

The Spirit's Fire Burns in Scotland

In a nation paralyzed by staid religious tradition, charismatic renewal has kindled new spiritual vitality.

Dancers stormed the stage. The lectern was pushed to one side. The worship band kicked into a Scottish jig, and Celtic fire struck the 125-year-old building as Christians who had gathered for a conference in Dundee, Scotland, erupted in spontaneous praise.

This celebration occurred last September during a five-day conference at The Gate, one of Scotland's largest charismatic churches. Among the speakers were Keith Johnson, pastor of Saskatoon Christian Center in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and American revivalist Tony Miller, pastor of New Harvest Church in Clewiston, Florida.

"God is going to restore the glory and the anointing and the power of God that made this a nation of revival—and made it impact the entire world," proclaimed Miller, a regular guest at The Gate. The Scottish audience went wild.

Leaders from several nations had come to Dundee, the fourth largest city in Scotland, to focus on revival. They included Ted Yuke from the 700-member Rock Church in Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, which means "New Scotland." His visit to "old Scotland" was the fulfillment of a prophetic word over his ministry.

Indeed, Dundee was a suitable location for this outbreak of renewal fire. The church is located on the same road where revival hit Robert Murray McCheyne's church more than 160 years ago. That move of the Holy Spirit transformed the city of Dundee in 1839.

Scotland has experienced numerous visitations in its history since it was first evangelized by Celtic saints in ancient times. Hopes are being rekindled for revival today.

The Gate meets in an old Church of Scotland building constructed as a result of the 19th century awakening. It's a fascinating mix of ornate carvings, stained glass windows, TV monitors and video cameras. Its pastor is former shipbuilding engineer Stewart Brunton, who had been involved in the construction of the Queen Elizabeth II ocean liner. Brunton became a Christian at a mission hall near Loch Lomond, Scotland.

In England in 1968, Brunton experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit while attending one of the first ever "house churches" at Chard, Somerset. "It felt like I was floating in the air the whole way home," he recalls.

After moving to Dundee, Brunton ran a Christian bookstore near the university. Students came in to talk—and to receive prayer.

"I found myself involved in exorcism, without knowing anything about it," he told Charisma. "I saw many people set free. I became known as 'the Dundee exorcist'—which upset me enormously."

Shortly after he began his deliverance ministry, the film *The Exorcist* was released. Brunton ministered to 100 people after he distributed leaflets about the reality of demons at the local theater.

Along with five others, he started his church in 1976. It was literally an “underground” congregation, meeting in the basement of Brunton’s bookstore. Church members bought their current building in 1984, and the congregation has grown to 500—large for a charismatic group in Scotland’s religiously conservative environment.

Brunton tried traditional outreach methods, but they didn’t work. Now *The Gate* deploys a wide variety of creative programs, including a “Student Feed”—distributing free lunches to 350 students every week; their own skate park, known as *The Factory*, which attracts 2,000 skateboarders, in-line skaters and BMX bikers; a preschool, regularly commended by the local authorities; and “3D” teas (“Decision Determines Destiny”), which address moral issues in schools.

Brunton admits he’s only seen small numbers of conversions through the church’s initiatives. But this charismatic church has won the attention of Dundee officials.

“We’re no longer that hidden little church. We’re quite visible now,” he says.

Brunton is focused about the future. He’d like to build a 2,000-seat auditorium for his growing church.

“I believe revival is hitting us,” he says. “I’ve always had on my heart that there’d be a real stirring of the Holy Spirit

in Dundee.

“I still don’t know how far it will go. I still can’t define it. But I believe we’re getting nearer to what that should be.”

God is touching other places around Scotland. Among them is Thurso, an Atlantic seaport town in the far north. In 1997 the Daily Mail national newspaper cited Thurso as “the most God-fearing town in the nation.” Despite experiencing a drop in population, the town boasted the fastest growing congregation in the Church of Scotland, St. Peter’s and St. Andrew’s, pastored by 42-year-old Kenny Borthwick.

Brought up in a Christian home, Borthwick came to faith at a children’s camp.

“From age 13,” he says, “there was always a feeling of, ‘I think there’s meant to be more to it than this.’ That continued through my training for the ministry.”

In Glasgow, Scotland, in 1981, he was hit by “wave upon wave of power”—while speaking to a friend on the telephone.

Borthwick became minister at Thurso in 1989. Five years later, his window cleaner told him about the charismatic renewal movement known as the Toronto Blessing. Borthwick attended a renewal meeting in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, where Jim Paul from Toronto was speaking.

Borthwick wasn’t impressed by the quirky spiritual manifestations associated with the Toronto movement. But he

was hungry for more of God. Then, when someone offered a simple prayer—"Lord, bless Kenny"—Borthwick was hit by a powerful force, "like being picked up and flung back," he says.

Returning home, Borthwick saw most of his traditional Church of Scotland congregation fall flat on their backs at the end of the evening service, drinking in the goodness of God. Dramatic conversions followed.

One woman practicing white witchcraft was thrown against the church wall by an unseen power. Believing God wanted her to renounce her craft, she handed over a "pendulum"—an occult device—to the minister.

The woman who was converted said she used to see apparitions of her dead father. After she received prayer, "she said it was

like lifting a lead weight that had been there for years," Borthwick says.

Borthwick is

encouraged by stories of renewal fire spreading in other parts of Scotland. "There are streams of blessing and pinpricks of light," he says. "We're still waiting for these pinpricks of light to become a blaze and for the streams to become a river."

Recently Borthwick had a vision of a sleeping stone lion, which he says represents the soul of Scotland. He believes that soul will be strengthened through a return to the Word of

God and a rediscovery of the love of God and intimacy in worship.

He helped launch a conference called CLAN Gathering (Christians Linked Across the Nation) that promotes renewal. They meet at a venue in St. Andrew's, formerly a spiritual power base of Scotland that currently draws more golfers than spiritual pilgrims.

Today, the streets of St. Andrew's are filled with tourists, but in the 16th century they ran with the blood of martyrs such as Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart. In this quaint coastal town, Protestant reformers preached against erroneous doctrine and immorality in the church—and were burned at the stake for it.

Ted Collington now leads a church there, initially started by students and overseen by The Gate. A Presbyterian minister working outside his denomination, Collington is also part of a group planning to restore regular prayer sessions amid the dramatic, windswept ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral.

Collington sees “pre-signs” of revival in Scotland. “Recent happenings in Toronto and Pensacola, [Florida], have given people an idea of a move of God, and there hasn't been an experience of that—that I'm aware of—in the past 50 years here,” he says. “But there is an expectancy of revival. The sure sign will be a move of repentance in the churches and a prayer movement of repentance on behalf of the nation.”

There also needs to be a Spirit-inspired unity among leaders in Scotland—since there are bitter divisions between churches. Says Collington: “We're a terribly divisive—and

divided-nation. The old Scottish 'clan' spirit is very real in many instances."

Keith Johnson believes The Gate is seeing the beginning stages of revival. "I'm encouraged by what I see here," he told Charisma. "History tells us that Scotland has experienced some mighty moves of God. If God did it before, He'll do it again."

"There's a move of God coming to this land that will be far greater than the Welsh revival," adds Tony Miller, a regular observer of the Scottish renewal. "It will be greater than the days of Robert Murray McCheyne. It will be the days of the revealing of the glory of God like never has been known in the history of mankind."

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