

THE LEWIS AWAKENING

1949-1953

By

Duncan Campbell



The Faith Mission

Govan House, 38 Coates Gardens, Edinburgh 12

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*To my wife through whose devotion and
sacrifice I have been enabled to enter
into this ministry*

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INTRODUCTION

TO many throughout the British Isles and overseas the reading of this book will be as music: they are Lewis born! To other readers the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, or even the whereabouts of Lewis, maybe unknown. A Londoner resolved to visit Lewis will leave his great city for this other world by train at seven o'clock at night, and will arrive at Mallaig, 560 miles north, by noon the next day. From there the famous *MacBraynes* will take him by well-appointed passenger boats of 700 to over 1,000 tons, first to Kyle of Lochalsh, then on to Stornoway the Capital of Lewis—a sea journey of 100 miles. The weather will largely determine the time of arrival, but a favourable crossing of *The Minch* should bring him there by seven o'clock at night. Given good weather and but an average capacity for the enjoyment of beautiful scenery, the new-comer to the Highlands will be conscious of a sense of sheer emotional exhaustion from the wonder of the ever-changing panorama of beauty by land and sea throughout the last 250 miles of his journey.

Lewis and Harris together form an island of 891 square miles. The road from Rodil, in the extreme south, to Port of Ness, in the north, is over eighty miles. The population is about 25,000. Of these, some 5,700 are in Stornoway, the only large town. Of the other 21,000, some are in very lonely places., but most are in more or less compact villages; and in several places these villages are so near to each other as to constitute a large community within the compass of a few miles. These 21,000 people are almost wholly occupied in crafting, and in weaving—on looms in their own homes—the world-famous Harris Tweed which, it is estimated, amounts to something like four million yards a year. Many live in picturesque thatched cottages, and Gaelic is universally spoken. The people are instinctively and traditionally religious, with the old-time reverence for God, His Word and the ordinances of His Church.

To this Island came Duncan Campbell in December, 1949; and he certainly was “a man sent from God.” The Divine initiative and element in this movement are evident to all who know the sequence of the events. Two years previously Mr. Campbell was a Presbyterian minister in a Lowland industrial community. Converted through workers of the Faith Mission in his West Highland home country, he and three others went forth from the

local Prayer Union to train for the Christian ministry—the others for the Church of Scotland: Mr. Campbell for the inter-denominational work of the Faith Mission. After completing the course at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh, Mr. Campbell continued for some years in the evangelistic work of the Mission until his health compelled him to take up work not entailing nightly preaching, and he gave twenty-five years to the United Free Church. Then he became possessed of a great concern to devote himself to Gaelic-speaking evangelizing in the Highlands and Islands, and after more than a year of prayerful consideration by both the Mission and himself, he rejoined the Faith Mission in January, 1949.

But it was to Skye he felt he should go, and during a succession of missions in that Island with manifest awakening, he wrote: “How glad I am that I did not yield to my own inclinations and go to Harris; I believe my work is in this very needy Island. I have invitations from all over the Island.” And later: “I have a pressing invitation to go to Harris . . . but my very strong leaning is to continue in Skye.”

When in October, 1949, the urgent request to the Faith Mission from the praying people of Barvas came through the Parish Minister, for Mr. Campbell to go to Lewis, his commitments in Skye left little hope of his being free for Lewis, and those in consultation with whom he made his arrangements felt he should keep his appointments. But Mr. Campbell felt that he was being led to Lewis—a conviction which deepened—and unforeseen changes released him so that within only a few weeks he was there: with what result he tells in this book.

I have before me Mr. Campbell’s own accounts of the work, received from him from week to week, and I can only say that his much restricted account in these pages gives but a glimpse of the great manifestation of Divine power witnessed throughout the Island. For personal reasons the vivid detail of experience in the lives of individuals is withheld. Could they be suitably narrated, they would be thrilling to read.

I am again reminded that Lewis will be totally unknown to many thousands who will read this book, and it may be well to say that a vast amount of the Island beyond the coastal area consists of peat and rock and swamp, and is almost wholly uninhabited, so that distances from Stornoway and between places are long. Many well-meaning people have thought it would be good to spend some time in the atmosphere of this spiritual awakening—somewhat as they would attend a convention; but they do not understand that there is no accommodation in rural places for visitors, nor any means of returning after meetings at night to Stornoway: moreover, without favourable contacts one may visit these places and be unaware of any particular spiritual movement but once enter the inner circle of the people’s lives, and the glorious visitation of the past four years becomes

apparent and moves the heart to joy and praise.

P. S. BRISTOW.

FOREWORD

By the REV. GORDON I. THOMAS.

IN acceding to the request to write a foreword to this brief account of the revival in Lewis and Harris, written by the Rev. Duncan Campbell, I am conscious not only of the privilege that is mine, but also of the fact that nothing I write can possibly add to the wonder of the story herein so briefly recorded. The movement of the Holy Spirit in the Outer Hebrides has been news for a long time, and I am quite sure this small volume will have a very wide circulation for that reason.

To meet Mr. Campbell is to be in the presence of one of God's very choice saints; a man who is great enough to be humble and therefore humble enough to be truly great. It was in August, 1947, that we first met and that a mutual affection sprang up between us. How little did I dream then that here was a chosen instrument of God for revival in our time! Yet so it has proved to be. Mr. Campbell has been more than restrained in his personal account of this mighty movement of God, and typically self-effacing. Story after story could be told of incidents that are in the realm of the miraculous and which indeed are positively breath-taking to hear. Practically none of these has been mentioned in this booklet, and I think I admire and love our brother even more for this reason.

I have been to Lewis. I shall never forget those ten wonderful days in company with Mr. Campbell. The community is touched in real revival and I saw this with my own eyes. In one village, a leading businessman told me that, before revival came, their young people spent much of Sunday in their beds or drinking their time away. Now, those same young people are members of the Church. "And," added my informant, "there has not been one case of backsliding." What a story!

An awareness of God is one of the marks of revival, says the Rev. Duncan Campbell. I am sure he is right, for although there was no outstanding movement of the Spirit while I was there, I nevertheless had two experiences that for me were unprecedented and that I certainly have not known since. Both of them illustrate the truth of his contention as to the awareness of God. One Sunday evening, while I was preaching, I believe that God took hold of me and of my mind and lips, as I would say He has not done on any other occasion. Thoughts flooded my mind that were totally unprepared, and I just knew myself to be borne along by the Spirit of God. I have rarely known so moving an atmosphere as when I sat down and the people sang the final Psalm. There was indeed an awareness of God that was very wonderful.

Another night, I was preaching at what was actually a very small meeting. There was precisely *nothing* to work up any specially moving atmosphere; in fact, rather the reverse, for if I am frank I must admit that I was very disappointed at the small size of the congregation. But how wrong was my assessment of Divine values, and how often probably we make these quite false judgments. In the midst of any message—I can only say, in the words of my dear friend.—“God came down.” There was a moment when I left off speaking and together we “felt” the silence. Yes, how “dreadful” was that place. More than one present that night referred to that moment in later days. Lest any should think that the work in Lewis is due entirely to Mr. Campbell, or that it is exclusively linked with him and therefore due to some combination of personality and psychology, let it be stated that Mr. Campbell was not present on this particular occasion. GOD WAS THERE, and in revival there is an awareness of God.

I could go on, but I must with difficulty refrain. All my life I shall remember those wonderful days, and thank God for the privilege of visiting places where revival has truly been, and where a permanent mark has been left. It gave me a great hunger in my heart, and this has been renewed on reading Mr. Campbell’s own account in the following pages.

Let us cry to God with that confidence Mr. Campbell found in the people of Barvas right at the beginning. I believe such a confidence is born only of prayer and of sacrifice—much prayer and deep sacrifice. Whilst God alone can send revival and we cannot work it up, yet it may be that we can help to prepare the way by prayer. Oh, to see a movement like this, here in the mainland and in other European countries; on the many mission fields and throughout the whole earth! “Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?” (Psalm 85:6). “Oh, Lord revive their work . . . in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.” (Habakkuk 3:2). Oh, Lord, revive me! May God use the pages of this little book to stimulate such a prayer!

CHAPTER I.

THE NEED OF AWAKENING.

THE Island of Lewis has been the scene of a very gracious movement of the Spirit. The breath of revival has been felt, and communities have been conscious of the mighty impact of God. This island had, in days past, experienced seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, but of late years the stream of vital Christianity appeared to be running low. This view was shared by the Free Church Presbytery of Lewis who, in the following declaration, publicly expressed their deep concern: “The Presbytery of Lewis having taken into consideration the low state of vital religion within their own bounds, and throughout the land generally, call upon their faithful people in all their congregations to take a serious view of the present dispensation of Divine displeasure manifested, not only in the chaotic conditions of international politics and domestic economics and morality, but also, and especially, in the lack of spiritual power from Gospel Ordinances, and to realize that these things plainly indicate that the Most High has a controversy with the Nation. They note especially the growing carelessness toward Sabbath observance and public worship, the light regard of solemn vows and obligations so that the sacraments of the Church—especially that of baptism—tend to become in too many cases an offence to God rather than a means of grace to the recipients, and the spreading abroad of the spirit of pleasure which has taken such a hold of the younger generation that all regard for anything higher appears with very few exceptions to have been utterly dismissed from their thoughts.

“The Presbytery affectionately plead with their people—especially with the youth of the Church—to take these matters to heart and to make serious inquiry as to what must be the end should there be no repentance; and they call upon every individual as before God to examine his or her life in the light of that responsibility which pertains to us all, that haply, in the Divine mercy, we may be visited with the spirit of repentance and may turn again unto the Lord whom we have so grieved with our iniquities and waywardness. Especially would they warn their young people of the Devil’s man-traps—the cinema and the public-house.”

The foregoing is an extract from a Free Church Presbyterial declaration, as published in the *Stornaway Gazette wad West Coast Advertiser* (December 9th, 1949).

The decline referred to in this declaration began to show itself in a growing disregard for the things of God; indeed the blighting influence of the spirit of the age, with its deadening effect, had wrought so effectively that in certain parishes very few young people attended public worship: the

dance, the picture-show and the “drinking house”¹ were institutions which could now thrive in Lewis, on the generous support given by their willing devotees.

True, Lewis has its traditions. The time-honoured practice of family worship is still observed in most homes. The great doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the total depravity of man, justification by faith on the ground of Christ’s atonement, regeneration by the Spirit, and the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men are central in the theology of Lewis. But then it is possible to have a name to live and yet be dead, and has not experience demonstrated again and again that man can be orthodox in sentiment yet loose in practice? Correct views of scripture do not constitute righteousness,

What effect the foregoing declaration had on the Christian Church in Lewis is beyond the knowledge of the writer, but certain it is that most would regard its publication as timely, and its contents a true representation of the situation.

Lewis, however, was not devoid of a virile Christian witness. In all denominations men could be found who were true watchmen on the walls of Zion, and who longed for the day when the desert would again “rejoice and blossom as the rose.” In most pulpits throughout the island, the evangel was proclaimed with passionate personal conviction, and not infrequently, in certain congregations at least, signs followed the preaching of the Word. The weekly prayer meeting was still a vital part of its religious life, although in too many cases attended only by a faithful few. But the Most High did not despise the day of small things and Lewis was soon to see the mighty power of God let loose in a gracious outpouring of His Spirit, and it came

“As dew upon the tender herb,
Diffusing fragrance round;
As showers that usher in the spring,
And cheer the thirsty ground.”

¹ Not a public house, but a small house or bothy in which men gather regularly to consume drink which they have purchased elsewhere. So far as we knew the only licensed premises in Lewis are those in Stornoway.

CHAPTER II.

HOW IT BEGAN.

IN his book, *The Second Evangelical Awakening*, Dr. Edwin Orr, referring to the American Awakening of 1858, writes: "A Divine influence seemed to pervade the land and men's hearts were strangely warmed by a power that was outpoured in unusual ways." Every genuine revival of religion has known the gracious touch of this mighty power falling from on high, moving men as no other power can move them to seek after God. "Oh . . . that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence" (Isa. 64:1), was the cry of the prophet of old. Was Isaiah conscious of the futility of man's best endeavours? Had he come to the end of all human resources? It appears so. This is the place to which the praying group in the Parish of Barvos in Lewis came, and it was this consciousness and conviction that, throwing them upon the sure promise of God, gave birth to the Lewis Revival.

In writing of the movement, I would like first to state what I mean by revival as witnessed in the Hebrides. I do not mean a time of religious entertainment, with crowds gathering to enjoy an evening of bright gospel singing; I do not mean sensational or spectacular advertising—in a God-sent revival you do not need to spend money on advertising. I do not mean high-pressure methods to get men to an inquiry room—in revival every service is an inquiry room; the road and hill side become sacred spots to many when the winds of God blow. Revival is a going of God among His people, and an awareness of God laying hold of the community. Here we see the difference between a successful campaign and revival; in the former we may see many brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, and the church or mission experience a time of quickening, but so far as the town or district is concerned no real change is visible; the world goes on its way and the dance and picture-shows are still crowded: but in revival the fear of God lays hold upon the community, moving men and women, who until then had no concern for spiritual things, to seek after God.

To the praying men and women of Barvas, four things were made clear, and to them became governing principles. First, they themselves must be rightly related to God, and in this connection the reading of Psalm 24 at one of their prayer meetings brought them down in the presence of the Lord, where hearts were searched and vows renewed, and, in the words of one who was present, they gave to their lives the propulsion of a sacred vow, and with Hezekiah of old, found it in their hearts to "make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel." Happy the church and favoured the congregation that can produce such men and women! So prayer meetings were held in

church and in cottage, and frequently the small hours of the morning found the parish minister and his faithful few pleading the promises, with a consciousness of God, and with a confidence in Him that caused them to hope in His Word.

In the second place, they were possessed of the conviction that God, being a covenant-keeping God, must keep His covenant engagements. Had He not promised to “pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground”? Here was something that for them existed in the field of possibility; why were they not actually experiencing it? But they came at length to the place where, with one of old, they could cry “Our God . . . is able . . . and He will.”

“Faith mighty faith the promise sees
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries ‘it shall be done’.”

Thirdly, they must be prepared for God to work in His own way and not according to their programme—God was sovereign and must act according to His sovereign purpose—but ever keeping in mind that, while God is sovereign in the affairs of men, His sovereignty does not relieve men of responsibility. “God is the God of revival but man is the human agent through whom revival is possible.”

Fourthly, there must be a manifestation of God, demonstrating the reality of the Divine in operation, when men would be forced to say, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” It is therefore not surprising that in the month of December, 1949, God did visit the Parish Church of Barvas with revival blessing that, in a very short time, leapt the bounds of the parish, bringing refreshing and spiritual life to many all over the island.

Here mention must be made of the part played by the parish minister, the late Rev. James Murray MacKay. For months he and his office-bearers had prayed for an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and now the time had come when they felt that, as a congregation, they were called upon to act. But so wonderful are the ways of God that the minister of Barvas had to go to Strathpeffer Convention to have revealed to him through the ministry of the Rev. Dr. T. Fitch, now of Belfast, the action to be taken. Great was his encouragement on returning to his parish to be told that God, in a vision of the night, had revealed to one of the praying group not only that revival was coming, but also the instrument to be used as a channel: the person revealed in the vision was the one mentioned at Strathpeffer! “In a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction” (Job 33:15-16).

So it was that word was sent to the director of the Faith Mission in Edinburgh, as a result of which I found myself in Lewis in December, 1949.

The supernatural working of God the Holy Spirit in revival power is something that no man can fully describe, and it would be folly to attempt it. There are, however, features of the Lewis revival which also characterized revivals of the past, one of which is the spirit of expectancy. Here I found a group of men who seemed to be living on the high plane of implicit confidence in God. That was the conviction and assurance that breathed in every prayer offered in that memorable first meeting of my sojourn in the Hebrides, and my first contact with this congregation fully convinced me that revival had already come: it was to be my privilege to have some small share in it. One will never forget the hush of the awful presence of God as we sat waiting for the opening Psalm to be announced; truly one could say:—

“And Heaven came down our souls to greet,
And glory crowned the mercy seat.”

Here is a scene witnessed during the first days of the movement: a crowded church, the service is over the congregation, reluctant to disperse, stand outside the church in a silence that is tense. Suddenly a cry is heard within: a young man, burdened for the souls of his fellow men, is pouring out his soul in intercession. He prays until he falls into a trance and lies prostrate on the floor of the church. But heaven had heard, and the congregation, moved by a power that they could not resist, came back into the church, and a wave of conviction of sin swept over the gathering, moving strong men to cry to God for mercy. This service continued until the small hours of the morning, but so great was the distress and so deep the hunger which gripped men and women, that they refused to go home, and already were assembling in another part of the parish. An interesting and amazing feature of this early morning visitation, was the number who made their way to the church, moved by a power they had not experienced before: others were deeply convicted of their sin and crying for mercy, in their own homes, before ever naming near the church.

None of those present will forget that morning meeting as the assembled company sang:—

“I will not come within my house,
Nor rest in bed at all;
Nor shall mine eyes take any sleep,
Nor eyelids slumber shall;

“Till for the Lord a place I find,

Where He may make abode;
A piece of habitation
For Jacob's mighty God."

There was a moving scene, some weeping in sorrow and distress, others, with joy and love filling their hearts, falling upon their knees, conscious only of the presence and power of God who had come in revival blessing. Within a matter of days the whole parish was in the grip of a spiritual awakening. Churches became crowded, with services continuing until three o'clock in the morning. Work was largely put aside, as young and old were made to face eternal realities. Soon the fire of blessing spread to the neighbouring parishes. Carloway witnessed a gracious manifestation of the power of God that will surely live in the annals of Lewis revivals. The minister of that parish was assisting with the meetings at Barvas: God was mightily at work, and a number of men were in great distress of soul. Two of these were pipers who were to have played at a concert and dance at Carloway. The minister of Carloway had had a concern to witness at this dance. Leaving the meetings at Barvas, he arrived at the dance at about 3.30 a.m. Almost immediately after he entered the hall the dancing ceased, and he thereupon proposed that they should sing two verses of a Gaelic Psalm. Not all were immediately favourable to this, but after a special appeal Psalm 139, verse 7, was sung, some present joining in:—

"From thy Sprit whither shall I go?
Or from thy presence fly?
Ascend I heaven, lo, thou art there;
There, if in hell I lie."

He then engaged in prayer and followed with a few words of exhortation, and suddenly the power of God swept through the company and, almost immediately, the music of the dance gave place to the cry of the penitent. Opposition broke down under conviction of sin and distress of soul. This applies especially to a schoolmaster's son who was acting M.C. Before leaving the hall the minister related the news that the pipers and others who were to have been at the dance had decided for Christ in the kitchen meeting at Barvas two hours before. Soon the whole proceedings came to an end and those present dispersed to their homes bewildered and amazed. That same night, in his own home, the schoolmaster came under deep conviction and on the following Monday his wife also completely broke down. They now blaze a trail for God in their parish, and Ness becomes the scene of a most gracious movement.

At Ness meetings were held in the afternoon and evening, and frequently on into the morning. Churches, halls, private houses, and even furniture and

meal stores were used to accommodate men and women seeking for God. Perhaps the greatest miracle of all was in the village of Arnol. Here, indifference to the things of God held the field and a good deal of opposition was experienced, but prayer, the mighty weapon of the revival, was resorted to and an evening given to waiting upon God. Before midnight God came down, the mountains flowed down at His presence, and a wave of revival swept the village: opposition and spiritual death fled before the presence of the Lord of life. Here was demonstrated the power of prevailing prayer, and that nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. There are those in Arnol today who will bear witness to the fact that, while a brother prayed, the very house shook. I could only stand in silence as wave after wave of Divine power swept through the house, and in a matter of minutes following this heaven-sent visitation, men and women were on their faces in distress of soul. It is true that in this village God had His “watchmen.” Thank God there are many such in Lewis and Harris; it is one of such men who, when he witnessed the mighty power of God in this village, asked that we might sing the 126th Psalm:—

“When Sion’s bondage God turned back,
As men that dreamed were we,
Then filled with laughter was our mouth,
Our tongue with melody.”

Some time ago, while passing through this village, I was met by an old man whose salutation was in the following words, “I am glad to be alive to witness this day.” Then, pointing to a particular house, he said, “Do you see that house? That was the ‘drinking house’ of this village, where our young men met in utter disregard of God, His Word, or His day. Today it is closed and the men who frequented it are praying in our prayer meetings.” What a joy it is now to see such numbers going to the house of God on the Sabbath, or looking forward with joyful anticipation to the weekly prayer meetings. Some time ago I remarked to a friend: “That is surely a wonderful sight,” referring to the large numbers of people going to church. “Yes,” he replied, “but before the revival one seldom saw more than four from this village going to church on Sabbath morning.” One young man, speaking for the youth of the district said, “We did not know what church-going meant until the revival came, now the prayer meeting is the weekly attraction, and the worship of God in His house on the Sabbath our chief delight.”

CHAPTER III.

THE SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT.

THE movement that began in the Parish Church of Barvas, almost immediately spread to the neighbouring parish of Ness, and it soon became evident that it was not to be confined to these two parishes. From north, south, east and west the people came in buses, vans, cars and lorries, to witness the mighty movings of God and then to return to their respective parishes to bear testimony to the fact that they had met with the Saviour. A gamekeeper, whose home was twenty-four miles from Barvas, was so wrought upon and burdened for the souls of others, that his van was seldom off the road and for two years, night after night, brought its load of men and women who were seeking for Jesus. He was rewarded by seeing many coming to the Saviour, including members of his own family. It is therefore not surprising that in the Parish of Lochs, where the gentleman referred to had his home, a gracious movement should break out. Here the ground was well prepared by a faithful ministry, and great was the rejoicing when sower and reaper saw the fruit of their labour in a harvest of precious souls. As in Barvas, meetings here continued until two and three o'clock in the morning and some remarkable scenes were witnessed as the Spirit of God moved among the people.

An incident occurred in this parish which is still vivid in my mind. A lorry was engaged to convey a number of people to a meeting: the distance to be covered was about fourteen miles, and the journey would take them round the end of a loch. Unfortunately, the lorry broke down when they were about seven miles from their destination. The younger of the party decided to walk, but this was too much for the older members who, very reluctantly, retraced their steps homeward. Suddenly it occurred to them that a late meeting would be held, and if they could secure a boat they could cross the loch and be in time for the midnight service. A boat was found at the nearest township three miles distant, and on rowing across the loch, a distance of three miles, great was their satisfaction to find a meeting in progress; and was it the guidance of the Spirit that led the preacher that night to take as his text, "They also took shipping and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus"? The men from across the loch were seeking for Jesus, and that night they found Him. That morning, just as the dawn was breaking and night gave way to the rising sun, another Sun had arisen, and One of clearer shining brought light and life to men who sat in darkness. Before they set sail for home, the congregation gathered and, led by one of the local ministers, sang:—

“When an thy mercies. O my God!
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I’m lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

“O how shall words, with egos/ warmth.
The gratitude declare
That glows within my ravish’d heart!
But Thou can’t read it there.

“When nature fails, and day and night
Divide thy works no more,
My ever-grateful heart, O Lord,
Thy mercy shall adore.

“Through all eternity to Thee
A Joyful song I’ll raise,
For, oh! eternity’s too short
To utter all thy praise.”

It is not often that strangers from other districts crowd a church, making it impossible for the regular congregation to get accommodation in their own building, but this actually happened in this parish. So great was the hunger for the Gospel that, long before the hour of service, buses and vans from a neighbouring parish brought a crowd that filled the little Church of Habost, and the regular congregation were content to sit in the vehicles that the strangers had vacated. “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

The influence of the Lewis awakening was felt in Harris. Soon in both Tarbert and Leverburgh a gracious movement broke out, and one interesting feature of this blessed visitation was the place that singing had in the meetings. Again and again a wave of deep conviction of sin would sweep over the congregation, and man and women would be seen bending before the mighty impact of the Spirit, as the heart-cry of the penitent found expression in the words of Psalm 130:—

“Lord from the depths to thee I cry’d.
My voice, Lord, do thou hear:
Unto my supplication’s voice
Give an attentive ear.

“Lord, who shall stand, if thou, O Lord,
Should’st mark iniquity?
But yet with thee forgiveness is,
That fear’d thou mayest be.”

Benera is a small island off the coast of Harris, with a population of about 400. In April, 1952, it was my privilege to visit this parish and witness one of the most remarkable movements of the revival. Here, as in other districts, there were men who, on their faces before God, cried for an outpouring of His Spirit; and an incident occurred which goes to demonstrate the power of prevailing prayer and to reveal how true it is that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." One morning an elder of the Church of Scotland was greatly exercised in spirit, as he thought of the state of the church and the growing carelessness toward Sabbath observance and public worship. While waiting upon God, this good man was strangely moved, and was enabled to pray the prayer of faith and lay hold upon the promise, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." This word from God came with such conviction and power, that he was assured that revival was going to sweep the island, and in that confidence he rose from his knees.

While this man was praying in his barn, I myself, taking part in the Faith Mission Convention at Bangor in Northern Ireland, was suddenly arrested by the conviction that I must leave at once and go to the Island of Benera, where I found myself within three days! Almost immediately on arriving, I was in the midst of a most blessed movement. Again the promise was being fulfilled, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." The first few meetings were very ordinary, but the prayers offered by elders of the congregation breathed a confidence in the sure promise of God. Again and again reference was made to the words of Psalm 50, verse 3, "Our God shall surely come." They did not wait long for the fulfilment of this word from God! One evening, just as the congregation was leaving the church and moving down towards the main road, the Spirit of God fell upon the people in Pentecostal power: no other word can describe it: and in a few minutes the awareness of the presence of the Most High became so wonderful and so subduing, that one could only say with Jacob of old, "Surely the Lord is in this place." There, under the open heavens and by the road side, the voice of prayer was mingled with the groans of the penitent, as "free grace awoke men with light from on high." Soon the whole island was in the grip of a mighty movement of the Spirit, bringing deep conviction of sin and a hunger for God. This movement was different from that in Lewis in this respect, that while in Lewis there were physical manifestations and prostrations, such were not witnessed here; but the work was as deep and the results as enduring, as in any other part touched by the revival.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature in this part of Harris was the awe-inspiring sense of the presence of God that came over the island. The people just gave themselves to seeking the Way of Life. Meetings were held during the day and through the night, in church, in the homes of the people and in

the open: indeed, every gathering of people was made a means of grace. One would like to pay tribute to two ministers of the Church of Scotland who, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, left their own parishes and threw their full weight into the movement, the Rev. Murdo McLeod of Tarbert, and the Rev. Angus McKillop of Lochs: the good people of this island will forever be grateful to those two gentlemen who gave of their best. Here is an extract from a letter received from an elder on the Island: he is referring to the first communion after the awakening: "The centre of the church was reserved for communicants, but it could not hold them; this never happened in the history of our parish before, 'Glory to God, Hallelujah!'"

The other Bernera also, in Lewis, is one of the smaller islands of the outer Hebrides, with a population of about 400 fairly equally divided between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland. Here God had a few faithful men and women, but a long vacancy in one of the churches did not help the spiritual life of the community, and this was reflected in a growing disregard for public worship, especially by the youth of the island. It has been said that the weekly prayer meeting indicates the spiritual temperature of a congregation, and if that be so, Bernera had a somewhat low temperature: but there had been indications of the working of the Holy Spirit, and here also God had His "Daniels" with their "windows .. open toward Jerusalem," who, long before the outbreak of the revival, were encouraged to believe that days of spiritual refreshing were near at hand.

One of the outstanding personalities of the revival, the Rev. Murdo McLennan, Parish Minister of Carloway, was Interim Moderator of the Bernera congregation. At his invitation I went to assist at a communion season and began a series of pre-communion services. The first meeting was not encouraging, and it was decided to have a further meeting in a nearby cottage. If the first meeting damped our spirits, here was a sight to gladden our hearts: a crowded house, with young men and women in the majority, and an awareness of God that was most subduing. That night in this cottage God made bare His arm, and a movement broke out that was to spread all over the island. It was here that an incident occurred that lives most vividly in my memory: at my request several office-bearers from the Parish Church of Barvas visited the island bringing with them a young lad recently brought to a saving knowledge of the truth. After spending some time together in prayer, we went to the church to find the place crowded, but seldom did I experience such bondage of spirit, and preaching was most difficult; so much so, that when only half-way through my address I stopped preaching. Just then my eye caught sight of this young lad, who was visibly moved and appeared to be deeply burdened: leaning over the pulpit I said, "Donald, will you lead us in prayer?" There was an immediate response, and in that

moment the flood gates of heaven opened, the congregation was struck as by a hurricane, and many cried out for mercy.

But the most remarkable feature of this gracious visitation was not what happened in the church, but the spiritual impact made upon the island: men who until then had no thought of seeking after God, were suddenly arrested and became deeply concerned about their soul's salvation. One worthy elder of the Free Church into whose home salvation came, referring to his native village, said "This is the Lord's doing, His great name be praised." A contributor to the local paper in an article referring to this movement wrote, "More are attending the weekly prayer meetings than attended public worship on the Sabbath, before the revival." It was my privilege to pay a return visit to this island, and what a joy it was to find the young converts growing in grace, and witnessing in church and community a good confession: to listen to their words of testimony or to hear them engage in prayer was "as cold waters to a thirsty soul."

The last place to be mentioned in connection with the spread of the movement is the Parish of Uig. This part of the island is sparsely populated, with the villages far apart, and not too well provided with transport facilities, but if buses were not available, vans and lorries were, and in these the people of the scattered townships gathered. At the beginning of the revival, while God was moving mightily in the Parish of Ness, a woman who was bitterly opposed to the movement made the remark, "Why does he not go to Uig? That is where they need the Gospel." If by inference this lady meant that Uig was lacking in a gospel ministry, she was, I fear, using her imagination without reference to fact. Uig for many years had been favoured by a faithful and evangelical ministry. It is true that, in common with many other parish, a spirit of indifference to the things of God prevailed, especially among the young, so that the church was supported largely by the middle-aged and old. But the faithful ministry from the pulpits, and the prevailing prayers of the people of God in the parish, did not pass the notice of Him who said, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

I wish I could describe the scene, and impart something of the overwhelming sense of the subduing Spirit of God on the night that the windows of heaven opened. The parish minister, the Rev. Angus MacFarlane, was in his own pulpit and was leading in prayer, when suddenly a consciousness of God came over the congregation, and we were lifted out of the realm of the ordinary, to realise a spiritual impact that could not be explained from any human point of view: revival had come. The first meeting of the evening concluded with the singing of Psalm 147, verses 2-3:—

“God cloth build up Jerusalem;
and He it is alone
That the dispersed of Israel
doth gather into one.

“Those that are broken in their heart,
and grieved in their minds,
He healeth, and their painful wounds
He tenderly up-binds.”

The second meeting of this memorable night was held in a neighbouring village. All lorries and vans available were put into service to convey the people to the place of worship, yet many were forced to walk miles; but distance did not matter, and at any rate they knew that the meetings would continue: if they were not in time for the first, they would be sure of getting the second or the third. So they came across the moors and over the hills, young men and maidens, their torches flashing in the darkness, intent upon one thing, to get peace from a guilty conscience, and refuge from the Storm in their bosom, in the shelter of the Rock of Ages.

Today, in this parish, the churches are throbbing with young life and the work and witness of the respective congregations made so much easier, through the new influx of men and women ready and willing to serve their Master and the Church of their fathers.

CHAPTER IV.

FEATURES OF THE MOVEMENT.

WHAT have been the outstanding features of this movement? Three stand out clearly. First, an awareness of God. To be fully realized this has to be felt. A Rector of the Church of England, referring to his visit to Lewis, said, “What I felt, apart from what I saw, convinced me at once that this was no ordinary movement.” I have known men out on the fields, others at their weaving looms, so overcome by this sense of God that they were found prostrate on the ground. Here are the words of one who felt the hand of God upon him: “The grass beneath my feet and the rocks around me seem to cry, ‘flee to Christ for refuge’.” This supernatural illumination of the Holy Spirit led many in this revival to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ before they came near to any meeting connected with the movement. I have no hesitation in saying that this awareness of God is the crying need of the Church today; “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”; but this cannot be worked up by any human effort, it must come down.

The second main feature has been deep conviction of sin—at times leading almost to despair. I have known occasions when it was necessary to stop preaching because of the distress manifested by the anxious, and many would find expression for the feeling in their hearts and the burden of their guilty conscience, in the words of John Newton:—

“My conscience felt and owned its guilt,
And plunged me in despair:
I saw my sins His blood had spilt
And helped to nail Him there.”

Physical manifestations and prostration have been a further feature. I find it somewhat difficult to explain this aspect, indeed I cannot; but this I will say, that the person who would associate this with satanic influence is coming perilously near committing the unpardonable sin. Lady Huntingdon on one occasion wrote to George Whitefield respecting cases of crying out and falling down in meetings, and advised him not to remove them from the meetings, as had been done. When this was done it seemed to bring a damper on the meeting. She said, “You are making a great mistake. Don’t be wiser than God. Let them cry out; it will do a great deal more good than your preaching.”

CONCLUSION.

MUCH has been said and written about the revival. Like all such movements of the past, many have praised God for it, others have made it the occasion of bitter press and pulpit attacks. “Men have praised or blamed as it suited them.” it is true, however, that exaggerated statements have appeared in the press carrying such lines as “Revival sweeping the Hebrides.” Revival has not swept the Hebrides: there are many parts of the Western Isles still untouched by the movement. But it is true to say that Lewis and Harris have experienced “times of refreshing . . . from the presence of the Lord,” and the wilderness has been made to “rejoice and blossom as the rose,”

One very much regrets that, from the beginning, there were those who opposed the movement. Almost from the very first, the scare was raised—”Arminianism.” Here, I would quote from one who, though mightily used of God, did not escape the bitter opposition of leaders in the Church: “I verily believe revival would have come to _____ at that time if prayerful sympathy, instead of carnal criticism, had been shown.” As in this case, so also in Lewis, criticism was based on hearsay—never a wise procedure. If only those who opposed had gone to hear for themselves, how different the story might have been today! But facts are powerful things and we can leave the facts of the Lewis Revival to speak for themselves.

CHAPTER V.

Notes of An Address given at a Meeting for Ministers at Oxford and Manchester.

*“Will thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice
in thee?”—Psalm 85:6.*

THESE words of the Psalmist express the heart-cry of many of God’s children today. There is a grossing conviction everywhere, and especially among thoughtful people, that unless revival comes, other forces will take the field, that will sink us still deeper into the mire of humanism and materialism.

With that conviction there is also a deepening hunger for a fresh manifestation at God. Indeed so intense is the longing and so heavy the burden, that the words of the prophet Isaiah are frequently on the lips of God’s children: “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down.”

We have seen man’s best endeavours in the field of evangelism leaving the communities untouched; true, we may have seen crowded churches, and many professions, but then all that is possible on the plane of human activity, as has been witnessed over and over again. It has been said that “the Kingdom of God is not going to be advanced by our churches becoming filled with men, but by men in our churches becoming filled with God.” Today, we have a Christianity made easy as an accommodation to an age that is unwilling to face the implication of Calvary, and the gospel of “simply believism” has produced a harvest of professions which have done untold harm to the cause of Christ.

We use all the modern means and facilities for the propagation of the gospel—our technique in Christian work and witness has been developed to a fine art, and during recent years “evangelize” has been heard from Congress, Convocation and Assembly; but as we look back over our much activity in church work and witness, what do we see? Not flags of victory that tell of communities won for Christ; not congregations throbbing with spiritual life, and the desert made to “rejoice and blossom as the rose.” No, not flags, but grave stones—like the stones of our Scottish Culloden, that tell their pitiful tale of frustration and defeat. So we are today faced with the need—pressing, urgent and awful—for God to manifest His power the need of a God-sent Holy Ghost revival.

Many years ago Dr. Henry Drummond wrote of a “natural law in a spiritual world.” It seems to me that our great need today is to rediscover a spiritual law in a natural world. The ills that shake the very foundation of

our civilisation have their roots in the spiritual and not in the material. Man has gone wrong at the centre of things and he must get right there. Was it not Gladstone who said: "My only hope for our country is in bringing the human mind into contact with divine revelation"? Now let us be perfectly clear that only God can do that. Is this not the conviction that finds expression in the words of the Psalmist? If there was to be a revival, God must do the reviving, and it was God's people who were to be revived. So revival has to do with God and His people. The world has nothing to do with revival—only that which has life can be revived, I read in a little booklet recently, "We do not have revivals to get men saved—men get saved because we have revival."

Let us now consider three aspects of revival: its origin, its agency, its outcome.

THE ORIGIN OF REVIVAL. "Wilt thou not ...?" We do well to remember that in the whole field of Christian experience, the first step is with God; thought, feeling and endeavour must find their basis and inspiration in the sovereign mercy of God. To me one of the most disturbing features of present-day evangelism is the over-emphasis on what man can do, and I believe this to be the reason why we so often fail to get men and women to make the contact with Christ that is vital. How few there are today who, in the supreme moment of conversion or decision, become conscious within themselves of a new and overpowering reality—the knowledge of God having done a saving work within them. The Apostle Paul puts it in clear light in his letter to the Galatians, when he writes "it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." The fact of ultimate reality surely is this, that Salvation is of God. He is the God of revival, and we must look to Him and to Him alone. I have already referred to the cry of the prophet Isaiah—his convictions were that the mountains would flow, and nations would tremble only when God came down. In other words, he is just saying that nothing will happen unless there is a mighty demonstration of God. It is my own deep conviction that the average man is not going to be impressed by our publicity, our posters or our programmes, but let there be a demonstration of the supernatural in the realm of religion, and at once man is arrested. I have seen this happen over and over again during the recent movement in the Western Isles. Suddenly an awareness of God would take hold of a community, and under the pressure of this divine presence, men and women would fall prostrate on the ground, while their cry of distress was made the means in God's hand, to awaken the indifferent who had sat unmoved for years under the preaching of the gospel.

THE AGENCY OF REVIVAL. “Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people ...?” God is the God of revival. He is sovereign in the affairs of men. But we must not believe in any conception of God’s sovereignty that nullifies man’s responsibility. We are the human agents through whom revival is possible. To say, as so many do, “We can do nothing,” may be a very accommodating doctrine to “them that are at ease in Zion,” but it will not stand in the light of Divine revelation. The Rev. Samuel Chadwick, in his book *Humanity and God*, writes: “The operation of Divine sovereignty and the freedom of human will are not irreconcilable to the wisdom of God. Our responsibility is not in the explanation of mystery, but in obedience to obligation and privilege.”

I wonder if we are really alive to our responsibility and privilege. I have read that the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne had the picture of the setting sun painted on the dial of his watch, and underneath written “The night cometh”: every time he looked at his watch he was reminded of his responsibility as a minister of the gospel, and of the charge entrusted to him. If we study the life of the early disciples, we see how their whole being was animated and actuated by one great purpose—to be at their best for God. They carried the seriousness into their witness that the man of the world carries into his business, or the explorer into his journeys and toils: they lived for God, and for souls.

I am disturbed by the attitude of the Church in general toward aggressive evangelism or revival. By evangelism I do not mean just an effort to get people back into the Church; this effort, while commendable, does not get us very far. What I mean is something much more: it is the getting of men and women into vital, saving and covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, and so supernaturally altered that holiness will characterize their whole being: body, soul and spirit. It seems to me that the time has surely come when we must, with open minds and true heart, face ourselves with unqualified honesty and ask the question: “Am I alive to my responsibility as a labourer in God’s vineyard”? I, personally, have constantly to remind myself that I can be a very busy man, and yet a very idle minister. How easy it is to live more or less in the enjoyment of God’s free grace, and yet not realize that we are called to fulfil a divinely-appointed purpose. Our commission is to declare the whole council of God in the midst of men “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God”—that, brethren, is our privilege and our task. And yet we must confess that too often the great things of God have not been the predominating things: the lesser things of life have been allowed to absorb our interest, and the lure of the lesser loyalty has blurred our vision and robbed us of our passion to win souls for Jesus Christ.

What, then, is the essential to recovery and revival? Surely a whole-hearted desire to be right with God, to stand before Him in an adjusted relationship. I am convinced that if we are to see the hand of God at work, we must give to our lives the propulsion of a sacred vow, and with Hezekiah of old say: “Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel.” Brethren, *the new truths that grip us this morning must find expression and embodiment in a new dedication*—that is, if we are to be men whom God can trust with revival. As a young student in Edinburgh it was my privilege to sit under the ministry of the late Dr. Alexander Stewart of St Columba’s. How well I recall the subduing sense of the presence of God that came over us, as that prince of preachers called us to our task. “Upon you,” said the Doctor, “Christ lays the great task of evangelizing. We talk of the great trust of human life; the tremendous responsibility of an engine driver, the sea captain, or the leader of an army. There is entrusted to them the care of human lives. But to us there is entrusted the charge of human souls, souls to be brought to Christ for pardon and healing through His precious blood, to be sunlit by His presence and consecrated to His service, and at last to be set as gleaming jewels in the crown of His eternal glory: or, because of our lack of vision, be allowed to wander further and further from God, and, as the years go on, trample out the lingering image of their Maker and at last be shut out forever in the dark despair of unending woe.”

“Perishing, Perishing! Thou was not willing;
Master, forgive, and inspire us anew;
Banish our worldliness, help us to ever
Live with eternity’s values in view.”

May God help us to make this our prayer!

THE OUTCOME OF REVIVAL. Here, I may be allowed to give a word of personal testimony indicating what revival has meant to me. Some years ago, along with Dr. Thomas Fitch, I was speaker at the Edinburgh Convention for the deepening of spiritual life. We had come to the closing meeting, and I had given my address. As I sat listening to Dr. Fitch giving his last message, I suddenly became conscious of my unfitness to be on that platform. I saw the barrenness of my life and ministry. I saw the pride of my own heart. How very humiliating it was to discover that I was proud of the fact that I was booked to speak at five conventions that year! How deceitful and wicked the human heart can be! That night, in desperation on the floor of my study, I cast myself afresh upon the mercy of God. He heard my cry for pardon and cleansing, and, as I lay prostrate before Him, wave after wave of Divine consciousness came over me, and the love of the Saviour

flooded my being; and in that hour I knew that my life and ministry could never be the same again. Nor could I ever doubt the Baptism of the Holy Spirit—brethren, explain it as you will, to me it was a baptism from on High, and if in any small measure God has been pleased to use me, it is all because of what He did for me that night, when two things became clear to me: *Christ's willingness to save the "whosoever."* and *the awful state of the eternally lost in hell.* That is what revival has meant to me, personally; and is not that just what happens in a general sense in the community. "Revival," said Professor James S. Stewart, "is a new discovery of Jesus": God becoming real in the midst of men. I have known the Spirit of God laying hold of a community in such a way that you would hardly meet a person that was not seeking after God. Is it not of the reality of God's presence in revival power that Paul is writing—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? Brethren, is this light visible in us? Are our lives, are our churches, lights that mark the road that leads men to the Lamb? In closing, let me use a simple illustration. Some years ago I was on holiday on the Island of Jura. While there I had the use of a very fine sailing boat. One day, with my daughter, I sailed past a lighthouse that seemed to stand erect out of the ocean. It being high tide the rock on which it was built was covered. While passing, the thought occurred to me, "that lighthouse could be as treacherous as the rock on which it is built, but for the light." It was the light that made the difference, The structure was perfect and the building the work of a master—but a positive danger to navigation apart from the light! Is the lighthouse a far-fetched comparison, or do I see in it a representation of the institution we call the Church and the vocation we call the Ministry—without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, a positive danger in the community; with the anointing, giving direction because men see God?