during the past year, the theatre of the Spirit’s mighty works, in a way not inferior to what was witnessed in the time of Nettleton. And let us not fail to note that the very same Calvinism which was wielded so effectually by Dr. Nettleton in his day, amidst the scenes of revival wherein he was used as an instrument, has been used in our day, and in our land, by the Great Head of the Church, who is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins”. Who can say that Calvinistic doctrine has clogged the wheels of the chariot, when he casts his eye over the churches in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, where these have been the truths believed and proclaimed, while the Holy Spirit has come down in power and majesty?<sup>44</sup>

A clear strength of the 1859-1862 Revival was that at least for by far the greater part it involved no diffuse theology, nor any compromise with Liberalism, Arminianism or Romanism. It was basically a theologically sound Revival work.

#### ***(4) The impetus to hymn-singing***

It is true that the United Presbyterians had a hymn book from 1851, and the Church of Scotland first allowed hymns in 1861. In the case of the Church of Scotland, that arguably owed more to the innovations and agitations of Dr. Robert Lee (1804-1868) and the “moderate/ritualist” influences in the Established Church than any impetus from the Revival, from which they would have been quite distanced. Clifford Marrs, however, does say that “as regards the hymn-singing . . . the revival was highly influential. It helped relax attitudes so that these were more readily acceptable.”<sup>45</sup> At that time, however, especially in the Free

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<sup>44</sup> Majory Bonar, op. cit., p. 528.

<sup>45</sup> Marrs, op. cit., p. 341.

Church, there was some strong resistance to adopting song of merely human composition and there is no evidence that the Revival was particularly instrumental at that point in leading the Free Church to change its proscription of hymns. No doubt the moves for union with the United Presbyterians a few years later (from 1863) did provide impetus for such a change given that the United Presbyterian Church already had moved from the strict “regulative principle” of worship that had prevailed in Scottish Presbyterianism by and large up to the middle of the nineteenth century.

On the face of it, one strength of the 1859 Revival was that there was no notable employment of a methodology of “attraction” or “entertainment” which became common, for example, in the Moody-Sankey missions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century<sup>46</sup> and in twentieth century “Campaign Evangelism”. It is clear that there were areas of the country, not least in the north of Scotland, in which the Revival made an impact spiritually where there was no particular inclination to move from unaccompanied psalmody in Church praise. What is not in doubt, however, is the fact of a widespread, largely Church-based movement of revival in both urban and rural areas of Scotland and beyond in 1859 and the years immediately following. It was, indeed, arguably the last evangelical movement to have such a widespread impact for the true gospel in Scotland.

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<sup>46</sup> Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, the American evangelists, conducted missions’ work in the United Kingdom in 1873-75, 1881-82, and 1891-92, visiting Scotland on each occasion.