




WHAT IS REVIVAL?

Should Brethren in the Lord Pray for Revival?



B.P. Harris

What is Revival?

*Should Brethren in the Lord
Pray for Revival?*

B.P. Harris

Assembly Bookshelf
Sacramento

All Scriptures are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

“Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.”

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some Scriptural texts are sourced from: BibleWorks™ Copyright © 1992-2008 BibleWorks, LLC. All rights reserved. BibleWorks was programmed by Michael S. Bushell, Michael D. Tan, and Glenn L. Weaver. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Heather Harris

These books are free as the Lord provides. Please limit one per household. They are available from:

(Please note – At this time, this book is only available in digital format from—www.silicabiblechapel.com)

Assembly Bookshelf
P.O. Box 15086
Sacramento, CA 95851 USA

This book may be freely copied, duplicated or printed in any form, digital, paper, or any other format, in part or in whole—but if desired in part, only if reference is made to the whole. Permission is hereby freely granted—as long as it remains free. It may also be freely downloaded for use on one's website as long as this notation is included.

Copyright © 2019 by the Author

Assembly Bookshelf

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The Testimony of Earlier Brethren	14
Testimony of George Müller & J. G. Bellett	14
Testimony of Three Brethren Evangelists	18
Testimony of D.L. Moody & C.H. Spurgeon	20
What is Revival?	22
I. Biblical Basis of Revival	22
What did “Revival” Mean to a 19 th Century Christian?	23
Is the Word Revival Used in Scripture?	24
II. Biblical Means of Revival	34
Revival by the Word of God	34
A Digression	40
Revival in the Way of God	55
III. Biblical Purpose of Revival	70
Revival of Truth	73
The Wycliffe Movement	74
The European Reformation	77
The English & Scottish Reformation	79
The Baptist Movement	91
The Methodist Movement	128
A Digression	139
The Brethren Movement	153
A Digression	197
Revival of Witness	205
Concluding Thoughts	227

Introduction

When one studies Church history over the centuries, especially during those times called the Dark Ages, one sees that many times when Christian leaders were confronted with problems within the Church, or when they were confronted with difficulties that might arise, either from within or without, they would use human wisdom to form human solutions, which would then be robed in religious garb, to elicit changes, using human strength, so as to solve the problems, or to confront the difficulties in the Church. They would elicit those changes in the Church to make the Church more “attractive” to the world or to the particular culture in which they existed.

This same thinking has even continued up to present times, albeit in Churches which are now more evangelical in nature than the Churches in ages past. And, today, because they are more evangelical in nature, the problem of dwindling attendance has become a major area of concern for them (unlike the Church of ages past, which automatically considered the local populace to be in the Church, simply because they adopted the doctrine of baptismal regeneration).

As such, this problem of dwindling attendance has caused consternation among many Churches, from some of the old mainline denominations, to the smallest of Assemblies gathering in the Name of the Lord (and rightly so, for we should all pray for, and be concerned for, the salvation of lost souls), but, unfortunately, in some cases, the same old solutions of human wisdom, robed in religious garb (and, in some cases, today, now in worldly garb), are carried out by human strength, and natural talent, so as to attract more people into the Church, albeit, now using a different garb than the Church of ages past, but a religious and worldly garb, nonetheless.

In one sense, one could say that human skills are still being brought into the work of the Lord to elicit change. Human wisdom and understanding, colored with Christian nomenclatures and terminology, are being introduced to make the Church more palatable and exciting to those who are lost. Of course, such thinking is easily implemented with the natural powers and talents of the human soul. Moreover, the same mindset has even spread, in some cases, to solve certain problems of sanctification that also confront the Church.

Human wisdom, gleaned from the studies of human behavior, along with the attractiveness of worldly philosophies are routinely Christianized by Christian leaders, and then used, supposedly, to help the saints mature and grow in the Lord. But is that not the very problem?—the solutions are not spiritual solutions that would solve the problems, and then lay a solid foundation for the next generation, and then even for the next generation, but are now simply soulical solutions that might last but for one generation, if even that.

In other words, the result of such solutions is not the saints maturing as they should, but rather, in many cases, the opposite of that—the saints growing even more soulical in their thinking.

Indeed, some of the Churches, from those older mainline denominations, are even becoming more soulical and carnal, and, indeed, sinful in some of their teachings and practices, than that even of the Roman Catholic Church (if that is even possible) out of which they came during the Reformation. And, unfortunately, what we also see happening is that some evangelical Churches are now starting down the same path that the old mainline Churches started down some hundred years ago, which, if the path is not changed, will more than likely lead to the same destination that some of those old mainline Churches have arrived at today. (And that is the danger, today, confronting some Assemblies that gather together in the Name of the Lord, for they are being

encouraged to follow the earlier path that some evangelical Churches started down some fifty years ago, that, unfortunately led them to that more dangerous path that many old mainline Churches have now been following for some time.)

This same type of mindset was manifested in Israel during those times of distress in her history after the kingdom was divided under Rehoboam—and look what happened to their subsequent generations. During the subsequent reigns of the kings of Judah, whenever problems or threats would arise, they would use human wisdom and understanding to make worldly alliances with human solutions to solve their problems. They would even use money that had been set aside for service to God, to gain their desired end, purchasing treaties with surrounding nations, instead of trusting in God's power and strength to directly solve the problem or the difficulty.

Yet, even though such human solutions sometimes brought outward success (as it has done for some Churches today), it did irreparable harm to the spiritual well-being of the people, affecting them for generations to come.

And now this same mistake is being made by many Churches, not in the outward and physical means like Israel of old, but in those inward alliances made with worldly principles and philosophies (although in some cases, throughout Church history, outward and physical means have, indeed, been used when the Church made alliances with the State).

As such, Churches that were once strong in the Lord have now become weak. Evangelical Churches that once honoured truth, that is the Word of God, have now become Churches that have watered down truth, which is the Word of God, and so are becoming Churches that are in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit of God. And, unfortunately, we now find such mindsets are now spreading to many

Assemblies, which once relied only upon the presence of the Lord Jesus, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the complete sufficiency of God's Word.

Perhaps no one can address this issue better than our brother from the early days of the brethren in the 19th century, Anthony Norris Groves—

“Christ chose to appear among us as the carpenter's son of Galilee, although many may think that greater respect and regard would have been obtained for his people had he selected a more influential position. We know that his coming as a poor despised man was in the eyes of the Jews a great objection to his reception and that they could not endure that their Messiah should be a Nazarene, “an inhabitant of so mean a city as Nazareth.” But God the Father, whose ways are not as our ways, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, had before appointed his dwelling place and circumstances in life, well knowing what a stumbling block it would be to the proud nation of Israel.

Again, in the choice of his companions, our Savior manifested the same disregard of human influence. He selected not the wise, not the noble nor the learned! He passed by them all and took such unlearned and ignorant men as would bring upon him derision rather than respect. He chose also a publican whom they abhorred, and a woman whom they preeminently called a sinner, and thus in addition to the reproach of being a carpenter's son, they accused him of being the companion of publicans and sinners. But *see* how our adorable Lord rejoices in the Father's plan of salvation.

“I thank thee, Oh Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes—Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

The means of our Lord's incarnation and the methods of his ministry was no mere accident but were the result of the premeditated design of God, the wisdom of which Christ

could see, and which we should see also, if we were like-minded with Christ.

Let us next consider what influence our Lord exerted to gain converts. Was it by telling them how many great persons were his disciples and contributed to his support? When the rich came to him did he offer them a soft pillow? No—He gave them all but one bed to lie upon—“go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me.”

Did *we find Him watering down the demands* of the gospel *or using worldly ways* to win the half-hearted or hesitating inquirer? No: these are his declarations. He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God; and again, he that hateth not father and mother, sister and brother, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple—He even taught us that things of good report (and in other circumstances lovely) should be disregarded when a soul was to be saved, as he said to one who would delay a little to bury his father, “Let the dead bury their dead, but follow thou me.”

Moreover, does Christ teach us that riches *are* more influential in his kingdom than poverty? Certainly not. To human reason, I admit our Lord's words to the young man were doubly trying—it not only sent him away, but was naturally calculated to discourage all others of his class; but to those who see that the glory of this dispensation consists in the triumph of internal faith over a state of external humiliation, it is in harmony with all other parts of truth, and for an elect church, whose strength consists not in numbers but in purity, it was indeed a most precious ordeal, calculated to winnow away the chaff by its very principles, whereas *many methods today seek to embrace the chaff, and so bury the wheat.*

This disregard of all earthly influence was not accidental, as I have before observed, and to which I shall

now proceed to shew, from the writings of the apostle Paul, who goes at length into the question.

Let us read attentively, his observations on the purposes of God, relative to human means, in his first epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:17; I Cor. 2:1-2; I Cor. 3:18 to the middle of the 21st verse)...In these portions of the epistle, the apostle establishes the following positions...That he came to them intentionally without the wisdom of words; and for this reason, *for fear* the cross of Christ should become of none effect.

We see then the apostle's judgment concerning the value of that eloquence, which draws out large and crowded congregations of Greeks who revel in the wisdom of words. In his estimation, it would not *only* have been of no use, it would have rendered the preaching of the cross of Christ of none effect.

To have used such popular wisdom may have been successful—crowds may have thronged the door—the people may have come in multitudes—the Greeks may have had their food ¹—indeed, the preacher *may have even had* his praise: but the children of that kingdom, which is not in word but in power, *would have vainly sought* the bread of heaven or would have found it so *diluted* they would know it not.

And I am not aware of one single circumstance in the present position of the Church that does not make the principles laid down by the Apostles equally essential to her real power and prosperity...There is no conquering power in the Church but God; follow his path, and you must succeed; pursue a counter one and you must *ultimately* fail. If there be any conclusion which a Christian cannot fail to draw from these portions of Scripture which have led to these

¹ In other words, the desired pleasure of hearing a new message encased in those beautiful words of wisdom which the Greek people so enjoyed.

observations, it is this, that the Apostle is setting forth God's plan of establishing his Church, as directly opposed to the plans and principles that rule in the world.

But if you say that, other things being equal, that man will possess the most influence, which has the most intellectual power [i.e. natural talent], most wealth, or most *prestige*, you cause Christian influence to be propelled onward by precisely the same powers and principles that prevail in the world. Whereas the Lord puts his treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power, may be of God and not of men.

I know that ten thousand arguments, plausible and powerful in various degrees, may be brought against this view of the subject; but my simple answer is, the Lord hath spoken, what can I say? - The Lord hath acted, what can I do? Shall men be wiser than his Maker? Let us be content with our true dignity of being made children of God in Christ, who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Now, *let me state*, I give no opinion *as to* how far the cultivation of “natural talent” may be allowable or desirable for a Christian in the pursuit of a worldly vocation; but the moment he approaches “the burning bush,” let him lay aside these shoes, for it is holy ground -Jehovah is there!

However, it may be objected, that although the apostles *laid aside these shoes*, being poor and illiterate, they possessed miraculous power. This is true—but St. Paul declares that the ground of a minister's reception was, not his miracles, but the truth that he preached - so that if he or an angel from heaven came without this stamp to his Mission, he was to be rejected and held accursed.”²

² Anthony Norris Groves, *On the Nature of Christian Influence* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2008) pg. 28-34

And so we see, beloved, by our brother's words of exhortation, the solution to any problem that might arise in the Church is nothing but trust and reliance, not upon the power of man, but upon the power and life of God and His Word. This solution has always been the same in any dispensation, whether one considers the Old or the New Testament—the solution has always been faith and trust in God.

For example, when the prophet Habakkuk cried out to God because of the spiritual state of the nation, after he learned of the difficulty that was about to overtake them all, to what did he look? Did he look to human or soulical means to solve the problem? No, he looked to God for help. And what answer did the Holy Spirit give him? What solution did the Holy Spirit give him? He told him—“But the just shall **live by his faith**” (Hab. 2:4 NKJV). And so, with that answer before him, what was it that Habakkuk prayed, when he prayed to God? **He prayed for revival**—

Habakkuk 3:1-2 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. ² 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. KJV

The prophet knew that revival would strengthen one's faith. He knew that it would renew one's trust in God's love and faithfulness. With the revival of God, he knew that God would sustain all who put their trust in Him. In other words, he knew that if God “revived” them, they could *stand fast in faith* through any difficult situation, just as he mentions at the end of his prayer, when he declares—

Habakkuk 3:17-19a Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls:¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.¹⁹ The LORD God

is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. KJV

Worldly alliances, which might be made with other nations to forestall the invasion, was not the answer for Habakkuk as it had been to those kings before him. The answer for Habakkuk was *faith* and *trust* in the *power of God*.

This answer has never changed, beloved. It was the answer in the first dispensation “before” Adam and Eve fell, and it was still the answer in the second dispensation “after” Adam and Eve fell and were cast out of the garden. It was the answer in the third dispensation of human history, when Noah and his family were saved. And it was the answer in the fourth dispensation when Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, as well as the answer in the fifth dispensation when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and when David slew Goliath. And it is still the answer in the current dispensation of the Church wherein each Church is exhorted to hear “what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev. 3:22).

The answer has always been the same, but as in all the previous dispensations, God’s people so many times simply ignore that answer and, instead, seek human wisdom and human means to solve the difficulty or the problem—things they can see and feel and understand according to their own thoughts and human understanding. But who then gets the glory?

And so the answer to the question that is the title of this booklet, as to whether brethren should pray for revival, the answer would be—“Yes, indeed; we should all pray for revival, for revival will always restore and sustain our faith to meet any problem that might arise!” And in that way only God gets the glory!

When problems arise, or we fear dwindling numbers, we should not come together in a committee meeting to elicit

changes in accordance with our human wisdom and understanding; nor should we come together to figure out a solution we can implement by money and natural talents—rather, we should come together in a prayer meeting (much like the apostles did in Acts 4:23-31) and cry out to God to search our hearts, to try our reins, if you will, to see if there be any wicked way within us (Ps.139:23-24; Jer. 17:5-17).

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ **And see if *there be any wicked way in me***, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV

Jeremiah 17:5-13 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. ⁶ For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land and not inhabited. ⁷ **Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.** ⁸ **For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.** ⁹ The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? ¹⁰ **I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins**, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings. ¹¹ As the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and hatcheth *them* not; *so* he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool. ¹² A glorious high throne from the beginning *is* the place of our sanctuary. ¹³ O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and* they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. KJV

And then, with that prayer upon our hearts, this prayer should arise upon our lips—“Oh Lord, *revive Thy work in the midst of the years!*”

Revival has always been, and will always be the answer for all our needs (until our Lord returns), not human ideas based upon natural talent, along with human strength and human ingenuity. Why?—because revival brings the life of Christ to bear upon any problem, and Christ’s life is the eternal solution for every need, and always the right solution.

Are we not exhorted, by the Holy Spirit, to let Christ live His life in us (Gal. 2:20)? Well, beloved, “revival” is the means whereby the Holy Spirit will accomplish this in us, through the cross of Christ. We are crucified with Christ, so Christ can be “formed” in us (Ga. 4:19), so that He can live His life “out” through us, and solve every problem.

But “revival” will not come if we do not pray as Habakkuk, or as David prayed. It will not come if we do not heed the Word of God, as was given to Jeremiah during his difficult times. And it will not come if we do not imitate the apostle Paul, as he imitated the Lord, just as our brother Groves shared with us above.

Dullness of spirit can hinder revival. Lack of fidelity to God’s Word can hinder revival. Worldly thinking and philosophies can hinder revival. Human strength used to implement human solutions can hinder revival. God has given us all a free will, which means He allows our wills to hinder revival (just as happened to Israel of old—Jer. 6:16). But, by our Saviour’s grace, may that never be.

So with that in mind, beloved, let us answer the question in the title of this book—*What is Revival?*—by first examining the “Biblical Basis of Revival,” and then proceed to the “Biblical Means of Revival,” and then conclude with the “Biblical Purpose of Revival.”

But first let us offer some modern context by first looking at a few testimonies regarding the “revivals” of the 19th century from some of our earlier brethren.

The Testimony of Earlier Brethren

The Testimony of George Müller & J. G. Bellett

The Beginning of the Revival of 1859

“When I began the orphan work, one of the especial objects which I had in view was to benefit the church of Christ at large, by the accounts which I might be enabled to write in connection with this service; for I expected, from the beginning, to have many answers to prayer granted to me, and I confidently anticipated that the recording of them would be beneficial to believers, in leading them to look for answers to their own prayers, and in encouraging them to bring all their own necessities before God in prayer.

“As I expected, so it has been...In thousands of instances...believers have been benefited through them, being thereby comforted, encouraged, led more simply to the Holy Scriptures, led more fully to trust in God for everything; in a word, led, in a greater or less degree, to walk in the same path of faith in which the writer, by the help of God, is walking. The thousands of instances of blessing which have been brought before me during the past twenty-four years (for almost daily I have heard of fresh cases, and often of several in the same day), have only still further led me to earnestness in prayer, that the Lord would condescend to use these publications still more, and make them a blessing to many tens of thousands of his children, and to many tens of thousands of the unconverted.

“And now the reader will rejoice with me, when he reads what follows. I am the more led to relate the following, that the godly reader more than ever may be encouraged to prayer, and, also, that an accurate statement may be given of this fact, which has been already referred to in many public places **in**

connection with revival-meetings, and which likewise has been several times stated in print.

“In November, 1856, a young Irishman, Mr. James McQuilkin, was brought to the knowledge of the Lord. Soon after his conversion he saw my *Narrative* advertised. He had a great desire to read it, and procured it accordingly, about January, 1857. God blessed it greatly to his soul, especially in showing to him what could be obtained by prayer. He said to himself something like this: “See what Mr. Müller obtains simply by prayer. Thus I may obtain blessing by prayer.” He now set himself to pray that the Lord would give him a spiritual companion, one who knew the Lord. Soon after, he became acquainted with a young man who knew the Lord. These two began a prayer meeting in one of the Sunday schools in the parish of Connor. Having his prayer answered in obtaining a spiritual companion, Mr. James McQuilkin asked the Lord to lead him to become acquainted with some more of his hidden ones. Soon after, the Lord gave him two more young men, who knew the Lord previously, as far as he could judge. In autumn, 1857, Mr. James McQuilkin stated to these three young men, given him in answer to believing prayer, what blessing he had derived from my *Narrative*, — how it had led him to see the power of believing prayer; and he proposed that they should meet for prayer, **to seek the Lord's blessing upon their various labors in the Sunday schools, prayer meetings, and preachings of the gospel.** Accordingly, in autumn, 1857, these four young men met together for prayer in a small school-house near the village of Kells in the parish of Connor, every Friday evening.

“On January 1, 1858, the Lord gave them the first remarkable answer to prayer in the conversion of a farm servant. He was taken into the number, and thus there were five who gave themselves to prayer. Shortly after another young man, about twenty years old, was converted; there were now six. This greatly encouraged the other three who first had met with Mr. James McQuilkin. Others now were converted, who were also taken into the number; but only believers were admitted to these

fellowship meetings, in which they read, prayed, and offered to each other a few thoughts from the Scriptures.

“These meetings, and others for the preaching of the gospel, were held in the parish of Connor, Antrim, Ireland. Up to this time all was going on most quietly, though many souls were converted. There were no physical prostrations, as afterwards. About Christmas, 1858, a young man from Ahoghill, who had come to live at Connor, and who had been converted through this little company of believers, went to see his friends at Ahoghill, and spoke to them about their own souls and the work of God at Connor. His friends desired to see some of these converts. Accordingly, Mr. James McQuilkin, with two of the first who met for prayer, went, on February 2, 1859, and held a meeting at Ahoghill in one of the Presbyterian churches. Some believed, some mocked, and others thought there was a great deal of presumption in these young converts; yet many wished to have another meeting. This was held by the same three young men, on February 16, 1859; and now the Spirit of God began to work, and to work mightily. Souls were converted, and from that time conversions multiplied rapidly.

“Some of these converts went to other places, and carried the spiritual fire, so to speak, with them. The blessed work of the Spirit of God spread in many places. On April 5, 1859, Mr. James McQuilkin went to Ballymena, held a meeting there in one of the Presbyterian churches, and on April 11 held another meeting in another of the Presbyterian churches. Several were convinced of sin, and the work of the Spirit of God went forward in Ballymena. On May 28, 1859, he went to Belfast. During the first week, there were meetings held in five different Presbyterian churches, and from that time the blessed work commenced at Belfast. In all these visits he was accompanied and helped by Mr. Jeremiah Meneely, one of the three young men who first met with him after the reading of my *Narrative*. From this time the work of the Holy Ghost spread further and

further; for the young converts were used by the Lord to carry the truth from one place to another.³

“Such was **the beginning of that mighty work of the Holy Spirit, which has led to the conversion of many tens of thousands, and which is still going on even in Ireland, and the blessed results of which are still felt in Scotland, England, and other countries.** It is almost needless to add, that in no degree the honor is due to the instruments, but to the Holy Spirit alone; yet these facts are stated in order that it may be seen what delight God has in answering abundantly the believing prayers of his children.”⁴

—George Müller

“For the Lord has ever had both His ordinary and His extraordinary seasons, in the course of His dispensations; **and such extraordinary seasons may be well called “revivals...** such I believe to be the present. It may be but short--and that is according to precedent for the energies which signalized days of revival in Israel, whether while under their own kings...were but passing. I doubt not that some or much of what has been seen of late, in places where there has been

³ This was the footnote in the quote above: “Rev. Dr. Sawtell. in a letter to Dr. Wayland, remarks, “So scrupulous was Mr. Müller about stating the facts “correctly,” and so solicitous lest a wrong impression should be conveyed, or lest any statement of importance should be made on insufficient authority, that he sent to Ireland for Mr. McQuillkin who, at his request, came to Bristol. Mr. Müller there examined personally into the facts, and only on becoming satisfied of its verity, did he insert in his annual Report for 1860 the statement in regard to the connection between his Narrative and the commencement of the Irish revival.”

⁴ George Müller, *The Life of Trust: Being a Narrative of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller* (Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, New York, 1898) Pg. 429-33

remarkable awakening of souls, may have come from... from the direct power of the enemy; for as to this last, we are not ignorant of his devices...At times...he will combine with an energy of God, for the purpose of neutralizing it, or bringing it into question and discredit...Whatever measure of these things may be in the present manifestation, still this leaves the work itself as God's work, of which I have no doubt. Surely it bears upon it the broad seal of His own precious power. We ought to have a heart for such a time...May every expression of His grace now in the salvation of sinners be only a fresh reason with the hearts of His saints, to wait for and long for the coming day of His glory!"⁵

—J.G. Bellett

The Testimony of Three Brethren Evangelists

"The Word declares that '*whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*' Now there is large scope in these words; the Lord Jesus has not restricted us to any particular object. But *whatsoever ye desire*,—first there is to be a desire, and I believe the Spirit Himself places that desire in our souls; and then we are to pray, for the Lord will be inquired of; then we are to believe, and all things are possible unto them that believe.

"Beloved friends in Christ, **have you a desire to see the Lord's work revive** in your own town or family? Would you like to see sinners crying out for mercy and made heirs of glory? Do you desire to see the arm of the Lord awake, and miracles of mercy wrought in this your day? If so, thank God there is the first thing, '*whatsoever ye desire.*'

⁵ John Gifford Bellett, *A Few Words on the Present Revival* (BibleTruthPublishers.com, Addison, Il) pg. 13-15, 19

“Now Christ said, ‘*whatsoever ye desire when ye pray.*’ When and for how long ought I to pray, is the next question. Did not Jesus say, ‘*Men ought always to pray*’...Pray alway, means whenever I can get a moment with the Lord. At my work; in the house; at home or abroad; on my knees or on my feet; in my bed or at my business, pray always, and faint not, for in due time we shall reap. When ye pray, plead and wrestle with the Lord for that which is upon your soul, whatsoever it may be. **If it be a revival of the gospel, pray for that.** If you desire the conversion of your relatives, pray for that. Whatever good you really desire, pray for it. There is no limit to your prayers if the things asked for be really desired.”⁶

—Henry Moorhouse

“A **Revival must be known by an increased desire for the preached Word**; by a deeper interest in the ordinances of the Church; by the growth of earnest, believing prayer, private and public; by an increase in the manifest fruits of the Spirit in the minds of believers, such as faith, joy, love, peace, holiness of life, and spirituality of mind; by the solemn awakening and true conversion of dead souls; by a tender life and freer vigour in preaching Christ and speaking of Christ; by a deepening sense of the value of souls, and a corresponding effort for their salvation.”⁷

—J. Denham Smith

“Dear brother in Jesus our Lord, You will be rejoiced to hear **that the great work of revival is going on**...the days are evil,

⁶ Geo. C. Needham, *Recollections of Henry Moorhouse, Evangelist* (F. H. Revell, Chicago, 1881) pg. 54-55

⁷ J. Denham Smith, *Winnowed Grain: or Selections from the Addresses of J. Denham Smith* (S. W. Partridge, London, 1862) pg. 24

and the Church apparently asleep; but I trust and believe the Lord will yet grant a great revival shower of his grace and truth yet once before his coming; else why the droppings of prayers and aspirations, and ardent desire and hope? ⁸

—John Hambleton

The Testimony of D. L. Moody & C. H. Spurgeon

“Let us pray that **we will have a Scriptural revival**, and if we preach only the Word in our churches ...we will have a revival that will last to eternity. Let us turn back to one of the Old Testament revivals, when the people had been brought up from Babylon. Look at the eighth chapter of Nehemiah: ‘And Ezra, the priest, brought the Law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month, and he read therein, before the street that was before the water gate, from morning until midday, before the men and women and those that could understand, and the ears of the people were attentive unto the Book of the Law.’ No preaching there, he merely read the Word of God—that is, God’s word—not man’s. A great many of us prefer man’s word to that of God. We are running after eloquent preachers—after men who can get up eloquent moral essays. They leave out the Word of God. We want to get back to the Word of God... As we see in the twenty third chapter of Jeremiah: ‘Is not my Word like as a fire, saith the Lord, that breaketh the rock in pieces?’ Those hard, flinty rocks will be broken if we give them the word of God... It seems to me if we had more of the Word of God in our services and give up more

⁸John Hambleton, *Buds, Blossoms, and Fruits of the Revival: A Testimony to the Great Work of God in these Last Days* (Morgan & Chase, London, 1870) pg. 38

of our own thoughts, there would be a hundred times more converted than there are.”⁹

—D. L. Moody

“My heart is glad within me this day, for I am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness, **by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States**...It has rushed across the land, and of it men have said, “The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but we can not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.” What is, then, the cause? Our answer is, **if a revival be true and real, it is caused by the Holy Spirit, and by him alone.**”¹⁰

—C. H. Spurgeon

⁹ D. L. Moody, *New Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers* (Henry S. Goodspeed & Co., New York, 1877)pg. 348-350

¹⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons Preached and Revised by The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon* (Sheldon and Company, New York, 1859) pg. 336-339

What is Revival?

I. The Biblical Basis of Revival

A hundred and fifty years or so ago it was common to ask God to send a revival to His Church. And, in answer to that prayer, God did send revival, not only in the United States, but also in England and Ireland.

This Revival, which we referenced above, and which we provided the testimony of earlier brethren regarding it, became known as the Revival of 1859.

It was during that time that many gifted evangelists went out from the Assemblies to preach the Gospel to lost souls. Henry Moorhouse, J. Denham Smith, John Hambleton, who were quoted above were some of those brethren evangelists. They understood the importance of God sending revival in His Churches so that the Gospel could go forth in the demonstration and power of the Spirit, as did D. L. Moody and Charles Haddon Spurgeon who were also quoted above. They all were mightily used by God to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to many souls in need of salvation.

During that time in the history of the Church there was great fervor throughout the land; it was quite common to see prayer meetings spring up everywhere, specifically set aside for the purpose of praying for revival. They all understood its importance, but what exactly did the word “revival” mean in the mind of those believers who were praying?

We will seek an answer to that question in a two-fold way. First—“What did that English word mean to an evangelical Christian from the Nineteenth Century?” And, second—“Is the word “Revival” used in Scripture?”

What did “Revival” Mean to a 19th Century Christian?

To answer this question, we must look to the English language, since we are speaking of Revivals in England, Ireland, and the United States. Therefore, let me simply provide a few definitions of that word, and its verbal form “revive,” from different English dictionaries published in that time period, in order to show what was in the mind of a Christian when they used that word. In this way we can see if their understanding of the word is found in Scripture.

“**Revival**, n. 1. Return, recall, or **recovery to life from death** or apparent death. 2. **Return** or recall to activity from a state of languor. 3. Recall, return, or **recovery** from a state of neglect oblivion, obscurity, or depression. 4. **Renewed** and more active attention to religion; an awakening of men to their spiritual concerns.”¹¹

“**To Revive**, re-vive', v. a. **to bring to life again**; to raise from languor, insensibility, or oblivion; **to renew**, to recollect, to bring back to the memory; **to quicken**, to rouse...”¹²

Revive, ré-vive'. v. a. **To bring to life again**, renew, **restore**, rouse.-v. m. **return to life**.¹³

¹¹ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (J.B. Lippincott & Company Publishers, Philadelphia, 1857) Pg. 854

¹² John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, and Expositor of the English Language* (Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh, 1843) pg. 439

¹³ John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, and Expositor of the English Language* (William Bradford, Philadelphia, 1822) pg. 310

From these three dictionaries we can begin to see how a 19th century English speaking Christian would understand the word in both its nominal and verbal form. We can see a number of key words were used to characterize the noun and the verb, such words as “return,” “recovery,” “renew,” “quicken,” “to bring to life again,” and “restore.”

As such, an English speaking Christian could just as well call a “revival,” a “recovery,” or a “renewal, or a “quicken,” or a “bringing to life again.” Consequently, they could just as well ask the Lord to send a “recovery” to the Church, or a “renewal” to the Church, and that would be no different than asking the Lord to send a “revival” to the Church.

But this is the English language and not the language of Scripture, which is fine, if that English word was used to translate an underlying Hebrew or Greek word, which, of course, brings us to our next question.

Is the Word Revival Used in Scripture?

To answer this question we must go back to the Old Testament. Now, as with all things from the Old Testament, we must be careful to maintain the distinction between Israel and the Church—Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel or, what some would call—spiritual Israel. The two are not the same. Nevertheless, we must never forget that many things written in regard to Israel were also written for our instruction, as Paul says in his epistle to the Corinthians—

I Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them *as* types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. (Darby’s Translation)

As such, when we realize this, we can see all these equivalent designations and definitions of revival that we

mentioned above are found in the Old Testament. Just because we may not find the actual word “revival” in our English version of the Bible does not mean the doctrine or principle behind the word is not found in Scripture. It simply means a different English word may have been used to translate the original word that, indeed, did speak to that doctrine or principle.

For instance, one will not find the English word “omnipotent” in today’s modern versions of the Bible. But that should not necessarily make one conclude that “omnipotence” is not a Biblical doctrine. It could be that translators of the newer versions of the Bible, simply decided to translate an original Hebrew or Greek word, which did refer to that doctrine, by another English word, which, of course, is exactly what happened. If one looks back further in time to the King James Version or the Geneva Version, etc., one will, indeed, find the word “omnipotent” in Scripture (e.g. Rev. 19:6).

Thus, we can see that just because the English word “omnipotent” does not appear in modern versions does not mean that the doctrine behind the word is not a Biblical doctrine. It simply means modern versions chose to translate the underlying Greek word that bespoke that doctrine by a different English word. In this case many modern versions chose to translate it by the English word “Almighty” (e.g. NASB). So in that sense, to say that God is “Almighty” is the same as saying that God is “Omnipotent.” It simply is a different way of designating a Biblical doctrine by a different English word.

Another example of this is the English word “rapture.” It is not found in the King James Version, nor is it found in most modern versions. But even though that word is not found in our Bibles, it does not necessarily mean the word refers to a non-biblical doctrine. The doctrine behind the English word is most certainly found in in our Bibles in such

verses as I Thess. 4:17. In fact, in accordance with the English meaning of “rapture,” one could have just as easily translated the Greek word ἀρπάζω (caught up), used in I Thess. 4:17, by the word “raptured.” Then the King James Version would have read—“Then we which are alive and remain shall be raptured up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” If that had been the case, and it had been read that way for over four hundred years, I do not think anyone would ever question whether “rapture” was a Biblical word!

And so, since the English word “revival,” or “revive” is defined by such words such as “recovery,” “renew,” “quicken,” or “bring back to life,” it may very well be in certain cases, that when those other English words are found in certain verses it might just as well be translated by the English word “revival” or “revive” (i. e. if warranted by the context).

For example, Psalm 80:18 in the KJV reads—“So will not we go back from thee: **quicken** us, and we will call upon thy name.” Quicken was one of the words used in the dictionaries above to define “revive.” As such, since “to quicken” and “to revive” can be synonymous, we see in the NASB, they chose the word “revive” to translate the underlying Hebrew word in the text—“Then we shall not turn back from Thee; **Revive** us, and we will call upon Thy name.” And there are other examples like this as well.

So with this in mind let us examine a few other places in Scripture where the English word “revive” or “revival” might be used in the same way as an alternate and appropriated translation of an underlying Hebrew or Greek word in the LXX.

In the book of Lamentations, we can see that Jeremiah speaks of being “renewed” in Lamentations 5:21, which, as we saw above is another nuanced meaning of the English word revival—

Lamentations 5:21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; **renew our days as of old.** KJV

So, in this sense, and in accordance with this context, “revive” could also be seen as a form of “renew.” In other words, if in English the word revive can carry the nuance of renew (which it does) then one could accurately understand the phrase as a prayer to revive their days as of old. In other words, it shows that Jeremiah is longing for their state of existence, represented by their days of old, to be revived by God so that their state of existence might become, once more, like it was before they backslid from God.

John Trapp, the godly Puritan who lived during the English Reformation made this comment on the verse: “Let there be a thorough **reformation** wrought in us, and then a gracious **restoration** wrought for us.”

And so we see, if a translator wished to use the word “revival” with its meaning of renewal in this verse, the context would allow it.

Another example, where revival might be substituted in a verse that uses one of these synonymous meanings mentioned above, is that of Isaiah 58:8. The verse speaks of “recovery,” which Webster gives as the second definition of revival—*recovery* from a state of neglect oblivion, obscurity, or depression.¹⁴

Isaiah 58:8 Then your light will break out like the dawn, **and your recovery will speedily spring forth**; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. NASB

And so, one could just as well understand the passage as saying, “And your **revival** will speedily spring forth.” In

¹⁴ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (J.B. Lippincott & Company Publishers, Philadelphia, 1857) Pg. 854

this case it would be a revival of spiritual health. And this would fit in nicely into the context since it would be a fulfillment of the revival promised by God a few verses earlier in Isa. 57:15, as seen in the King James Version.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, **to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.** (Isa. 57:15 KJV)

Next, we have another example of quickening in Brenton's English Version of Ezra 9:9 in the LXX. In this verse we see "reviving," as translated in the KJV, referred to as a "quickenings." He translated the underlying Greek word as "quickenings," which Greek word was a translation of the underlying Hebrew word—

Ezra 9:9 For we are slaves, yet in our servitude the Lord our God has not deserted us; and he has extended favour to us in the sight of the kings of the Persians, **to give us a quickening**, that they should raise up the house of our God, and restore the desolate places of it, and to give us a fence in Juda and Jerusalem. (Brenton's Version of LXX)

And so again, we see that the English word "quickenings" can define that same thing as "revival." Thus, it would have been allowable to translate the phrase from the Greek into English as "to give us a revival," which would still be consistent with the Hebrew which was translated as "to give us reviving" in the King James Version as well as in the NASB.

And so, if we look at the previous verse, verse 8, where Brenton also translated the underlying Greek word as quickening, we see that the KJV translators also refer to it by the phrase "little reviving."

Ezra 9:8 And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a **little reviving** in our bondage. KJV

Moreover, if we look at the New King James Version of Ezra 9:8, we see that those translators actually rendered it by the English word “revival.”

Ezra 9:8 “And now for a little while grace has been *shown* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of **revival** in our bondage. NKJV

And so we see that doctrine of “revival,” and the doctrine of being “revived” is, indeed, found in Scripture. It simply is not as readily seen because translators chose to use such English words as *renew*, *recover*, *restore*, *quicken*, etc. to translate the original underlying word referring to the principle of revival.

Now, of course, that is not to say that every time one finds those words in Scripture one could simply substitute the word *revival* or *revive* in its place. That would be incorrect. As we said, context must allow it; there are many verses where those other words are used, where the word *revival* or *revive* would not be accurate and would actually give a wrong impression. But there are some verses where *revival* or *revive* could be used, and so would be an acceptable translation.

All this is being said to show, as with the example we gave of the word “rapture” and “omnipotent,” that simply because a certain word is not readily found in Scripture does not mean the underlying doctrine or principle is not found in Scripture. It might be a matter of translation. If the word had been used as a translation more often (where allowable)

perhaps the Biblical concept would be more understandable today.

Finally, let's examine the primary definition given for "revival" or "revive" from those three dictionaries mentioned above, and that is the definition "bring to life again."

This definition of revival is one of the most important definitions of all the meanings, for it brings us forward to the New Testament. If we really wish to understand how the concept of "revival" is Biblical and firmly rooted in Scripture, we need to look no further than to this phrase, "bring to life again." This definition shows us that the concept of "revival" is based in the very "resurrection" of our Lord!

Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and **revived**, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. KJV

Beloved, true revival is rooted in the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord, which means all "revival" in the Church must be based upon, and must proceed from, the resurrection life of Christ. Every true revival, recovery, renewal, reformation, or any other word that might be used to describe it, must be based upon His resurrection life, for true Revival is nothing more than a manifestation of the resurrection life of Christ in the Church.

Thus, we can see that "revival" is, in one sense, a "renewal" of one's walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), because through the resurrection of Christ we live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Revival raises a Church "from a state of neglect," unto a "state of life" that will reflect the reality and power of Christ's resurrection.

Resurrection life allows Christ to be formed in us, so that Christ Himself can then live His life out through us as can be seen in Gal. 4:19 and Gal. 2:20.

Galatians 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, (Gal. 4:19 KJV)

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20 KJV)

It “renews” our heart to walk by Christ, so as to not be conformed to this age we live in but, rather, to be “renewed” in the spirit of our mind.

Ephesians 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. KJV

And this is the crux of the whole matter. It is the reason why many Churches fall away from the Faith, why many Churches make compromises with the world, why many Churches find themselves allowing things, that a generation or two before, they would never have dreamed of allowing into the Church.

What has happened so many times is that, rather than seeking *revival* when those difficult times come, when spirits need to be renewed, when spiritual lives have been neglected, when discernment has become dull, we end up seeking other “things” to correct those deficiencies.

For example, we might use worldly “things” to draw people to come to hear the Gospel, rather than trusting the Holy Spirit to draw people to come to hear the Gospel of Christ. Or we might use natural talent and human ability to build the Church, rather than trusting in the revival of Christ’s resurrection life within us and the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit to build the Church. All this is the result of spiritual languor and apathy in our spirits, of not having Christ formed in us, by which we can live in the power of His resurrection. It is the result of not being able to say with the apostle Paul—“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20a).

The Church will never be able to experience “Revival,” if the saints in the Church are not willing to deny

themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him, if they are not willing to be conformed to His death so as to allow “Revival,” the power of His resurrection, to come forth and be manifested.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. NASB

II Corinthians 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ *We are* hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--¹⁰ **always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.** NKJV

When a Church finds it has left Christ as her first love, it needs “revival” (Rev. 2:4). When a Church has a name that it is alive, yet it is dead, it needs “revival” (Rev. 3:1). When a Church becomes so blind and self-deceived that it does not know it is lukewarm, it needs “revival” (Rev.3:16).

Revival is the answer for Churches in this dispensation of grace, just as revival was the answer for Israel under the dispensation of the Law. The resurrection life of Christ will always be the answer for the backsliding, pride, blindness, and spiritual apathy of man. Revival will always be the answer in any dispensation.

And so, in its primary sense, revival refers to Christians being recalled to life, being recalled to their life in Christ Jesus by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit through the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord. It refers to the Church being recalled from a state of dullness and spiritual indolence, into a state of love, witness, and spiritual power that is brought about by the filling and fullness of the Holy Spirit of God.

It is only when that occurs that we can begin to associate the word “revival” to the salvation of many souls, for when the Church is revived, when individual Christians are quickened by the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit fills them with the love of God the Father, who so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, only then will His love overflow from their renewed hearts to seek and to bring that salvation to all that are lost. It causes them to witness for Christ! That is the end result of revival!

And so we see that “revival” is indeed a Biblical doctrine, being firmly rooted in Scripture, but made known to us through its different shade of meanings, whether that be *recovery*, *renewal*, *restoration*, *quickening*, or a “*bringing back to life again*.” Revival is Christ being formed once again within our hearts, so that He can live His life through us, so that the power of His resurrection might be manifested to a dying world. Amen.

May we now look at a few verses where “revive” or some form of the word “revive” does not need to be inferred, but, instead is the common translation used by some translators (e.g. both the NASB and the NKJV). And it will be those verses that will help us understand the Biblical Means of Revival that the Holy Spirit has always used.

II. The Biblical Means of Revival

What are the means by which God will bring revival to His people? Scripture reveals to us that there are two major things that are associated with revival in Psalm 119—the Word of God, and the Way of God. Let us first look to the Word of God.

Revival by the Word of God

In Psalm 119:25 we see that David associated revival with the Word of God.

Psalm 119:25 My soul cleaves to the dust; **Revive** me according to Thy word. NASB

David loved the Word of God, and in Psalm 119 he asks the LORD to “revive” him in accordance to His Word. David treasured the promises in God’s Word. In fact the very first Psalm reveals to us a promise for one who meditates upon God’s Word day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; **and in his law doth he meditate day and night.**³ And **he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither;** and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. KJV

The Holy Spirit promises that those who meditate upon the Word of God day and night, refusing to follow the

wisdom of the world, refusing to stand in the way of sinners, refusing to associate themselves with those who deride the things of God, that they will be like trees planted by rivers of water. That is revival! The Holy Spirit is likened to a river of life in Scripture (Rev. 22:1; John 7:38). When we keep God's Word in our hearts and meditate upon His words continuously, God has promised to us a continuous "revival" of life, as one finds in the imagery of a tree being daily refreshed by rivers of water. Such a one will bear much fruit for God. This explains why revivals always result in souls being saved, even though, per se, revival refers to the Church and not to the unsaved.

And this is an important point that should be mentioned before we continue. Some people believe that Revival refers to many people being saved. That is not necessarily the case. Why?—because only those who have already been alive can be revived! The unsaved cannot be revived for they have always been dead in their trespasses and sin. In other words, they are dead until they are born again! Thus, it is the Church that can be revived, not the unsaved.

But, the reason why so many associate revival with the conversion of lost souls is that when God's people are revived, they are filled with the love of Christ and so are constrained to go forth and proclaim the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world! Thus, even though Revival is not directly linked to the unsaved, it is indirectly linked because God's people become filled to the brim with the love of God that is manifested in the Son and is affirmed by the Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel.

But, to return to our subject at hand, true revival can never come apart from the Word of God! If a Church does not preach the Word, it cannot be revived.

We can see this principle in the Old Testament; revival came to Judah once the Word of God was found in the

Temple and king Josiah had it read to him, as well as to all the people (II Chron. 34:14-33).

And it was through that revival that we are told the house of God was restored! The Temple, of course, was a type of the Church. And even though judgment would eventually come to Judah, during that revival the people of Judah remained faithful to the LORD throughout Josiah's reign (II Chron. 34:33).

II Chronicles 34:33 And Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve the LORD their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers. NASB

Beloved, whenever the Word of God is honoured and given its rightful place in our heart, it will become a means whereby God can revive us and bring revival to the Church!

Psalms 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction, That **Thy word has revived me.** NASB

This is why it is so important to have a faithful translation of the Bible. God will use the inspired words of Scripture to revive us. But the words of man that have been added to Scripture can never revive. It is His Divine words that are full of life! Indeed, when one gives God's people the words of men mixed with the words of God, they hinder true revival! The reason for this is self-evident. Only God's words are living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword (Heb. 4:12). Only His words are pure and tried (Prov. 30:5-6). Only words spoken by the LORD are spirit and life and so able to "quicken," to "revive" (John 6:63)!

Hebrews 4:12 For the **word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword**, piercing even to the dividing

asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. KJV

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every **word of God *is* pure**; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him. ⁶ Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. NKJV

John 6:63 It is the **spirit that quickeneth**; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.** KJV

And, as we saw, the English word, “quickenings” that is used in this last reference in John 6:63 is another word for “revival.” In fact, it is the participial form of the same Greek word used in LXX in Ezra 9:8-9 (also translated “quickenings” by Brenton) for the Hebrew word that the King James translators chose to translate into English by the word “reviving.” And so Jesus is saying that it is the Spirit that “revives,” and the Spirit does so through the Word of God, which words Jesus spoke, and which words the Holy Spirit moved men of God long ago to record for us in the Canon of Scripture.

The words of God are spirit and life and so they are words that revive the one who receives them. The words of men do not, and cannot, do the same. Just a few words of Scripture, spoken in the demonstration and power of the Spirit can be used by God to bring revival! But a thousand words created by man, spoken with all the natural talent and power a man can muster, will not be able to bring revival.

In this light, let me once more provide part of that observation made by D.L. Moody regarding true revival, because it such an important truth.

“If we preach only the Word in our churches ...we will have a revival that will last to eternity. Let us turn back to one of the Old Testament revivals, when the people had been brought up from

Babylon. Look at the eighth chapter of Nehemiah: ‘And Ezra, the priest, brought the Law before the congregation, both of men and women...and he read therein...No preaching there, he merely read the Word of God—**that is, God's word—not man's**. A great many of us prefer man's word to that of God. We are running after eloquent preachers—after men who can get up eloquent moral essays. They leave out the Word of God. We want to get back to the Word of God... It seems to me if we had more of the Word of God in our services and give up more of our own thoughts, there would be a hundred times more converted than there are.”¹⁵

And now let me provide a quote, regarding the same truth, from a sermon given by R. A. Torrey, who was a co-worker with D. L. Moody.

“I expect all of you that are at all thoughtful will notice this fact, that everything that I say the Word of God has power to do, Mr. Moody has told you that the Holy Spirit has power to do. The explanation of that is this: The Word of God is the instrument that the Holy Spirit uses. Everything that the Spirit of God does, He does through the Word of God, and it is absolute nonsense to talk about having the power of the Spirit unless you have the Word of God. There are a great many people to-day who magnify the Spirit of God and neglect the Word. What is the result? Fanaticism, enthusiasm, wild-fire; nothing permanent, nothing abiding, in it. And you will find other people who magnify the Word of God and neglect the living Spirit. What is the result—dead orthodoxy. And there is nothing in the world so dead as dead orthodoxy... While it is necessary that we be filled with the Holy Ghost, as you were told yesterday, if you are to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and to have any power through the Holy Ghost, you must be full of the Word of God.”¹⁶

¹⁵ D. L. Moody, *New Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers* (Henry S. Goodspeed & Co., New York, 1877)pg. 348-350

¹⁶ William R. Moody, Delavan L. Pierson, eds., *Northfield Echoes, Volume III: A Report on the Northfield Conferences for 1896* (E. S. Rastall, Northfield, 1896) Pg. 133

Why is this so important? It is important for true “revival” will not be able to come unless one is filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and one cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit of God apart from a walk by faith (cf. Gal. 3: 2-3 and 3:5); ¹⁷ and one cannot walk by faith apart from the Word of God, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God!

Romans 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. KJV

When one is filled with the Word of God, one is filled with the Holy Spirit. And I do not mean filled with the Word of God simply in our soul or mind, but filled with the Word of God down deep in our spirit or heart. Mere mental knowledge will puff up (I Cor. 8:1), but the Word of God hid in our heart by the Spirit, will be living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword and will pierce to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit. It will show us what needs to be forsaken in our life and what needs to be denied in our “self” life, so that the Holy Spirit can then flood our soul with His fullness.

Conversely, when one is filled with the Holy Spirit, one will be filled with the Word of God. Compare Eph. 5:18-19 with Col. 3:16.

¹⁷ The Greek word, variously translated in different translations as “ministereth,” “provides,” and “supplies” in Gal. 3:5, is a present participle and perhaps would be better translated as found in Young’s Literal Translation: “He, therefore, who is **supplying** to you the Spirit, and working mighty acts among you—by works of law or by the hearing of faith *is it?*” (Gal. 3:5). The filling of the Holy Spirit should be a continuous and daily activity. God is ever supplying to us the Holy Spirit, as a spring of living water, if we but obey Him, deny ourselves, take up our cross and walk by faith.

Ephesians 5:18-19 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. KJV

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. KJV

By these verses we can see how important the Word of God is in revival. If we would be filled with the Spirit, we must walk by faith, and if we would walk by faith, we must be filled with the pure Word of God, and if we are filled with the pure Word of God, i.e. the very words of God, we can then be revived!

A Digression

Perhaps, it is important to digress a little bit at this point and meditate a little more on the importance of having the pure Word of God by which we can seek to be revived. It is God's Words that will revive us, not man's words. And this is why an accurate and faithful translation is so important for revival.

Many modern translations are a hindrance to revival because they add, delete and change the pure Word of God in many places by their false theory of dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence claims to follow a so-called "thought for thought" method of translation, which to those who hold that theory, means a "phrase by phrase" translation, or in some cases a "sentence by sentence translation of the whole, in which they believe the overall thought of the phrase or sentence actually is able to subsist independently of each and

every word of the text, so that the “gist” of the text as a whole can be discerned and then communicated with different words, more words, or even less words than the original words given by the Holy Spirit.

But that ignores the basic structure of language as created by God, wherein the thoughts of God are discerned on a word by word basis, which together forms the structure of the sentence, which in turn can then, and only then, be understood by its combined meaning, context, and content!”

Scripture is a triunity of Language, Writings, and Message, and the one and common and same substantial quality of all three is thought. Language is made visible by communication, either verbal, written or sign; and, in the case of Scripture, it is made visible by written words, which are then understood as a message. Each and every word is a visible manifestation of an invisible thought. A word cannot exist without a thought. A single word is a thought expressed. Thoughts occur on a lexical level, not simply on a syntactical level. The NASB’s rendering of I Cor. 2:11-14 nicely brings out this correspondence between words and thoughts (wherein they construe πνευματικὰ with the things (ᾧ) i.e. “*thoughts*” of verse 11, and πνευματικοῖς with “words” (λόγοις) of verse 13).

I Corinthians 2:11-13 For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God,¹³ which things we also speak, not in **words** taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, **combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words**.

Darby’s rendering of Prov. 15:26 also shows a correspondence between “thoughts” and “words,” as does the KJV’s rendering of Ps. 17:3.

Psalms 17:3 “Thou hast proved my heart, thou hast visited me by night; thou hast tried me, thou hast found nothing: my thought goeth not beyond my word.” Darby’s Version

Proverbs 15:26 “The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.” KJV

One cannot divorce thought from words, because on its most basic level every human word is simply a visible expression of an invisible thought, which means every inspired word, chosen by God is an expression of a particular thought, which then must have a particular meaning, which with other words makes up the writings, which through context makes known the message of God.

Thus, the overall thought of a phrase or sentence, cannot be accurately conveyed as intended (with its every nuance and emphasis), without maintaining the thoughts that are expressed in each individual word. If one adds, deletes, or changes the words, one adds, deletes, or changes the thoughts, which in turn will add to, or subtract from, or change the message originally intended by God. You cannot accurately translate a phrase or sentence without following, as much as is possible, a complete equivalence theory of translation. (Sometimes a definite article from Greek is not translated into English, even in the most literal of translations, for they were not used the same way in English as they were used in Greek.)

A dynamic equivalent method of translation results in a mixing of man’s thoughts with God’s thoughts, because it mixes man’s words with God’s words. It is a denial of the full doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration of Scripture, although that will never openly be admitted by such translators. In reality, it is only an affirmation of Plenary Inspiration, if even that.

Why is this point so important? It is important because if our Bibles are a mixture of men’s words and God’s words, our Christian lives will be a mixture of men’s

thoughts, and God's thoughts, and our spiritual lives will be compromised (cf. Prov.23:7).

Dynamic Equivalence, as well as Optimal Equivalence purports to be a "thought for thought" translation, but it is not! If it truly was a "thought" for "thought translation," it would be a "word" for "word" translation. In reality, the real method that follows more closely a "thought for thought" method of translation is a complete or formal equivalent method of translation!

Each chosen word of Scripture in the Hebrew and Greek (and Aramaic) is a Divine Word. And words themselves are a manifestation of a thought! The words of language are nothing else than thought, symbol and meaning. An invisible thought becomes visible by a symbol (e.g. word, script, pictograms, sign language, etc.) and so the thought manifested in a symbol is understood by its meaning. Thus, a thought is evidenced by a chosen symbol to manifest that thought which would otherwise remain invisible and unknown to others.

In some languages, a thought may even be evidenced by just one letter, like an interjection (ὦ in Greek, "O" in English, e.g. in I Tim. 6:11), or a thought might be evidence by a number of letters combined into a word form. In any case, whether one letter or many letters, they each have a specific meaning. Each is full of thought in and of itself.

The words of Scripture, beloved, are carefully chosen words, spoken and written by many different authors, under the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so as to form the one Canon of Scripture. When you abandon the thoughts of the words, and try instead to glean the thoughts of a phrase or sentence by a dynamic equivalent theory of translation you add to, in some cases delete from, and in other cases change the very thoughts of God!

Modern versions which follow today's theory of dynamic equivalence are really nothing more than

paraphrases, although they are called translations. (Fifty years ago such Bibles were commonly called paraphrases, e. g. the Living Bible, but today, unfortunately, more often than not, they are not called such any more.) And what does it mean to paraphrase? Webster's Dictionary defines the verb as follows—

“PAR'A-PHRĀSE, v. t. To explain, interpret, or translate with latitude; to unfold the sense of an author **with more clearness** and particularity **than it is expressed in his own words.**”¹⁸

And in its nominal form they state—

“PAR'A-PHRĀSE, n. [Gr. παραφρασις.] An explanation of some text or passage in a book, **in a more clear and ample manner** than is expressed in the words of the author.”

And this is the problem with a dynamic equivalent method of translation which believes a thought for thought translation is a phrase for phrase translation. Such a translation cannot accurately convey all the thoughts of God. By definition, as seen above, being a paraphrase, it is saying the chosen words of the author are not clear enough to clearly communicate the message. Now, for an author that is fallible, that might be true (but even in this there is respect for the original works of the author, no matter how difficult it might be to understand). For example, Shakespeare was fallible, and for some readers his works are difficult to read and understand. But out of respect for the integrity of his works, most would feel aghast at changing his words and phrases into contemporary English. But, be that as it may, there still would be nothing intrinsically wrong with doing so, if one wished to do so, for his words are not divine.

¹⁸ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1857) pg. 715

But for an Author that is infallible, for one to feel He is not being clear enough, and so is in need of having his words altered, added to, or deleted is in reality quite arrogant! (And, of course, the only author in the universe that is infallible and perfect is God!) It disallows the fact that God may have chosen to purposely write a difficult passage because He desires the reader to pause, and to meditate upon the passage, humbly seeking and waiting for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to enlighten his or her heart. To ignore the right of an infallible and perfect Author to compose his work exactly as He wishes, is really quite presumptuous!

Another definition of the verb to paraphrase shows even more so the true nature of a paraphrase, and, as such, many Bible versions today that choose to follow a dynamic equivalent method of translation. Samuel Johnson in his dictionary defines paraphrase as follows—

“To PA’RAPHRASE, par’ra-fraze, r. a. to interpret with laxity of expression; to translate loosely.”¹⁹

An example of this can be shown from a comparison of John 3: 5 taken from a modern translation of God’s Word that follows a dynamic equivalent theory of translation, and so by one who thinks it is fine to add, delete and change God’s Word in accordance with their own wisdom and understanding, with John 3:5 taken from a modern translation that follows a complete equivalent method of translation, believing a translation should preserve as much as possible in translation the exact wording used in the original. Here are the two versions compared.

“Jesus said, “You’re not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the ‘wind

¹⁹ Samuel Johnson, *Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language* (John Williamson and Co., London, 1839) pg. 676

hovering over the water’ creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom.” (The Message)²⁰

“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (NASB)

Truly *The Message* shows how a paraphrase, how a dynamic method of translation, translates a text “loosely,” and interprets it with a “laxity of expression!”

Now, perhaps, this example from *The Message* is an extreme example of dynamic equivalence, but once one abandons a *word for word* method for translation, there is nothing to stop one from doing so, for it becomes a subjective interpretation of the Holy Spirit’s words with one’s own words. And when one adds, deletes and changes God’s words, one is not providing a thought for thought translation, pure and simple. It is an exercise in presumption and is nothing but a hindrance to truth, and so becomes a hindrance to true Revival.

The Word of God is not like a novel that needs to be simply read. No, it is a Sacred Book that needs to be read and studied, that needs to be hid in one’s heart, to be meditated upon, and to be laid before the Holy Spirit in prayer, seeking His guidance and illumination. Jesus laid before us this principle in John 16:13, where He said the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Comprehending Scripture was never intended to be a mere intellectual exercise (cf. I Cor. 2:13-16); it was always intended to be a spiritual exercise of prayer and meditation (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2), wherein the Holy Spirit would enlighten

²⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, tr., *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary Language* (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 2003) pg. 187

the believer. This is being forgotten by many believers, however, because more and more Christians are replacing spiritual Christianity with soulical Christianity. They are losing their spiritual discernment, because in many cases they are confusing the soul and the spirit and so are thinking they are being spiritual when they are being nothing but soulical or natural in their thinking, and, in some cases, simply carnal, not in the outward fleshly sense of the word, but the inward sense of the word.

Now, of course, there is nothing wrong with providing a readable translation. That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about an overall philosophy that operates by a rational understanding of God's Word, in comparison to a trusting spiritual understanding of God's Word. When words are added (without proper indication), or boldly taken out as if they are redundant or not necessary, and/or changed for all for the purpose of making the text more readable for the Christian, it betrays a rational and soulical mindset and a lack of trust in the original composition and the ability of the Holy Spirit to compose His work exactly as He willed with carefully chosen words. Having a goal of readability is fine, but when readability compromises the text by a faulty method of translation, then it becomes detrimental to the spiritual well-being of the Christian.

It completely disallows the fact that the Holy Spirit may have purposely chosen to write some passages in a difficult manner, through His chosen human authors, because He wished the Christian to pause, stop and then slowly reread and meditate upon that difficult passage? A translator that follows a dynamic equivalence presumes difficult passages should be smoothed out for ease of understanding. Is that not a presumptuous judgment? It simply is not right that wholesale changes are made in the text of Scripture through dynamic equivalence and then are presented to Christians as an excellent translation of Bible, and not as a paraphrase of

the Bible. It is most misleading, and is a hindrance to revival. (We are speaking, of course, in a general sense. God can use anything He wishes to accomplish His purposes. And we are not saying that if He so wishes, He can use a less than accurate translation, after all, He uses us who are still imperfect servants of God, who do not always accurately reflect His character in our lives. But, just as we should never be satisfied with ourselves, being servants who inaccurately reflect the character of God, neither should we be satisfied with translations that inaccurately reflect the Truth of God. Our Lord can accomplish so much more in us if we are obedient servants full of the Holy Spirit, and so God can accomplish so much more in us when we are obedient to His words in a Bible that is faithful to the text with words that are full of spirit and life.)

That is not to say that there is any perfect translation. For example, a complete equivalent translation of the Bible like that of the KJV or NASB may have instances of a less than word for word translation; and, indeed, a dynamic equivalent translation of the Bible like the NIV, and the NLT may have a few instances of an accurate word for word translation, but the point is the former is an exception to the rule of complete equivalence, and the latter is an exception to their rule of dynamic equivalence. And so the question becomes, "Which version is the closest to a word for word method of translation?"

And if one looks at it that way, even those translators, who follow a dynamic equivalent method of translation must admit that versions like the KJV, NKJV and the NASB are more faithful to a word for word translation. And that becomes the point. The words chosen by God for Scripture are Divine words and should be translated with the closest equivalent word in the target language and with as little additions as possible, and in those cases where they are needed, to be careful to provide the reader with an indication

that they are additions. God's Word should never be treated like a newspaper that can be freely edited, or like the work of a fallible author that might need to be updated to contemporary English for ease of understanding. Nor should it be treated as if the original thoughts of God in each Divinely chosen word can still be maintained on a phrasal or sentence basis without maintaining, as much as possible, a completely equivalent word for each and every one of those same Divinely chosen words. In other words, it should not be treated as if each of God's Divinely chosen words are not necessary to be an accurate translation because the translator believes there are better words available to communicate what the translator discerns is the original intention of the writer.

George Needham, a co-worker of D. L. Moody and the biographer of the brethren evangelist from England, Henry Moorhouse, whom we quoted in the beginning of this book, said it best when he once wrote the following—

“The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture in its thoughts and words...The words employed by the Spirit are human words, and may form the vehicle of ordinary human intelligence, but when selected by the Spirit to convey divine revelations they become **divine words**. Therefore, in this relation are they called the words of the Spirit. ‘Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.’

As the body of the primal man was made out of the earth, into which God breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul; so the Holy Spirit has taken the earthly words of human language out of which He forms the body of Scripture, and into which He breathes the living thought, and thereby the Book becomes a Book of Life. “Every Scripture is God-breathed.”

Let us consider the testimony of Jesus on this point. In Mark xii. 36, our Lord's words are recorded, where He quotes from Ps. ex. Not accidentally does He refer to the author of that Psalm, when rebuking the secularized scribes of the temple, in the words, “David himself said By the Holy Ghost.” The Psalm is the language of David. David himself said it, for David was mouthpiece, or

penman. But it is emphatically the language of the Holy Ghost who spake through David, and whose word was on his tongue (2 Sam. xxiii. 2)... How misleading, therefore, is any theory of Inspiration which allows the admixture of human mistakes with divine communications; the mistakes of human speech coupled to divine thought... The higher critics and the lower critics would not manifest their dislike of the complete inspiration of the words of Scripture, were it not for the insane passion of the natural man to regard reason as the touchstone and test of revelation. Calmly and wisely has Professor Gaussen written of the Bible: "Its first line and its last, with all the instruction (whether understood or not) which it contains, are by the same Author. Whatever the sacred penmen may have been—whatever their circumstances, their impressions, their comprehension of what they wrote, and the measure of their individuality brought into operation by this divine and mysterious power—they have all, with a faithful and directed hand, written in the same volume, under the guidance of the same Master...—the Bible. Let us not lose our time, then, in vain questioning, but study the Book. It is the word of Moses, of Amos, of John, and of Paul, but it is the thought of God, and the word of God. It is therefore erroneous language to say, 'Certain passages of the Bible are those of man, and others those of God.' No; every verse therein, without exception, is of man, and they are also all, without exception, those of God." Even so, the humble, devout believer recognizes the divine Author in every verse and word of Scripture, and values it as an integral part of the great volume of Revelation, stamped from Genesis to Apocalypse with the impress of divine life, and light, and power, even as the thoughtful naturalist sees in every trembling leaf the mark of intelligent design, and understands its relation to the whole forest."²¹

Now some may wonder, "Why talk of a theory of translation in a book about revival?" The answer is simply the

²¹ A. T. Pierson, ed., *The Inspired Word: A Series of Papers and Addresses Delivered at the Bible-Inspiration Conference, Philadelphia, 1887* (Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, New York, 1888) pg. 327

Word of God is the Biblical means Divinely chosen by God to revive His people; so if we wish for His Divine quickening we must not change the text by adding our own interpretive words to His Divinely chosen words, which Jesus tells us are full of “spirit and life” (John 6:63), which means they are quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12), ready to accomplish its convicting purpose in our lives in order to bring about His revival in our hearts. Man’s words are not full of spirit and life; nor are they quick and powerful.

Perhaps, we will close with an exhortation by James H. Brookes, a well-known Bible teacher in the 19th century, who was another friend of D. L. Moody, and was one who actively worked with him during those times of revival.

It was said that he believed there “should be *a continuous revival* in the church,”²² and that “he earnestly desired to see the work of the Lord, that is, the salvation of souls, prospering with great power and without cessation.”²³ And in that light it was also said that “his regard for the Word of God was so unreserved that he received it in its literalness, and believed that if the terms of a promise were complied with, the stated result would inevitably come to pass.”²⁴

This fact will show why he felt so strongly about the integrity of God’s Word. His exhortation in this regard is from an article from that same book mentioned above that was edited by A. T. Pierson. It shows how he opposed the theory of dynamic inspiration, which, in some ways, prepared the way for the subsequent theory of dynamic equivalence.

“Of none is this more true than of the popular theory...that while the thoughts [of the Bible] are inspired, the words are uninspired. No one...could have ever conceived an idea so utterly

²² David R. Williams, *James H. Brookes: A Memoir* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, St. Louis, 1897) pg. 278

²³ Ibid., pg. 278-279

²⁴ Ibid., pg. 279

absurd. As Dean Burgon has said: ‘You cannot dissect inspiration into substance and form. **As for the thoughts being inspired, apart from the words which give them expression, you might as well talk of a tune without notes, or a sum without figures.** No such dream can abide the daylight for a moment. No such theory of inspiration is even intelligible. It is as illogical as it is worthless; and cannot be too sternly put down.’ As Professor Gaussen has said: ‘This theory of a divine revelation, in which you would have the inspiration of the thoughts, without the inspiration of the language, is so inevitably irrational that it cannot be sincere, and proves false even to those who propose it... So true it is that we cannot separate the one from the other, and that a revelation of God's thoughts ever demands a revelation of God's words also’.... So far as we are concerned, we can reach the thoughts only through the words “²⁵

“If the words were not inspired, why did he say, when the Israelites were nearing the end of their long Journey in the wilderness, ‘Ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it?’ (Deut.iv.2). Surely the meekest man on the earth could not have attached such transcendent importance to his own word, nor could he have said, unless he knew they were inspired’... He everywhere asserts that the words he communicated to the people were the words God told him to deliver; he nowhere intimates that any message he uttered was his own in thought or language.”²⁶

“Are we to make nothing of all this? Is it to be set aside at the bidding of man's wholly uncalled-for theories of inspiration? Because he chooses to fancy that there are different kinds and degrees of inspiration, **because he prefers to believe in inspired thoughts and uninspired words, because he tries to comfort himself with dynamic inspiration, because he is opposed to mechanical inspiration, are we to treat the explicit testimony of the word itself, given in more than two thousand places, as of no value?** Out with all of these foolish theories, that are not worth the

²⁵ A. T. Pierson, ed., *The Inspired Word: A Series of Papers and Addresses Delivered at the Bible-Inspiration Conference, Philadelphia, 1887* (Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, New York, 1888) pg. 149-150

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg 153-154

paper on which they are written! Men have no right to their opinions, when God has most explicitly and fully revealed His truth, as He has done upon this subject. ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;’ and it is certain that the theories of inspiration have only darkened His counsel. He does not set before us the foolish task of trying to explain how His book is inspired, but to believe, because He says it, that it is inspired and verbally inspired.”²⁷

And so, beloved, if we desire revival, so that we do not abandon Christ as our first love, so that we do not have a name that we are alive, yet are dead, so that we do not think we are rich in need of nothing, not realizing that we are lukewarm in need of much, we must, first of all, hold fast to the Word of God in a faithful translation; we must put aside those versions that change God’s Word by their faulty method of dynamic equivalence, and should rather look for a translation that attempts to follow a complete equivalence method of translation—a translation that believes that each and every word of God is pure seven times over and so should be faithfully translated with equivalent English words, as much as possible.

Psalms 12:6-7 The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.⁷ Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. KJV

If we do that then we can pray like David—

Psalms 119:107 I am exceedingly afflicted; **Revive me, O LORD, according to Thy word.** NASB

²⁷ Ibid., pg. 156

And then testify of His faithfulness, like David testified in Psalms 119:50—

Psalm 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction, That **Thy word has revived me.** NASB

May we all be able to give such a testimony.²⁸

²⁸ Versions such as the KJV, the NKJV, the NASB (1977), Darby's Version, Young's Literal Translation, are all faithful translations that essentially follow the complete equivalence method of translation. Versions such as the NIV, the NLT, the CSB, to name a few, are all versions that follow the dynamic equivalence method of translation and so are detrimental in some places to the spiritual well-being of the believer. (The CSB purports to follow an Optimal Equivalence Method of translation, but it is still a modified form of Dynamic Equivalence that will delete certain words of Scripture, under the false impression that original thoughts can be maintained without equivalent words.) Then there are other modern versions, unfortunately, like the ESV, which essentially follows a complete equivalence method of translation, but, unfortunately, has departed from the Historic Christian Faith in certain key verses affecting the doctrine of the Trinity. In particular, certain verses have weakened, if not completely obscured, the doctrine of the Only-Begotten Son of God, confessed by godly Christians for two-thousand years, and witnessed over and over throughout the centuries in many Creeds, Confessions and Statement of Faiths (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9). As such, many modern versions, like the ESV have become a detriment to the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints; they are robbing Christians of the precious truth of the Only-Begotten Son of God, especially as affirmed in the Historic Christian Faith that bears witness to this doctrine in such affirmations as the Nicene Creed, which declares the Only-Begotten Son was "begotten before all time," or as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the London Confession of Faith state, was "eternally begotten of God the Father." (Please realize, I am claiming no special insight. I am not introducing some new doctrine. Those modern versions are the ones contradicting what the Church

Revival in the Way of God

The next means that David associates with revival, i.e. in being revived, is by walking in in the way of God.

Psalms 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way. NKJV

Isaiah also speaks of this way to which we are called to abide—

Isaiah 30:21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying,
This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and
when ye turn to the left. KJV

And Jeremiah, the prophet states that this way is a “good way,” part of those “ancient paths” that we should seek and ask for.

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see
and ask for the **ancient paths**, Where **the good way is**, and walk in

has always believed for near two thousand years. They are the ones contradicting the truth, affirmed as the Faith, in those Creeds and Confessions of Faith mentioned above. I am simply following the Word of God as it has been understood by godly men throughout the last two thousand years of Church history in regard to the Faith that once and for all was delivered to the saints. It is that Historic Christian Faith that I contend for. I am just one of the millions who have always clung to that Faith and the blessed doctrine of the Only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten before all time—He whose “goings forth” was from everlasting. Amen. For further study on this doctrine please see *Understanding the Trinity*, and *Studies in the Usage of the Greek Word Μονογενής*, available at www.silicabiblechapel.com)

it; And you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk *in it*.' NASB

However, unfortunately, as Jeremiah next declares, the children of Israel refused to abide in that way, or seek to walk in that path, and so they were brought into captivity rather than into the revival that David beseeches the Lord to grant to those who abide in His way. Their sin and iniquity blinded them to their utter departure from His way, which David in another Psalm refers to an everlasting way that can only be known by the searching light of God that dispels the darkness and blindness of one's heart.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, **and lead me in the way everlasting.** KJV

And so we can see the Biblical principle, that when we are blind to our true condition (Rev. 3:17), when as a Church we have a name that we are alive, yet are dead (Rev. 3:1), the only solution is the searching light of God in our hearts and in our lives to bring us back into the way we should go, so as to be revived in that way. So many times a Church will not hear the voice from behind, but, like Israel, will be like those who do not hear and so those who will not walk in His way wherein is life .

The Great Shepherd of the Sheep and the Bishop of our souls beseeches us today to hear His voice! Seven times in the book of Revelation we are exhorted to “hear” what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Revelation 3:6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' NASB

And those who hear are identified as overcomers. We must remember that the letters to the seven Churches are

written to Christians. We know this because Scripture tells us the Lord only chastens those whom He loves, and even a Church as bad as the Church in Laodicea, which must be spued out of his mouth, is still shown to be legitimate and genuine because the Lord loves, and so chastens them (cf. Heb. 12: 6-8; Rev. 3:19). If they were not true Christians, Scripture says they would be without chastisement.

Hebrews 12:6-8 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. KJV

Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 19 KJV

And yet, even though they are true Christians, they are still exhorted to overcome their lukewarmness, by listening, and then obeying, what the Spirit says to them (Rev. 3:19-22).

Thus we see that overcoming for a Christian comes from listening to what the Spirit says to the Churches. One could say that revival comes by returning to the way that the Spirit admonishes the Church to follow, as spoken by the Lord.

In Scripture we find an overcoming that results in our eternal salvation, and an overcoming that results in our present sanctification. We are told that when a person is born again, when a person is born of the Spirit, a person is said to overcome the world by that faith.

I John 5:5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? NASB

But equally so, for those Christians who backslide, who give heed to error and carnality, who become lukewarm by their blindness, their self-righteousness and pride, if they give heed to the voice of the Spirit, and so obey the admonition of the Lord, they can be revived in the way, and so be ones who overcome again, *this time not for salvation, for once we are saved we are always saved, but this time for our ongoing sanctification*. Our first overcoming results in justification to life. Our second overcoming, if you will, results in our ongoing sanctification to life, wherein the Christian is sanctified spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:13) and a Christian is further conformed to image of the Son (Rom. 8:29).

The word translated “overcome” is a word that means “to conquer.” We begin our Christian life by overcoming the world, by conquering the world by our faith in Christ and His death for us on the cross, by which faith we are justified and receive eternal life. And then, as we grow in our Christian life, we have more “overcomings.” We also conquer or “overcome” the wicked one by the Word of God as the apostle John also says.

I John 2:14b I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and **ye have overcome the wicked one**. KJV

We “overcome” evil with good, i.e. conquer evil with good, as the apostle Paul says!

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. NASB

And then, in another place, the apostle John says to those to whom he was writing that they had also “overcome” false spirits, who taught false doctrines against Christ, because the Holy Spirit within them (who, of course, they received

when they believed) is greater than he in the world. This overcoming is said to occur after they were already “of” God, i.e. saved. And it says the way they overcame was by the greater Holy Spirit within them.

I John 4:3-4 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. ⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. NKJK

Christians are called to go from victory unto victory in their lives. Indeed, in one verse, Paul uses an intensified form of the same Greek word used by John in his epistle and in the book of Revelation, declaring that we “overwhelmingly conquer” through Him who loved us! The Christian life is to be a life of “overcoming,” first, beginning with our justification by faith, second, by continuing with our present sanctification, and third, by our future and everlasting glorification.

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ But in all these things we **overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB

And so we see that overcoming the errors and false paths that the Church sometimes falls into is in itself a form of revival, made known by our returning to the ways of Christ.

Too often, when difficult times come to a Church, it seeks other “ways” to surmount the difficulty. But, even though the Church might have a good motive in pursuing different “path,” or “way,” it does not lead to life or revival; it only leads to more death.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death. KJV

This is, apparently, what happened to the Church of Sardis, which had a name that they were alive, but our Lord declares that they were dead!

Revelation 3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, `These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. NKJV

Thus, the same thing can happen to any Church for the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says is not reserved for that one Church; what is said to one, is said to all.

The only way that brings life is the way of Christ, and, indeed, the way that “is” Christ!

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. KJV

Problems will always arise within Churches. Some Churches will be blind and lukewarm. Some Churches will be dead. Some will be self-righteous, believing they are the one true Church in a place. Some Churches will live in carnality and some will live like “mere men,” “natural men,” i.e. like “soulical men” (I Cor. 2:14; 3:3).

But if we hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, if we hear His voice that tells us that “this is the way, walk ye in it,” then we can be “revived” by the Holy Spirit of God, we can be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:20-23), we

can be quickened by the words of His voice. But we must stop turning our eyes to worthless things to solve our problems, from ways of our own making, from ways of carnality and souliness found in new methods created by the wisdom of men, even good men. We must return to the “way,” wherein revival comes, which we are finally shown in the New Testament to be the “way of the cross.” Beloved, the way of revival is the way of the cross.

Paul reveals this to us in his epistles. He tells Timothy to remind Christians of those “ways which are in Christ,” which he declares is his own way, and which he declares he teaches in every Church.

I Corinthians 4:17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of **my ways which are in Christ**, just as I teach everywhere in every church. NASB

In Philippians 4:9 he says the same thing, exhorting the saints to follow those things they learned from him and saw him practice.

Philippians 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. NASB

And in Philippians 3:17-18 he calls those things the pattern of his life, which in verse 18, he reveals will never be contrary the cross of Christ.

Philippians 3:17-18 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ. NASB

And then in Phil 2:3-8 we discover that both of these things, his practice and his pattern are based upon what he calls the “mind” of Christ. He shows that the “way” of the cross of Christ is a reflection of the mind of Christ, which will become our way, if we let His mind dwell in us.

Philippians 2:3-8 *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,** ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, **even the death of the cross.** NKJV

Beloved, the way of the cross will always be a means of revival, for the cross will always lead to resurrection life.

If we wish to be revived we need to leave all our ideas, man-made traditions, methods (or any other thing created by our own human wisdom and understanding to solve the problems of the Church) upon the cross of Christ. Only then can revival come. In fact, Paul believed that the cross in the Christian life was so crucial that in Gal. 6: 14 he actually says he gloried in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. KJV

And in another place, he shows how it leads to life—

II Corinthians 4:10-11 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’

sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you. NKJV

So many Christians (and even non-Christians) love to follow the sayings of Christ such as “judge not that ye be not judged,” or the saying of Christ to “love one another.” No doubt these sayings are essential for righteous living, but equally important for righteous living is this saying of Christ that many Christians (and of course, those non-Christians who do not understand the sayings of Christ) seem to ignore today. And that saying is this—

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross**, and follow Me. NASB

But, the fact that this saying is largely ignored today should not surprise us, for the Spirit says that in the end days, men will be lovers of self (II Tim. 3:1-5), which, of course, is the opposite of the saying of Jesus for one to deny self. In other words, Paul is saying that men (and Christians who act like mere men) will esteem their “self” as more important than others, rather than esteeming others as more important than themselves (cf. Phil. 2:3). And for Christians who act like them, they will trust in themselves to do the things of God, rather than just trusting in God (II Cor. 1:9). They will put confidence in their flesh, rather than having no confidence in the flesh, and that does not mean the flesh in its grossest sense, but the flesh in its supposedly good sense, i.e. religious flesh (Phil. 3:3).

Beloved, we must never forget that if we are saved, we have the Spirit of God within us, dwelling in the very holy of holies of our beings, i. e. our human spirits. (Scripture tells that our bodies are a Temple of God—I Cor. 6:19—and so, as a Temple, it must have that most inward part of it, the holy of holies, if you will, wherein the Spirit dwells.) However, as

with the Temple of old in Jerusalem during the days of the Old Testament a veil can separate that most inward part, the holy of holies, from the other inward part, the holy place, and then also from the outer court as well.

Yes, Christ has done away with that veil, positionally, when He died, thus providing a way by which we can now be saved. But in our experience and Christian walk, in our ongoing sanctification, whenever we fail to walk by faith, whenever we forget what Christ has done, whenever we fail to obey his saying to “deny” our self and take up our cross, we end up putting up a veil of our own making, i.e. our flesh, between Him and us. We end up separating ourselves off from the presence of God by our sin, our self, and by our own ways, thus grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19). Our flesh, our self, and our sinful ways acts like a veil which obscures the very presence of God.

In other words, analogously, our human spirit is equivalent to the *holy of holies*, our human soul is equivalent to the *holy place*, and our human body is equivalent to the *outer court*. As such, when we walk by the flesh (which Scripture shows that it includes not only the deeds of the body, but also the deeds of an unrenewed soul—Gal. 5:16-21; Rom. 12:2), we create a barrier to the life of the Spirit flowing out from our spirit, wherein He dwells, which, in turn, keeps Him from shining forth and filling up our souls, i.e. the holy place.

In other words, grieving the Holy Spirit of God, keeps us from being “filled with the Spirit.” The Spirit, does indeed, dwell in us, never to depart (Rom. 8: 9), but our fleshly and soulful ways quench and hinder him from filling us to overflowing, because the veil of our hardened “self” puts up a barrier up to His ways, thoughts and will.

Even if we put away the baser sins of the flesh (of the body) such as adultery, fornication and drunkenness, that does not mean we automatically become spiritual Christians, filled

with the Holy Spirit of God, for we may still be living by the more subtle sins of the flesh (of the soul), such as pride, jealousies, divisions, with all its self-seeking ambitions and ways. These too can hinder and quench the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 5:16-21 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

However, when we instead have the mind of Christ and allow the “way of the cross” to humble us and to convict us, to shine its light into the deepest parts of our being, we will find we are able to see the utter sinfulness of our being, including the complete inadequacy of all those Christian acts done in the power of religious flesh (of the soul), which righteousness God says is still as filthy rags (Isa. 65:6). When we see this, we will see the wisdom and the importance of the Lord’s saying that is largely ignored today, that “if any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me.” We will see how the teaching to love ourselves, taught by so many Christian pastors and teachers today, is so detrimental not only to revival, but also to our spiritual well-being! ²⁹ We will see that it is the complete opposite of the mind of Christ, and so the ways of Christ.

²⁹ One can see that Scripture identifies “self” with the human “soul” by comparing our Lord’s words in Matt. 16:26a, “...if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own **soul**—with our Lord’s words in Luke 9:25b, “...if he gain the whole world, and lose **himself**.”

Beloved God revives us in His chosen way, and the way of God, is to follow the way of His Son, and the way of His Son is the way of the cross. Denial of self in every disciple of Christ is so important, for life comes out of death. When we consider ourselves as on the way to be crucified, we forget ourselves and, instead, see Christ. We die, so we can live. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus will set us free from the law of sin and death, which is the very thing which energizes “self.” Someone once said that the middle letter in the word “sin” is none other than the letter “I”—SELF.

Denial of self allows the light and life of the Holy Spirit to shine freely into our souls and thus transform us by the renewing of our minds (our souls) (Rom 12:1-2). When we offer ourselves up to God as a living sacrifice, the Holy Spirit can then fill us by shining forth and flooding our soul with Himself. And since one’s soul is composed of mind, emotions and will, His thoughts will become our thoughts, for our thoughts will be taken captive to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4). And our emotions will mirror His godly emotions, if you will, so that His love will become our love; His joy will become our joy; His peace will become our peace. And, finally, of course, when the Holy Spirit fills and floods our soul from our spirit, wherein He dwells, our will will become His will, so that like our Saviour, we will pray, “Not my will, but Thy will be done” (see Matt. 26:42).

Loving oneself, beloved, is the opposite of denying oneself, and Scripture warns us that in the last days this philosophy will bring difficult days.

II Timothy 3:1-2a “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self...” NASB

This philosophy of loving and affirming self is practiced by the world, and is, unfortunately, even embraced by so many Pastors and Teachers in the Church. It is the

philosophy of man, the wisdom of this age, and is opposite of the teaching of Christ. Denying oneself is the way that Christ followed, and is the way that Paul followed and is the way we are commanded to follow (I Cor. 11:1).

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. NKJV

We should be willing to take up our cross and count all that we are in Adam as crucified, all of our power and human endeavour and all of those methods of human wisdom that are developed for what some perceive as success. Instead, like the apostle Paul, we should trust in God, never in the things of *self* to do God's work.

II Corinthians 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that **we should not trust in ourselves**, but in God which raiseth the dead. KJV

We should walk in the demonstration and power of the Spirit, not in the wisdom of our human soul, nor in the power of our human strengths and natural talents.

I Corinthians 2:1-5 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. NASB

If we pray for revival, if we wish to be revived, this is the way we should walk. It is an ancient path that is always the same, which, as we said before and which we will say once more in closing, is the path wherein is found the good way.

Jeremiah 6:16a Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the **ancient paths**, Where **the good way is**, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls. NASB

And is the way, wherein we will be revived, as King David declared.

Psalms 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, *And revive me in Your way.* NKJV

And, finally, this is the way that Paul gave everything up for, so that he could know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

Philippians 3:7-10 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. NKJV

When we learn this, we can pray like David prayed, seeking the revival of the Lord, in that ancient path, the way everlasting, which in the New Testament is revealed as the way of the cross, wherein will be found true revival.

Psalms 143:10-11 Teach me to do Thy will, For Thou art my God; **Let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground.** ¹¹ For the sake of Thy name, **O LORD, revive me.** In Thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble. NASB

If we wish to know if revival is true or false, we simply need to see if men are preaching and walking in the

way of the cross, or if they are walking and preaching the way of self, which always seeks reputation, recognition, and praise among men. We need to see if messages and preaching are “in persuasive words of wisdom,” or if they are “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” which means it will not be in false demonstrations of power pretending to be the power and miracles of the Spirit, but true demonstrations and power of the Spirit that is filled with the mind of Christ that never seeks its own, nor ever seeks, begs or asks for money, for oneself or for one’s ministry (from which one receives a salary). Nor will it be from making merchandise of the things of God. True revival of the Holy Spirit will always reflect the mind and way of Christ which says, “...freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). It will always trust in the provision of God the Father, for God will always provide for that which He has ordered. Men who pretend to be filled with the Spirit and filled with His power can never walk by faith, but must beg for money, using modern marketing techniques to elicit guilt and giving, and/or charge for the things of their ministry, selling them for profit. The difference between true and false revival will be found in the ways of those who come in the name of the Lord (Matt. 24:24; II Cor. 11:13; II Pet. 2:1). And if one questions your desire to prove the genuineness of a revival by the ways of those in charge, it is a false revival for the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit has commanded such proving and testing (Matt. 7:15-20; I John 4:1).

III. The Biblical Purpose of Revival

Now that we have looked at what is the Biblical Basis of Revival and what is the Biblical means of revival, let us now examine what is the Biblical purpose for revival according to Scripture. For what purpose does God send forth His Spirit? The Psalmist declares: “Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou dost renew the face of the ground” (Psalm 104:30 NASB). In speaking of this verse John Gill provides this helpful comment:

“And thou renewest the face of the earth; by a new set of creatures of all kinds being brought upon it to fill it. As there is also a daily renewing it every morning by the rising sun, giving fresh life and vigour to all created beings; and a yearly one every spring, **when the face of all nature is renewed and revived**...It may be applied to the renewing work of the Spirit of God in the souls of men, by whom they are made new, **and by whom they are daily renewed in the Spirit of their minds**. And there are particular seasons in which God sends forth his Spirit and renews the face of things in the world, and in his churches; upon the effusion of his Spirit in the first times of the Gospels, there was a new face of things, not only in the land of Judea, but throughout the whole Gentile world, where old things passed away, and all things became new; as in the latter day, when the Spirit shall be poured forth from on high, there will be a renewing of the face of the earth again; it will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; the kingdoms of it will become Christ’s; new heavens and a new earth will be created, and Jerusalem will be made a rejoicing, and her people a joy (Isa 65:17-18)..”³⁰

What we see in these comments is that the Holy Spirit of God not only is sent forth to create, but also to renew or to

³⁰ John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Accessed on Dec. 12, 2018 archive.org/details/GillsCommentaryOnTheEntireBible

revive. The original creation was made by God the Father by the Word and by the breath of His mouth, which bespeaks the Holy Spirit (see Gen. 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6).

Moreover, Scripture shows us that not only was the original heaven and earth created by the God through the Word, who is the Son of God, the creation is still held together by the Son of God (Col. 1:16-17).

And, as seen in Psalm 104:30, not only was the original creation created by the Spirit of God, the creation is still sustained by the Holy Spirit, in that the earth is daily renewed and revived. Thus, we see all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are involved, first, in the creating the heavens and earth, but then, second, in also sustaining that creation.

The same is true in the new creation. In our new birth we have been created in Christ Jesus. We become a new creation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

And as with the old creation, when we are born again in the new creation, all Three Persons of the Trinity are involved. We are born of God the Father, as the apostle John declares in his Gospel when he states: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were **born**, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God** (John 1:12-13). We are “born again through the Son, the Word of God, as the apostle Peter declared in his epistle: “having been **born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, **through the word of God**

which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23 NKJV). And, of course, we are born of the Holy Spirit, as the apostle John declared in his Gospel: “Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is **born of the Spirit** is spirit.’ Marvel not that I said unto thee, ‘Ye must be born again.’” (John 3:5-7)

Consequently, in the same way that all Three Persons sustain and renew the original creation, all Three Persons also sustain and renew the new creation. The only difference between the two, however, is that Christians in the new creation have free will (unlike the things of nature in the old creation).

God earnestly desires to revive us, to renew, to spiritually sustain us every day in the spirits of our minds. He earnestly desires that we be daily revived through the Word of God, that we be daily revived in His way, but since we have free will we can say like Israel of old, “We will not” (cf. Jer. 6:16). Those of us in the new creation can resist the will of God, which, when we do, we grieve and quench the Holy Spirit of God, and so hinder His revival (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19). This, of course, is detrimental to our spiritual well-being and our walk and so hinders the Holy Spirit of God from reviving us, and bringing about revival in the Church. (Of course, ultimately God’s purposes will be accomplished!)

But when we hear the voice of God, when we obey the Word of God, when we listen to what the Spirit says unto the Churches, we are revived in two ways. First we are revived in “truth,” and then we are revived in our “witness.”

And this brings us to the Biblical purpose of revival, and is the reason why every Christian in every Assembly should always seek to be renewed or revived in the spirit of their minds (Eph. 4:23).

Our Saviour desires us to walk in truth and He desires us to be a light and witness unto the world! This desire will come to fruition in our lives when we walk by the Spirit and allow Him to transform us by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2) through revival.

So with this understanding of the desire, and the will, and the work of all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in all that they create, especially in the new creation, let us examine how God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit revive us unto Truth and unto a life of faithful witness.

Revival of Truth

When Jesus declared that He was the “way,” He was telling us not only that He was the way by which one could gain salvation and come to God the Father, but He was also showing that He is the only way by which we could grow in our sanctification, because sanctification does not occur apart from truth (II Thess. 2:13). Thus, Jesus not only declares that He is the way, He also declares that He is the truth (John 14:6)!

II Thessalonians 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation **through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** NASB

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. KJV

So if we abide in Christ, we will be abiding in the “Way,” and if we are abiding in the Way, we will be revived by the Holy Spirit of God, and if we are revived by the Holy

Spirit, we will also be revived in Truth! Revival will always lead to truth. Indeed, Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who will guide us into Truth!

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. KJV

In other words, when we are revived by the Holy Spirit we will be safeguarded from error and will be led into Truth. And, in the same way, when a Church is revived they will be safeguarded from error and be led into a recovery of truth! This principle can be seen throughout Church history. Let us look at a few of those revivals of the Holy Spirit that led into a recovery of Truth, for this is one of the purposes for revival.

The Wycliffe Movement

The Primacy of Scripture

In the 14th century, revival came to the Church through the ministry of John Wycliffe who opposed the worldliness and the domination of the clergy over the laity in the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy routinely withheld the Word of God from the people at that time by refusing to translate the Scripture into the vernacular of the people. But John Wycliffe was led by the Holy Spirit into believing it was essential for God's people to have the Scripture in their own language, which, in his case, was English.

This was the beginning of a renewal and revival of the Spirit after a long period of spiritual decline and darkness in the Church of God that began after the death of the apostles and accelerated in the fourth century after the union of the

Church with the State. During that long decline so many things of man, and so many traditions of men, entered into the Church of God. This resulted in a clergy/laity division with the Church, which led to the common belief by the clergy that God's people must not have the Scripture to read for themselves, but that they must accept the judgment that anything of Scripture must come only through them, as they deemed necessary, and that it must come only with their interpretation of text.

Gotthard Lechler, in his book, *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors*, speaks of these things, by relating the thoughts of one of Wycliffe's main detractors Henry Knighton of Leicester.

"Knighton, a chronicler of the period, in a passage which was probably penned before the year 1400...maintains that Christ gave the Gospel, **not** to the Church, **but only to the clergy** and doctors of the Church, to be by them communicated to the weaker brethren and the laity according to their need; whereas Wycliffe has rendered the Gospel from the Latin into English, and through him it has become the possession of the common people, and more accessible to the laity, including even women who are able to read, than it used to be to the well-educated clergy."³¹

Thus we see how a small group of men within the Church (the clergy), with great condescension, robbed Christians of their spiritual heritage, and robbed them of the Word of God as a means for their revival. John Wycliffe sought to change this.

Gotthard Lechler continues, speaking of those Christians to whom the Word of God was given in a translation they could read and understand. (We must remember, up to that time Scripture was primarily read in

³¹ Gotthard Lechler, Peter Lorimer, trans. *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors* (Religious Tract Society, London, 1904) pg. 229

Latin, which only the clergy and well-educated could read and understand.) He continues—

“Here and there a little company would assemble to converse on Divine things, to build one another up in faith and knowledge. At such meetings the Bible in Wycliffe's translation would be read aloud, or a tract by Wycliffe or Hereford, explaining the sacred text. Even the art of reading would be taught on such occasions. It was thus, as we have seen, that William Smith of Leicester first learned his alphabet. Many others, men and women, anxious to read the Scriptures for themselves, would follow his example. Knighton bitterly complains that the Word of God translated into English 'becomes more accessible and familiar to laymen and to women able to read than it had heretofore been to the most intelligent and learned of the clergy.’”³²

In fact, Henry Morely in his work provides a fuller quote taken from Knighton's Chronicle, wherein he shows the arrogance of the clergy by their comparison of fellow believers to ignorant swine, and their disdain that women were allowed to read the Word of God—

“This master John Wiclif...translated into the Anglic [English tongue]—not Angelic tongue, the Gospel that Christ gave to the clergy and the doctors of the Church, that they might minister it gently to laymen and weaker persons, according to the exigence of their time, their personal wants, and the hunger of their minds, whence it is made vulgar by him, and more open to the reading of laymen and women than it usually is to the knowledge of lettered and intelligent clergy; and thus the pearl of the Gospel is cast forth and trodden under feet of swine.”³³

³² Ibid., pg. 479-480

³³ Henry Morley, *English Writers: With an Introductory Sketch of the Four Periods of English Literature, Volume II, Part I* (Chapman and Hall, London, 1867) Pg 394

How sad that such an arrogant attitude was maintained by a clergy class within the Church, which helped explain Wycliffe's opposition to the system and the Holy Spirit's desire to revive the saints by the eternal Word of God.

And so we see that in time of spiritual dullness and laxity the Holy Spirit brought revival to the Church, recovering the truth of the priesthood of every believer to hear in their own tongue the eternal Word of God and to read, whenever possible (for many were illiterate), the Scripture for themselves, or, at the minimum, by hearing it in their own tongue to be able to hide it in their heart by remembrance and memory.

Thus, we can see how the purpose of that revival was to disabuse the Church of the thought that the Word of God was only to be searched and studied by an elite clergy, but was the spiritual inheritance of all God's people! This was the first step in revival unto Truth, for the Truth is found in the Eternal Word of God, so the first step was to give the saints the Word of God in their own tongue so that they, like the Bereans of old, could search the Scripture daily to seek the Truth (Acts 17:10-11).

The next major revival came to the Church in the 16th century under the ministry of Martin Luther.

The European Reformation

Justification by Faith

The revival under John Wycliffe led eventually to another revival of the Holy Spirit, this time through the ministry of such servants of God as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, as well as others. Although many teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were exposed for error during this time, the major error that was exposed was the teaching that salvation was by works, that purgatory was

an intermediate state, and that one's time in purgatory could be shortened by present payments for indulgences.

Thus, this reformation became primarily known for the recovery of the truth that salvation is by grace through faith, and not through good works. In other words, one was justified by faith.

All of this, of course, was seen in Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517, as well as in his other works and teachings, wherein he showed that salvation was by grace, through faith alone, commonly known as *sola fide*.

And then, as with Wycliffe, Luther also understood that it was important for the saints to see this truth for themselves in Scripture, to see it in their own language. Thus, he produced his own translation of Scripture in German.

And, as the century progressed, this reformation or revival of truth spread to other countries and to other men of God, one of those being Ulrich Zwingli, who among other things was used by God to recover the truth of the symbolic and representative nature of bread and wine in the Lord's Table, in contradistinction to the Roman Catholic's doctrine of transubstantiation. The symbolic nature of the bread and wine also exposed the error of the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass.

And then it was under the ministry of John Calvin that much of the truth that was recovered under Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli was consolidated and given a theological understanding in the Church by his writings, the foremost of them being his work entitled the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

However, much of this recovery of truth was maintained and in some cases enforced by a continual dependence upon the power of the State. As such, there continued to be this alliance of the Church with the State, which hindered a fuller revival. In this they differed little from the Roman Catholic Church. However, this was soon to

change for this revival of the Spirit and recovery of truth spread to England, where in part, it became known as the Separatist Puritan movement which continued well into the 17th century.

The English & Scottish Reformation

Church Autonomy

The Reformation in England, like the Reformation in Germany unfortunately came with the same dependence upon the State. In Germany this dependence came near the end. With England it came in the beginning with an act of Henry VIII.

Joseph P. Thompson said it this way: “The continental Reformation, begun in the spirit, could not be made perfect through the flesh; much less could the English Reformation, begun in the flesh, be so perfected into a spiritual renovation in faith and practice.”³⁴

This beginning in the flesh referred to the political battle of wills between King Henry VIII and the Roman Pontiff. However, once Henry VIII separated the Churches in England from the control of Rome, a revival of the Spirit began which sought to “purify” the Churches in England from the lingering errors and corruptions that came from its association with the Roman Catholic Church.

This revival of the Spirit eventually became known as the Puritan Movement. However, this purifying only went so far (which was the difficulty referred to above in the quote from Joseph P. Thompson), for even though the Churches may have been separated from the power and control that was

³⁴ Joseph P. Thompson, “Religious Liberty since the Reformation,” *New Englander and Yale Review*, Volume XXI (William L. Kingsley, New Haven, 1863) pg. 118

Rome, the Churches in England were never separated from the power and control of the State that was England.

In fact all the Churches in England, having been freed from “Rome,” soon became known as the Church of “England,” with Henry VIII considered as a supreme head of the Church of England, and the Defender of the Faith.

There was no protest against this at first, for the focus of the Puritans, generally speaking, was to purify the Church of England of any lingering Roman Catholic influence and false doctrines brought to light during the Reformation on the continent.

But the Puritan movement had many differing aspects with some Puritans believing that not only should the Church be purified of the lingering effects of the Roman Catholic Church, but that the Church should also be purified from the lingering effects of union with any earthly power, in which case, this now meant the power of the State that was England.

Daniel Neal speaks to this in his history of the Puritans. He states—

“It is unsafe and dangerous to intrust any sort of clergy with the power of the sword: for our Saviour's kingdom is not of this world; “if it were (says he), then would my servants fight, but now is my kingdom not from hence.” **The church and state should stand on a distinct basis**, and their jurisdiction be agreeable to the nature of their crimes; those of the church purely spiritual, and those of the state purely civil...”³⁵

³⁵ Daniel Neal, Joshua Toulmin, John Overton Choules, *The History of the Puritans, Or Protestant Nonconformist ; from the Revolution in 1517, to the Revolution in 1688; Comprising an Account of Their Principles; Their Attempts for a Farther Reformation in the Church; Their Sufferings ; and the Lives and Characters of Their Most Considerable Divines* (William Baynes and Son., London, 1822) pg vi

Thus we can see the revival of the Holy Spirit spread wider and deeper as the Reformation continued. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were shown great light by Scripture, but their illumination of Truth only went so far. Much of their views and opinions were still covered in the blindness that had enveloped the Church for so many centuries.

Because of this it seems to be a merciful act of God that He guides and disciplines us in accordance to the light He has given us. If He did not, who could stand? Of course, when it comes to our eternal standing before Him, we stand not by our own righteousness, but by His righteousness. We stand before Him free from any chastisement, for our sins have been forgiven by the blood of the Lamb, and the righteousness of Christ becomes our confidence, since it is imputed to all who believe! But in our daily walk we are told “whom the Lord loves, he chastens” (Heb. 12:6). He corrects and disciplines us so we will be conformed more and more to the image of His Son, so that we will do His will.

So if God gives us more light, then more will be required, whereas, if He gives us less light, then less will be required by His mercy. It seems He is pleased with everyone who lives up to the light they have been given. On the other hand, if we do not live up to the light He has given us, then He is grieved.

This principle of grace, mercy, and light seems to explain how certain kings in Judah were repeatedly praised as doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord, yet later we find that they did not go as far in reform and revival as subsequent kings.

For example, in II Chron. 26:4, Uzziah is praised as doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord, yet in the parallel account in II Kings 15:3-4, we find he did not do away with the high places as he should have. Yet later, we see king Hezekiah also undergoing a reform and revival, but in that revival we see that he does, indeed, understand the error

and sin of allowing high places to remain, and so he destroys them all (II Chron. 31:1).

So it seems the reformation under king Uzziah was good as far as it went, and so was praised by God, but the reformation under king Hezekiah, which came about with more light, with the restoration of more truth, was praised by God even more since it conformed the people of God to the Scripture even more so—the Law stating that all high places should be torn down (Num. 33:52; cf. Deut. 12:5-6).

So we see that each Church is responsible to faithfully obey God, and to live up to light He has given to them. Of course, God hates all sin and does not condone any evil, yet it seems sometimes a Church is treated by God as earthly parents might treat a little child or baby. Great latitude is given to little children or babies who are learning what is pleasing or displeasing to their parents, whereas a full grown child might be soundly disciplined for doing the same thing, for they should know better.

Thus, it seems God sometimes acts by the same principle in spiritual matters, so that, whereas He passed over some of the things practiced by Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, (because of their obedience in the things that He did make known to them, e.g. the truth of justification by faith), He did not do so with other Christians later on in the English Reformation who were practicing those same things. With them He might be most displeased, for He had given those in the English Reformation more light, which they sometimes ignored.

Dear brethren, should this not make us all pause and not be so quick to judge our brethren. We should be merciful to our brethren as God is merciful to us. I think we all might be a little surprised at how many things we might still ignorantly practice in our Churches, which, with a little further light from God, we might be most ashamed! And yet we experience the loving smile of our heavenly Father. We all

need to grow in the Lord and mature in our walk, for we will always have some area in our lives in need of correction. This is true even of the most spiritual in our midst (which, I think, they would be the first to admit)!

Indeed, if we are not still in need of some type of chastisement or correction in our life, then that would mean that we are as sinless and as perfect as our Lord! Of course, we know that is not true of any Christian, for no one can say they have no sin, until that time comes when we shall be fully glorified and conformed to the image of Christ (see I John 1:8; Rom. 8:29-30).

And the same principle operates on an ecclesiastical level. No Church should ever claim to be perfect, having no need for correction from our Lord, the Chief Shepherd, or having no need of further light from God. If that is their boast, it simply shows they are imperfect and have a carnal and natural (soulical) mindset.

And so we see that the Holy Spirit was slowly spreading His quickening power throughout the Church, leading the saints into greater and greater light as the Reformation continued. In England, and then in Scotland, this included the true nature of the Lord's kingdom in the dispensation of the Church, that the Church should not be wed with the State, of which Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin did not see or understand. This in turn soon led to the Biblical principle taught by the apostles that each local Church was autonomous and independent from each other and that the only Head of the Church was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

As such many saints in England began to see that the Church was accountable only to Christ, and not to any earthly power such as a king, neither to the power or claims of a Pope, nor to any other Church, or association of Churches. This was a Biblical truth not seen by many in the Reformation before, and in some cases even now.

Henry VIII in England, with subsequent sovereigns, did not see it. Luther did not see it. Zwingli did not see it, nor did John Calvin see it. But some of the Puritans in England began to see this principle in Scripture. As such, because of this, and because of their desire to keep themselves separate from all the corruptions and man-made traditions that had slowly crept into the Church, many Puritans in England soon became known as Separatist Puritans. And so the revival of the Spirit and recovery of Truth continued.

As time went on, however, those who were in power within the State took issue with this viewpoint of the Separatist Puritans. They disagreed with this principle of separation of the Church from the State. As such some of these Separatist Puritans began to be persecuted for their Faith and for their Biblical viewpoints on separation. Eventually, some were forced to flee England under the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

One group of Christians of such Separatist Puritans fleeing England was a congregation that settled in Leyden, Holland under the shepherding care of a pastor named John Robinson and the elder William Brewster. They sojourned in Leyden for twelve or so years, worshipping in freedom from union with the State, until some decided to leave Holland and set sail for the New World.

Soon they set sail for America in that now famous ship called the *Mayflower*. These Separatist Puritans, who left for America, were later known as the “Pilgrims,” in part, because they viewed themselves as “strangers and pilgrims” in this world in accordance with the Scripture as found in Hebrews 11:13.

Not everyone in the congregation left for America. Some planned on immigrating to the New World later. But one of the leaders in the congregation in Leyden did leave on the *Mayflower*, William Brewster, who was an elder in the Church. But the pastor John Robinson and the rest of the

congregation remained behind in Leyden, hoping to join the first settlers in America at a later time.

Upon their departure John Robinson gave them this loving exhortation. I will provide the exhortation below for it reveals the Reformational and Separatist Puritan mindset that so wished to recover the truth of God's Word. It is a perfect example of their desire for a revival or recovery of all the truth of Scripture given to them through the apostles of Christ. It is worth quoting in whole.

“Brethren,—We are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of heaven only knows. But whether the Lord has appointed that or no, I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry. **For I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy Word.** For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. Whatever part of his will our God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, **who yet saw not all things.**

This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light, as that which they first received. I beseech you, remember it as an article of your church covenant, **that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God.** Remember that, and every other article of your sacred covenant. **But I must here, withal, exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth; examine it, consider it, and compare it with other Scriptures of truth, before you receive it.** For it is not possible the Christian world should

come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.”³⁶

Thus we can see how these brethren, like Wycliffe and the Lollards before them, clung to the Canon of Scripture as the rightful and only source for all Truth. They did not look to a Church’s Magisterium, nor to any man-made doctrine, wisdom, or human tradition, but only to the eternal Word of God. They were renewed in the spirit of their mind, and committed to conforming themselves to the apostolic pattern of Churches established in Scripture. Thus, because of their belief that Scripture teaches that the Church should never be unionized with the State, they saw and understood the apostolic pattern of local Congregations or Churches being in fellowship with other Churches, but at the same time they remained autonomous or independent from one another, being only accountable to the Chief Shepherd above.

Joseph P. Thompson provides a nice summary of how this truth regarding the separation of Church and State was not understood at the beginning of the Reformation, thus showing the need for greater illumination of this truth.

“This revival of the Byzantine alliance of church and state was the fatal error in the ecclesiastical policy of the leaders of the Reformation. The Reformation was not only a protest against the doctrinal errors and the practical immoralities of the church of Rome, it was also a revolt from the supremacy of the Pope. **Yet, while it set up the word of Christ as the supreme rule of faith and practice, it did not follow that word so implicitly in matters of ecclesiastical polity. Its leaders looked to a political association of princes and peoples under its banner,** which should hold the Papacy in check, and protect the Reformed from persecution...Perhaps in the Europe of the sixteenth century, an

³⁶ *The Primitive Church (or Baptist) Magazine: Advocating the Constitution, Faith, and Practice of the Apostolic Churches, Vol. XVI, New Series* (Arthur Hall & Co., London, 1859) pg. 73

alliance of church and state was a necessary stage in the transition from the universal and organic absolutism of the Papacy, back to the individual liberty and the free fraternal fellowship of primitive Christianity. But this policy of the Reformers entailed upon their churches the formalism, the laxity, **and the infidelity of national church membership**, and the disabilities and contentions of state-control. As the Papal system had substituted the faith of the church for that of the individual, so this system substituted a national and legal faith for the ecclesiastical.”³⁷

In other words, the world still found its way into the Church through the State, since membership in the State was seen as membership in the Church through the ongoing practice of infant-baptism. But progress was being made and truth was being recovered. He continues—

“Puritanism, the legitimate outgrowth of the spirit of Wycliffe and the Lollards, now assumed two distinct types—non-conformity and separatism...the Separating Puritans, despairing of any reform within the establishment, “ seeing they could not have the word freely preached, and the sacraments administered without idolatrous gear, concluded to break off from the public churches, and separate in private houses.” The persecution of these Separatists, the martyrdom of Barrowe, Greenwood, and Penry in London, and the exile of many into Holland, darkened the closing years of the reign of Elizabeth. **But from this despised and persecuted Separation...arose the church-independence and the religious liberty that the Pilgrim Fathers brought to Plymouth rock...**”*The Church of the Pilgrim Fathers*,” says Knowles, **“was formed on the principle of entire independence of all human authority.** Its members belonged to that class of the Puritans who had separated entirely from the Church of England, and adopted a form of church polity **which they deemed more consistent with the letter and spirit of the New Testament.** They

³⁷ Joseph P. Thompson, “Religious Liberty since the Reformation,” *New Englander and Yale Review*, Volume XXI (William L. Kingsley, New Haven, 1863) pg. 117

held that ecclesiastical censures are wholly spiritual, and not to be accompanied with temporal penalties.”³⁸

And so, we can see how the revival of the Holy Spirit continued in the Church with Reformational fervor, having only begun a hundred or so years before in Germany, after such a long time of spiritual blindness, and human tradition that griped the Church during those Dark Ages.

Their desire to form a Church polity consistent with the letter and spirit of the New Testament, not only led to their belief in the Church’s autonomy from the State, but also each local Church’s autonomy from each other. In part, this was because they separated from the Church of England’s form of Church government that held to the idea of apostolic succession. Instead, they practiced a form of Church government they understood to be more consistent with the “letter and spirit of the New Testament.”

The following is from *The Works of John Robinson* concerning their understanding of “ecclesiastical ministry” provided in a letter written to Sir John Wolstenholme, who desired information about their Church, before some of the members set sail on the *Mayflower* to America.

In their Church, which now was in Leyden, Holland, John Robinson was considered the pastor and William Brewster the one ruling elder. Below is their first declaration given to Sir John Wolstenholme regarding their understanding of Church government—

“Leyden, January 27, 1017. Old style.

Declaration, No. 1.

“Touching the ecclesiastical ministry, namely of pastors for teaching, elders for ruling, and deacons for distributing the church’s contribution, as also for the two sacraments, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, we do wholly and in all points agree with the French

³⁸ Ibid., pg. 119-120

Reformed Churches, according to their Public Confession of Faith: though some small differences. The Oath of Supremacy we shall willingly take, if it be required of us, if that convenient satisfaction be not given by our taking the Oath of Allegiance.

John Robinson,
William Brewster.”³⁹

As for those other Puritans that never left England, after the Act of Uniformity in 1662, in which the State wished to enforce “conformity” of all Christians to the common worship and jurisdiction of the Church of England, those Christians known as Separatists Puritans soon became known as Nonconformists, for they refused to acknowledge the authority of the State to involve itself into such matters of the Church. The Act declared the following—

“Be it enacted by the king's most excellent majesty, by the advice and with the consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and of the commons in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that all and singular ministers in any cathedral, collegiate, or parish church or chapel, or other place of public worship within this realm of England, dominion of Wales, and town of Berwickupon-Tweed, shall be bound to say and use the morning prayer, evening prayer, celebration and administration of both the sacraments, and all other the public and common prayer, in such order and form as is mentioned in the said book annexed, and joined to this present Act, and entitled, “The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England...”⁴⁰

³⁹ John Robinson, *The Works of John Robinson, Vol. III* (Doctrinal Tract & Book Society, Boston, 1851) pg. 488

⁴⁰ George Gould, ed., *Documents Relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (W. Kent & Co., London, 1862) pg. 388-389

Basically, it required all to acquiesce and to declare allegiance to the sacraments, rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. I will provide the Act's required declaration of allegiance below.

"I [] do here declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book entitled, "The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England, together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in churches: and the form or manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons." ⁴¹

This, of course, was unacceptable to many Separatist Puritans, for they did not believe in episcopal succession, as well as many other things still practiced and accepted by the Church of England. And so they would not consent or conform to all that was required by the Act of Uniformity (thus their title of Nonconformists).

Moreover, as we also stated above, some separatist Puritans were also beginning to see the unbiblical nature of paedobaptism. This belief, however, had not yet solidified in their midst, for some Nonconformists, especially those who would later be known as Congregationalists, still practiced infant baptism.

Nevertheless, the one major truth those Christians known as Separatist Puritans who emigrated (later known as Pilgrims) and those Puritans who remained in England (later known as Nonconformists) continue to affirm was that the Church should not wed herself with the State. This was a very important Biblical truth that the Holy Spirit recovered in their midst. It addressed the outward relations of the Church and

⁴¹ Ibid., pg. 389-390

bore witness to the truth that Christ's kingdom was not of this world.

But now let us turn our attention to how those Christians began to address the inward relations of the Church.

As we briefly mentioned above, some among the Separatists Puritans, because of their objection to the apostolic succession of the Church of England, began to recover the truth of Church government. And, some of the Puritans also began to see the Biblical truth of believer's baptism by immersion. But this illumination of this truth came in stages.

As we said, some of those early Separatist Puritans still practiced paedobaptism, and others, who did give up infant baptism, nevertheless, still practiced believer's baptism by effusion, but soon, many began to see the truth of believer's baptism by "immersion." More and more light was dawning upon them. This further unfolding of truth next led to what is called the Baptist movement, of which we will now examine. How wonderful it was that revival was recovering the precious truths in God's Word given to the Church for all time by the apostles of Christ.

The Baptist Movement

Believer's Baptism

As the English Reformation continued we should mention that each subsequent step in the revival of the Holy Spirit built upon that which went before. Thus, the revival under Wycliffe helped lay the basis of the European Reformation. His belief in the primacy of Scriptures and burden to provide the Scripture in the language of the people greatly influenced Martin Luther. Then of course, we saw how this continued on into the English Reformation. Now we

will see how it led into the next revival of the Holy Spirit—the Baptist movement.

As we mentioned at the end of the last section, those Nonconformist Puritans, who recovered the truth regarding the outward relations of the Church—specifically, that there should be no union between the Church and the State, also continued their recovery of truth in regard to the inward relations of the Church.

Once the world was removed from the Church outwardly, they turned their attention to removing the world from the Church inwardly, specifically, by addressing the fact that baptism should only be given to believers, and not to infants who were not able to exercise faith in Christ personally.

Infant baptism held that the parents (and godparents) could become a surety for the future instruction and faith of the infant regarding the truths of the Gospel and of faith in Christ. As such, and because of their surety and the fact that the Church of England believed baptism was a sacrament and not an ordinance, they believed the baby was regenerated by the faith of the parents and godparents in that baptism. As such, the infant, through infant baptism, was believed to become a member of Christ's body. This remained true even if they never followed their baptism as an infant with the sacrament of confirmation when they reached the years of discretion, as it was then called. True, at that time in Church history they could not partake in what they called the sacrament of Holy Communion without that confirmation, but they could continue to be considered regenerated members of the Church!

A book written near this time in Church history that speaks to this was a book published in 1691 that was entitled *Believers Baptism from Heaven and of Divine Institution, Infant Baptism of Earth and of Human Invention*. It was written by a brother named Hercules Collins, who called

himself a servant of the servants of Christ. In one of his chapters, he made a comparison of Believer's Baptism with Infant Baptism.

"Believers Baptism hath no Absurdities attending it. But infants Baptism hath many, namely, that Persons may have Regeneration & Grace before Vocation [i.e. their calling by God] and that Persons may be visible Church-Members before Conversion. Moreover, that Persons may be baptized by another's Faith...bringing in a carnal fleshly seed into Christ's Church, in the room of a Spiritual seed."⁴²

This demonstrates why baptism by immersion upon confession of faith was such an important truth to recover during the English Reformation in contradistinction to infant or paedobaptism. Paedobaptism opened the door to the Church being compromised with the world, for it allowed unsaved people to be members of the Church. It contradicted that Biblical doctrine that regeneration is by faith, and that being the personal faith of the one so regenerated.

It should be remembered that regeneration (παλιγγενεσία), essentially, is a word that simply means to be "born again." In that light, it was Jesus Himself who said that being born again, i.e. being born of the Spirit, was the result of one's exercise of faith (John 3:9-15). Therefore, it was doctrinally incorrect to affirm that a little baby could undergo regeneration (παλιγγενεσία), by which they were made a member of the body of Christ, without any exercise of their own faith.

The problem was not that there were unsaved people present in the Church services. Indeed, is it not a good thing for unbelievers to come to Church? Perhaps, it might lead to their salvation. Scripture speaks of this in I Cor. 14:23-25.

⁴² Hercules Collins, *Baptism from Heaven and of Divine Institution, Infant Baptism of Earth and of Human Invention* (London, 1691) pg. 88

Nor was the problem a belief that if a baby died it would be saved by the mercy of God based upon the merits of His Son. Many of those Nonconformists, who later became known as Baptists, believed that truth (cf. II Sam. 12:23).

The problem was that people were being taught that regeneration occurred by baptism. They were being taught that the faith of another believer could be imputed to a little baby. And they were being taught that those little babies who were saved by another's faith and made members of the Church through paedobaptism, remained members of the Body of Christ, even if they never followed through, when grown up, with the sureties made on their behalf.

And finally, the problem was also that they taught that even if the person does follow through with those sureties in confirmation, their mere mental affirmation to those sureties made on their behalf, assures their salvation, rather than there salvation being assured by a deep seated faith in the Lord Jesus Christ from their own heart.

In another place, Hercules Collins also said this:

“Believers Baptism introduceth no Error nor false Doctrine into the World. But Infant-Baptism doth introduce many Errors, in that it was to take away Original Sin, work Grace and Regeneration, effect Salvation by the Work done; that it was an Apostolical Tradition; that Children have Faith, and are Disciples of Christ; that all Children of Believers are in the Covenant, defiling and polluting the Church with false matter, and confounding the Church and the World together; introducing many hainous [sic] Traditions and Inventions...”⁴³

⁴³ Hercules Collins, *Baptism from Heaven and of Divine Institution, Infant Baptism of Earth and of Human Invention* (London, 1691) pg. 92

John Gill also warns against the danger of this error that gives false assurance to one who thinks they are saved, yet in reality may not be, because the person is simply trusting in what they were taught by the Church, rather than trusting in what Scripture actually teaches. In his book on infant baptism, originally written in 1766, he states:

“The leaven of this old and destructive error yet remains even in some Protestant churches, which have retained it from Rome. Hence a child, when baptized, is declared to be regenerate, and thanks are returned to God, that it is regenerate. And when it is capable of being catechised, it is taught to say that, in its baptism, it was made a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Such instruction cannot but have a powerful tendency to take off all concern from persons when grown up, respecting any vital change of heart, as necessary to prepare them for heaven; and to encourage in them the fatal presumption, that, notwithstanding their evident want of grace, they yet are members of Christ, and shall never perish—are children and heirs of God, and, therefore, must certainly inherit eternal life. The father of lies himself, as Dr. Owen justly observes, could not have devised a more pernicious doctrine, or one more calculated to insure the final ruin of the soul.”⁴⁴

Nothing can be more evident than that infant baptism is the basis of national churches, and, therefore, the parent of all the mischiefs which arise from the unhallowed union of the spiritual and the profane in the same religious community.”⁴⁵

The sad fact was that many little infants would grow up and reach the age of accountability, at which time they were expected to confirm their supposed baptismal regeneration in the sacrament of Confirmation, yet many

⁴⁴ John Gill, *Infant Baptism, a Part and Pillar of Popery*, (American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1851) pg. 53-54

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 55

would choose not to do so, even unto adulthood, and yet, they were still owed as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Another Christian, known as a Baptist, Adoniram Judson, also understood the importance of believer's baptism and why infant baptism led to so many errors, not being an apostolic practice or a Biblical command. Before he left for the mission field he believed in infant baptism, but during his journey on the ship he became convinced of the Biblical doctrine of believer's baptism.

He relates this in his book entitled, *On Baptism*, the following.

“Are we ready to acknowledge the children of believers, as members of the Christian church, in the same sense, as the children of Jews were members of the Jewish church? ... To consider and treat them, as members of the church, until formally excluded; and to consider and treat them as not members, until formally admitted, are very different things. The latter is the uniform practice of Protestant dissenters in England, and their descendants, the churches in America; the former only is consistent with the principle that the children of believers are church members. **But it most evidently tends to confound the church with the world, and, it is to be feared, is the most pernicious practice that ever infested and laid waste the vineyard of the Lord.**”⁴⁶

Scripture tells us—“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). The fact is, whether it was the intention or not, infant baptism gave people a false sense of salvation, for they never truly understood that salvation was not something they were physically born into, but was instead that which was to be the result of a direct act of faith from their own spirits by which they personally trust in Christ for

⁴⁶ Adoniram Judson, *A Sermon on Christian Baptism* (Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, Boston, 1846) pg. 71

salvation through their own personal act of faith in Him. It was Jesus, Himself, who said one must be born of the water (physical birth) and born of the Spirit (spiritual birth) to see and to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

And then, and only then, in answer to that faith and spiritual birth, which is demonstrated by a good conscience (i.e. a spirit of faith), is that person baptized (I Pet. 3:21).

Thus, believers baptism by immersion was an important truth that was recovered by the reviving work of the Holy Spirit, for by definition it helped protect those Churches, which had refused union with the State, and thus the world, but still were in danger of having the world come in through other means, i.e. through unregenerate souls being considered members of the Church by infant baptism.

In that light, those early Nonconformist Christians in England laid forth, for all to examine, the following belief regarding baptism. It is included in section 39-41 of their confession of Faith in 1644 entitled: *The Confession of Faith, of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptist.*

XXXIX

That Baptism is an Ordinance of the new Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed only upon persons professing faith, or that are Disciples, or taught, who upon a profession of faith, ought to be baptized.

XL

The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a sign, must answer the thing signified, which are these: first, the washing the whole soul in the blood of Christ: Secondly, that interest the Saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection; thirdly, together with a confirmation of our faith, that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and riseth again, so certainly shall the bodies of the Saints be raised by the power of Christ in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.

XLI

The persons designed by Christ, to dispense this Ordinance, the Scriptures hold forth to be a preaching Disciple, it being nowhere tied to a particular Church, Officer, or person extraordinarily sent, the Commission enjoining the administration, being given to them under no other consideration, but as considered Disciples.⁴⁷

The effect of this truth caused those in the Church to realize that many fellow Englishmen may have been in the thralls of blindness and in desperate need of the Gospel message, for they had been falsely taught since childhood that they were baptized as infants and thus a member of the body of Christ, when the opposite, in so many cases, was the actual truth; instead they were lost souls in desperate need of salvation.

Now that we have seen how the Holy Spirit fully recovered the truth of believer's baptism by immersion in the Baptist movement, we should mention that there were other truths of Scripture recovered by some of those who would latter call themselves Baptist. Believer's baptism by immersion was the primary truth recovered by the Holy Spirit for the Church, but there were other truths as well, of which many today may not be aware.

But the recovery did not happen all at once. Just as this truth of believer's baptism began to be recovered in the previous revival of the Puritans, being only embraced by a few, but not fully embraced until the Baptist revival or movement began, so too, we should mention there were other truths embraced by some in the Baptist movement that were not fully recovered or embraced by many until the Holy Spirit

⁴⁷ W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1911) pg. 185

brought about the Brethren revival or movement. But it began during the revival called the Baptist movement.

Perhaps the reason why this is so, is because many of these truths, which were recovered by the Holy Spirit through those in the Baptist movement, and which we will now discuss, were soon forgotten and neglected by them, and so are not fully associated with them. These truths we will mention never took hold, just as believer's baptism by immersion did not fully take hold under the Puritan movement until the Lord raised up those now known as Baptist. It is the same way these other truths did not take hold until the Lord raised up those believers in the Brethren movement, as we will see after we discuss the intervening Methodist movement.

But since the Holy Spirit did recover these truths first through many of those Separatist Puritans and Nonconformist Puritans, who later were called Baptists, we will list some of them below. Perhaps, some who call themselves Baptists today will be surprised that those who went before them held to and practiced these Biblical truths.

In short, they were such truths as these—

1) They believed that it was wrong for Christians to “denominate” themselves. Therefore, they refused the name “Baptist” and simply referred to themselves as “Christian” or “brethren.”

This particular truth may not be known to many, but many of those Nonconformist Puritans, who were later known as Baptists, simply did not believe it was Biblical to adopt a denominational name. They believed it was only Biblical to refer to themselves as Christians or brethren who had been baptized. It was other Christians, who disagreed with them during that time of revival and reformation, who gave them a sectarian name like Anabaptist or Baptist, both names which they consistently refused to accept.

It was said of John Bunyan (1628-1688), who is considered by many today to be one of the earliest Baptists in England (who was the author of the famous work entitled, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, as well as *The Pilgrim's Progress*) that he did not like “to be called by the denomination of his sect.”⁴⁸ In fact, John Bunyan makes the following statement about the name “Baptist” in his writings.

“You ask me next, “How long is it since I was a Baptist?...I must tell you ...I know none to whom that title is so proper as to the disciples of John [the Baptist]. And since you would know by **what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you, I would be, and hope I am, a Christian**; and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, **or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost**. And as for those factious titles of Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Jerusalem, nor Antioch...for they naturally tend to divisions”⁴⁹

To him divisions were likened as follows—

“Jars and divisions, wranglings and prejudices eat out the growth, if not the life of religion. These are those waters of Marah that embitter our spirits, and quench the spirit of God. Unity and Peace is said to be like the dew of Hermon (Psalm cxxxiii.3), and as a dew that descended upon Sion, when the Lord promised his blessing. Divisions run religion into briers and thorns, contentions and parties. Divisions are to churches, like wars in countries; where war is, the ground lieth waste and untitled; none takes care of it. It is love that edifieth, but division pulleth down.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Robert Southey, *The Pilgrim's Progress with the Life of John Bunyan* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1837) pg. 58

⁴⁹ John Bunyan, *The Works of that Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan, Volume III* (Nathan Whiting, New Haven, 1833) pg. 376

⁵⁰ Ibid.

And then, even before John Bunyan there was John Smyth (1570-1612) who some today consider to be the very first English Baptist Pastor. (We will examine this claim with greater context at a later time.) He speaks to this same issue in his *Confession of Faith Propositions and Conclusions Concerning True Christian Religion Containing a Confession of Faith of Certain English People, Living at Amsterdam*, printed in 1611. In it he decries the division of “all repenting and believing Christians in the communion of the outward visible church.”

Section LXXI of his Confession declares the following:

LXXI

“That all repenting and believing **Christians are brethren** in the communion of the outward visible church, wherever they may live, or by what name they may be named, be they Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, Brownists, Anabaptists, or any other pious Christians, who in truth, and by godly zeal, strive for repentance and faith, although they are implicated in great ignorance and weakness. Nevertheless, we greet them altogether with a holy kiss, **deploring with our whole heart, that we**, who strive for one faith, one Spirit, one Lord, one God, one body, one baptism, **should be so divided and severed into so many sects and splitting, and that for so less considerable reason.**”⁵¹

And so we see that many of those Christians, who believed in believer’s baptism, also understood the importance of “names,” and the importance of using only those names that were given to us by God. They believed anything more than that tended to divide the household of God. They simply did not believe in denominating themselves by names, which to their understanding, divided the Church.

⁵¹ B. Evans, *The Early English Baptists, Vol. I* (J. Heaton, London, 1862) pg. 267

In fact, this belief was so strong that H. Leon McBeth, professor of Church History at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, stated that it was not until the mid-17th century before such Christians began to even use the name *Baptist* for themselves, and even then it was not for another hundred years before it became readily accepted. He shares the following in his book on *Baptist Beginnings*:

“The name *Baptist* was not at first applied to those people who are the subject of this book. Their opponents often called them “Anabaptists,” but they preferred such names as “Brethren,” “Baptized Churches,” and “Churches of the Baptized way.” By the early 1640s, some opponents were calling them “Baptists.” The group had begun to use the name of themselves by the mid-1650s, but not for a full century would *Baptist* be generally accepted.”⁵²

Apparently, the pressure created from other Christians continually calling them falsely by a denominational name eventually weakened their resolve, and soon they began to simply acquiesce to the name given to them by others (not the name Anabaptist, but the name Baptist). But it is important to note that it was not that way in the beginning when the Holy Spirit first recovered this truth through them regarding the importance of retaining only those names given to us in Scripture by God.

Another Christian who bore witness to this truth in the 17th century was William Kiffin, who many now label as a prominent Baptist pastor of the time. But he did not use the name “Baptist” for himself or other Christians like him (at least not in 1681, when he published the following book). Rather, he used such names as **disciple**, **brethren**, and **believer**. And, as mentioned by H. Leon McBeth above, he

⁵² H. Leon McBeth *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1987) pg. 48-49

also used the term “**brethren of the baptized way**.” Below are a couple quotes in his book published in 1681.

“Yea all the Reformers, whether Lutherans, Calvinists or other Foreigners, The Church of England, and all the Dissenting Congregations that own Ordinances, (ex [cept] a few Persons **of the Baptized way** and that lately too), have owned and do own, that Baptism is an Ordinance of Christ...”⁵³

And in another place he calls them our “Dissenting Brethren of the Baptized way.” And then he says, regarding those who profess Christ, the following—

“The professors of the Christian Religion, are distinguished by certain terms... as Prelatical [i.e. Episcopal], Presbyterian, Independant [sic], Anabaptist, &c. **And it were well, if such names were laid aside, and the title of Christian Brother reassumed,** because they agree in Fundamentals.”⁵⁴

And so we see in the beginning all those Christians, who today are called Baptists, certainly understood the importance of honouring the names given to them (and to us all) by God the Father in Scripture. Why?—because it is always the prerogative of the greater (i.e. God the Father) to name the lesser (i.e. His children). Even as late as the 19th century this was still understood by such Christians now called Baptist, one of them being C. H. Spurgeon. Although, by that time, the use of the name Baptist had become routine, he still understood the undesirable nature of it. He touches upon this truth in one of his sermons—

⁵³ William Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-communion: Wherein is Proved by Scripture ... that No Unbaptized Person May be Regularly Admitted to the Lords Supper* (Geo. Larkin, London, 1681) pg. 88-89

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 2

“I am not particularly anxious about my own name, whether that shall endure forever or not, provided it is recorded in my Master's book. George Whitfield, when asked whether he would found a denomination, said, “No...**let my name perish; let Christ's name last forever.**” **Amen to that! Let my name perish; but let Christ's name last forever...** I say of the Baptist name, let it perish, but let Christ's name last forever. I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. You will say, Why? Because when everybody else sees baptism by immersion, we shall be immersed into all sects, and our sect will be gone. Once give us the predominance, and we are not a sect any longer. A man may be a Churchman, or a Wesleyan, or an Independent, and yet be a Baptist. So that I say, I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last forever.”⁵⁵

It is unfortunate that this spiritual understanding of these godly men did not persevere. In fact, for the most part (as we said before), it was not until the rise of the Brethren movement that this truth was once more recovered, as we will shortly see.

(It should be mentioned, however, that just as it happened within the Baptist movement, the same thing is now happening in the hearts of some within the “brethren movement!” Some are minimizing the importance of this truth that was recovered by the Holy Spirit. I have heard of some who simply say we should just accept the denominational designation from other Christians and call ourselves the “Plymouth Brethren.” May God forgive us for such a thought.)

Those who are thinking in this way do not understand the prerogative of the Father to name His children, and the deep and spiritual reason for being faithful to those names. God's names are sufficient for us all. If some worry that other Christians will not know who we are, or that it might in some

⁵⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon* (Sheldon, Blakeman and Company, New York, 1857) pg. 167-168

way hinder growth, then all we need to do is to include a Statement of Faith to all who wish to know; or if we advertise our place of gathering, we can include a short list of our distinctives or the Biblical principles that we follow.

The early Church had no other names other than what God gave them, yet the Lord still built His Church! We need to rely on Him, not names we adopt according to our own thinking or wisdom to facilitate growth. In any case, dear brethren, we should never denominate what God in His wisdom did not denominate. We should glory in the names He already gave to us to His honour and glory.

Why is it that Christians love to denominate themselves? Why are so many not satisfied with the common name given to us by God our Father above? Could it be, perhaps, because as humans we have an innate desire to “make a name for ourselves” (cf. Gen. 11:4). Or maybe not; maybe it is simply an innocent desire to let people know what we believe as a Church in contradistinction from other Churches. (But if that was the case, a Church could make that known by a Statement of Faith without ever having to denominate themselves.) Or on the other hand, perhaps, we feel, as a Church, we have a corner on the truth and we want others to notice our particular views. But, beloved, such thinking is not spiritual. In fact, it is a reminder that knowledge puffeth up (I Cor. 8:1).

J. Vernon McGee once made a helpful comment on this truth; he said it this way:

“We understand that there are about three hundred sects in America today. My, how the Church is divided...! Were the Scriptural relationships observed and obeyed, the narrow and limited conception of the Church would not prevail as it does in this hour. These relationships, as we find them in God’s Word, enable believers to see beyond the limited border or confines of the Church or little group to which they belong. The Church needs a full-orbed

view today—it desperately needs a 20-20 vision to see what the real Church of the living Christ is and always has been...Let me state this kindly, but as far as His Church is concerned, it is one flock today. How tragic it is, and has been, to have the Baptist sheep over here, and the Presbyterian sheep over there, and the Methodist sheep in still another area. After all, Sheep are sheep and those who are in His flock are one. There is one flock and one Shepherd...”⁵⁶

Perhaps, beloved, with a new revival of the Holy Spirit, Christians will once more be illuminated, like our brethren before and realize that names are important to God, for they are given to us by Him to be revelatory to all who hear. They are unifying names and not divisive names. They include every believer and exclude none who believe. They bring glory to Him and not to us.

We are “brethren,” which reveals we are all children of one God and Father. We are all “disciples,” which reveals we have one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are “Christians,” which reveals that we are all anointed by the same Holy Spirit. We are “believers” which reveals we are all saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves. And we are all “saints” which shows we have all been sanctified by the blood of Christ. All these names have been given to us in Scripture. They are good names which encompass every believer. Why not be content with them? God was wise in giving them to us. Can man ever improve upon the wisdom of God?

2) They believed in the weekly observance of the Lord’s Table, as being necessary for a Church following the commands of Scripture.

⁵⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Christ, His Cross, His Church* (Thru the Bible Radio, Los Angeles, 1971) pg. 5-6,11

Some of those Christians, now called Baptists, also recovered the weekly observance of the Lord's Table for those Christians in the Baptist movement.

In section XIX of their Confession of Faith, written in 1611, they stated the following regarding weekly observance of the Lord's Table.

XIX

“That every church ought according to the example of Christ's disciples and primitive Churches, **upon every first day of the week, being the Lord's day,** to assemble together to pray, prophecy, praise God, and **break bread,** and perform all other parts of spiritual communion for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of true religion, and piety in the church (John xx.19. Acts ii.42 and xx.7, I Corinthians xvi.2). And that ought not to labor in their callings according to the equity of the moral law, which Christ came not to abolish, but to fulfill (Exodus xx.8 &c).”⁵⁷

And then, again, John Bunyan, considered by many to be an early Baptist in England, bore witness to the same truth, believing it was a custom incumbent upon all Churches. He wrote—

“We come yet more close to the custom of churches—I mean, to the custom of the churches of the Gentiles—for as yet we have spoken but of the practice of the Church of God which was at Jerusalem; only we will add, that the customs that were laudable and binding with the Church at Jerusalem were with reverence to be imitated by the churches of the Gentiles, for there was but one law of Christ for them both to worship by.

Now, then, to come to the point—to wit, that it was the custom of the churches of the Gentiles on the first day of the week,

⁵⁷ Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I, Vol. II* (Printed for the Author, London, 1739) Appendix pg. 7

but upon no other that we read of, to come together to perform divine worship to their Lord.

Hence it is said, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples were come together to break bread,” &c. (Acts xx. 7). This is a text that, as to matter of fact, cannot be contradicted by any, for the text saith plainly they did so; the disciples *then* came together to break bread—the disciples among the Gentiles *did so*.... “They came together *to break bread*—to partake of the supper of the Lord” And what day so fit as the Lord's day for this? This was to be the work of that day—to wit, to solemnize that ordinance among themselves, adjoining other solemn worship thereto to fill up the day, as the following part of the verse shows. This day, therefore, was designed for this work—the whole day, for the next declares it. The first day of the week was set by them apart for this work.

‘Upon the first day;’ not upon a first, of upon one first day, or upon such a first day, for had he said so, we had had from thence not so strong an argument for our purpose; but when he saith ‘upon the first day of the week’ they did it, he insinuates it was their custom... **What or which first day?—of this, or that, of the third or fourth week of the month? No, but upon the first day, every first day, for so the text admits us to judge.**

“Upon the first day of the week, *when* the disciples were come together,’ supposes a custom... They came together then to break bread; they had appointed to do it then, for that *then* was the day of their Lord's resurrection, and that in which he himself congregated, after he revived, with the first gospel Church, the Church at Jerusalem. Thus you see, breaking of bread was the work—the work that by general consent was agreed to be by the churches of the Gentiles performed upon the first day of the week. I say, by the *churches*, for I doubt not but that the practice here was also the practice of the rest of the Gentile churches, even as it had been before the practice of the Church at Jerusalem. For this practice *now* did become universal, and so this text implies; for he speaks here *universally* of the practice of all disciples...”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ John Bunyan, *The Works of that Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan, Volume III* (Nathan Whiting, New Haven, 1833) pg. 427-428

Even years later, this truth was still considered to be a Biblical imperative by Baptists in Scotland. Let us look to the witness of Robert Haldane (1764-1842) and his younger brother James A. Haldane (1768-1851).

Perhaps, by way of quick background, Robert Haldane and James A. Haldane were brothers who belonged to Churches in Scotland, which were commonly referred to as Independent Churches. They were very active in these Churches and were well respected by all. These Churches were similar to those Separatist Puritan Churches in England, in that they held to many of the same practices, the foremost of which was Church autonomy, but also, unfortunately, paedobaptism.

But, fortunately, like John Smyth before them, they were led by the Holy Spirit into seeing the unbiblical nature of paedobaptism, and so were soon affirming the Biblical nature of believer's baptism throughout the area of Scotland and England.

Therefore, they were already very active and very influential in the work of the Lord. So, once the Holy Spirit enlightened their hearts in regard to this truth, the Lord used them to restore this truth to many other Christians in Scotland as well. It is said the Baptist movement grew greatly through their ministry and writings. And so, they are perfect examples to show how weekly observance of the Lord's Table was a common practice of early Baptists.

We will first look at the witness of the younger brother who was a minister and evangelist, then the older brother who was considered a theologian by many.

The younger James A. Haldane wrote the following—

“When the Lord commands his disciples not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, he requires that they should associate as far as they have opportunity, and no farther. The precept

is as binding on two as on two hundred. These can co-operate, and continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers; and the abundance of the one may be a supply for the other's want...**No good reason then can be given why two or three believers, who have not an opportunity of meeting with a greater number, should not stately assemble on the Lord's day as a church of Christ, to observe the Lord's supper,** as well as to continue in the apostles' doctrine and in prayers. Indeed it is their bounden duty to do so.”⁵⁹

And he states—

“There are various ordinances which we observe with the fullest persuasion that they are agreeable to the mind of God, while other ordinances appear to us very problematical, which are at least as clearly taught in scripture. This we are perhaps unwilling to admit. The evidence of the one strikes us as perfectly satisfactory, while the other appears at best but doubtful. This is not surprising. It arises from the force of habit in reconciling us to what we are accustomed to... We may illustrate this, by considering what is said of the Lord's supper, Acts xx. 7. “On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them.” **Hence we learn, that it was the practice of the church at Troas to meet together on the first day of the week to break bread.** But perhaps we have been accustomed to break bread only once a month or once a year, and consequently to attach to this ordinance a degree of solemnity far greater than we do to any other. We are therefore alarmed at the idea of reducing it to the level of the other ordinances, and considering it as a stated part of our worship. We re-examine the text. Instead of taking the natural and obvious meaning, we inquire whether it will bear an explanation which corresponds with our practice....”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ James A. Haldane, *Observations on the Association of Believers, Mutual Exhortation, the Apostolic Mode of Teaching, Qualifications and Support of Elders, Spiritual Gifts, &c.* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1808) pg. 13, 14

⁶⁰ Ibid., pg 18-19

And then later in the same book he states—

“Let us next attend to the time of observing the Lord's supper. There are now no months nor years to be observed as under the old dispensation; but the first day of the week is appointed for Christians to assemble, and attend to the ordinances. When we read therefore of their continuing stedfastly in breaking bread, **we can have no doubt that the Lord's supper should be attended to every Lord's day.**”⁶¹

In fact, this truth was not only a distinctive practice of Baptists in Scotland, it also was a practice of Baptists in England and Holland, and even was the common practice of those earlier Independent Churches among whom he first ministered. A few years earlier he wrote—

“The reformers were fully aware of the apostolic practice respecting the Lord's supper. Calvin thus expresses his views: 'Every Lord's day the table should be spread in the church, and though none should be constrained, all should be exhorted to the repast'... (Institut. Rel. Christ, lib. iv. cap. 17. § 45, 46.)”

“It seems strange indeed, as we have already said, to separate the ordinances of the first day of the week and the Lord's supper, the one intended to commemorate the death, the other the resurrection of Jesus; and one consequence of doing so is, that many professors, and perhaps even some Christians, almost forget that the first day of the week is observed in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection.

“One great end of the Lord's Supper is to represent the union of Christians with one another, through their union with their Lord... This ordinance is much calculated to promote mutual love, and to represent the complete separation which the gospel makes between Christians and the world. It is a sign or witness to those who look for him, that the Lord will come again without sin unto salvation, and is thus intended to strengthen their faith and hope...”

⁶¹ Ibid., pg. 25

“It is a similar error which has produced the objection that weekly communion will destroy all solemnity. Does frequency in prayer make us less solemn in the duty? Does the weekly return of the Lord's day destroy its solemnity? Should we be more solemn at family-worship, if we only attended to the duty once a-month? But the Lord's Supper, it is said, is more solemn than any other duty. Where do we learn this? Not in Scripture. We must not believe every spirit, but try the spirits by the testimony of God. It may seem as if we argued against solemnity; but we only argue against attaching such a degree of solemnity to one ordinance, as tends to make us tremble to observe it with due frequency, and diminishes our reverence for others appointed by the same authority. We do not argue against the solemnity of this ordinance, we argue for the due solemnity of every ordinance.”⁶²

And then the older brother, Robert Haldane, bore witness to the same when he wrote—

“The first churches under the guidance of the Apostles assembled on the first day of the week. The Apostle Paul, and those who accompanied him, abode seven days at Troas. "And, upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them," Acts xx. 7. **Here we learn that it was their common custom to meet on this day for holding their religious assemblies, and observing the stated ordinances of worship.** The time appointed, too, to collect the contributions for the poor was the first day of the week. "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be

⁶² James Alexander Haldane, *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians: Drawn from the Sacred Scriptures Alone, Being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation and to Represent the Guilt and Evil Consequences of Neglecting Them* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1805) pg. 298-301 (letter forms have been updated to modern forms as well as some spelling throughout any of his quotes)

no gatherings when I come," 1 Cor. xvi. 2. It was not then on account of anything peculiar to the church at Corinth that Paul commanded that this duty should be performed on the first day of the week, since he had enjoined the same on the distant churches of Galatia, and the Apostle elsewhere declares that he taught the same things everywhere in all the churches, 1 Cor. iv., 17; vii., 17..."

"In the Lord's Supper, we have a symbolical representation of the death of Christ, and in the Lord's day we have a commemoration of his resurrection every week."

"If any one hesitates to admit that the observance of the first day of the week is commanded in the New Testament, because not enjoined by direct precept, he has not attended to the manner in which the various parts of our duty are there taught; and he should ask himself on what ground he observes the first day of the week. Is it because all Christians agree in doing so? In this there is nothing valid. The consent or practice of all the Christians and of all the churches on earth, cannot add to, or take from, or change one iota of the law of God. What that law is, must be learned from the Scriptures, either by direct precept, or from the approved practice recorded in them of Christians or churches under the guidance of the Apostles, and thus stamped with their authority... Christians have nothing to do but to repeat and to obey the laws, in whatever manner enjoined by our Lord and his Apostles. Why are churches formed? Why do they assemble on the first day of the week? Why are they to consist of persons only of a certain character? ... To the practice of the first churches under his direction, and to his own practice, the Apostle Paul appeals, as of equal authority with his express injunctions. "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God," 1 Cor. xi. 16. The approved customs of the first churches were fixed by the Apostles, and are therefore equally binding as their commands; and their commands, as speaking by the Holy Ghost, are equally obligatory as those of the Lord... and those of his Apostles, whose words bind and loose in heaven and on earth, all shall be judged at the last day. If any man shall add to these words or take from them, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." ⁶³

⁶³ Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Robert Carter, New York, 1847) pg. 715-717

And then in one of his letters preserved in a book, we have this testimony—

“I began with practising the Lord’s supper monthly. Afterwards I became convinced, that on the principles I held, I ought to observe it weekly.”⁶⁴

Today, these two servants of God are still recognized for their faithful service to the saints in Scotland. In his book, *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, William H. Brackney lists them both as Scottish Baptists, who he says “exerted much influence on the development of evangelical and Baptist ministries through a theological school and [through] the sending forth of missionary-pastors.”⁶⁵

We should thank God for their faithful witness to the truth, for their great love to the Lord and toward their brethren, and for their love to all those lost souls to whom they took the Gospel.

3) They believed in a plurality of elders, wherein those elders were the same men who also had the title of pastors or bishops. Thus they believed each Church should be ruled and shepherded by a group of men appointed by the Holy Spirit, and so recognized by the Church, who would shepherd and rule as equals.

Perhaps, as an aside, since I will be providing more quotes by John Smyth, this is a good time to provide (as I promised earlier to do) some greater context to the thought by some that he was the first English Baptist pastor.

⁶⁴ Robert Haldane, *Letters to Mr. Ewing, respecting the Tabernacle at Glasgow, etc* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1809) pg. 40

⁶⁵ William H. Brackney, *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists, Second Edition* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD 2009) pg. 267-268

Some Baptists today believe that he should be considered the first English Baptist pastor (or at least one of the earliest) and others do not. There are many different views on this issue. In fact, some Baptists today do not even consider him to be a full Baptist, since he practiced believer's baptism by effusion, rather than by immersion. But part of that disagreement is the result of modern day disagreements among Baptists, who disagree among themselves on other issues anyway.

One important thing to remember on this issue is that the denominational nomenclature of Baptist was not existent at that time, at least not to any great degree. Thus, there is no need to really determine if, indeed, that title should ever be applied to him or not. I just mentioned it earlier because many view him as the first, or at least one of the first English Baptist pastors.

Those Baptists today who do not view him as the first English Baptist pastor believe that title should go to Thomas Helwys instead, while others might believe it should go to William Kiffin, or John Bunyan, and I am sure there are other candidates as well, depending on which part of the Baptist community one belongs to today. (Today there are many different types of Baptists, much like there are different types of Lutherans, Presbyterians, and those who are erroneously called Plymouth Brethren, etc.)

The point is that things were much more fluid in those days. The Holy Spirit was illuminating many hearts with Biblical doctrines and practices that had long been forgotten during the darkness of the Middle Ages. As such, it took time for recovered truth to be accepted, and then, once accepted, to remain and be solidified in the hearts of the saints. Many times truth would be recovered, and then would be lost once again, until the Holy Spirit brought it up again.

So, the important thing to remember is that these brothers must be understood within the times in which they

lived. They suffered much in the way of religious persecution for their beliefs and willingness to be guided only by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And so we should not be so quick to judge them by our standards today. Could we undergo the persecution and hardships they endured for Christ and His Word, even though their knowledge had not yet become perfect or sufficient from our own point of view?

If some today dispute John Smyth being labeled as the first English Baptist pastor because they believe he was still deficient in certain areas of belief, he, and others like him, certainly taught enough “baptistic” truth at the time to derisively be given that name, or some form of that name back then! (But then, it really does not matter, for as we showed earlier, they did not like to adopt a denominational name for themselves anyway!)

It says much that we can sit back and judge them so easily about their lack of full knowledge, especially, when our liberty to sit back and do so without fear of religious persecution was won by the blood and suffering that they endured! I am afraid our zeal sometimes goes beyond our knowledge, and we get puffed up in pride, and deflated in love.

It took time for the biblical truth of believer’s baptism by immersion to be fully recovered. The first step, which took great courage, in and of itself, was to simply reject infant-baptism, and affirm that baptism is for believers only. Many Christians were persecuted for such belief. The added truth of believer’s baptism by immersion would come later. Yes, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys may have still practiced believer’s baptism by effusion at first, but could that not have been simply because the Holy Spirit had not yet enlightened them on the truth and the need of immersion? The Church at that time was coming out of great darkness and carnality. Spiritual growth and sanctification took time (as it does with us all)!

But be that as it may, none can deny that it took great courage for them to affirm that one should first believe, i.e. that one should make a confession of faith before one is baptized, even if they did not yet understand it should be by immersion.

Eventually the truth of believer's baptism by immersion would take hold and become settled in the hearts of the saints, and for that we should be thankful that the path toward that truth was first paved by Christians like John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, godly Christians who led the way by first rejecting paedobaptism.

And so, it really makes no difference if the title of the first English Baptist pastor should be applied to him or not. None can deny that he was used by God to restore many truths considered "baptistic" by Baptists today. And as we said, the truth of the matter is, he probably would have rejected that title for himself anyway, for he believed, like many others at that time, that they should not be called by such names as Baptist or Anabaptist, or any other such name, but, rather, like what was said by John Bunyan, they should be "called a Christian, a believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost"⁶⁶

And so, with that said, let me provide another quote from our brother John Smyth, given in one of his treatises from the early 1600's, entitled *The Differences of the Churches of the Seperation* [sic] (1608), regarding another "baptistic" viewpoint of that time, that has been abandoned by many today—the Biblical truth of the plurality of elders.

On this truth he declared the following:

"The Presbytery of the church is the company of the Elders...The presbytery is uniform consisting of Officers of one sort...These

⁶⁶ John Bunyan, *The Works of that Eminent Servant of Christ, John Bunyan, Volume III* (Nathan Whiting, New Haven, 1833) pg. 376

Officers are called Elders, Overseers, or Bishops, Pastors, Teachers, Governors, Leaders...which are several names of one & the same office consisting of several works or qualifications.⁶⁷

If you remember, John Robinson was a fellow pastor with him when they were both still in England. They agreed on many things, including the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, but on this they did not fully agree in this sense. While they both believed there should be a plurality of elders in every Church, John Robinson believed there was a distinction between those elders who were pastors, and those elders who were considered ruling elders. The first were ordained, while the second were not. Thus, for example, John Robinson was considered the pastor of the congregation in Leyden, while William Brewster was not. They both were thought of as elders, but William Brewster was simply a ruling elder, not an ordained elder, i. e. pastor.

But many of those early Christians, now known as Baptists, did not believe in such a distinction in Church government, nor did John Smyth. He believed all elders were pastors, and all pastors were elders (also known as bishops), and, as such, they all had equal authority.

John Smyth continues:

“For every one of these officers must be—

1. An Elder or Ancient in years, 1. Timothy 3. 6. & 5. 1.
2. Oversee the flock, 1. Pet. 5. 2. Act. 20. 28
3. Feed the flock, 1. Pet. 5. 2. Act.. 20. 28.
4. Able to teach, & exhort with wholesome doctrine & convince the gainsayers, 1 Timothy 3. 2, Tit. 1. 9. Eph. 4. 11
5. Govern the Church. 1. Tim. 3. 4. 5. 1 Cor. 12. 28.

⁶⁷ John Smyth, W. T. Whitley, ed., *The Works of John Smyth, Vol. I* (Cambridge at the University Press, Cambridge, 1915) pg. 307 (Letter forms have been updated to modern forms, as well as some spelling throughout any his quotes)

6. Lead the Church in at the public affairs thereof. Heb. 13. 17.

7. Are preferred to place of honor. 1. Thess. 5. 12. 1. Tim. 5. 17. & special labour. 1. Timothy 3. 1.

“Seeing all the Elders must teach, exhort, convince, feed, oversee, rule, & lead the church therefore they may all administer the scales of the covenant: for that is a chief work of feeding & applying the covenant & that particularly...”⁶⁸

“Moreover, if the Apostles had ordained 3 kinds of Elders, Act. 14. 23. they would have mentioned them with their several kinds of ordination: but that is not done: for in one phrase their election & ordination is mentioned: er[go] their ordination being one, their office is one & not three.

“Further, if there had been 3 kinds of Elders at Ephesus then the Apostle at Miletum would have given them several charges as having several duties lying upon them: but the Apostle Act. 20, 28. giveth them one general charge common to them all, namely the duty of feeding, the work of the Pastor: [er]go, they are all Pastors...”⁶⁹

“Lastly, if all the Elders have the Pastors gifts, & the works of the Pastor, & the Pastors ordination, then they have all the Pastors office...Therefore all the Elders have the same office of the Pastor: & so are all of one sort.

“Hence this consecratory [i.e. deduction] ariseth [—]... Eldership consisting of three sorts of Elders is the invention of man.”⁷⁰

And then, there is the witness of Scottish Baptist James Haldane who wrote—

“Again, it is said, that we are not informed how many elders and deacons there should be in a church. The reason is obvious. The particular number necessary in every situation could

⁶⁸ Ibid., pg. 307

⁶⁹ Ibid., pg. 308

⁷⁰ Ibid., pg. 309

not be specified. Yet the rule of duty will, in all circumstances, be found sufficiently plain. A certain work is to be done, and the number of the labourers must be regulated by its magnitude. The larger the church, the more elders and deacons are necessary. **We are guarded against Episcopacy, by being taught to have more than one overseer;** but we must regulate the number of elders and deacons according to the number of the church, and the gifts it possesses.”⁷¹

“That there was a plurality of elders, overseers, pastors or teachers, in every church, is abundantly manifest: Acts xiv. 23. xx. 17—28. Phil. i. 1. The names are expressive of the office. They are to watch as those who must give account, or to oversee the flock. Pastor refers to the same thing, in allusion to their acting the part of a shepherd. They are to teach the brethren, by putting them in remembrance of the apostles' doctrine. They are called elders, because they must not be novices, but men of experience, and in general it will be found, that young men are unfit for the office. Their duty is to preside and rule in the churches, to take care that all things be done according to the traditions delivered by the apostles. They are to lead the churches in their obedience to Jesus; pointing out to them, from the word of God, their duty respecting every case that occurs.”⁷²

And then from his earlier book written a couple of years before the Lord fully led him into the truth of believer's baptism, he also said this:

“The elders in each church composed a presbytery, that is, the eldership. This word (πρεσβυτεριον) only occurs once in the New Testament, 1 Tim. iv. 14...That there was in every church, when regularly set in order, a plurality of pastors, is evident. I cannot express my views better on this subject, than by quoting the

⁷¹ James A. Haldane, *Observations on the Association of Believers, Mutual Exhortation, the Apostolic Mode of Teaching, Qualifications and Support of Elders, Spiritual Gifts, &c.* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1808) pg. 5-6

⁷² Ibid., pg. 68-69

following passage from an interesting narrative lately published. ‘It is evident to me,’ says Mr. Ballantine, ‘that primitive churches had a plurality of pastors, or a presbytery, in every congregation...Paul, when he was at Miletus, sent for the *elders* of the church at Ephesus, Acts xx. 17, and there appear to have been several of them in that church, from his manner of addressing them on that occasion, and from the direction he gives Timothy concerning them, 1 Tim. v. 17.,’ To the same purpose Paul writes to Titus, ‘Ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee,’ Titus i. 5. This exactly accords with what we read in the epistles to the churches, Philip, i. 1. ‘To all the saints who are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and deacons’”

“It is then very evident that the primitive church had an eldership, or presbytery, in each church. Indeed we read of no church in the New Testament, so far as I recollect, supposed complete, or keeping all the ordinances as delivered to them, **but had a plurality of pastors.**⁷³

And so we can see how many of those brothers in Christ, who are considered to be Baptist today, believed in the plurality of elders or pastors without any one of them being separated and elevated over others to become the bishop, or the senior pastor, or, even the first among equals. To them such a title as “the” bishop, or senior Pastor would be reserved for One only, and that would be “the” Bishop of our souls, the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, the Senior Pastor over each Church, and, indeed, over the whole Church—the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷³ James Alexander Haldane, *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians: Drawn from the Sacred Scriptures Alone, Being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation and to Represent the Guilt and Evil Consequences of Neglecting Them* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1805) pg. 225-226 (letter forms have been updated to modern forms as well as some spelling throughout any of his quotes)

4) And finally, they believed in the liberty of the Spirit to lead certain brethren into the exercise of their spiritual gifts in worship and in ministry during the Church service to the mutual edification of all. This was seen as a manifestation of the priesthood of all believers.

John Smyth addressed this truth as follows:

“The saints as priests offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:5). Spiritual sacrifices are such as originally proceed from the spirit...”

The Fountain from whence spiritual worship proceedeth is the spirit...The spirit signifies two things—1) the Spirit of God. 2) the spirit of man that is the regenerate part of the soul...**The work of the Holy Spirit is to suggest matter and to move the regenerate part of the soul** (I Cor. 12:8-11; John 14:26; Luke 24:32-45...In performing spiritual worship we must take heed of quenching the Spirit...The Spirit is quenched by silence when fit matter is revealed to one that sits by and he withholds it in time of prophesying. **The Spirit is quenched by set forms of worship, for therein the Spirit is not a liberty to utter itself, but is bounded...**Saying set forms of worship by rote is quenching the Spirit and reading set forms of worship out of a book is quenching the Spirit, for in the one the Spirit is not manifested but the strength of the memory; in the other the matter is not brought out of the heart, but out of the book, **and so in neither of them the Spirit is at liberty.**”⁷⁴.

And then James Haldane spoke of this Biblical truth many years later—

“The Lord distributes to them various gifts severally as he will, and has commanded, that “as every man has received a gift, we

⁷⁴ John Smyth, W. T. Whitley, ed., *The Works of John Smyth*, Vol. I (Cambridge at the University Press, Cambridge, 1915) pg. 275-278

should minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10.

"Provision is made for the edification of the body by the ordinance of Pastors and Teachers, who are to admonish, reprove, exhort and instruct; but as all are partakers of the same spirit, as there may be expected in the churches, fathers and young men, as well as babes in Christ, it is evidently proper, and suited to the relation in which they stand, that they should exhort each other, and thus enjoy the benefit of the gifts and knowledge possessed by all the members, both for mutual edification, and also for the increase of love for the truth's sake, which is hereby manifested as dwelling in them. Thus the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love,' Eph. iv. 16.

"Surely this corresponds better with the idea that all we are brethren, and that one is our Teacher, Mat. xxiii. 8...'Having then gifts,'" says the apostle, 'differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, he that ruleth with diligence, he that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness, Rom. xii. 6-8.'"⁷⁵

"The duties of the elders are certainly included in this description, but are not exclusively referred to...Had the Lord intended the edification of the brethren to be exclusively promoted by men in office, we should have found the miraculous gifts bestowed only on elders, that an example might have been left on record for our direction.

"Supposing that I Cor. xiv. refers exclusively to miraculous gifts, yet the object of the kind of prophesying there alluded to, was speaking unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort, verse 3; but we know that miraculous gifts **are not** essential to this. **Suitable gifts are to this day bestowed on the Lord's people, by**

⁷⁵ J. A. Haldane, *Observations on the Association of Believers, Mutual Exhortation, The Apostolic Mode of Teaching, Qualifications and Support of Elders, Spiritual Gifts, &c* (John Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1808) pg. 32-33

which they are able to edify, exhort and comfort each other. Such gifts therefore should be earnestly desired; and it is as much our duty to seek to excel to the edifying of the church, as it was that of the Corinthians of old, 1 Cor. xiv. 12....When we find among ourselves brethren possessed of knowledge and utterance fitting them for edifying the church, shall we lose the benefit of these gifts, because they were not conferred in a sudden and miraculous manner...?....Miraculous gifts are not necessary; and therefore I conclude, that whether all the persons alluded to in this chapter were possessed of such gifts (which I greatly doubt) or not, this is a mere circumstance, and not essential to exhortation in the church.” ⁷⁶

He also addresses the role of the elders or pastors in this liberty of the Spirit—

“It has been also alleged, that it sets aside the teaching of the elders; but this is by no means the case. We are plainly taught in scripture, that there should be elders in every church of Jesus Christ, who are to preside in the assemblies of the saints, and to labour in the word and doctrine. Mutual exhortation is nowise calculated to interfere with this appointment. Much of the edification of the church will depend upon the prudence and discretion of the elders respecting this very subject. They must attend to the gifts of the brethren, encourage those who are backward to use their gifts, and repress the forwardness of others. If the exhortations of the brethren are properly conducted, it will be much for the edification of the elders as well as of the church. It will also make them better acquainted with the progress of the brethren, and suggest to them many important topics upon which they will be able to enlarge.” ⁷⁷

I, myself, have been involved with this type of open ministry in the Sunday morning meeting for many years, reaching back even to the 1970's. Rarely, have I seen it abused, when a Church is abiding by the Word of God. In fact, as an elder, I can only remember once that I ever had to

⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 33-36

⁷⁷ Ibid., pg. 17

admonish a brother during an actual Church meeting for saying things he ought not to say. Usually, if anything needs to be said it can be done after the meeting, but even in this, such admonishments have been few.

The liberty of the Spirit to move the brothers to exercise their spiritual gifts unto the edification of the saints in a Church service, teaches all to be longsuffering, prayerful, and discerning, never so judgmental that the Spirit is quenched, but also neither so tolerant that false doctrine is allowed to be taught; it teaches all to be humble, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought.

Moreover it is so important that the apostle says it is a commandment of the Lord, which he says that any who are spiritual will recognize (I Cor. 14:37). Thus the positive and negative injunctions in I Cor. 12-14 should never be lightly treated or rationalized away. Indeed, they should be obeyed to the best of our ability. After all, did not Jesus say that if you love Me you will keep My commandments (John 14:15)?

This important truth was recovered by the Holy Spirit through the Baptist movement, and, indeed, before that movement in the Separatist Puritan movement, wherein John Robinson also taught the same. It must be remembered that some of the Pilgrims, who immigrated to the New World, were in the same Church with John Smyth and John Robinson in England. As such it would be helpful to hear the teaching of John Robison on this truth in order to see how it was practiced aforetime. This is what he states—

“We learn from the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 3, that ‘he who prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort:’ which to perform conveniently, and as becomes the church assembly, we make account...happily two or three in each of our churches, considering their weak and depressed state. Touching prophecy then we think the very same, that the synod, held at Embden 1571, hath decreed in these words: ‘1. In all churches, whether but springing up, or grown to some ripeness, let the order of

prophecy be observed, according to Paul's institution. 2. Into the fellowship of this work are to be admitted not only the ministers, but the teachers too, as also the elders and deacons, yea, even of the multitude, which are willing to confer their gift received of God, to the common utility of the church: but so as they first be allowed by the judgment of the ministers, and others.' And as the apostle sometimes said, "We believe, and therefore we speak," II Cor. iv. 13, so because we believe with the Belgic churches, that this exercise is to be observed in all congregations, therefore we also observe it in ours. Of this our both faith and practice, we have these amongst other special foundations."⁷⁸

And, finally, a few years later after the Pilgrims became established in Plymouth in the colony of Massachusetts in America, the following was recounted about their Church meeting, which showed how that which was mentioned above was put into practice by those who were in fellowship with him.

This account is from a few years later. Notice how Roger Williams, who is recognized as a Baptist in America, is mentioned as one who prophesied (i.e. forth-telling or preaching).

"On the Lord's Day there was a sacrament which they did partake in; and in the afternoon Mr. Roger Williams, according to their custom, propounded a question to which the pastor, Mr. [Ralph] Smith spoke briefly, then Mr. [Roger] Williams prophesied, and afterwards the Governor of Plymouth spoke to the question after him the elder, then some two or three more of the congregation. Then the elder desired the Governor of Massachusetts and Mr. Wilson to speak to it, which they did. When this was ended the deacon, Mr. Fuller, put the congregation in mind of their duty of contribution, upon which

⁷⁸ John Robinson, Robert Ashton, ed., *The Works of John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, Volume III* (John Snow, London, 1851) pg. 55

the Governor and all the rest went down to the deacon's seat, and put into the bag and then returned.”⁷⁹

Thus we can see how these brothers understood the liberty of the Spirit to move among the hearts of the saints, moving them to rise up and exercise their spiritual gifts within the Church service for the mutual edification of all, thus obeying the injunctions and admonitions of Paul the apostle in I Cor. 12-14.

In this sense, beloved, the brethren movement, which we will discuss later, and the Baptist movement, had more in common than most think (at least in the beginning). It is simply unfortunate that many of those now known as Baptists today, may not even know that their early brothers in Christ believed in and practiced these truths. (Nor, indeed, do many in the Brethren movement today know that those brothers held to these truths, before they ever adopted them in the late 1820's. But no one should be surprised by this, for the Holy Spirit has always been moving in the Church to revive the saints, and one of the purposes of revival has always been the recovery of Biblical truth, of which these were a part!)

With that being said, it is most unfortunate that most of these truths listed above were soon forgotten by many who would later be known as Baptists. Why? What did those early brothers see in regard to these four points that many do not see today? Why were those truths considered essential for the spiritual well-being of the Church at that time, but they are not

⁷⁹ Walter H. Burgess, *John Smith, the Se-Baptist, Thomas Helwys and the First Baptist Church in England with Fresh Light upon the Pilgrim Fathers' Church* (James Clarke & Co., London, 1911) pg. 172

considered essential today? May these questions be brought before the Lord and the Word of God by all Christians today.

The Methodist Movement

Field-Preaching

Perhaps at this juncture it would be helpful to once more quote John Robinson's word of encouragement regarding the fact that sometimes those God uses can only go so far in their recovery of truth.

"If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry. **For I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy Word.** For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. Whatever part of his will our God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, **who yet saw not all things...But I must here, withal, exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth; examine it, consider it, and compare it with other Scriptures of truth, before you receive it.** For it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."⁸⁰

Why does God recover truth in this way? Why are certain servants of His able to see one truth, but not another? Why does God use different servants at different times to

⁸⁰ *The Primitive Church (or Baptist) Magazine: Advocating the Constitution, Faith, and Practice of the Apostolic Churches, Vol. XVI, New Series* (Arthur Hall & Co., London, 1859) pg. 73

recover His truth that had been lost over time? Perhaps, God does it this way to keep us humble so as not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, so as to not think we have the corner on the truth, so as not to think we are the only true Church. In other words, God may send revival to His Church through certain men, thereby recovering truth in His Word which has been forgotten, or truth in God's Word that has nullified by human traditions, or simply truth in Scripture that has simply been ignored for many centuries; but then, it seems, God leaves other truths in Scripture for other members of His Church to recover through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In this way a Church has less chance of becoming puffed up (as did the ancient Church of Corinth) in thinking they are the only Church that is pleasing to God (cf. I Cor. 14:36). Such was the case of those in the Methodist Movement.

God used certain of His servants to help John Wesley; then God used John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, as well as others, to help others and to recover certain truths in God's Word that had been ignored or forgotten by man-made traditions. The Lord showed them all very much, and recovered precious truth through them, but they could only go so far, just as was in the case of those who were influenced by Luther and those influenced by Calvin, as well as those influenced by John Bunyan and all the other Christians who were named Baptists.

So with this in mind, let us see how God used other servants to influence John Wesley.

When we study John Wesley's life we see he was greatly helped by certain Moravian brethren. In fact, some of them were instrumental in his conversion. The way this came about was as follows. Certain men who were involved in administering the new colony of Georgia in America invited John Wesley, and others, to come to the colony to minister to the colonists and help in the Gospel work among the native

Indians. John Wesley and others agreed and soon he and others were on their way to the colony. (It must be remembered that he was in the Church of England, which meant he believed he was regenerated as a baby by baptism, thereby making him a member of the Church by that baptism.)

On the ship to America he became friends with certain Moravian brethren, who began to show him a characteristic of Christianity of which he was not quite familiar.

And then, after he reached the colony in 1736, and was awaiting the completion of his own housing, he resided with the Moravian brethren, while beginning his religious work among the colonists. At first he had great success, but soon a certain dispute arose, which is related in the following account of his life.

“Mr. John Wesley... was rapidly gaining influence, when a circumstance occurred, which led to his departure from Georgia... Mr. Wesley rigidly adhered to the rubric of the Church of England, and refused to admit those to the Lord's supper whom he judged unworthy, without respect of persons; and some time after the marriage of Mrs. Williamson, perceiving some things in her conduct of which he disapproved, he, after ineffectually endeavouring to produce amendment in her, repelled her from the communion. Immediately the storm broke forth... and such a combination was formed among those in power to oppress him, that he was led eventually to ask the advice of his friends as to what he should do. They gave it as their opinion that he was not called by Providence to remain longer in the colony: In this opinion he coincided, and sailed shortly after for England.”⁸¹

Now began a number of events which led to John Wesley's eventual conversion. He thought he was saved but

⁸¹ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: Volume V* (Wesleyan Conference Office, London, 1878) pg. 4

the recent series of events in Georgia weighed heavily on his heart. The story continues:

“On his voyage home, Mr. Wesley solemnly reviewed his religious state and experience; and the record which he made in his Journal on that occasion affords an interesting view of a sincere mind earnestly engaged in the search of truth. He was early warned, he says, “against laying too much stress on outward works, as the Papists do.” Afterwards he read some Lutheran and Calvinist authors, who seemed to him, on the other hand, too much to magnify faith...His attention was next turned to the Fathers. From them he went to the Mystic writers; but here he found not what he sought. He soon saw the dangerous tendency of their system, and renounced them as guides. “And now,” he adds, “it is upwards of two years since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why, (what I least of all suspected,) **that I, who went to America to convert others, was never converted myself.**” Such was his conclusion respecting his state. “⁸²

After this admission to himself, despite all his service to God, he saw that he was still unsaved, but all that was soon to change. After arriving back in England, he had many conversations with a Moravian brother by the name of Peter Bohler from whom he realized that it was only by faith alone that he could obtain the conversion he desired. The story continues:

“An appeal to Scripture silenced his principal objections to Bohler's statements respecting instantaneous conversion...On Sunday, April 23d, he heard the testimony of several living witnesses that God saves now as in the ancient times. “Here ended,” says he, “my disputing. I could now only cry out, Lord, help thou my unbelief’... Mr. Wesley dates his conversion from May 24, 1738. His mind had been particularly impressed during that day with certain passages of Scripture which had occurred to him; and “in the evening,” he says,”

⁸² Ibid., pg. 4-5

I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”⁸³

And so, it was through Peter Bohler and other Moravian brethren that John Wesley saw the Biblical truth that salvation and conversion is an instantaneous experience of life through an act of faith in Christ, and through John Wesley and others this was brought to the forefront to those in the Church of England, which heretofore, had so relied on baptismal regeneration as being the major means of grace and salvation for lost souls in the Church.

And so this truth that “God saves now as in ancient times,” i. e. instantaneous conversion (as per the example of Cornelius), was soon to burst forth in a large way in the English countryside, but one other thing had to occur first—the Biblical truth of open air evangelism (as practiced by our Lord, for example, as happened in the Sermon on the Mount, and, by such ones as Peter preaching to those near the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, as well as his subsequent preaching in the Temple complex in Jerusalem).

Heretofore, the one who was primarily responsible for bringing this truth back to the Churches in England was George Whitefield, a close friend and fellow worker with John Wesley. He had been engaged in open air evangelism for some time, which at that time was called **field-preaching**, as can be seen in this account below.

Once, when he was being remonstrated by a civil authority for breaking the law by this type of preaching the Gospel in the open, he requested of the magistrate to know

⁸³ Ibid., pg. 4-6

which law he had broken. In his journal he makes mention of this incident as follows:

“I replied, I...only desired to know what law could be produced against my preaching: in my opinion there could be none, because there was never any such thing as **field-preaching** before. ‘Sir,’ says he, ‘you ought to preach in a church.’ ‘And so I would,’ replied I, ‘if your minister would give me leave.’” I then pressed him to show me a law against meetings; urging, if there had been any law, they would have been stopped long since. He answered, ‘It was an odd way of preaching.’

Soon after I was returned to my company, he sent me the following letter:—‘Rev. Sir, Basingstoke, July 20, 1730. I received your extraordinary letter, and could expect no other from so uncommon a genius. I apprehend your meetings to be unlawful, having no toleration to protect you in it. My apprehension of religion always was, and I hope always will be, that God is to be worshipped in places consecrated, and set apart for his service, and not in brothels, and places where all manner of debauchery may have been committed; but how far this is consistent with your actions, I leave you to judge.’”⁸⁴

As the magistrate declares, this type of preaching was not done at that time in England. All preaching was expected to be done in a Church building or in a consecrated place. (Oh, how man-made traditions grieve the Spirit of God, for by that understanding, our Lord, Himself, would have been criticized by those Christian men in England, because of His preaching of the Gospel in the “fields,” if you will, and by His taking the Gospel to sinners wherever they might be.)

But the Spirit of God had moved George Whitefield to take the Gospel to fields white unto harvest” (cf. John 4:36). But this was so odd to Christians at that time (or at least to those who called themselves Christians) that it was

⁸⁴ George Whitefield, *Journal of a Voyage from London to Savannah in Georgia* (Hunt and Clarke, London, 1826) pg. 254-255

vehemently opposed. It simply was not proper in their own minds. It simply was not done, which even George Whitefield admitted, saying “there was never any such thing as field-preaching before.”

But this, too, was another truth that revival was recovering and it soon was to be revealed to John Wesley through George Whitefield. (Later this would be called open air evangelism, wherein the Gospel was taken straight to the people, rather than being proclaimed only from a Church pulpit.) John Wesley relates the story himself in his journal—

“Saturday, 31. In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this **strange way of preaching in the fields**, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church... Mon. 2.—At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was this... ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind: To set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’”⁸⁵

And so we see another Biblical truth recovered by revival that had long been forgotten in England, despite the fact that open air evangelism was rooted in Scripture, and was the practice of the apostle Paul himself (Acts 17:17)!

How wonderful it was that because John Wesley was willing to follow Scripture, rather than man-made traditions, this practice of field-preaching resulted in many souls being

⁸⁵ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.: Journals, Third Edition* (John Mason, London, 1829) pg. 185

saved from an eternity in hell. Witness the following testimony of his work—

“It has been computed that between the ages of thirty-six and eighty-eight John Wesley travelled some 225,000 miles in preaching and delivered more than forty thousand sermons...Almost all Wesley's journeys were made on horseback, and he read as he rode. And the sermons represent but a small part of his spiritual work. They do not include the private addresses given to his societies; still less all the strain of his prayer meetings, his striving with individual souls, his indefatigable care of the purity of his converts' life and belief. The labour of preaching these sermons was made the greater by the fact that perhaps most of them were **preached in the open air**, and as some of us possibly might think, by the fact that almost every day John Wesley began by preaching at five o'clock in the morning...To us at the present day there seems nothing very strange about preaching in the open air; and there are probably few clergymen of the English Church who have not often done it. At an earlier period it was of course common. But **it had long ceased to be common in 1739**. Those were the days of great wigs and ponderous decorum. ..”
86

And so the English Reformation, with the restoration of open air evangelism, continued on into the 18th century through the lives of ones like George Whitefield and John Wesley. But, in accordance with the observation of John Robinson so many years before, John Wesley could only go so far. It was left to those called Baptists to continue the recovered truth of believer's baptism by immersion, for John Wesley and those influenced by him, were not able to see the danger of baptismal regeneration, despite the fact that even he admitted England was not a Christian nation, and that he himself was proof that being baptized as an infant, nor,

⁸⁶ A. J. Mason, *John Wesley, a Lecture, The Church Historical Society, XLVII* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1908) pg. 21-23

indeed, even being confirmed later at the year of discretion, guaranteed regeneration.

A biography of John Wesley speaks to this in this manner—

“John Wesley...was born in 1703, [and] became a Communicant in his childhood. We do not know when he was 'old enough to be Confirmed,' but his father, Samuel Wesley, Vicar of Epworth, was far too strict a Churchman to be likely to admit his son to the Holy Sacrament before his Confirmation. [and we know he] partook of the Lord's Supper when he was only eight years old.”⁸⁷

And yet, by his own words in his journal, he admitted he was not converted till many years later. And, as proof that infant baptism did not ensure that all those so baptized (and confirmed) were Christian, he stated in a letter to the bishop of Gloucester the following regarding the nature of those in the Church of England, of which, he still considered himself a member.

“None can deny that the people of England, in general, are called Christians. They are called so, a few only excepted, by others, as well as themselves. But I presume no man will say the name makes the thing; that men are Christians, barely because they are called so. It must be allowed...that the people of England, generally speaking, have been christened, or baptized; but neither can we infer, ‘These were once baptized; therefore they are Christians now.’ It is...allowed, that many of those who were once baptized, and are called Christians to this day, hear the word of God, attend public prayers, and partake of the Lord's Supper. But neither does this prove, that they are Christians. For notwithstanding this, some of them live in open sin: and others (though not conscious to themselves of hypocrisy, yet) are utter strangers to the religion of the heart: are full of pride, vanity, covetousness, ambition; of hatred,

⁸⁷ Henry Holloway, *The Confirmation and Communion of Infants and Young Children* (Skeffington & Son, London, 1901) pg. 167

anger, malice, or envy; and consequently, are no more spiritual Christians than the open drunkard, or common swearer.

“Now these being removed, where are the Christians, from whom we may properly term England a Christian country?...Although, it is true, most of the natives are called Christians, have been baptized, frequent the ordinances; and although here and there, a real Christian is to be found, as a light shining in a dark place. Does it do any honour to our great Master, among those who are not called by his name...To close this point, if men are not Christians, till they are renewed after the image of Christ, and if the people of England, in general, are not thus renewed, why do we term them so... Let us labour to convince all mankind, that to be real Christians is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and to serve him with all our strength; to love our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore to do unto every man, as we would they should do unto us.” To change one of these Heathens into a real Christian, and to continue him such, all the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit are absolutely necessary.”⁸⁸

The only thing I might add, is that John Wesley may have thought that this condition of so many in the Church of England may have been the result of man’s free will to resist God, and not necessarily because they were not regenerated in baptism when an infant. John Wesley believed a true Christian could backslide, and so it is possible he may have simply thought all these so-called Christians were ones who were still regenerated in baptism as infants, but who has simply failed to live up to their calling.

Unfortunately, despite his great zeal in making Christ known to lost souls, he did believe (unlike George Whitefield) that a Christian could lose his salvation. But one would think that his own admission that he was not converted until later in life would have convinced him that regeneration could only occur from an act of faith, of which a baby was incapable, but,

⁸⁸ John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, Vol. V* (J. Emory and B. Waugh, New York, 1831) pg. 474-475

whatever the reason, he still recognized that so many in England were not Christian (or by his understanding, acting like Christian). Yet that did not change his mind regarding the practice of paedobaptism.

Because of this, believing a Church should manifest true Christian character, those who followed his teachings, would soon separate themselves from the Church of England, and forming, instead, the Methodist Church, so as to be a pure Church that acted and manifested a true Christian character. But because they continued the practice of infant-baptism, in a few generations, they found themselves in the same situation as the Church of England that John Wesley described above. They no longer manifested true Christian character and truth. This is the result of believing in baptismal regeneration.

Today, many Methodist Churches are no different than John Wesley's description of the Church of England, and in some cases may be considered worse. Why?—Because paedobaptism still gives a false sense of salvation to those so baptized, and so allows the spirit of the world to enter the Church through those unregenerate souls who are Christians in name only.

My own great-grandfather, who was a true Christian, was a Methodist missionary and a circuit riding preacher in the 19th century, and I am sure that if he were alive today, and so witnessed the condition, practices, and teachings of some Methodist Churches, he would be dumbfounded and would be grieved to the depths of his very soul.

Whatever the reason for John Wesley's description of those in the Church of England above, it still shows the truth of John Robinson's warning at the beginning of the English Reformation that those in revival can only go so far. His insight held true in each state or revival of the unfolding Reformation in England. Certain ones could only go so far, never seeing their own fallacies and errors in regard to some of their own particular views, despite the fact they were used

by God to recover long lost Biblical doctrines or practices in other areas. Such was the case of John Wesley.

God greatly used him to recover the true nature of Gospel witness in a dying world. He showed that the Holy Spirit never intended the Gospel to be proclaimed only in the four walls of a Church building, rather, the Lord intended it to also be proclaimed in the fields white unto harvest, and yet, in it all John Wesley never saw the danger of paedobaptism and the dangers of a perfunctory confirmation that assures people that they are regenerated in the water as infants, when the fact is they are not.

He failed to learn the truth recovered by the Holy Spirit in the previous revival—the Baptist Movement. Even though the Lord showed him that he was not saved when he was baptized as an infant, he could not see the danger of that practice. He simply could not go further than the truth of open-air evangelism which the Lord showed him.

A Digression

At this juncture, perhaps, we might ask the question as to why truths once recovered by godly men in the beginning of one movement or revival are sometimes neglected by other men in that same movement, and then are not recovered by men in subsequent revivals either.

William MacDonald once addressed this reality that always seems to follow such revivals throughout Church history. He described it as “drift and departure.”

He discussed this fact in an article he wrote regarding recovery of Biblical truth in what he called “great movements of the Holy Spirit,” which we have been calling “revivals of the Holy Spirit.” This is what he said:

“Christians must be taught to test everything by the Scriptures. This is our only authority. The question is not, ‘How do we do it in our assemblies?’ but ‘What does the Bible teach about it?’ Our loyalty must be first, last and always to the Lord and to the principles of His Word. And we should never blindly assume that any group of believers has a monopoly on the truth, is adhering to the New Testament in its entirety, **or is immune from drift and departure**. Every generation must guard against the danger of slipping into denominational, sectarian ways of thinking. Down through the centuries, there have been great movements of the Holy Spirit in which certain truths have been recovered out of the rubble of tradition, formalism and ritualism.

The first generation, that is, those living at the time of these movements have been intelligent concerning the scriptural principles involved. But then the second and third generations have tended to follow the system routinely because their parents were in it, and because they themselves were brought up in it... Thus the history of most spiritual movements has been aptly described in the word series: **man ... movement ... machine . . . monument**.

At the outset there is a *man*, anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit. As others are led into the truth, a *movement* develops. But by the second or third generation, people are following a system with sectarian, *machine*-like precision. Eventually nothing is left but a lifeless, denominational *monument*.

In a healthy New Testament assembly, those who are in fellowship know why they are there. They are not sermon-tasters or followers of men, but Christians who are well grounded in the truth of the gospel and of the Church. They are prepared to judge everything by the Word. They are not unalterably committed to any particular group of assemblies. If trends develop which are unbiblical and dishonoring to the Lord, they will seek the leading of the Holy Spirit to the company of those who do meet in obedience to the Bible.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ William MacDonald, *To What Should We Be Loyal?*
<http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/article/153> accessed 11/8/2018

Like John Robinson before him (who spoke centuries before), William MacDonald also recognized that those who were brought into truth by the Holy Spirit, many times will lapse into a blind loyalty to those who were used by God to first bring about the recovery of that truth. In many cases they do so to the point that they judge all truth by their own group, or Church, rather than by their fidelity to the Lord, and their adherence to the eternal and abiding Word of God. Thus, unknowingly to them, their first love to the Lord is slowly replaced with a first love to their own particular Church or denomination that they believe has a corner on the truth, even when that particular group has slowly drifted and departed from things they once believed in the beginning of their movement or revival. Sometimes Methodist will remain Methodist simply because their father and his father before Him were Methodists. When this happens one is in danger of losing his or her first love to the Lord.

However, this is far too common in many Churches; it seems to eventually occur in every movement of the Holy Spirit of God, and it was no different in England. In fact, this spiritual pride had grown to such a degree in some of the Churches we have mentioned from each of the movements we have discussed, that some believers in those Churches would have nothing to do with others in other Nonconformist and Independent Churches. Why?—because they came to believe that they, themselves, were the only true Church.

This same thing happened to some in the “brethren movement,” as we will shortly discuss, but not until the Lord had first recovered certain truths lost or ignored by previous generations of Christians, as well as those truths lost or ignored through drift and departure by those Christians in the earlier revivals.

But through it all, it seemed that in each of the subsequent movements of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit would seek to move the Church a little closer to the apostolic

model left for us in Scripture; and if certain truths that were recovered in one revival were abandoned through drift and departure, He would seek to recover them once again in the next.

This cycle of drift and departure, and then recovery, simply seems to be a characteristic of all revivals. This same thing, of course, happened over and over in the history of Israel.

For example, God brought revival and reform under king Asa (II Chron. 14-15), as well as his son Jehoshaphat, but then drift and departure set in, so that by the time Asa's grandson Jehoram became king, the people had abandoned the reforms first brought about by God through him (II Chron. 21-22). And so, God then raised up Joash (through the faithfulness of Jehoiada the priest), and Joash became king and once more restored through revival some of those earlier reforms instituted through his great-great grandfather Asa (II Chron. 23-24).

But then again, the cycle repeated; and once Jehoiada the priest died, drift and departure set in once more (II Chron. 24:15-19). This drift then continued during the reign of Joash's son, Amaziah, where it was somewhat slowed, because Amaziah at first sought to follow the Lord (II Chron. 25:2, 9-10). But the "drift" was relentless, and soon even he departed in a terrible way from the Lord (II Chron. 25:14-15).

But once more, God in His love brought revival under Uzziah, until his presumption and pride caused him to drift and depart from the truths of God's Word—II Chron. 26:16-23. (This account of Uzziah, of course, should be a warning to us all, lest we also get puffed up and think because God used us in restoring truth, we now have a corner on truth so that whatever we do or think must be right and pleasing in God's sight.)

But then again, once more, we see the cycle continue with God in His mercy bringing about a great revival under

King Hezekiah (II Chron. 29-33), followed, unfortunately, by more drift and departure under his son Manasseh and then his grandson Amon (halted briefly by the repentance of Manasseh). Then, perhaps, the greatest revival of that time came, the revival under King Josiah (II Chron. 34-35). But even that did not last, and soon the Babylonian Captivity was upon the nation.

But even that subsequent drift and departure that caused their Captivity did not stop God from bringing about another revival by His love and mercy! After seventy years of captivity He restored them once more, bringing revival under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Then began the rise of the rabbinic movement in Israel, which, for the most part, completely ended the children of Israel's recurring sin of idolatry, but even that did not end their drift and departure. Soon they descended into the sin of self-righteousness and spiritual pride, rather than the sin of idolatry.

Then after the Intertestamental time period, God brought about the greatest revival of all time, which of course, came about in the fullness of times, which became the pattern for all "true" revivals. This was the Revival brought about in Israel by the incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son of God, He who was full of grace and truth, who went forth in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14-15; John 3:34), and who would make known to the people the true character of God the Father (John 1:14-18).

Beloved, all revivals should be measured by that Revival, the greatest revival of all time which is called in Scripture the "time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). Why?—because it was in that revival that God recovered through the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ the fullest measure of truth in Israel, more than was recovered by any of the other kings in Judah. Indeed, one can say that it was the Lord Jesus, Himself, who was the full embodiment of truth upon earth, for

in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (Col. 2:9), and it was revealed to the world that He was “the Way, the Truth and the Life,” the One who was true King of Israel (John 1:49; 14:6).

And so, in Him, God began the greatest Revival of all time, first through the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, who bore witness to that “true” Light which enlightens every man (John 1:6-9), and then by the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, of whom the voice from heaven declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt. 17:5).

But, unfortunately, as we know, most refused to hear Him or to receive Him, but to those who did receive Him, He brought about in their lives a revival of truth and full reformation by giving to them the power to become the children of God, to all who would believe on His Name (John 1:11-12).

And to those who heard Him, and who received Him, He made known to them the truth of who God the Father really was (John 1:18); He made known to them the truth of who God the Son really was (John 3:16; 10:30; 8:42; 14:9-10; 16: 28); and He made known to them the truth of who God the Holy Spirit really was (John 15:26).

To the children of Israel, He made known to them the truth of God’s righteousness, and also of His mercy and love (Matt. 5-7). And to His disciples He made known to them the truth of God’s kingdom (Matt. 13; Acts 1:3), and most of all, the truth of His death, burial, and resurrection (Luke 18:31-34), which He told them to proclaim as the Gospel of truth throughout the entire world (Luke 24:44-48; Co. 1:5-6).

In short, the fullness of truth was restored to the people of God by Him, who was the “Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6). He showed everyone the true means of revival and the true purpose of revival, which was none other than Himself. He was the source or beginning of revival, the

means or middle of revival, and, indeed, the purpose or end of revival.

And even though He, Himself, needed no revival, being sinless and pure, He became our Revival, for He became unto us “wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30 NASB)!

And so, beloved, if we wish to know if revival is true or not, all we need to do is to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He is all the revival we need. He showed us that true revival is only found in Him, the Living and abiding Word of God—He who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, who became flesh, and who dwelt among us, and who, in love, became the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

As such, true revival will always be measured by Him, who was God manifested in the flesh, very God, and by Him, who was very Man, the promised seed of the Woman, the Man, Christ Jesus our LORD (“one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten to be acknowledged in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably.”⁹⁰).

He is the sole pattern. If revival is true, it will never contradict the attributes or the truth of His Person; it will never be at variance with the truth of His Divine nature (very God of very God, begotten eternally of God the Father—Micah 5:2; John 1:14,18; I John 5:20.), nor the truth of His Human Nature (the Word made flesh, of the seed of David, and the seed of Abraham, being born of the virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord—Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; I John 4:2-3). All truth can only be found in Him and must agree with Him in every particular. Anyone who teaches otherwise, who does not hold to the

⁹⁰ Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom, With a History and Critical Notes*, vol. II (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1993) pg. 62

Faith as revealed in Scripture, as it has always been affirmed in the Historic Christian Faith, is a false prophet, who brings nothing but a false revival, no matter how successful it might seem.

Moreover, as with the Living Word of God, another thing we must do, if we wish to know if a revival is true or not, is to look to the Written Word of God. Why?—because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, always directed His disciples to the Written Word of God.

Luke 24:25-27 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ²⁶ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. KJV

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. NKJV

John 5:39 "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me, NKJV

Jesus always reminded His followers that truth is found in Scripture. Repeatedly, our Lord would admonish His disciples, and the religious leaders of the day, as well as all who could hear, and those who would listen, with this declaration—"It is written." True revival will never contradict the written and eternal Word of God, nor will any truth ever be recovered outside the eternal Word of God.

It is so important to realize that there is no truth to be "discovered," there is only truth to be "recovered," i.e. "restored." All things have already been revealed to us in Scripture. There is no new revelation to be given, or truth to

be found. The Canon of Scripture is complete and closed. Most assuredly, the purpose of revival will always be to recover or affirm truth, but that will never mean truth outside of the Word of God; there is no truth outside of the Word of God. All things pertaining to life and godliness have already been given to us in Scripture, which were given to us by the inspiration of God.

II Peter 1:3-4 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. NKJV

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. NKJV

And so, as we said, truth does not need to be discovered, but only recovered through the illumination of the Holy Spirit within the eternal Word of God. It was inscripturated long ago for all to read and believe.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that truth has never been completely lost among God's people, even in the darkest days of Church history. As with Israel, there always was a remnant (cf. Rom. 11:1-5; Rev. 2: 24-25; 3:4, 8).

Ever since the days of the apostles, I believe God has always had some gathering of Christians, somewhere in the world, who have been faithful to continue with those things first revealed to us by the apostles in God's Word. So if we seek to be revived, we should not, out of hand, dismiss things revealed to Christians from days long ago. If we think we have recovered some truth in Scripture, there will always be certain ones from generations past, who were also shown the

same truth, for truth will never be found outside of the eternal Word of God, and God will always have more than one witness to the truth found within God's Sacred Word. In other words, God is not going to all of a sudden recover some truth that no one else has ever seen or affirmed in past ages of the Church. God has always had a faithful remnant. So one should not say, "For two thousand years the Church has been deceived; I now have discovered the truth, so listen to me!"

And this will become another safeguard to us. If anyone claims to have found truth outside of God's Word, or truth from some dream or vision, or from some new revelation, that person is a false prophet (and any claim of revival by them is false). If anyone believes the Canon of Scripture is not closed, that person is a false prophet. If anyone writes something that purports to be of equal authority to Scripture, that person is a false prophet. If there is any person who purports to prophesy, with a new revelation, written or otherwise, which then demands our obedience and fidelity, that person and revelation is false. (Of course, an example of this is that of Joseph Smith, with his supposed apostleship and supposed prophetic insight, as well as his false assertion that his book of Mormon was given to him by God. Not only was he a false prophet and a false apostle, his book was a false book.)

And so we see that all true revival will always be centered in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who ushered in the "time of reformation," and the One who is the pattern for any subsequent revival. All truth must always be in accordance with His Person and with His Written Word—in accordance with His teachings, which taught us to always remember: "it is written."

Thus, all true revivals will also always be rooted in Scripture, and never be at variance with that precious Word of God that has forever been settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89). Moreover, all true revivals will never be based upon some

new interpretation revealed only to one man, but will always be in accordance with the doctrine of two or three witnesses, which means somewhere in the present, or somewhere in the past, the Holy Spirit has already shown the same precious truth from God Word's to another believer in Christ. Martin Luther was a perfect example of this; he had the second witness of Philip Melancthon from the present, and he had an additional witness Augustine from the past.

Beloved, this principle of God, of always having more than one witness to the truth, is rooted in the very Being of God, wherein even Jesus said that He did not bear witness of Himself (John 5:31-38), which, of course, teaches us that a local Church, being the body of Christ, should follow His example and never bear witness of itself, thinking that God is only speaking to it alone. If a Church does so, it is only filled with spiritual pride and in need of spiritual understanding and growth. The Church in Corinth was an example of this and Paul chastised them for it.

I Corinthians 14:36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? KJV

Yet, unfortunately, despite the warning of Scripture in this regard, we know such thinking will always be the ways of soulical men, and carnal Churches. True revival never leads an Assembly to lift up and magnify itself as the one Assembly of God on earth; it never directs other Churches to heed only it, or to heed one man from it, claiming to speak for God. True revival will always direct all men, and any Assembly, to listen to the Son, and to hear the Spirit (who always glorifies the Son and the Father who has ever magnified His Son). We are not to focus on a man, on a Moses or on an Elijah, but only on the Son (Matt 17:4-5). God will always say to us all, "Hear ye Him!"

So when men use the idea of revival to point to themselves, to further themselves, to build up their own kingdoms, to get the saints to “hear them” as if they are the only interpreters of the Word, or when they allow other Christians to erect a tent for them, so to speak, to bring honor and glory to themselves (much like Peter, James and John wished to do for Moses and Elijah), then one can see that that revival is not true, for true revival will always be that which lowers man into the dust of the ground, so as to lift up the Man Christ Jesus, He who is the Only-Begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father before all time, our precious Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

So now that we see that drift and departure seems to follow every revival, and that the Holy Spirit will always seek to restore anything lost from previous revivals, for true revivals of the Spirit will always be a recovery of truth, since the Holy Spirit’s ministry will always be to lift up and glorify Christ Jesus our Lord (because grace and truth are only realized in Him), and since the Father commands His children to hear only Him...we should all take heed!

The reason I say this is because even though there are still many godly Christians in Churches from within those previous revivals or movements of the Holy Spirit, there are some Churches within them that have fallen because of their drift and departure from truth. So we who think we stand, should take heed lest we fall (I Cor. 10:12).

For example, some Lutheran Churches that came out of the European Reformation have drifted, and indeed, have greatly departed from truth, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America. They now endorse and believe in things which would bring the ringing condemnation of those originally in that European Reformation in Germany, especially from Martin Luther himself. Their drift has resulted in a complete departure from truth. The same can be said of many Churches that came out of the English Reformation.

Churches in the Anglican Communion (more so in England and the United States, than in some other parts of the world) have also completely departed from the truth in so many areas, even in areas dealing with sin. Their departure, too, would bring the ringing condemnation of those Puritans of old.

This has also happened among the Presbyterians, e.g. the Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA). And then, of course, some Churches from the Methodist movement have also greatly departed from the truth, no longer following the holiness preached by John and Charles Wesley. For example, those within the United Methodist Church have greatly departed from the truth. And even among the Baptists this departure has occurred. Certain Churches within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (with whom even C. H. Spurgeon took issue more than a century ago) have departed from truth. In America, the same sort of departures has arisen in the American Baptist Church.

In all these instances, the usual reason for the eventual departure is a low view of Scripture and a departure from the Historic Christian Faith, if not in words, then certainly in practice. Many might claim adherence to the truth of the Faith, as witnessed in the Nicene Creed (in some cases they may even recite the Nicene Creed every Sunday), and other Churches might claim adherence to the truth of the Faith as revealed in the Westminster or London Confessions of Faith, but then, in their sermons, or in their writings, or in their opinions, and even in their own local confessions, they will water down that Faith, redefine key terminologies of the Faith, and in some cases even contradict portions of that Faith.

This should be a warning to us all, for the same diluting of the integrity of the Word of God, and the same departing from the Historic Christian Faith (in particular the doctrine of Eternal Generation of the Son and the doctrine of the Only-Begotten) as revealed in the Word of God is

happening before our very eyes in many fundamental and Evangelical Churches today. No one is free from such drift and departure, especially when the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the work of the cross is replaced with the fullness of natural talent and power of human self in our work for God. Soon, if not checked, this drift will lead to a full departure by some of those Churches, just as it has in some of the Churches in the other movements.

In the beginning, this drift will not be the result of carnal sins, but will be the result of soulical sins and soulical mindsets. In the late 19th century it came through the soulical mindset of liberal rationalism and higher criticism, wherein human wisdom and logic slowly replaced heavenly wisdom and faith.

Unfortunately, in the 20th century that silent enemy of human wisdom and rationalism led to all the false theories of dynamic equivalence and in regard to the Faith, in particular the doctrine of the Trinity. In particular, especially in the last few decades, this human logic and rationalism has replaced the simple, childlike faith that accepts that doctrine of the eternal generation or begetting of the Son, borne witness to throughout the centuries by godly men, and affirmed in the Historic Christian Faith. This drift is leading to a departure in all sections of Christendom. So as I said, this should be a warning to us all.

It should be a warning because we all know, by some of the aforementioned Churches that got carried away in the drift, they have now departed to such a degree that those soulical sins of human wisdom, rationalism, and human pride have now been replaced with actual sins of a carnal nature, which are now accepted, not as sins, but as something quite normal and right, and so, are promoted as such.

May we all take it to heart and take heed to the exhortation of the apostle Paul given to all Christians, as we

mentioned before—“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

For the sake of subsequent generations (if the Lord tarries) may we remember Paul’s declaration—“But the natural [soulical] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” (I Cor. 2:14-15).⁹¹

With all this being said, we should not forget that there are still many godly Christians in those Churches from those previous revivals, who have not yet departed, but are in danger of “drift.” Our prayer should be for them, and for ourselves, and, indeed, for every child of God, that we all would be open to the purity of the Word of God and the message of the cross, the denial of self and the powers of self in the work of the Lord, and also the fullness of the Spirit in every aspect of our life and the faithful and earnest contending for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints.

The Brethren Movement

Church Principles

We now come to the last major revival that we will examine, although there were, indeed, subsequent revivals in Church history, such as the great world-wide missionary revival of the late 19th and early 20th century. But for the

⁹¹ If one wishes to pursue this important truth mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 2:14-15, and how it can apply to Christians, please see *Press on to Spirituality, Life in the Image and Likeness of God*, freely available from www.silicabiblechapel.com in paperback or digital format.

purposes of this book we will end with the Brethren Movement of the early 19th century.

At the end of our section on the Baptist movement we mentioned certain truths that were recovered during that revival of the Spirit, which, unfortunately, were eventually neglected by some, and so were set aside once again. The first truth we mentioned was their desire to never denominate one section of the Church from another section; instead, they sought to be content with those names given to them by God in Scripture. But, as was said, by the time of the middle of the 1700's most Baptists no longer held to that particular viewpoint and so freely began to view themselves as the Baptist denomination.

In that light, once those from that revival laid aside their first resolution to only use those names given to them by God the Father, it is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit, at the beginning of the 1800's, brought forth another revival among the saints to once more recover the desire of the Holy Spirit, that the children of God abide by the names given to them by the Father and Son and, of course, by Himself, as the inspired Author of Scripture.

And, as we will now see, He also led some of those saints in the "brethren movement" to once again recover the other truths that some of our brethren from the Baptist movement let slip away over time. This new revival was known as the "brethren movement."

It is unfortunate that some of our brothers in the Baptist movement did not continue with those truths the Holy Spirit led them to recover, except, of course, the most important truths of believer's baptism by immersion, the autonomy of each local Church, and a belief that the Church should never be wedded to the State.

Nevertheless, just as we mentioned before, this departure should not surprise us for it has happened in other revivals, or "great movements of the Holy Spirit," as brother

MacDonald would say, and, indeed, as we will find out, unfortunately, happened within the “brethren movement” as well. But first let us look to the beginning of the movement.

If I may, let me quote from a few brothers regarding the beginnings of this revival of the Holy Spirit. It sprang up in many different places in the world, but, since we have been examining what the Lord did here in the West, we will examine the movement where it is generally acknowledged to have begun in Dublin, Ireland, as well as in Bristol and Plymouth, England.

Let us begin with a brother by the name of G. H. Lang. He begins by providing a spiritual backdrop to the religious condition of England in the first decades of the 1800’s. He speaks of all the narrow sectarian views that had developed between the Dissenting and Nonconformist Churches over the previous years, summing them up with the declaration—“What separations, what heart-burnings, what hardening of heart sectarianism has caused...”⁹²

He then continues and states that into this milieu of sectarianism God raised up some brothers to challenge this mindset. As such, it should be noted that even though everyone attempts to assign the beginning of the “brethren movement” to one certain individual, the movement was not started by any one individual, but by many individuals simultaneously. In fact, when one examines all revivals, one will find there always is more than one individual involved, much like we saw with the Methodist movement, the Baptist movement, and, indeed, the entire Reformation in Europe and in Great Britain. There always seems to be more than one individual involved. Why?—because each movement is a revival of the Holy Spirit, and since He is the true origin of

⁹² G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves, Saint and Pioneer* (The Paternoster Press, London, 1949) pg. 15-16

each movement, He operates in accordance with the Biblical principle He Himself established in the Word—that of two or three witnesses (e.g. Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16). And so, as we mentioned in our Digression earlier, and which we will now bespeak once again, God moves in many hearts at once.

This is such an important spiritual principle. Any person who claims special insight today from the Holy Spirit regarding any truth that has not also been revealed to another by the same Spirit (on an equal basis) should be held suspect, for even Paul the apostle followed this principle, submitting his Gospel to the other apostles, believing (I am sure) that God had revealed the same to them (Gal. 2:2). It is not a legalism; it is a spiritual principle.

In most cases, a false prophet who claims to bring revival from God can be proved to be false, simply by this one spiritual principle. A person who claims God has specially revealed something to him that has never been revealed to another during this dispensation of grace most assuredly is a false prophet. The Holy Spirit in this dispensation affirms truth through the Body of Christ and the Spirit of Christ—and it should not be forgotten that the Body is many members.

Even such ones gifted with much authority and revelation from God as apostles were sent out by the Lord two by two. Why?—I believe it is because the Lord Jesus Himself followed this principle of everything being established as true by at least two or three witnesses (John 5:31-38), as we briefly mentioned in our Digression above. So if the Master followed this principle, then most assuredly His disciples should follow this principle.

It is amazing that the Son of Man (who could never speak anything but truth) made known to the people that He did not expect them to believe Him, if He did not have at least one other witness! It was He who said in John 5:31: “If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.” What an amazing statement by one who was and is and ever

will be the very Truth! What humility and lowliness of mind was shown by one who possessed all honour and glory, which mind we are also told to have (Phil. 2:5)! Of course, we know the Son had three other witnesses besides Himself. There was the Father, and then the Holy Spirit, which is two witnesses. But the Lord even obtained a second witness among men—the witness of John the Baptist (John1:6-8), which together with the other two Persons of the Blessed Trinity made a total of three witnesses.

This spiritual principle of two or three witnesses is rooted in the very communion of Divine life within the Trinity. Not one Person of the Blessed Trinity ever did anything by themselves alone. The Father eternally has done all things in union and communion with the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has never done anything apart from the Son and the Father, and the Son has never done anything apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit. The spiritual principle is rooted in the very life of God!

If the Son walked by this principle, then most assuredly, those who claim to be sent out by Christ will live by that same principle, if, indeed, they have the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:8), and if Christ is truly living in them (Gal. 2:20)!

The Lord warned us that false prophets would arise. The spiritual principle of two or three witnesses is one of the many safeguards given to us in trying the spirits, which we are commanded by Scripture to do (I John 4:1). Christians should never follow just one man, except the one Man, Christ Jesus our LORD.

Thus, it would not be correct to say that Anthony Norris Groves was the founder of the movement; nor would it be correct to say J. N. Darby was the founder, nor indeed, J. G. Bellett, Edward Cronin, Francis Hutchinson, Edwin Wilson, John Vessey Parnell (later Lord Congleton), William Stokes, Henry Craik, or George Müller, or any other. All these

men were greatly used by God to recover many Biblical truths, but not one was the founder of the movement.

God began showing many believers these truths, all in the same period of time. Some responded sooner, and some later, but by the early part of the 1830's all these men were serving God in what is now known as the "brethren movement." G. L. Lang says much the same thing:

"The principle agency used by God to effect this change was the testimony and practice of individuals, and groups of believers, who about the year 1829 commenced to gather to build one another up with no other guide than the Spirit of Truth and no other rule than the Word of God.

"As the ground of reception to their fellowship they demanded nothing more than that a person could show that he, by a new birth, possessed the life of God by faith in the Son of God. The uniting, inspiring energy of their fellowship was divine love. So evident to all were these two features, the life of the one God and Father, that they became known simply as 'brethren.'

"Inevitably perhaps, at any rate by a persistent tendency of the human mind, the common name, embracing all children of God, became a proper name, the small 'b' a large 'B,' and the movement was termed 'The Brethren.' **But this was not by their own act or wish.**"⁹³

These small gatherings of different groups he refers to were at first unknown to each other, but were mostly located in Dublin, and then in such places as Plymouth and Bristol in England. J. G. Bellett recounts those early days of fellowship and beginnings in Dublin as follows. He speaks of a conversation with A. N. Groves in 1827—

"Groves has just been telling me, that it appeared to him from Scripture, that believers, meeting together as disciples of Christ were free to break bread together, as their Lord had admonished

⁹³ Ibid., pg. 15-16

them; and that, in as far as the practice of the apostles could be a guide, every Lord's Day should be set apart for thus remembering the Lord's death, and obeying his parting command.⁹⁴

Then about a year later, near the close of 1828, during another visit to Dublin by A. N. Groves, J. B. Bellett recounts another time of fellowship with brother Groves as they were walking down Lower Pembroke Street in Dublin. He states:

“In the close of 1828 he again visited Dublin, and, walking one day with him, as we were passing Lower Pembroke Street, he said to me, ‘This, I doubt not, is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come together not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves.’ At the moment he spoke these words I was assured my soul had got the right idea, and that moment (I remember it as if it were but yesterday) was the birth-place of my mind (if I may so speak) as a ‘brother.’”⁹⁵

In William Neatby’s history of the movement, he states that after this encounter, J. G. Bellett began to meet with Edward Cronin who had independently been meeting in a similar gathering in Dublin about the same time. Neatby speaks of this second group as follows—

“Immediately following his account of the extraordinary impression that that remark made on him, Bellett introduces Edward Cronin abruptly, and proceeds: “In a private room we had the Lord’s Supper with, I believe, three others, while I was still going to Sanford

⁹⁴ William Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1901) pg. 7

⁹⁵ Henry Groves, *Not of the World, Memoir of Lord Congleton* (John F. Shaw & Co., London, 1884) pg. 15

Chapel, and John Darby was still in the County Wicklow as a clergyman.”⁹⁶

It is important to note, for those who call J. N. Darby the founder of the movement, that Edward Cronin’s was meeting thus, well before the meeting mentioned by Bellett. Neatby says that “Cronin seems to intimate a considerable expansion in his company before it came into touch with the circle, in which, Groves, Bellett, and Darby were leading spirits.” Neatby then quotes Edward Cronin as follows—

"It there ... became noised abroad, and one another became affected by the same truth, which really was the oneness of the Body and the presence of the Holy Spirit, also seen by us very clearly. Here Francis Hutchinson joined us, and, as we were becoming numerous, offered us the use of his large room in Fitzwilliam Square. At this time dear J. G. Bellett and J. N. Darby were more or less affected by the general state of things in the religious world, **but were unprepared to come out into entire separation. They looked suspiciously at our movements, feeling still able to attend and minister in the Church of England, as well as to come occasionally to our little assembly.**"

Finally, there was a third gathering that had been led by the Holy Spirit into the same truths. Harold Rowdon, in his history of the movement, describes this group as follows (from a testimony of a brother named William Collingwood):

“Collingwood began his story in 1825 with three friends who were closely associated in Christian work of weekdays, but who separated on Sundays. They included a baptist and a paedobaptist, and, as one of them was named by Collingwood, as the late Lord Congleton; it is clear that from the beginning dissenters and churchmen were included... They came to the opinion that they were at liberty to give

⁹⁶ William Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1901) pg. 17-18

substance to their conviction of spiritual unity by taking the Lord's Supper in the house of one of their number, and proceeded to do so. Presently they were joined by two ladies, and Collingwood related the story of how Mr. Paterson, a Scripture Reader, introduced Mr. William Stokes to the group.”⁹⁷

It seems that some from this third group soon began to meet with those meeting at Fitzwilliam Square, as can be seen in the quote below—

“There was another small group, which had for some years been meeting to ‘break bread in similar fashion, which was soon drawn to join forces with the newly-formed fellowship. Once again, the reason for their secession from the existing churches had been their inability to find a church fellowship which would welcome them all, from their differing backgrounds, and not exclude one or other of the.

“William Stokes and Grove’s friend Parnell [Lord Congleton] had been two of their number. When they learned of the establishment of the fellowship in Hutchinson’s house, the two groups joined forces...and in May 1830, [Parnell] proposed that they should move their meeting-place to a more public room which he hired in Aungier Street.”⁹⁸

And thus, the Lord brought all three groups together to break bread on Aungier Street in Dublin, and the new revival began to grow.

During this same approximate time, the period of 1829 to 1831, the Lord was also moving within the hearts of two other men in the southern part of England. In 1829 a young man named George Müller arrived in Teignmouth,

⁹⁷ Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (Pickering & Inglis Ltd., London, 1967) pg. 42

⁹⁸ F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (The Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1968) pg. 30

England to recuperate from ill health. While there, he met Henry Craik, who was a pastor in a Baptist chapel in Shaldon, which was a village across the river from Teignmouth. This meeting was in the providential ordering of God, for we next learn that in 1830 George Müller was also led to minister as a pastor in a Baptist chapel, this one being Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth, thus beginning a life-long relationship, wherein, through mutual fellowship, the Lord continued to lead both men into those Biblical principles that would later become the foundation of the “brethren movement.” However, just as with J. G. Bellett and J. N. Darby, we find out that this process did not happen all at once; it took a little time.

During these same years that the Lord was moving in the hearts of Müller and Craik, we find out that J. N. Darby was still a clergyman in the Established Church of England, although, occasionally, he would also minister in some of those small brethren assemblies. In fact, F. Roy Coad states that in this same time period “Darby was still not wholly committed to a total breach with the Established Church.”⁹⁹ That full breach would not come for about two more years. J. G. Bellett writes that even as late as 1834 he was “*all but detached from the Church of England.*”¹⁰⁰

And so we see that while J. N. Darby was still moving and ministering within Anglican Communion of the Church of England and Ireland, and George Müller and Henry Craik were moving and ministering in a Baptist Church, the Holy Spirit was revealing more and more to them all. Harold Rowdon speaks of this as follows:

“Müller continued a Baptist pastor. But, little by little, he began to develop views which were to cause him to become more and more associated with the Brethren, In the summer of 1830, Müller came

⁹⁹ Ibid., pg. 31

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pg. 31

to the conclusion that it was Scriptural to follow the example of the apostles in Acts 20:7 and break bread every Sunday, even though no specific command to this effect had been given. At the same time he concluded from passages such as Ephesian 4 and Romans 23 that opportunity should be afforded for any of the brethren to exercise in the common worship of the church such spiritual gifts as they possessed. Although his views on this matter did not fully mature for several years, **Müller state that he at once began to put this conviction into effect** by throwing open ‘certain meetings’ so that ‘any of the brethren had an opportunity to exhort or teach the rest, if they considered that they had anything to say which might be beneficial to the hearers.’

“At the end of October, 1830, Müller announced that he would forego a regular salary and depend for his support upon free-will offerings, for the reception of which a box was provided in the chapel.”¹⁰¹

Finally, after a series of events, by 1832 we find that the Lord had led Henry Craik, and then George Müller, to Bristol, England, where they both served together as equal pastors, co-elders, first in two chapels, Gideon and Bethesda together, and then, finally, just in Bethesda Chapel, where they both would minister together for many, many years.

Moreover, it was in Bristol, where the Lord would begin the orphanage work for which George Müller is so often associated. And it was through that work that another brethren principle (first put into practice by George Müller while he was still in Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth) would become so well known throughout England and Ireland, and eventually the whole world, even to this day—the principle of living by faith. Both he and Henry Craik took no stated salary as pastors or elders, but, instead, they lived and walked by

¹⁰¹ Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (Pickering & Inglis Ltd., London, 1967) pg. 117

faith. A plain box was put in the back of the chapel where anyone could offer a gift for their support, if, indeed, they felt led to do so by the Lord. Later, the same practice was followed for the work of the orphanage. They never made known the needs of the work to anyone but the Lord in prayer. George Müller's stated purpose for doing this was to show the saints that God still answers prayers and has promised to meet our every need if we truly are in His will.

And so we see that by 1832 George Müller and Henry Craik had begun a work in Bristol, much like what occurred in Plymouth and before that in Dublin.

(Before continuing, as an aside, perhaps it should be mentioned that in 1830 the Lord had also brought George Müller and Mary Groves together in holy matrimony. She was the sister of A. N. Groves, so he and Anthony Norris Groves were brother-in-laws, with A. N. Groves being the older by ten years or so).

As for A. N. Groves, we find that he had already left England before this time, having departed for the mission field in 1829. He too walked by faith, going out as a simple brother led by the Lord to the mission field, without any support or backing from any missionary organization in accordance to what he felt was the Lord's will. He lived by faith, never asking for offerings or support.

He felt the Lord sent him out in this manner, following the examples left for all believers in Scripture, and so he went out as a servant of the Lord to whom he looked alone to supply all his needs. He never asked for money, directly or indirectly, trusting instead on the knowledge that his Father in heaven knew his every need and so would provide for any necessity that might arise, in accordance with His will and His own timing. If funds were in short supply, and nothing had arrived in accordance with God's providential will, he followed the example of the apostle Paul and worked with his own hands to care for his and his

family's needs, as well as those with him. In his case, he worked in his trained profession, a dentist.

As for J. N. Darby, as we said before, he too was being led by the Holy Spirit into many of these same truths. In fact, he had written some of them down in a pamphlet entitled *Considerations on the Nature of the Unity of the Church of Christ*, while he was still an ordained Anglican priest, a curate in the Church of England and Ireland. There are two editions of this work; the earlier edition reflects more of the original principles of those early brethren in Dublin, while the second edition, edited by him years later, reflects a more divisive and narrower spirit than the first edition.¹⁰² In any case, the earlier edition (1828) reflects a growing unease that Darby had with his role as a clergyman in the Church of England and Ireland.

After writing that pamphlet, he continued in his curacy in County Wicklow for a time, but even after leaving that curacy he still remained in the Church of England and Ireland as a clergyman, and continued to minister within the Anglican Church, as well with those brethren who began to meet in Dublin in 1830.

His love and openness to all believers in those early days is recounted by J. G. Bellett in a letter he wrote. It demonstrates how it was later in his life that J. N. Darby began to change his views and become increasingly narrow of heart to other Christians and Churches. Bellett writes:

“In the year 1834 many more were added, and that year, J. N. Darby being in Dublin, it was a question with him whether he should come and help us, as God might give him grace in Aungier Street, or preach, as he had been invited, at the Asylum in Leeson Street [this was a chapel of the Church in England], but he was all but detached from the Church of England. He visited different places either that year or the next, and amongst them Oxford, Plymouth, Cork and

¹⁰² See Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (Pickering & Inglis Ltd., London, 1967) pg. 34

Limerick, ministering, wherever he might, the truth which God had given him from His Word, and I doubt not, from what I remember, he found in all these places other evidences of the independent work of the Spirit of God on the hearts and consciences of the saints of which I have spoken. In Limerick and Cork occasionally preaching in the pulpits of the Established Church, he also met Christians in private houses, and the influence of his ministry was greatly blessed.”¹⁰³

During this time, Darby also established a strong bond with certain brothers in Plymouth, including B. W. Newton, G. V. Wigram and Percy Francis Hall. This seems to be around 1831 (although Darby had met Newton a year before in Oxford). But near the end of 1831 certain brothers were meeting in a chapel in Plymouth according to those brethren principles the Holy Spirit had before revealed from the Word of God.

F. Roy Coad states that “Wigram acquired a chapel where regular preaching...was to be given...[His] early intention may not have been to establish more than a useful preaching centre, although Newton suggests...that the Lord’s Supper was taken privately at an early date, and that shortly thereafter it was taken formally in the chapel.”¹⁰⁴ But he also relates that “neither Darby nor Newton himself were fully in accord with this early step [by Wigram], for neither was yet completely detached from the Church of England. Indeed,

¹⁰³ J. G. Bellett, *Interesting Reminiscences of the Early History of “Brethren” with Letter from J. G. Bellett to J. N. Darby* (Walter Scott, Weston-Super-Mare) pg. 8 (6) — accessed December 3, 2018 © dieser Ausgabe: 2003 bruederbewegung.de Texterfassung und Satz: Michael Schneider Veröffentlicht im Internet unter— <http://www.bruederbewegung.de/pdf/reminiscences.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (The Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1968) pg. 61

Darby continued to preach in Anglican churches, as a clergyman, long after Newton himself had seceded.”¹⁰⁵

But soon Darby’s separation from the Church of England became permanent and he began his fruitful ministry in many places, including the Assembly in Plymouth. Unfortunately, the name of this city was used by Christians in other denominations to denominate the brethren, calling them, instead, the “Plymouth Brethren.” But, believing such denominating was wrong, those brethren refused to ever use this name. Instead, they simply used the name given to them by the Lord—brethren (e.g. Matt. 23:3).

And this fact brings us to those four truths we already discussed that were first recovered by those early Christians who are now called Baptists (but later were abandoned by many of them) the first being the truth of abiding in the names given to us by God, as was practiced and taught by such early Baptists like John Bunyan and William Kiffin.

We will now discuss how each of these four truths were recovered once again by the Holy Spirit by those within the brethren movement. The first was a follows—

1) They believed that it was wrong for Christians to “denominate” themselves. Therefore, they refused any denomination name, and simply referred to themselves as “brethren.”

William Collingwood, one of the early brothers, writes of this truth in those early days—

“From this small beginning the movement grew...The chief aim was to exhibit, in a Scriptural way, the common brotherhood of all believers. They recognised no special membership. That they belonged to Christ was the only term of communion; that they loved

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pg. 61-62

one another was the power of their fellowship. In principle, it embraced all whose faith and walk showed that they had spiritual life...This ideal could be attained only by a return to the absolute simplicity of the Apostolic model as found in the New Testament. To bring in anything of a contentious character would defeat it. There must be nothing that human tradition had introduced to divide God's people. None must be stumbled or grieved by the presence of what was not clearly and strictly Scriptural." "Consistently with this, they habitually called by the title of 'Brother' or 'Sister,' any whom they regarded as one of the family of God...Hence by an unfortunate inversion of terms—as the world must give them a name—they became popularly distinguished from other Christians as 'The Brethren.' **Any such distinctive title they always repudiated.** That of 'Plymouth Brethren' was given them as becoming known by being gathered there in considerable numbers." ¹⁰⁶

David J. Beattie said this, in his book, *Brethren, The Story of a Great Recovery*, regarding the latter name, "Plymouth Brethren," and how it became assigned to them by other Christians (much like the name Baptist was assigned to those early brothers in the 17th by other Christians)—

"Thus came about the formation of a company of Christians definitely separated from ecclesiastical organisations, and gathered solely to the Name of Jesus. This gathering of believers at Plymouth, notable perhaps because of the fact that its existence gave birth to the appellation 'Plymouth Brethren,' **by which future generations of Christians faithful to the teaching of the Scriptures were to be ungraciously designated,** was to go down in history as the first assembly of Brethren in England...When the brothers began to preach the Gospel in the open-air and in the villages around,' says Andrew Miller, small curiosity was awakened to know who they were; there was something new in their preaching and in their going to work. But as they belonged to none of the denominations they were spoken of as 'Brethren from Plymouth.'

¹⁰⁶ W. Collingwood, *The Brethren, A Historical Sketch* (Pickering & Inglis, Glasgow, 1899) pg. 5-10

This naturally resulted in the designation ‘The Plymouth Brethren,’ which has been applied to them—sometimes in derision—since.”¹⁰⁷

And, if we look to the work of George Müller and Henry Craik in Bristol, they bore witness to this Biblical principle as follows—

“In order to enter into the force of the following particulars, it is necessary to keep in mind the position which, as a body of saints, we seem called upon to maintain, in this city, before the church and the world. We meet simply as believers in Christ, without reference to any sectarian distinction, maintaining the Scriptures as our only rule doctrine and discipline, and affording freedom for the exercise of any spiritual gift which the Lord may be pleased to bestow. We thus hold out a gathering place for all who believe in the Lord Jesus, and desire to confess His name, by obedience to His authority. Whatever impedes us, in this our great work, can only be suffered to continue, if the Lord Himself lays it upon us as a burden or chastisement. Nothing but necessity can justify our putting any obstacles in the way of the saints in this city, who, feeling the obligation of separating from every sectarian bond of union, would desire to meet with us.”¹⁰⁸

The early brethren followed this practice and truth because they believed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit gave names to those who believed. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave the name ‘brethren’ to His followers, saying “and all ye are brethren.” (Matt. 23:8). And in Hebrews 2:11b-12, the Holy Spirit also said, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto

¹⁰⁷ David J. Beattie, *Brethren, The Story of a Great Recovery* (John Ritchie Ltd., Kilmarnock, 1939) pg. 19

¹⁰⁸ George Müller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller, Written by Himself, First Part* (J. Nisbet & Co., London, 1881) pg. 324

thee.” Then we see that Jesus gave the name “disciples” to those who believed, when He said, “where shall I eat the Passover with “My disciples” (Luke 22:11). This, of course, was a name of endearment. Then after His ascension back to heaven, the Holy Spirit shows through the written Word that we are now known as “believers,” bespeaking of our relationship with the Lord by faith (Acts 5:14). And then in Rom. 1:7, God the Father calls us “saints,” and in Rom. 9:26 it says He calls us His “sons.” And finally, we come to the most common and precious name given to us in I Pet. 4:16. In this verse the Holy Spirit reveals that we are given the privilege to call ourselves “Christians,” in honour of the Son, which name brings glory to God.

The early brethren did not view these various nomenclatures as pious platitudes, but saw them as revelatory names given by God the Father to His people to bear witness before the world as to, who He is, and what He has done in His Son, and how His love and life becomes available to all. They are very important names and should not be so lightly ignored or added to with other names of our own choosing. (Would we ever change or add to the names given to us by our earthly parents because we thought their naming of us was not sufficient to communicate to others as to whom we are, or as to what we believe?)

The name **brethren** is given by God to reveal to any unbeliever who comes into our midst that we are loved by God and are members of His household, and so members of each other. The name **disciple** reveals to the world that we are insufficient in ourselves and in our own wisdom, and so are in need of the teaching of a Master, which is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. The name **believer** is given to show all men and women, who hope to be saved by good works, that one is not saved by good works, but by the grace of God through faith, a precious gift of God’s love. That name is so revelatory, for it points the unsaved to faith in

Christ as a means of salvation. The name **saint** shows that all, who have been saved through faith, have been “set apart” from the world to God, and the name **sons** shows that all those who are set apart are now sons (and daughters) of God the Father. And, of course, the name of **Christian** is so revelatory, for it shows that all who believe are given a precious gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which has been given to those who are now known as brethren, disciples, believers, and saints. The apostle reveals to us that “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). It shows that we have all been anointed by God the Father with the precious Person of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit we cannot be saved, sanctified, or glorified. How wonderful it is to simply be called a Christian.

These names given to us by God are so important. Why would we not rejoice in them alone and be honored to be known by them?

Even if this is not understood or appreciated by some Christians, one would think that they would at least acknowledge that as a servant, a bondsman of Christ Jesus, they have no right to question the names He has decided to give to His servants. Is that not His prerogative as a Master? (Unless we do not acknowledge that we are a bondsmen to Christ.) Would it not be more honouring and respectful if such a bondsman said something like the following?—“I have no right to change or add to a name given to me by my Master. I am honoured to abide in those names He has graciously given me.”

Perhaps, a parabolic story might help us understand this truth, if we tell it from the viewpoint of one living with the realities of the first century, wherein slavery was practiced, and freedom from slavery was so cherished. What if one of the Roman Emperors from the first century, who had many slaves, as they were wont to do, decided to make some

of his slaves, freedmen; and in light of that decision he commanded that from henceforth they would be known as “Caesarian” freemen, granting them the honour to be known by his title or name, just in case someone else in the empire might wish to take their freedom away and enslave them once more.

Now suppose some of those newly freed slaves decided that they loved and respected the Emperor, but they also loved and respected the Roman naturalist Pliny, and so, as such, they decided that in honour of him also they would now call themselves *Plinian Caesarian* freedmen. How does one suppose the Emperor would feel about his former slaves deciding to alter, or in this case, add to the name he gave them when he granted them freedom? How do you suppose the Emperor would feel that they are now known as *Plinians* before they are known as *Caesrians*? Would he not feel that they were ungrateful for the gift he gave them, as well as disrespectful to him as the Emperor over all the Roman Empire? After all, it was he who freed them from slavery.

Now, beloved, perhaps that is a silly example, but how is it any different than Christians being known (if we might use this example) as *Lutheran Christians*?¹⁰⁹ Or, how

¹⁰⁹ Of course, we are not trying to make any comparison between Martin Luther, who was our godly brother in Christ, with “Caesar,” who was ungodly and lost. We are simply speaking of the matter of “honour,” as did the apostle Peter, when he told us to “honour the king” in I Pet. 2:17 (even though that was Nero), and as did Paul the apostle, when he told us to render “honour to whom honour” in Rom. 13:7, and even as our Lord said to do, when He told us to “render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matt. 22:21). We are simply saying if Caesar was to receive more honour than Pliny, then most assuredly one should not place the name of our brother Martin Luther before the name of our Master. We should never call ourselves Lutherans when we are a Christians and it was Christ Jesus our LORD who saved us and freed us from bondage.

is it any different if they respond with a name associated with a mere mortal man like Martin Luther, when they might be asked as to who they are? In other words, if they respond to that question by saying, “Oh, we are *Lutherans*.” Imagine that! It was Christ who saved them, who freed them from being slaves of sin, granting them the honour of His Name, and instead of responding, “We are *Christians*!” they respond, “We are *Lutherans*!” How disheartening.

In fact, it was Martin Luther himself, who also protested such a use of his name. He was aghast that anyone would call themselves a “Lutheran,” or that any Church would be known as the *Lutheran Church*.

Samuel Schmucker shares this in his book entitled, *The American Lutheran Church: Historically, Doctrinally and Practically Delineated*—

“Against the practice of designating the church of the Reformation by his name, Luther protested in the most energetic manner, alleging it to be a repetition of Corinthian sectarianism, condemned by Paul. **‘The Papists,’ says he, ‘may well have party names, because they are not satisfied with the doctrines and names of Christ,** and desire also to be popish. Then let them be called after the Pope, who is their master. But I am not and will not be any one’s master.’”¹¹⁰

It was said that he simply preferred the name “Christian.” And so we see, beloved, that even Martin Luther thought such an addition to the name of Christ was dishonoring. And we could add any name to that example of Christians being asked as to whom they are. What if they responded to that question asked above by saying—“Oh, we are *Plymouth Brethren*,” or “Oh, we are *Baptists*,” or “We are *Methodists*,” or “We are

¹¹⁰ Samuel S. Schmucker, *The American Lutheran Church: Historically, Doctrinally and Practically Delineated*, 5th edition (E. W. Miller, Philadelphia, 1852) pg. 255

Wesleyans”—where is the gratitude, respect, and honour to our Lord with responses as these?

If an earthly lord or ruler like the Emperor of Rome would consider former slaves changing the name he gave them, to be a disrespectful act, as well as an ungrateful act for the great honour he bestowed on them to be called by his own name, how much more would the King of kings and Lord of lords be hurt by the lack of respect and ungratefulness of such an action? If not for anything else, simple honor, respect, and gratitude, should cause a Christian, or a Church (His Bride, sharing His name) to be content with those names He gave to them.

Beloved, if God is all wise, and everything God does can never be less than perfect, and if Jesus told us to pray that the Father’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven, then if it is not the Father’s will to call his children in heaven *Lutheran Christians*, would that not then mean, if His will is to be done on earth as in heaven, we should never call ourselves *Lutheran Christians*? In the same way, if the Father does not call the disciples of His Son in heaven, *Baptist Christians*, would that not mean, if His will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we should not call ourselves on earth *Baptist Christians*? Or if Christians in heaven are not known as *Methodist* or *Wesleyan Christians*, would that not mean we should not be known as *Methodist* or *Wesleyan Christians* on earth? And, of course, the same could be said in regard to a Church. If the Church in heaven is not called the *Plymouth Brethren assembly* or *Church*, then, most assuredly, if we are called to pray that His will should be done on earth as in heaven, we should never call ourselves a *Plymouth Brethren assembly* or *Church*. Rather, we should be called by those names he gave us, one of them being simply “brethren.” We should simply be known as “the brethren” of Christ in this place or in that place, or brethren gathered in the name of the Lord. Consider the following examples—

Acts 10:23 "...and some of **the brethren from Joppa** accompanied him." NASB

Acts 15:23 "...to **the brethren in Antioch** and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. NASB

Acts 15:36 "... and visit **the brethren in every city**..." NASB

I Corinthians 16:20 "All **the brethren** greet you" NASB

Colossians 4:15 "Greet **the brethren who are in Laodicea**..." NASB

To the early brethren this was a precious truth. They recovered, by the Holy Spirit, the truth of the importance of names. It has always been the case. As we said before, but probably unbeknownst to them, it was first recovered over a century earlier by the Holy Spirit through other Christians. If one remembers, it was the same truth made known to William Kiffin, who is now called a Baptist, but back then he was simply called a "Christian brother." If one remembers, it was he who said:

"The professors of the Christian Religion, are distinguished by certain terms... as Prelatical [i.e. Episcopal], Presbyterian, Independent [sic], Anabaptist, &c. And it were well, if such names were laid aside, and the title of Christian Brother reassumed."¹¹¹

Thus, the Holy Spirit continued His recovery of truth in revival, this time through those in the "brethren

¹¹¹William Kiffin *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-communion: Wherein is Proved by Scripture ... that No Unbaptized Person May be Regularly Admitted to the Lords Supper* (Geo. Larkin, London, 1681) pg. 2

movement,” and, for the most part, this truth has been maintained to the present day (although it seems some today are beginning to waver, as happened to those in the Baptist Movement). But for the most part “brethren” still understand the importance of names and they still seek to honour God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by abiding by the names given to them in Scripture so as to not alienate any true child of God from fellowship with them, all the while showing their respect and gratitude to the Lord above for granting them those names, and in the process being careful to bear witness to the revelatory purpose for which those names were given in the first place.¹¹²

And so we see that many times revival will restore what the Holy Spirit once restored to Christians before, who, for whatever reason, were not able to maintain that truth. This not only occurred with the truth of being faithful to the names chosen by God for His children, but also some of those other truths first revealed to those now called Baptists, whether it be John Smyth, or Robert and James Haldane.

The next truth that was once again recovered and solidified as an essential Biblical doctrine, and practiced by those brethren in the early 1800’s, was the weekly observance of the Lord’s Table, which we will now examine.

¹¹² If one wishes to study the original biblical principles of the brethren in depth, please see *Church Principles of the New Testament, Vol. I*, and soon to be available, *Church Principles of the New Testament, Vol. II*, as well as, *Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren: As Found in a Letter Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in 1836 (Updated Version)* at www.silicabiblechapel.com. Also see: G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves, Saint and Pioneer, A Combined Study of a Man of God and of the Original Principles and Practices of the Brethren with Application to Present Conditions*

2) They believed in the weekly observance of the Lord's Table, as being necessary for a Church following the commands of Scripture.

The early brethren understood the importance of breaking bread every Lord's day. They believed the apostles established the weekly observance of the Lord's Table in the Churches they founded as a pattern to be followed, and a practice to imitate (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). Again, George Müller and Henry Craik addressed this issue and this is what they said:

“IV.—Questions Relative To The Lord's Supper.

(1) How frequently ought the breaking of bread to be attended to?

Ans. Although we have no express command respecting the frequency of its observance, yet the example of the apostles and of the first disciples would lead us to observe this ordinance every Lord's day, Acts 20:7.

(2) What ought to be the character of the meeting at which the saints are assembled for the breaking of bread?

Ans. As in this ordinance we show forth our common participation in all the benefits of our Lord's death, and our union to him and to each other (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17) opportunity ought to be given for the exercise of the gifts of teaching or exhortation, and communion in prayer and praise. Rom. 12: 4—8, Eph. 4: 11—16. The manifestation of our common participation in each other's gifts cannot be fully given at such meetings, if the whole meeting is, necessarily, conducted by one individual. This mode of meeting does not however take off [take away] from those, who have the

gifts of teaching or exhortation, the responsibility of edifying the church, as opportunity may be offered.”¹¹³

And in another place in his *Narrative*, George Müller related how the Lord revealed to him, by grace, this wonderful truth and practice to his soul. He shared it as follows:

“That the disciples of Jesus should meet together, on the first day of the week, for the breaking of bread, and that that should be their principal meeting, and that those, whether one or several, who are truly gifted by the Holy Spirit for service, be it for exhortation, or teaching, or rule, &c., are responsible to the Lord for the exercise of their gifts: these are to me no matters of uncertainty, but points on which my soul, by grace, is established, through the revealed will of God.”¹¹⁴

And then, of course, we had the witness of A. N. Groves which we provided beforehand—

“Groves has just been telling me, that it appeared to him from Scripture, that believers, meeting together as disciples of Christ were free to break bread together, as their Lord had admonished them; and that, in as far as the practice of the apostles could be a guide, every Lord's Day should be set apart for thus remembering the Lord's death, and obeying his parting command.”¹¹⁵

We could provide many more examples, but since this recovered truth is so self-evident with the brethren, being practiced to the present by most, if not all assemblies, let me

¹¹³ George Müller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller: Written by Himself, Vol. II* (J. Nisbet, London, 1841) pg. 82-83

¹¹⁴ George Müller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller.: Written by Himself, First Part* (J. Nisbet, London, 1845) pg. 68

¹¹⁵ William Blair Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1901) pg. 7

provide one more testimony regarding those early days when they first began to celebrate the Lord's Table every Sunday.

This is from the biography of Lord Congleton, the 2nd Baron of Congleton one of those first brothers of the movement. (At the time of this account, his father, who was the 1st Baron of Congleton, had not died, so at this time he was simply known as John Parnell.)—

“Thus early did Mr. Parnell recognise that the person of Christ was the alone rallying point for all believers, the outward emblem and seal of which was the communion of the Lord's Supper, and to this he sought an open testimony. We find the following interesting account of the first meetings in that room in a book entitled *The Brethren*, by the late Andrew Miller, p. 21:—‘Mr. Parnell hired a large auction room in Aungier Street for their use on Lord's Day. His idea was that the Lord's table should be a public witness of their position. This was the Brethren's first public room, where they commenced breaking bread about the spring of 1830. In order to clear the place for the meeting on Lord's Day morning, three or four of the brethren were in the habit of moving the furniture aside on Saturday evening. One of these active brethren, referring to their Saturday night's work after a lapse of nearly fifty years, says, ‘These were blessed seasons to my soul—J. Parnell, W. Stokes, and others, moving the furniture, and laying the simple table with the bread and wine—and never to be forgotten; for surely we had the Master's presence, smile, and sanction in a movement such as this.’ We have heard some describe the strangeness of their first visit to this room, having been accustomed to all the proprieties of ‘church and chapel,’ but what they heard was entirely new to them, and is remembered to this day. Such love to speak of the peculiar freshness, unction, and power of the Word at that time.”¹¹⁶

And so we see this was a precious truth that was held dear in the heart of the brethren. They believed the Lord's

¹¹⁶ Henry Groves, *Not of the World, Memoir of Lord Congleton* (John F. Shaw & Co., London, 1884) pg. 19

Table was for the Lord's day, and they never abandoned that Biblical truth that the Holy Spirit recovered for them back in those later years of the 1820's. To this day the "remembrance meeting" is the central meeting of their worship. In fact, H. A. Ironside, who grew up and fellowshiped with the brethren, thought it was so important to remember the Lord in the bread and cup every Lord's day that, even after he began to minister as a pastor at Moody Memorial Church, he would *break bread* every Lord's day in his study with any and all.

The following can be found in his diary from that very first Sunday in Chicago in 1930—"My first Lord's Day as pastor of Moody Church. At 9:15 a.m. a few of us broke bread in the feast of remembrance in church study. At 10:45 I preached on I Cor. 2:2."¹¹⁷ And it has been said that he did this every Sunday, and on those few occasions when he had a free Sunday, his biographer, E. Schuyler English, said that he would seek out an assembly of brethren "where he might worship the Lord and break bread in remembrance of Him in fellowship with some of these dear saints."¹¹⁸

3) They believed in a plurality of elders, wherein those elders were the same men who also had the title of pastors or bishops. Thus they believed each Church should be ruled and shepherded by a group of men appointed by the Holy Spirit, and so recognized by the Church. They did not believe one pastor should be singled out and elevated over others, but that every Church should have a plurality of elders who would shepherd and rule as equals.

¹¹⁷E. Schuyler English, *H A Ironside: Ordained Of The Lord* (Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, N.J., 1976) pg. 157

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 90

This truth was also recovered and has persevered in most Assemblies even to this day. Unfortunately, however, as with the Baptist movement, there has been some drift, and even departure, over the last one hundred and fifty years or so by part of the brethren. Most have faithfully held to this Biblical truth, but in the middle part of the 19th century, J. N. Darby drifted, and then departed from some of those original principles that he once affirmed, including this truth.

But the majority of the brethren have remained faithful to this truth over the last two hundred years or so. Most are still ruled by a plurality of elders or pastors.¹¹⁹

G. H. Lang (1874-1958) wrote the following on this matter:

“As to that first gathering in Dublin in 1829, J. G. Bellett wrote: ‘the settled order of worship which we had in Fitzwilliam Square gave place gradually. Teaching and exhorting were first made common duties and services, while prayer was restricted under the care of two or three, who were regarded as elders. But gradually all this yielded. In a little time, no appointed or recognized eldership was understood to be in the midst of us, and all service was of a free character, the presence of God through the Spirit being more simply believed and used.’”

“Thus a most blessed fact, the presence of the Spirit, was used both rightly and wrongly: rightly in that worship and ministry were left to His leading, as His word directs; wrongly in that the proper rule of the assembly by elders, which also His Word directs, was suffered to lapse. The mistake thus innocently made has worked incalculable harm to the Brethren assemblies ever since, by allowing, on the one

¹¹⁹ For a fuller study on this unfortunate development in the brethren movement please see *Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren As Found in a Letter Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in 1836 (Updated Version) Including Some Excerpts from his Journal*, freely available in digital format at silicabiblechapel.com.

hand, autocratic dictatorship where strong individuals have been present, and democratic disorder elsewhere...But in some other early centres more Scriptural ways obtained. In the first meeting in England, at Plymouth, there was a recognized eldership. Dr. Tregelles' testimony is decisive as to this. He wrote: 'At Plymouth Mr. J. N. Darby requested Mr. Newton to sit where he could conveniently take the oversight of ministry...Mr. J. N. Darby addressed Mr. Newton by letter, *as an Elder*...it was written by J. N. Darby, from Dublin, and it is addressed to *B. Newton, Esq., Elder of the Saints Meeting in Raleigh Street, Plymouth*.'"¹²⁰

"Both Müller and Craik were early and firmly persuaded that recognized rulers in a church are necessary and Scriptural. To quote what I wrote formerly: 'they (Müller and Craik) were as necessarily the first rulers of that church as any apostolic evangelists were of churches they founded. But as the fellowship multiplied, and they saw the Spirit qualifying other brethren for oversight, and moving them to addict themselves thereto of their own will (I Cor. 16.15; I Tim. 3.1), they invited such formally to join them in the eldership, and then announced to the assembly the names of those thus invited, which followed the example of Paul's exhortation regarding Stephanus. Thus there was no *selection of* rulers by the ruled—a principle contrary to the divine order, according to God's mind, since all authority is by delegation from God, the sole Fount of authority, not by conferment from below, from the subjects; but there was *recognition* by the church, with opportunity for stating any valid objection to a brother entering that responsible position. This method has continued, with real advantage to that assembly...'"¹²¹

¹²⁰ G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves, Saint and Pioneer, A Combined Study of a Man of God and of the Original Principles and Practices of the Brethren with Application to Present Conditions* (Thynne & Co. Ltd., London, 1939) pg. 195

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 197

And then, let me conclude regarding this truth practiced by the brethren with this comment in his book entitled *The Churches of God*—

“In each place where they laboured they formed the converts into a local assembly, with elders—always elders, never an elder (Acts 14:23; 15:6,23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1)—to guide, to rule, to shepherd, men qualified by the Lord and recognized by the saints (I Cor. 16:15, 16; I Thess. 5:12, 13; I Tim. 5:17-19); and with deacons appointed by the assembly (Acts 6:1-6; Phil 1:10—in this contrasted with the elders—to attend to the few but very important temporal affairs, and in particular to the distribution of the funds of the assembly.”¹²²

“In each...there were elders, men qualified for ruling and caring for the house of God. Who they were in each church was known. They were set in office (*tithemi*) by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:29); sometimes appointed by those who were used of God to found the local church in question (Acts 14:23); sometimes only recommended to the church without formal appointment (I Cor. 16:15, 16; I Thess. 5:12, 13); sometimes appointed by one sent by Paul for the purpose. But there they were, known and acknowledged, with duty, right and power to rule the house of God for its well-being and for His praise therein.”¹²³

4) They believed in the liberty of the Spirit to lead certain brethren into the exercise of their spiritual gifts in worship and in ministry during the Church meeting to the mutual edification of all. This was seen as a manifestation of the priesthood of all believers.

¹²² G. H. Lang, *The Churches of God* (Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., Miami Springs, 1985) pg. 10-11 (Originally published by The Paternoster Press, London, 1959)

¹²³ Ibid., pg. 87-88

In regard to this old and established Biblical truth and apostolic practice from the earliest days of the Church, Henry Craik said this:

“The reverential reading of Holy Scripture, incessant prayer for the teaching of the Divine Spirit, watchfulness over our own hearts...are calculated to render us meet to be used of God in ministering to the blessing of others. The well-being of the whole body is to be promoted by that which every joint supplieth...” “See that ye excel to the edifying of the Church,” is the exhortation addressed to all. How various are the modes in which Christians may aid the well-being of one-another. The more instructed may lead on those who are deficient in knowledge. Those who have had long experience in the Divine life may counsel those who are as yet but babes in Christ. Those who, having passed through trial and found that God has manifested Himself as their deliverer, may encourage the hearts of afflicted ones to put their trust in Him, even when outward things look dark and gloomy...”¹²⁴

“Let it be clearly apprehended that to each believer belongs the privilege of helping on the benefit of the whole body, but the modes in which that object is to be sought must vary in each individual case. Self-knowledge, humility, rectitude of purpose, and believing prayer are requisite for enabling the several members to discover and to maintain their true position in the body of Christ. In the xii. Rom, and xii. of I. Cor., this most important subject is fully expounded by the apostle Paul. Those two chapters, and other passages more or less bearing on the same theme, ought to be prayerfully and diligently studied by every Christian...”¹²⁵

“When any assembly of Christians had been gathered together in any particular place—this result of missionary labours furnished opportunity for the exercise of whatever gifts for service any member of the community might have received ,’ and thus, from the

¹²⁴ Henry Craik, *New Testament Church Order, Five Lectures* (Snow & Co., 1863) pg. 36

¹²⁵ Ibid., pg. 41

very beginning, the principle laid down by the Apostle Peter (I. Peter, iv. 10), had free scope in the churches.”¹²⁶

And then G. H. Lang, referencing I Cor. 14:29-31, makes the following comment, as well as including the witness of S. P. Tregelles, who bore witness to those early Church meetings of the brethren in Plymouth—

“The picture here given of ministry in an apostolic gathering excludes the presiding officer of whom we have read as arising in the second century. It shows (1) that in the church there were several persons known to have been chosen by the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the world of God; (2) that each and all of these had power and right delegated from the lord to address the assembly; (3) that the control of their utterance was (a) by the Holy Spirit direct, who, while one was speaking, might give to another a message for the assembly; (b) by the prophet himself, who retained control of his own spirit, even though energized by the Holy Spirit, and could resume silence.”

“The control of the assembly by one man was thus unknown. The Lord Himself, by His Spirit, was really present as if He had been visible. Indeed to faith He was visible; and Himself being there, what servant could be so irreverent as to take out of His hands the control of the worship and ministry?”

“But, on the other hand, most certainly it was not the case than anybody had liberty to minister. The liberty was for the Holy Spirit to do His will, not for His people to do as they willed....Everyone had right who was chosen, qualified, and moved thereto by the Lord the Spirit had the right, and no one else had any right...”

“The post-apostolic church quickly departed from this pattern. It has been seen and adopted only occasionally throughout the centuries, notably in seasons of powerful revival. And hundred and thirty years ago it was rediscovered by the first Brethren, followed for a while

¹²⁶ Ibid., pg.53

with almost apostolic blessedness, and has been, and is being, very considerably forsaken, with great spiritual loss...”

“That most accurate of men, Dr. S. P. Tregelles has left precise first-hand information as to the original practice of Brethren in several localities, including Plymouth (the first such assembly in England) Exeter Bath and London. He united with the Plymouth assembly as early as 1835. In 1849 he wrote: “‘Stated ministry but not exclusive ministry,’ has been the principle on which we have acted all along here...By ‘Stated ministry,’ we mean that such and such persons are looked on as teachers, and one or more of them is expected to minister, and they are responsible for stirring up the gift that is in them; but this is not ‘exclusive ministry,’ because there is an open door for others who may from time to time receive any gift, so that they too may exercise their gifts.”

“This was then the principle acted on in Plymouth before there was any other gathering for communion in England...When such meetings did arise in other places, there was no thought, at least for several years, of setting up liberty of ministry in the sense of unrestrainedness....”

“Mr. G. V Wigram...published a tract...of four pages, entitled, “On Ministry in the Word.” I extract two of the questions and answers:

“E—Do you admit a *regular ministry*?”

“W—If by a regular ministry you mean a *stated* ministry (that is, that in every assembly those who are gifted of God to speak to edification will be both limited in number and known to the rest), I do admit it; but if by a regular ministry you mean an *exclusive* ministry, I dissent. By an *exclusive* ministry I mean the recognising certain persons as so *exclusively* holding the place of teachers, as that the use of a real gift by anyone else would be irregular. As for instance, in the Church of England and in most dissenting Chapels, a sermon would be felt to be *irregular* which had been made up by two or three persons really gifted by the Holy Ghost.

“E—On what do you build this distinction?”

“W—From Acts xiii. 1. I see that at Antioch there were but five whom the Holy Ghost recognized as teachers—Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. Doubtless, at all the meetings it was only these five, one or more of them, as it pleased the Holy Ghost, who were expected by the saints to speak. This was a *stated* ministry. But it was not an *exclusive* ministry; for when Judas and Silas came (xv. 32), they were pleased to take their places among the others, and then the recognised teachers were more numerous.”

127

And this belief in a regular ministry, but not an *exclusive* ministry, brings us to the final point recovered by the Holy Spirit through the brethren. It had, indeed, been recovered by some in earlier revivals, as G. H. Lang mentioned above, but it never became firmly established until, by God’s grace, it did with the brethren.

So let us now turn our attention to this final point which rejects the mindset of an *exclusive* ministry, by those called the *clergy*, who restrict the right and responsibility of other members of the body of Christ, as led by the Holy Spirit, to exercise their spiritual gifts during the Church service, unto the mutual edification of all, but who, at the same time, affirm a *regular* ministry, wherein the elders (pastors) will faithfully minister and shepherd the flock of God, without ever hindering their liberty of ministry in Christ.

5) They did not believe in the clergy/laity system of the Church which created a class of men distinct from the people of God, which restricted all ministry to themselves. They believed that Scripture taught that the clergy was the same as the laity, and the laity was, indeed, the same as

¹²⁷ G. H. Lang, *The Churches of God, A Treatise for the Times Upon the Constitution, Government, Discipline, and Ministry of the Church of God and the Principles and Practice of Service in the Gospel* (C. J. Thynne & Jarvis, Ltd., London, 1928) pg. 45-47

the clergy, and that ministry was never meant to be restricted to just a few, but that all were called to minister in accordance with their spiritual gifts in the Church meeting, whether it was those who were gifted to be pastors and teachers, or whether it was those who were gifted with other gifts such as helps and exhortation or many others (I Cor. 12:28, Rom, 12:8; I Cor. 14). They believed that while there was a distinction of gifts, there never was a distinction of priesthood. Rather all were called in I Pet. 5:3 the clergy, the inheritance of the Lord, which blessed the Lord by functioning together as a royal priesthood, ministering to one another in love so that the body of Christ might be built up and grow into Him who is the Head, even Christ.

It seems the reason this truth never became firmly established in the earlier revivals was because other believers in those movements did not fully see the unbiblical nature of the clergy/laity system. The apostles of Christ never established such a system in the early Church, since they were taught by Christ that they all were a royal priesthood, unlike the priesthood of the Old Testament, which was a distinct priesthood from the rest of the people of Israel (cf. Joshua 18:7; Num. 18:7). But that distinction and Testament ended, and we are now to serve in the New Testament.

But, even though the apostles of Christ never established that system that restricted the priesthood, and thus the service to a few recognized individuals (known as the clergy), the system did originate from one of those early Churches, and that was the Church wherein Diotrephes ruled. He lorded it over the flock, forbidding those who were from the apostle John to speak (III John 1:9-10). And from that time forward the system rapidly grew, becoming the hierarchical form of Church government wherein one of the elders from among the other elders of the Church was

separated from them and elevated over them, becoming the sole bishop of the Church.

Purportedly this was down to protect the order and purity of the Church, but this was man's solution and not God's. It undid the Church government set up by the Lord for His Church through the apostles, wherein He was the sole Bishop over each Church, with the other bishops (elders or pastors) being under Him, meaning they always formed a plurality. Jerome from the 4th century testified to this—

“Hence a presbyter is the same as a bishop, and before ambition came into religion, by the prompting of the devil, and people began to say: ‘I belong to Paul; I to Apollo; I to Cephas,’ the churches were governed by the direction of presbyters, acting as a body. But when each presbyter began to suppose that those whom he had baptized belonged to him, rather than to Christ, it was decreed in the whole Church that one of the presbyters should be chosen to preside over the others, and that the whole responsibility for the Church should devolve on him, so that the seeds of schism should be removed.”¹²⁸

In other words, by separating one bishop or elder from the other bishops or elders, thus making him the sole authority over the Church (following the example of Diotrephes), he usurped the office of Christ as the sole Bishop and Chief Shepherd over each local Church.

Once this apostolical order was abandoned and the unbiblical distinction made between an elder and bishop, the hierarchical order of the clergy became firmly entrenched, and soon other offices, never established by the apostles, were soon added to the clergy system, offices such as Archbishop, Patriarch, Cardinal and, eventually the worst of them all, the Pope, who usurped the rightful place of Christ as Head of the

¹²⁸ Henry Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford University Press, London, 1974) Pg. 189

Church. All these were inventions of men in accordance with their own wisdom; it was a denial of the prerogative of Christ to establish through His apostles the most efficient, sufficient and God honouring form of Church government.

And, as with all things originating with man, this system eventually quenched the Holy Spirit of God, by solidifying the unbiblical mindset of having a distinction between, what was called the clergy, and what was called the laity. It went so far that it even led to clergymen actually forbidding the preaching of the Gospel unless one was licensed to preach by the very same men known as the clergy (in complete contradiction to Scripture, wherein all believers were free to preach and to minister, e.g. Acts 8:1-4; I Pet. 4:10-11).

Below is an example of where this license to preach was required; it is mentioned in an article from *The Scottish Congregational Magazine*. It reads as follows—

“In the year 1798 the Relief Synod unanimously decreed ‘That no minister belonging to this body shall give or allow his pulpit to be given to any person who has not attended a regular course of philosophy and divinity in some of the Universities of the nation; and who has not been regularly licensed to preach the gospel.’ This was evidently designed to exclude from their pulpits English ministers and others engaged at the time in itinerancies in Scotland... The General Associate Synod, on the 2d May 1798, passed a similar act, in the following terms:—‘The Synod, therefore, agree in declaring, that as lay-preaching (or preaching by persons not invested with any ecclesiastical office) has no warrant in the Word of God, no person in the communion of the Secession Church ought to countenance the public ministrations of such persons.’”¹²⁹

Imagine that, those from the clergy forbid fellow brethren to minister, when an apostle of Christ, Peter, said the

¹²⁹ *The Scottish Congregational Magazine* - Vol. XXV, January to December 1876. (Andrew Elliot, Edinburgh, 1876) pg. 53

complete opposite, declaring—"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10 KJV). Beloved, to whom do we give our allegiance, an apostle of Christ, or others who contradict him? Whom do we obey—an apostle of Christ, or other believers who forbid what he commands?

Those brothers in the brethren movement chose to obey and imitate the apostles Peter, and John, and Paul and all the rest of the apostles of Christ, and the Churches which they established, just as Paul encourages us all to do (I Cor. 11:1), by exhorting us, hopefully, to imitate them (I Cor. 11:16). And the brethren have been faithful to this truth given to them by the Holy Spirit ever since.

From the very beginning of the movement A. N. Groves understood this truth. As was said before, in the early part of the 19th century (1828) he said this—

"This, I doubt not, is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come together not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good from the midst of ourselves." ¹³⁰

And then in 1831 he said the following—

Jesus still is near, still comforts and supports; but yet I feel He meant His Church to be a body. The miserable substitute of man's arrangements for the Holy Ghost's, has destroyed the true unison and order of the Church of Christ, by substituting that which is artificial for that which is of God; by appointing man to be the artificer of a work God alone can accomplish. **Now the Church presents a disunited aspect; the unity being marred, among other things, by the unscriptural distinction of clergy and laity,**

¹³⁰ Henry Groves, *Not of the World, Memoir of Lord Congleton* (John F. Shaw & Co., London, 1884) pg. 15

which confines ministry to a few, leaving the many without due office or service: this is not of the Spirit. How blessed it is among all these disorders to know that the Lord cares for His own, and will keep them as the apple of His eye, watching day and night lest any hurt them... There is something, I think, in this view of the body being composed of members of various orders, various services, from the most minute to the most important, all tending to the one great end, the glory of the only Head, and the Church's glory in Him, that greatly comforts the weak. When the Lord first led me to feel interested in His cause abroad, I framed to myself some beau-ideal of a missionary, which, if I now entertained it, would destroy all happiness. Since the Lord has led me to see how truly low my place is in His holy blessed body, amidst all this humiliation He makes me feel happy in the thought I am a member, though embracing little that pride would lead one to aim at. If I am but allowed to minister to my dear and holy brethren on the other side of the desert I shall feel happy and thankful. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with the condescension that He should allow me to feel part of His mystical body, though so weak, so useless.¹³¹

And then almost a hundred years later, H. A. Ironside, another brother from the Assemblies, who later ministered in Moody Memorial Church, also understood the same important truth, sharing the following thoughts in his booklet entitled, *Salvation and Reward*—

“Note first of all that Peter though one of the chiefest apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one whom a special revelation and particular mission had been given, claims no authoritative place over other servants of Christ. He is "also an elder." That is, he writes of himself as a "co-presbyter" one with his fellow-presbyters. If Peter was the first Pope it is clear that he never knew it. He does not write as "the Holy Father" to whom others are in duty bound to be subject, but he

¹³¹ A. N. Groves, *Memoir of the late Anthony Norris Groves: containing extracts from his letters and journals* 2nd edition, (James Nisbet, London, 1857), pg. 209

exhorts his fellow-elders, as being himself one of their company...Remembering the words of the risen Saviour, spoken so long ago that morning by the seaside, 'Feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep,' he passes on the exhortation to his brethren engaged in the work of ministering to the people of the Lord...The true minister of Christ is a man with a shepherd's heart who loves the flock and cares for them for the sake of Him who bought them with His blood. That they have responsibility to him is plain, but he looks, not to them but to the Lord for his support. And be it noted, the elders are not set over the flock (though, indeed they are 'over them in the Lord') but they are told to 'feed the flock of God which is among you.' It is true they are to lead the sheep, as in Hebrews 13: 17, where we read, 'Obey them that have the rule over you (or, literally, that guide you), and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

"In the assembly of God, if things are as they should be, there will be neither clerical pretension on the one hand nor anarchy on the other. The Christian company is a brotherhood where each should have in view the best interests of all the rest, and where all the gifts given by the great Head of the Church may be freely exercised for the blessing of the whole Church...Neither are they to lord it over possessions... Men speak (thoughtlessly often, no doubt) of 'my church,' or 'my congregation,' but this is practically to deny and to forget that it is 'His church' and 'the congregation of the Lord,' to which they may be called to minister. **It has been pointed out often that the word for 'heritage' [in I Pet. 5:3] is kleros, from which we get our word 'clergy.'** And here, paradoxical as it may seem, **the laymen are the clergy! All God's people are His clergymen, according as it is written, 'The Lord's portion is His people.'** What a solemn thing then to lord it over such! But how grateful such should be and how responsive to those who feed them as Christ's under-shepherds who are called upon not only to minister the Word but to be examples (or models of behavior) to the flock." ¹³²

¹³² H. A. Ironside, "Salvation and Reward," *Help and Food for the Household of Faith*, Vol. XLVI (Loizeaux Brothers, New York, 1920) pg. 203-204

This is such an important truth, for without it, the eye might say to the hand, “I have no need of you” (I Cor. 12:21), which causes ministry to become restricted to a few called the clergy. And if ministry is restricted to those called the clergy, the fullness of the body of Christ will not be expressed to the glory of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit will not be full manifested through those spiritual gifts, which were bestowed upon the members of the body of Christ for their common good and mutual edification (I Cor. 12:7).

As G. H. Lang mentioned above, it is not as if this truth had not been seen before. It simply was not fully accepted by all within the movement in which the Holy Spirit made it known.

Indeed, James A. Haldane, whom we already mentioned as exerting “much influence on the development of evangelical and Baptist ministries,”¹³³ understood this truth. In fact, he not only understood it, he taught it, but it was largely ignored by many. (It is hard to end those man-made traditions that have been introduced into the Church, traditions which have become entrenched over the centuries, but then again, that is what revivals of the Holy Spirit are for—to recover truth.)

James Haldane said the following regarding the clergy and laity system (before the Holy Spirit ever began the brethren movement)—

“Some have maintained that there is a distinction between preaching and ruling elders, and accordingly Presbyterians have distinguished the one by the name of ministers, and the other by that of elders. The former preach, baptize, and dispense the Lord's Supper; the latter are members of what is called the session. The **former are clergymen; the latter laymen, and are usually called lay-elders. We may safely affirm, there is no hint in the New Testament of**

¹³³ William H. Brackney, *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists, Second Edition* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD 2009) pg. 267-268

the distinction between clergy and laity... While no such distinction then as that of clergy and laity can be admitted as scriptural, it does not follow that there may not be a diversity of gifts among elders, nor that it is improper for each of them peculiarly to apply his mind to, and to be chiefly engaged in, that particular department of duty belonging to the office, for which he is best qualified.¹³⁴

And even the well-known Baptist minister, John Gill made the following observation of Peter's statement in I Pet. 5:3, regarding *God's* heritage (κληρος) from which was developed the word clergy:

"The word "clergy" is common to all the saints, and not to be appropriated to a particular order of men, or to officers of churches; and these are not to be lorded over by their elders, in a domineering and arbitrary way; for though they are set over them in the Lord, and have the rule over them, and should be submitted to, and obeyed in their right and lawful ministrations of the word and ordinances."¹³⁵

And so we see that, indeed, the Holy Spirit was showing this truth to others before the beginning of the brethren movement ever began, but knowledge of the truth did not, necessarily, mean practice of the truth. For the most part, this truth was never fully put into practice until the time of the brethren movement, at which time, this truth was once and for all recovered in accordance with New Testament Church

¹³⁴ James A. Haldane, *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians: Drawn from the Sacred Scriptures Alone, Being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation and to Represent the Guilt and Evil Consequences of Neglecting Them* (J. Ritchie, Edinburgh, 1805) pg. 230, 237 — (Letter forms have been updated to modern forms as well as some spelling has been updated.)

¹³⁵ John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Accessed on Dec. 12, 2018, archive.org/details/GillsCommentaryOnTheEntireBible

principles—and this time, by God’s grace, it has remained even to the present day by most Assemblies of brethren who gather together in the name of the Lord.

As for other Biblical doctrines or truths recovered through many of those early brethren there are such truths as the dispensational nature of God’s dealings with mankind, the dispensational distinction between Israel and the Church, along with the future restoration of Israel to their promised land, and the recovery of the long lost truth of the pre-millennium return of Christ, and, indeed the millennial reign of Christ, i.e. a literal thousand year reign of Christ after His Second Coming (in contradistinction to Postmillennialism and Amillennialism, held by most of Christendom at that time).

Additionally, not only did they continue to bear witness to these truths given to them by the Holy Spirit, they also continued to bear witness to those other truths recovered before them such as justification by faith (recovered by Martin Luther and John Calvin), separation of the Church and State (recovered first by the Pilgrims and then solidified by those called Baptists), believer’s baptism by immersion (also recovered by those called Baptists), and, of course, field-preaching or open-air evangelism (recovered by George Whitefield and John Wesley among others).

Such were the beginnings of the brethren movement. Other notables in the movement, besides those already mentioned were R. C. Chapman, C. H. Mackintosh, William Kelly, Harry Morehouse, the boy preacher (who greatly influenced D. L. Moody), Samuel Ridout, Eric Sauer, Henry Soltau, and G. H. Lang. And then there were such hymn writers as Joseph Scriven (writer of the hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”), and Samuel Trevor Francis (writer of the hymn, “O, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”). Also there were publishers such as Paul J. Loizeaux (who was not only a Bible teacher and evangelist, but also the founder of Loizeaux Brothers), and there were Greek scholars such as S. P.

Tregelles, G. V. Wigram, Sir Lancelot Brenton (translator of the Greek-English Septuagint), as well as W. E. Vine (Vine's Expository Dictionary). And then in later times there were such Christians as Jim Elliot (the missionary martyr in Ecuador), the Biblical scholar F. F. Bruce, the aforementioned H. A. Ironside, who ministered as a pastor in Moody Memorial Church. (He never considered himself as "the" pastor of the Church. This was one of his stipulations before he agreed to their desire for him to serve in their midst—others had to be recognized as pastors), and finally, one could mention William MacDonald, who was a Bible teacher, for some years president of Emmaus Bible College, and later the author of *Believer's Bible Commentary*, as well as dozens of other works.

A Digression

One other thing should be mentioned before concluding the story of this revival of the Spirit; we must mention that like other movements before, some of those in the brethren movement also drifted and departed from what the Holy Spirit first revived in the hearts of the brethren.

I say this, for some brethren have become puffed up, thinking they are the only true Church in an area. They forbid any from their Assemblies to even break bread with other Christians. As such, they are now known as exclusive brethren, but I would prefer to simply call them "brethren who are being exclusive." For the most part, however, most brethren have remained faithful to those original truths recovered for them by the Holy Spirit. Those who are now known as open brethren, but I would prefer to call them, perhaps, something like, "brethren, who receive those who Christ receives."

It is unfortunate that this movement of the Holy Spirit, which moved the saints toward love and unity, eventually fell into jealousy and disunity, primarily through the subsequent influence and teaching of J. N. Darby one of the earliest brothers in the movement.

Division was introduced into the movement in the name of purity and separation from evil, whereas in reality it was based upon a misunderstanding of what truly constitutes the unity of the Spirit. J. N. Darby drifted away, and eventually departed, from many of the original principles of the brethren.

A. N. Groves saw this narrowing of heart occurring and wrote the following in a letter to J. N. Darby in 1836 imploring him to remember the first principles which the Holy Spirit showed them all. He wrote (in part)—

“And even though I feel you have departed from our original principles, (which I know you had hoped would allow our original purposes to be realized), and, though I fear you might be in danger of returning back to the narrow mindset of the religious system you left, I still feel your heart remains committed before God to our very first principles; and, with but a simple reminder or two, I feel your heart will be able to see all the evils of all the systems (from which you profess to be separated), actually springing up among yourselves.”¹³⁶

“I always understood our principle of fellowship to be this—the possession of the common life, found in the common cleansing of the blood of Christ (for the life is in the blood); these were our early thoughts, these were our first principles, and they still are to me. I have not abandoned them as I have matured in my Christian life. However, this transformation, which has occurred in those little bodies (assemblies) who follow you, who witness against

¹³⁶ B. P. Harris, *Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren: As Found in a Letter Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in 1836 (Updated Version)* (Assembly Bookshelf, Sacramento, 2014) pg. 5-7

all that they judge as error rather than witness for the glorious truth I just mentioned, has caused your witness, in my humble opinion, to fall from that of our glorious standing found in heaven to one of the earth.”¹³⁷

“Were we not, in those early days, free to join and act with any Christian, or group of Christians, as long as those same groups did not require us to violate our consciences either by requiring us to do what we felt we could not do, or restrict us from doing what we felt we should do?”¹³⁸

“Did you know, dear brother, that some will not have me hold communion with the Scotts, because their views are not satisfactory about the Lord's Supper? Others will not have me hold communion with you, because of your views about baptism! And others will not have me join in fellowship with those from the Church of England, because of her thoughts about ministry. But based upon my principles of communion, I receive them all; but based upon your principle of witnessing against error, I must reject them all (including you!)...I shall never feel that separation from the good in other believers (because of certain errors), to be the best way of witnessing against those errors, that is, until I see infinitely clearer, than I do now, that that is God's desired way.”¹³⁹

Unfortunately, our brother Darby did not take to heart any of these words of brother Groves. He and those who followed him were unrelenting in their exclusive mindset. In fact, in response to such mindsets, A. N. Groves wrote this a few years earlier regarding the criticism that came to him for following the open fellowship with all believers in Christ, regardless of the denomination or group to which they might belong. He considered all Christians to be his dear brethren in the Lord. He wrote the following:

“Yet as to our liberty in Christ to worship with any congregation under heaven where He manifests himself to bless and

¹³⁷ Ibid., pg. 10

¹³⁸ Ibid., pg. 12-13

¹³⁹ Ibid., pg. 17-18

to save, can there be in any Christian mind a doubt? If my Lord should say to me, in any congregation of the almost unnumbered sections of the Church, "What dost thou here?" I would reply, "Seeing Thou wert here to save and sanctify, I felt it safe to be with Thee." If He again said, as perhaps He may among most of us, "Didst thou not see abominations here, an admixture of that which was unscriptural, and the absence of that which was scriptural, and in some points error, at least in your judgment?" my answer would be, "Yea, Lord, but I dared not call that place unholy where Thou wert present to bless, nor by refusing communion in worship reject those as unholy whom Thou hadst by Thy saving power evidently sanctified and set apart for Thine own."¹⁴⁰

Such was the openness of the original brothers, who first met in Dublin during the early days of the movement, from which openness Darby drifted, and then departed from in total. It seems that some of those things that were held by J.N. Darby in his early years, as ordained clergyman (i.e. curate) in the Church of England and Ireland, subtly influenced his thinking in later years. If we are not vigilant, it seems that many times what we were in the past, is what we will be in the future, not in the evil sense, but in the sense of prejudices and propensities which arise from our own personalities and particular background.

Sanctification is a life-long process, and even though sanctification from the evil deeds of our body occurs rather quickly in one who is saved, the more subtle deeds of the soul that so influences our thinking sometimes requires many years for God to change. This is why we must conform our thinking to Scripture and not to our own logic and wisdom. We all need God's grace in our walk with Him. If we do not recognize this we are in danger of having old mindsets and

¹⁴⁰ A. N. Groves, *Memoir of the late Anthony Norris Groves: containing extracts from his letters and journals* 2nd edition (James Nisbet, London, 1857)

beliefs persist in our walk. The same danger seems to have affected our brother Darby.

As time went on he became narrower and narrower to the point that he created a hierarchical structure of accountability similar to the hierarchical structure of the Church of England and Ireland. In theory he denied it all, even teaching there could not be a recognized eldership anymore, but in practice he welded a mindset of authority and power that was not much different than that in the governance of the Church of England, with himself, and those with him, at the top. He freely excommunicated whole assemblies in contradiction to Scripture, based upon his false theory of separation from evil being the basis of God's unity.

Later on in life, he, and those who followed and agreed with him and his wholesale excommunications, became known as "exclusive brethren." Once they isolated themselves in their supposed purity, the exclusive mindset only hardened, and more and more divisions occurred in their midst, completely undermining the true unity of the Spirit.

Once they isolated themselves from the rest of the body of Christ, they were carried away with unbalanced doctrines. J. N. Darby was even accused of teaching a form of the same heresy that he once accused B. W. Newton of teaching, which led to so many divisions among the brethren. That sad chapter in the story of a tremendous revival of the Holy Spirit should be a warning to us all.

Nevertheless, in the end of it all, who can deny that our brother Darby was greatly used by God early on in the movement, bearing witness to much truth, of which the whole Church is spiritually indebted? ¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹If one wishes to further study this development among the brethren movement, please see *Church Principles, Vol. II* at silicabiblechapel.com (available 2019), *Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren: As Found in a Letter Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in 1836 (Updated Version)*

And so we have come to the end of the English Reformation in each of its ensuing stages. It seems, beginning with John Wycliffe, that God began to recover those truths of Scripture, which had been replaced with man-made teachings and traditions, soon right after the death of the last apostle of Christ, and had continued in the Church through that period sometimes called the Dark Ages.

Slowly, over the centuries, God began to enlighten His servants in regard to forgotten Biblical truth, and for the most part, each succeeding revival of the Holy Spirit was built upon something that had been recovered before. But, unfortunately, there were many relapses. Certain truths had glimmers of permanency in early revivals, but soon succumbed to entrenched traditions and the carnal oppositions of men, and so were slowly abandoned.

Even among the last movement we mentioned, the brethren movement, there was a retrenchment by some. This occurred, as we just shared, when J. N. Darby abandoned some of the original truths recovered by those early brothers in Dublin and, instead, substituted his own theory of unity among Christians, i.e. his theory of separation from evil as being the basis of unity, which soon led many of the brethren to alter what the Holy Spirit had first showed them.

And so, as with the Methodist movement before them, and as with the Baptist movement before them, some within the brethren movement did not remain faithful to all that the Holy Spirit first recovered through them in the early days of 19th century. Relapse, and drift and departure, is a common feature in all these movements of the Holy Spirit and is the reason why we should always seek the continuous revival of the Holy Spirit. No Church should think they have arrived and are in no need of revival!

on the same website, and/or *Darbyism: Its Rise and Development*, written by Henry Groves.

Truly (for those who view the names of the seven Churches in the Book Revelation as being revelatory), the name of the Church in Sardis could apply to many Churches today. The name means “remnant,” and truly those Christians from these many revivals were at first a remnant in the sea of Christendom, and so had a name that they were alive. Yet for various reasons it seems each one lost some of those things that they were given in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And, even though, taken as a whole, each of the seven Churches would represent a specific stage of Church history, starting with the Ephesus, representing the early Church, and ending with Laodicea, representing the last stage of the Church preceding the Lord’s Second Coming, and even though, technically speaking, the Church in Sardis would only refer to that time in Church history when the Reformation occurred, and so, to those specific Churches that came out of Thyatira, representing the Roman Catholic Church, one cannot deny that, generally speaking, the Lord intended the admonition given to one Church, which would include Sardis, should be an admonition to all. Why? Because He concludes each message with the admonition—“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (plural),” not to that Church (singular), meaning that any Church which does not listen to what is said to the others Churches, might be in danger of making their same mistake.

In other words, for example, even though it was Ephesus that lost their first love, if other Churches do not listen to the admonition given to Ephesus, they too might lose their first love, which would then mean, for instance, a Church like Philadelphia, losing their first love, could end up, spiritual speaking, acting more like Ephesus, than like the Philadelphia!

Therefore, even though the Church in Sardis bespeaks the time of the Reformation and the Churches which were revived at that time, the admonition given to them to be

“watchful, and strengthen the things which remain,” because they were dead, even though they had a name that they were alive, should become an admonition to us all, lest we end up becoming like them, also having a name that we are alive and yet in reality are dead!

And, so beloved, may we all hear what the Spirit says to the Churches, and be ever so careful to keep what “remains.”

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

—**Revelation 3:1-6**

Revival of Witness

Many Christians mistakenly associate revival with the saving of souls. Revival does not necessarily refer to the salvation of souls, for lost souls cannot be revived; they cannot be recalled to life because they were never alive in the first place. They are dead in their trespasses and sins!

Revival refers to Christians who are recalled to life, being recalled to their abundant life in the Christ Jesus by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and by the living and abiding Word of God.

It refers to the Church being recalled either from a state of lukewarmness and spiritual apathy, on the one hand, or from a state of self-righteousness and spiritual pride, on the other hand, unto a state full of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. It is only when that occurs that we can begin to associate the word “revival” toward the salvation of many souls, for when the Church is revived, when individual Christians are recalled to their life in the Spirit, the Spirit then fills them with the love of God the Father who gave His Only Begotten Son to this dying world. When that occurs, the love of God propels them onward to witness for Christ! That is revival.

Revival does, indeed, result in the salvation of souls, but that is not because unbelievers are revived, but it is because believers are revived, and by that revival are filled with the love and life of Christ Jesus to overflowing, wherein what is on His heart becomes that which is on our hearts! His love constrains us (II Cor. 5:14)!

Consider His love in this exhortation and prayer given at one of D. L. Moody’s Conventions held in Northfield, Massachusetts during those times of revival in the late 19th century. It appeared in J. Hudson Taylor’s missionary magazine, entitled *China’s Millions*.

“The following appeal, issued at Mr. Moody's Convention, Northfield, is a cause for praise to God, and yet a very solemn message to every believing reader. Will the Master say of each of us that we have done what we could—all we could to carry out His parting command to preach the Gospel to every creature?

“To fellow-believers of every name scattered through the world, greeting: Assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with one accord in one place, we have continued for ten days in prayer and supplication, communing 'with one another about the common salvation, the blessed hope, and the duty of witnessing to a lost world.”

Twelve years near to our place of meeting that in 1747, at Northampton, Mass., Jonathan Edwards sent forth his trumpet peal calling upon disciples everywhere to unite in prayer for an effusion of the Spirit upon the whole habitable globe. That summons to prayer marked a new epoch in the Church of God. Praying bands began to gather in this and other lands. Mighty revivals of religion followed; immorality and infidelity were wonderfully checked; and, after more than 1500 years of apathy and lethargy, the spirit of missions was reawakened. In 1792, the monthly concert was begun, and the first missionary society formed in England. In 1793, William Carey, the pioneer missionary, sailed for India. Since then over 100 missionary boards have been organised, and probably not less than 100,000 missionaries including women, have gone forth into the harvest field. The pillar has moved before these humble followers, and the two-leaved gates have opened before them until the whole world is accessible. The ports and portals of Pagan, Moslem, and even Papal lands are now unsealed, and the last of the hermit nations welcomes the missionary. Results of missionary labour in the Hawaiian and Fiji islands, in Madagascar, in Japan, probably have no parallel even in apostolic days, while even Pentecost is surpassed by the ingathering of 10,000 converts in one station in India within sixty days in the year 1868. The missionary bands had scarce compassed the walls and sounded the Gospel trumpet, when these walls fell, and we have but to march straight on and take possession of Satan's strongholds.

“God has thus in answer to prayer opened the door of access to the nations. Out of the pillar there came once more a voice: ‘Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.’ And yet the Church of Christ is slow to move in response to the providence of God. Nearly 800,000,000 of the human race are yet without the Gospel, vast districts are yet unoccupied. So few are the labourers that if equally dividing the responsibility each must care for at least 100,000 souls. And yet there is an abundance of men and women in the Church to give the Gospel to every living creature before this century closes. If but 10,000,000 out of 400,000,000 of nominal Christians would undertake such systematic labour as that each one of that number should in the course of the next fifteen years reach 100 other souls with the Gospel message, the whole present population of the globe would have heard the glad tidings by the year 1900! Our Lord’s own words are... Peter exhorts us both to look for and hasten the coming of the day of God... Christ is waiting to see of the travail of His soul, and we are impressed that two things are just now of great importance; first, the immediate occupation and evangelisation of the destitute districts of the world’s population, and, second, a new effusion of the Spirit in answer to united prayer.

“If at some great centre, like London or New York, a great council of evangelistic believers could meet to consider the wonder-working of God’s providence and grace in mission-fields, and how fields that are unoccupied may be insured from any further neglect, and to arrange and adjust the work so as to prevent needless waste and friction among workmen, it might greatly further the glorious object of the world’s evangelisation, and we earnestly commend the suggestion to the prayerful consideration of the various bodies of Christian believers and the various missionary organisations. What a spectacle it would present both to angels and to men, could believers of every name, forgetting all things in which they differ, meet by chosen representatives to enter systematically and harmoniously upon the work of sending forth labourers into every part of the world-field!

“But, above all else, our immediate and imperative need is a new spirit of earnest and prevailing prayer. The first Pentecost covered ten days of united, continued supplication. Every subsequent

advance may be divinely traced to believing prayer...We therefore earnestly appeal to all disciples to join us in importunate and daily supplication for a new and mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit upon all ministers, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and Christian workers, and upon the whole earth, that God would... melt hard hearts before the burning message. It is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that all true success must be secured; let us call upon God till He answereth by fire! What we are to do for the salvation of the lost must be done quickly, for the generation is passing away, and we with it. Obedient to our marching orders, let us go to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, while from our very hearts we pray, 'Thy Kingdom come.'"

'Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all.' Done in Convention at Northfield, Mass., Aug. 14, 1885."¹⁴²

And so, when there is revival in the Church, there will always be a revival of witness, for revival brings the fullness of the Spirit into the lives of the saints, and the fullness of the Spirit brings the fruit of the Spirit, and the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is love, and that love of the Spirit is the love of God, which is the same as the love of Christ, which is the love that will constrains us to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel so that lost souls, dead in their trespasses and sins, might hear and be saved (II Cor. 5:14-21).

This same progression of life has been repeated in some way with every revival throughout Church history, if, indeed, it was a true revival.

With John Wycliffe came a resurgence of the Word of God that was given to the people in their English language, which after his death was carried on by those who were given the name Lollards. They went about preaching the Gospel

¹⁴² J. Hudson Taylor, ed., *China's Millions*, No. 12, Vol. X, December 1885 (Morgan & Scott, 12, Paternoster Buildings, E.C.) pg. 147-148

taking the Word of God to the people in their own language. One of them, by the name of Thomas Man, was said to have led seven hundred persons to our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, of course, in the European Reformation we have Martin Luther engaged in proclaiming the Gospel of peace to many, many people. He did this by using the Word of God as the best Gospel tract ever written, if you will. Like John Wycliffe before him, he translated the Word of God into the language of the people.

In the Preface of his German New Testament he says the following:

“*Evangel*, (translated Gospel,) is a Greek word, and means, in our language, a *good message, good tidings, good news, good out-cry*, of which one sings, speaks and rejoices...Such *out-cry* and consoling news, as *gospel* and *good tidings*, is also called a New Testament, because, just as it is with a testament, in which a dying man leaves his goods to be divided after his death among the heirs named therein, so also has Christ before his death, commanded and directed, that after his death this gospel should be proclaimed in all the world, and that thereby all his goods shall be bestowed on those that believe; namely, his life, by which he has swallowed up death; his righteousness, whereby he hath destroyed sin; and his salvation, whereby he has overcome eternal damnation.”¹⁴³

Thus we see that Martin Luther felt his translation of the New Testament was his way to proclaim the Gospel to the people. It was his way to promote evangelism, so to speak. So, when those who received the Gospel through his German translation of Scripture—when they equally shared that translation with others—they too were proclaiming the Gospel; that was their way of promoting evangelism. Martin Luther believed that if one had true faith, one could not but

¹⁴³ Martin Luther, Peter Anstadt, tr., *Luther's Explanatory Notes on the Gospels* (P. Anstadt, York, Penn., 1899) pg. iv

help proclaim God's love and free gift of salvation by faith. In another place he says—

“This is the reason also, why no law is given to the believer, whereby he can be justified before God...because by faith he is justified, made alive and saved. And nothing more is necessary, than that he show his faith by his works. Yea, where there is faith, **there it cannot be restrained; it manifests itself, breaks forth in good works; confesses and teaches this gospel before the people**, and the believer risks his life for its sake.”¹⁴⁴

And so we see how revival leads to a revival of witness among God's people. We see this also occur in the English Reformation. Let us speak of two men, which, heretofore, we have not yet discussed. They are John Owen and Richard Baxter. They were not only involved in the revival of truth; they were also involved in a revival of witness, having a great burden for lost souls. John Owen once wrote this regarding revival and the subsequent witness of revival—

“Do any of us find decays in grace prevailing in us;—deadness, coldness, lukewarmness, a kind of spiritual stupidity and senselessness coming upon us?...Let us assure ourselves there is no better way for our healing and deliverance, yea, no other way but this alone,—namely, the obtaining a fresh view of the glory of Christ by faith, and a steady abiding therein...this must be effected by fresh supplies and renewed communications of the Holy Spirit. Unless he fall as dew and showers on our dry and barren hearts,—unless he causes our graces to spring, thrive, and bring forth fruit;—**unless he revive and increase faith, love, and holiness in our souls**,—our backslidings will not be healed, nor our spiritual state be recovered...But the inquiry is, in what way, or by what means, we may obtain the supplies and communications of him unto this end...It is in the exercise of faith on Christ, in the way before

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. v

described, **that the Holy Spirit puts forth his renewing, transforming power in and upon our souls.** This, therefore, is that alone which will retrieve Christians from their present decays and deadness.”¹⁴⁵

And then he emphasized that a Church that is revived, that is having its spiritual state being recovered, will labour diligently for the conversion of souls. He writes—

“It belongs unto their charge and office, **diligently to labour for the conversion of souls unto God.** The ordinary means of conversion is left unto the church, and its duty it is to attend unto it. Yea, one of the principal ends of the institution and preservation of churches is the conversion of souls, and when there are no more to be converted, there shall be no more church on the earth.”¹⁴⁶

As for Richard Baxter, who also prayed for and yearned for the salvation of the lost, he relates how God finally answered his yearning and prayers for lost souls in his labour in the town of Kidderminster in England during a revival—

“The congregation was usually full, so that we were led to build five galleries after my coming hither, the church itself being very capacious, the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in. Our private meetings also were full. On the Lord’s day, there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not more than one family in the side of a street that did not so,

¹⁴⁵ John Owen, *The Person and Glory of Christ* (Robert Carter & Brothers, New York, 1852) pg. 395-396

¹⁴⁶ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen, Volume XX* (Richard Baynes, London, 1826) pg. 443-444

and that did not, in professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity.”¹⁴⁷

And, of course, such revival of witness continued in different places and different times throughout England through many other servants of God, who were guided by the Holy Spirit into truths long obscured. For instance, from among those separatist Puritans who ultimately became known as Baptists, there was John Bunyan who was greatly used by God to share the Good News of Christ Jesus to so many lost souls throughout England, as can be seen in the passage below—

“Though Bunyan made Bedford the centre of his work, he extended his ministrations through the whole county, and even beyond its limits. One of his first acts after his liberation was to apply to the government for licenses for preachers and preaching places in the country round. Among these he made stated circuits...In Mr. Froude's words, ‘he abstained, as he had done steadily throughout his life, from all interference with politics, and the government in turn never meddled with him.’ He frequently visited London to preach, always getting large congregations. Twelve hundred would come together to hear him at seven o'clock on a weekday morning in winter. When he preached on a Sunday, the meetinghouse would not contain the throng, half being obliged to go away. A sermon delivered by him at Pinners' Hall in Old Broad Street was the basis of one of his theological works. He was on intimate terms with Dr. John Owen, who, when Charles II expressed his astonishment that so learned a divine could listen to an illiterate tinker, is recorded to have replied that he would gladly give up all his learning for the tinker's power of reaching the heart.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Henry C. Fish, *Handbook of Revivals: For the Use of Winners of Souls* (James H. Earle, Boston, 1874) pg. 42

¹⁴⁸ Leslie Stephen, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. VII* (Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1886) pg. 280, 281

Later there were Christians such as Robert and James Haldane, who are also known as Baptists, who devoted much of their lives and fortunes to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Both were sons of a wealthy landowner from Scotland. After their conversion to Christ they tirelessly served the Lord throughout Scotland, England and Europe. They helped to found the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home*, and were active in seeking to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The following is a testimony to their work in the Lord, and their desire to recover those truths of Scripture that had been lost, but also the revival of witness to a world full of lost souls on their way to eternal perdition—

“It is not surprising that both of the Haldanes clung to the Bible with a fidelity that was never shaken. To assert its Divine origin, to uphold its full inspiration, to protect it against those who would either add to the words of God or profanely take them away, was one great object for which they lived and laboured. To defend its doctrines against every blast of heresy and every taint of error was another grand aim which they steadily pursued with consistency and courage, from the outset to the termination of their career...**But, earnestly as they contended for the faith once delivered to the saints, their exertions for the diffusion of the Gospel at home and abroad were still more remarkable**...The attention which at one time they directed to the revival of a primitive form of Church polity in Scotland, is the only part of the career of the Haldanes in regard to which success was not proportioned to their efforts...Their character will be found stamped on their acts; and whether we regard the labours of the elder brother for the revival of Christianity on the Continent of Europe, or the labours of both in their native land, it has been said with truth that they have left the impress of their name on the age in which they lived. Their example and success, both at home and abroad, is an encouragement to all who are willing and able, with equal boldness, zeal, and perseverance, in reliance upon the Divine blessing, to maintain the great truths of salvation, and make known the free Gospel of the grace of God...It may be said of both that in all their undertakings for the promotion

of religion they proceeded hand in hand...That object was the glory of Christ and the salvation of their fellow-men.”¹⁴⁹

Both brothers were filled with the love of God for those souls lost in sin and death. They were both concerned that there would be a revival of Gospel witness by the Church. In that light, when the elder brother, Robert Haldane, made a missionary tour on the continent of Europe, the following was said in regard to that revival of witness—“The results of that Mission stretch into eternity, and will forever connect the name of Robert Haldane **with the revival of the Gospel in France and Switzerland.**”¹⁵⁰ And when the younger brother, James Haldane, made a Gospel tour in the county of Derbyshire in the Midlands of England, the following was said—“During five summers, beginning with that of 1797, Mr. James Haldane had devoted himself to long and laborious itinerancies, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel...Wherever Mr. James Haldane went, it was in the spirit of one whose lips had been touched as by a live coal from the altar, and in whose breast there burned a flame of love for Christ which could not be extinguished. His visit to Derbyshire **was a season of revival and awakening.**”¹⁵¹

As for those in the lineage of the Puritans who remained in the Church of England, seeking to purify the Church from within, we have already spoken of the early work of John Wesley, and his brother Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, which were involved in a revival that is now known as the Methodist movement, and which also resulted in a revival of witness throughout the land. As we mentioned before—

¹⁴⁹ Alexander Haldane, *Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey and of His Brother James Alexander* (Hamilton, Adams & Co., London, 1852) pg. 674-675

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pg. 372

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 287

“It has been computed that between the ages of thirty-six and eighty-eight John Wesley travelled some 225,000 miles in preaching and delivered more than forty thousand sermons...Almost all Wesley's journeys were made on horseback, and he read as he rode. And the sermons represent but a small part of his spiritual work. They do not include the private addresses given to his societies; still less all the strain of his prayer meetings, his striving with individual souls, his indefatigable care of the purity of his converts' life and belief.”¹⁵²

And as for George Whitefield, his Gospel preaching had such an effect that, when he returned to America, his labour inaugurated what later would become known as the First Great Awakening. When he reached New England he laboured together with Jonathan Edwards and soon a revival was spreading far and wide. W. A. McKay relates the following regarding this wonderful time in Church history:

“Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, Noyes, William and Gilbert Tennent, David Brainerd and Samuel Davies were the foremost among those raised up at this time to arouse a slumbering Church and awaken a dead world. The **revival** extended over the whole of the New England colonies, and it was reckoned that during its continuance upward of **one hundred thousand souls were brought to Christ.**”¹⁵³

Finally, within the brethren movement, we also see a revival of witness, with many brethren being engaged in open-air evangelism, not only in England and Ireland, but also in lands far away. This was seen most notably in the life of one of the earliest brothers used by God to first recover many of

¹⁵² A. J. Mason, *John Wesley, a Lecture, The Church Historical Society, XLVII* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1908) pg. 21-23

¹⁵³ W. A. McKay, *Outpourings of the Spirit; or A Narrative of Spiritual Awakenings in Different Ages and Countries* (Presbyterian Board of Publications, Philadelphia, 1890) pg.75

those Biblical truths regarding the Church, its worship, and its ministry that had been so obscured over time—Anthony Norris Groves.

From an early age, brother Groves thought of being a missionary in India. The thought first came into his heart when at an early age he heard the aforementioned John Owen one day preach. However, when the time actually came for God to send him to the mission field, God sent him first, not to India, but to Baghdad; only then, after a few years, did God send him to India.

When he departed from England for those distant lands, he wrote the following:

“After many years of reflection about the work of a missionary, I am now actually on my way. Home has been left, friends who were as one's own soul have been parted from, and we shall soon now have everything new to seek; but still the hand of the Lord is strong upon us all, enabling us to hope in His mercy, and believe in His promises. I never had very strong expectations of what we were to do being manifestly very great, but that we shall answer a purpose in God's plans I have no doubt. My source of enjoyment and happiness, therefore, for the future I expect to arise much more out of the realisation of Christ in my own soul to be my Christ, than from anything in my external prospects. Elijah fully fulfilled God's purpose; yet he does not appear to have made more than one convert (Elisha) to the Lord his God, though there were some he knew not who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Nor did Noah make one convert; yet he fulfilled the Lord's purpose in his preaching; so before the Lord comes again, 'as in the days of Noah,' we shall, I expect, have to stretch forth our hands without many regarding; **but let it be our concern, that we do, as individuals, and as a mission, preach Christ faithfully, and love Him truly.** May the Lord, of His great mercy, keep among us the spirit of love and

brotherly union; this is a very earnest prayer of mine, for it is so lovely to see brethren dwell together in unity.”¹⁵⁴

Some have considered him to be the father of faith missions; he went out without missionary board or missionary support, other than the God who sent him, who, as the Psalmist reminds us, owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10).

His great faith became a great encouragement to others to walk by faith, trusting in God alone to meet their every need. He greatly influenced many other believers in Christ to walk in the same way, foremost of whom was his brother-in-law George Müller of Bristol, and then through George Müller, Hudson Taylor of China, who began the China Inland Mission.

When Christians today think of “living by faith,” or of what became known as “faith missions,” most will think of George Müller and his orphan work in Bristol, or they might think of Hudson Taylor and the faith mission, the China Inland Mission. But many Christians today do not know that it was A. N. Groves who first influenced those two men to begin such works of faith—but both George Müller and Hudson Taylor most assuredly knew that one of those who so greatly influenced them was none other than A. N. Groves!

Harold H. Rowdon says the following about this aspect of his service:

“His conception of ‘*Christian Devotedness*,’ as expressed in the pamphlet which he published under that title in 1825 caused him not only to obey literally the commands; Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’ (Mark 16.15), ‘lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth’ (Matt. 6.19), and ‘sell all that thou

¹⁵⁴ A. N. Groves, *Memoir of the Late Anthony Norris Groves: containing extracts from his letters and journals* 2nd edition, (James Nisbet, London, 1857), pg. 53

hast' (Matt. 10.21), but also 'to live by faith on the divine promises day by day.' That is, he decided to embark upon missionary service abroad without any arrangement for financial support, but in faith that, in answer to prayer, God would provide for his needs through the gifts of friends or in other ways."¹⁵⁵

This was all in keeping with brother Groves desire to be a servant, seeking no glory for himself. Indeed, much of his lasting work was found in the work of others. He aided and supported many other missionaries already working in India, from those with CMS to the Gospel work of the German missionary, Karl Rhenius, at Tinnevely (Tirunelveli) in the Tamil Nadu region of India. He travelled all through India, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and also helping any missionaries he might find, no matter what their denominational background.

But other Christians also helped him as he helped them. It was in the Tamil Nadu region of India that he first met a young native Indian named John Christian Aroolappen, who became a truly gifted evangelist, who chose to work closely with brother Groves, and brother Groves gladly worked with him. Brother Groves believed missionaries should follow the Scriptural method of missionary work, which in his mind meant encouraging the indigenous missionary work of his fellow brethren in India, as can be seen in the quote below—

“As a missionary thinker, Groves was a man ‘born out of due time.’ In a letter, he pointed out some of the weaknesses of the Protestant missionary movement and suggested alternatives. He deplored the ‘utter want of Church character and authority in all existing Societies,’ and maintained that the Scriptural and proper plan is for missionaries to go forth as messengers of the churches. Such would

¹⁵⁵ Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren* (Pickering & Inglis, London, 1967) pg. 188

enjoy the support of one of more churches, though it might be that they would go with only partial acknowledgment and support, and must therefore trust in God's providence and be prepared to earn their living...Grove was a untiring exponent of what is now called missionary 'identification.' As early as 18 August 1829, he laid it down that missionaries should live humbly, on the level of those to whom there were ministering 'not from smallness of salary, but from conviction and principle.' **Furthermore, he saw the desirability of evangelizing India though the work of Indians, and was able to produce shining examples—notably Aroolappen** who had already drunk deeply of the spirit of Rhenius and was willing to follow the example of Groves until his dying hour in 1866.”¹⁵⁶

This burden of brother Groves for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ among all continued throughout his life, and in 1836, after a short trip back to Europe, he brought back some additional missionaries to help in the work, which included two brethren from an Ebenezer Chapel in Barnstaple, England, wherein laboured R. C. Chapman. They were known by some to be Baptists, but shortly they came to adopt many of those New Testament Church principles recovered by the brethren.

These two men, by the name of George Beer and William Bowden, left for India with A. N. Groves and soon settled in the town of Narsapur, north of Madras. An early missionary journal entitled, *The Telugu Mission of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America*, announced their arrival as follows:

“Until 1836 Vizagapatam and Cuddapah were the only missions among the Telugus. The next station was established at Narsapur by Messrs. Bowden and Beer in 1836. These laborers for Christ, who had come to India anxious to carry on missionary work while

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 199-200

supporting themselves by their trades, were two young tradesmen from Barnstable [sic], England.”¹⁵⁷

Indeed, since most missionaries in India at that time were members of various denominations, they did not know how to designate Bowden and Beers, since, like, A. N. Groves, they were non-sectarian in their desire to do the work of the Lord in India. They followed those brethren principles back in Barnstable from their friend and older brother in the Lord, R. C. Chapman. In fact, this lack of knowing exactly how to designate these new missionaries led them to call William Bowden a *Plymouth Brethren Baptist Missionary*! This is how it actually read in their missionary journal—“a Plymouth Brethren Baptist missionary, then stationed at Palkole near Narsapur.”¹⁵⁸

Soon Bowdon and Beers travelled inland, settling in Dowalaishweram, wherein they continued their work; their mission, the *Narsapur Baptist Mission*, was now renamed the *Godavari Delta Mission*. The name was adopted for the purpose of “giving accurate geographical definition of their activities, whilst divesting it of any token of denominationalism.”¹⁵⁹ This, of course, was a reflection of their belief in the non-sectarian practices of the brethren, but, indeed (perhaps unbeknownst to them) was also a reflection of the non-sectarian practices of those early Christians who were first called Baptists by those other Christians who still believed in paedobaptism.

¹⁵⁷ George Drach, Calvin F. Kuder, *The Telugu Mission of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America* (General Council Publication House, Philadelphia, 1914) pg. 46

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pg. 86

¹⁵⁹ E. B. Bromley, *They Were Men Sent by God* (The Scripture Literature Press, Bangalore, 1937) pg. 93

And so they continued their labour, open to every believer in Christ, and wishing to always obey Scripture in all things. Below are some of the principles they followed as a Mission—

1st. We endeavour to carry on the work, taking the Scriptures alone as our guide in all things, believing that the Lord has given us in His word ample provision and direction not only for our personal salvation and growth in grace, but for our guidance also in all matters concerning the Church, which is His Body: 2 Tim. iii. 15-17; Eph. v. 25-27.

2nd. We believe the preaching of Christ crucified and risen to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, I Cor. i. 17-31; and we receive all who love Him and seek to obey His commandments: Rom. xv. 7; 1 John iii. 23, 14.

3rd. We have no society or association to look to for assistance, but we do not want [i. e. we are not in need], for we trust in the loving providence of our Heavenly Father, who has hitherto abundantly supplied all our needs: Luke xii. 22-30. At times undoubtedly He has been fit to try our faith and patience, but that is no “strange thing,” and these have always been seasons of much spiritual blessing.¹⁶⁰

And below is an account of their labour in the Gospel—

“George Beer and William Bowden reached out to neighbouring towns and villages, going into the bazaars with tracts and engaging the Indians in conversation. When the Beers subsequently move to Masulipatam, the Bowdens moved to Palakol, then the largest town in the Godavari delta area and a busy trading district with a large weekly market. William Bowden preached regularly on the streets. The Saturday market, attended by hundreds from the surrounding country-side, afforded unrivalled opportunities for evangelism. It

¹⁶⁰ *The Missionary Conference: South India and Ceylon, 1879, Volume II* (Addison & Co., Madras, 1880) pg. 277

was six years, however, before the first convert was gained...The first convert was Achoma, an outcaste, the former concubine of a European. She opened her house to women and many were won for the Lord. Among the caste Hindus, also, many believed and were baptized. When Peter, the first such, was baptized publicly in the river, he consigned his gold *lingakaya* (a charm worn by worshippers of Siva) to the waters. His descendants have provided preachers and teacher to the assemblies. Many others were baptized in 1842, the beginning of a church in Palakol.”¹⁶¹

And so they continued in their faithful labour, and the number of converts continued to grow. After their death their sons carried on where they left off. In 1881 the Mission was listed as a private and independent mission with the name as the Godavery Delta Mission by the Methodist Episcopal Church Press publication of a Missionary Directory of all missions in India. The following is their record of the Mission—

“The idea of this Mission originated with the late Mr. A.N. Groves, who, returning to England from India about 1834, induced Messrs. William Bowden and George Beer to come to India and labor among the Telugus. They arrived at Masulipatam in August 1836, and in 1837 began the Mission at Narsapur. They continued preaching and teaching six years before the first convert was gained. There has been a gradual increase in the number of converts since. Mr. Beer died in 1853 and Mr. Bowden, in 1876: they have been succeeded by their sons. An Anglo-vernacular school has been established at Narsapur: also a Boarding-school. There are several village schools. A monthly Telnga newspaper is conducted by one of the missionaries. The statistics are about the same as in 1871 -.

¹⁶¹ Fredk. A. Tatford, *That the World May Know, Vol. 3, The Challenge of India* (Echoes of Service, Bath, 1983) pg. 96

There are six “European missionaries (unordained); 1,090 Native Christians: 350 communicants.”¹⁶²

And so, because of the faithful labour of those very first missionaries in the Godavari Delta, their labour was not in vain; it has borne much fruit over the years as each new generation takes up their work. By some estimates there are now upward to three hundred Godavari Delta Mission Churches. Truly, our Lord’s saying is true, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

As for A. N. Groves, he continued on with his desire to help all missionaries he came into contact with throughout India, regardless of their denominational backgrounds. His whole purpose was to bring the Gospel to souls in need of the love and forgiveness of God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he first arrived at India he recorded for us a record of his burden in his journal. It was published after his death by his wife and in it she related the following excerpt from his journal—

“Mr. Groves placed before his friend his own objects, and his thoughts in connection with the Lord’s work. His favourite idea at this time was to select a band of devoted men, ready not only to preach Christ fully, but to follow Him in a self-sacrificing course, and if need be to labour with their hands for their own support; and the sphere of service which he had in view was an immense district on the Eastern coast, then entirely without a missionary. He found some in India who seemed ready to assist him; he expected the willing services of his fellow-workers at Bagdad, and had heard of

¹⁶² B. H. Badley, *Indian Missionary Directory and Memorial Volume* (Methodist Episcopal Church Press, Lucknow, 1881) pg. 228

others in Europe, whom he resolved to go in search of; therefore after a stay of only two days in Calcutta, he went to Patna to enlist the services, or at least the sympathies, of Mr. Start, visiting the Serampore mission and sundry others by the way; and shortly after his return to Calcutta, he set out on his voyage homeward."

"Never was there a more important moment than the present for India; up to this time everything in the Church has been as free as our hearts could wish...but now the Church of England is seeking to extend its power, and the Independents and Methodists are seeking to enclose their little flocks. My object in India is two-fold, to try to check the operation of these exclusive systems, by showing in the Christian Church they are not necessary for all that is holy and moral; and to try and impress upon every member of Christ's body that he has some ministry given him for the body's edification, and instead of depressing, encouraging each one to come forward and serve the Lord. I have it much at heart, should the Lord spare me, to form a Church on these principles; and my earnest desire is to re-model the whole plan of Missionary operations, so as to bring them to the simple standard of God's word. The encouragement the Lord has given me is great, beyond all I could have hoped; I cannot tell you how lovingly I have been received, not by one party only, but by all. I cannot but believe I am called to service in this country. I have encouraged others to remain faithful to the Lord in their work, and shall I run away? I have wished them to live on little, and shall I retire from the scene, and not share their burden with them and show them how? I have desired the dear Church in India to love each other, and to know no distinctions, and shall I not dwell here, and practise what I preach? My full conviction is that the testimony of Jesus is being published in these lands, and will be, and that the first fruits will be gathered."

And so, upon his return to India he continued to do the work of the Lord, ministering among various Churches, whenever possible, and faithfully laboring in the fields white unto harvest that was India. He traveled far and wide throughout India, and even visited Ceylon; however, most of his labour was in Madras and the surrounding area. Eventually he settled down in Chittoor, from which he made monthly

missionary tours to surrounding areas with the Gospel, such as Vellore and Arcot; he also took the Gospel west toward Bangalore, and through his co-workers down towards Tiruchchirappalli, as well as down to Tinnevely.

Finally, if we might now return from the missionary field to those brethren in England, there also was a revival of Gospel witness throughout many of those Assemblies established in both England and Ireland. In fact, as we already said, it was so common for believers to preach the Gospel in the surrounding countryside and villages outside of Plymouth, that those living in the areas would point to the believers from Plymouth sharing the good news and say, “Those are the brethren from Plymouth,” giving rise to the name they refuse to accept even to this day, the “Plymouth Brethren.”

Of course, we could go on as the Gospel witness was taken up by other brethren in every location where they might gather, eventually leading to that great revival of 1859, the revival with which we began this book, quoting from those brethren evangelists Henry Moorhouse, J. Denham Smith, and John Hambleton.

We could go on and speak of other evangelists and missionaries arising out of the brethren movement, such as Donald Munro and Donald Ross in Canada, F. S. Arnot in Central Africa, along with Dan Crawford, but more than enough has been said to demonstrate that with the brethren movement also, as with the Methodist movement before them, and before them the Baptist movement, following the English and Scottish Reformation, along with the European Reformation on the continent, and long before them all, the Wycliffe Movement; not only has there always been a recovery of truth in revival, but there has also always been a

great revival of witness for Christ! May such revivals continue, dear Lord until you come! Maranatha, Amen.

Concluding Thoughts

And so, yes, to answer the second question in the title of this book, brethren should pray for revival and each subsequent generation should pray for revival until the Lord returns. Revival is God's chosen method of solving problems in His Church, so that the Church might be pleasing to Him who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands (Rev. 1:11-13, 20). Why?— Because only His life can bring solutions that will last unto eternity, being the gold, silver, and precious stones, rather than the solutions of human wisdom and natural talent, being the wood, hay and stubble that will be judged and burnt up in the end (I Cor.3:10-23). So whether we call it a renewing, a recovery, restoring, reformation, or quickening, revival is always the answer for the life of the Church.

It is unfortunate that the word “revival” has become neglected in the 21st century by many Christians, because the word “revival,” indeed, is a Biblical word that was given to us by God in Ezra 9:8 (NKJV). The word was used for the revival that came to the remnant of Israel that had returned from captivity, and by way of an example, according to I Cor. 10:11, it is used as a type for the Church, bespeaking the revival that will come from the Lord to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. It becomes a model for believers who have been quickened by the Spirit of God through the Word of God, which is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edge sword, whereby the power of Christ's resurrection is manifested in the lives of those who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds.

Perhaps, part of the reason the word *revival* is being neglected by some today, is because some Christians, and it seems in some cases, by those who call themselves Christians (whether they are or not, only God knows), have misused the

word, calling what they do “revivals,” along with what they call miracles and great wonders, when in reality all they are doing is garnering financial support for themselves and/or their ministries. Instead of returning God’s people to the unchanging and eternal Word of God, and instead of contending for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints, they are promoting “strange doctrines” to the detriment of the Christians who are taken in by their deception.

Rather than seeking to build up Christ’s kingdom, such revivals are being used by men to build up their own little kingdoms. They know that if they call it a revival, they will gain the awe of the saints, especially when God in His mercy still saves souls, if and when, the Gospel is preached, even if it is preached in pretense, and selfish ambition—Phil. 1:14-18 (i.e. if, indeed, the Gospel is truly preached at all!)

We must remember if Scriptures are spoken or read, even by an insincere or carnal Christian, it can still be used by God to save a soul, for, as Paul wrote in Rom. 10:17, “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”

As such, since God’s Word can bring faith to those in need of salvation, Paul rejoices whenever the Gospel is preached, even by those who might wish to cause him harm (Phil. 1:14-18). God’s love is so much greater than our pettiness, selfishness, and jealousies. Even a quotation of a single verse such as John 3:16 can be used by the Holy Spirit to save a lost soul.

Therefore, false revivals are a reality, but God is greater than those who promote false revivals, and we should not let that stop us for praying that God will revive His people, for true revivals will always be hindered by adversaries. Unfortunately, this has occurred over and over throughout Church history.

We should not forget the enemy of our souls always tries to hinder the real work of God. The apostle Paul once

said, “For a great door is opened to me and an effectual one, and the adversaries many” (1 Cor. 16:9 Darby). Adversaries will always be present, for a revival of the Holy Spirit brings about repentance to the Church; it brings life to backsliding Christians; it brings recovery of truth that has been obscured by human traditions, and it brings a renewed witness to lost souls. All these things Satan hates

It was that way in Paul’s day, in the beginning of this dispensation, and it is no different in our day, near the end of this dispensation.

Let us consider what R. A. Torrey, who worked closely together with D. L. Moody, once said in regard to *true* revivals, and what he calls, *spurious* revivals.

“Thoughtful ministers and Christians everywhere are talking about a revival, expecting a revival, and, best of all, praying for a revival. There seems to be little doubt that a revival of some kind is coming, **but the important question is, ‘What kind of a revival will it be?’** Will it be a true revival, sent of God because His people have met the conditions that make it possible for God to work with power, **or will it be a spurious revival gotten up by the arts and devices of man?**”

A business man who is in touch with religious movements in all parts of the country said to me recently, ‘There is little doubt that a revival of some kind is coming, and the revival that is coming will be either the greatest blessing or the greatest curse that has ever visited the church of Christ.’

There are many who are trying to promote a revival by pushing...[false] doctrines that...are in reality as old as the early heresies that crept into the church. They have never had power in the past to produce conviction of sin, conversion or regeneration...”

163

¹⁶³ R. A. Torrey, ed., *How to Promote & Conduct a Successful Revival: With Suggestive Outlines* (Fleming H. Revell Company, Chicago, 1901) pg. 5

Or, let us consider the wise words of the brethren evangelist John Hambleton, as written in a letter to his fellows Christians during the 1859 Revival—

“Dear Brethren:—Lest Satan should get an advantage of you, or that your good should give occasion to others to speak evil of you, permit me to give a little advice as a friend and brother in the Lord. A copy of a placard has been put into my hands announcing meetings by a band of brethren calling themselves the “Glory Band,” with several names and old professional habits as dog-fighters, prize-fighters, navvies, etc., etc.

“Knowing some of you, my dear brethren, that your love to Jesus is great, but that your knowledge is yet very weak, permit me to caution you against the enemy of your souls, for the depths of Satan are as yet unknown to you. It is good always to be zealous in the work of the Lord, but judgment and prudence are necessary in all things we do as children of God. It is very cheering to the hearts of the Lord's people to hear of the great blessing accomplished by the preaching of Christ crucified, in turning drunkards, dog-fighters, prize-fighters, gamblers, etc., from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; but, now that you are saved, beware lest Satan should exalt your flesh, that, instead of growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he should so puff you up as to cause you to glory in your shame, that is, because you were drunkards, dog-fighters, race-goers, gamblers, etc.

“Now, dear brethren, my heart's desire for your own sakes, and the honor and glory of God is that you forget those things which are behind, and press forward to those glorious things in Jesus which are before.

“To do this, you must come together quietly for prayer and meditation on the Word of God before going out amongst the multitude. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This will give ballast to your walk and work, in and for the Lord; otherwise you will be like a ship in a gale, without weight in her hold to keep her steady. Study the two Epistles of Paul to Timothy well, and each of the other epistles in turn. Get them thoroughly digested in your souls, waiting on the Lord continually, and never permitting the old-Adam flesh to go

before God's Holy Spirit, either in excitement on the one hand or dead formality on the other. The narrow path lies between these two, and he who walks therein hearkens to the voice of 'Jesus only' in the word of Scripture, 'This is the, way walk ye in it;' and while you are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, beware of Satan's temptations, causing you to serve yourself; for Jesus says, 'If any man come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'

“May He, by his blessed Spirit, dear brethren, cause you so to walk and grow in grace, that you may, by your good conversation, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and forget the things of former days, yea, even in the mention of them, for we were all guilty of every lust, and evil things in our wicked hearts, of which now the very thought and mention ought to make us blush with shame. Brethren, there are heavenly glories awaiting us. Let us contemplate these things, and grow daily more like our heavenly Lord Jesus, meek and lowly in heart.” (Read Col. iii)

Yours in Jesus only,

John Hambleton”¹⁶⁴

And finally, in speaking of the same 1859 Revival, let us take to heart the words of J. G. Bellett, who was from that first gathering of brethren meeting together in the name of the Lord in Dublin—

“For the Lord has ever had both His ordinary and His extraordinary seasons, in the course of His dispensations; **and such extraordinary seasons may be well called “revivals.”** Such were the days of Samuel and Jehoshaphat, of Hezekiah and of Josiah, of Ezra and of Nehemiah likewise. His way, or form, or character of acting then, as by His Spirit in the midst of His people, was marked and peculiar, thus making the moment peculiar... And again I say, such I believe to be the present [speaking of the 1859 Revival]. It may be but short--and that is according to precedent for the energies

¹⁶⁴ George C. Needham , *Recollections of Henry Moorhouse, Evangelist* (F. H. Revell, Chicago, 1881) pg. 96-98

which signalized days of revival in Israel, whether while under their own Kings, or after their return from Babylon, were but passing. I doubt not that some or much of what has been seen of late, in places where there has been remarkable awakening of souls, may have come from the force of sympathy—from the infirmity of nature—from the acts and practicing of men likewise, and surely, I may add, from the direct power of the enemy; for as to this last, we are not ignorant of his devices. He will, at times, transform himself into an angel of light, and make his ministers, ministers of righteousness. At times, also, he will combine with an energy of God, for the purpose of neutralizing it, or bringing it into question and discredit.... Whatever measure of these things may be in the present manifestation, still this leaves the work itself as God's work, of which I have no doubt. Surely it bears upon it the broad seal of His own precious power. We ought to have a heart for such a time... **While, however, saying this, and claiming the heart as well as the judgment and conviction for this present work of God, I would also say, 'We are not to surrender what we have of God's truth, or any part of it, to it.' We are 'not' to treat it as we would Scripture. It is not authority, as inspiration is. We are to judge it rather than to bow to it. It may be mixed with what is of man; and Satan, we know, and as we have before said, will be busy when God, in grace, is active...** And thus is it to be with us at this time. Let, us take our delight in this fresh work, get blessing to ourselves out of it, be thankful on the behalf of thousands for it; but let us still hold fast that which we have of God from His word, and which, perhaps, none of these thousands have. For this work, though precious work of God, His own quickening, illuminating, gladdening virtue in sinners like ourselves, again I say, is not authority. It is not as scripture or inspiration. God's way, already made known in His word, will take its way, and our eye must not be diverted. We may pray that this gracious power of the Spirit, which is now abroad, may do a plenteous work everywhere; but we are to remember the apostle's word to Timothy, 'Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast

known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.””¹⁶⁵

And so, beloved, we should not let the enemy of our souls, or unsaved adversaries, or, in some cases, carnal Christians, who use what they call *revivals* for their own aggrandizement, ever hinder us from seeking and praying for a true and Biblical revival in every Assembly—yea, for a true and Biblical revival in every Church, in every gathering of the saints throughout the world—all so that the Truth of God’s Word will ever be maintained, so that the Faith, once and for all delivered to the saints, will ever be held fast in our hearts, so that the power of Christ’s resurrection will ever be manifested, and so that the witness of the Gospel will go out into all the world in the demonstration and power of the Spirit, where believers will preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

May every generation of believers be faithful to declare these truths to the next generation.

Psalm 71:18-20 “And even when *I am* old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, **Until I declare Thy strength to *this* generation, Thy power to all who are to come.** ¹⁹ For Thy righteousness, O God, *reaches* to the heavens, Thou who hast done great things; O God, who is like Thee? ²⁰ Thou, who hast shown me many troubles and distresses, **Wilt revive me again,** And wilt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. (NASB)

Habakkuk 3:2 O LORD, I have heard your speech *and* was afraid; O LORD, **revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known;** in wrath remember mercy. (NKJV)

And so, whenever a Church finds their numbers dwindling, or when they notice there is a sense of

¹⁶⁵ John Gifford Bellett, *A Few Words on the Present Revival* (BibleTruthPublishers.com, Addison, Il) pg. 13-15, 17

hopelessness or weariness of spirit, or when they see problems arising (i.e. as long as the Church is faithfully following the Word of God and being obedient to their Head, Christ Jesus the Lord), they should not seek to change their ways, or change those New Testament Assembly principles they have followed, which some say have become old fashioned, or out of date, or not in line with the changing social mores of the world. Rather they should pray for the revival of the Holy Spirit. They should seek to be renewed in the spirit of their mind (Eph. 4:23). Indeed, did not Paul command the Church to never be conformed to the world (i.e. the age we live in), but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2)? Indeed he did!

Therefore, when believers in an Assembly find their numbers dwindling, or problems arising, they should first present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God and go to Him in prayer. They should humble themselves before Him and ask for His reviving power, so that His Church will please Him in all ways and will faithfully proclaim Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, so that people without might be mightily saved, and so His Church will become a place where people will come, not because they can find in the Church the ways of the world, wherein they are made to feel comfortable, but will find a Church where they come because they wish to leave the world behind with those things that made them comfortable!

You see, beloved, the answer to our problems and dwindling numbers is not new methods. The answer is not utilizing worldly means to draw people to hear the Gospel. The answer is not worldly music filled with the rhythm and beat of the world, along with strobing lights meant to visually excite and attract people to come to Church to hear the Gospel.

Such worldly means should not be used to draw people to hear Christ, for people will end up trusting in such

things after they are saved. Why?—simply because those things are associated with something that is very dear to them, i.e. their salvation. Paul speaks of this in I Cor. 2:4-5—

I Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching *were not with persuasive words of human wisdom*, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ **that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men** but in the power of God. NKJV

It is good that people were saved? Yes, of course. But those people could have also been saved by using the apostolic means, i.e. the power of the Spirit, which in turn will help them in their subsequent Christian life.

Using worldly means to draw people to Christ will not hinder people from being saved, but it will hinder their subsequent spiritual growth, for Paul says one's faith will remain in the means that were used to bring them to the Gospel, whether it be the wisdom of man, as Paul says, or other worldly means that are used today.

Would it not be better to trust that Christ will draw people to Himself in answer to our prayers? A revival of trust in the promise of Christ and His Word is always the answer. He is the One who draws people to Himself, and the Word of God is that which will bring faith. It has always been so and it will always be!

John 12:32 “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” NASB

The answer to problems in Assemblies is not worship that is made to be sensual, appealing to one's senses, but rather worship that is spiritual. The answer will always be a revival of worship in Spirit and Truth, for the Holy Spirit moves in the heart of every believer in Christ to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise to God, as a chosen generation

and royal priesthood. And it will be in Truth, for the Word of God is Truth, being forever settled in Heaven.

Worship must be by both, for without Truth, one can be led away to carnal worship where self is magnified, and where worship is judged by how exciting it is, or how it might makes us feel, rather than how it makes our Lord feel. But equally, without the Spirit (meaning the fullness of the Holy Spirit), one can be led away into spiritual atrophy, i.e. into lifeless dogma and empty orthodoxy.

R. A. Torrey, who was used by God in many revivals, once spoke succinctly of this balance of the Spirit and of the Truth of God's Word—

“There are a great many people to-day who magnify the Spirit of God **and neglect the Word**. What is the result? Fanaticism, enthusiasm, wild-fire; nothing permanent, nothing abiding, in it. And you will find other people who magnify the Word of God **and neglect the living Spirit**. What is the result—dead orthodoxy. And there is nothing in the world so dead as dead orthodoxy... While it is necessary that we be filled with the Holy Ghost, as you were told yesterday, if you are to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and to have any power through the Holy Ghost, you must be full of the Word of God.”¹⁶⁶

Revival will always maintain this proper balance, convicting our hearts of loving other things, when Christ is not our first love, convicting our hearts of not walking by faith in the promises of God, when we utilize the things and wisdom of the world in doing God's work, thus making us lukewarm. And revival will always fill us with the Blessed Holy Spirit of God whereby Christ is glorified and God's life can transform us by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2),

¹⁶⁶ William R. Moody, Delavan L. Pierson, eds., *Northfield Echoes, Volume III: A Report on the Northfield Conferences for 1896* (E. S. Rastall, Northfield, 1896) Pg. 133

ever filling us with His Word, and manifesting through us the power of our Lord's resurrection, so that through us the Gospel might go forth in the demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit unto a dying world so desperately in need of forgiveness and salvation.

Perhaps, we might close with the comment by J. G. Bellett that we provided in the beginning of this exhortation—"For the Lord has ever had both His ordinary and His extraordinary seasons, in the course of His dispensations; and such extraordinary seasons may be well called "revivals." Beloved, revivals have always been God's solution for those times when the Church falters in her mission.

May it be so today, for there is such a need for a revival of truth within Churches, everywhere, and a great need for a revival of witness to the world, everywhere, where the message of the Church, in the demonstration and power of the Spirit, is—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—not all those other things that have replaced Him in the witness of the Church to the world today. May it be so, dear Lord. That is our prayer today. Amen.

"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.
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."

Habakkuk 3:1-2

Books from Assembly Bookshelf

Anthony Norris Groves

On the Nature of Christian Influence

George Cutting

Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment

B. P. Harris

Bearing Witness to the Original Principles of the Early Brethren:
As Found in a Letter Written by A. N. Groves to J. N. Darby in
1836 (Updated Version)

Church Principles of the New Testament, Vol. I

Church Principles of the New Testament, Vol. II

Our Worship is Important

Press on to Spirituality

Studies in the Usage of the Greek Word *Μονογενής*

The Christian and Difficult Times in the 21st Century

Understanding the Trinity

Upon this Rock: An Exposition of the Glories of Christ in

Matthew 16:13-18, Along with the Foundation of the Faith

The Gospel According to Matthew: Notes and Comments, Part I

The Gospel According to Matthew: Notes and Comments, Part II

Sermon on the Mount: An In Depth Study

What is Biblical Discipleship?

**If one would like to freely download these books in digital
format, they are available at www.silicabiblechapel.com**

*Special thanks to my daughter Heather who helped in proof-reading
and correcting this manuscript. May the Lord richly bless her for
her continued assistance.*

About the author:

B. P. Harris is an elder in the Church that meets in The Bible Chapel in Sacramento, CA. He was saved at a young age in 1959 at Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, CA, during the ministry of J. Vernon McGee, and now resides in Northern California where he has been happily married for over 39 years.

