THE CLOUDBURST

Revival

FOR THOSE WITH A HEART FOR REVIVAL

Keswick: A Good Word or A Bad One? Revisited

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it. – Isaiah 45:8
We are excited to announce a new dynamic site focused on giving the gospel to the lost. Our hope and prayer is for individuals and churches to use this tool to see many people brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Take time to visit the site today!
The years of 1921-1922 saw a mighty movement of the Spirit in parts of England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This issue of Revival magazine highlights the English and Scottish segments. This was the last major revival on the mainland of Great Britain. It is a classic account of the Spirit of Revival stirring His people to intercede for revival with expectation as well as preparing His servants to lead in the revival.

Interestingly, this revival began among Baptists and then quickly spread to others. O for another similar visitation! As we remember these "wonderful works" (Ps. 111:4), may we allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate faith in our hearts to cry out "Let the skies pour down righteousness."

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Gift- and ad-supported Revival magazine

Revival magazine is published and distributed free of charge, supported by the financial gifts of churches, individuals as well as advertisers. We express our heartfelt gratitude to God for the generous giving that has made this current issue possible. Requests to be added to the mailing list may be sent to the address below. Permission is granted to photocopy articles if distributed free of charge. Articles are also published online, at www.RevivalFocus.com. We would love to hear how God has used Revival magazine for the cause of revival both personally and corporately.
Spiritual life was evident in Lowestoft before the revival began. In 1917 the Rev. Hugh Ferguson began his ministry in the London Road Baptist Church, where the revival was to begin. The outstanding feature in the life of the Baptist Church prior to the revival was the weekly prayer meeting. This was held in the schoolroom on Monday evenings with an attendance of up to ninety people seeking God for a great manifestation of His power, especially among the growing number of young people who were attending the services and Bible classes. The people prayed faithfully in this way for two years. One member, who had prayed most fervently, died just before the revival began. Prayer reached a crescendo early in 1921.
Hugh Ferguson, who was grieved by the dancing and Sunday concerts that were being sanctioned by the Town Council, was further disturbed by an editorial in the Lowestoft Journal on January 15th entitled “Let Us Pray.” Councillor John Rushmere, supported by Alderman Harris, proposed, “That the meetings of the Council begin with prayer.” The motion was rejected. The following week the Editor took issue with Mr. Rushmore for bringing the proposal saying, “Prayer is good, but there are other mental and moral activities that are better.” The editorial prompted Hugh Ferguson to preach a sermon on Job 22:15 entitled, “What profit is there if we pray?” During the sermon he reminded his congregation: “All the trouble and confusion in public work today is due to the fact that men are trying to manage in the world without God. Nations and communities who forget God are in a veritable hell of misery, suffering and confusion. The great need of the hour is a truer, deeper and more widespread recognition of God in individual, municipal and national life.” Perhaps even more significant than this sermon was the resolve of Hugh Ferguson and the Rev. John Hayes of Christ Church to pray more urgently that God would work. Just over a month later God answered their prayers. …

Hugh Ferguson and his deacons at London Road Baptist Church, were afraid that having arranged a week of meetings they would not get enough people together to make Douglas Brown’s visit worthwhile. However, leaflets were distributed throughout the town and the following notice appeared in The Lowestoft Journal on Saturday, March 5th: “The visit is announced of Rev. A. Douglas Brown who will conduct special services in the London Road Baptist Church, Lowestoft from Monday-Friday March 7th-11th inclusive. The evening services are at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Brown, the son of the Rev. Archibald Brown, is a very eminent preacher who has a great message for the times. Full particulars of services are advertised.”

Opened in 1899, the Baptist Church was a splendid preaching auditorium situated in the town centre. It had a fine organ and seated seven hundred and fifty people. The impressive white pulpit supported on three pillars was occupied by a succession of men who were predominantly preachers of the Word of God. On Monday evening the church was well filled. Douglas Brown preached powerfully and there was a spirit of expectancy. On Tuesday a prayer meeting in the morning at eleven, was followed by a Bible reading at three in the afternoon, and another evangelistic service in the evening for which the church was again full. The Holy Spirit’s power was felt in the meeting and some said that Douglas Brown had made a great mistake in not appealing for decisions for Christ. Hugh Ferguson described the prayer meeting on Wednesday morning as “wonderful,” and the Bible reading in the afternoon was also very well attended. Here is Ferguson’s eye-witness account of the evening meeting when Douglas Brown preached on the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda in John chapter 5:

“We had the church packed in the evening. When our brother had delivered his message, he told the people he was going into the vestry and would be glad to see any who wanted help or desired to surrender themselves to Jesus Christ. I shall never forget that night as long as I live. Our brother passed through the deacons’ vestry – up a little stairway and into the pastor’s vestry – and he had not been there many minutes when first one came, and then another, and then another. I showed them the way into my little vestry, and then I came down the stairs into the chapel. The people were singing that grand old hymn:

_Thy welcome voice,_
_That calls me, Lord, to Thee:
For cleansing in the precious blood_
_That flowed on Calvary._

As I entered the church again and stood looking at the people, Brother Edwards paused for a moment and asked if there were any others coming into the inquiry-room. We had been praying for ‘showers’ that night and He gave us a ‘cloud-burst’. They came from all parts of the building and filled the deacons’ vestry. It was just like waiting outside some theatre; there was one queue down this aisle and another down that. I went to Douglas Brown and said, ‘What are we to do? You cannot deal with these people one by one!’ So we just opened the schoolroom and in they came – fifty or sixty people to start with. Some of the Christians had the good sense to come with the anxious and help them. I got them together in the schoolroom and began to speak to them in a company. I had been speaking for only a few minutes, the door opened and another batch came in, and all was confusion for a few minutes. Then I tried to speak to them again; and again the door opened and another batch came in. It was a wonderful sight. We got those who had definitely surrendered to Christ to keep on one side; and those who had difficulties we put into classrooms with a good Christian worker to help them and deal with them. Presently there was quietness, and that night between sixty and seventy of my dear young people, those we had been praying to God for – young men and women, from the ages of fifteen to twenty – some sixty or seventy of them that night ‘passed from death to life.’

One convert that night was Robert Browne, a young lad of fifteen years, who gave his version of the events of that memorable night:

I had connections with the Baptist Church and used to walk from my home in Oulton Broad with my pal to the Bible Class. It was so large that two rooms were hired in the old technical college, one for the young men’s class and one for the young ladies’ class. I was one of a large company of young men from fourteen years of age upwards. On the first Sunday in March the leader of our class, the late Mr. E. G. Baley, asked “his boys” as he called us, to do something for him that week. “I want you to come to these special services, come down one night, come down on Tuesday.” Someone said, “Yes, we’ll come.” And so I remember that on the Tuesday night I went with my friend and took part in this gospel service. There were hymns and prayers and Douglas Brown spoke; nothing particular happened but there was the sense of the moving of God’s Spirit. I remember how the next day my pal came along as I was digging my father’s allotment. “Hey! You going down to the meeting again tonight?” he asked. “I think I shall go.” “I’ll come with you,” I replied. The Wednesday night was an occasion that many will never
and the third group for the evening meeting. Prayers were made daily for the morning prayer session, another for the afternoon Bible reading, and a third for the evening meeting. These requests had to be divided into three sections, one for the morning, another for the afternoon, and the third for the evening.

On the Thursday evening the meeting was transferred to the Fisherman’s Bethel, not more than a hundred yards from the Baptist Church towards the Fishmarket. It was the annual meeting of the Bethel; Hugh Ferguson was in the chair and greetings and reports were on the program and Douglas Brown would preach. The building was packed and the atmosphere was charged with spiritual power as the people waited for blessing. “This is not an atmosphere for figures,” remarked the Treasurer as he gave his report in about three minutes! Douglas Brown was soon in the pulpit, and having been in the service of the White Star Shipping Line, he was quite at home in the nautical surroundings. He preached on the words of Peter, “If it be Thou, bid me come to Thee on the water.” He showed that stepping down from the boat and stepping on the water was like casting off all human dependence, stepping on the Word of God and coming to Christ. Hugh Ferguson takes up the story again:

The inquiry room was packed a few minutes after the sermon, with men and women crying to God, “What must we do to be saved?” It was like an auction room. There was my brother the Rev. John Hayes, Vicar of Christ Church, dealing with anxious souls, and the Rev. John Edwards of Brixton standing on another form, and I was standing with some others, and we were all engaged in the glorious work of pointing men and women to Christ. The place was so packed that when you got in you could not alter your position. The missionary had simply to tell the people, “You will have to come to Christ where you are.” That night they were coming to Jesus all over the building.

After another great meeting in the Baptist Church on Friday it was obvious that God was moving in a remarkable way and more room would need to be made for the blessing to continue. Douglas Brown had to return to his church in Balham for the Sunday services, but before he left, Hugh Ferguson, John Hayes and Peter Greasley, Port Missionary and leader of the Bethel, met together and decided to tear up their programs and do as the Spirit of God led. It was arranged therefore, that Douglas Brown would return to Lowestoft the following Monday.

On March 17th the first of the three reports appeared in The Christian entitled “Revival Times in Lowestoft” by M.J. Micklewright. Formerly a member of the church in Balham where Douglas Brown was pastor, he was himself now a lay pastor in East London. Having been unwell and hearing of the blessing that had broken out at Lowestoft, he obtained leave from his employment and went to see what great things God was doing. When, early in the second week, Douglas Brown saw Micklewright in one of the meetings he said, “The Lord sent you here, I want you for my ‘curate.’” Montague Micklewright’s task was to collect names and requests and list them for the prayer meetings, which were held in the Baptist Church each morning. After a short address by Mr. Brown, requests for prayer were read out. So numerous were these requests that they had to be divided into three sessions, one for the morning prayer session, another for the afternoon Bible reading, and the third group for the evening meeting. Prayers were made daily for the salvation of souls; husbands, wives, children, parents, friends and neighbors were brought before the Throne of Grace. “It was great to hear the sobs through those prayers, as they cried to God for the salvation of those who were lost,” commented Ferguson. One old man would stand out in the aisle of the church during those prayer meetings, lift his hand to heaven and cry, “O Lord, save!”

As the people prayed in Lowestoft they knew that in other places, such as the Ramsden Road Church, Balham, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle, people were praying for a mighty out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on Lowestoft and beyond. When Douglas Brown returned to Balham for the weekend of March 19th-21st, he told the Saturday evening prayer meeting the work of God in Lowestoft. The same spirit of prayer that he had experienced in the East Anglian fishing port descended on that meeting also. “We took it as an earnest of coming blessing,” wrote Montague Micklewright. “The following Sunday and Monday witnessed an open confession of faith on the part of scores of persons – some of them adults of mature age, the remainder children and young people. During the week in Lowestoft, upon a moderate statement, about eighty persons entered the inquiry rooms at the Baptist Church from Tuesday to Friday, and among them some very striking cases of conversion.”

After that first memorable week it was decided to widen the influence of the meetings, and so from the second week the afternoon Bible readings were held at Christ Church. The first one filled the Parish Room, the next one filled the church, and so it continued for three weeks, including Easter week, as Douglas Brown gave the Bible studies on the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. On those memorable afternoons the tramcars were full of people carrying Bibles, and when they reached Old Nelson Street the conductor would call out, “Get off here for Christ Church.” Someone said that the addresses were like “bombshells,” their aim was practical and they were directed at the lives of Christians. “Two stand out in the memory of all,” reported Micklewright. “They were on ‘The Judgement Seat of Christ.’ Solemn words were spoken in regard to some classes of worker[s] – including the preacher – who had occupied his time with a social gospel of philosophical discourse, and the Sunday School teacher or Bible Class leader who had been an unfaithful steward of the Word. Those services maintained the same wonderful attendances and earnestness, and on Good Friday afternoon, notwithstanding the brilliant sunshine and services in most other churches, Christ Church was more crowded than ever.”

The outstanding feature of this spiritual movement was the preaching of the Gospel. Unlike the more famous Welsh Revival seventeen years earlier, when at times and in some places the preaching was drowned by the singing and other phenomena, in East Anglia the preaching was predominant. Although the evening meetings were formal, with Douglas Brown preaching in academic gown, he preached simply on the basic truths of the Christian faith from Scripture, with the Cross central to every message. “Douglas Brown preaches the truth with no uncertain sound,” said Hugh Ferguson. “Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by the Atoning Blood, Regeneration and Renewal by the Holy Ghost, Anointing by the Holy Ghost for Service, Godly Living, Waiting for the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven. You get old Bible doctrines and Apostolic preaching and, thank God, Apostolic results.” There does not appear to have been the musical support that is so important to modern evangelistic campaigns, although the hymn singing from Sankey’s Sacred Songs was immensely popular. People came in their hundreds night after night to hear the preacher and his message. “He was different from anybody else I ever heard,” said one octogenarian looking back on those days. “It was as though he was speaking to me personally.” Standing … where the Baptist Church had stood in 1921, the old man recalled, “Oh the singing! You could hear it out here; it drew the people in.”
“My father took me to the meetings; I was twelve at the time," a lady recounted, “but I can hear Douglas Brown now: "The woman left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?’ (John 4:28-29). I also heard him preach on Jesus going up to the cross," she continued. “He kept pointing, you could see it all, it was so touching." Another lady who was converted at that time remembered Douglas Brown preaching on the cross. “His hair was white, his face was radiant, I felt he was speaking to me alone.”

An elderly widow, who was a girl in the Wesleyan Bible Class at the time of the revival, went to the meetings in the Baptist Church. “I remember Douglas Brown preaching on the Cross and describing the nails with tears,” she said. “I think the organist left the organ and went to the inquiry room. My Bible class leader touched me on the shoulder and spoke to me. I wept, and then I went out. It was for re-dedication because I was already converted.”

“I want you to come to the Baptist Church to hear a preacher tonight,” a mother said to her son one day in March 1921. Sixty years later he described the scene. “The church was full and Douglas Brown preached on 'The Left Water Pot.' As he neared the end of his address, and while he was still preaching, one or two people left their seats and went to the communion rail, and by the time the service was over people were standing all round it.”

Many exciting stories of conversions were recorded during those weeks, some involving whole families. A mother who was converted during the first week immediately put in a request for prayer for her son, who was preparing to emigrate to Canada. A few days later one of her daughters was converted and this was followed the next evening by the son who had been prayed for. He was well-known in the district, and at Douglas Brown's request he testified to his new-found faith the following evening and concluded by inviting other young men present to give their hearts to God. A companion of his who was in the congregation was quite overwhelmed by this testimony and tried to get away from the building. He was followed by one of the workers, who spoke to him about his soul. Before the evening was over he was on his knees to the pulpit and say to the people, “My friends, I want those of you who love the Lord Jesus to go out. I want you to go into the Parish Hall and pray.” They got up and went, here and there all over the church; they passed into the Parish Hall, some two hundred of them gathered there, and they held a prayer meeting. Then I had to say to the young men, “I want you to get up and sit on the floor at the front;” and we had to get people into that church packed in that way, and in the vestry. In the Parish Hall they were praying; there was a sister praying for her sister who was in the church, and at the close of the service that sister came to me and said, “I want to talk to you.” On the following Tuesday evening that sister was led to Christ in my study in answer to the prayer offered in the Parish Hall.

We can never tell you half of the answers to prayer. It has been most wonderful. Young men praying for the girls to whom they were engaged, girls praying for their young men, mothers praying for their boys and their girls, children praying for their fathers, friends praying for friends. I remember one night in the church there stood a young man with bowed head, and I said, “What are you doing here?” “I have been praying for my five companions, and four of them have come to Jesus, and I am praying for the last one; he has not come tonight. I do not know whether he came. I have not heard the end of the story, but that is what has been going on.”

A woman whose life and marriage were broken, crept into the back of one of the churches where the meetings were being held and listened to the Gospel. She came back night after night but she was afraid to respond because of the state of her life. At last she came and brought her husband with her; they came to Christ together and their marriage was restored. John Hayes had shaken hands with that woman as she walked down the aisle and said, “I am so glad to see you here tonight,” He did not know who she was until she came into the vestry and said, “I want Jesus Christ.” At the London Road Baptist Church one evening, a man who had come into the inquiry room and found peace with God was worried at the thought of telling his wife. Meanwhile, in another room a woman was being counseled. Both wondered how they would tell their respective partners about this, the greatest experience of their lives. They needn't have worried, they were husband and wife and they met on the premises before they went home, after coming to the meeting separately!

A man was kneeling on the pavement outside the Fishermen's Bethel one evening. Douglas Brown saw him and, thinking he was in trouble of soul, approached him to speak with him. “O sir,” he said, “don't disturb me: I’ve been praying for my boys for years, and the three of them are in the inquiry room, thank God!” Two professional men who were related and well-known in the town were converted on successive evenings. Two women of low repute knelt at the communion rail one night and were heard to cry, “O God! O God!” On another evening a powerful man who had a criminal record, and against whom the leaders had been warned, came into the church. He came into the vestry with the words, “I want God,” and knelt at the communion rail with a little girl of thirteen years as each received the Saviour. The man immediately joined himself with a band of open-air preachers and went all over the town confessing Christ as his Saviour. He soon brought two of his friends to the meetings who were also led to the Lord.

Douglas Brown and Hugh Ferguson were crossing the harbour bridge late one evening after a meeting when they came across a man who, attempting to speak to them, broke down, leaned over the railings and wept like a child. He was under deep conviction of sin and felt he was too bad to be saved. The two ministers took him aside and there on the pavement beside the bridge led him to Christ. The next evening he was first down the aisle as a testimony to his new found faith. On Good Friday morning a man was loitering on the sea front outside the hotel dining-room where Douglas Brown was having breakfast. The Holy Spirit prompted him to go and speak to the man, so he went out and joined him on one of the seats. He remarked on the “lovely” morning and “glorious”sea. “Yes, and what a glorious Saviour you have,” was the quick reply. He was an anxious soul and he was pointed to Christ there on that seat on the sea front.

A poor desperate woman, whose family had recently died, was passing the Baptist Church one evening; bare-footed and hatless she was about to throw herself into the harbor. Arrested by the sound of singing she slipped into the back of the church. Although she found no rest or peace that evening and went away stating her intention of not returning, the Spirit drew her, and the following evening she was again in the congregation and came to Christ. Snatched from the verge of suicide she became the caretaker of the Baptist Church for many years.
A builder, whose drunken ways created havoc in his home and almost drove his poor afflicted wife to suicide, was converted, together with his wife. Afterwards, instead of going to the public house, the man would push his wife to the services and prayer meetings in her invalid chair, where they would thank God for His mercy and pray for their children who had been affected by the evil influences formerly in their home. John Hayes commented, “There have been times when Mr. Ferguson and I have gone alone and sobbed out our hearts together in joy at the great things God has done for us.”

People from the seaside village of Kessingland four miles south of Lowestoft would bus, cycle or walk into the town for the meetings. A number of appeals were sent to Douglas Brown to preach in the village but it was impossible to arrange a visit during the first two weeks, so a message was sent to the people to devote themselves to prayer. A visit to Kessingland Bethel was arranged for the Thursday evening of the third week. The preacher delivered his message and had only ten minutes to spare before returning to Lowestoft to preach. Nevertheless, there were a number of professions of conversion and there are people in Kessingland today who remember that time.

On Saturday, 26th March 1921 a pressman who worked for a London newspaper was home on holiday and walking down a Suffolk lane when he heard a voice telling him to take a turning to the right. He had not gone far when he met a man carrying a carpet bag, walking miserably with his head bowed. The man looked up and recognized the printer saying, “I saw you at one of the meetings!” “Yes, I have been to some of the meetings,” the man replied. The man with the bag told his story: “Eleven years ago I left in disgrace. I have been in South Africa for eight years and I have only been back in England a few weeks. I have never been near a house of God and I felt I would just fling myself out of life. But last Wednesday my wife said to me, ‘I am going to one of the services and I want you to come too.’ When she said that, I took up a book and flung it at her head. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘You can do what you will, but a voice has told me to go and I’m going.’” That woman went to the meeting, and so did her reluctant and ill-tempered husband. On Saturday the man was wandering down that country lane under conviction of sin. He was soon kneeling in the lane with his new friend, and the burden of his sin was lifted. They went home and later that day the man’s wife was converted. The following day the pressman wrote to Douglas Brown and told him that at quarter to nine that evening there would be a little prayer meeting in a wood where a husband and wife, with three friends who had been converted the day before, and himself would give thanks “for God’s good work, the miracle of grace.”

During the last week of March, the meetings which had previously been held in the Baptist Church, Christ Church and the Bethel, moved to St. John’s Church where the vicar, the Rev. William Hardie, supported the work of revival. St. John’s, which was situated just south of the harbor bridge, seated eleven hundred people and its spire was a landmark in the centre of the town…. The fourth week of the revival saw the best attended meetings of all, with the numbers increased by people coming in from the surrounding neighborhood. The evening services were preceded by open-air meetings at six o’clock. Even today, more than seventy years later, there are those who say of those services in the church, “Oh it was wonderful! There were people everywhere, on the window sills … on the pulpit steps and in the aisles.” Others claim, “I came out at St. John’s.”

“On the Thursday night of the fourth week it was a wonderful sight,” said Hugh Ferguson. “An hour before the service was due to begin the great building was packed, and at the close we thanked God for many who had passed from death into life and realized Christ as their own personal Saviour.” One man, who was young at the time, told the writer how he saw one and another kneeling by the hedgerows as he walked home to Oulton Broad from St. John’s. The final meeting on the Friday evening was to have been held at the Baptist Church where it all began, but Mr. Ferguson knew it would be impossible to accommodate all the people there, so he and Mr. Hardie decided it should be held at St. John’s.

As on the previous evening, every conceivable space in the church was taken long before the service was due to begin, and there were still people outside. In many respects that final service was a summary of all that had happened throughout that memorable month. The four ministers in the pulpit were wonderfully united in the Gospel: the Baptists, Douglas Brown and Hugh Ferguson, and the Anglicans, John Hayes and William Hardie. The congregation included people from every kind of church, and from no church at all. Among them were Anglicans, Nonconformists, Salvation Army, Brethren and those who attended the Railway Mission. There were even Christian Scientists who, as Mr. Ferguson said, “Got converted and when they got Christ they broke from Christian Science.” Singing had featured in all the meetings throughout the month. Some of the gospel hymns from Sankey’s collection had been sung time and time again: “I Am Coming Lord,” “Come to the Saviour Now,” and “Blessed Be the Fountain of Blood,” which came to be known as the hymn of the revival. On that last evening St. John’s Church and its vicinity echoed with the strains of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” The organist was thrilled to play for such a meeting and his choir that evening, singing from the chancel, included many fishermen. They sang the version with the chorus:

I love Jesus, hallelujah, I love Jesus, yes I do.

They held on to that chorus two or three times. Another unforgettable moment was the singing by that great congregation of “God be with you till we meet again,” joined by the crowds in the street outside. It was the same simple, direct message which was again preached on that last evening; the gospel of man’s ruin through sin, and his salvation through Christ and His blood shed on Calvary.

There were remarkable scenes on Saturday morning, April 2nd as Mr. Brown left Lowestoft. A number of groups had assembled in the station booking hall and he went to each, bidding them farewell and committing them to God in prayer. A crowd of workers and converts gathered on the platform, together with Hugh Ferguson, John Hayes and William Hardie, and just as the train left Mr. Hardie struck up a verse of “God be with you till we meet again.” When the train reached Oulton Broad South another crowd, including many converts, was waiting on the station. Douglas Brown shook hands with as many as possible and committed them to God in prayer before the train bore him homewards to London. And so, what began as a five day mission among young people at the Baptist Church, a month later was concluded in this way.

[At this point, there were 500 converts. The revival continued to spread in numbers as it touched the area of England known as East Anglia. One eye-witness noted that the power of the revival brought life again to the saints and new life to the lost.]
If Christians are to live by faith and walk by faith, shouldn’t we know how it operates? Is faith a work...or is it a gift? What is the role of human responsibility in all this? In *The Faith Response*, John Van Gelderen addresses this confusion by outlining a proper, biblical understanding of the nature of faith, which is true God-dependence—realizing “I can’t but God can” —and he doesn’t stop there. In later chapters he makes practical application of this truth to our daily walk with God, showing how total dependence on God is wrapped up in the secret of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
The Northeast Scottish Revival of 1921

The Story of the Fisherman Revivalist, Jock Troup
THE YARMOUTH REVIVAL

In 1921 revival broke out in Yarmouth where thousands of fishermen and women were gathered for the season. Saturday was always the "big day" for these fisherfolk for the men returned then with their catches and did not go out again until the following Monday. As the boats came into the harbor, the womenfolk – the wives, mothers, sweethearts, and sisters of the fishermen – prepared the fish for the market. This left them free for themselves and a happy "get-together" on Saturday night. Jock and his companions took advantage of these occasions to preach the Gospel of Christ in the market places and wherever the folk were gathered together. With great earnestness they brought home to them the claims of Christ, calling upon them to repent and get saved.

One such night as several hundreds were listening in the open air, the mighty power of God came down upon them bringing great conviction of heart and distress of soul. It was revival-history in Scotland being repeated – as on the day when John Livingston preached in the graveyard of the Kirk o' Shotts outside Glasgow and 500 souls were smitten by the awful power of God. It was like the time, when the people of Northampton (Massachusetts) clung to the very pillars of the church while Jonathan Edwards, that mighty intellectual, preached the Gospel to them. Strong, sturdy fishermen were literally flung to the ground under deep conviction of sin – "slain" by the Spirit of the Lord. There were groans and cries of agony everywhere. Revival had come at last and it was only with great difficulty that the great meetings which were to follow, conducted by Jock Troup and his fishermen companions, could be drawn to a close, even at three o'clock in the morning! So great was the agony of soul among the workers after that the foreman would often come to Jock and say, "Go speak to that woman so she can get back to her work! Bring her through, for she is no good in such a state." For indeed, in every place convicted souls were weeping and breaking through for faith that would save them, through Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God swept over the entire coast of England, around Yarmouth. It was at this time that God raised up Douglas Brown, a Baptist Minister, as a chosen instrument for the revival. Douglas Brown was the son of the famous Archibald Brown who had been a co-worker with Charles Spurgeon in London. God led this young pastor to leave his church and give himself full time in revival meetings. For over two years he was busy day and night, preaching to thousands and seeing many saved. This revival fire swept even into London City. But this is another story which will have to wait its telling for another time.

The whole of Scotland was now astir as the news reached the families of the fishermen back home. The young converts had written home to tell of the mighty happenings in Yarmouth, describing their own experiences and pleading with their loved ones to come to Christ. I saw the fruit of this myself in 1931 while I was evangelizing with my beloved brother Jock in the Borderland between Scotland and England. We were conducting a campaign in the small fishing town of Eyemouth at the very extreme southeast coast of Scotland. It was a typical fishing town of some 2,000 population, though one could easily say that when Jock stood in the market square to preach, not less than 3,000 people gathered about him. They had crowded the roads from Burnmouth and other surrounding villages as they hurried into Eyemouth to see and hear their beloved Jock. Ten years had passed since the Spirit first began to work in mighty power in Yarmouth and consequently, because of the letters from the new-born souls there, in the coastal towns of Scotland.

What stories we heard of the mighty-working power of God in that place! The people pointed out a church which was constantly filled with anxious souls seeking the Lord and where the meetings could not close until the early hours of the morning. They told of that remarkable day when the fishermen returned home to Eyemouth from Yarmouth after they had been converted in the revival there. The villages and towns were filled with excited women and children, mothers, wives, and sisters, as they breathlessly awaited the return of their loved ones. Many of them had wonderful tales to tell of their own conversion, as they had sought the Lord and found Him after reading the letters from their loved ones in Yarmouth. Many were under deep conviction of sin. Many were still fighting God. And for those who had already been saved for some time – the news of the revival at Yarmouth and district had stirred them to new heights of holiness and new depths of devotion and love. Their hearts stood still as the fishing vessels appeared on the horizon and the cry arose, “The fleet is coming”. The people rushed down to the harbor and waited. As the ships came closer, singing could be heard coming over the water – not the old songs of the fishermen, but hymns – glorious Gospel hymns of Moody and Sankey, the hymns of their childhood days! As the fleet drew nearer to the harbor and the strain could be understood, the words were caught up by the waiting ones on the shore so that by the time the boats were tied, they were all singing together the hymns of Zion:

I was sinking deep in sin
Far from the peaceful shore;
Very deeply stained within –
Sinking to rise no more.
But the Master of the sea
Heard my despairing cry –
From the waters lifted me,
Now safe am I.

Love lifted me, Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
Love lifted me!

During one of the meetings a young Methodist local preacher came forward to tell Jock how he was "one of the first to fall" in the market square in Yarmouth. This was hard for me to understand, although I had read of this strange phenomena taking
immediately left Yarmouth for Fraserburgh, much to the surprise and amazement of his employers. By the time the train had reached Crewe in the North of England he had won to Christ all the people in his crowded compartment! How precious was this confirmation to his heart that the Lord was with him!

Upon arriving in Fraserburgh, he made his way to the Market Place and began to preach the Gospel. He was a stranger in this town and could think of no other place to go. A large crowd soon gathered and stood with rapt attention in spite of the fact that it was a cold and very windy night.

“Why don’t you go to the Baptist church?” someone asked him, “There is a meeting going on there and I am sure you would be welcome.”

“I don’t know where the Baptist church is”, he replied simply.

“Follow me and I will take you there”, the stranger volunteered.

Soon the great crowd of folk, headed by the stranger and evangelist appeared at the door of the Baptist church. The pastor and deacons were just coming out, after having finished a deacon's place in many revival meetings. I questioned him carefully.

“What do you mean by ‘falling’?” I asked. “Did you literally fall to the ground under the mighty power of God?”

“Yes”, he answered quietly, with that simple earnestness of the fisherfolk of Scotland, “I was standing in the market square, having been attracted there by the thousands of other people who were listening. I had no great desire to be saved as I was a good religious boy who had not lived a life of outward sin. I was self-righteous because of my church connections. The moment I stood on the outskirts of the crowd, God began to strip me of my rags of self-righteousness, and I saw myself a guilty sinner naked before a holy God. So awful was the sight that I was literally ‘slain of the Lord’ and fell to the ground under deep conviction. At the same time many others were slain in the same way so that the ground about me was like a ‘slain battlefield’.”

Jock had never been to Eyemouth before, but he had become a legend to many living there who had heard much about him through their loved ones. I had a little Baby Austin car at that time with a sliding roof. We parked the car in the middle of the Market Place and Jock stood on the seat, having pushed his head and shoulders through the open roof. From this position he preached night after night to the crowds. The people loved and revered him for his blessing in the past to their loved ones. Needless to say, many a lost sinner found his way to the Saviour in those days. And I have never ceased to thank God for letting me in on some of the secrets of the revival which took place there ten years before.

HIS VISION

When Jock was still in Yarmouth, at the beginning of the revival, while in prayer he saw a vision. In the vision he saw a man on his knees in Fraserburgh, praying to God. “Send Jock Troup to Fraserburgh”, he was saying. Jock, believing that this was God speaking to him, made haste to obey the heavenly vision. He immediately left Yarmouth for Fraserburgh, much to the surprise and amazement of his employers. By the time the train had reached Crewe in the North of England he had won to Christ all the people in his crowded compartment! How precious was this confirmation to his heart that the Lord was with him!

The revival fires swept around the Scottish coast. (The big cities Aberdeen and Dundee were mightily moved). The People’s Journal, a secular newspaper, dated 17th December, 1921, describes how the revival swept the towns and villages of the North-east coast, where Willie Bruce and other young men labored with Jock with utter abandonment, and reaped a mighty harvest.

People thronging the streets are going to church; nine out of ten can be counted on being bound for a place of worship.

They are not the conventional type of churchgoer. With them religion is part of themselves not to be confused with the donning of fine raiment. So one discovers them in the garb of their calling, the men in blue jerseys and caps, the women with shawls; but there are well-dressed people sprinkled among them, showing that the movement is not confined to the fishing class.

Where the church should hold five hundred, a thousand or more have contrived to find entry and the doorway is blocked with others who would fain get in.

There is no waiting for the fixed hour of beginning. Prayer is offered spontaneously, without a break, the worship switches again into hymn choruses. Voluntary testimonies are frankly and eagerly made by recent converts. Tales of drink and gambling, of domestic unhappiness, of soured existence flow from the lips of men and women who passionately plead with the unconverted.

The message is simple. There is insistence on one point – the acceptance of Christ as the only road to salvation.

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The story of the revival at Inverallochy and Cairnbulg, two rambling villages to the south of Fraserburgh, reads like a page from the ecclesiastical history of Scotland.

Since the boats returned, the devotions have risen to fever heat. The small Mission Hall has been crowded every night and four great out-door meetings have been held each Sunday. Out of the 1,500 population 600 conversions have taken place in a fortnight. Gambling has suddenly gone. Tobacco, pipes and cigarettes have been destroyed.

At Findochty, some miles from Buckie, a divine spark has been fanned into a fierce flame. From six p.m. to midnight, prayer meetings, conventions, and processions succeed each other. From Portessie . . . . Cullen, revivalist stations established there this week.

Each center is sending out its groups of God-fearing sturdy fishermen as day-missionaries to the immediate neighborhoods, which in turn follow the same course. By cycle, on foot, without regard to wind and weather, they make their pilgrimage. No district can withstand them for long. They are the triumphant bearers of a fiery cross with a new meaning and message.

Everywhere in the home, in the streets, there is joyous singing of hymns – “At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light . . . .”

THE REVIVAL IS CONTINUING . . . .

“We are not revolting against churches,” says Jock Troup, “but the Almighty is! The ministers have left the Bible for the new theology and are not preaching according to the Word as revealed. Not from the riches in the churches, but from among the lowly and humble, He has chosen His instruments to guide His people away from delusion to the Light, back to the simple truth which is Christ.”

GLASGOW

Mr. Peter McRostie and Mr. Alexander Galbraith, Superintendents of the Tent Hall and Seaman’s Bethel respectively, sent an urgent invitation to Jock to come to Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland. The great Mission Halls in Glasgow at that time were in a constant state of blessing. They were continually packed to capacity. Sometimes, many had to be turned away, even from the ordinary services. It was a common thing for souls to be saved in every meeting. Evangelists could labor in the city for months, going from church to church and Mission Hall to Mission Hall, so great was the harvest. Many Presbyterian ministers then preached the glorious Gospel. The Open Brethren Gospel Halls which honey-combed the city were centers of fervent evangelism where souls were saved and the young converts built up by the exposition of the Word. It was the expected thing for a special mission or evangelistic campaign to last at least one month.

Glasgow, a city of over a million souls, was at this time the most evangelistic city in the world. Open air meetings were conduct-
On Wednesday, July 20th 1921, Hugh Ferguson told the Keswick Convention about the revival in East Anglia. He described the situation in his church a few months earlier, with its large number of young people and well-attended prayer meetings praying earnestly for revival. “But I did not know where to find a Missioner,” he confessed. On a rare free Sunday in the autumn of 1920 Ferguson went to Balham to listen to the Rev. Douglas Brown, having heard of the blessing that accompanied his preaching at the Ramsden Road Baptist Church, and he was greatly impressed. Mr. Ferguson had tea with Douglas Brown on Monday afternoon and asked him if he would conduct a series of evangelistic services in Lowestoft, together with a course of Bible readings for Christians. “Ferguson,” replied Douglas Brown, “if I can be of any service, I will gladly come. I want no fee but only ask that my expenses be defrayed.” Douglas Brown’s subsequent testimony suggests that at the time of Mr. Ferguson’s visit he was not as ready to go as his answer implied, and it may have been that very occasion in the autumn of 1920 which was used by God to change the course of Douglas Brown’s life and ministry.

Before he arrived in Lowestoft on Monday, March 7th 1921, God had dealt with Douglas Brown in a very powerful way, which he later described at the Keswick Convention in 1922, where he was giving a series of Bible readings on Revival. In one of these addresses entitled, “A Revitalised Church,” he gave an account of God’s dealings with him prior to the revival. Douglas began by apologizing to the Convention for the fact that he had not had time to prepare his talks. He told them he had addressed seventeen hundred meetings in eighteen months. Certainly this was no exaggeration as his work load was very heavy; in fact, according to The Christian he had preached three hundred and seventy times from March to June, and in the Daily News it is reported that he had preached three hundred and ten times in eleven weeks.

Preaching from 2 Chronicles 7:14, Douglas Brown illustrated the words, “If my people shall humble themselves…” from his own experience. He said it had taken four months for that truth to get home to him, even though he had been a minister of the Gospel for twenty six years. It is significant that it was just after Mr. Ferguson’s visit that the crisis came. The rest of the story is best told in his own words:
"God laid hold of me in the midst of a Sunday evening service, and He nearly broke my heart while I was preaching. I went back to my vestry and locked the door, and threw myself down on the hearthrug in front of the vestry fireplace broken-hearted. Why? I do not know. My church was filled. I loved my people, and I believe my people loved me. I do not say they ought to, but they did. I was as happy there as I could be. I had never known a Sunday there for fifteen years without conversions. That night I went home and went straight up to my study. My wife came to tell me that supper was ready and was waiting. ‘You must not wait supper for me,’ I said. ‘What is the matter?’ she asked. ‘I have got a broken heart,’ was my reply. It was worth-while having a broken heart for Jesus to mend it. I had no supper that night. Christ laid his hand on a proud minister, and told him that he had not gone far enough, that there were reservations in his surrender, and He wanted him to do a piece of work that he had been trying to evade. I knew what He meant. All November that struggle went on, but I would not give way; I knew God was right, and I knew I was wrong. I knew what it would mean for me, and I was not prepared to pay the price. Then Christmas time came, and all the joy round about seemed to mock me. I knew what Jesus wanted. He showed me pictures of my congregation, and Douglas Brown on his knees in the midst of them. I saw Douglas Brown praying for his own folk, to whom he had preached for over fifteen years. I saw it all in the picture. The struggle went on, and I said to the Lord, ‘You know that is not my work. I will pray for anyone else who does it, but please do not give it to me, it will kill me. I cannot get into the pulpit and plead with people. It is against my temperament, and You made me.

“Then something happened. I found myself in the loving embrace of Christ for ever and ever; and all power and joy and all blessedness rolled in like a deluge. How did it come? I cannot tell you. Perhaps I may when I get to heaven. All explanations are there, but the experience is here. That was two o’clock in the morning. God had waited four months for a man like me; and I said, ‘Lord Jesus, I know what you want; You want me to go into mission work. I love Thee more than I dislike that.’ I did not hear any rustling of angels’ wings. I did not see any sudden light.”

Douglas Brown’s experience was reminiscent of the American evangelist D. L. Moody who had to be willing to leave his church in Chicago and preach wherever God led him before the love of God flooded his soul until he had to ask Him to stay His hand.

It was in the same Keswick sermon that Douglas Brown described the other great moulding factor in his life: the influence of his father, who was Minister of the East London Tabernacle when Douglas was a boy. Archibald Brown often took his family to Keswick, just south of Lowestoft, for their seaside holidays, in the very area where his son was to be so mightily used by God. Douglas Brown related this vivid memory of his father:

“As a little schoolboy of ten, on Friday nights I used to unlace my boots and take them off and creep along from the room where I was supposed to be doing my homework to the door of my father’s study. To get to that door I had to go down six steps and every one of them creaked; but even as a little schoolboy I was prepared to spend eight to ten minutes getting down those steps very carefully and cautiously to that door, to listen. Every Friday night father was in his study preparing for Sunday, and he used to pray. What I heard through that keyhole was more wonderful than what I heard from the platform on Sunday morning. I heard a big strong man telling Jesus that he was nothing, that Jesus was everything. I heard the agony of Calvary. I listened to somebody who understood the fellowship of the sufferings of his Lord, until on Friday nights he was, as it were, hanging on the Cross with Jesus: ‘I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ I could not understand it all as a little boy, but it gripped me. I feel the aftermath of it today.”

The testimony of Douglas Brown to his father’s influence is concluded by the dedication of a volume of his addresses:

“This volume of addresses I humbly and gratefully dedicate to the memory of my dear father, the Rev. Archibald Brown, whose life and example were a constant and sacred inspiration to me, not only in my early life, but also through the later years, until he fell asleep in Jesus. Whatever blessing has come to other lives through my ministry and revival work I owe, under God, to the inspiration, advice and example of one who, by his fidelity to the truth and loyalty to Christ, awakened in my own heart the Calvary passion for souls, apart from which all preaching fails to reach its highest objective.”

On the Saturday night I wrote out my resignation to my church, and it was marked with my own tears. I loved the church, but I felt that if I could not be holy I would be honest; I felt that I could not go on preaching while I had a contention with God.
These were the events and influences engineered by a sovereign God to prepare His servant for a work of revival in England that has not been repeated. If God prepared a man through childhood into manhood, and then took him away from the scene of a remarkable ministry in London to do greater things in an East Anglian fishing town and beyond, that should be recognized as a work of revival. When Douglas Brown set out for Lowestoft at the beginning of March 1921, he was “a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21).

On another evening, Douglas Brown preached on “The Secret of Revival” and gave personal testimony to God’s dealings with him, and to what he described as his “baptism of the Holy Ghost” before his first coming to Lowestoft in March:

“I confess with sorrow and shame, humbly before God that the last eight months of my life have been months of tremendous emptying. Blessed be God! They have been months of filling. I am giving this little bit of experience humbly to the glory of God, that it may help others. I only really learned the meaning of the baptism of the Holy Ghost at the end of last February, and I had been a minister of Jesus Christ for twenty-seven years. I thank God for that morning when He nearly broke my heart in my study, when I saw all things that were wrong, and I knew that the only hope of usefulness and power, and joy, and gentleness, and love, was for Jesus Christ to come into my life and absolutely reign; and He showed me that just as I had received a Saviour by an act of faith, so I had to come humbly and penitently to His feet and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

“I can remember that morning as if it were this morning. As I knelt there with the tears running down my cheeks, I said, ‘Lord Jesus, I am not worthy. I feel I ought not to ask for such a thing. Thou mightest strike me dead for presumption; but, O Jesus, Thou has told me, ‘Thou hast led me, Thou hast brought me to this. For the sake of my church, for the sake of my congregation, for the sake of the men and women that I meet day by day, for the sake of my witness to that wonderful Calvary, Lord Jesus, I trust Thee, I ask Thee now to give me the Holy Spirit. I would receive Him for a life of purity, a life of power, a life of loyalty to Jesus, a life of faithful witness. None of these things could ever be mine in my own power. I am a horrible failure, and I know it! O Lord, give me Thy Holy Spirit,’ and He led me, He gave me fire that morning, and I thanked Jesus Christ. I did not think about my failings. I never felt so bad in my life, but I took Him. Within four days I was in Lowestoft; the cloud burst, and souls were being born again by the score.”

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KESWICK

A Good Word or a Bad One?

Revisited

by John R. Van Gelderen
Occasionally I hear people use the label Keswick in a derogatory way. Yet others use the term quite positively. Someone who did not know the term would wonder if Keswick is a good word or a bad one. The issue, of course, is not the term, but what one means by the term.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEOLOGY

Keswick is a beautiful town nestled in the Lake District of England. In 1875, a conference began there which continued annually as “The Keswick Convention.” Its original stated purpose was for the deepening of spiritual life. To accomplish this purpose, a definite theological position was taught—sanctification by faith, sometimes called holiness by faith.

The focus of the theology was on Christ as one’s life. This was sometimes called “The Higher Life,” or “The Deeper Life,” or “The Victorious Life.” Although in later years other ideas were sometimes attached to some of these labels in various sub-groups, their original usage was Christ-focused, and still remains so by the majority of those who use the terms.

In other words, the “Higher Life,” the “Deeper Life,” the “Victorious Life,” the “Spirit-filled Life,” the “Christ-Life” is not a new line of teaching. It is not a mere set of doctrines; it is not a set of motions; it is not a conference, a convention, or a movement—it is a Life. That Life is a Person, and His name is Jesus! Jesus is the “Higher Life.” Jesus is the “Deeper Life.” Jesus is the “Victorious Life.” How can it be otherwise? Sanctification, or holiness by faith, is simply accessing the “Holy Life” by faith. It is “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” by “faith” (Gal. 2:20). Holiness by faith is accessing the Holy Life of Jesus to empower holy living and serving. It is becoming “partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:10) through the impartation of His life, not a self-dependent attempt to imitate His life.

Keswick theology teaches that “progressive sanctification” does not mean an inevitable gradual sanctification, but rather that sanctification is accelerated by faith choices and is hindered by choices of unbelief. Obviously, the Holy Spirit works keeping, but believers are responsible to cooperate in faith for sanctification to progress according to God’s will. Keswick teaches that just as justification is by faith, so also sanctification is by faith. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6).

To help people understand how to “progress” in sanctification, Keswick emphasized a specific theme each of the five days of their convention: Sin (sin is the problem, both outer man sins and especially inner man sins), Provision (Christ is the answer through the cleansing power of His blood and the enabling power of His Spirit), Consecration (the access to Christ’s provision is through surrender to/dependence on Christ’s leadership and surrender to/dependence on Christ’s enablement), the Spirit-filled Life (surrender/faith accesses Christ’s Life—the Spirit-filled life for holiness and service), and Service (the whole point of sanctification by faith is to then serve by faith primarily in the declaration of the Gospel).

The Keswick Convention began in 1875 and continues to this day in England. However, as with many movements, eventually the original focus was lost so that today the Keswick Convention no longer truly represents its original purpose. The first two generations of Keswick (the first eighty years) held to the original theology. In other words, Keswick theology stayed largely true to its beginning from 1875 to the 1950s. During this time, Keswick guarded itself from the extremes of certain factions within the “Holiness Movement.” Ecclesiastically, however, Keswick began to weaken during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s and 1930s. Their motto of “all one in Christ,” though a blessed truth in biblical proportion, set them up for potential compromise when this controversy came on the scene. This compromise eventually eroded their theology in significant ways by the 1960s. However, it should be noted that many other Keswick or Keswick-type meetings have stayed true to Keswick theology to this day.


Notice how familiar many of these names are and how they are esteemed even to this day. R. A. Torrey was so respected in his day that he was the editor of The Fundamentals. The Fundamentals contain 90 articles. Speakers associated with Keswick theology wrote at least 21% of these articles. Of the total number of authors used, at least 29% were associated with Keswick theology. This is a significant fact and shows that Keswick was mainstream in the beginnings of biblical fundamentalism. Therefore, Keswick was clearly considered “orthodox.” To denigrate Keswick is to denigrate the roots of fundamentalism.

I prefer to call Keswick theology “revival theology,” although there is a sense in which revival theology is broader than sanctification by faith. When one is awakened to the need to access the indwelling Life of Christ by faith and begins to appropriate that Life for the steps of obedience, personal revival occurs. Personal revival is a restoration to spiritual life—the Life of Christ in you accessed by faith as the animating power to your personality. This doctrine did not begin in 1875 with Keswick. It began in the New Testament (John 10:10, 14-16; Rom. 6-8; II Cor. 3:5, 17-18; 9:8; Gal. 2:20; 3:1-5,14; Eph. 3:17; 5:18; Phil. 1:21; Col. 1:27; 3:4). Even in corporate revival this is what occurs to the individuals involved. This is revival theology! In fact, in The Flaming Tongue, J. Edwin Orr’s account of the early twentieth-century revivals which affected at least 57 nations, Orr repeatedly documents that Keswick-type conferences were used of God to either ignite revival fire or to greatly fuel it.

In the work entitled Five Views of Sanctification, J. Robertson McQuilken wrote the Keswick view, and John Walvoord wrote the Augustinian-Dispensational view. After each author presented his view, he then had opportunity to respond to the other views. Essentially, McQuilken maintained no real difference between the Keswick view and the Augustinian-Dispensational view, and Walvoord maintained no real difference between the Augustinian-Dispensational view and the Keswick view. Dispensational theology is broader than just sanctification, whereas Keswick deals primarily with sanctification. But on sanctification, Keswick theology is Dispensational theology embraced by many today.

INACCURATE ACCUSATIONS

Over the years I have come across several inaccurate accusations against Keswick theology.

PASSIVITY

Some accuse Keswick of passivity. This is probably because Keswick emphasizes resting in Christ. However, the emphasis is not to sit back and do nothing, but rather trust to obey. It is obedient faith,
and, therefore, believing obedience. Resting in Jesus involves the due diligence of faith-filled (resting) obedience (labor) as stated by the Apostle, “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” This is not mere “labor,” but “labour” that is trusting in “his working.” The emphasis is not idle passivity, but active cooperation—the cooperation of surrendering to the Spirit’s leadership and depending on His enablement. This is walking in the Spirit, which obviously involves steps, not quietistic passivity. But the steps are steps of faith, not the mere motions of flesh-dependent activity. This is what brings “rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29), for as one preacher said, “When you wake up with Jesus, He carries the load!”

Keswick denounces performance-based sanctification or “struggle theology,” which is flesh-dependence in an effort to live the Christian life. Sanctification by works is just as wrong as justification by works (Gal. 3:1-3). You do not get justified by faith, and then get sanctified by struggle. Sanctification is also by faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (Heb.11:6). Obviously there are struggles in life, but flesh-dependence for frustrated Christian living is an unnecessary struggle. Faith for victory means you are depending on the victorious life of Christ to enable you to obey. It is not a matter of you trying to live the Christian life (hollow motions), it is a matter of trusting the indwelling Christ to enable you for the steps of obedience (empowered motions). So victory without trying does not mean victory doing nothing: it means victory with trusting. True faith is not an inward, “navel-gazing,” self-focus; it is focusing rather on Christ, the true object of faith, that He might express His very Life through yours. To accuse Keswick theology of passivity is simply not accurate.

SUBJECTIVISM

Occasionally Keswick theology is labeled derogatorily as being too subjective. This is probably because of Keswick’s emphasis on the reality of the Holy Spirit. However, Keswick emphasizes the subjective reality of the Spirit, based on the objective boundaries of the Word. The emphasis is by no means the Spirit without the Word. Nor is it the Word without the Spirit. Rather, it is the Word and the Spirit. The Spirit without the Word is delusion leading to strange fire. The Word without the Spirit is deadness leading to no fire. But the Word and the Spirit is dynamic leading to true Holy Spirit fire.

Interestingly, Robert Thomas rightly deals with the dangerous subjectivism of evangelicals in his book called Evangelical Hermeneutics. He names many names in the evangelical world that he considers guilty of true subjectivism. But when he seeks to show a right approach, he often quotes J. Robertson McQuilken as handling matters biblically. McQuilken, who wrote several helpful books, is the writer of the Keswick view of sanctification in Five Views of Sanctification, which we noted earlier. Keswick teaches the subjective reality of the Holy Spirit based on the Word, not subjectivism which leaves the scriptural foundation. To accuse Keswick of subjectivism reveals an inaccurate understanding of Keswick teaching.

SECOND BLESSING

Some accuse Keswick of second blessing theology. But this shows great ignorance of both true second blessing theology and Keswick theology. Second blessing theology speaks of receiving a once-for-all second blessing which puts one on a new stage never to fall back to the former stage. Keswick speaks of alternating between two conditions of either walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit. It is not once for all. Second blessing theology demands a “second” event. Keswick teaches that you were given the whole package at salvation and that you can access the whole blessing immediately (and some do), but that many, because of a lack of understanding, do not until later. Even then, it is not a second blessing, but a second, and a third, and a fourth, and so on. Second blessing theology says that you receive something you did not yet have. Keswick theology teaches that you, by faith, access your first blessing! However, when one has not accessed the provision of the indwelling Christ for quite some time, when he does so, it may seem like a second blessing, even though technically it is not. This explains why some early Keswick writers used the terminology of second blessing (which confuses matters today), but they did so only in the sense that I have described above, which is different from true second blessing theology.

SINLESS PERFECTIONISM

I suppose this charge comes because Keswick theology emphasizes the victorious life of Christ. The provision for victory is perfect. It has to be—His name is Jesus! But Keswick makes clear that we still live in the “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6). The focus of Keswick is not that you cannot sin, but that you are able not to sin because of the indwelling Christ. Keswick makes clear that tragically Christians sin. Yet it teaches that the focus should not be on being defeated, but rather on victory in Christ by faith. The provision of the indwelling Christ is perfect, but our consistent access of that perfect provision is sadly imperfect.

This is quite different from a Wesleyan position. There is no such thing as a Wesleyan/Keswick position. Rather, there is a Dispensational/Keswick position. To accuse Keswick theology of sinless perfectionism is simply not being honest with the facts of Keswick teaching.

LET GO, AND LET GOD

Sadly, this phraseology has had various aberrant concepts attached to it in recent decades. Therefore, I do not use this phrase. However, its original usage in the early Keswick era was simply to “let go” of self-will and self-dependence, and “let God” by yielding to God’s will in God-dependence. It represents the words of the Lord Jesus “Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24). While it is understandable that the aberrations of this phrase must be clarified, it is sad that the original God-centered and ultimately Christ-centered meaning of the phrase is being denigrated by some as well.

REASONS FOR THE ATTACK

Several reasons for the criticism of Keswick theology are observable.

MISINFORMATION

Amazingly, I have been in various settings where speakers had just taught Keswick/Deeper Life theology and then said, “Now I’m not talking about Keswick,” or “I’m not talking about the Deeper Life.” This shows that they do not really know what the labels actually mean, but are likely functioning off of hearsay and concepts which have been attached to the terms Keswick or Deeper Life by their critics. First impressions are mind-setting. Someone “bent their ear,” or they read the critics of Keswick without actually reading the Keswick authors themselves. Then, when they criticize the term Keswick or its related terms, they are shooting themselves in the foot because they are undermining what they themselves teach. Obviously this is unintentional, but still it is harmful to that which they believe.


**THOROUGHGOING CALVINISM**

Not all proclaimed-Calvinists clash with Keswick, but those of a thorough-going system often do. Keswick emphasizes man's responsibility of faith (sanctification by faith). Some Calvinists claim this is man-centered. But how can God-dependence theology be man-centered? Faith is not a work; it is dependence upon the Worker. The inspired Word says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him" (Rom. 4:5). Therefore, faith is the opposite of works. Faith says, "I can't, but God can," and so depends upon God. The focus of true faith is, of necessity, on God, who is the object of faith. This is undeniable God-centered.

The clash is between inevitable faith (thorough-going Calvinism) and responsible faith (Keswick). Does progressive sanctification just inevitably occur for every true child of God, or can it be hindered by unbelief and accelerated by faith? Keswick claims the latter. Interestingly, responsible faith (Keswick) also clashes with the misfocused faith of unfettered choice (thorough-going Arminianism). Responsible faith means you are responding to the convincing work of the Spirit based on God's Word. It is not unfettered choice, nor is it inevitable. It is a true responsibility.

When I hear or read what some Calvinists claim that Keswick teaches, I'm amazed at the inaccuracy. Perhaps some read the critics of Keswick and not Keswick authors themselves. Others may perhaps read Keswick authors but do so with such bias that they do not read what the authors are actually saying. The outcome is major misrepresentation.

**PERSONAL DEFEAT**

Some may attack Keswick because they supposedly "tried it, and it didn't work" for them. However, the problem is not with the provision of the indwelling Christ, but with either a misunderstanding of truth or a misapplication of surrender.

Some people misunderstand faith, what it is, and how it operates. Like a triangle with three sides, faith must involve the three parts of the soul of man (mind, affections, will), or it is not true faith. The mind must understand the foundation of truth revealed in God's Word. The affections must be affected (convinced) by what is understood. Then the will must engage in God-dependence based on Spirit-convincement of the reality of God's words. Regarding sanctification by faith, it seems to me that some may attempt to move from mere intellectual understanding to a choice of the will without actually being convinced by the Spirit of the truth involved. This would "short-circuit" the process because it would not be real faith. It would be wishful thinking rather than convinced confidence. When this is the case, some may conclude, "I tried it, and it didn't work." However, when the Holy Spirit illumines truth, the convincement leads to genuine faith – which always works.

Others misapply surrender/faith. They may not have given their all to Christ, trusting Him to take it. Or they may not have taken His all to them, trusting Him to give it.

For those who "tried it and it didn't work," the problem is not with the truth of the provision of the indwelling Christ which may be accessed by faith. Yet it is always easier to blame something other than yourself.

**SATANIC ATTACK**

Satan attacks revival truth! He is the master deceiver. Revival theology (Keswick) threatens his turf. Much of the controversy is stirred up by his deceptions. When you understand that Keswick-type conferences were used to ignite revival fires or fuel them in the early twentieth-century revivals, it is no wonder that Satan has attacked Keswick theology in order to prevent another great wave of revival blessing.

**CONCLUSION**

Obviously, an article which is brief in its nature cannot deal with all the details of the present confusion around the word Keswick. May I suggest that you read the Keswick authors, and let them speak for themselves. Their writings have been blessed of God to point many to Christ and the Word, away from self and the world, which gloriously passes the tests of 1 John 4. Read G. Campbell Morgan's The Spirit of God, Evan Hopkins' The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life, J. Elder Cummings' Through the Eternal Spirit, Handley G. C. Moule's Practicing the Promises and his treatment of Romans 6-8 in his commentary on Romans, F. B. Meyer's many books, W. H. Griffith Thomas' treatment of Romans 6-8 in his commentary on Romans, A. J. Gordon's writings, A. T. Pierson's works, and so forth. Steven Barabas quotes from many Keswick authors in his book entitled So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention.

So, is Keswick a good word or a bad one? If you mean sanctification by faith, thus accessing the victorious life of Christ, that is gloriously good! However, I prefer to use the label "revival theology." The issue, of course, is not a label, but truth.

The Christian life is not merely a set of moral actions. Unsaved moralists have that. The Christian life is a life—a person—and His name is Jesus! Jesus Christ is the Christian Life. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the only one who can live the Christian life. But when you were born again, Christ, the Christian life Himself, moved into you —to impart to you His life. He lives in you so that you, yet not you, but Christ in you, can live the Christian life. When you got saved, Christ moved in—to live His life, not yours! But this is not automatic. As you received Christ by faith, you also must walk by faith one step at a time (Col. 2:6). This is accessing the eternal life of Christ as the abundant life in Christ. This is sanctification by faith. Ultimately, this is revival reality.

For those of us who believe the theology of “Christ in you accessed by faith,” the derogatory slurs against this truth are not small matters. Jesus is the Victorious Life, the Higher Life, the Deeper Life, the Spirit-filled Life, the Revived Life, the Hidden Life,—the Christ-Life! To us, when holiness by faith—the Holy Life accessed by faith—is attacked, the attack is ultimately on the indwelling Life of Christ.
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