INTRODUCTION

1. The Value and Importance of Church History
1:1 Commencing with any study of the history of the Church necessitates some explanation of the importance of Church History. The past can speak into the future, "being yet dead he speaks".

1:2 In the first place Church History presents many warning signs, helping us to learn from the mistakes of the past. Heresies and departures from the truth of the Scriptures litter the pages of Church History. By studying the history of the Church we can learn not to make the same mistakes.

1:3 Secondly, we owe much to the past for the way in which so much doctrine has been hammered into shape upon the anvil of history.

1:4 More importantly, Church History is really the continuation of the work of God as the Holy Spirit has built and preserved the Church. History proves the truth of the words of Jesus, "I will build my Church". Church History brings glory to God. It portrays His majestic sovereignty over the years reveals His hands of blessings.

We owe a great deal to Church History. We have inherited so much from the past in terms of the Evangelical Church, freedom to worship, Missionary enterprise, Bible translations doctrinal understanding and practical Christian living.

2. The meaning of Revival
2:1 The dictionary defines revival thus "to bring back, or restore to life; a state of recovery from languor, neglect or depression".

2:2 Revival is a time of extraordinary religious awakening. The Greek (ἀναζω anazo) means, "to live again". It is used in 1 Kings 17:22, to live again, life came back again! This is revival. Revival depicts an extraordinary out pouring of the Holy Spirit first of all upon the church itself and then the Spirit over spills to the surrounding world.

2:3 Revivals in Bible times. The Psalmist would cry for the people of God to be "restored" (Hebrew יָבֹשׁ to cause to come back, return) spiritually Ps 85:4, (Ezra 9:8-9), Habakkuk 3:2, Is 75:15.

2:4 The Bible records particular times of revival when the Spirit of God was poured out on people in an extraordinary fashion. Elijah experienced revival on mount Carmel; see also Ezra 10; John the Baptist; and Apostolic times following Pentecost.

2:5 The History of the Church also portrayed periods of revival, new life returning to the Church resulting in many thousands rapidly finding Christ as Saviour. The greatest revival period is that of the eighteenth century.
3. **The importance and significance of the 18th Century Revival**

3:1 There are three outstanding centuries within the pages of Church History which bring most glory to God; the Reformation of the 15-16\textsuperscript{th} century; the Puritan period of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century and the Revival period of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

3:2 The Revival period 'was a time when the Spirit of God was sovereignly poured out upon men and women, young people and children of all classes and ethnic origins in Britain and in America.

4. **THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE REVIVAL PERIOD**

4:1 The 18th century revival 'was preceded by two very important periods the Reformation (15-16th centuries) and the Puritan era of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century which paved the way for the Revival period of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

4:2 The Reformation (a term covering an involved series of changes in western Christendom between the 14th and 17th centuries) in particular laid firm doctrinal foundations upon which the revivalists of the 18th century were able to build. The basis of Wesley and Whitefield's preaching ministry was that of the doctrines of grace, showing that a man is not saved by works but by the free unmerited grace of God through faith in Christ. Justification by faith alone.

4:3 The Puritan era. Although the Reformation itself was a dramatic turning point in Christian thinking and preaching, there were certain people within the Church (in the 16th Century) who felt that the Reformation had not gone far enough. These people later came to be known as "Non-Conformists" or "Puritans". They wished to "purify" the Church in England, to see the Reformation become more complete.

4:4 The influence of the Puritan movement upon the 18th Century Revival is significant in several ways.

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\item The Puritans were well known for their desire for Christian purity and piety. In its protest against worldliness, its evangelistic concern, its inward piety, its Scriptural doctrines, its strictness of discipline, the Puritan way of life strongly resembled those qualities which were to mark the eighteenth-century movement.
\item The Puritan's love of the scriptures and their faithful rendering of the doctrines of grace formed the basis for the evangelistic ministry of preachers such as Whitefield, Edwards, Harris and. many others.
\item The fervent prayers of the Puritans also contributed to the Revival. The Puritan movement progressed through Elizabeth's and James 1st reigns but really flourished after the execution of Charles 1st when Oliver Cromwell was in power. However, in 1660 when Charles 2nd came to the throne, known as the 'Restoration Period', the Bill of Uniformity was issued which restored many of the hated Catholic practices to the Prayer Book. As a result of this nearly 2,000 evangelical Puritan ministers were turned out of their churches because they would not conform. During this period of the Restoration the Puritans still continued to pray for better times in England. Whilst forbidden to preach (and many were thrown into prison- e.g. John Bunyan) a great volume of prayer ascended to God. They prayed for revival.
\item The Puritan Hope. When religious toleration came with the reign of William 3\textsuperscript{rd} and Mary in 1688 the Nonconformist Churches were but a shadow of their former glory. Nevertheless, those with a Puritan mind still hoped for better things in the future. They held to a view of unfulfilled prophecy, which led them to believe that God would work out His purposes through wide spread revivals.
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4:5 We are now ready to step into the 18th century and witness the answer to the Puritan prayers, their hopes realised through the faithful ministry of the doctrines of grace, re-discovered by the Reformers, and now clearly emphasised within an evangelism anointed by the Holy Spirit.

5. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
5:1 The Moral and Religious conditions in England during the 18th Century. Nothing is so suited to demonstrate the extraordinary powers of God in revival than a brief survey of the moral and religious conditions of the 18th Century.

5:2 The "Gin Age" had dawned with the effect that every sixth house in London had become a gin shop. The nation had sunk into an almost uncontrolled orgy of gin drinking.

5:3 Around the middle of the century the face of England began to change with the coming of steam, mass production and the creation of industry. It was the sudden demand for labour following the new inventions in industry which brought people flocking into the industrial areas which led to the creation of the slums.

5:4 By 1789, Europe was being shaken by the French Revolution. Riddled with inequalities and injustices it was inevitable that revolution would result in France.

5:5 In Britain the gulf between the rich and the poor was extensive. The rich lived out their lives in luxury, and ostentation. In contrast the poor became poorer through their gin drinking, producing intoxication which in turn made them either unable or unwilling to work.

5:6 Lawlessness and violence also characterised the age. Crime was constantly on the increase despite the making of 160 crimes punishable by death.

5:7 Moralities in England had almost ceased to exist. Other evils of the time consisted of dreadful treatment of the mentally ill, abuse and cruelty to children, and increased gambling and obscenity on the stage. Duelling, adultery, fornication, gambling, swearing and drunkenness, were considered to be the most fashionable practices.

5:8 Christianity in England was most ineffective to change people's hearts or stem the spreading tide of immorality. It was during this period that a form of Christianity known as 'Deism' had been introduced. It was a type of Christian rationalism.

5:9 For the average man engrossed in a life of licentiousness and ungodliness, Deism was a welcome relief as it removed from Christianity the holiness and justice of God, leaving in its wake a religion of ritualistic lip-service compatible with a life of sinfulness.

5:10 The remnants of the evangelical Puritan-type Church attempted a weak and ineffective defence of biblical Christianity. Thus Christianity, was presented as no more than a polite, ethical, sedate and timid religion.

5:11 Following the 1662 ejection of the powerful preaching force of Puritans, the Church had to accept any kind of men within its ranks of clergy. The vast majority of pastors were sunk in worldliness who neither knew nor cared anything about their profession. They hunted, they shot, they farmed, they swore, they drank and they gambled.

5:12 Deism had gained wide acceptance amongst the clergy of the Church of England and also the ministers of the Nonconformist Churches. Sermons were little more than barren moral essays utterly empty of anything that would awaken the sinner or offer hope for the
5:13 Subjected to the effects of the Restoration of Charles the II, expressed in licentiousness and robbed of a sense of the reality of God by Deism, the people of England stood more in need of the Gospel of Jesus than at any time since the Reformation.

5:14 Some efforts were made to rectify the moral and religious situation in England. Religious Societies were formed in which some young men met regularly to pray and encourage each other. They sought to express a social conscience.

5:15 Other steps were also taken to improve conditions.

i) The establishment of hospitals.

ii) The publicising of the conditions of the prisons

iii) Legislation against the sale of gin. The "Gin Act" of 1736.

iv) The Charity Schools movement.

v) The Society for the Reformation of Manners.

vi) The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Despite all these attempts to challenge and change the face of England, no significant improvement was achieved. It was becoming profoundly clear that all external attempts to change conditions within the nation were failing miserably and therefore the major problem lay basically with the individual human heart.

5:16 It was this England that formed the stage upon which the Revival took place. Only God could answer the needs of the people.

6. THE AWAKENING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

6:1 The Revival actually began in Wales (possibly 1718) when Griffith Jones, named the "morning star of the Revival" began preaching the everlasting Gospel in Carmarthenshire some twenty years before the conversion of John Wesley. Much affected by his ministry was Daniel Rowlands, and then eventually in 1735 Howel Harris was converted and commenced a moving, effective ministry.

6:2 In England God was moving in the heart of an unconverted Anglican Clergyman in Howarth, Yorkshire; William Grimshaw in 1734. George Whitefield of Gloucester was converted in 1735, and John and Charles Wesley converted in 1738; and in 1779 Anglican Charles Simeon.

6:3 The Revival proper began in 1739, when in January of that year George Whitefield began to preach in and around London and then in the Bristol area. In February he took the momentous step of preaching in the open air to 200-miners at Kingswood as the Church had been denied to him. From this point onwards-open air preaching became the norm. During the succeeding months Whitefield estimated that as many as ten thousand hearers gathered, and in London even greater crowds gathered.

6:4 The Revival was very wide spread in England. It was stated, "There are few or no counties in England and or Wales where there is not a work........ The gospel in this day may be likened to a fire set to well dried fuel; it no sooner touches but a flame arises".

6:5 In Wales under the ministries of Howel Harris and Daniel Rowlands the Revival was growing rapidly.
6:6 Wales records significant numbers of conversions on a grand scale. Rowlands witnessed seven great revivals which were spread throughout Wales itself. It is said that by 1746 Daniel Rowlands had 3,000 communicants in his small Cardiganshire parishes, and that some hundred ministers owed their conversion to him.

6:7 God was also performing a special work of grace in Scotland. In 1733 Ebenezer Erskine and others were driven from their churches because of their fervent evangelicalism and continued to minister through the founding of the Secession Church. In 1742 occurred the great Revival of Cambuslang near Glasgow. In February, following several days of prayer, some fifty people sought their minister, William M’Cullock, to counsel them in the night because of their deep burden of guilt. Eventually the whole parish of 900 ceased with their quarrels, swearing, drunkenness and gave way to confession and prayer.

6:8 Vast areas of Scotland were touched by the Spirit with vast crowds attending the Churches and every Sunday people being converted. In Scotland the Revival reached its climax in 1782 but for many years afterwards awakenings were known in the country.

6:9 The American Awakening began in 1735 and commenced through the extraordinary and powerful preaching ministry of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton Connecticut. People were being converted up to four a day, thirty in a week, with over three hundred coming to Christ in six months! George Whitefield came to America to evangelise and in 1740 the very climax of the Revival had been reached.

6:10 It must be remembered that when numbers of converts were recorded this did not refer to just "Church-goers" but to those who had made a serious profession of faith and who had shown, under examination, that their lives were truly changed.

7. GEORGE WHITEFIELD - AN 18TH CENTURY EVANGELIST

7:1 One of God’s greatest evangelists of the 18th Century.

7:2 George Whitefield (1714-1715) was converted before the Wesley brothers (1735) and the first of them to engage in outdoor preaching, who first set the "new birth" at the heart of the evangelical message of his era; who first realised the need to evangelise in an assertive and "aggressive manner"; the first to see converts gathered in such large numbers; who first employed lay preachers; who held the first conference in Wales; who first missioned in Scotland; who first made contact with the American Awakening.

7:3 He was born in Gloucester, the son of an Inn keeper, the Bell Inn. Little is known of Whitefield’s early life except by his own confession he used to be a Sabbath Day breaker, card player and given to swearing, filthy talking and lying. Whitefield entered Oxford at the age of 18.

7:4 Before entering Oxford Whitefield tried to become religious. He then began to read the works of some of the Puritans. He was later converted. The result of this was two fold. First he devoured the scriptures day and night, reading it on his knees, rejoicing in the Word line by line. Secondly Whitefield became a man of intense prayer.

7:5 At the age of 21 Whitefield was ordained into the Church of England, following a deep conviction that God had called him into the ministry, Whitefield engaged in a thorough biblical preaching ministry. Taking the theme of the "new birth" as his constant message, crowds began to gather to hear him. Following a brief visit to America, in 1739, where he was widely acclaimed as a great preacher, Whitefield found that the churches in London and Bristol were now closed to him. The clergy had come to resent his popular preaching
which emptied their own churches and in particular they hated his teaching on the ‘new birth’ which clearly contradicted their emphasis on baptismal-regeneration. Turned out of the Churches, Whitefield took the momentous step of preaching in the open air.

7:5 From this point until his death, a period of thirty one years, Whitefield's life was one of constant preaching of the Gospel. He was always about his Master's business, travelling in Britain or America, calling on men and women to believe in Christ and be saved.

7:6 Whitefield was once married and outlived his wife, but did not have any children. He died in Newbury Port North America on Sunday September 29th 1770 at the age of fifty six.

7:7 Other great names can be added to this list of evangelical preachers such as John Wesley, John Newton the converted slave trader turned preacher (1725-1807); William Romains (1714-1795); John Berridge (1716-1793); Henry Venn (1724-1797); Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) and John Fletcher of Madeley (1729-1785), and many, many more.

8. PREACHING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
8:1 The instrument through which the Spirit of God blessed the people of this nation during the 18th century was the preaching of the Word of God. Through these men the nation witnessed a return to the priority of preaching.

8:2 They preached everywhere! If they found themselves thrust out of the established Church, they gladly took to the open air whether this is field or barn.

8:3 They preached simply! It was concluded by these men that for preaching to be effective it had to be understood.

8:4 Their preaching was fervent and direct! Gone were the heavy, dull and boring sermons of the established Church. They spoke with fire and zeal, like men who were thoroughly persuaded of the truth.

8:5 They taught the Scriptures. These men believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures. They sought to preach the whole counsel of God.

8:6 They also emphasised in their preaching the biblical teaching on sin.

8:7 Turning men and women from self-righteousness, they pointed them to the imputed righteousness of Christ.

8:8 The New Birth, as a necessary work of the Holy Spirit, featured as an integral part of their preaching.

8:9 Their new birth teaching was immediately backed up with a call to repent and trust in Christ as Saviour.

8:10 This was followed by a call to holiness and the godly life.

8:11 Such was the nature of the ministry which changed the face of Britain and America. These truths were preached in Churches, open air, amongst the rich and the poor, on Sundays and every day. Crowds turned out to hear the Evangelists.
9. THE INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS OF THE REVIVAL

9:1 Such a spiritual awakening within the Church was bound to demonstrate some effects upon the wider society and communities. By nature, Revival arouses the consciences of both Church and State.

9:2 First, the rise of the Missionary Movement, which arose towards the close of the century and then blossomed into the nineteenth. The revival itself provided the great stimulus to missionary work.

9:3 The Sunday School movement also had its roots in the Revival.

9:4 In 1796 William Wilberforce and others sought to form the Society for Bettering and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor. The aim of this group was to ensure that the health and safety regulations were duly observed in the rapidly expanding factories.

9:5 Prison reform was started by Robert Raikes. John Wesley sought to arouse the heart of England concerning the state of prisons.

9:6 Within the movement for the abolition of slavery, two significant principles motivated their endeavours; the doctrine of salvation and the teaching of the equality of all men before God. William Wilberforce, the evangelical Christian, was persuaded to take up the issue in Parliament. By 1807 Parliament published an Act which declared the slave trade to be illegal.

9:7 There were other social reforms such as the relief of the poor, the care of the sick and aged, the feeding of the hungry, labour homes were established, schemes of work devised for the unemployed, loan offices and banks opened for the poor and legal advice provided.

9:8 The Revival eighteenth century demonstrated its most outstanding impact upon the social life of the country. Today we owe many social changes to the Revival period, we are truly debtors to the Revival.

CONCLUSION

The Revival must reinforce for us the message that "nothing is impossible with God". The Revival proves the words of Zech 4:6, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord".

Richard Lee