

1

Reformation or revival?

At DPC we identify ourselves in the Christian Church as a Reformed congregation. That means we trace our origins, not just to the Reformers, but further back to the NT church and the Bible. That is what the Reformers taught and we can do no less and no more than claim the same authority. But they also taught the principle of *semper reformanda*: that is, always reforming. The scriptures show us that we must always bring all we do back to God's word. Both the Bible and history show how easily we can lose direction.

Haggai and Zechariah were prophesying after the return from exile to Jerusalem when the temple needed to be rebuilt. Haggai first had to tell both the leaders and the people that they had no excuse for being preoccupied with their own houses instead of building the temple, the Lord's house. Indeed he showed them that their poor harvests and economic problems were directly linked to their failure to give priority to serving the Lord by rebuilding his house (ch 1: 1-11). God had brought this about.

They began to build, but became disheartened. Haggai took them beyond mere commitment to the work. They had to learn where the true glory of the temple lay. It was not in size, or gold, or silver, but in the Lord's own presence. God's word to them, as to us, was, 'I am with you.' The glory of the latter house would far exceed that of the former, because of the presence of the Lord in a more glorious way (ch 2: 1-9).

In the golden splendour of Solomon's temple, God's glory was represented in types and shadows. But in the 'latter house,' which is the church of Jesus Christ, the glory is Christ himself, Immanuel, 'God with us.'

Haggai's further message concerning ceremonial uncleanness was to show them that holiness cannot be transferred from one to another. What mattered, as ever, was the heart, and service from the heart. They began again. God at work in his sovereign purpose said in his grace that from the day they set to the work, 'I will bless you' (ch 2:28)

True reformation demands that we depend on the Lord, in our hearts, and not depend simply on putting things right. Haggai reminded them that at the time of the covenant at Sinai God said, 'My spirit remains among you, don't be afraid.' We have the Spirit now more fully than then, the church and every believer, yet we still need to depend on him and plead for his outpouring. Zechariah told Israel's governor, Zerubbabel, that it was '... not by might nor by strength but by my Spirit, says the Lord.' The church today needs the power of God's Spirit. It's not either/or: reformation or revival, but reformation with revival, that we need. We must look to, depend on, and cry out for, a greater and more powerful work of his Spirit again in this land.

2

A prayer from Calvin's commentary on Haggai
written at the close of the chapter on
Haggai chapter 2: 1-5

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are not only alienated in mind from thee, but also often relapse after having been once stirred up by thee, either into perverseness, or into our own vanity, or are led astray by various things, so that nothing is more difficult than to pursue our course until we reach the end of our race - O grant that we may not confide in our own strength, nor claim for ourselves more than what is right, but, with our hearts raised above, depend on thee alone, and constantly call on thee to supply us with new strength, and so to confirm us that we may persevere to the end in the discharge of our duty, until we shall at length attain to the true and perfect form of that temple which thou commandest us to build, in which thy perfect glory shines forth, and into which we are to be transformed by Christ our Lord. Amen
