



Children in Revival

Astonishing times in Scotland from
the 18th to the 20th Century

Harry Sprange



Christian Focus Publications





© 2002 Harry Sprange
ISBN 1-85792-789-3



Published in 2002
by
Christian Focus Publications Ltd
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Scotland, Great Britain.

Previous edition published as *Kingdom Kids* in 1994
by Christian Focus Publications

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister MacInnes

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Christian Focus Publications.



List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Reference	Located in
AH	The Argyllshire Herald	National Newspaper Library, Colindale
BHMS	The Baptist Home Missionary Society Annual Reports	Baptist Union Archives, Glasgow
BJ	The Banffshire Journal	Elgin Public Library
CW	The Campaign Weekly	Mitchell Library, Glasgow
EC	Elgin Courant	Elgin Public Library
EMC	The Elgin and Morayshire Courier	Elgin Public Library
GRT	Glasgow Revival Tracts	Mitchell Library, Glasgow
GSS	Gaelic School Society, Annual Reports	New College Library, Edinburgh
GWH	Glasgow Weekly History	Mitchell Library, Glasgow
IA	The Inverness Advertiser	National Newspaper Library, Colindale
RM	The Religious Monitor	New College Library, Edinburgh
SG	The Scottish Guardian	Mitchell Library, Glasgow
TB	Times of Blessing	New College Library, Edinburgh
TC	The Christian	Nat. Library of Scotland (incomplete)
TF	The Freeman	National Newspaper Library, Colindale
TR	The Revival	Nat. Library of Scotland (incomplete)
WHJ	The West Highland Journal	National Newspaper Library, Colindale
WJ	The Wynd Journal	Mitchell Library, Glasgow



Children praying!
Children praying everywhere.
Children praying in classrooms.
Children praying in dormitories.
Children praying in school-yards.
Children praying in factory yards.
Children praying in fields.
Children praying on the hillside.
Children praying by the riverside.
Children praying behind hedges.
Children praying in woods.
Children praying on Glasgow Green.
Children praying on the beach.
Children praying under upturned boats.
Children praying in the snow.
Children praying in homes.
Children praying in attics.
Children praying in half-built houses.
Children praying in churches.
Children building their own huts to pray in.
Children praying in their hundreds.
This is the untold story of Scotland's praying children!





Foreword

‘Do you *really* believe in God?’

The question came from eleven year old Zoe, as she sat waiting for a holiday club programme to start. There was something about the emphasis she put on ‘really’ that caught my attention and we began to chat. After a few moments I realised that she had not knowingly met anyone who actually believed in God’s existence, let alone had faith to believe that God wanted to make a difference in her life.


I had just come back from a trip abroad where children seemed so full of God, and so passionate to serve Him. A great sadness flooded over me as my attention drifted from Zoe to the crowd of excited children that was filling the room in front of me.

‘Oh God’, I cried out silently, ‘rescue this lost generation’.

The pain in my spirit was made the worse from having read a book that had proved a milestone in my calling to serve God amongst children. A book that had moved me from the position of believing that ‘God can’ to a point where I realised that ‘God does’. The book is none other than the one you are holding.

A new passion is rising in the hearts of young people and many children and youth workers. A passion to see the new generation rise to the challenge of seeing God’s kingdom established in schools and homes, and the places where children spend time. We are realising that God needs to work beyond our strategies for outreach and evangelism to do something extraordinary to the ordinary. We desperately need to see revival.

In the pages that follow you will read about God doing extraordinary things as children begin to pray. You will discover that schools can and have been turned upside down by the power of God. That families can and have been rescued from disaster



Children in Revival

because of the prayers of young children, and that whole communities can and have been radically affected for good.



This is a history of God's response to the prayers of the children of Scotland. It is a history of how God has sometimes used children as the spark for revival.

If God has done it there and then, he can do it here and now. Read the book and fan your faith.

Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy (Hab. 3:2).

Graham Reed

CrossBow Ministries





Preface

Originally published in 1994 by Christian Focus Publications under the title *Kingdom Kids: The Story of Scotland's Children in Revival*, this new edition has been expanded, and where necessary corrected as further material has come to light. The author is very grateful to all those who have submitted items from their own research or pointed him in the direction of new sources. No doubt still more stories will come to light, but this story of the prominent place of children within Scotland's religious heritage needs to be retold again and again, not to generate a nostalgia for the past, but to inspire your faith for the future of what God can do in our own land.

Harry Sprange
Inverkeithing
June 2002



Note on the Author

After graduating from the London Bible College with BD Hons (Lond.), Harry Sprange worked briefly with the youth service in inner London, before being appointed to an experimental youth ministry in Craigmillar, Edinburgh, where he served as Baptist minister for twelve years. In 1987 he founded a children's prayer network called Kingdom Kids (Scotland), which was part of the Prayer for Revival Network (Scotland) and linked to the AD 2000 Prayer Track. This is now part of Pray for Scotland. He continues to offer prayer conferences for children, and is also available to act as a consultant in the area of children's discipleship, and to teach revival history. His vision remains to see children and young people playing their full part in the life of the local church.




Introduction and Notes on Sources

In recent years there has been much serious study and discussion on the place of children in the Christian Church, but little in the way of historical research, and probably none in the specific area of looking at the part children have played in religious revival movements. It is gratifying to discover that Brian Edwards in his recent book *Revival*¹ has devoted a ten page section to children and youth, and from Scotland he includes references to the Kilsyth and Cambuslang revivals of 1742, Dundee in 1839, and Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh in 1905. Only two books have come into my hands specifically on the place of children in Revival, one written for the children of Ulster, the other for those in Wales.² To my knowledge, no-one has attempted to collate the historical material available on Scotland.

This book started as a study of children in the history of the Church, with an emphasis on revival world-wide, but this has had to be narrowed down to a study limited to Scotland, simply because of the sheer volume of material available. One of the first problems I encountered is that most of these sources are anecdotal, and often the precise context and even location is left vague. Many of the magazine and newspaper reports are borrowed from others, or from ‘correspondents’ which are undated, and may be several weeks after the events described have transpired. This does not make it easy to pin-point precise dates, nor therefore to trace other references. We are still remarkably well served with information, however. James Robe published the events of 1741-2 soon after they happened in the *Glasgow Weekly History of 1742*, and in his *Monthly History*,

1. ‘Revival’ by Brian H. Edwards, Evangelical Press, 1990.

2. ‘The Children in ’59’ by Rev. Henry Montgomery, reprinted by order of Belfast Presbytery, 1936, and circulated by the Sabbath School Society for Ireland, and ‘Something Wonderful Happened’ by Mabel Bickersteth, Committee of the 1904-5 Memorial Fund, 1954.




Children in Revival

collated and published in 1744. The revival of 1859 ff. was even better covered by the Christian newspapers of the day like the *Freeman* (produced by the Baptists in London) and the *Scottish Guardian* of Glasgow which from 30th October 1859 ran a regular column entitled 'Revival Intelligence'. Other publications were magazine / newsletters like *The Revival* (London, founded mid 1859, after a decade continuing as *The Christian*) and more especially the *Wynd Journal* published in Glasgow from 1st October 1859 until 13th September 1862, described by the *Freeman* of 26th October 1859 as 'a weekly publication of revival and home mission news'.

The second difficulty has been to define what age group is meant by the term 'children'. There are many instances where a story is recorded about a 'little girl' who it transpires later in the account is fifteen or sixteen years of age – an insufferable insult to any modern teenager! Partly because of the lack of precision in many of the accounts, I have utilised every reference to children that occurs. Where ages are specified I have normally stopped at sixteen, but have included a few additional quotations about older teenagers, 'youths', and 'young men and women' when they seem to be of particular interest. We do need to bear in mind, however, that most of these narratives took place before the Act that made education compulsory in Scotland in 1872, when child labour was common. For example, William Quarrier, later philanthropist of Glasgow, and founder of the Bridge of Weir Children's Homes, was born in 1829 and at the age of six worked a twelve hour day in a Glasgow pin factory for a wage of one shilling a week, and was apprenticed to a shoemaker before his eighth birthday.³ Even where education was available at an elementary level, it would only cover the age groups of the modern primary school, so that when we read references to the top class, we need to recollect that these would be pupils of no more than twelve or thirteen years of age at the most.

3. 'William Quarrier and his homes' by E.M. Sawyer, P & I, Glasgow 1962.




Introduction and Notes on Sources

Similarly, one entered into domestic service young, and girls at least normally left on marriage.

A quick definition is required as to what is here understood as ‘Revival’ or ‘Religious Awakening’. Although some American churches use the term to refer to any special season of evangelism, we shall restrict its use to the narrower concept of an unusual and spontaneous awareness of the Presence of God, sometimes although not always preceded by preaching and prayer, but which resulted in mass convictions of sin and subsequent conversions. There is also a specialist vocabulary employed: constantly we will find references to persons being ‘impressed’ or ‘awakened’, which may only be a first step towards full ‘conviction of sin’, and ‘conversion’ or ‘assurance’ is only entered many days subsequently.⁴ Today, the modern evangelist tends to lump all these together to claim results, but in most of the accounts which follow, the writers are very cautious indeed of claiming ‘conversions’, usually adding the rider ‘hopefully’ to avoid the sin of presumption in Calvinist Scotland!

Finally, all writers face the dilemma of deciding what to include and what to omit. Does one aim at a popular account that is easy to read but lacking in depth, or does one record all available data with the knowledge that some readers will find the results tedious and cumbersome? I have chosen the latter course, in order to make as much of the original source material as possible available to a wider readership. Wherever possible I have quoted the original accounts, leaving the reader free to interpret them, and if necessary to retell them to others in simpler language. Inevitably, this must make my own style clumsy in places rather than polished. By doing so, I hope I can save others the need to plough through the original records, to find some

4. For example, William Burns writing in 1840 (Scottish Christian Herald, April Supplement) describes as ‘altogether inevitable...a great falling away of those merely alarmed, or but partially awakened, and never savingly converted.’



Children in Revival

obscure anecdote which a popular writer has used, but with no reference as to source and context. To this end I have endeavoured to write at an academic level with the inclusion of full footnotes and bibliography, but to make the style easier for the non academic reader to follow I have avoided the use of Latin abbreviations (such as ‘op. cit.’, ‘ibid.’, ‘passim’) which can be most daunting for those unacquainted with their usage, except for the universally understood ‘e.g.’ and ‘etc.’. I have also relegated some of the longer quotations to the ‘Appendices’ section for ease of flow in the main text. In short, I have intended to produce a useful resource document rather than a literary masterpiece! However, while I would not dare to claim that this study is exhaustive, I have tried to include all the references I can find to children being touched in revival, children used in revival, revival touching schools, and the existence of children’s prayer meetings. I could not include every reference to childhood conversion, or children’s evangelism, or children in church life. It is the part played by the prayer meetings of children in Scottish Church history that has motivated me particularly to probe further and unearth this story, until I have concluded, along with D. A. Currie, that the spontaneous occurrence of prayer meetings among children ‘may have been a distinctively Scottish phenomenon’.⁵

5. D A Currie: The Growth of Evangelicalism in the Church of Scotland 1793-1843, PhD Thesis, St Andrew’s University 1991, p. 358