



# REFORMATION TODAY



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Singing the praise of the Lord at the annual Reformed Conference (See News).

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Front cover picture. *Nature shows us plenty of examples of life springing up where everything seems barren. In a similar way, God has shown his sovereign power in the history of revivals of his Church (see article about the history of Howell Harris and revivals in the 18th century in Wales). This should be a great stimulus to prayer (see news item on prayer for revival).*

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## Editorial

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**I**N PSALM 8:4 DAVID ADDRESSES THE FOLLOWING question to God: 'What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?' The question expresses amazement at the fact that God is indeed mindful of man and cares for people. For many people nowadays this question is utterly irrelevant because they have no time for God, not even the slightest thought about him. Others are really wondering where God is when they look at the condition of this world and all the evil that is taking place. In many cases, this is an expression which assumes human primacy: we are to decide what we think about God and whether or not we care about him! When confronted with the one and only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Sovereign Lord, the question changes. Man is humbled and begins to wonder why God wants to have anything to do with us.

When we realise our rebellion and sin against God, the sense of wonder becomes even greater and deeper. We confess that we deserve God's wrath and we cry out to him. In that position the Bible discloses a most unexpected but no less real answer to the above question: the Lord has declared that he has given

us his one and only Son, the man Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate answer to the question of Psalm 8 (Heb 2:5-9). God is mindful of him because he fully obeyed God and carried out the Father's will. This has become supremely clear in his sacrificial life and death on the cross in the place of sinners. This is the grace of God (Heb 2:9). God is therefore mindful of all who are in Christ Jesus by grace through faith. God therefore cares for men and women who believe in Christ, who are justified by grace through faith.

The Lord's people may still be troubled about this question, however, as they may NOT experience God's care for them, and not even have a sense of his presence with them. This can be a real struggle in the lives of God's children. Having noticed this, the only and ultimate remedy must be to look again at the true man of Psalm 8, the Lord Jesus Christ. He experienced being forsaken by God in our place so that we should never be forsaken again. In his great wisdom he may not give us the conscious assurance of this truth, but true it is nevertheless. The promises of Scripture make this abundantly clear (Heb 13:5-6): 'I will never leave you nor forsake you. So, we can confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

These matters all come back in this issue of *Reformation Today* for which its theme can be summarised as follows: ‘The doctrine of man and God’s presence with his children’. Mostyn Roberts continues the doctrinal series with the topic of the doctrine of man. The series on John 14 by Bob Davey fittingly expounds verses 18-31 where Jesus assures his disciples that he will not leave them as orphans. Such promises of God were the key remedies used by the Puritans as the great ‘physicians of the soul’, as Humphrey Mildred illustrates from one of the most insightful

writers on these matters, William Bridge. Wes Johnston adds even more wisdom from the Puritans to the theme of this issue. John Palmer explains how God uses trials to build true Christian character in us. Finally, considering the matter of the article on Howell Harris and revival should lead us to exclaim with a sense of deep wonder and gratitude: ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?’ May the Lord bless you with his gracious presence as you contemplate the theme and content of this issue of *RT*.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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## The Apostles Not Left as Orphans

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*By Bob Davey*

**T**HIS IS THE FINAL PART IN A SERIES OF FOUR EXPOSITORY ARTICLES ON JOHN 14 IN WHICH WE LOOK AT VERSES 18-31.<sup>1</sup>

In the upper room Jesus continues to comfort the eleven faithful apostles with twelve reasons why they should not have troubled hearts. We have already looked at the first six of these in the previous articles.<sup>2</sup>

***Reason 7. Jesus and the Father will still be with them: 14:18-24***

**I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.**

With great love and tenderness Jesus has called the apostles ‘little children’ (13:33). He now tells them that though he is going away, he will not leave

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<sup>1</sup> The previous 3 articles have appeared in *RT* 256, 258 and 260

<sup>2</sup> Reasons 1-3 in part 1; reason 4 in part 2 and reasons 5 and 6 in part 3 (it should be noted that part 3 mentions reasons 4 and 5 whereas this should have been 5 and 6).

them behind alone and bereft in the world, like orphans. He will come to them.

**A little while longer and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live also.**

*A little while longer and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.* Within hours the earthly phase of the ministry of Jesus was to be over. After his death the unbelieving world would then see him no more. But his death would not signal the end for him nor for the apostles. He will rise from the dead and will be seen by them. For a short period of forty days between the resurrection and his ascension into heaven the risen Lord was actually seen by the apostles on a number of occasions.

*Because I live, you will live also.* Not only that. His resurrection life would secure and guarantee eternal life for them, as it does for all believers.

**At that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.**

*At that day.* Jesus here is referring to the day of Pentecost. That day was the birthday of the Christian Church, when a new phase for the kingdom of God began. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the spiritual privileges of the New Covenant were to be revealed and fully experienced on that day. The apostles would not be left bereft and helpless as orphans to struggle on alone as best as they could. On that day they would be fully empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit for their future ministries.

*You will know that I am in my Father.* The union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Trinity is absolute, full and eternally perfect. Therefore by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the apostles would be given more understanding and insight into the full deity of Jesus and his union with the Father (1 Cor 2:11,12).

*and you in me, and I in you.* The union of the Son with the believer has a beginning in this world at conversion. The Holy Spirit seals the union and the enjoyment of it. This union with Christ, once established, will never come to an end. All the disciples, as well as the apostles, were filled with the joy of the knowledge of the Lord at Pentecost.

The term 'in Christ' always means 'in union with Christ'. It is a very short term with a very big meaning. This union is likened to the human body. In the body there is a union of the head with the other parts of the body. So the glorified Lord Jesus Christ is the head, and the Church (born-again believers) is his body (Eph 1:22-23; 4:15,16). This union, together with each member of the body in it, was purposed in the mind and plan of God from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-6).

Other illustrations, or pictures, of this union with Christ are vine and branches (15:1-8); husband and wife (Eph 5:22-32); a temple (Eph 2:19-22).

**He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.**

Because of its importance Jesus repeats that the fundamental evidence for being a true believer is genuine love towards him (verse 15). Only a born-again Christian seeks to truly love Jesus with heart, soul, mind and strength. Truth without love is an empty shell (1 Cor 13:1-3). This love is full of wonder and gratitude towards him 'who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2:20). As a result the response of obedience to his commands is gladly given. This is true freedom. The apostles must never forget this fundamental duty of loving obedience, both in their living and in their teaching. Nor should we.

*manifest myself to him.* The reward for those who genuinely love and obey Christ is sweet communion with him. The love of God is poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). The full extent of the love of Christ towards believers is found in Romans 8:35-39.

**Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?'**

The apostle Judas (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13) was also called Thaddaeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18). This is the only place where words that he spoke are recorded. He is not to be confused with Jude the writer of the short New Testament letter nor with Judas Iscariot the traitor.

Judas asked Jesus what he meant.

**Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.**

*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word (teaching) .. not mine but the Father's.* Those who love Jesus believe, keep, honour and obey the teaching of Jesus, which is the teaching of the Father also. The Word of God is all in all for true believers. They live by every word of God (Matt 4:4; 7:24,25). They do not pick and choose what to believe and what to obey.

*we will come to him (face to face) and make our home (together) with him.* The promise stresses a most intimate personal relationship. Believers will not have to wait until they are in heaven before they receive intimate communion with the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son will make

their home together with believers by indwelling them. This is for the here and now. What amazing love that almighty God should so choose to dwell with sinners!

*He who does not love me does not keep my words.* Those who reject the teaching of Christ are rejecting Christ himself. Whatever service they give in the name of Christ is not real and not accepted by God. If they continue in rejecting the teaching of Christ they will be rejected and punished (Matt 7:18-23,26,27). These words of Jesus underline the importance of sound doctrine and teaching. Love for Christ and love for the Word of God cannot be divorced from each other.

#### ***Reason 8. The Holy Spirit will teach in Jesus' place: 14:25,26***

**These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

*These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.* For three years the apostles had been taught by Jesus himself, in his physical presence. That was now going to change.

*the Helper, the Holy Spirit ..he will teach you.* Jesus promises that when he leaves the apostles they will continue to be taught by him but not with him being physically present with them. The Holy Spirit will be given to them as Teacher, in place of his physical presence.

*whom the Father will send in my name.* The ultimate authority for the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be the same as it had been for Jesus. As Jesus had been sent by the Father, so also the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father. The Holy Spirit will not be independent, acting for himself. He will act for Jesus and be his future mouthpiece.

*he will teach you all things.* Only God can know all things. What is being promised by Jesus is that the Holy Spirit will infallibly teach the apostles all the truth necessary for them to know and transmit.

*and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.* The Holy Spirit will ensure that the apostles will both remember and accurately pass on all the teaching of Jesus. There will be no contradictions between the apostles' teaching and Christ's teaching. Nor will there be any contradictions in the teachings of the apostles among themselves. The Holy Spirit will give them infallibility in their teaching and writing. The New Testament Scriptures are the product.

What the prophets were in producing the Old Testament Scriptures, the

apostles were to be in producing the New Testament Scriptures. The result is the whole Bible, the infallible Word of God.<sup>3</sup>

What greater help could the apostles have in their ministries than that!

***Reason 9. Jesus will give them his legacy of peace: 14:27***

**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**

The peace that Jesus promises the apostles is the spiritual peace of God that surpasses all understanding. He called it ‘my peace’ because it would be his legacy, the fruit of his sacrificial death. Therefore the hearts of the apostles ought not to be troubled, nor fear for the future (Phil 4:6,7).

***Reason 10. His going away is a matter for them to rejoice about: 14:28***

**You have heard me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for my Father is greater than I.**

The apostles were not to be self-absorbed with their troubles. Had not Jesus promised that he was coming back for them (verse 3)? They should fix their minds on him. If they loved him, then they would rejoice *for him* because he was going home to heaven.

*for my Father is greater than I.* Jesus in his deity is equal to the Father, but as Mediator/God-Man he is subject to the Father. As Mediator he was going to heaven to receive from the Father Almighty all the blessings of salvation for the redeemed (Phil 2:8-11). They should rejoice *for him* at the happy outcome of *his* mission on earth.

***Reason 11. Their faith will increase when his predictions happen: 14:29***

**And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.**

Jesus was well aware that the state of mind of the apostles prevented them from absorbing all the predictions that he had made. But he knew that later on, they would be able to look back and see that all that he had said had been true and had come to pass. As a result their faith in him would be greatly strengthened. This would make them strong in faith for their apostolic ministries.

***Reason 12. The death of Jesus will be a victory not a defeat: 14:30,31***

**I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me.**

<sup>3</sup> See the article *The Bible: God's Word* by Mostyn Roberts in RT 259.



There was little time left for discussion before Satan would be permitted to have his way with Jesus. In an hour or two Jesus was going to be betrayed by Judas in the garden of Gethsemane and then be crucified. Jesus called that period the ‘hour and power of darkness’ (Luke 22:53).

*the ruler of this world.* Here Jesus tells us the truth about this world’s affairs. The world already has a world ruler (Luke 4:5-8). The world’s way of thinking is governed by Satan (2 Cor 4:4). The ‘whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one’ (1 John 5:19).

*he has nothing in me.* Jesus was sinless from conception. He was sinless in all his life right up to the end. He loved his Father and did his will in all things. As a man Jesus could be tempted by Satan (Matt 4:1-11). Yet Satan had nothing that he could lay hold of in Jesus in order to cause him to sin. The outcome would be certain and complete victory for Jesus. The resurrection proved it.

**But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment so I do. Arise, let us go from here.**

Jesus will not resist his arrest. He will go to his death willingly as a lamb to the slaughter. This will be a demonstration to the whole world, for all time, of his love and obedience to his Father.

*Arise, let us go from here.* Let us get ready to go immediately. The appointed time is at hand.

So, once again the twelve reasons why the apostles should not have troubled hearts:

1. They are to trust Jesus as they trust God (verse 1).
2. Heaven is sure for them (verse 2).
3. Jesus will come back for them (verse 3).
4. Through Jesus the way to heaven is provided (verses 4-11).
5. Their work for Jesus will still go on and succeed (verses 12-14).
6. They will have the help of the Holy Spirit (verses 15-17).
7. Jesus and the Father will still be with them (verses 18-24).
8. The Holy Spirit will be Teacher in Jesus’ place (verses 25-26).
9. Jesus will give them his legacy of peace (verse 27).
10. His going away is a matter for them to rejoice about (verse 28).
11. Their faith will increase when his predictions happen (verse 29).
12. The death of Jesus will be a victory not a defeat (verses 30,31).

All twelve reasons for the encouragement of faith given to the apostles have a relevance for the individual Christian today.

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# ‘A Lifting Up for the Downcast’

## by William Bridge

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*Introduction and comments by Humphrey Mildred, the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Edinburgh*

### **Seven encouraging reminders by a Puritan physician of the soul.**

**Y**OU KNOW YOU REALLY SHOULD READ THIS ARTICLE! WHY, BECAUSE I WROTE IT? NO, BUT BECAUSE THE subject is a vital one; it is a neglected one, and we can learn a great deal from a Puritan preacher who addressed it with rare skill in one of his sermons. What follows is a very free summary of chapter six of *A Lifting Up for the Downcast* by William Bridge, one of my favourite Puritan authors. It is titled ‘A Lifting Up in the Case of Desertion’. My other reason for wanting you to read this article is that I hope it will result in your reading the book— it is a wonderful feast of spiritual refreshments.

1. He begins by stating that this feeling of desertion is a not uncommon spiritual experience and it is one of the worst of the many afflictions of the righteous for two very obvious reasons:

a) It is harder to bear all our other trials if we no longer feel the Lord is with us.

b) Just as the presence of Christ sweetens all our comforts so his absence embitters all other sufferings.

2. Without the sunshine of his smile upon us he seems to us to be our enemy, and not just an absent friend. Satan seeks to persuade us this is the real situation. Let’s listen to Luther! ‘When God seems to be my enemy and to stand with a drawn sword against me, then I do cast and throw myself into his arms.’ That is a truly spiritual response, a response of faith to this severest of trials. See Isaiah 50:10. ‘Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.’

3. We must remember that God is said to forsake man, either in regard of his power, grace and strength, or in regard of the comfortable feelings of his love. In other words, either in regard to union, or to vision. In regard to union he never forsakes his children. In regard to vision he forsakes us

only for a time – he will always return to us. Other Puritans used the word ‘communion’ rather than ‘vision’ to express this particular truth. Bridge is reminding us, and how much we need the reminder, that although we may and do lose our enjoyment of Christ and the salvation he gives us, it is not that in desertion we become non-Christians! We may not have the enjoyments of Christ but we still have our union with Christ. Desertion is not losing our union with him, but losing the blessings of his felt presence with us. If we appreciated his presence more, we would grieve over his absence more deeply. All preachers know what it is when preaching to be sadly aware of the Holy Spirit’s absence. But how thankful we are when we enjoy seasons of his presence. Thus it is for all believers in our daily pilgrimage – Christ leaves us for a season but he never forsakes us utterly. He will always return at the time of his choice.

4. What purpose does the Lord have in forsaking us for a time? Do we need to ask? Can we not trust that he has a purpose of love, a purpose to bless us, a purpose to bring great good from this apparent evil? Has he not said that he delights to do us good? It is one of his great instruments of our sanctification in three ways:

- a) He withdraws himself from us that he may draw us closer to himself.
- b) He withdraws for a moment that we might die to this world and long more vehemently for heaven.
- c) He withdraws that we might die to the walk of sight and live to a walk of faith. ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!’

5. Though God hides his face from his people for a time, so they are in the dark, it is never pitch black. ‘He leaves us enough light to work by.’ This is a great encouragement and challenge. What is our spiritual work? To seek him with our whole heart. To serve him with all our strength. To seek to comfort others in the same twilight. To set about the work of intercession for Christ’s world-wide kingdom. Let us recall past periods of blessed sunshine with gratitude and hope.

6. Remember our great High Priest knows what it is to be deserted by God. Does not his anguished quotation of Psalm 22:1 encourage our timid souls? Was that the end of the matter? No – that cry was soon followed by resurrection glory and then ascension glory! What must we do? Wait upon the Lord – wait patiently for him.

7. Have you not known periods of desertion before? And has not Christ always returned to you? Then be tough with yourself and mortify the sin

of unbelief. Be tough with Satan and say to him, ‘Yes, Satan, I know the Lord loves me, because you tell me he hates me!’ And say to your Lord and Saviour, ‘Your will, not mine, be done. Bless this great trial to me and may it be a means of making me a more obedient servant, enabling me to glorify you more!’

This subject of our periods of desertion by the Lord is a vast one and it is strange that the literature on it is not more extensive. If you are interested in this experience may I commend another title to you, one by a living author? This is *Deserted by God?* by Sinclair Ferguson, published by Banner of Truth. He bases each short chapter on a psalm and thus shows how common the experience is but also the wealth of experimental teaching there is on it in the book of Psalms.

John Flavel lived between 1627 and 1691, dying at the age of sixty-three. Samuel Rutherford, that great Scottish minister, was born in 1600 and died in 1661 at the age of sixty-one. Did they ever meet? I do not know, but Rutherford certainly experienced periods of desertion, and although only really two of his letters in the Banner edition of *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford* out of the 365 letters, are directly about desertion by the Lord, there are many references to his struggles in his writings. What is spiritual desertion? Let Rutherford echo Flavel. ‘Love would have the company of the party loved; and my greatest pain is the want of him, not of his joys and comforts, but of a near union and communion’.

The Church of Jesus Christ owes a great debt to Mrs Ann Cousins (1824-1906), the wife of the Free Church of Scotland Minister in Melrose. She it was who wrote a long poem based on sayings of Rutherford, some verses of which appear in many hymn books,. It is known by the first line, ‘The Sands of Time are Sinking’. Let me close by quoting one of the verses not in the hymn books:

But flowers need night’s cool darkness,  
The moonlight and the dew;  
So Christ, from one who loved it,  
His shining oft withdrew;  
And then for cause of absence,  
My troubled soul I scanned –  
But glory, shadeless, shineth  
In Immanuel’s land.

I wonder, when did we last scan our troubled soul, seeking to know why Christ has left us? Is not this the real problem facing some Reformed congregations today?

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# The Puritans and their Heirs on the Sensible Presence of God, the Immediate Work of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit's Work of Assurance

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*By Wes Johnston*

I've been compiling these quotes for a while now. I plan to add to the list:

**P**URITAN WILLIAM GUTHRIE SPEAKS OF THE SHEDDING ABROAD OF GOD'S LOVE IN THE HEART AND THE SENSIBLE presence of God to the soul: 'I speak with the experience of many saints, and, I hope, according to Scripture, if I say there is a communication of the Spirit of God which is sometimes vouchsafed to some of His people that is somewhat besides, if not beyond, that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart; it is a thing better felt than spoken of: it is no audible voice, but it is a ray of glory filling the soul with God, as He is life, light, love, and liberty, corresponding to that audible voice, "O man, greatly beloved" (Dan. 9: 23); putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, "It is good to be here" (Matt. 17: 4). It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when He but mentioned her name – "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master" (John 20: 16). He had spoken some words to her before, and she understood not that it was He: but when He uttereth this one word "Mary", there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was Christ, and if she had any interest in Him. That manifestation wrought faith to itself, and did purchase credit and trust to itself, and was equivalent with, "Thus saith the Lord". This is such a glance of glory, that it may in the highest sense be called "the earnest" or first-fruits "of the inheritance" (Eph. 1: 14); for it is a present, and, as it were, sensible discovery of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto His likeness; so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the Spirit! Faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into the sensible presence of God. This is the thing which does best deserve the title of sensible presence; and is not given unto all believers, some whereof

“are all their days under bondage, and in fear” (Heb. 2: 15); but here “love, almost perfect, casteth out fear” (1 John 4: 18). This is so absolutely let out upon the Master’s pleasure, and so transient or passing, or quickly gone when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state into debate for want of it.’ (from Scottish Presbyterian William Guthrie, *The Christian’s Great Interest*, available online)

**John Owen** distinguishes between faith and spiritual sense. Faith alone justifies. Spiritual sense comes and goes, but there is no denying its reality:

‘Learn to distinguish between faith and spiritual sense. This rule the apostle gives us in 2 Corinthians 5:7, “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” It is the sight of glory that is especially here intended. But faith and sense in any kind are clearly distinguished. That may be *believed* which is not *felt*; yea, it is the will and command of God that faith should stand and do its work



John Owen (1616 – 1683)

where sense fails...And if we will believe no more of God, of his love, of his grace, of our acceptance with him, than we have a spiritual affecting sense of, we shall be many times at a loss.’ (John Owen, *Works vol. 6*, pp. 561-562).

John Owen describes the teaching of the Spirit, ‘which is a part of his anointing (1 John 2: 20, 27). There is an unction of the Spirit which brings joy: a teaching by the Spirit of consolation; – making sweet, useful, and joyful to the soul, the discoveries that are made of the mind and will of God in the light of the Spirit of sanctification. Here the oil of the Spirit is called the “oil of gladness”, – that which brings joy and gladness with it; and the name of Christ thereby discovered is a sweet “ointment poured forth”, that causeth souls to run after him with joy and delight (Song of Solomon 1:3). We see it by daily experience, that very many have little taste and sweetness and relish in their souls of those truths which yet they savingly know and believe; but when we are taught by this unction, oh, how sweet is everything we know of God!...When we find any of the good truths of the gospel come home to our souls with life, vigour, and power, giving us gladness of heart, transforming us into the image and likeness of it, – the Holy Ghost is then at work, is pouring out of his oil’ (*Communion with God*, from *Works vol. 2*, p. 248).

*One way* (not the only way, or primary way) in which the Spirit of God brings a believer joy is by his *immediate* work to and upon the soul. I find the example of John the Baptist leaping for joy in the womb of his mother

quite compelling and helpful: “He doth it immediately by himself; without the consideration of any other acts or works of his, or the interposition of any reasonings, or deductions and conclusions. As in sanctification he is a well of water springing up in the soul, immediately exerting his efficacy and refreshment; so in consolation, he immediately works the soul and minds of men to a joyful, rejoicing, and spiritual frame, filling them with exultation and gladness; – not that this arises from our reflex consideration of the love of God, but rather gives occasion thereunto. When he so sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and so fills them with gladness by an immediate act and operation (as he caused John [the] Baptist to leap for joy in the womb upon the approach of the mother of Jesus), – then doth the soul, even from hence, raise itself to a consideration of the love of God, whence joy and rejoicing doth also flow. Of this joy there is no account to be given, but that the Spirit worketh it when and how he will. He secretly infuseth and distills it into the soul, prevailing against all fears and sorrows, filling it with gladness, exultations; and sometimes with unspeakable raptures of mind” (*Communion with God*, pp. 252-253).

The Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts in order to give us an ‘overflowing sense’ of the mercy and love of God in Christ: ‘He “sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts” (Rom. 5: 5). That is the *love of God to us*, not *our love to God*, which is here intended; the context is so clear as nothing can be added thereunto. Now, the love of God is either of *ordination* or of *acceptation*, – the love of his purpose to do us good, or the love of acceptation and approbation with him. Both these are called the love of God frequently in Scripture, as I have declared. Now, how can these be shed abroad in our hearts? Not in themselves, but in a sense of them, – in a spiritual apprehension of them. “Shed abroad” is the same word that is used concerning the Comforter being given to us (Tit.3:6). God sheds him abundantly, or pours him on us; so he sheds abroad, or pours out the love of God in our hearts. Not to insist on the expression, which is metaphorical, the business is, that the Comforter gives us sweet and plentiful evidence and persuasion of the love of God to us, such as the soul is taken, delighted, satiated withal. This is his work, and he doth it effectually. To give a poor sinful soul *a comfortable persuasion*, affecting it throughout, in all its faculties and affections, that God in Jesus Christ loves him, delights in him, is pleased with him, hath thoughts of tenderness and kindness towards him; to give, I say, a soul an overflowing sense hereof, is an inexpressible mercy’ (John Owen, *Works* vol. 2, p. 240).

‘The Spirit stills the storms of the soul with a word, and thereby we rejoice in his presence: The soul knows [the Holy Spirit’s] voice when he speaks... There is something too great in it to be the effect of a created power. When

the Lord Jesus Christ at one word stilled the raging of the sea and wind, all that were with him knew there was divine power at hand (Matt. 8:25-27). And when the Holy Ghost by one word stills the tumults and storms that are raised in the soul, giving it an immediate calm and security, it knows his divine power, and rejoices in his presence' (John Owen, *Works* vol. 2, p. 242).

**Octavius Winslow** on hiding from the presence of Christ and delighting in the presence of Christ: 'There is a hiding from his presence; there are misty views of his character, misinterpretations of his dealings and a lessening of holy desire for him: but where the heart is right in its affections, warm in its love, fixed in its desires, God is glorious in his perfections, and communion with him the highest bliss on earth' (Octavius Winslow, *Personal Declension and the Revival of Religion in the Soul*, pp. 50-51).

The sensible presence of God, and his absence, can be sensed in the soul:

'He who knows God, who, with faith's eye, has discovered some of his glory, and by the power of the Spirit has felt something of his love, will not be at a loss to distinguish between God's sensible presence and absence in the soul. Some professing people walk so much without communion, without fellowship, without daily filial and close intercourse with God; they are so immersed in the cares, and so lost in the fogs and mists of the world; the fine edge of their spiritual affection is so blunted, and their love so frozen by contact with worldly influences and occupations, – and no less so, with cold, formal professors, – that the Sun of righteousness may cease to shine upon their soul, and they not know it! God may cease to visit them, and his absence not be felt! He may cease to speak, and the stillness of his voice not awaken an emotion of alarm! Yea, a more strange thing would happen to them if the Lord were suddenly to break in upon their soul, with a visit

of love, than were he to leave them for weeks and months without any token of his presence' (*Personal Declension*, pp. 52-53).



*Thomas Goodwin (1600-79)*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones used an illustration from Puritan **Thomas Goodwin** for the special manifestations of God in the Spirit. The idea is that there are times when God especially manifests his fatherly love by workings of the Spirit in the soul. I have not been able to track down the original source for Goodwin's exact illustration, but here it is in the words of the Doctor:



‘A man and his little child are walking down the road and they are walking hand in hand, and the child knows that he is the child of his father, and he knows that his father loves him, and he rejoices in that, and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about it all, but suddenly the father, moved by some impulse, takes hold of the child and picks him up, fondles him in his arms, kisses him, embraces him, showers his love upon him, and then he puts him down again and they go on walking together’ (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, pp. 95-96).

**Charles Spurgeon**, in a sermon called ‘The Former and the Latter Rain’ insisted on the need for the reviving work of the Holy Spirit. He stressed that there are spiritual heights available that most believers do not see, and therefore should all the more desire and seek: ‘My Brothers and Sisters, there is a point in Grace as much above the ordinary Christian, as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling. Believe me, the life of Divine Grace is no dead level, it is not a low country, a vast flat. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians who live in the valleys, like the poor Swiss of the Valais, who live in the midst of the mist, where fever has its lair and the frame is languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are forever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ and tossed to and fro. But there are other Believers, who, by God’s Grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion. Their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft.’

**The Westminster Confession** speaks of an assurance (who can doubt this is the work of the Spirit?) which is not the same as saving faith:

I. Although hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; which hope shall never make them ashamed.

II. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

III. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

IV. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair' (WCF, chapter 18).

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## The Development of Christian Character

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*by John Palmer*

WHAT IS A GODLY AND FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN? THIS QUESTION CAN BE ANSWERED IN DIFFERENT WAYS. However, a good answer must surely contain the idea of stability and consistency. The great tragedy of a moral fall, which leads us to have to say of a brother that he is no longer godly and faithful, by definition must include the fact that his life is not consistent with what has gone before. So this stable, settled faithfulness to Christ must be of the essence of true godliness.

We can call this the 'Christian Character'. This is not a term heard much in ordinary conversation, or seemingly in preaching. Yet the concept is biblical. The word 'character' does not appear in the AV/KJV, but in NKJV, ESV, NIV it is rightly there in Romans 5:3-4, '...suffering

produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope’ (ESV— all quotations are from this unless stated otherwise). The Greek is *dokimē*, meaning ‘approvedness after testing’. It is probably what Greek-speakers of 2000 years ago would have stamped on electrical equipment tested in the workplace for safety, if they’d had any then!

The same word is used in Philippians 2:22, ‘But you know Timothy’s proven worth’, i.e. his settled character; and in 2 Corinthians 8:2, ‘...for in a severe test of affliction’— we could say, ‘in a character-proving test’— in this context, it resulted in a ‘wealth of generosity’. This was how their godly character was demonstrated. A related word, *dokimos*, occurs in Romans 16:10, ‘Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ’, and elsewhere in the NT.

In 1 Corinthians 11:19, Paul says to the Corinthians, ‘There must be divisions among you in order that those who are approved [that is, by God] among you may be recognised’ (author’s translation). He is not saying that having divisions is good for a church! Rather, in a church like that at Corinth, which sometimes resembled a bear-garden, because some were behaving so sinfully that Paul says, v17, ‘When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse’, it would be hoped that there would be some who by their behaviour were actually exhibiting Christian character and so standing out from the rest!

What is this character which Christ approves? It can be summed up as Christlikeness, being ‘transformed into his image’ (2 Cor. 3:18). It is what results from ‘growing in the grace and the knowledge’ of him (2 Pet. 3:18). So it is to be holy, godly, displaying every grace. The new self is ‘created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness’ (Eph. 4:24). Peter asks, ‘...what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...?’ (2 Pet. 3:11).

2 Peter 1:5-8 describes this character, as one grace is added to another: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, love.

So how do we develop Christian character? The passages quoted above show that successfully enduring trials is an essential component. ‘Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep your word’ (Ps. 119:67). However, this is not all that is necessary. There are in fact three interrelated components which God weaves together to produce a character which he approves. We will consider the first two more briefly, the focus of this article being on the importance of the third. We can do this because these two have already in a sense been covered.

## **Trials**

Christian character is what we really are, as revealed by trials. This is

because trials develop it. 1 Peter 1:6-7 teaches us that trials lead to the 'tested genuineness of our faith' being shown. 'Tested genuineness is *dokimion* – a word relating to the other Greek words we have been considering. It refers to putting metal into a fire to burn off the dross so that what is left is really the substance that it is claimed to be, without impurities which would reduce its value.

Peter alludes to this, saying that even gold will perish, although not susceptible to melting in any fire that could have been kindled in his day, but that Christian faith survives any trial.

Here is Christian character being formed and thus proved. This is the settled state of a person. Consider two Christians who pass through the same experience of suffering for their faith. One has been a pillar of the church. Yet he crumbles and denies his faith. The other has been a seemingly unstable Christian. Yet he withstands all, and is still found standing at the end, a much stronger Christian. In the first instance Christian character was not there. Unbeknown to all, the seemingly rock-like person was not relying on Christ, and could not withstand the persecution. In the second case the person truly was relying on Christ, and though his Christian character had imperfections which all could see, the trial has burnt these away, making his character grow.

We see, then, that Christian character is developed in a person who suffers trials while relying on the Lord as the source of his daily spiritual life. How careful we must be not to rely on anything else – our own strength, our outward habits of piety such as church attendance or Bible reading, our pastor. When these have gone, are we kept by God's power through faith? If so, Christian character is there and will grow through our trials.

### **Scripture**

This too we have been assuming as a source of developing the Christlike character – and rightly so. 'Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth,' the Lord prayed for his people (Jn. 17:17). There are two parts to the reality of the Word developing Christian character.

First, we must believe the commandments that we are given, and then obey them. 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7 tells us that God's will is our sanctification; that he has not called us to remain in impurity, but that his purpose in calling us is holiness. So, vv1-2, we must obey his instructions, in order to live in a way that pleases God. In Psalm 119:11 we read, 'I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.'

So we must continually examine ourselves by the Word and repent and obey. 'When I thought on my ways, I turned my feet to your testimonies; I hastened and did not delay to keep your commandments' (Ps 119:59-60, author's translation). Developing Christian character is one long process

of self-examination, and repentance, and subsequent greater obedience.

Secondly, we must believe the promises that we are given, and plead them in prayer. 2 Peter 1:4 tells us that in order to add one grace to another, as in the verses following, God has given us his precious and very great promises. These have made us partakers of the divine nature – that is, the Holy Spirit is actively at work within us to conform us to God’s image. It is those who know that they stand in grace, justified by faith, who can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; they are those in whom sufferings produce endurance, and endurance character, and character hope.

It is the one who has the hope of the promise of being eventually perfectly conformed to Christ who purifies himself now (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

As for how we, seeing ourselves and our sinfulness, can even begin to hope that we might become more Christlike, has not God declared that he is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to his power at work within us (Eph. 3:20)? 1 Corinthians 15, the great chapter about our transformation, ends with, ‘*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain*’ (v58). Here is a marvellous description of Christian character. How do we attain this? By believing in our final victory over sin, as shown in our immortal perfect bodies (vv54-58).

### **The Third Component**

What is the context in which this character can be developed? It is the local church. We must understand this. Over half of the commands in the New Testament letters regarding the characteristics which Christians should display tell us how we should relate to our fellow-believers. So it is simply impossible to develop a fully-rounded Christian character if we cut ourselves off from Christians by not being fully involved in the life of a local church. Shutting oneself away in order to be holy cannot work!

God is realistic. He knows our frame. He gives us instructions on how to deal with one another, as imperfectly sanctified Christians. So the place where we must begin is with love. For this is the new commandment for Jesus’ disciples. To follow him is to obey the command to ...‘love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another (Jn. 13:34). This is the mark by which the world will recognise us as his disciples (13:35). Where can this best and most usually be seen, but in relationships within the local church?

It is, we must notice, a commandment, not an optional extra, or something that might be nice but is an unattainable goal. In John 15:12, 17 Jesus reiterates it as a commandment. Now, only if we keep Jesus’ commandments, can we be said to love him (Jn. 14:21, 23-24). No

character where love for the brothers is not prominent, therefore, can be said to be a Christian character at all. Indeed, one who does not love his brother is not a Christian, full stop (1 Jn. 2:9; 3:10, 14; 4:8).

What does this love look like? Scripture tells us that it is intensely practical. It means meeting our fellow-believers' practical needs, without limit (1 Jn. 3:16-18). However, it also means 'humility and gentleness, with longsuffering (Gk. *makrothumia*), bearing with one another in love' (Eph. 4:2). See how it is spoken of as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22; and its importance as part of Christian character in Colossians 1:11 and 3:12.

It is sadly not uncommon to find that this area is less prevalent than the other aspects of love. There are Christians who will happily give their fellow-believers lifts, or money, but find it impossible to get on with them or speak a civil word to them, especially if they disagree about an issue in the church. They will not tolerate their shortcomings. This is not a fully-rounded Christian character on display!

Character is produced by endurance in sufferings (Rom. 5:3). This word is *hypomonē*, which means 'standing firm under pressure'. (Some translations read 'patience', but this is inadequate. Patience is the virtue that enables one to wait for a bus when it's late without grumbling. Endurance is the grace that enables one to suffer unjustly without retaliation. It includes patience but is deeper). Because we are imperfect, we will have to endure what we suffer of unkindness, disappointment, frustration, etc., at the hands of Christians as well as others. Because we spend a lot of time with other believers, this will be a significant part of our character building. In a church where love is prevalent, it should only be in minor ways that we have to suffer. If we can't deal with these in love, how are we going to stand up under the much harsher treatment that the world will give us, and still follow the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-23)?

We can analyse the Christian character in terms of a number of graces, which God calls us to exercise toward one another. We need to understand, and pray for grace to develop, each one. However, no one grace can be developed to be truly part of a Christian's character in isolation from the others. How do we show love? Often by longsuffering of tiresome behaviour from other believers. How do we do this? By faith, calling on God for grace.

Let us see this by a negative example. Another important part of Christian character is meekness, or humility. We see how important it is in its prominence in Romans 12:3-5 and Ephesians 4:1-3, where it is the primary grace necessary to live aright in the body of Christ, in view of God's mercies as declared in Romans 1-8 and Ephesians 1-3. Now a Christian cannot say, 'I know I am lacking in meekness, so today I will be especially

careful to be meek.’ For today might be the day when we need to show practical love in taking charge of a situation and speaking plainly to someone. Perhaps we visit a housebound believer and their carer has not come that day. We think, ‘No, I will be meek, not put myself forward,’ when we needed to ring the carers and be assertive, insisting that someone come quickly, for the good of the believer.

Because all the graces of which the New Testament speaks are all vital to a perfect Christian character, it is not possible to show in the confines of one article all the possible ways in which Christian graces interact in a soul. In the passage from 2 Peter 1 quoted earlier, Peter is not giving a complete list of every grace that God tells us is part of Christian character. Nor is he saying, ‘You must be perfect in one grace before you can make a start on the next,’ or none of us would ever begin to love at all!

Yet there are indications of how some important graces interact, and that in the context of the local church. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonian Christians because of their ‘work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ’. These graces were prominent; but not perfect, for Paul speaks of his desire to ‘supply what is lacking in your faith’ (3:10), and regarding love he urges them that they ‘do this more and more’ (4:10).

Nevertheless, it is clear that as they both worked and suffered together these graces developed, for in the next letter he can give thanks, that ‘your faith is growing abundantly and the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing’ (2 Thess. 1:3-4).

This teaches us that the vital graces of love and faith develop as Christians in a church work together. Attending on Sunday, slipping in at the last minute and slipping out as soon as the service is ended, is not good for the church or for the believer’s own soul. It is not the way to develop one’s own Christian character or that of others. The New Testament pattern is that we are involved in each other’s lives, and that we are ‘with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel’ (Phil. 1:27).

So each one of us must develop Christian character by how we treat each other. We must show love to the selfish brother, longsuffering to the tiresome, meekness to the overbearing, etc. We must work on our weaknesses, as an athlete who has one part of his body that is most likely to let him down – knees, back, etc. – will give more time to exercises that strengthen that part. It is hard work! To succeed, we must not fail to meet together often (Heb. 10:25); and we should find such meeting builds us up in Christ as we work and worship together, share each other’s joys and sorrows, pray for one another, and thus grow ‘to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13).

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# What is Man<sup>1</sup>? And what is wrong with him?

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By *Mostyn Roberts*

What is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4)

So writes David in his meditation on the majesty of God and the marvel of his goodness to man. John Calvin comments: ‘The prophet teaches that God’s wonderful goodness is displayed the more brightly in that so glorious a Creator, whose majesty shines resplendently in the heavens, graciously condescends to adorn a creature, so miserable and vile as man is, with the greatest glory, and to enrich him with numberless blessings.’ Man is ‘the most excellent example of [God’s] works’.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of man is perhaps the most neglected of biblical doctrines today. Some shorter introductions to Systematic Theology omit it altogether. What, however, is more under threat from the theory of evolution than the doctrine of man who is now regarded as just a very lucky animal? Or from the gender-bending philosophies of our most powerful institutions which erase both the distinction between the sexes and the glorious inheritance they have in common?

We return for the moment to Calvin to set our agenda – a study of man and the Fall – that is, what we are and what is wrong with us.

We now speak of the creation of man: not only because among all God’s works here is the noblest and most remarkable example of his justice, wisdom and goodness; but because, as we said at the beginning, we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves. This knowledge of ourselves is twofold: namely, to know what we were like when we were first created and what our condition became after the fall of Adam.<sup>3</sup>

More hangs on the doctrine of man, then, than a self-absorbed interest in ourselves; according to Calvin, we need to know ourselves in order to

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<sup>1</sup> The use of ‘man’, ‘him’ etc. is for convenience and economy of space only – Scripture is utterly committed to the equality of men and women as creatures in the image of God.

<sup>2</sup> See Comm. *Psalms, in loc; Institutes* I.xiv.20.

<sup>3</sup> *Institutes* I.xv.1. Probably still the best accessible textbook on this subject is *Created in God’s Image*, A.A. Hoekema, (Eerdmans, 1986/94).



help us know God and *vice versa*. The atheistic philosophies of today are depriving us of our knowledge both of God and of ourselves.

### **A creation in waiting**

Man is a creature, dependent on God. Created on the sixth day, along with the other 'living creatures', he inhabits the dry land, which appeared on the third day. Creation was virtually complete when he appeared on the scene. He is special but he is not alone. He has a place, a context, relationships. Above all, creation was made for him. To quote Calvin again: 'God himself has shown by the order of creation that he created all things for man's sake.'<sup>4</sup> He is the summit of creation, though 'rest' (the seventh day) is its ultimate purpose.

### **The uniqueness of man**

A number of pointers direct us to man as a special creation.

1. A heavenly consultation – 'Let us make...' (Gen 1:26). It is difficult to think to whom God might have said this other than to God. It seems, as many have believed, to be an early hint of the truth of the Trinity.

2. The repetition of the Hebrew *bara*, 'to create'. It appears in Genesis 1:1 (creation of the heavens and the earth), v21 (creation of living creatures) and then three times in v 27 (creation of man as male and female). It is a word of which God, in Scripture, is always the subject and no materials are ever mentioned when it is employed. As Francis Schaeffer says, 'It is as though God put exclamation marks here to indicate that there is something special about the creation of man.'<sup>5</sup>

3. Man is given a mandate to be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion over the animals, the 'creation mandate' (vv 28-30). He was placed in the garden to work it and keep it, and caring for the garden and naming the animals are expressions of his dominion (Gen 2:15,19).

4. Man is stated to be created male and female – the other creatures were male and female too, but only of man is it expressed.

5. He cannot find a helpmeet from among the animals.

6. The taking of his life requires a 'reckoning', the taking of the life of the killer (Gen 9:5, 6).

7. With man alone God will enter into covenant, as we shall see.

8. Above all, he is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26,27; 5:1; 9:6). This, rather than his possession of a soul, is his great distinguishing mark,

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<sup>4</sup> *Institutes* I.xiv.22

<sup>5</sup> *Genesis in Space and Time* (IVP 1972), p 33.

the ‘heart of Christian anthropology’<sup>6</sup>. Man is called a ‘living creature’ or ‘living soul’ (Gen 2:7) but so are other creatures (1:21, 24). What marks off man as different is that God breathed into him, and that he is the image of God. ‘So in reality the emphasis here is not the soul as opposed to the body but on the fact that by a specific and definite act God created man to be a living thing with conscious life. God made man in his image by a specific act of creation.’<sup>7</sup> As John Murray says, ‘It was the divine inbreathing that constituted man animate creature. It was this same inbreathing that constituted man specifically man.’<sup>8</sup> The distinctive quality of man is not in simply having a soul, but in that he has been made in God’s image by a special creative act of God.

### **The image of God**

It is generally agreed that, though they are not identical, there is no essential difference between the words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’. Together they tell us that man *represents* God and *resembles* God. Ancient kings might put an image of themselves in distant places of their empires to remind people of the allegiance they owed (Dan.3:1). We represent God in and to his creation; at the same time man, the whole man, is like God. It would always be a sin for man to ‘make’ an idol or carve an image, but never a sin to *be* the image of God. Herman Bavinck reminds us that the whole man is the image of all that God is; the image of God is something that man is, not that he has<sup>9</sup>. Most scholars locate the image primarily in the soul, or the mind and heart, of man, yet, as Calvin reminds us, ‘There was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not shine.’<sup>10</sup>

In the idea of ‘image’ we meet that of ‘son’, remembering that in Luke 3:38 Adam is called the son of God. When we meet ‘son’ in Scripture we are not far from the concept of kingship (Pss 2:6,7; 82:6,7). As the image of God, Adam was God’s son, a king in his creation with a mandate to exercise dominion over it.

### **Adam and Christ**

Above all Adam was a type of Christ (Rom 5:14), who is the essential, uncreated image of God. Genesis chapters 1-3 prepare the way for the coming of Christ, the Second Man, the Last Adam. He is described as ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15; cf 2 Cor 4:4) and the ‘express image’ or ‘exact representation’ of his being (Heb 1:3). To see him is to see the Father (John 14:9). In Christ the dominion of Psalm 8:5-8 is perfectly

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<sup>6</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, p 66.

<sup>7</sup> Schaeffer, *op cit*, p 39.

<sup>8</sup> ‘The Origin of Man’, in *Collected Writings* vol 2 (Banner of Truth, 1977), p 9.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Human Nature’, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol II, p 554.

<sup>10</sup> *Institutes*, I.xv.3.

recovered, or at least will be (Heb 2:5-9). In Christ we see man as he should be, the perfect son, perfectly given to the service of his Father, perfectly loving his neighbour and perfectly exercising dominion over creation, anticipated by his 'nature' miracles. The fact of the Incarnation is striking evidence of man's being in God's image, for it shows that there is exact correspondence between the divine nature and the human. We also see in Christ the goal of redemption – to be conformed to his image (Rom 8:29) and to be perfectly like him (1 John 3:2; cf. 1 Cor.15:49; Phil 3:21).

What is inadmissible however is to suggest that the divine image is only in Christ and not in Adam. Bavinck<sup>11</sup> reminds us not to put the cart before the horse. Scripture begins with Adam; the natural man comes before the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46); we are created in God's image, not in Christ's, which suggests that though restored in Christ we are not simply restored to the image of the Son but to that of the Triune God. To say the least, this means that relationship must be part of the image. Which brings us to

### **What is 'the image of God'?**

We might say, 'Look at Jesus Christ' and that would be a fair answer, but it would only tell us what the image looked like in perfection; it does not tell us what the image actually was/is in the constitution of man. Reformed theology has generally distinguished between the 'broad' aspects of the image and the 'narrow' aspects, though the labels vary. The reason for this is that we recognise that the Fall made a difference. Something was lost, but something was retained, for man is still said to be created in the image of God in Genesis 9:6, after the Flood, and in James 3:9<sup>12</sup>. What was lost? Well, working backwards, with what Robert Reymond calls 'a restoration hermeneutic', we see in Ephesians 4:23, 24 that the new man in Christ is 'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' and in Colossians 3:10, the new man is 'being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator'. If this is the renewed creation, these are presumably what we lost – righteousness, holiness and knowledge, and they are recovered in Christ.

Some call this our 'original righteousness' and refer to it as what we have called the 'narrow' image. Holiness, we might say, is what man lost at the Fall. But the image was not thereby altogether destroyed. The 'broad' image remains, though thoroughly distorted, or as we say, 'totally depraved'. This consists of everything that distinguishes us from animals. We have capacity for worship, and awareness of God even though we smother it (Rom 1:18); a moral nature to discern between right and wrong though we often get it wrong and go against what we know; we have rational powers, creativity, linguistic powers and emotional capacity vastly greater than that of animals;

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<sup>11</sup> *Reformed Dogmatics*, II.554.

<sup>12</sup> See also Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 11:7.

and that elusive but undeniable quality, personality. We fulfil (badly) the cultural mandate. Man is still, in other words, recognisably man. He still represents and even resembles God, though in a terribly distorted way and though he also now presents the devil's face (John 8:44). He still functions as man, but not as God intended, not properly. Adam and Eve had what older writers happily used to call 'integrity' (that is, original righteousness), all their faculties harmonising perfectly, reason enlightened in the knowledge of God, 'wired' to obey gladly, knowing their relations to God and to each other. Here was true holiness, righteousness and knowledge in action. After the Fall, as Bavinck describes it, man lost none of his faculties or his 'substance' but lost the 'harmony and health of his nature and became a sinner through and through'<sup>13</sup>. No longer holy, and the (broad) image shattered, he is still man, but only a grim shadow of what he once was, and his remaining dignity as man only serves to scream at him, 'See from whence you have fallen.'

### **Adam in the garden**

So what was Adam's relation to God in the garden? There has been renewed interest in recent years, due largely to the work of G K Beale<sup>14</sup>, in the theme of the temple in Scripture and, for our purposes, particularly in Eden as a prototype temple and Adam as the first priest. It is pointed out that the words translated 'work' and 'keep', Adam's duty in the garden (Gen. 2:15), occur together elsewhere only in relation to the priests' duties with regard to God's Word and the tabernacle<sup>15</sup>. The theme connects us beautifully with the final chapters of Revelation with the 'garden city' in which there is no temple, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple (Rev 21:22). The idea of Adam as priest however is not new. JH Thornwell in the nineteenth century wrote of Adam:

'as fitted to occupy a place in which he shall represent God to the creatures and the creatures to God...to render to the Supreme Architect, as the high priest of nature, the tribute of praise which the creatures can reflect but never express. Hence he is destined to exercise dominion over them. He becomes their lord. Through him and for him they accomplish the end of their being – they are for him as he is for God.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Op cit p 552-53.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Apollos, IVP, 2004)

<sup>15</sup> Beale, op cit p 81.

<sup>16</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol I, p 224.

Adam can be seen therefore as the first priest-king<sup>17</sup>, but in order to fulfil his destiny he had to obey God. This was not just in relation to the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28-30, though it included it, nor the moral law written on his heart (Rom 2:15) though it included that too. God ordained a further test for Adam in Genesis 2:16,17 and this brings us to the heart of Adam's role in the garden. He was in covenant with God. Even though the word 'covenant' does not appear in Genesis 1-2, Reformed theology has generally acknowledged such an arrangement, and that 'covenant of works' is the best phrase for it, though some use 'covenant of life' or 'of nature'. There are two parties, a command, a sanction of death on disobedience and an implied promise of life on obedience, which make this seem very like a covenant even if the word is missing. The word 'covenant' does not appear in 2 Samuel 7 either, but no-one doubts God is making a covenant with David there. The 1689 Baptist Confession chapter 7.1, parallel here to the Westminster Confession 7.1, puts it like this:

'The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life except by some voluntary condescension on God's part, and this he has been pleased to express in the form of a covenant.'<sup>18</sup>

In other words, *in addition to* the blessings he received and the duties he owed as a creature, Adam received further blessings and owed further duties by virtue of this covenant in Eden. God stooped in 'voluntary condescension' to Adam so that *something further and better* than he had in Eden could be his. What was that? Everlasting life which could not be lost, where there could be no fear of disobedience, no living under the prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and no fear of sin, but he would enjoy God in a way that would be impossible to lose. He would move, as many have said, from a situation of being able to sin, to a place where he would not be able to sin.

Some do not like this idea of a covenant of works because for example they say it undermines the idea of grace, but it does not; the very existence of the covenant is of grace, or at least of God's kind condescension<sup>19</sup>. Or perhaps they feel it is quite unlike God to make any reward hinge on

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<sup>17</sup> Indeed one should not omit his prophethood – as one whose knowledge was perfect and who 'named' God's creatures after God's mind.

<sup>18</sup> The 1689 Confession does not use the phrase 'covenant of works' until chapter 19.6 when it discusses the law in the believer's life. The Westminster Confession uses the phrase in chapter 7.2.

<sup>19</sup> There is no space to go into detail here. For good discussion see Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Baker 2006) pp 83-104; J.V. Fesko, *Last Things First* (Mentor, 2007) pp 103-114; and for a cautious but firm reservation see John Murray, 'The Adamic Administration', *Collected Writings*. (Banner or Truth 1977) vol 2, pp 47-59.

obedience or 'merit', but is it? Why? Does not Jesus say to the rich young ruler (Matt 19:17) and the lawyer (Luke 10:25-28) that if they obeyed the commandments they would live? Was he lying? Of course not. Was he speaking of the Mosaic covenant? Well, the covenant of works is repeated in the Sinai covenant, but it did not originate there. What point would there be in genuinely promising eternal life on the basis of their works to people who were already sinners? The Mosaic covenant had reasons for repeating the covenant of works ('Do this and you will live', Lev 18:5), most importantly to reveal to sinners their weakness – which is why Jesus uses it in his encounters with these self-righteous men. But the actual promise of life on the basis of obedience could only hold water if the 'doer' is perfect – which was true only for Adam before his fall. 'Do this and live' was the arrangement made with Adam.

So there is no real objection to the concept of a covenant of works, nor to the name. The name is secondary; the concept, however, is of great importance. In particular the parallel of Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 cries out for it. In this passage we see that as in Adam we die (vv 12,15), sin (v 12), are condemned (v 18) and are made sinners (v 19), so in Christ we live (vv 17, 18, 21), do righteousness (v 20), are justified (v 18) and are made righteous (v 19). Given the great differences between the two cases (vv 15-17) the parallels are compelling: Adam and Christ are *representatives*; they were put on *probation* – Adam in the garden, Christ in the wilderness and indeed throughout his life as Gethsemane revealed; and surely it therefore makes sense to see our relation to Adam to be the same as our relation to Christ – *covenantal*. The 'covenant of works' and the 'covenant of grace' stand in relation to each other. Christ came by the latter, to fulfil the former – eternal life on the basis of his obedience. Salvation is possible not because God changed his mind about what he required – he always required a righteous life – but because in his grace he provided a person to live that life. Salvation is not a change of God's law but a change of person to obey that law – a Mediator, the Second Man, the Last Adam. It was the one act (so different in themselves – one disobedient, one obedient) of both representative men that seals our destiny; as Thomas Goodwin said, 'In God's sight there are two men – Adam and Jesus Christ – and these two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings.'<sup>20</sup>

Considerations of the mode of redemption and the parallels with Christ are therefore compelling in considering whether there is a covenant of works, though the idea has solid evidence in the Genesis account<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Hoekema, *op cit*, p 164.

<sup>21</sup> Many would point also to Hosea 6:7 which refers to Adam 'transgressing the covenant' – though any commentary will tell you there are difficulties with the translation.

But what went wrong? We must now turn to look at the origin and spread of sin.

### **Sin – where did it all begin?**

The origin of sin is a great mystery. How could a perfect man in a perfect environment disobey God? William Cunningham calls it ‘the most difficult and perplexing subject that has ever been, or perhaps ever can be, investigated by the mind of man’<sup>22</sup>. So perhaps we can be forgiven for taking a few short cuts!

We must be clear first that God is not the author of sin, though he decrees all things. The 1689 Baptist Confession, like the Westminster, says at chapter 6:1, that ‘this act [i.e. eating the forbidden fruit] God, according to his wise and holy counsel, was pleased to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory’. It was not ‘bare’ permission as some would understand it – that God took his hands off the wheel and so somehow absolved himself of responsibility. There is *purpose* here too; God in some sense willed what man did. If he did not, then man willed it and sin would be in man’s power, not God’s. ‘Even what is done against God’s will [we might add ‘preceptive’ will] is not done without his [decretive] will’ said Augustine. In other words, God does not command sin or desire it, but it is not thereby outside his power or providential control, nor outside his decrees. If God had not had the idea of sin first, it would not have happened. The possibility (indeed, from the divine perspective, the certainty) of sin was the will of God, yet the actual/efficient cause of sin is always a creature – the devil or man<sup>23</sup>.

### **In Eden – sad indeed that day...**

Adam, then, was perfect but like a young sapling, not yet mature in righteousness and with Eve, as the 1689 Confession chapter 4:2 says, ‘living under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change’. The serpent – Satan embodied, we learn from later in Scripture (2 Cor 11:3,14; Rev 12:9) – undermines the created order and addresses Eve rather than Adam; he undermines also her trust in God’s truthfulness and goodness and, her faith shaken, she believes the lie. She trusts her own senses and desires what ironically she already has – likeness to God. She eats, Adam eats, and consequences follow.

Sin is firstly a religious evil – it is primarily against God (Ps 51:4). It is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). It is the contradiction of God’s holiness, and a want of holiness – ‘any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of

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<sup>22</sup> *Historical Theology*, (Banner of Truth) vol 1, pp 625-26.

<sup>23</sup> See Bavinck, ‘The Origin of Sin’, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol 3, p 56f.

God'.<sup>24</sup> It has no positive being of its own, yet is a 'law' (Rom 7:25, 8:2). To paraphrase Bavinck<sup>25</sup>, sin is abstractly a privation, yet concretely a power controlling everyone; it has no independent principle of its own yet is a principle that devastates the whole creation; it lives off the good, yet fights it to the point of destruction. It is nothing, has nothing and cannot do anything without the entities and forces God has created, yet organises them all into rebellion against him. With everything that belongs to God it opposes everything that belongs to God. It is dependence at war with the Independent One and striving for its own independence. It is 'impermanent becoming' in a struggle with him who exists eternally. It is the greatest contradiction tolerated by God in his creation, yet used by him in the way of justice and righteousness as an instrument for his glory.

'Sin exists but it will never be able to justify its existence. It is irrational and absurd.' Any 'explanation' would make sin logical and rational and give man something to blame. Reformed theology makes things harder by insisting on original righteousness in Adam, not simply neutrality as Pelagians claim. Adam in Eden was not in a state of perfect balance between good and evil able to choose either, equally. He was positively righteous, otherwise he would not have been the image of God and not 'good'. This makes the Fall less explicable but it reflects the biblical revelation of creation, fall and redemption.

### **The Fall: its consequences**

In Genesis 3 we see shame enter into Adam and Eve's perception of themselves (v 7, cf 2:25); fear of, and loss of fellowship with, God (v 8) – spiritual death, to be followed in due course by physical death and for the seed of the serpent (apostate humanity) eternal death; conflict in their relationship with each other; pain and struggle in their relationship with the created order. The curse is an undoing of creation; from dust they came, to dust they will return. The great commission of Genesis 1, to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, has come to an end. Or has it? No, they will not eat of the tree of life, so eternal life (though not eternal destruction) as sinners is denied them (Gen 3:22,23), but they will cover the earth as sinners – even if God has to scatter them forcibly (Gen 11: 8). What we see now is a horrible parody of what man's dominion might have been. But that is sin. It is not a created thing, because then it would have had to be created by God for only God can create; sin is a parasitic distortion and destruction of what God has made.

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<sup>24</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, qu.14.

<sup>25</sup> op cit p 145.



In terms of man's constitution, he suffered the *loss of original righteousness*, that is his original integrity. He bears *real guilt*. His condition is one of *total depravity* – total not because he is as bad as he could possibly be, but because in nothing is he as good as he should be. He is polluted, corrupt. Spiritually he is not alive to God (Eph 2:1-3); his understanding is darkened, and heart hardened (Eph 4:17-19); corrupt in mind and will (Rom 1:22-32), he is hostile to God (Rom 8:7). Moreover spiritually he suffers from *total inability*. He can do nothing good (Rom 3:10-18) (*non posse non peccare* – he can do nothing but sin). He can do a lot of 'civil' good in the world, but nothing he does is free from the taint of sin and nothing is for God's glory, therefore it is unacceptable in itself to God. He is a slave to sin (John 8:34), under God's wrath. He must be born again.

### **Original sin**

CS Lewis once said that original sin must be the easiest Christian doctrine to prove from experience. The trouble is, people see wickedness in the world but it takes a work of the Spirit to convict them of *sin as sin*. 'Original sin' is not a biblical term but it describes the biblical teaching that the state we have described is a condition in which every human is born. The universality of sin is stated in 1 Kings 8:46 – ('there is no-one who does not sin') and Romans 3:10, 23. The basis for the doctrine however is Romans 5:12-21, a passage we have already considered. The transmission of sin is established by the representative headship of Adam. This is a 'federal' headship – that is, not only was he the physical head of the human race, but he was made our legal representative by God and as such his probationary disobedience in the garden was reckoned or imputed to us. The whole passage hinges on the significance of the 'one' act either of Adam's disobedience or of Christ's obedience. By virtue of their union with Adam as their representative head, God constitutes all men sinners by the immediate imputation to them of Adam's first sin ('immediate' meaning that it is without their own personal sin being taken into account – our personal sin follows the imputation, it does not precede it). We are 'made sinners' (Rom 5:19) and thus, because sinners, guilty, and possessed of a sinful nature. In logic the imputation comes first, the guilt next, and the corrupt nature follows.

So sin is transmitted to the whole race. But thanks be to God, 'as one act of trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous' (Rom 5:18,19).

As the sin, so the remedy – in a federal, covenantal head – and one who is infinitely greater than Adam, so that 'grace might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord' (v 21).

*Mostyn Roberts is the pastor of Welwyn Evangelical Church.*

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# Howell Harris and the 18th - Century Revival

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by Kees van Kralingen

THIS YEAR IS NOT ONLY THE 300<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD (SEE RT 261), BUT ALSO the same anniversary of at least four other men used by God in the evangelical revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These men are William Romaine (1714-1795), Samuel Walker (1714-1761), James Hervey (1714-1758) and Howell Harris (1714-1773). In this article I would like to draw attention to the life of Howell Harris and more generally to God's mighty acts in this crucial period in the history of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

## Life and ministry

Howell Harris and George Whitefield were not only born in the same year, but also born again in the same year 1735 even almost on the same day. Howell Harris was born in the little hamlet of Trevecca in Wales. He became a schoolmaster. The spiritual state of the church in those days was generally at a low ebb. An announcement in the service in Talgarth on Palm Sunday of 1735 of a communion service to be held on Easter Sunday set an irreversible spiritual process in motion in the young schoolmaster. He became convicted of his sinful spiritual state before a holy God. The service on Easter Sunday deepened his conviction and led him to a process of repentance of his sins but without as yet finding peace with God. On Whit Sunday, also at a communion service in Talgarth, even though the devil tried to attack him with thought to the contrary, Howell Harris found forgiveness and pardon of his sins through Jesus Christ. He experienced a deep peace with God. He described his experience as follows: 'At the table, Christ bleeding on the cross was kept before my eyes constantly; and strength was given to me to believe that I was receiving pardon on account of that blood. I lost my burden; I went home leaping for joy.'

About three weeks later he had an even stronger experience which was going to mark his life and ministry decisively. When reading the Scripture and praying in the tower of the church at Llangasty he was overwhelmed

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<sup>1</sup> For this article I have made use of the following sources: Mark A Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism. The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apolllos/IVP, 2004); DM Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans. Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987) pp.282-302; Howell Harris, *His own Story* (Chepstow: Bridge Publishing, 1984).

with a sense of the truths of the gospel. He started to feel a deep compassion for souls and a sorrow for people without Christ. This prompted him to immediate evangelistic activity, beginning in his neighbourhood. He started to visit people in their homes, especially the sick, reading Scripture to them and applying this with words of exhortation to repent and believe the gospel. As he went on in this way, the Lord blessed this ministry and gradually larger crowds of people wanted to listen to the preaching of Howell Harris. His work also began to cover a wider geographical area. Although he belonged to the established Anglican Church, his ministry was also appreciated by dissenting churches. He started to set up small group meetings beginning in Trevecca in 1736. By 1739 thirty more of these societies were in operation. His theology also developed; initially he rejected thoughts about predestination, but in 1737 he embraced Calvinistic doctrine.

As news of his ministry spread, so also news of events in other parts of England and Wales reached Howell Harris. He heard about the expanding ministry of Daniel Rowland and met him in 1737. Later that year, or possibly early 1738, William Williams of Pantycelyn came to saving faith in Christ through Harris's preaching. Williams was going to be another major influence in the revival in Wales especially through his writing of tracts, hymns and poems. In 1738 Harris also received a copy of Jonathan Edwards' report of the revival in North America entitled '*A Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New Hampshire in New England*'. In 1739 Harris travelled to London and met George Whitefield, leading to lifelong friendship and cooperation between these men.



*Howell Harris*

Howell Harris developed into a tireless itinerant preacher of the gospel. He worked very hard and in his hectic life he visited London 39 times in total. He was the most frequent substitute for George Whitefield for preaching in Moorfields. Because of the work in Wales by Harris and Rowland supported also by Whitefield, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon and others, a great change took place in Wales. These people all worked within the established Church of England and Wales, but their work led to the formation of Methodist societies as also elsewhere in England and North America through the preaching of Whitefield and the Wesleys. As Harris, Rowland,

Williams and Whitefield were all Calvinists, Methodism in Wales became largely Calvinistic. Howell Harris did also maintain friendly relations with the Wesleys even though he sided with Whitefield on the question of the doctrine of predestination.

In 1750 a dispute arose between Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland which was resolved later in 1762. This led Harris in 1750 to focus more on the religious community in his hometown of Trevecca. In 1768 Harris and Rowland with support from Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon established a preachers' training course in Trevecca. In 1773 Howell Harris died and went to be with his Master whom he served so faithfully.

### **The mighty work of God in revival**

We can still draw important lessons from the life and ministry of Howell Harris and other key people used by the Lord in the revival of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. More importantly, we can try to learn lessons about God's mighty work in this fascinating period in the history of the Church in which the cause of the gospel advanced with such power.

A first point concerns the sovereignty of God in bringing about revival. The fact that a number of key people were born in the same year does already indicate this. Even more remarkable is a series of nearly simultaneous events in 1734-5 which to us seem totally unconnected if only because they happened in locations far removed from each other. In 1734 revival broke out in Northampton under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. In 1735 George Whitefield in Oxford, England and Howell Harris in Trevecca, Wales came to a saving knowledge of Christ almost on the same day to be followed by the conversion of Daniel Rowland about a month later. If we extend the period by a few years, we can now include the conversion of John and Charles Wesley and many more. God was obviously at work in all these events by his Holy Spirit.

Howell Harris reported a deep spiritual experience a few weeks after his conversion resulting in a strong passion for evangelism and preaching the gospel. Others have testified to similar experiences which were also repeated as Howell Harris has recorded in his diaries. They remind us of what we read in Acts 4:23-31 where the apostles and others were filled again with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word of God boldly. Such experiences also fuelled the preaching of Harris and others. They knew what it was for the power of the Spirit to come upon them even while preaching (and also what it was for this not to happen!). The preaching of Harris and his colleagues was therefore very powerful and direct. They were aiming at much more than intellectual communication of truth; they did not hesitate to work directly on the affections of their hearers. They were aiming at life-transforming results not only through convincing the mind but also moving the heart. The fruits of such preaching were always attributed to God's sovereign work in the hearts of people. These preachers never hesitated to

express their utter dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering their preaching and working saving faith in the lives of the hearers.

Another amazing observation is the lack of ecclesiastical boundaries in the revival. Howell Harris's ministry was also favourably received by Dissenters such as the Baptists.<sup>2</sup> The same was true to an even larger degree for George Whitefield who preached in almost every conceivable type of Protestant church in England, Wales, Scotland and North America. These men were driven by the opportunities to preach the gospel and the spiritual needs of people together with a strongly irenic spirit when it came to mutual differences on some doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters.

These observations have led many people to try to define what revival truly is in essence. Although many such definitions exist, the best ones express this in terms of a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **Some applications**

Although we are now separated from these events by several hundreds of years and we live in a society where the general knowledge of God and the Bible has disappeared to a much greater degree than in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, there are still some important applications of which some are highlighted here:

First of all, our God is still the same God and his sovereignty has not diminished. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever (Heb 13:8). Who knows what people God is raising up right now to be an instrument of mighty blessing and advance for the gospel, perhaps even from among people who we think are the least likely candidates?

Secondly, we need this preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. This means speaking the Word of God boldly, proclaiming the gospel. We need to study what such preaching really is.

Thirdly, we need to reconsider, if not rediscover, what true biblical evangelism and conversion are. The current Christian world and even the evangelical world has developed many spurious and superficial ideas about these important matters. The historical accounts of revival preaching and evangelism and the resulting powerful and lasting effects in terms of conversion, discipleship and service can help us to look for biblical guidance.

Finally, although prayer has not been mentioned so far, this is nevertheless crucial for the progress of the gospel and the Church in the world. This subject will be addressed again on the pages of *Reformation Today* in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> This applies to some Welsh Baptists who did like Harris' preaching. As we all know this does not mean that Baptists on a wider geographic scale enjoyed much influence of the revival. This came much later in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century as Michael Haykins book *Ardent love for Jesus* (see review in RT 260) makes clear.

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## News

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### **Concert of Prayer for Revival**

The most recent meetings in the Concert of Prayer took place early in October. In Yorkshire we held just a single meeting for the entire county this time, with the one exception that a small group met at the same time to pray with Erroll Hulse in the nursing home where he now lives. Both meetings took place on October 4<sup>th</sup> from 10 am till 12 noon.

The main county-wide meeting was held in York. Selecting the most suitable location for a central event is always going to be a problem in England's largest county, which stretches over 100 miles north to south, and over 100 miles east to west, and covers an area of about 6000 square miles, almost three times the size of the next biggest English county! So wherever we meet it will inevitably be more accessible for some people than for others.

The time spent together in York was greatly blessed. There were about 60 people present. They came from as far afield as Sheffield and Hull to the south, Mirfield and Haworth to the west, and Ripon and Thirsk to the north.

The meeting began with the reading of Matthew 9:35-38, and the reminder that, however far removed the general population today might be from the things of God, Jesus' assessment, nevertheless, is that they represent a bumper harvest just waiting to be reaped, and therefore we must pray that the Lord of the harvest will send labourers into the field.

In the course of the meeting various participants highlighted other scriptures too, all of which fed and led our praying. Zechariah 10:1 prompted prayer for a spiritual downpour – the heart of what the Concert is all about. Isaiah 55:11 encouraged us to know that the Lord's Word will not return to him void, but will prosper and accomplish his purposes. We were both challenged and encouraged by the words of Psalm 81: challenged to forsake the idols that have captured our stubborn hearts, to listen afresh to the voice of God and to walk in his ways, and encouraged by God's promise to turn around our enemies, and to feed his people with the finest of the wheat, bringing deep satisfaction.

We prayed much about our own plight as believers and churches. We

realised that we, the people of God, need to be revived. Our hearts need to be changed if we are to make a difference in the world: we need a renewed love for Christ and for our fellow-sinners, and a greater readiness to talk to them about him. We need to put to death our self-life with all its pride, to get out of the way, so that Jesus Christ may work. We were led to pray about the various idols which can so easily occupy the throne of our hearts, particularly career and money. Materialism has so deeply afflicted and infected us that we are becoming useless. We recognised the need to be different, and prayed for God to work the necessary change within us.

We also prayed for the world. We expressed concern in prayer for the neediest people all around us, and also prayed for the respectable people who think that they are OK. Both categories need to be reached. We prayed that the fear of God might fall upon our nation, leading to real conviction of sin, and that our eyes would not be blind to the doors that the Lord is opening.

We acknowledged that if the Lord does not come to us in power then there is no other way that the situation confronting us in these dark days can be turned around. We faced up to the fact that if we continue as we are we are not going to reach this nation for Christ, and confessed our inability to do anything about it. We did so in the confidence that the God who allows his people to ask will answer the cries of our hearts.

For next year we have decided to hold the Yorkshire united prayer gatherings on the second Saturday morning of each quarter. Our dates for 2015 are as follows: 10<sup>th</sup> January, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 11<sup>th</sup> July, and 10<sup>th</sup> October.

We know that meetings are taking place in other areas also, and we are greatly encouraged to know that we are praying in fellowship with brothers and sisters elsewhere. May the Lord burden more and more of his people with this dire need, so that the Concert of Prayer continues to expand to his glory.

*Jonathan Bayes*

## **Report of the 25th Reformed Conference in Lusaka, Zambia**

*By Pastor Naphtally Ogallo from Kenya*

Together with Pastors Sam Oluoch and Michael Maura and Pastor Bill Issa from Uganda we were privileged to attend the 25th Reformed Conference in Lusaka, Zambia. From 25th to 29th some one thousand five hundred people gathered daily at Lusaka Baptist Church. The Conference theme

was 'Running Forward, Remaining Faithful'. Pastor Kalifungwa gave the keynote address, saying that 'Running Forward' is all about missions. It is taking the gospel to every part of Zambia, the rest of Africa and indeed to the West also. 'Remaining Faithful' relates to the Doctrines of Grace. This is the other great thing that can happen to one after conversion.



*Front row left to right: Dr. Conrad Mbewe (Kabwata Baptist Church (KBC), Zambia), Michael Maura (Bethesda Baptist Church, Tassia Nairobi, Kenya), Naphtally Ogallo (Grace Baptist Church - Eldoret, Kenya), Ronald Kalifungwa (Lusaka Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia), Bill Issa (Reconciliation Baptist Church, Kampala, Uganda), and Misheck Kumwenda (Missions Secretary KBC, Zambia).*

*Back row left to right: Sam Oluoch (Grace Baptist Church - Kisumu, Kenya), Wilson Tembo Jnr. KBC, Zambia), Charles Bota (KBC, Zambia), Chipita Sibale (KBC, Zambia), Joseph Taguma (KBC), Zambia), George Sitali (KBC), Zambia).*

*They were holding a consultative meeting after the 25th Reformed Conference on how to move forward with the Reformed Movement in Kenya, Uganda and to the rest of Africa.*



The two main speakers were Pastor Voddie Baucham and Pastor Ken Jones both from USA. Voddie handled the ‘Running Forward’ showing very convincingly from Genesis to Revelation that our God is always on mission; that God expects his people to be always on mission and that the whole of biblical revelation has missionary tone from beginning to end and finally the consummation of all things comes at the end of mission.

Ken Jones very ably day by day took and expounded each of the five points (TULIP) of the Reformed Faith which Charles H Spurgeon once called ‘the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus’. Ken would take each doctrine, set forth its statement, then extract summary teachings from the same and finally draw out applicable observations.

Pastor Conrad Mbewe gave the closing address by asking a pointed question: ‘What difference will all this make to us from here onwards?’ Using Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians Dr. Mbewe brought out two important points:

1. Gratitude – Reformation in Zambia has truly been God’s work and he is worthy of all praise. 30 years ago there was no Reformed Baptist Church in Zambia. Now there are 40 English-speaking RBC in the whole country with 10 of these within Lusaka, the capital city. He then added, ‘Humility does not mean denying what God has done but accepting what he has done and giving him the glory.’

2. Anxiety about tomorrow – (1) The greatest fear is toleration of gospel error. He underscored that while the gospel is our life-line, it is being diluted in the present church. (2) Also there is fear of the loss of unity in the years ahead. Pastor Conrad reiterated that it is important for leaders to meet and talk over issues that they don’t agree on. The Reformed movement is first of all about the Bible so we must go as far as the Bible goes. Infighting robs any group of the energy they need for the work of the Lord’s mission.

It was greatly commendable how the organising committee handled the daily logistics including the challenges that arose as they sought to provide the best meals possible for such a large multitude. Brothers and sisters opened their homes for visitors, took time off from work and used their resources to make the 25th Reformed Conference a success.

## APC Meetings in November 2014

Friday 7th	Mseleni, KwaZulu-Natal	Very rural location in far north of KZN
Tuesday 11th	Kwa Mashu (KZN)	First conference in big township outside Durban
Wednesday 12th – Thursday 13th	Empangeni (KZN)	Erroll Hulse had his stroke at this conference in 2013
Saturday 15th	Ficksburg (Free State)	Youth conference
Tuesday 18th – Wednesday 19th	Maseru (Lesotho)	Postponed from October because of military coup

The speakers will be Dr Grave Singogo (Ndola, Zambia) and Blake Cassell. There are no conferences taking place in December.

## New Books

The following new books have appeared recently:

- John Blanchard, *Why Are you Here? Searching for the Meaning of Life* (EP Books)
- Steve Donald, *Heaven in Your Eye – Earth on Your Heart* (EP Books); looking at heaven through the eyes of the Puritans: Boston, Baxter and Bunyan
- Richard M Hannula, *Samuel Rutherford* (EP Books, Bitesize Biography series)
- Paul E Brown, *Christian Marriage* (Grace Publications)
- Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith. A reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Banner of Truth)
- Sinclair B Ferguson, *From the Mouth of God. Trusting, Reading, and Applying the Bible* (Banner of Truth)

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