



# PIRSpective

The Theological Newsletter of the Pacific Institute for Religious Studies (PIRS)  
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## Studies on Revival of Religion: Part 1

By W. R. Downing

**Isaiah 64:-2** Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

### WHAT IS A 'REVIVAL OF RELIGION'?

This terminology—'revivals of religion'—is necessarily broad, as this subject must be inclusive of those times of reformation in the Old Testament, the revivals of the New Testament and those eras of revival and spiritual awakening throughout church history. If we are to persevere in believing prayer for revival, we must understand what we are praying for. By 'revivals of religion' we mean any movement of God which is inclusive of reformation, revival or spiritual awakening; which is characterized by the enlivening ministry of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts, minds and lives of God's people resulting in a heightened degree of practical godliness, a return to biblical religion and, as in the case of the New Testament and subsequent history, an unusual number of conversions. Revivals may be local and restricted to one or more churches; they may encompass a given geographical location, culture or country; or they spread around the entire world. Church history repeatedly witnesses to every one of these.

### WHY STUDY REVIVALS OF RELIGION?

The phenomenon of revivals—of those life-giving movements of God among men when more is accomplished spiritually in a day, a week, a month or a year than perhaps for decades or even hundreds of years previously—these form an essential part of both biblical and church history. As history is the out-working of God's eternal redemptive purpose, so these times of revival form an integral part of God's spiritual dealings with men. Such a study ought to remind us that God is neither static in his redemptive work nor limited to the usual means we have become accustomed to.

Stated formally, the purpose of these studies is four-fold: first, a corrective purpose. There is much scriptural and historical misunderstanding concerning a 'revival of religion'. It is essential for us as Christians to understand what true revival is that we might pray and labor aright. Any misunderstanding of any scriptural truth presents a barrier to its realization and implementation. Revival in modern thinking is usually synonymous with 'revivalism'. It is common for churches to 'hold revivals' and for preachers to 'preach a revival,' i.e., revivals have become scheduled evangelistic

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meetings or campaigns rather than a sovereign work of God brought about through prayer and faithful gospel preaching.

Second, a didactic purpose. The Scriptures give detailed accounts of 'revivals of religion' in the Old Testament. Such were times of reformation in which the king and nation of Israel turned from idolatry and Ba'al worship, destroyed the pagan altars and 'groves,' returned to the worship of Jehovah, repairing the temple and re-establishing the proper orders of the priests and Levites and the feasts of the Lord. Such times of reformation were, in principle and by anticipation, 'revivals of religion' which prepared for the gospel revivals and spiritual awakenings recorded in the New Testament. In the New Testament and under the New or Gospel Covenant, we arrive at the full reality of revival and spiritual awakening in the Gospel Economy. It is correct to state that New Testament Christianity began and continued for its first decades in a state of continued revivals and spiritual awakenings! These New Testament examples are necessarily the source and standard for our understanding of revival.

Third, a spiritual purpose. The people of God individually and corporately usually stand in need of true revival. Revivals are the exceptions rather than the rule for the individual and corporate life of God's people. Both Scripture and history attest to the fact that churches experience their greatest strength and growth in times of revival. We need to understand what true revival is, and thus pray and labor for such intelligently. God's people should have an instinctive longing to see and experience New Testament Christianity in its power!

Finally, a practical purpose. Through understanding the scriptural and historical truth concerning revival, and through a study of the historical records of the great works of God, we should be both challenged and burdened to pray for revival.

### THE TERMINOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING OR MISUNDERSTANDING?

As the study of revivals of religion is a part of church history, so the subject itself has gradually developed throughout history, and much misunderstanding presently pervades in the minds of many. We must, for the sake of clarity and consistency, define, describe or make distinctions among several essential terms: reformation, revival, spiritual awakening and revivalism.

A reformation (Lat: *reformare*) is a correction, a removing of faults and defects, a return to biblical truth. Individual Christians and churches should be in a constant state of reformation or renewed conformity and alignment to the Scriptures. Both logically and historically, there is a direct correspondence between reformation and revival. Reformation may bring revival; revival will bring reformation. Logically, a return and conformity to the Scriptures coincides with a revival of God's people. Historically, the fruit of the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation laid the foundation for and was evidenced in the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals. In this day of religious pragmatism and innovation, most churches need reformation—a return to biblical truth and principles.

Revival (Lat: *revivere*, to come back to a vigorous state after a decline) is strictly and technically a term that points to an individual or a collective revitalization of spirituality or experimental religion.<sup>1</sup> Revival presupposes a state of spiritual declension and lethargy. In a given church, in churches, or generally among the people of God, a revival is an out-pouring of God's Spirit bringing a heightened degree of spiritual life, an earnestness in spiritual things and a renewed purity in life and worship. Such revitalizing and gospel urgency, fomented by the Spirit of God, usually extends to the unconverted in a spiritual awakening.

The term 'spiritual awakening' refers to an out-pouring of the Spirit of God upon the preaching which results in an unusual number of conversions. As 'revival' technically refers to a heightened degree or renewal of spiritual life among the people of God, such reviving inevitably spreads outside the people of God to the unconverted both within and without the churches who are convicted, converted and brought into the fellowship and communion of God's people. These realities are usually combined as connoting revival—renewed life to the spiritually lethargic and spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

'Revivalism' refers to the application and use of certain methods or measures to produce religious excitement and promote religious decisions. Revivalism began in the early frontier revivals with the Wesleyan Methodist evangelists (c. 1800–) and entered mainstream evangelical Christianity in late 1820s with the advent of Charles G. Finney and his use of what was then termed the 'New Measures'. While true revival derives from the sovereign power and prerogative of God, 'revivalism' is simply the work and methodology of man.<sup>2</sup> Revival and revivalism may be mixed together, as in the second 'Great Awakening,' or may occur separately, as in religious crusades or scheduled religious meetings—i.e., we

may have revival without revivalism, we may have a mixture of revival and revivalism, or we may have revivalism without revival.

The idea of revivalism has all but replaced the biblical and historical truth concerning revival in the thinking of most people. A study of revival, we trust, will correct such thinking and rekindle both prayer and an anticipation for a true work of the Spirit of God in our day.

### PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

The study of revivals of religion is usually limited to a historical discussion of the distinct movements of God in the Old and New Testaments and especially in the subsequent history of Christianity. While we believe this to be important and necessary, it is also incomplete. Any study of the subject of revival should itself produce a quickening effect upon the reader, generate a vital concern and lead to passionate prayer for a present manifestation of those '*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*'

Even the subject of prayer itself is fraught with much difficulty, often producing an initial idealistic energy and tendency which soon gives way to disappointment, an increasing unbelief and finally to abandonment or a return to the mundane and habitual. Prayer for revival usually follows suit. As the necessary precursor to revival, believing prayer must remain faithful, constant, fervent and persevering. We must look into the pages of history with a believing heart, mind and eyes, and see that revivals are a God-ordained and an exceedingly glorious fact. Past history should prove to whet anticipation and perseverance for the present. Who will pray for revival unless we do? Unless you do? Who will believe, persevere, intercede and seek God's face until he answers, unless you do?

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> One of the most penetrating and practical studies on revival can be found in Packer, J. I., 'Jonathan Edwards and Revival,' *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 309–327.

<sup>2</sup> One should consult Finney's own writings, especially his *Autobiography*, *Revival Lectures* and *Systematic Theology*. A comprehensive analysis of Finney's doctrines and influence may be found in Warfield, Benjamin B., *Works VIII, Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1971). Cf. also Downing, W. R., *Lectures on Calvinism and Arminianism* (P.I.R.S. Publications, 2000), 320–386.

## Baptist Doctrines and Distinctives. Part V Unashamed to Be a Baptist: Embracing the 'Stigma'

By James A. Billings

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

Ever since John the Baptist came on the scene there has been a stigma with reference to the word 'Baptist.' John the Baptist is the prototype for all 'so called' uneducated, lowbrow, mean, ignorant and eccentric preachers who historically have not conformed to the popular religion of the day. 'The Baptist' did not attend the school of the prophets, he did not receive a

formal education in Jerusalem under the great doctors of the law known as the Scribes and Pharisees, nor did he sit at the feet of Gamaliel like the Apostle Paul.

Shocking to all learned and sophisticated scholars lays the indubitable fact that John the Baptist was a home-schooled country boy who spent his mature teenage years and the decade of his twenties in the wilderness of Judaea in solitude under the tutelage of his father, Zacharias who was a Levitical priest (Lk. 1:80). John's one and only credential as a Baptist preacher was his calling from God. It was an incontestable calling. He suddenly came on the scene preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Matt. 3:1-10).

The function of John's ministry is found in his name and title. He was prepared and set apart by God to declare to the world that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, to prepare the way for Him, and to make the people ready to receive Him. His power and authority were so evident that even the Jewish elite could not ignore him. They sent a delegation to ask him who he was, *'Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?'* He said *'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness make straight the way of the Lord'* (Jn. 1:22-23). John was asked what all Baptist ministers are asked in derision, *'What sayest thou of thyself?'* He, like all Baptists after him, answered the only way there is to answer an antagonist- *'I am a voice....!'* The Word of God thundered from his lips with great authority that was unambiguously the voice that spoke on behalf of God. His ministry was a spiritual ministry and his success was based on his faithfulness to his Divine calling.

*'And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of E-li-as, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord'* (Lk. 1:17; Mal. 4:5).

#### MR. SPURGEON AND DR. GILL

John the Baptist is the supreme example and icon of a true Baptist preacher. Therefore, it should not surprise us to discover that a lowly, poor, uneducated Baptist preacher named Charles Spurgeon earned the title, 'The Prince of Preachers.' What made Mr. Spurgeon a distinguished man, a leading philanthropist, a celebrated preacher, a heroic Christian and a notable Baptist? It seems that everything in his life prevented him from attaining greatness. His mother and father were so poor that at the age of eighteen months they moved him in with his grandparents and spinster aunt. At age six he did something few six-year-olds would care to attempt. He read John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*. It became obvious that he was a natural genius and throughout his formative years he imbibed on the Puritans. He was self-educated. In the providence of God he did not attend a university. When God saved him he was only fifteen years old. He came to Baptist convictions by reading the New Testament in the original Greek language. When he announced his Baptist convictions to his Congregational mother, she said, 'Charles I have prayed for your conversion, but *not* that you would become a Baptist!' Charles replied: 'Ah, mother! The Lord has answered your prayer with his usual bounty and

given you exceedingly abundantly above what you asked or thought.'

What was special about the greatness of Mr. Spurgeon? Was it his intellect? No. Was it his station in life? Obviously not. What made Mr. Spurgeon special and great was that God placed His hand upon him. God called Charles Spurgeon and gifted him abundantly. Like John the Baptist, Mr. Spurgeon did not need the acceptance of the religious elite to pursue and accomplish his work in the ministry. Toward the end of his celebrated life Yale University invited him to come and speak because of his remarkable accomplishments. He wrote them declining the invitation and said, 'I sit on my own gate, whistle my own tunes and am quite content.'

Dr. John Gill was also a very accomplished preacher and ambassador for the Baptists. He is recognized as the most well versed scholar of the eighteenth century in Hebrew culture, literature and customs. He has been called the Dr. Lightfoot of the Baptists. This is a great honor bestowed upon John Gill because Dr. Lightfoot was a graduate of Cambridge University and a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Not surprisingly, some believe that this compliment flatters Dr. Lightfoot more than Dr. Gill.

In 1748, twenty-eight years after John Gill was ordained to the ministry he received an honorary diploma of Doctor of Divinity from Aberdeen. His academic attainments far excelled all of his peers and his field of expertise was succinctly described as, 'extraordinary proficiency in sacred literature, the Oriental tongues, and Jewish antiquities.' When his deacons congratulated him on receiving the award he thanked them and added, 'I never thought it, nor bought it, nor sought it.' Like all that walked before him, Dr. Gill understood that any success or greatness found in his life was due to the Divine stamp upon it.

#### EMBRACING OUR HERITAGE

We must stress that Baptists are not anti-education, anti-social, anti-law or anti-government. Of course these invectives have always been the common slanderous charges hurled at us. Because of our Baptist convictions concerning believer's baptism by immersion, the nature of the church, the autonomy of the local church, Christ as her head, liberty of conscience and soul liberty we have been, necessarily and historically, outside of the generally accepted popular company of Christendom. Like John the Baptist we have never been accepted, and as a result, popular Christianity in its many forms and flavors is uncomfortable associating with us.

Frankly and more specifically, we humbly recognize that we have at times been treated harshly because we are an embarrassment to our Protestant brothers and sisters. Our degrees do not come from Princeton, Yale, Westminster, or Wheaton University. Instead we come from a long line of tenacious men and women who have been educated by our families and pastors. Some of us have earned degrees from Baptist universities and seminaries, but that is of little consequence to our Protestant friends.

Our true lineage is not our denomination or our education.

It is our alignment with the truth of the Gospel as it is found in the New Testament. We received our first degrees two thousand years ago and it was signed with our blood. We have been fed to the lions, used as lanterns to light Nero's garden parties, burned at the stake, stoned to death, torn apart by mobs, banished from our homes, our fathers and brothers have been butchered, our wives and daughters have been raped and we have been drowned by our adversaries in order to mock our unwavering conviction for believer's baptism by immersion.

John the Baptist had his head cut off in summary fashion. The great Bohemian Baptist, John Huss, was called by his persecutors 'A Ringleader of Heretics.' When the enemies of the Cross burned Huss at the stake they committed his soul to the Devil! John Bunyan, an uneducated tinker and one of the greatest minds ever to come out of England was imprisoned for twelve years for refusing to preach without a state approved license.

William Carey, the greatest missionary since the Apostle Paul was a self educated cobbler. After his conversion he became a master of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Dutch and French. The Edinburgh Review was constantly ridiculing his work in India by slandering his good name simply because he was an uneducated Baptist. They denounced Carey and his associates as 'fools,' 'madmen,' 'tinkers' and 'cobblers.' But the Quarterly came to their defense, 'In fourteen years these 'low-born and low-bred mechanics' have done more toward spreading the knowledge of the Scriptures among the heathen than has been accomplished, or even attempted, by all the world besides.'

Sadly, our generation is doing its best to erase the 'stigma' of the word Baptist. The name Baptist is being dropped from church signs all over America and our scholars are re-writing history in order to make us a more acceptable sect in Christendom. The fact is that our Baptist heritage is a great and illustrative heritage. We should all be proud of those who walked before us and we should also count it a great privilege to be counted among them. It is a heritage like no other in the history of the world. It is our job in this generation to honor those who walked before us by standing with them no matter how hard the walk or humiliating the task.

## Baptist Connections: Episode Two

By Michael A. Carling

*[The following is another installment of Baptist Connections, an episodic look at certain associations between men, events, and the providence of God]*

The component parts of this episode include: The Philadelphia Baptist Association, the Welsh Tract church, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, and their respective influence upon the Baptist Thomas Fleeson.

### THE PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The Philadelphia Baptist Association was organized on September 27, 1707, with five member churches from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. Samuel Jones, pastor of the Pennepek Church of Pennsylvania and associational

leader, stated that, 'They were at this time a feeble band, though a band of faithful brothers, consisting of but five churches.'<sup>1</sup> Throughout the years this body was influential in shaping Baptist modes of thinking and was very supportive of missions both at home and abroad. According to Horatio G. Jones, 'This Association has maintained, from its origin, a prominent and important standing in the denomination. It has been favored with the services of many distinguished ministers — men of eminent piety, solid judgment and finished education. Among these are found the names of Morgan Edwards, Abel Morgan, John Gano, Samuel Jones, David Jones, Keach, Griffith, Rogers, Ustic, Holcombe, Staughton, Brantly and others, who have gloriously fought the good fight.'<sup>2</sup>

As reflected in the minutes of this association, which usually met on the first Tuesday of October in the given year, there were a number of points or statements reflecting the business of the day. Often a circular letter was written which expounded upon a point of doctrine or just informed the member churches of various events and circumstances. In addition to chronicling Baptist history, these minutes would from time to time record events of national significance. For instance, the Association was prevented from meeting in 1777, as indicated by a footnote in the place of the minutes for that year. It reads, 'In consequence of the ravages of war, and Philadelphia being occupied by the British army, the Association held no meeting this year.'<sup>3</sup> Another instance is found in the minutes of October, 1781. Under item 14 it reads, 'And now, dear brethren, having come to a close of our annual meeting, before we address you by our circular letter, we feel ourselves constrained to acknowledge the great goodness of God towards us, and to call on you to join with us in thankfulness and praise, as well for the unanimity and brotherly love which prevailed through out our meeting, as for the recent signal success granted to the American arms, in the surrender of the whole British army, under the command of Lord Cornwallis, with the effusion of so little blood.'<sup>4</sup> This event began the peace process that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Paris in September 1783 acknowledging the independence of the American colonies.

### THE WELSH TRACT CHURCH

For the early history of this church I have provided a rather large section from *The Early and Later Delaware Baptists*, by Richard B. Cook:

'For the origin of this, the first Baptist Church in the State, we must cross the Atlantic to Wales. In the spring of 1701, sixteen Baptists in the counties of Pembroke and Caermarthen resolved to go to America. They formed themselves into a church, with Rev. Thomas Griffith, one of their number, as Pastor. They embarked at Milford Haven in June, 1701, and have been properly styled a 'church emigrant.' They landed at Philadelphia, September 8, 1701, where they were courteously received by the brethren, and advised to settle about Pennypack, to which place they removed. They continued at Pennypack about a year and a half, during which time their church increased from sixteen to thirty-seven. Then they 'took up' land in New Castle County—one of the three counties of Delaware then in Pennsylvania— from Messrs. Evans, Davis, and Willis, who had purchased upward

of thirty thousand acres of William Penn, called the 'Welsh Tract.' To this they removed in 1703, leaving some of their number at Pennypack, and receiving while there accessions in return.<sup>5</sup>

According to Benedict, 'This church is the oldest in the State, and has now existed upwards of 100 years. It has been the mother of the Welsh Neck church in South Carolina, the London Tract, the Duck Creek or Brynson, and, in some measure, of Wilmington, Cowmarsh, and Mispillion, and was one of the five churches which formed the Philadelphia Association, in 1707.'<sup>6</sup>

### THE *AEDES AEGYPTI* MOSQUITO

The mosquito (from the Spanish meaning *little fly*) is a common insect in the family *Culicidae* (from the Latin *culex* meaning *midge* or *gnat*). There are about 3,500 species of mosquitoes found throughout the world. In some species of mosquito, the females feed on humans, and are therefore vectors<sup>7</sup> for a number of infectious diseases affecting millions of people per year.<sup>8</sup> There are five main groups of mosquitoes. They are the *Anopheles*, the *Culex*, the *Psorophora*, the *Culiseta* and the *Aedes*. Of this last group there are several hundred different kinds, but the *Aedes aegypti* is the more familiar kind for it carries both the dengue and yellow fever diseases. Once a mosquito is infected with the virus, it can transmit it as long as it lives.

The name *yellow fever* comes from the effect the disease has on the human body. If unchecked, the virus can damage the liver. This in turn causes yellow bile pigments to gather in the skin making the skin look yellow, hence the name. It has also been known as 'Yellow Jack' and 'the saffron scourge.' To recover from yellow fever is to acquire lifetime immunity; however, many with this debilitating disease succumb and die. The last outbreak of yellow fever in the United States occurred in 1905, when New Orleans, Louisiana, and other ports of the South were invaded.<sup>9</sup>

### THOMAS FLEESON

Thomas Fleeson (1748-1828) was a Baptist preacher and pastor from the late 1770's to the late 1820's. He was the son of the Hon. Plunket Fleeson, who in 1769 manufactured paper hangings and paper mache mouldings at the corner of Fourth and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Thomas's father was appointed an Alderman of the city in 1777, a presiding judge of the City Court in 1782, and he was commissioned as a Justice of the Common Plea in 1784. Plunket Fleeson died in 1791.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest mention of Thomas Fleeson is as a member of the church at Philadelphia, where he had been baptized upon his profession of faith by William Rogers, D. D., in 1774. In January of the following year he was licensed to preach.<sup>11</sup> He actively preached in many churches during the late 1770's and was fervent in aiding the evangelists Elijah Baker and Philip Hughes in Delaware in 1779. Concerning Fleeson's fervour for the work it is said, 'And none were more zealous in this united effort than Messrs. John Boggs and Thomas Fleeson...'<sup>12</sup> In 1780 Fleeson was ordained the pastor of London Tract Church in Pennsylvania, where he

served faithfully until 1800. In 1792, upon the death of Curtis Gilbert, pastor of Roxborough or Ridge Baptist Church of Philadelphia, Fleeson and William White supplied the pulpit until 1800 when in that year Fleeson became its permanent pastor.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas Fleeson lost his eyesight in 1804 but continued to serve the Roxborough church for many years. He was variously known as 'the blind preacher'<sup>14</sup> and the 'eloquent old blind preacher.'<sup>15</sup> In spite of his infirmity, Fleeson often traveled on horseback to preach in various places. He continued in his labors at Roxborough until 1827 when Samuel Smith of the Montgomery Church was called and settled as pastor. Thomas Fleeson went to be with the Lord in 1828 at the age of eighty.

### THE CONNECTION

The London Tract church of Chester County, Pennsylvania, which was established out of the Welsh Tract church, was constituted an independent congregation on November 21, 1780. Eighteen members of the Welsh Tract church were dismissed in order to form the new local assembly.<sup>16</sup> Due to the loss of its record book by frequent fires,<sup>17</sup> not much is known about the London Tract church during the years from 1780 to 1830. What is known is that Thomas Fleeson was appointed its first pastor on November 22, 1780.

Thomas Fleeson attended the yearly meetings of the Philadelphia Baptist Association as early as 1776, for his name is listed as a 'Messenger' of the Philadelphia church in the minutes for that year.<sup>18</sup> Before becoming pastor of London Tract, Fleeson was 'admitted by the Association to the full privilege of members' in October of 1780.<sup>19</sup> In 1781, he was listed under the London Tract church.<sup>20</sup> Fleeson took an active role in his participation with the Association from 1776 to 1807. He was elected clerk for the meeting in 1781, preached a sermon for the 1790 meeting, and was on a committee concerning Pittstown church in 1792. Fleeson's position as pastor of the Roxborough (Roxbury) church is noted in the Association's minutes of 1800.<sup>21</sup>

In 1793, Philadelphia was America's largest city and its capital and busiest port. The summer of that year was unusually hot and dry. The lowered water levels provided a breeding ground for insects. By July the city's inhabitants were remarking on the extraordinary number of flies and mosquitoes that swarmed around the dock area. That same month, a trickle of refugees escaping political turmoil in the Caribbean Islands became a torrent of thousands as ship after ship unloaded its human cargo on Philadelphia's docks. Unbeknownst to the city's inhabitants, all the necessary ingredients for an unprecedented health disaster were now in place.<sup>22</sup> Samuel Breck, a merchant and new arrival to Philadelphia, was an eyewitness to what followed, 'I had scarcely become settled in Philadelphia when in July, 1793, the yellow fever broke out, and, spreading rapidly in August, obliged all the citizens who could remove to seek safety in the country. My father took his family to Bristol on the Delaware, and in the last of August I followed him... I was compelled to return to the city on the 8th of September, and

spend the 9th there. Everything looked gloomy, and forty-five deaths were reported for the 9th. And yet it was nothing then to what it became three or four weeks later when from the first to the twelfth of October one thousand persons died. On the twelfth a smart frost came and checked its ravages.<sup>23</sup>

Since the Philadelphia Baptist Association met in Philadelphia for its annual meeting, it was confronted by the epidemic at the beginning of October 1793 and wisely decided to postpone the meeting.<sup>24</sup> The minutes of October 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 1793 reflect this great event by stating that the Association met in the town of Southampton, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, some ten miles northeast of Philadelphia, 'Having been prevented meeting, at the time appointed, in the city of Philadelphia, by a prevailing infectious disorder, with which God, in his providence, has been pleased to visit that city.'<sup>25</sup> Under item seven of the minutes it states, 'The Association, taking into consideration the awful dispensations of Divine Providence in the epidemical disorder now raging in the city of Philadelphia, together with the great drought in our part of the country, and general declension in vital piety, recommend that Tuesday, the 12th day of November ensuing, be observed as a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer; throughout our churches; and should it please God to remove any part of those judgments previous to that day, that his mercy therein be remembered with public thanksgiving at the same time.'<sup>26</sup>

Thomas Fleeson was called upon to write the circular letter for the meeting of 1793 due to the neglect of the one to whom it was originally appointed.<sup>27</sup> As pastor of London Tract church, established from members of the Welsh Tract church, and as a member of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, and by cause of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, Thomas Fleeson wrote the following in the circular letter:

'In a course of Divine Providence, we were favored to meet at this place, and, blessed be God, our meeting has been comfortable. We trust we have had the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great and exalted head of the church. In all our deliberations we have had a view to the glory of God and the peace and comfort of the church of Christ. The contagious disorder with which the Lord has been pleased to visit the city, the present great and uncommon drought, the sad decay of vital piety, are circumstances of a very alarming nature, — are sure indications of the displeasure of Almighty God, and call aloud for deep humiliation before the Lord. How necessary is it that we should lay these things seriously to heart; that we should consider the cause of the Lord's displeasure; that we should repent and do our first works; that we should turn to the Lord with all our hearts, with weeping, fasting, and mourning, — rend our hearts, and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God, who is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. The accounts from our churches are such as give pleasure and pain; pleasure, when we consider the peace and unanimity which generally prevail; pain, from the consideration of a too general declension, and the small addition to our churches. O, dear brethren, be engaged with the Lord, that he would revive his work, that his threatened judgments may be averted, that we may enjoy his presence, that a spirit of grace and supplication may be poured out upon us, and that we may revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.'<sup>28</sup>

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>3</sup> Gillette, A. D., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707-1807*, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), p. 158.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.174-175.
- <sup>5</sup> Cook, Richard B., *The Early and Later Delaware Baptists* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880), pp. 14-15.
- <sup>6</sup> Benedict, David, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*, Volume II (Gallatin, TN: Church History Research & Archives, 1985), p. 8.
- <sup>7</sup> A 'vector' is an insect or any living carrier that transmits an infectious agent.
- <sup>8</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosquito>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/652578/yellow-fever>
- <sup>10</sup> Scharf, J. Thomas and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia 1609-1884*, Volume II (Philadelphia, PA: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884), pp. 858, 1565.
- <sup>11</sup> Spencer, David, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: William Syckelmoore, 1877), p. 155.
- <sup>12</sup> Cook, Richard B., *The Early and Later Delaware Baptists* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880), p. 23.
- <sup>13</sup> Scharf, J. Thomas and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia 1609-1884*, Volume II (Philadelphia, PA: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884), p. 1309.
- <sup>14</sup> Spencer, David, *Early Baptists of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: William Syckelmoore, 1877), p. 155.
- <sup>15</sup> Scharf, J. Thomas and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia 1609-1884*, Volume II (Philadelphia, PA: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884), p. 1309.
- <sup>16</sup> Futhey, John Smith and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County Pennsylvania*, Volume I (Heritage Books, 1995), p.271.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* The record-book for 1780-1830 was destroyed by a domestic in the family of John W. Tawresay, who used it to kindle the fire as occasion required.
- <sup>18</sup> Gillette, A. D., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707-1807*, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), p. 157.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p.169.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p.179.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 357.
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/yellowfever.htm>
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> The minutes for 1792 indicate that the next meeting was scheduled for the first Tuesday of October, 1793.
- <sup>25</sup> Gillette, A. D., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707-1807*, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), p. 292.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293. '...having been appointed to write a circular letter in consequence of Brother Smalley not bringing forward the one he was nominated last Association to write...'
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 293-294.

## It Is Prudent to Prepare for Persecution

By Mark A. Bailon

It is one thing to be misunderstood by our family, friends and coworkers but quite another to be hated.

In John chapter 7:1-10 our Lord must deal with both these realities beginning with His own family. At the time of this incident our Lord was living and working in Galilee because the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem were proactively looking for Him so they could kill Him (verse 1). Our Lord was a wanted man and many were looking for him. Knowing this, our Lord stayed in Galilee. But since the Feast of Tabernacles was about to be celebrated (verse 2) our Lord's brothers suggested that their eldest brother leave Galilee and travel down to Jerusalem. We know from John 6:66 that many of his followers had gone away and walked no more with him. So his brethren reasoned that He could impress his erstwhile followers and everyone else with His miracles. This feast was popular among the Jewish faithful so there would be a large number of people for our Lord to dazzle, including those who had followed him at one time. We infer this because his brethren told him (verse 3), *'Leave this place and go away to Judea so that your disciples can see the works that you are doing.'* His works, of course, consisted of his miraculous healing ministry in manifestation of the kingdom of God. However, not believing in Him (verse 5), they figured that someone performing the works that Jesus did must be doing them for attention and acclaim (verse 4). Perhaps there is even a hint of mockery in their voices. In any case, they press him to *'manifest yourself to the world!'*

Our Lord's brethren did not comprehend Him or His ministry. If they had they might have committed themselves to Him. But as it was, *'neither did his brethren believe in Him.'* To them He was just another leader who happened to have this remarkable power of performing miracles. They had absolutely no idea of the antagonism that existed between our Lord's mission and the sinful world system of Satan. So by telling our Lord that he should go public and show the entire world the great things he was doing, they revealed the sad fact that they did not comprehend that their brother's life and ministry were completely opposed to the world as a self-centered and evil system. Because of their unbelief his brethren could not know that the Lord was obeying His Father as to both where and when He performed His miracles. Unlike them He did not act arbitrarily or selfishly. He acted in accordance with and in obedience to the will of His Father. Our Lord was selfless not selfish. Jesus tells them in no uncertain terms (verse 6), *'my time has not yet come but your time is anytime.'* Literally, *'your time is always ready.'* In effect He is telling them, the world in general, and you in particular, follow your own will. You are at peace in your world and you are in step with the world in both time and space. But, of course, our Lord is not. Unlike His brethren, He is not one with the world but one with the Father. He is, in this respect, at odds with the world.

Moreover, the world cannot hate unbelievers! But the world hates our Lord because He testifies concerning its evil ways (verse 7). Our Lord's brethren did not understand that

He came to save sinners from their sin, the sin which is at the center of the world system. Nor that He was in step with His Father and not with the world. Therefore, he tells them, *'You go ahead and go up to the feast but I am not because my time is not yet fulfilled.'* So, Jesus the Christ stays in Galilee while his brethren go to the feast (verse 9). But He eventually goes to Jerusalem, yet not openly but in secret (verse 10). It is not time for Him to manifest Himself in Jerusalem.

It is telling in these verses (8-10) that our Lord would not go to the feast at this time. But His concern is not with the hit that is out on Him. It was just not the right time for a public ministry in Judea. His time had not yet been fulfilled. When our Lord confronts the world it is to die for his people. It is to save the world. His relationship to the world, as an evil system, is not neutral. He cannot manifest Himself to the world without confronting it with righteousness. Therefore, he cannot just go to Jerusalem at some arbitrary time. His actions are always with a view to His mission of salvation. That is why there is a time of fulfillment. His was a life of purpose. He was fulfilling the eternal redemptive purpose of God. He was calling a people to a spiritual kingdom. It is a kingdom that is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of this world. His brethren did not understand His works or ministry because they were still in the world and a part of it. Therefore, they did not commit themselves to Him. They could not believe in him. And the unsaved people that we know do not believe in Him either.

A true, faithful Christian will be misunderstood, mocked and even hated. We should be misunderstood by our unsaved children, neighbors and co-workers. I dare say that even if our children profess faith in Jesus Christ, we parents should still manifest a stronger faith because of our Christian maturity. As such, we should embrace the opposition that we get when we testify of the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not easy to be patronized and thought a fool, much more to be hated. But we will suffer as the world celebrates the new openness and tolerance of other religions. If we insist that only Christians worship the one true God, then we will invite the scorn and hatred of the world. The reality is that the world truly hates Christians and our Gospel. It is only God's providence that keeps us from being persecuted by the world.

But our mission has a different face to it compared to our Lord's. Our time is not fulfilled and won't be until the consumation of the age when our Lord returns to claim His people. But until then we are to live among the ungodly of the world as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Now is the time to be faithful. Now is the time to be brave. Now is the time to take a public stand for Christ. The world is becoming more and more antagonistic towards Christians. To be sure, it may have despised us but not to the point of persecution. But that day is coming and is well-nigh here whether you know it or not. The contrast between the world and Christianity is becoming starker. When will the Lord bring revival and an awakening to our churches? Will He do it in our lifetime? Perhaps we should be prepared to be misunderstood and hated and persecuted for our faith and witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Essential Texts for a Biblical Approach to Apologetics (5). Romans 1:18-21 continued.

By Paul S. Nelson

**Romans 1:18-21** <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; <sup>19</sup> Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. <sup>20</sup> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: <sup>21</sup> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

### NATURAL REVELATION AND APOLOGETICS

Thus far in our exposition of Romans 1:18-21 we have dealt with (1) *Natural Revelation and the Unbeliever's Knowledge of God*, (2) *Natural Revelation and the Unbeliever's Reaction* and (3) *Natural Revelation and Apologetics*. This article continues with the third subheading, *Natural Revelation and Apologetics*.

There are at least five important elements of presuppositional apologetics addressed in Romans 1:18-21: 1) the Creator-creature distinction, 2) the noetic effects of sin, 3) a conflict of worldviews, 4) the myth of neutrality, and 5) point-of-contact. We have already considered 'the Creator-creature distinction,' and now move on to 'the noetic effects of sin.'

### NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN

In Romans 1:21, the apostle Paul makes a startling statement about man's reaction to knowing God, '*when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.*' The verb '*knew*' (γνόντες) denotes knowledge by personal experience, and is a definite statement of man's knowledge attained through the natural revelation described in the previous verses. This describes the utter ingratitude of all men in their natural, unregenerate state. Although man knows God, he does not act accordingly, and refuses to give homage to him. Man deliberately refuses to recognize God as his God, neither reverence him as God. It is the effect of an inherent bias and hostility against God.

'*But became vain in their imaginations.*' By using the strong adversative conjunction '*but*' (ἀλλ'), the apostle penetrates deep into the inner condition of man. Men are '*vain in their imaginations.*' The Greek verb for '*became vain*' (ἐματαιώθησαν) denotes having no intrinsic value, i.e., futile and empty. '*Imaginations*' (διαλογισμοίς) properly means thoughts or reasonings with the implication of evil. The phrase denotes a state of vain delirium characterized by evil rationalization. Unbelieving thought is nothing but futile reasoning.

'*And their foolish heart was darkened.*' The Greek word for '*foolish*' (ἀσύνετος) literally means 'unable to put together.' It expresses the notion that natural man is unintelligent and destitute of understanding due to an inherent depravity. He is unable to put together the manifest evidence about God as disclosed in natural revelation. Paul states that their foolish '*heart*' (καρδία) was '*darkened*' (ἐσκοτίσθη). The verb '*darkened*' (ἐσκοτίσθη) is placed forward for emphasis. The

darkness of sin does not reside in any one faculty but has its seat in the heart (καρδία). The apostle is speaking of a pervasive depravity that has corrupted man's entire heart - not only the mind, but the will and affections as well. It is an inherent corruption that extends to every part of man's nature, to all the faculties and powers of the soul. The foolish heart of the unbeliever, being covered in darkness, manifests itself in evil reasoning.

Both verbs used for '*became vain*' (ἐματαιώθησαν) and '*darkened*' (ἐσκοτίσθη) are aorist passive, which implies the fall of Adam and the subsequent judgment of sin upon the human race. The fall of man had a drastic effect on man's reasoning capacity and his ability to understand reality. As a result, man is born with a false theory of knowledge. He exchanges the truth of God for '*the lie*' (v.25) and lives in a world of self-deception. He is noetically blind and spiritually insane.

The term 'noetic effects of sin' refers to the doctrine of *total depravity* and that aspect which emphasizes the intellectual corruption of man. The Bible characterizes natural man's depraved mind as having his '*understanding darkened*' (Eph. 4:18; Rom. 1:21), groping around in darkness (Acts 17:27), walking in the vanity of his mind (Eph. 4:17), futile in his thinking (Rom. 1:21), hostile to God in his mind (Rom. 8:7), an enemy of God in his mind (Col. 1:21), his thoughts overcome by moral corruption (Gen. 6:5), futile in his reasoning (1 Cor. 3:20; Rom. 1:21), suppressing the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18), changing the truth of God into '*the lie*' (Rom. 1:25). In short, man's reasoning ability has become totally depraved. He has become destitute of the truth because of his hatred of God.

The reality of original sin and its consequent noetic effects correlates directly to the unbeliever's ability to truly know anything. Consequently, one's apologetic method must take into account the total depravity of man's intellectual faculty. Natural man is incapable of reasoning objectively without bias against God. Intellectual neutrality is impossible because of the depravity of the mind. However, the unbeliever claims intellectual autonomy in order to interpret the universe without reference to God. His fallacious epistemology would do away with God in every respect, and determine for himself what is true and what is false. Sinful man naturally will make himself ultimate in determining truth and reality. He will exalt himself against the knowledge of God. It is the expression of a depraved nature.

Only by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit can unregenerate man be restored to true knowledge. By the sovereign grace of God and through the operation of the Spirit, man's mind is renewed and able to come to the true knowledge of God and reality (Eph. 4:23-24). The blindness and darkness of man's mind is removed in the new birth to see the knowledge of God as it is in Jesus Christ. The hatred and bias against God is definitively broken. Hence, Christ is realized as the fountain '*in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*' (Col. 2:3). This is why apologetics is necessarily evangelistic, and must never be separated from the context of the gospel. Man must be saved to truly know anything.