GREAT REVIVALISTS
1700 to the present day

JOHN PETERS
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Waverley Abbey House …
‘a powerhouse for Jesus Christ’

This volume celebrates the twenty-first anniversary of Waverley Abbey House as the headquarters of CWR’s operations throughout the world. Its acquisition came about after a reader of Every Day with Jesus contacted Selwyn Hughes (in 1982) suggesting that he should look at an old house which had recently become available for purchase. After receiving a second letter from the same correspondent, Selwyn and Trevor Partridge inspected the property which, at that time, was already on offer to another prospective buyer.

That was not, however, the end of the story. Eventually CWR’s offer of £325,000 – not the highest by any means – was accepted. A protracted and complicated period of extensive renovation followed, with many significant technical and financial problems along the way, but on 29 August 1987, Lord Tonypandy (formerly Speaker of the House of Commons and possibly better known as George Thomas) conducted the opening ceremony. Selwyn spoke of the occasion as a milestone in the history of CWR and, for him, ‘an exciting and emotional event’. Lord Tonypandy’s words were prophetic: ‘This place will be a powerhouse for Jesus Christ in the unfolding years … It will be used to train tomorrow’s leaders in the Christian world.’

Since that auspicious occasion, Waverley Abbey House has been the ministry centre of CWR’s global mission, been the location for many of its courses, housed the offices of its leaders and staff, and also witnessed a number of thrilling events. One such occasion was in 2002 on the fifteenth anniversary of the opening, when 1,000 people assembled in Waverley. Several speakers drew attention to the fact that the hallmark of Waverley is changed lives, with many of those who trained there having, quite literally, taken the teaching to help others around the world. Samson Gandhi, Executive Director of the Person to Person Counselling ministry in India at that time,
commented that ‘three weeks at Waverley in August 1996 redefined my personality, made me more like Christ, and set the path for my [whole] ministry. It was like a confirmation and commissioning.’ Other speakers described how the courses at Waverley and the accompanying fellowship had provided the biblical foundations for their lives and work. In other words, God has used Waverley Abbey House to equip His people and His Church.

Other memorable events that spring to mind include Selwyn’s address celebrating forty years of CWR and, perhaps most poignantly of all, his final address to CWR Partners and Staff in December 2005, just a few weeks before his death. Those present were impressed with his deeply held faith, conviction and courage; and his integrity left an indelible impression on everyone, together with a feeling that this was the end of a chapter and the beginning of a new era, as indeed it was.

In every sense, therefore, Waverley Abbey House is fulfilling the vision so bravely followed, in the first instance, by Selwyn and Trevor; it is appropriate that the ‘coming of age’ of the House should be marked and celebrated. The idea of a publication inevitably followed, but on which subject? The answer to such a query was, in many senses, obvious: revival and revivalists, the grassroots of CWR since its inception in 1965. Revival was, of course, one of the golden and sustaining threads of Selwyn Hughes’ whole life, so no subject could be more apt.

Throughout his long ministry, Selwyn was careful to distinguish between renewal and revival; he often pondered on the reasons why some churches and commentators never moved beyond the idea of renewal to the more comprehensive idea of revival. In his editorial to the July/August 1988 issue of Revival World Report he said this:

*I am not sure I know the complete answer but my considered opinion is that it has to do with two things: one, our human tendency to be more preoccupied with getting a blessing than being a blessing, and two, a reluctance in allowing the Holy Spirit to clean up our lives. There is something in us all that settles for an experience of God rather than an encounter with God.*

He added, with total justification, ‘Any spiritual blessing that does not clean up our lives and deepen our prayer lives must be regarded as suspect.’ Hard-hitting but true, and it was an emphasis he frequently returned to in his preaching, counselling and writing, in which he highlighted the danger of focusing on the spectacular phenomena and outwardly dramatic at the expense of losing our focus on the Lord Jesus. He certainly concurred with the views of Frank Bartleman, of Azusa Street fame, who said: ‘We may not even hold a doctrine, or seek an experience, except in Christ. The attention of the people must be first of all, and always, held to him’ (Renewal, 1995).

The nature of revival

‘Revival is God bending down to the dying embers of a fire that is just about to go out, and breathing into it, until it bursts again into flame.’ (Christmas Evans)

‘A revival is something that can only be explained as the direct action and intervention of God.’ (Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

‘Revival is something above and beyond that spiritual environment and climate which we, for want of a better word, deem normal.’ (Vernon Higham)

‘In revival, God visits His people, making His presence known and revealing Himself as the holy God. In revival people are overcome and overwhelmed by God’s love.’

(Robert Backhouse)

Two complementary truths are observable in all revivals. First, God’s sovereignty. By sovereignty is meant God’s absolute authority, thus meaning that revival (or ‘times of refreshing’) is always the action of God, not human beings. While it is true that the decisions of men and women can *end* revivals, they cannot *initiate* revival. To put the matter another way, revival is a movement of the Holy Spirit, a pouring out, if you wish, of His life and power. Aspects of this sovereignty, which often demonstrates itself when the Church is spiritually low, include:

- fresh evidence of life-transforming Holy Spirit activity;
- moral and ethical changes in society, as were abundantly evident in the 1904–05 revival in Wales;
David Brainerd died at the age of twenty-nine. Yet whenever the associated ideas of revival and missionary endeavour and zeal are under consideration, his name is given a prominent and honourable place.

**Radical conversion**

The biographical facts of his life are easily chronicled. Born in 1718 in Connecticut, he was profoundly converted in 1739, later becoming a student at Yale College, one of America’s foremost educational institutions. He did not last very long there, however, and he was expelled for what Jonathan Edwards later described as ‘intemperate, indiscreet zeal’. Some time after this he was licensed to preach and was appointed by The Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge to be their missionary to the Delaware Indians of North America, an assignment which became his life’s work. It was to involve Brainerd in living the rest of his life
in Eastern Pennsylvania under conditions of severe hardship until finally disease got
the better of him.

True disciple

The external facts of his life may be scanty, but his qualities as a man of God shine
out radiantly, constituting a stirring example for all Christians today. Not for him the
almost continuous grumbling that characterises so many churches in the contemporary
evangelical scene. Three positive qualities in particular stand out.

In the first place, he was supremely a man of prayer. He shares this dedication to
a holy life with all those whom God has used in revival, including Robert Murray
McCheyne, Wesley, Whitefield and Evan Roberts. It was not unusual for Brainerd
to spend whole nights in prayer seeking for the touch of a supernatural God in order to
be equipped and anointed for service. His example confirms a vital spiritual principle:
there are no short cuts (or instant answers) to spiritual maturity or effectiveness in
God’s service.

In the second place, he delighted himself in God. An entry in his diary for 12 July
1739 shows an intensity in his appreciation of God:

As I was walking in a dark, thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to
the view and apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness,
for I saw no such thing, nor do I intend any imagination of any body of light
somewhere in the third heaven or anything of that nature, but it was a new
inward apprehension or view that I had of God, such as I never had before,
nor anything which had the least semblance of it. I stood still, wondered and
admired! I knew that I never had seen before anything comparable to it for
excellency and beauty, it was widely different from all the conceptions that
ever I had of God or things Divine. I had no particular apprehension of any
one Person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, but it
appeared to be Divine Glory. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see
such a God, such a glorious Divine Being, and I was inwardly pleased and

satisfied that He should be God over all for ever and ever. My soul was so
captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other
perfections of God, that I was even swallowed up in Him.

In the third place, he valued highly and practised holiness. This followed almost
inevitably from the personal revelation quoted above, and again his diary gives a clear
insight into the man and the burning convictions that motivated him:

All things here below vanished, and there appeared to be nothing of any
considerable importance to me but holiness of heart and life, and the
conversion of the heathen to God. All my cares, fears, and desires, which
might be said to be of a worldly nature disappeared, and were, in my esteem,
of little more importance than a puff of wind. I exceedingly longed that God
would get to himself a name among the heathen, and I appealed to him, with
the greatest freedom, that he knew I ‘preferred him above my chief joy’.

Here was a man, as Brian Edwards says in his book Revival: A People Saturated with
God, whom God could trust in revival. David Brainerd served God in the harshest and
most unpromising of circumstances, a bleak and hostile environment that frequently
drove him to the edge of despair. That he was able to continue was due
to an unshakeable conviction that he had been specially called to take
the gospel to the Indians of North America; his own indomitable spirit
that was daily refreshed and uplifted in prayer, enabling him to ride at
least 3,000 miles on horseback; and his passion for those who did not
know God in personal ways.

Product of revival

He was himself the product of revival. He journeyed almost 500 miles to the
Susquehannah Indians, amongst whom a great revival erupted. His wholehearted
dedication to the conversion of these people is clearly mirrored in his diary: ‘All things

... he valued highly and practised holiness.
here below vanished and there appeared to be nothing of any importance to me but holiness of heart and the conversion of the heathen to God.’

**Sacrificial lifestyle**

Such was Brainerd’s devotion that the abiding image, enshrined in history, is of him praying in the snow until it melted around him and was stained with his blood. Prevail in prayer for revival he certainly did until his death on 9 October 1747.

**Challenge for today**

A curious fact about revival history is that Brainerd, like Robert Murray McCheyne and Ann Griffiths (the eighteenth-century Welsh hymnist) died before reaching the age of thirty. And yet, their influence resonates powerfully in the twenty-first century. Why? In Brainerd’s case, it is because of his holiness and passion for men and women to come into a personal relationship with Jesus.

Brainerd’s life demonstrated that there is no easy route to spiritual maturity. It requires discipline and thoughtfulness that have their source in a love relationship with Jesus, and the robustness to withstand difficulties and opposition. Brainerd’s life eloquently illustrated these qualities, and he poses a challenge to us as we live in these more self-indulgent times.

**Prayer**

O God, forgive us for our frequent laziness, even apathy, in Your service. We desperately need Your strength to be effective witnesses to Your love and compassion for everyone. Amen.

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**DAVID BRAINERD**

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**DUNCAN CAMPBELL**

(1898–1972)

**Revivalist and man of God**

Duncan Campbell was born at the end of the nineteenth century. He died in 1972. His life and work were almost immediately honoured (in 1974) by the publication of Andrew Woolsey’s biography, *Duncan Campbell, A Biography: The Sound of Battle*. Today he is largely remembered as the human face of the Hebridean Revival (1949–52), later as the principal of the Faith Mission Bible College, and for *Revivalist and Man of God Duncan Campbell*, his perceptive insight into the whole process of revival, which he defined – simply and memorably – as ‘a community saturated with God’, so that men and women (again in his own words) ‘are powerfully awakened to eternal realities and become concerned about their salvation, or the salvation of friends and neighbours’.

**Man of God**

This profile is not concerned with his key role in the Hebrides midway through the twentieth century, instead it is with his qualities...