

History of Revival (1740-1851), 4

by Ian Murray

This sermon explores the life and ministry of Thomas Chalmers, a Scottish evangelist who played a key role in the Evangelical Revival of the 19th century.

Duration: 57:08

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 85:6, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:14, Ephesians 5:15-16, 1 Timothy 4:12

Topics: "Church History", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares two authors and their books that he recommends. The first author is Gacy Ryle, who wrote a book called 'Five Christian Leaders.' The book provides a detailed account of the revivals that took place in the 18th century in the British Isles. It explores the lives of the leaders and draws out practical lessons from these revivals. The speaker strongly urges the audience to obtain this book. The second author mentioned is Robert Murray McChain, whose memoir by Andrew Boner is recommended. The speaker mentions that McChain's sermons are also available and highly regarded.

Transcript

I begin this morning by drawing your attention to two authors. The first, Gacy Ryle, and his book, Five Christian Leaders. This is an account of many of the revivals of the 18th century that took place in the British Isles.

And I'm sure it is the best account which you can read in this compass, or perhaps in any compass, of those revivals. He gives you the lives of the leaders, and then he draws out many of the practical lessons. And I can't urge you too strongly to obtain this little book, Five Christian Leaders, by Gacy Ryle, at \$1.15. And there are plenty of copies, I think, available.

The second author, I'm sure, is a name known to many of you, perhaps to all, Robert Murray McChane. His memoir by Andrew Bonner, another paperback, and a book that you have in the States and we don't have in England, The Sermons of Robert Murray McChane. Some years ago we sent over quite a number to Carlisle, and we have sold them out in Britain, and you still have a stock, so you can buy this.

The Sermons of Robert Murray McChane. Now that leads me into the subject that is before us this morning. I want to speak to you on the Evangelical revival that took place in Scotland in the last century, in the years 1830 and the early 1840s.

And I do this for several reasons. One is because, as I've just mentioned, there is the memoir of McChane, which is such an influential book, if I could but prevail upon those that have not yet read McChane's life to read it, well that would be more than enough as it were this morning. It was a turning point in my own life, I believe, when this book was put into my hands.

It was in rather strange circumstances. I was on the other side of the world in the Far East, and I went shopping one day, and in my shopping came across this Christian bookshop and was urgently persuaded by the Christian woman who opened this shop to buy McChane's memoir. I did, and as I say, it became in many ways a turning point in my whole life.

I was simply staggered that McChane wasn't known amongst Christians. I went back to the chaplain of our regiment, it was a Scottish regiment, and I was a young Christian and not very prudent perhaps in those days, and I was full of zeal, and I spoke to him about McChane, and I could see the man sort of looked blank, and then he sort of didn't want to reveal his ignorance, and he said, oh yes, he said, he was a saintly old man, he said. Well, those of you who didn't laugh, McChane died at the age of 29, so he didn't know very much about it.

Well, McChane was only one of several hundreds of similar men upon whom the unction of the spirit rested in such power in those days. He was only one of many. We have spoken a lot this week of the Alexander family, and let me just tell you an incident when James Wattle Alexander went over from New York to Scotland in 1850, and he was amongst these men who, in the year 1843, the evangelicals in Scotland, almost all of them, had been formed into the Free Church of Scotland, and J. W. Alexander was visiting amongst these people, and he wrote from Glasgow in 1851, these few days in Scotland have shown me a permanent revival of religion, such as proves to me that God has a favour to his covenanting people.

The preciousness of it is that religion is founded on chapter and verse, free from outcry and sanctimony, but so courageous, active and tender that I am as certain as I am writing these lines that I am among the best people on earth. A thousand times have I said to myself, oh, if my father could just for one hour hear these prayers and observe these fruits of unadulterated Calvinistic seed, and I was reminded of those words in our prayer meeting this morning, and earlier this week, if these men from the past could be with us in these times of prayer, I believe that Alexander would have said the same thing. It was then a period of great revival, and I must simply this morning try to pick out one of the men who was used to prepare the way for the revival, and then to speak to you a little on the revival itself, and I hope to get enough time to go into the lessons which we may draw from it.

The man then who was perhaps more than any other used to prepare the way was a man by the name of Thomas Chalmers, and he was born in a little seaport in the county of Fife, in Scotland, in the year 1780. At the time he was born, the church was at about her lowest ebb since the Reformation. Let me remind you in a word of an important fact in Scottish church history.

In the late 17th century, after the Puritan period, after the death of men like Samuel Rutherford and David Dixon, after that period there was severe persecution which lasted for about 28 years, and in that persecution many hundreds of men and of women also were put to death for the gospel. You can see in Edinburgh today the spot where many ministers were executed at that time. That caused a great separation amongst those who professed the gospel.

There were some who compromised with the civil power who were the persecuting arm. There were others who fled to the hills and the mountains and who lived there and sometimes died there. There was this great separation.

Now when the persecution ended in the year 1688, those who had compromised unhappily were too often allowed to remain in the national church. There was just the one national Presbyterian Church of Scotland. And these men instead of being put out of their churches were allowed to remain.

They gave of course lip service to the confession of faith but they did not know how to preach it and they became a dead weight in the church. And as the years went by, their numbers instead of decreasing, increased. The next thing that influenced the situation was an act of parliament in the year 1712 by which the right of congregations to appoint, to elect their own ministers was taken from them.

The act of patronage as it was called gave to patrons the right to induct ministers into congregations. Now these patrons were generally the landowners, the aristocracy and the people upon whose land these church buildings were erected. They were made patrons.

I was thinking only this morning as I reflected on this how wonderfully God overrules evil for good. Because some of the greatest men of the 18th century, some of the leaders here in America, men like Witherspoon and in other parts of the world, they came to America and they came to England and to other parts because patronage shut churches to them in Scotland. There were cases where there were evangelical congregations and they could not appoint an evangelical minister.

And as I say then some of the best of these men were scattered across the earth. It certainly is an instance of God overruling evil for good. Yet it was a great evil for year after year in many areas there was no gospel preaching at all.

At the end of the 18th century God raised up Robert and James Haldane whose names I'm sure you know. They began to itinerate and they discovered vast areas of the north of Scotland where the gospel had not been heard for a long time. When James Haldane preached in Orkney which is an island off the coast of Scotland he met a man of 92 years of age who said how nearly 80 years before he had prayed that God would send the gospel to that part of Scotland.

So during the whole of the 18th century with some exceptions about which I cannot speak today but you will find a book on the exceptions on the bookstore on the great revival at Cambuslang in 1742 but with exceptions the general condition of the country was one of deterioration and this was the situation when Chalmers was born. Let me just give you perhaps just an illustration or two to show you the kind of thing. One of the men who was raised up in the end of the 18th century I mustn't even trouble you with his name when he was born his parents took him to the minister for baptism.

The minister was about to go out on a shooting expedition couldn't spare time for any service but he offered and he performed the baptism by cracking the ice with the butt of his rifle and applying the water to this little babe. The babe later became a great evangelist. And when he was a grown man and an evangelist he preached in a parish called Glenelg on the west of Scotland and after the service was over the minister who was a moderate said to him he said that was a very good sermon I suppose but it was very unsuitable here for you spoke all day to sinners and I know only one in all my parish.

Well I've used the word moderate and that is the label that really was taken by these men themselves. They denied experimental religion. They were sometimes partly orthodox but to give you the words of Alexander Duff he says they denied the peculiarities of the gospel.

There was no savour and unction of divine grace. Instead of the power and pathos of earnest gospel invitations and appeals there were substituted cold pretenses of academic learning that froze the sympathies of the human heart. They were really just moralists without the supernatural, the moderates and they controlled the church at the time when Chalmers was born.

When he was born as I say in the year 1780 when he was 15 he went to the University of St. Andrews which was quite nearby and at the age of 19 he was licensed to preach the gospel. His father was a godly man and a Christian but when Chalmers went to St. Andrews he was completely carried away by the moderatism and by the prevailing religion of that place. He says St. Andrews was at this time overrun with moderatism under the chilling influences of which we inhaled not a distaste only but a positive contempt for all that is properly and peculiarly gospel.

One day there was a theological lecture where Chalmers was at and the boy sitting beside him a boy by the name of William Burns I'd like you to remember that name, William Burns the lecture happened to be on the doctrine of election and when the lecture was over Chalmers turned to this other boy and he said to him you are the only Calvinist that I know in St. Andrews and he invited this boy to come home and to meet his father who he said would agree with him but otherwise there wasn't a single person known to Chalmers in St. Andrews who believed what was still the actual confession of the church. So Chalmers went into the ministry in the year 1802 with no experience of the power of the gospel and indeed no gospel to preach. The truth is he was really a scientist all his time and interest went into studying chemistry and mathematics and physics and in these areas he was quite brilliant.

Let me give you one example of this. Chalmers biography was published in the year 1850 and when it was published the writer of this biography, a man by the name of Hanna says what an extraordinary thing it was that when Chalmers went to his manse in Fife 50 years, nearly 50 years before he had installed gas pipes in the house because he was certain that gas was going to be the means of power and lighting in the future. Well in 1850 that had not taken place and the biographer thought it was just an oddity of Chalmers but of course Chalmers was I suppose 60 or 70 years ahead of other people.

He had gas piping in his house, it was never used but this was the sort of man he was. Well I think that is quite extraordinary. You would see him on an evening leaving his manse to go and give an address in another church he would not be going with his bible but on the back of his horse he had test tubes and bottles of acid and he would actually give these country folk demonstrations in chemistry and this sort of thing.

Well all the time as he confessed later he was seeking a reputation in the world. There is no question about his brilliance. He was a good speaker and by the time, by the year 1808 when he had been in the ministry for about 7 years he was determined to get to London and to find some publisher who would publish something that he wrote and he was ready to go in the month of July 1808 when something happened which stopped him travelling.

He had a dear sister in Amstrotte which was quite near his church, I didn't tell you his church was in Kilmanny, also in Fife but his sister in the month of August took seriously ill and within a matter of weeks she was dead. The next year death came even nearer to Chalmers. Again in the, about the middle of the

summer news was sent to him that an uncle had died suddenly.

This man was apparently a Christian he was found kneeling in the act of prayer in his kitchen and dead upon his knees. Chalmers was sent for and went of course he was touched for the man had evidently been kind to him as a boy but on his way back from this house where his uncle had died he had to ride through the kind of rain that we had earlier this morning he had to ride some 20 or 30 miles he was drenched I think his health was already somewhat undermined the result was that for 3 months his life hung in the balance he never left his room and a revolution by the spirit of God began in his thinking.

He opened his Bible afresh for the first time in his life he began to try to pray and we have recorded in his diary something of the prayers that he began to utter at this time let me give you one Oh God he said fit, fitter, poor, dark, ignorant and wandering creature to be a minister of thy word in the next year 1810 he was able to leave his home and the people of Kilmanny saw him coming to the church not as they had seen him before but muffled up in a big coat and a scarf around his neck and in the pulpit preaching not on morality not on the themes which had occupied the few minutes that he had given previously but preaching on the magnitude of eternity on the brevity of time preaching in a way that men had not heard him ever preach before and in those years 1810, 1811 Thomas Chalmers became a new preacher in Christ he says I had a more intimate communion with God in solitary prayer than I ever felt before my sentiment was a total an unreserved and a secure dependence on Christ the Saviour now I have to resist the temptation to talk to you about his preaching and his ministry but it was as you can believe greatly used two men were coming out of his church one day they walked in silence down the road and at last one said to the other he said did you feel anything particularly in church today?

I never felt myself to be a lost sinner until the day when I was listening to that sermon it's very strange replied his companion it was just the same with me well Chalmers began to make evangelical friends Andrew Fuller came up from England and stayed in his manse a friend of William Carey other contacts were made and the word went round that Chalmers the scientist the philosopher had become an evangelical Christian the moderates laughed they nicknamed him mad Chalmers and the evangelicals of course gave praise and thanks to God well passing on then because time is against me passing on Chalmers left Fife and went to the city of Glasgow beginning his work there about the year 1814 and continuing until 1823 great numbers attended his preaching there was great opposition there were many

conversions and the evangelical faith was heard of as it had not been heard of in Glasgow for some long time and in his diary we find these words as Chalmers was looking to God to revive the church thy blessing and thy spirit O Lord beyond this parish and neighbourhood O that a day of power and of refreshing were to come amongst them I implore thy spirit on behalf of this county O may its ministers be turned to the Lord send them pastors according to thine own heart stay not thine arm O God make it bare come forth in the might of thine all subduing spirit and reveal Christ in many hearts for his sake well just as Chalmers was in the midst of this great work in Glasgow or so it seemed to those who observed he surprised everyone by taking an appointment as professor of moral philosophy in

St Andrews University in the year 1823 and he did that because he believed with all his heart that a change in the churches was to be brought about by a change in the pulpit and a change in the pulpit had to be effected by a changed way of training then for the ministry of the gospel and so he believed that God had led him and surely he had to spend the rest of his life in training other men for the ministry so he went first to St Andrews he was there from 1823 to 1828 and from 1828 he went to his the greatest work of his life the professorship of theology in the University of Edinburgh there are many accounts of the first lecture

which Chalmers gave in Edinburgh it was a winter's morning November 1828 Edinburgh was swept with snow the lecture was to be given at 11 o'clock in the morning

and the hall was crowded by nine the police even had to be called to contain the crowd and the subject of Chalmers lecture the subject was the effect of the right study of theology and Chalmers great theme that morning was to show that the learning of the truth and the study of the truth was in order to spiritual and moral transformation and one of the men that was present was William Cunningham a student and when Cunningham left the lecture hall that morning he went to his room and he wrote in his diary it is impossible not to indulge the hope that the time to favour our Zion yea the set time is come well in the next decade the 1830's boys who had been school boys in the 1820's men like McChane and Andrew Boner and Alexander Somerville, George Smeaton many others, these young men in

their late teens and early twenties they became students under Chalmers let me just give you as I've tried to summarise them the main lessons which Chalmers impressed upon his divinity students first of all that the governing principle upon which the strength of ministerial duties depend is regard for the approval of God he told them that if a minister lacks that principle his public work will be dominated by regard for himself and for the approbation of men but if we seek the approval of God then first of all Chalmers said we must be well assured ourselves that we have the saving and the sanctifying influences of the gospel in our own hearts our primary concern must be to see that God approves us and so he says by far the most effective ingredient of good preaching is the personal piety

of the preacher himself secondly he taught them that ministers and indeed all Christians should never rest satisfied without growth in personal holiness he says a great deal about this in his own diary advance the power and life of religion in my heart he prayed and he writes to a friend pray unceasingly for the progress of his work in your heart strike the high aim of being perfect even as God is perfect never let go your aspirations oh with what unceasing progress towards perfection should we be unable to advance did we cast all self-seeking and self-confidence away from us did we consent to be altogether guided by his strength and be altogether accepted in Christ's pure and unstoppable righteousness his third principle that ministers must give themselves wholly to their true work now I

don't stop to elaborate that but it meant a great deal in that day because ministers had become gentlemen, scholars literary men, gardeners there were many famous ministerial gardeners the professor of Greek in Edinburgh a little before this people said how did he get into the professorship of Greek we call it in Britain perhaps you do in America too the chair, the Greek chair in Edinburgh University, how did he get into the Greek chair well people said he fell into it out of an apple tree that is to say the man that spent his days in his garden and someone thought well it would be a nice honor to make him professor of Greek so he fell into the chair out of his apple tree well Chalmers spent a great deal of time teaching his students that they had to leave aside not only these things but

even such things as committee work and society work and a great deal of other work which took far too much of the time of ministers their entire time he said was to be disposable to the purposes to which the apostles gave themselves wholly that is the ministry of the word and prayer speaking of his own experience in Glasgow of all the duties that were laid on him and how he fought against them he says this I have set my face against and though I have a good deal of opposition yet I am persuaded that I have the solid countenance and approval of those who value the true objects of the Christian ministry fourthly then he taught his students that they must deal directly and personally with people with regard to the need of salvation they must press home arguments upon the conscience they must

yearn and plead and speak boldly Chalmers never forgot his own experience for seven years he says in Kilmanny he never spoke to a single person about their spiritual state once he became an evangelical he believed that it was not only his duty to preach from the pulpit but to speak to those with whom he had to do when he was in Glasgow he visited in one year eleven thousand homes himself short visits I admit but he was a great believer in visitation I move on then and I am beginning to leave Chalmers now and to come to the men that he trained in his vestry in Edinburgh on Saturday mornings he encouraged a group of students to meet they met for prayer and after prayer they went out into the poorer districts of Edinburgh two by two to visit and to call upon people and from this group about

twelve to twenty students from this group there came the leaders of revival in the next five and ten years one of them was of course McChane himself he first joined the group in 1834 and discovered as he says what embedded masses of human beings are huddled together unvisited by friend or minister well Chalmers was the leader of the church extension work of the Scottish church in his five years of office in the work of church extension some 222 new churches were built and into these churches went many of his own students a few months ago Mr.

Ernest Riesinger and Mr. Roger Irwin and myself made a pilgrimage to Dundee it was their suggestion it was not mine but we went to Dundee and we stood in one of these as it was then a new church that was opened in the year 1837 still very much as it was the church to which McChane was called St. Peter's Dundee it was a very moving experience and these young men who went into these churches went with a clear vision of the need of revival McChane's first sermon in St. Peter's was on the text the spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the gospel to the poor many of the texts that these men began their ministry with were on this note of revival and prayer for the spirit they maintained a prayer fellowship once a month they had a day for prayer, they were not always able to meet but on a particular day, sometimes a day varied it was often the first Monday of the month they gave much of that day to prayer and meditation and in between the month one of them would write a sort of circular letter encouraging the others to pray and sharing information Andrew Bonner for example writes in 1837 remember to observe he says these are concerted times of prayer and count it absolutely necessary to be often alone like Jacob at Jabbok until you can call your study penial for I have seen God face to face and to another ministerial friend he writes I often think of your prayer meetings is there any sign of the spirit poured out and so on there was then increasing prayer and this prayer of course was shared in by many older Christians now let me take up again for a moment the man who I mentioned as a boy sitting in the desk next to Chalmers in St.

Andrews William Burns he was a Christian and an evangelical and he spent his whole life in a little country parish called Killscythe about 12 miles from Glasgow he went there I suppose well early in the 19th century and there he stayed he saw no great blessing upon his ministry he preached faithfully, he taught his people he brought up a family and one of his sons was William Chalmers Burns W.C. Burns in the year 1839 McChain went to Palestine on a mission of enquiry to see whether they could begin missionary work there and while he was away this son of William Burns the son William Chalmers Burns was asked to occupy the pulpit of St.

Peter's Dundee which he did in the month of July W.C. Burns went through to help his father at Killscythe in the communion season in Scotland the communion season generally lasts about 5 days, begins on Thursday and concludes on Monday it's just an old tradition, tradition really I think which comes from the revivals of possibly even the 17th century there is preaching from Thursday through to Monday night the Thursday was a fast day, a day for self-examination on Friday the emphasis was on the marks of evidences of salvation there was experimental discussion and then over the weekend the Lord's Supper

was observed and on the Monday night there was further preaching by way of praise and thanksgiving now the communion had been held in Killscythe and there was an uncommon sense of God's help so much so that it was decided there would be a further service on the Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock and W.C.

Burns the young man was asked to preach well he preached that day the service was to have been in the marketplace in the open air but the day was wet so they met in the church and the service went on to 3 o'clock in the afternoon preaching and this is what happened Burns preached from the text thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power and as he preached it seemed as though the clouds of blessing were gathering over them and towards the conclusion of the sermon he spoke of the works of God's power in revival in former times and even as he spoke men said it appeared that the God of history had come to be present in their midst his father says the eyes of most of the audience were in tears and those who could observe the faces of the hearers expected half an hour before the scene which eventually followed when W.C.

Burns was at the height of his appeal speaking on the words no cross no crown, no self denial no salvation, no cross no crown then it was that the emotions of the audience were most overpoweringly expressed a scene followed which scarcely can be described I have no doubt says the father from the effects which followed from the very numerous references to this day's service as to the immediate cause of their remarkable change of heart and life in the convincing influence of the Holy Spirit on that day W.C.

Burns standing in the pulpit said the appearance of the great part of the people from the pulpit gave me an awfully vivid picture of the state of the young godly in the day of Christ's coming to judgment.

Well that was the beginning of the revival in Kiltseyth July 1839 for three months services continued every night Burns went back to Dundee and shortly there also revival broke out McChain came back from Palestine in November and when he came back he saw a transformed scene although there had been blessing before his departure he says when he came back the word of God had come with such power to the hearts and consciences of the people here and their thirst for hearing it became so intense that the midweek classes in the school room were changed into densely crowded congregations in the church and for nearly four months it was found desirable to have public worship almost every night I often think says McChain that the change which people have experienced might be enough to convince an atheist that there is a God and to convince an infidel that there is a savior the effects that have been produced upon the community are very marked it seems to be allowed even by the ungodly that there is such a thing as conversion men can no longer deny it well McChain resumed his own ministry and for the rest of his life W.C.

Burns became an itinerant missionary and evangelist for the next two or three years he was greatly used in Scotland preached in many places and both under his ministry and under the ministry of other men of whom I cannot now speak there were similar revivals let me just give you one quotation one of McChain's friends who was ministering in Perth he says there are all the marks of a work of God which we see in the preaching of the apostles that is these marks are amongst us the multitude were divided families were divided the people of God were knit together they were filled with zeal and joy and heavenly mindedness and numbers were constantly turning to the Lord and one last quotation from W.C.

Burns he preached for a week in Perthshire in August 1840 and he said at the end of the week it has been indeed a resurrection of the dead sudden and momentous as the resurrection of the last day nay far more

momentous for the individuals concerned and I was compelled to think last night as we listened to the evening address of W.C. Burns having been one of the best known preachers in Scotland he literally disappeared that is to say he went as a missionary to China he died in the heart of Manchuria about the year 1868 and spent the greater part of his life well almost the whole of his ministerial life in China and in the far east when he died his possessions were sent home from Manchuria he was buried out there but his possessions were sent home came back to the manse in Kilsyth and one reads in his biography how the box containing his possessions was opened and what was found inside I think it was two shirts, a pair of trousers a Chinese flag, a Bible perhaps one other book and that was the total sum of the earthly possessions of W.C.

Burns now the remainder of our time lets draw out some of the lessons but if you read of course the memoir of McChane you will get a good deal more on the revival upon which I have only touched in the first place this revival as so many other revivals led to the disruption of the Church of Scotland you have already heard how moderatism had been so strongly implanted in the church and for many years as the evangelical cause revived there was increasing collision and opposition between the evangelicals and the moderates but when the spirit of God was poured out in this way it became intolerable for the evangelicals to regard the ministry of the moderates men like McChane went into the parishes of the moderates and preached there to the congregations of the moderates without being asked you can imagine you can imagine how unpopular they were and previously you see there had been a kind of neutrality, the evangelicals had preached to their own people, the moderates had preached to theirs but when this sense of people's need of salvation was so laid upon the evangelicals they had to throw aside their prudence and go to the people so that the collision intensified and in particular the controversy raged on the subject of patronage the evangelicals worked to throw patronage out of the church so that ministers were appointed entirely by congregations.

There was a great dispute but in the end the dispute went to the parliament, the British parliament and the parliament ruled that patronage must stay in force and at that point the evangelicals said well then Christ must rule and we shall leave this church and continue in a free evangelical church now you know when we talk of secession and separation these days it's not just what it was then the parish system dominated the country the schools, the churches, the mansions all belonged to the national church there was not one brick which belonged to an individual church, all the property on the mission field and there was a good deal in India it all belonged again to the national church so when men spoke of leaving the church people simply smiled that would have meant losing their homes losing all their possessions and losing about a hundred thousand pounds a year which was given by way of government aid to the church now I know you don't know what that figure means but take my word for it, it's a large amount of money especially in those days so when people spoke of secession some people said well maybe 40 ministers might leave and a few said well a hundred at the most and many said well the people won't follow them the people have always gone to the parish churches but there came a day, the 18th day of May in 1833 when more than 450 ministers together left the church of Scotland and a vast body of Christian people and they formed the free church of Scotland and I believe that the difficulties which they faced would never have been faced were it not for the conscious presence of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in their midst it's a very moving story to read the sacrifice of that time perhaps I'll return to it in just a moment but on that 18th day of May the disruption took place and for those who left the church it was a day when the spirit of God and of glory rested upon them they had their first general assembly meeting and those who were at that meeting when it was over they said that they went home as though they had been to a scene at Pentecost and one of them wrote he said hallelujah I shall never see the like of this till heaven so the revival

disrupted the church that has often happened a second lesson these revivals were used to restore credibility to the Christian faith now by that I mean two things firstly that Christians themselves were restored to the power of faith William Burns of Killisnoe says that before the revival there the idea of revival had been a tradition of bygone days but what had until now been a tradition took strong possession of the minds of Christian men and has never since lost its hold from that hour it ceased to be a thing incredible that God could raise the dead the faith of Christians was enormously increased but also it gave credibility to the Christian faith to the world.

Now remember what the ministers had been like, these moderates they were just professional men they made a good living, they earned a reasonable salary, there was no real suffering there were no difficulties, people looked at them and they judged them to be what they were just like themselves and the image of the ministry had been utterly debased and for the ministry to be restored to its true position required a great deal of suffering and sacrifice and this is what the revivals and the disruption did.

When these more than 400 men left their homes and their livings, people all over Scotland had their ears open and their eyes opened to a new message. They saw people who had given up everything for the message they said they believed. They weren't used to anyone believing any message, they thought that the moderates just gave their opinions and other men gave theirs but here were people who were thus suffering.

Now you may read an account of those sufferings and it's a very moving story. For example one minister whose home was on an island off the west coast of Scotland, a very beautiful part of Scotland had his mansions, church he had to put his belongings and his family into this boat and they were rowed across to the mainland, it was very rough when they left their home their youngest boy was just 5 and being so unpleasant in the sea this little boy cried out to his father, take me home daddy take me home. The father said what did it feel like to know that I had no home.

There were many similar stories like that and the suffering went on because as I mentioned before the patrons were generally the landowners. So in many parts of Scotland all sites for church building were refused. So people winter after winter had to meet in the open air, some met on sea shores, others met on roadways which were public property.

One church bought a boat and it was tied up about half a mile from the shore and people went out to this boat, it was called the Iron Church All over Scotland people were thus left without buildings, the purpose of course was to drive the people back into the churches but it had the opposite effect. When these sufferings were endured as they were, the eyes of multitudes were opened to see and to hear the gospel. Let me just give you a few facts and figures I do not have before me the number of congregations which joined the Free Church perhaps it was something like 500 but within 2 years 163 new churches had been formed, new congregations in many cases they had no buildings and then by 1848 when the sites had been in many cases granted over 700 new churches were built now remember Scotland is a little country, a small place and 700 churches is a great many churches and there is a marvelous story of how money simply flowed into the church people gave themselves and their substance and there was this mighty movement of evangelization and revival, the harvest was reaped in all parts of the country lastly then this revival led to a restoration of a true sense of priorities in the church now when the disruption occurred you might have supposed that the problems that would have been uppermost would be the problems of finding new mansions for the ministers, how to get men salaries, how to build new buildings, these might have been the problems but these were not the problems the anxiety which these men showed was an anxiety

how vital godliness could be strengthened in their midst, in Chalmers words their burden was that the gospel should be carried to every cottage door in Scotland, the desire which above all else the free church cherished says Thomas Brown was to receive some token of God's favor in the revival of her spiritual life the night before the disruption a meeting took place in a church in Edinburgh St. Luke's church and the purpose of this meeting was to pray for the outpouring of the spirit of God and at this meeting W.C. Burns preached and this is what he said it is easy to perceive that if these trials which are now at the door if they do come to us without a great measure of the Holy Spirit along with them, then the most fearful consequences will follow where will ministers be who do not receive that influence of the spirit when they lose the influence belonging to their present position when they have no title and no church and no pulpit they will either get influence by carnal means and they are to be pitied who get it in that way or they must get it by being men evidently full of the spirit of their master and publicly owned by him as those who are winning many souls to Christ.

In other words they were saying that without the outpouring of the spirit they would have no future as a church at all but after the free church had been in existence for one year, the second general assembly met and in this assembly two days were given to discussion on the state of personal religion in their midst they turned their thoughts from everything else and they gave their attention to what is the state of vital piety in our midst. Charles Brown was called upon to preach and I think his sermon was one of the most remarkable ever preached in Scotland for this reason let me tell you in just a second his text was Habakkuk 2 and verse 1 I will stand upon my watch and set me upon my tower and will watch to see what he will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved. The burden of his sermon was on God reproving and of God reproving them and he spoke on the deficiencies of their lives, the deficiencies of their ministries.

Now mark you he was speaking after 12 months of the most remarkable blessing and spiritual harvest. When all over Scotland hundreds of people were being converted and yet the burden of his preaching was a burden of humiliation and of repentance that impresses me deeply as the preacher prosecuted his great work his faithful and searching confessions and warnings urged with all the impressive power of a heart thoroughly in earnest and directed as we believe by the spirit of God the whole vast multitude were bowed and shaken like a forest of trees beneath a mighty wind and one visitor who was present from Ireland said they bowed down before God and when instead of railing against their enemies they confessed in deep prostration the plagues of their own hearts and the sins of their own lives in one universal cry that prayer arose to heaven, God be merciful to us sinners we never witnessed a scene more solemnly sublime. And at that general assembly the assembly drew up and placed on record these words with profound humiliation and in reliance on the great strength of almighty God we solemnly devote, dedicate and consecrate ourselves anew as laborers to the service of God and his holy purpose of glorifying his great name in saving souls through the preaching of the truth and the operation of the Holy Ghost.

I say the revival had brought the church back to her priorities. Money flowed buildings were built, salaries were paid but these were not the things that men thought about or scarcely spoke about, they thought about the advancement of the kingdom of Christ and as they did that all these things were added to them. Well our time is gone one last brief quotation if you can see a book by Thomas Brown called Annals of the Disruption that will give you a very good account of this period but he closes that book with these words If the church is to gain over the world men must recognize her faith, her zeal, her self-sacrificing love and in these they must trace the evidence of Christ's abiding presence with her as her living head in disruption times this was what men lived and prayed for and they did not pray in vain Let us pray Oh Lord our

gracious God and Father we once more come before thee to give thee thanks and praise thou art indeed the God of all grace, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God who in past days hath visited thy people Oh Lord we thank thee that thou art amongst us at this hour, that we are not our own, that by the precious blood of Christ thou hast brought us nigh to thyself and we do continue to call upon thee that thou would speak to us and with us and we may know our hearts to burn within us as we sit under the preaching of thy word Oh Lord do thou make us truly to praise thee may thy grace rest upon us all in the continuing hours of this day that thy purposes may be fulfilled in us and that we may all be drawn nearer to thyself hear us and pardon all our sins as we ask it in Jesus name, Amen

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