

'Spirituality', like 'piety' and 'godliness', is a comprehensive word. It expresses the totality of a Christian's devotion, experience, life-style and priorities. The different words represent different eras in Church history, with different nuances of meaning and emphasis. In this article the word 'spirituality' is used in the sense of a believer's dealings with God. Howel Harris is chosen as representing the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, in many ways not typical, but one in whose life are clearly visible leading features of the movement.

Harris, who lived from 1714 to 1773, claimed to be, along with George Whitefield in England and Daniel Rowland in Wales, the first to be used in the work in Britain. For nearly four decades from his conversion in 1735 he was involved in evangelism, decision-making, the solving of problems, leadership liaison, and far-reaching personal experiences. The literary legacy which he bequeathed to posterity, some three hundred diaries and four thousand letters, provides an insight into his spiritual progress, as well as a historical resource for evaluating that Awakening's distinctive features. Consideration of spirituality brings into focus many issues which were prominent in his own time, and are still relevant today.

A survey of Harris's life ¹

Ten years after his conversion, Harris said that in the early days of his Christian life he was not satisfied to go to bed at night without having drawn somebody to God.² As a result, he visited the farms in the neighbourhood, and 'exhorted' people to turn from sin and believe the Gospel. He met with no little success, and began to gather those who professed conversion into little groups for mutual encouragement and instruction. Members of his family, however, were mystified, and counselled caution and reflection. The local vicar also was opposed to him, and he found but a few kindred spirits, widely scattered both within the Anglican church to which he belonged and among the Nonconformists or Dissenters.

Public activity was complemented by private review. Harris began to keep a diary, initially, he tells us, to

record among other things "what passes between God and my soul ... and how I spend my time." Years later he wrote of his diaries: "saw wisdom enough in God to gift some person, when I am in the grave, to draw somewhat out of them that may be of use to the Church."³ In them the hours are counted in the margin to monitor diligence and usefulness. Fears, frustrations, failures, conversations, sermons, plans are all recorded in greater or lesser detail, depending on inclination and the constraint of time. Comments tumble over one another, written with white-hot, spontaneous intensity, in a rushing scrawl. What comes through is honesty and accountability, a striving for holiness, a concern for personal relationships, a growing acquaintance with his own heart, and an uncompromising, one might almost say apostolic, commitment to labour for the Gospel.

Within a few years he had established contact with others who were being used of God: Griffith Jones, Daniel Rowland, George Whitefield, and the Wesley brothers. His evangelistic journeys took him ever further afield as the work grew, with periods of revival in which increasing numbers came to faith in Christ. At the same time problems multiplied: problems of organization and discipline, of ecclesiastical identity and spiritual discernment, of personal relationships and theological definition. In Wales the influence of Harris was always prominent, and his impact on the chief revival centres in England, Bristol and London, was notable. Although refused ordination by the bishop to whom he applied, he preached in the open air, organized "society" meetings independently of parish church services, and persisted in his itinerant activities. He only stopped short of administering the sacraments.

Early in his spiritual life Harris became convinced of the sovereignty of God in salvation, and of the doctrines of grace. The preaching of Rowland and Whitefield confirmed him in this. Their Methodism, too, with its emphasis on experience, was in line with his own convictions. His affinities with the Methodism of the Wesleys, and of the Moravian, John Cennick, were less

keen and did not endure. All the Methodists gave priority to preaching and stressed the importance of nourishing its fruit in close and disciplined fellowship, and the Welsh Methodists enjoyed recurrent periods of such revival. The Deism and Moralism which had prevailed thus gave way to a vital Christianity.

For a decade from the late 1740s Harris was estranged from the work on account of theological aberration and personal issues. His unguarded phrases about the sufferings of God, his increasingly overbearing manner and a misguided dependence on the spiritual counsel of a woman other than his wife created grave difficulties. They brought about his withdrawal from the work and the setting up at Trefeca of a self-sufficient community containing a number of his followers. Physical exhaustion may have contributed to this; for several years Harris remained essentially a private figure. Later he felt constrained to join the Militia as an expression of his Protestantism, on condition that he was allowed to preach.

The 1760s witnessed Harris's return to active participation in another period of revival, but for the rest of his life his contribution remained subdued and guarded. However, one of Harris's long-standing ambitions was realized during this period: a "school of the prophets" was established at Trefeca to train men for the ministry. The project derived considerable support from the Countess of Huntingdon, and for many years the Anniversary of its opening was a great preaching occasion for both English and Welsh leaders of the Awakening. In spite of declining health, his spiritual vigour remained undimmed to the last.

Harris's dealings with God took place, in the main, in the context of involvement rather than withdrawal, of activity rather than stillness, of a battlefield rather than a cloistered cell. His contemporaries consistently esteemed him highly for his devotion to the Saviour, his zeal in the work of the Gospel, his fearlessness in the face of persecution and his organizing ability. All these had their source and motivation in his unquenchable thirst for God's

presence and power in his own life as well as in his public work, and it is because of this that his contribution to the Great Awakening was significant and lasting.

Leading aspects of Howel Harris's spirituality

An Anglican by conviction as well as practice, Harris's spirituality was profoundly influenced by the *Book of Common Prayer*, which organized personal as well as corporate devotion around Scripture lessons, the Christian festivals, and the Apostles' Creed. A 1742 diary entry records his joining with a family "in reading morning service", and twenty years later at home he "discoursed at noon and night on the Lessons". The work of John Pearson on the *Creed*, and of John Ellis and John Rogers on the *Thirty-nine Articles* confirmed him in his conviction "that our Church is a pure Church, that I could undertake to prove what it holds. I stay not in it because I was brought up in it, but because I see it according to God's Word." The Prayer Book's succinct prayers, the Collects, in particular, in the words of Gordon S. Wakefield, provided "a spiritual reservoir" akin to the Psalms.⁴ It was a liturgical and sacramental spirituality, providing an ordered, uniform framework for devotion. If Harris deviated from Anglican practice in his evangelism, he profited from and commended its structured devotion.

In the matter of personal dealings with God certain matters have priority. This is evident when we consider the by-paths which have manifested themselves in the history of the Church in this respect. By some, a speculative exercise of the intellect, along Gnostic lines, was thought of as an ascent to God and godliness. The mystics perceive spirituality in terms of "purification", "contemplation", and "union" as three distinct, consecutive steps on the path to God. For others, progress in the Christian life is measured in terms of "experiences", which are then deemed to provide an index of spirituality. This brings us to a vital question, as relevant in our day as in Harris's: how do we establish and measure genuine spiritual life and progress in the

soul? In these matters the question of authority and revelation is crucial.

Authority and revelation

For Harris, unquestionably, that authority lay in the Bible, “God’s Word”, “God’s Book”. Here are some representative remarks: “On my brother speaking contemptibly of the Bible, I was enabled to tell him plainly that he was an enemy of Jesus Christ”; “I have done nothing but preach the Bible”; “Spent the evening reading Dr. Owen on ‘The Authority of the Scriptures’”; “the Scripture is the test to try all”.⁵ Such was his conviction, what of his practice? How did Scripture permeate his devotion, guide his judgment, influence his relationships, and determine his preaching?

It almost goes without saying that Harris’s theology was orthodox. It certainly was biblical in its source, Protestant in its repudiation of Popery, Puritan in its striving for reformation, and Evangelical in urgency and application. Harris read Puritan books, and advocated the use of the Westminster Assembly’s Catechisms as well as the Thirty-nine Articles and the Catechism of the Church of England.⁶ In a letter of the greatest doctrinal significance, Harris challenges Charles Wesley to think biblically: “I am full of pride in my understanding, being ready to bring Scripture [in subjection] to my notion and experience, and not to bring them to the law and to the testimony. It is by the Word we are to try the spirits.”⁷ It is on that basis that he proceeds to reprove Charles for holding the possibility of falling from grace, for Arminian expressions in some of his hymns, and in a loose use of the expression “Christ died for all”, which implied universal redemption and free will. Christian doctrine is not derived from Christian experience, but from biblical truth. True spirituality stems from a mind governed by the Word of God, and Harris’s spirituality, therefore, was grounded in, and molded by, propositional truth.

The conviction that Scripture alone should determine belief, experience, and behaviour was a far cry from the spirituality of mystics, fanatics, and Quakers. The latter

short-circuited Scripture with their speculative contemplation, subjective fantasies and ‘inner light’. A local magistrate once accused Harris of being a mixture between a Presbyterian and a Quaker with the remark, “you pretend to the Spirit”, (that is, to extraordinary revelations and to immediate inspiration). Harris’s reply was, “I hope you don’t make a jest of the Spirit of God.... you and I must have the Spirit of God.” More specifically, on another occasion at the home of the Countess of Huntingdon, the following incident took place: “Had a dispute with my Lady’s chaplain....about the unction in us above the scripture, and was enabled to oppose it strongly....My Lady yielded that the scriptures are the outward means the Spirit uses to reveal spiritual things to us, and that the Spirit never shows us anything but according to the scriptures....When the chaplain insisted on the Spirit above the Word, I could not help declaring that I had heard before he was a mystic, but now found him to be so, and that this is Quakerism, all the Reformed divines testified against it.”⁸ Freshness must be distinguished from immediacy. In God’s dealings with the soul there must be freshness, wrought by the Spirit, in and through the Word. Immediacy lays claim to inspired revelations of God directly to the soul, apart from that Word. True revival experiences partake of the former, but not the latter.

Nevertheless this was an area which caused considerable misunderstanding, debate, and opposition to the Methodists. They were condemned as “enthusiasts”, religious fanatics pretending to immediate revelations from God, as religious anarchists bent on overthrowing order, and as frenzied extremists who must be stopped at all costs. The Deists of the day, whose only yardstick was reason, vilified their emphasis on God’s revelation; the religious establishment regarded their zeal as a spurious claim to supernatural activity. Harris defended himself against such a charge by his brother by saying “that in the hour of death and the Day of Judgment ... my strict adherence to Jesus Christ ... will appear to be no enthusiasm, but a nobler choice to remove the affections

from the creature to the Creator.”⁹ One of the early opponents of Methodism defined enthusiasm in this way: “a person’s having a strong, but false persuasion, that he is divinely inspired; or at least, that he has the Spirit of God some way or other; and this made known to him in a particular and extraordinary manner.”¹⁰ A more explicit example of the repugnance with which enthusiasm was held is Bishop Butler’s interview with John Wesley in 1739, during which the bishop made the famous remark: “Mr. Whitefield says in his Journal, ‘There are promises still to be fulfilled in me’. Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing - a very horrid thing!”¹¹ Wesley’s reply to one who charged Whitefield with enthusiasm was simply this: “Whatever is spoken of the religion of the heart and of the inward workings of the Spirit of God, must appear enthusiasm to those who have not felt them.”¹² For Wesley, enthusiasts were those who, “firstthink to attain the end without the means Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not.... But false, imaginary inspiration is enthusiasm. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the Law and the Testimony.”¹³

Bishop Lavington’s pamphlet of 1749, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared*, was answered by both Whitefield and Wesley. Whitefield’s answer sets out the Methodist endeavours for a lively faith and personal experience: “To awaken a drowsy world; to rouse them out of their formality, as well as profaneness, and put them upon seeking after a present and great salvation; to point out to them a glorious rest, which not only remains for the people of God hereafter, but which, by a living faith, the very chief of sinners may enter into even here . . . to stir them up to seek after the life and power of godliness, that they may be Christians, not only in word and profession, but in spirit and in truth.”¹⁴ Thus Whitefield countered the criticism with an emphasis on real, intimate fellowship with Christ as the hallmark of true faith: “The letter-learned scribes and Pharisees of this day, look on us as madmen and enthusiasts; but

though they make so much noise about the word *enthusiast*, it means no more than this, one in God; and what Christian can say, he is not in God, and God in him?”¹⁵

Yet, given Harris’s passion for freshness and relevance, his theology could never be an end in itself. While it was objectively true, and capable of formulation and expression, it was also a fluid theology, dynamic rather than static, progressive rather than settled. His habit was to “discourse where the Book [that is, the Bible] opened”. Subjective constraints determined his emphasis at any particular time: “The first four years the Lord sent me to thunder the Law, and to bring people to leave outward sin and perform duties. The next four years I was sent to preach the Gospel and faith, assurance and free grace.... and now these last six or seven years since I have preached the Person and death of Christ.”¹⁶

On occasions this created difficulties in debate, and Samuel Mason, one of Harris’s correspondents felt compelled to ask for precise statements of his position: “When you write in answer to us, use no ambiguous words, but words that may convey a clear idea, and as Scriptural as may be, and words used in divinity whose sense is known; for I observe when people advance new doctrines, they also advance new and strange words and phrases, whose sense and determinate idea is known to none but themselves.”¹⁷ Later, in the Trinitarian controversy between him and the other Welsh Methodists, his doctrinal imprecision led him into the heresy of Patripassianism. His speaking of “that Blood infinite and the Blood of God”, and a “dying, bleeding God”, brought upon him the censure of his fellow-labourers, and for a time, estrangement from them.¹⁸

Even more serious were the practical effects of this lack of discipline. Harris always recorded his dreams, as if they had real significance for him as a Christian, or for his Christian work. His dependence on the ‘prophetic’ insights of a woman, Mrs. Sidney Griffith, in the late 1740s exacerbated his estrangement: “Of Madam Griffith, whether she be of God or not, that such things

had been in the Old and New Testament. Of Deborah, the women ministering to Christ, and going with Paul"; "I had access to God on account of Mrs. Griffith"; "Merely in obedience to conscience and God, He has made Madam Griffith a new threshing instrument". Whitefield was uncompromising in his opposition to the whole affair, as Harris noted in his diary: "he said he did not approve of Madam Griffith being with me, that it was contrary to God's Word." ¹⁹ Scripture alone must be the rule of faith. Deviation from it is a subtle temptation. The appeal of direct access to inspired and authoritative revelation from God is, to human nature, irresistible. But it is also deceptive and dangerous. True spirituality flourishes only on an entire, sustained, and consistent submission to the Word of God.

The doctrines of grace and holiness

Next in the matter of spirituality come the doctrines of grace and holiness. "Continual need we have of watching over ourselves", writes Harris in 1740, "and the difference between notional faith and real faith." ²⁰ As for the latter distinction, he countered one who "sets faith wholly in believing the testimony God gave of His Son as a proposition", by insisting "on an appropriation of Him to us, too." ²¹ Among the Methodist doctrines denounced by the critics were, "The gross Antinomian doctrine", and "depreciating good works, and teaching Justification by Faith alone". ²² It was quite true that the Welsh Methodists believed in justification by faith, and they defended their position from the teaching of the Thirty-nine Articles, as well as Scripture. ²³ Harris heartily concurred with Rowland's treatment of the subject in a sermon on 1 John 2:2: "We see here also God's children at times do admire their happiness, not in their sanctification, but in their justificationThe inside of God's people is the best in all agesIt is not our grace and holiness that God praises in the Song of Solomon, but our imputed righteousness.....Righteousness imputed is like the sun; thereon God looks - hence is sure foundation of

a witness; but sanctification is like the moon, changeable, and so the witness arising hence is uncertain." ²⁴

As for Antinomianism, it was a charge which Harris vigorously opposed. But it was not always easy to avoid the Scylla of Legalism on the one hand and the Charybdis of license on the other, as Harris himself observed: "Spoke to the brethren, the one against Antinomianism, and another against legality." "Recommended Bunyan's Law and Grace to them". ²⁵ As part of the Welsh Methodists' effort to clarify the place of the Law, they arranged for the Scotsman Ralph Erskine's *Law-death, Gospel-life: or the Death of Legal Righteousness, the Life of Gospel Holiness* to be translated into Welsh. ²⁶ At a later period, the hymn-writer of the Welsh Awakening, William Williams, dealt with the issue in two chapters of his work on Christian experience, *Theomemphus*. ²⁷

There was another subtle danger. The believer might be tempted to rely on the experience of joy and sense of assurance which followed justification. Experience meetings could degenerate into a hotbed of subjectivity, leaving the soul at the mercy of fluctuating feelings, whether of others or one's own. The Scripture statement, that "we are justified freely by His blood" speaks of a finished atonement and a full acquittal as the only grounds for true enjoyment of God. Harris was careful to preserve this emphasis, urging one of his correspondents to "beware of resting on anything short of Christ. We are apt to lean on broken reeds of frames [feelings], graces, longings etc. It is good to have thirstings after Christ, but it is not good to rest until they are fulfilled..... Give yourself to the utmost for Jesus Christ, to glorify Him in all manner of ways.....the more you will lay out for Christ, the more He will pour into your soul. In this is He glorified in you, in bearing much fruit indeed." ²⁸ Harris spoke sadly of another, "how he is fallen from the cross and following frames", and was greatly alarmed at some of Wesley's people, that "they live in their frames" ²⁹

Experience and Discipleship

This raises the vast subject of Christian experience and discipleship. The Great Awakening was nothing if not experiential in its emphasis. Truth must be experienced. True spirituality finds expression in everyday living and disciplined fellowship. But how is genuine experience evaluated? What criteria should determine its progress? How is its development disciplined? What is the place of the means of grace? What ingredients are necessary for worship, and devotion? In all these respects, the Welsh Methodists were predictably orthodox. Their evangelism was dominated by preaching, their worship and devotion were influenced by the Anglican Prayer Book, they insisted on Bible study, prayer, and attendance at the sacraments. But what were their distinctives? Let me highlight some of them.

For Harris, true dealing with God demanded freshness and reality. Personal communion and devotion, guidance when confronted with choices in particular situations, and public preaching, should always partake of life and authority. "June 18th. 1735, being in secret prayer, I felt suddenly my heart melting within me like wax before the fire with love to God my Saviour... There was a cry in my inmost soul, which I was totally unacquainted with before, Abba, Father! Abba, Father! I could not help calling God my Father; I knew that I was His child, and that He loved me and heard me." "The fire of the Lord came down amazingly; was obliged to cry often, Allelujah! Hosannah!"; "to 2 in the morning like a drunken man. Could say nothing but Glory! Glory! for a long time." "The Lord came, overpowering me with love like a mighty torrent that I could not withstand, or reason against, or doubt." ³⁰

Harris's favourite expression in seeking for guidance is "laid it before the Lord", and this he did for minor as well as major issues, from buying a watch and whether to drink tea, to getting married, and whether to join publicly with John Wesley. Of his own will on any matter, he records that by faith he learned at an early

stage in his Christian life "to give it up to Thee to choose." Only then was he free to follow "the four ways of knowing God's will: by His Word, Providence, People and Spirit." ³¹ Thus subjective constraints were not without objective criteria, usually in the form of providential circumstances: "Crying to go (to London) to strengthen his (Whitefield's) hands ...the outward providences concurring, having money, and settled the societies all, and no present call for me, have determined me." ³² But Harris was not always consistent in submitting to the objective authority of God's Word in the matter of personal guidance, and both Rowland and Williams accused him of being an "enthusiast, saying I have God's mind". ³³

A similar insistence on freshness is apparent in Harris' appetite for lively, biblical sermons. Reporting to Whitefield on one occasion, he said, "Such a sermon I never before heard as Brother Rowland preached . . . so much of the powerful working of the Holy Spirit I think has never been known among us." ³⁴ On another occasion Harris could say "The power that continues with him is uncommon. Such crying out and heart-breaking groans, silent weeping, and holy joy, and shouts of rejoicing I never saw.....you might feel God there among them, like a flame." ³⁵ In his own public ministry of "exhorting" he resolved "not to speak of what we have heard from the Lord, but what we have *now*, afresh from him." ³⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, to find Harris denouncing "the doctrine of building souls on past experience", and commending Whitefield's early insistence on "the continuing believing, and not living on past experiences". ³⁷

In the "societies", those typically Methodist gatherings of the converts of the revival, the emphasis was on simplicity and openness. Harris was notoriously outspoken in his dealings with the experience and behaviour of others, and he expected them to be so with him. Spiritual reality was not fostered by reserve or pretence. With typical frankness he writes to Charles Wesley: "Let us look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Let us look at Him as searching and trying our hearts. Let us speak

and write [as] in his presence, and then we will bear with one another and deal faithfully. Be not surprised, my dear brother, or offended at my simplicity. Let me tell you in the Spirit of my dear Lord my whole heart.”³⁸ And to another correspondent, “How hard it is to gain simplicity and to keep it.....pray for me, that I may know nothing but simplicity and love.”³⁹ And again, “O dear, dear friend, have a watchful eye over me to help me with your warm prayers.....and seasonable reproofs and admonitions.”⁴⁰ Whitefield’s wife reproved him for his “stiffness and positiveness”; while her husband, at various times, reproved Harris for his “heat”, although he “spoke well of my honest heart and good judgment”; and again, “The Lord keep you and me, my dear brother, from a hot, rash, positive, overbearing temper. This I think is the predominant failing in my dear brother Harris.”⁴¹ For his part, Harris was ready to acknowledge this tendency: “I often act and often speak in my own dark, rash and selfish spirit.” “Told them of my heat, it is what I mourn over, and beg their prayers against.”⁴² But the alternative, no “plain dealing”, he regarded as a serious deficiency among the Dissenters.⁴³

Harris’s reproof on occasions, however, bordered on the domineering. “Having kept a private general society ... where I was more cutting and lashing than in public, showing how the wrath of the Lord [is] kindled here, and his curse is gone through all Wales, and burns like fire, and is not yet returned.”⁴⁴ Especially was this true during the late 40s, when the disruption in the Welsh Methodist ranks was imminent. In particular, he criticized the other leaders for their “lightness” (or frivolity), behaviour which had always been anathema to him: “We are about soul’s work, eternity work, and God’s work; there is no jesting with God.”⁴⁵ He was not slow to defend himself: “What they think is harshness in me is not my sin or anger, but my created nature, a rough voice and a rough appearance is created [natural] to me; my soul is love, I speak in love.”⁴⁶

Methodist discipline in the society meetings assumed both a willingness and an ability to articulate their

experiences. This they referred to as “opening the heart” Whitefield’s statement of this is found in his 1740 *Letter to the Religious Societies*:

The only end which I hope you all propose by your assembling yourselves together, is the renewing of your depraved natures, and promoting the hidden life of Jesus Christ in your souls.....None but those who have experienced it, can tell the unspeakable advantage of such a union and communion of souls. I know not a better means in the world to keep hypocrisy out from amongst you. Pharisees and unbelievers will pray, read, sing Psalms; but none, save an Israelite indeed, will endure to have his heart searched out.⁴⁷

Harris saw it in a similar light: “set all to relate to each other what God has done for their souls, to bring Satan’s work to light; it is good to expose them, to bring the Lord’s work [to light] is good, [in order] to bring Him praise, and to encourage others on.”⁴⁸

Clearly, the danger of an excessive subjectivism was always present, and oversight of these meetings required wisdom and maturity. Nevertheless, the societies provided opportunities for oversight in spiritual matters which the parish churches, in particular, lacked. It was by this means that genuine conversions were distinguished from the spurious, growth in grace was encouraged, and spiritual leaders were nurtured. It was Griffith Jones, a senior parish minister, who alerted Harris to the dangers of resting on experiences, and of making them an index of spirituality: “Heard Mr. Jones preaching on the disciples calling fire from heaven. He showed the spirit of error, 1. When we lean on our own experiences before the Word; 2. On our own understanding to read and apply the Word above the judgment of others; 3. When we set up little things or even great truths any further than they affect us.” Another occasion was more private: “He said we were charged as going to Quakerism and all errors, and to leave the Bible and to follow our experiences. I said that was not true, but what is the Bible but a dead letter to us till we do experience the work of the Spirit in us, not one or the other separately, but both together.”⁴⁹ It was a salutary observation.

Fellowship and discipline have their part in nurturing spirituality, but their full benefit is reaped only when God's Spirit and God's Word are given their rightful place.

Revival and order

Given the extraordinary success of the Gospel in Harris's day, characterized by several revivals, and the proliferation of society meetings, it was inevitable that questions should arise about revival and order. A hallmark of the Welsh Methodists was that they hungered for more of God. Their spirituality was characterized by a longing to press on into God's presence, and to bring Him with them to their people. They monitored the remarkable conversions that took place, the impressions made on God's people, and the influences on their lives. They witnessed the transformation of whole communities. But this plethora of divine activity was inseparable from the problems that accompany new and vigorous life. They were problems of new life not of decay, of multiplication not of diminution, of revival not of declension. It was easy, therefore, for others to criticize zeal as fanaticism, elevated spiritual experiences as emotionalism, and heavenly disorder as ecclesiastical anarchy.

Harris's zeal was proverbial. "O may the Lord fill us all with His power that we may never rest day or night, but continually go about with our lives in our hands, calling poor sinners to come to Christ, and building the lambs up in Christ." "On the way I was made as bold as a lion, filled with zeal to press on my brethren with me to lay aside days for prayer; and to engage every man of their congregations, endowed with grace, love, humility, prudence and gifts, to go about from house to house, that all may know of Jesus Christ, since the devil is so busy." ⁵⁰

It was not only theory for Harris, but practice: "It is now nine weeks since I began to go round South and North Wales, and this week I came home. I have visited in that time thirteen counties, and traveled most of 150 miles every week, and discoursed twice every day - sometimes three or four times a day. In this last journey I have not taken off my clothes for seven nights, traveling from one morning to the next evening without any rest above 100

miles, discoursing at midnight, or very early, on the mountains in order to avoid persecution." ⁵¹ Godliness needs exercise, and by the grace of God it grows and matures in the context of multiplied labours, spiritual conflicts, and used opportunities.

In all these labours, Harris always referred to himself and other unordained laymen as 'exhorters'. The Methodists sought to maintain discipline regarding their fitness for the task, both spiritually and educationally, but did not always succeed. Their critics regarded them as "bold, visionary rustics", "illiterate mechanics, much fitter to make a pulpit than to get into one". ⁵² When challenged about his itinerancy by a parish minister, Harris "assured him that I did not come to weaken his hands, or to draw any away from church, nor met at the time of divine service; and that I was sure he would not seem to border so near on self-sufficiency as to say that there was no need of help. People can never be helped too much and too often to repentance." ⁵³

A fuller defense of Harris's position was made to the curate of his own parish: "You seemed to [think it] unlawful for a layman to preach, but who [ordained] Apollos? He said, Was not he ordained? I said, no. Who deputed those prophets in Moses's time, who prophesied in the camp without proving their mission by miracles, and Moses said, Oh, that all God's people were prophets? He asked what was meant by prophets there. I said, Teachers to teach the way of God, and open the Law. What, said he, is meant by God's people? I said, Such as had grace. I then said that all the disciples on St. Stephen's persecution went to preach, and they were not all ordained; and our own Church holds that in case of persecution a layman may preach, for that is distinct from giving the Sacraments, and that none should give them but such as were ordained. He said, But now there is no necessity. I said, There never was more. What is all the drunkenness, etc. about? He asked could I turn them. I said, I must do my best ... that my aim was to do good, to draw sinners from sin to Christ." ⁵⁴

This reminds us of the principle of urgency in the matter of reaching the unconverted, an urgency which constrained Richard Baxter, the eminently successful Puritan minister, to reason thus: "The commonness and the greatness of men's necessity, commanded me to do anything that I could for their relief, and to bring forth some water to cast upon this fire, though I had not at hand a silver vessel to carry it in.....We use not to stand upon compliment or precedence, when we run to quench a common fire ... If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay." ⁵⁵

It is true that God has set in His Church officers, called by Himself, approved and ratified by His people, for the work of the ministry, and to build up believers. (Ephesians 4: 11-12). Men are also called by Him to take the Gospel to unevangelized areas, as, for example Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13: 1-3. Such are set apart and sent by God and acknowledged in an orderly fashion by the Church. This order is to be preserved as an ideal to be aimed for in every age. The public ministry of unordained of laymen has to be defined within these terms. The state of the Church in his day showed grave spiritual declension, and for him this was warrant enough to modify the normal demands of order.

Harris regarded his awakening gifts as a commission, given and withdrawn at will by God. He did not intrude into the office of the ministry, for example, in the matter of administering the sacraments. He saw his labours as being in submission to, as well as complementing, those officers in the Church who were clearly called of God. Furthermore, most of the time he accepted that the fruits of his labours were subject to evaluation and approval by the regular officers of the Church. For their part, contemporary ministerial leaders acknowledged his gifts and labours as being from God and to His glory by giving him opportunities for public ministry of the Word. In doing so, they would have agreed with Richard Baxter's argument in the previous century, "it's better that men should be disorderly saved, than orderly

damned, and that the Church be disorderly preserved than orderly destroyed." ⁵⁶ The alternative to order need not always be disorder. Sometimes it can be order of another kind. In this respect the Methodists created their own, and for this Harris showed both genius and energy.⁵⁷ Issues of life and death take precedence over those of order and regularity. True spirituality holds together in dynamic tension both the apostolic injunction "Let all things be done decently and in order", and the apostolic experience "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 14:40; 9:16).

Conclusion: Eternity in view

In conclusion, we note that Harris matched zeal for souls with anticipation of glory. While he was "never better than when on full stretch", he had eternity in view. "What have we to do with fine buildings?", he asks, "We are travellers, we'll make shift for a night." ⁵⁸ Along with anticipation went assurance, a matter of considerable debate throughout the period of the Great Awakening. "What though the outward man decays, when the inward man puts on the Lord of Glory, and when tastes of heaven are given us, we have no appetite to earthly things. Inward supports will make us bear anything, for Christ bears in us and for us. All is ours, let us study nothing but to glorify Him while we breathe..... He called us when dead in trespasses and sins, and will not change His mind, and sin, men, or devils shall not separate us from Him, because His arms are about us." ⁵⁹ Harris's dealings with God, therefore, were leavened with a lively hope. It was this which imparted urgency to his labours, resolve to his strivings for holiness, and joy to his heart: "I must have the Saviour, indeed, for He is my all; all that others have in the world, and in religion, and in themselves, I have in Thee; pleasures, riches, safety, honour, life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, bliss, joy, gaiety, and happiness..... And if a child longs for his father, a traveller for the end of his journey, a workman to finish his work, a prisoner for his liberty, an heir for the full possession of his estate; so, in all these respects, I can't help longing to go home." ⁶⁰ This is evangelical spirituality.

References

1. For a chronological bibliography of Howel Harris see Richard Bennett, *Howell Harris and the Dawn of Revival*, Bridgend, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1987 (shortened in the footnotes to HHDR); Transcripts of portions of his diaries and letters have appeared in *The Journal of the Historical Society of The Presbyterian Church of Wales* [referred to as CH in the footnotes] and its Supplement [shortened to MS]; and in *Selected Trevecka Letters (1742-1747)*, Caernarvon, The Calvinistic Methodist Bookroom, 1956; and *Selected Trevecka Letters (1747-1794)*, Caernarvon, The Calvinistic Methodist Bookroom, 1962, both edited by Gomer M. Roberts [referred to respectively in the footnotes as STL.i and STL.ii]; and in the following books edited by Tom Beynon: *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier (1714-1773)*, Caernarvon, The Calvinistic Methodist Bookroom, 1958; *Howell Harris's Visits to London*, Aberystwyth, The Cambrian News Press, 1960; *Howell Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, The Cambrian News Press, Aberystwyth, 1966, [respectively HRS, HVL, and HVP]; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris 1714-1773 The Last Enthusiast*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1965 (shortened to GFN); Eifion Evans, *Howel Harris, Evangelist*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1974 is abbreviated to HH. Extensive references to Harris are in Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Awakening in Wales*, Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985 [henceforth DR]. A recent survey of Harris appears in John Armstrong, *Five Great Evangelists*, Fearn, Rosshire, Christian Focus Publications, 1997. Based on a doctoral dissertation, Geraint Tudur's *Howell Harris: From Conversion to Separation 1735-1750*, appeared in 2000, published by the University of Wales Press, Cardiff (shortened to GT).
2. HVL.71.
3. HVL. 213, 49.
4. HVL.32; HRS. 136; HHDR. 38,41; MS.i.66; 432; 463; HVP.31-2; Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, New York, Crossroad, 1991, p.262.
5. HVP. 5, 327; HVL. 204; HVP. 214,330; HRS. 170. See also Chapter 10 'The Bible in the Great Awakening', in Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch: The True Nature of Religious Revival*, Bridgend, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996, Chapter 10; and HH.7, n.14.
6. See Eifion Evans, 'Howel Harris and the Printed Page', CH. 23 (1999), 33-62; HVP. 324-31; CH.I.49. Studies on Puritan piety include Richard Lovelace, 'The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600-1640' in Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*; and J. I. Packer on 'The Spirituality of John Owen' in *Among God's Giants: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, Eastbourne, Kingsway Publications Ltd, 1991(Chapter 12).
7. MS.ii.25.
8. MS.i. 421; HVL. 153. Harris refers to the chaplain as a "Mr. Hutchinson". Whitefield was appointed one of the Countess of Huntingdon's chaplains in 1748.
9. MS.i. 100. For the Methodists' rebuttal of criticism see Eifion Evans, 'Early Methodist Apologetic', in *Fire in the Thatch*, Chapter 8.
10. Quoted in Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, London, The Epworth Press, 1960, pp.33-4.
11. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by Nehemiah Curnock, 1909, London, Charles H. Kelly, vol. ii p.257, fn.; The Bishop of London had issued a 'Pastoral Letter' in the same year with much the same indictment. See DR.96.
12. *ibid.* p.319.
13. *ibid.* p.130.
14. Quoted in Luke Tyetman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, vol. ii 1890, p.221.
15. Sermon on Heb 4:9, in *George Whitefield Sermons*, New Ipswich, New Hampshire, Pietan Publications, vol. iii 1994, p.294.
16. HVL. 23, 42, 84; HVP. 207: this was written in December, 1751. Dr. Tudur Jones notes that "Systematic Theology was not Howel Harris's strong point, and the details of his credo developed and changed through his contacts with a variety of people and his own intense personal experience. Nevertheless, he moved consistently within the orbit of Calvinism." ("The Evangelical Revival in Wales: A Study in Spirituality", in James D. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1989, p.242.)
17. MS.ii.19. Samuel Mason was a bookseller and printer, a Calvinist, and member of Whitefield's London Tabernacle.
18. HVL. 236, 167.
19. HVP. 212, 166-7, 196; HVL.14. For a discussion of the separation between Harris and the other leaders, see HH, Chapter VI, 'Dividing Times', and GT, Chapter 8, 'The Prophetess'. For Harris's dreams, see GFN, 8-9.
20. MS.i.257.
21. HRS.161.
22. Theophilus Evans, *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, 1752, p.78.
23. HVP. 31-2, 145.
24. DR. 195-6.
25. HVP. 142, 328. Harris is referring to *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, by John Bunyan.
26. CH. 4 (1980), 28; the matter is discussed in DR. 247-9. For Erskine, see Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, Edinburgh, and Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1993.
27. Translated into English, with notes, and published in 1996 under the title *Pursued by God* (Eifion Evans, Bridgend, Evangelical Press of Wales). See chapters 15 and 16.
28. MS.i.281, 280.
29. HVP.207; HRS. 74.
30. *A Brief Account of the Life of Howell Harris Esq., Trevecka [Wales]*, 1791, p.15; HVP.118; HVL.108, 225.

31. HVL. 42, 47, 51, 58, 109, 141, 181; HRS. 46; cf. HVP. 171, where Harris adds "other ways God reveals His will, - by dreams, union, the ministry of angels, the people, and Urim." Presumably he referred to former times, although Harris, like John Wesley, was not averse to using the lot. Harris used it at the College in 1769 to decide which two students should take the Gospel to the East Indies; and John Wesley, decided to preach and print his sermon on 'free grace' on the same basis. See HRS.234; *The Letters of John Wesley*, London, vol.i, 1931, p.303; *Journal*, vol.ii. 184, n.1.
32. HVL.39.
33. HRS.149.
34. STL.i.159; Rowland was preaching on Nehemiah 13:29, and had applied the message to all conditions of men: "If you are a backslider, read Hebrews; if devotional, read the Psalms; if you are prone to be rebellious, read Joshua and Judges; but if you would accomplish great things, read Nehemiah." John Morgan Jones a William Morgan, *Y Tadau Methodistiaidd*, cyf. I, Abertawe, 1895, tud. 283. See also Eifion Evans, 'The Sources and Scope of Daniel Rowland's Sermons', CH. 18 (1994), pp.42-55.
35. STL.i.81.
36. *Last Message and Dying Testimony*, quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris*, p.54.
37. HVL.149, 209.
38. MS.ii.24.
39. MS.ii.28,29.
40. MS.i.304.
41. HVL.86, 241; *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, x. 24, quoted in HH.51.
42. STL.i.23; HVL.242.
43. HVL.209.
44. MS.i.468.
45. HVL.8. For the disruption, see DR. 269-80; HH. 45-57; and GT. 170-94.
46. HVL.143.
47. DR.87. For the Rules of the societies see DR. 175-85, and also *Fire in the Thatch*, Chapter 7, 'Adding to the Church - in the teaching of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists'.
48. MS.ii.7; William Williams's contemporary, classic work on the subject was translated into English with the title *The Experience Meeting*, by Mrs. Lloyd-Jones, and published in 1973 (London, Evangelical Press).
49. HVP.63, 116; for Griffith Jones, see DR Chapter 14, 'A Father in Israel'.
50. STL.i.48; MS.i.417.
51. *A Brief Account*, pp.195-6. A similar summary is found in STL.ii.21; and HH.33.
52. Quoted in Richard Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications Issued During the Eighteenth Century*, 1902, pp.56,100. See also Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, chapter 4, 'Satire of Methodist Preachers and Preaching'; HH. 11-14, and DR index s.v. 'Lay-preaching'.
53. MS.i.455.
54. D. E Jenkins, *Calvinistic Methodist Holy Orders*, Carnarvon, Connexional Book-Room, 1911, p.27. Writing to Whitefield early in 1745 Harris speaks of certain parts of Wales where "there is much of the divine fire kindled where lukewarmness had prevailed, and they meet at 5 in the morning, and in some places are kept up all night in prayer and praise. This revival the Lord did [commence] by means of (seemingly) a very mean, unlikely instrument, an exhorter that had been a cobbler. Now, no-one is more enflamed and more owned to quicken others than he is." STL.i.159-60.
55. *A Treatise of Conversion*, in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, Ligonier, Pa. Soli Deo Gloria, Volume 2, 1990, p.399, 'Preface'. It was originally written in 1657.
56. Quoted in GFN, 42.
57. See for example HVL.61,62; STL.i.82.
58. HVP.10, 17, 39, 328; HRS.17.
59. MS.i.360. For the issue of assurance, see DR index. For a discussion of Reformed and Puritan insights into assurance see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith : Calvin, English Puritanism and the Dutch Second Reformation*, American University Studies, Series VII, Volume 89, New York, Peter Lang, 1991.
60. *A Brief Account*, pp.100-01.