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Howell Harris and Revival

By Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Some may wonder why we devote a meeting in this Conference held in London to a Welshman of the name of Howell Harris. The first answer is that this year happens to be the bi-centenary of his death. He died on July 21, 1773. It has been our custom from the beginning of this Conference to call attention to great men of God the anniversary of whose birth or death falls in any particular year; and that is the main reason why I call attention to Howell Harris. But quite apart from that, Harris is one of the great heroic figures in the Christian church, and his story is truly an astonishing one. It is very necessary that we should call attention to him because the ignorance of people concerning this man is almost indescribable. For instance, there was a review of a book by J. Pollock on 'George Whitefield' in the Western Mail of Cardiff on June 2nd this year - the very year in which the bi-centenary of the death of Howell Harris is being celebrated - and the reviewer, who was a schoolmaster, actually wrote these words, 'The Story of Whitefield deserves to be better known especially in Wales where Calvinistic Methodism may be claimed to be a legacy from him (i.e. Whitefield) through the Countess of Huntingdon'. I have only one comment to make on that: it is an example of 'invincible ignorance'! But lest anyone should think that this feeling that Howell Harris has been sadly neglected is due to nationalistic prejudice on my part, let me quote some words by Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall, a well known contemporary historian, of New College, Hampstead, who wrote a little book on Howell Harris and gave it the title Howell Harris the last enthusiast. Dr Nuttall, an Englishman, writes 'I have sought to rescue Harris from his neglect by English writers, and to restore him to his original place in the Evangelical Revival as a whole'; and again 'This is one reason why I have chosen to speak of him, in the hope of introducing him to the ignorant Englishman'.

But why should people in England, in London, be interested in him! The answer is that he paid no less than 39 visits to London during his hectic life. He deputized for George Whitefield in preaching in the Tabernacle at Moorfields more frequently than anyone else, and he was for some three years the head of the Calvinistic Methodists both in England and in Wales. So Nuttall is quite right in saying that Harris played a very prominent part in the Evangelical Awakening and Revival of 200 years ago. He was a particularly close friend of Whitefield, and, because of his Calvinistic views, was more friendly with Whitefield than with the Wesleys. Nevertheless, he was also a great friend of both John and Charles Wesley. He attended their Annual Conference on many occasions, and he was always concerned about reconciling Whitefield and Wesley and bringing them together. I shall refer to that later on. At the same time he was a great friend of the Countess of Huntingdon. However, my main reason for calling attention to him, over and above everything else, is that I believe a consideration of this man's will help us come to an understanding of the true nature of Revival.

Fortunately there is an abundance of material concerning him. He wrote endless diaries. He was always writing. After a heavy day's preaching he would write in his diary, and spend hours at it; and fortunately they are still available. The first Diaries were in Latin, others were in English. Because he wrote in such a minute hand, and in addition, wrote across what he had written previously, they are very difficult to decipher; but a number of men have been engaged in this work for years, and copious extracts from these diaries have been published in several volumes by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Book Room. The special value of the diaries is in them Harris gives us such an intimate insight into what was in that great period of Revival, and especially the relationship between the various great men of God who were so mightily used.

Let me hurriedly deal with some of the salient facts. The condition of Wales at the beginning of the 18th century was, from the spiritual standpoint, very low indeed. The same was true also, of course, in England: but in certain respects it was worse in Wales than in England. Wales as a whole was about 100 years behind England even in shedding Roman Catholicism, and whilst there had been great Puritans in Wales, such as Morgan Llwyd, Walter Craddock and Vavasor Powell and others, spiritually speaking things were at a very low ebb indeed. There were one or two Evangelical men in the Church of England, and there were Non-conformists - Independents and a few Baptists - but they were small in number. That was the state of the church.

The state of the people was one of spiritual ignorance, indeed death, with the consequent and inevitable immoral condition.

on, I do not want to over-paint this picture, as has sometimes happened according to the modern historians. Writers of the 18th century and of last century may have been guilty of over-painting the blackness and darkness of the picture. However, we can be quite certain that the position was very sad and deplorable. But then suddenly there came this great awakening, this great Revival, in which one of the chief instruments - many would say the chief instrument, though I cannot quite agree - was born in January, 1714 -- this man Howell Harris.

He was born in a little hamlet called Trevecca; it is not even a village. He had but little education, yet he became a schoolmaster. The schoolmaster of today is not the same as in those days. The vital event in his life took place in 1735; but for this we should never have heard of him at all. It was his conversion. How did it happen? In this connection I cannot but refer to a most amazing incident. The Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales has paid just a little attention to the bicentenary of Harris' death this year. In their General Assembly held last June in a place called Lampeter in Cardiganshire, they asked a Professor of Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge, Dr. R. Buick Knox, to deliver an address on Howell Harris. It is, to me, almost incredible, but this is what Dr. Knox said, 'The decisive moment in his life was at the solemn sacrament in Talgarth Church on Easter Day 1735'. That is astonishing, and for the simple reason that it is not true! What amazes me is that a Professor in Church History should be capable of such a statement, and that the official Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales should publish it.

What then actually did happen? On Palm Sunday, March 30th, 1735, Harris attended the Parish Church at Talgarth, which is a short distance from the hamlet of Trevecca where he was born and where he lived. During the service the Vicar, announcing that there would be a Communion Service the following Sunday, said that he knew there were many people who did not come to the Communion because they felt they were not fit to partake of it. He went on to say, 'If you are not fit to take Communion you are not fit to pray, if you are not fit to pray you are not fit to live, and if you are not fit to live you are not fit to die'. These words hit this thoughtless schoolmaster with great force. He had never been a riotous person but he had lived a loose life; so these extraordinary words of the Vicar announcing a Communion Service began a process of conviction of sin which from then on led to an agony of repentance.

I emphasise this incident because it reminds us of one of the amazing things about being a servant of God. You can bring people to conviction of sin even through an announcement! You never know what God is going to use; your asides are sometimes more important than your prepared statements. Well, Howell Harris went to the Communion service, and it but increased his conviction of sin. He continued in an agony of repentance - trying to find peace and unable to find it - until Whit Sunday, which was May 25th, when he went again to a Communion Service in the same church. He describes how during a part of the service he had a tremendous fight with the devil. He had found a certain amount of peace in a neighbouring church called Llangasty where he had given himself to God as best he could in his ignorance. That gave him a measure of peace, but the devil came and attacked him in this Communion on Whit Sunday, violently trying to shake his faith in everything. However, before the service was over he had found peace. Here are his own words describing this: '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, and I said to my neighbour who was sad, Why are you sad? I know my sins have been forgiven, though I had not heard that such a thing to be found except in this book. Oh blessed day! Would that I might remember it gratefully ever more!'

Howell Harris was now converted, he knows that his sins are forgiven and he has lost his burden. But still more important is what happened to him over three weeks later, on June 18th, when he had a further experience. He was reading the Scripture, and praying in the tower of the Llangasty church, where he had given himself to God, when he received a further experience which eclipsed all previous experiences. It is from that moment that this man began to be the flaming Evangelist of whom we speak, and whose memory we commemorate this evening. As a result of this experience he felt a compassion for souls and a sorrow for all people who were in sin. It was this experience which led to his evangelistic activity.

At first he just began to visit people who were sick, and to read to them out of certain books, The Practice of Piety and other books which had helped him. But he read with such power that people were profoundly affected. After a while, when ever it was heard that he was going to read out of a book in any sick room or anywhere else, people crowded together to listen to him; and this went on in a cumulative manner until eventually the crowds became so great that he began to preach to them in the open air. Great crowds began to gather, and large numbers of people were brought under conviction, and many were brought to conversion. It was as a result of this that he began to establish the Society meetings, the Experience meetings of which we have already heard in this Conference.

I am just selecting some of the outstanding facts in his life. It was in 1737, two years after his conversion, that he first met the great Daniel Rowland of Llangeitho, situated in another part of Wales in the West. He met George Whitefield for the

first time in Cardiff in 1739, and eventually these various contacts led to the formation of an Association of all these Societies so that they might regularize and control their conduct and development. The first Association was held in 1742, but a more famous one was held near Caerphilly in 1743. The man who was appointed Moderator on that occasion was the great George Whitefield. Harris and the others went on preaching, and enduring terrible persecutions and hardships. Harris was brought very near to death on several occasions. The antagonism in the Church of England, and among the vicars, was indescribable, and the hostility of the masses at times was violent. But this man went on, with his life in his hands, and was indefatigable. I have scarcely ever read of any man who has worked as hard as Howell Harris did. He would preach many times during the day, and after that would hold private societies with the converts, and after that would write his diaries. Very often he had no sleep at all, and would go back to his school the next day; or he would have a couple of hours' sleep and then travel and preach somewhere else. On and on he went, working in an almost superhuman manner. His voice became permanently husky quite early on in his preaching career, but he still continued.

This went on until 1750 when a dispute arose, for various reasons, between him and Daniel Rowland and the other leaders, which led to a disruption and separation, and he retired to his home in Trevecca. This led eventually to a most interesting enterprise. He had read about the community that August Hermann Francke, the German pietist, had established in Halle. It was a kind of orphanage and religious community. Harris had been greatly impressed by this, as many others were, and he decided to start such a 'family' in Trevecca. There he gathered together quite a number of people, up to one hundred. One would be a blacksmith, another a carpenter, another working on the farm, another a miller and so on. They were a religious community, and he taught and instructed them in the Faith. Later, he did another extraordinary thing. There was a war at this time with the French, so Harris became a soldier, a captain in the militia. As captain in the militia he came to England, to Great Yarmouth, and then went down to Devon and Cornwall and other places. He preached in his uniform and there are extraordinary stories of what happened sometimes.

However, he turned to the Methodist Societies in Wales 1763 and continued to work with his old friends and colleagues. Another interesting thing about him was that in 1768 the Countess of Huntingdon and he and others established a college for the training of preachers. It was established at Trevecca and a great building was put up in 1768. The founding of the College in 1769 was a great occasion, as were the anniversaries which were held every year. Whitefield preached at the opening, and in 1769 Whitefield, John Wesley, Rowland and others preached. All this went on until, quite exhausted, weary and tired, Harris died on July 21, 1773.

Out of all this came first the Calvinistic Methodist Society, and eventually a 'Connexion'. Harris and the others died as Churchmen. Their followers departed from the Anglican Church and held their own first ordination of ministers in 1811. Were there nothing else but the coming into being of the great Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, which played such a prominent part in the life of Wales in the 19th century, it would have been a wonderful story; but we know that in addition to that, Harris' ministry greatly added to the numbers of the Congregationalists and the Baptists. They benefited greatly from his ministry, and they are very ready to acknowledge that. Likewise his efforts here in London were a great means of encouragement to the saints. He recorded all these things in his diaries, and in them you get glimpses of men like John Cennick and many other of the subsidiary personalities in the great Evangelical Awakening, in addition to the Wesleys and Whitefield.

II

Those are the main facts in connection with this man. I want now to refer to what I call matters for special comment. I am going to select certain matters out of the life story of this man which, as I see things, are most relevant to our condition today. We do not have a merely antiquarian interest in these things; we are not academic historians; we are spiritual people - many of us are preachers, pastors, and others are leaders in Sunday School work and in other spheres. So we turn to history to derive some benefit, some help and some encouragement. We need it badly at a time such as this, for the state of affairs in Wales and in England today is almost identical with what it was before this great religious Revival of the 18th century. We are back in very much the same kind of situation. There are differences. I must not digress to mention them. I would say the main one is that they did not have to contend with the liberalism and modernism that we have known. It was rather a deadness. What was needed then was an awakening ministry. We are called upon to do something in addition to that.

What are these matters that deserve special comment? First, and foremost, the sovereignty of God! Professor Buick Knox, in his address in the General Assembly this year, uses the following phrase: referring to Harris he talks about the 'movement which he began'. What can one say about such a statement? It indicates a sheer lack of spiritual perception and understanding, and savours of 20th-century thinking and the starting of various movements. Howell Harris never started a movement. His story, as I have reminded you already, is one that can only be explained in terms of the sovereignty of

God. Here is this man going to a church rather reluctantly, and here is this strange announcement of a Communion Service; and he is immediately apprehended, arrested and convicted. That is what started the whole of this great story. Howell Harris did not start it. We must not think of him in terms of a man who starts a crusade or a movement. That is really to deny the essential message of this wonderful story. No, no! It is the sovereignty of God; and we see this not only in the story of Howell Harris, but also in the fact that at almost exactly the same time as God did this to Howell Harris, He was doing the same to Daniel Rowland. They had never heard of each other - long distance separated them from one another - but it happened at the same time; and we know that things were happening to George Whitefield at the same time. We know also that much the same was happening to Jonathan Edwards in America and others at the same time. What is this? The sovereignty of God! The sovereignty of God as regards time, place, persons!

If you have visited Trevecca you will know that it is still a hamlet; and if you had been asked to say where a great movement of revival is likely to start you might have been tempted to say St Paul's Cathedral, or somewhere else in London. But that is not what happens when God acts. It is often in a hamlet like Trevecca, some unknown place of which no one has ever heard; but that is the kind of place God chooses and the time and the persons - this poor schoolmaster and others of a similar type. Read the history of revivals and you will find that God has constantly repeated this kind of action - 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called'.

Another aspect of the sovereignty of God which I would emphasize is the way in which revival comes. The story of Howell Harris is one illustration of the fact that revival does not always come after a preliminary reformation. Revival sometimes follows reformation, but revival sometimes precedes reformation; and for us to lay it down that reformation must precede revival, and that doctrinal orthodoxy is essential to revival is simply to fly directly into the face of facts.

Secondly, what is revival? Revival is an outpouring of the Spirit of God. It is a kind of repetition of Pentecost. It is the Spirit descending upon people. This needs to be emphasized in this present age. For we have been told so much recently by some that every man at regeneration receives the baptism of the Spirit, and all he has to do after that is to surrender to what he has already. But revival does not come as a result of a man surrendering to what he already has; it is the Spirit being poured out upon him, descending upon him, as happened on the day of Pentecost.

That brings us to a third point, which is seen particularly clearly in the case of Howell Harris. We come, in other words, to that crucial experience, to which I have referred, which took place on June 18th 1735, when he was in the tower of the church at Llangasty. To me, this is the key to the understanding of Howell Harris, as it is the key to the understanding of Revival. I am amazed that both Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall and Professor Buick Knox make no reference to this at all. Others deal with it in a very cursory manner too - they just slip it in as one of the facts and one of the events - but as I have always understood this man's story, and as I still understand it more and more, you cannot explain him or understand him, or what happened through him, except in the light of this crucial experience of June 18th. Here let me recommend the little book published by the Banner of Truth a number of years back. It is called *The Early Life of Howell Harris* by Richard Bennett - in the original Welsh it is *The Dawn of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism*. Bennett gives an excellent account of this crucial experience. What was it? To me, there is only one expression to use. It was the expression used by these men themselves and by their successors. It was a baptism 'of fire' or a 'baptism of power'. What I would emphasize particularly is that Harris was already converted, had already received forgiveness of sins, and he knew that he had it, and had been dancing in joy. But it was now just over three weeks later that he received this crucial experience which turned him into a flaming evangelist. What was it? This is how he describes what happened as he was there sitting in the tower and reading and praying: 'Suddenly I felt my heart melting within me like wax before a fire, and love to God for my Saviour. I felt also not only love and peace, but a longing to die and to be with Christ. Then there came a cry into my soul within that I had never known before - Abba, Father! I could do nothing but call God my Father. I knew that I was His child, and He loved me and was listening to me. My mind was satisfied and I cried out, Now I am satisfied! Give me strength and I will follow Thee through water and fire'.

As Richard Bennett says, 'Doubtless the experience of forgiveness in Talgarth church was sweet. Yet it left a feeling of further need in his soul which he could not define. But when he was at secret prayer in Llangasty church, God now gave Himself to him. He was there cleansed from all his idols, and the love of God was shed abroad in his heart. Christ had come in previously, but now He began to sup with him; now he received the Spirit of adoption, teaching him to cry "Abba, Father," and with it a desire to depart and be with Christ. All his fears vanished for months and pure love took their place'.

That is the account of this crucial experience; and I emphasize that it was the crucial experience. I do so by showing how Harris keeps on referring to it. He never forgot it. It was the biggest and most momentous event in his life. If you read his diaries or extracts from them, you will find that when he comes to June 18th he generally refers to what happened to

him in Llangasty church. It is to this he points back rather than to what happened on Whit Sunday in the month of May. For instance, in 1739 he writes in his diary on this date, 'The love of God was shed in my heart four years ago to give myself to God'. Again in 1746, 'A day to me memorable. This day 11 years ago I was sealed to the day of redemption'. Again, 'Had a seal through reading Revelation 21: 7. Oh! sweet day. I had this before in Llangasty church of old, but through yielding to sin and carelessness and being curbed by almost-christians, and because it was not given through a Scriptural promise I fell again into doubts'. On June 29th, 1763 he seems a bit confused with his dates, but he writes, 'This day 28 years ago I was (when I did not seek it as I had never heard of it) sealed by the Spirit of adoption and feeling that I loved God with all my heart, that I was in God and He in me. I longed to be dissolved and to be with my own dear Father'.

Another very interesting reference in his diaries - not to his own experience but to an experience of a little maid - must be quoted in this connection. 'The Lord revealed Himself to her in an amazing manner for some hours, so that she was lost in His love that she knew not where she was. Sinking to nothing in the discovery of his majesty and glory in Jesus Christ her eternal portion, and by the uncommon earnestness the Spirit gave her to pray for the church, she thought an uncommon work on the earth. Many such instances of the outpouring of the Spirit have we among us'. If you read extracts from both his diaries you will find that this is his constant emphasis, this to him was the turning-point, the crucial event that made him an evangelist, it is essential to an understanding of Revival. We can further demonstrate this by showing that he had several repetitions of this refers to it, and reminds himself of it, or the date brings it back to him, he also had similar experiences. Richard referring to events in 1736 says, 'He speaks again and again of a spiritual feast which he enjoyed about this time on Grwyne Fechan mountain while returning home from Cwm Ian, for he seemed to see God so smiling upon him that his heart was near to bursting under the powerful influences of divine love. The place became a holy mountain for him ever afterwards.' Although his body was weak and aching, and though he could eat nothing, the realities of the spiritual world appeared so naked to his mind throughout the time, that his weak body was clothed with unparalleled power, so that his very appearance dispelled all opposition.

Another extract from his diary says, 'In private society till two in the morning like a drunken man. Could say nothing but glory, glory, for a long time. Who can write all the Lord did here?' In 1747, 'God came down as He used in Wales and our hearts did burn within us'. This was in London. He has a reference then to Lady Huntingdon, 'Hearing her declaring her sentiments of the new birth, and all she insists on from the bishops is the necessity of knowing forgiveness of sins and receiving the Holy Ghost'. May 1749, 'The Lord came, overpowering me with love like a mighty, torrent that I could not withstand or reason against or doubt'. There is always this distinction between receiving forgiveness of sins and receiving the Holy Ghost; in other words, the difference between what happened to him on Whit Sunday 1735 and what happened to him on June 18th in the same year.

This is the only explanation of this man. This is what created within him a compassion for the lost. This is what urged him to go out and to tell the people about their condition and do something about them. His concern for the lost and the perishing was the consuming passion of his soul. I would make this comment at this point. Is not that always the crucial test which we must apply to those who claim to have received the baptism of the Spirit? The crucial test is the concern for souls, compassion for the lost. That was the great characteristic of our Lord. He saw the people as 'sheep without a shepherd'. He 'had compassion upon them'; and the man who is filled with the Spirit in this way is like his Lord. His outstanding characteristic is his compassion for the lost; his concern for them was the test of 'the baptism of the Spirit'. It does not lead to an inward looking, self-indulgent, church movement that turns in on itself and spends its time reciting and even boasting at times of experiences. It always leads to this concern for others. There have been movements in the church claiming great things for themselves, as there are certain similar movements at this present time, but they have had to admit that the evangelistic concern has not been prominent among them. The baptism of or with the Spirit, however, shows itself primarily by giving its recipients a great evangelistic concern. That is not to deny the great value of experiences; but I would suggest in the light of this history that this deep concern for the lost is the most prominent and chief characteristic of such an experience.

Another matter that must be emphasized under this heading is that Harris always stressed the importance of new experiences, fresh experiences. He reprobated the kind of person who was always talking about an experience he had had many years before, but who never seemed to have had it again. Even in his 'dying testimony', as it is called, he says 'that we are not to speak of what we have had from the Lord, but what we have now afresh from Him'. This was of great concern to him. This great vital experience could be repeated, and if it was not being repeated, and people had to live on the memory of a first experience, he thought they were in a sad state, and he would reprimand them for that.

Under this same heading one cannot but refer to his spirituality. Howell Harris lived in the realm of the Spirit. He believed in direct leadings. He often would not act at all without such a direct leading. Some would criticize him on those grounds, and it may be that at times he did become what Nuttall describes as 'an enthusiast'. Indeed he was perhaps in danger, a

t times, of crossing the border into fanaticism; but the point is that he lived in close association with God, and was sensitive to the Holy Spirit's influences. If you read in his diaries his accounts of meetings when he had been preaching, and when others had been preaching, the expressions you keep on finding are these - 'The great gate came down when I shewed of our Saviour's infinite death'. 'The Lord came down in power'; 'I had great freedom and a strong gale came down when I shewed the greatness of salvation'. That was what he always sought and longed for. 'The Lord came down in power'. Another favourite term of his was 'the authority'. If he was not conscious of 'the authority' when he preached he was troubled, but when 'the authority' came all was well. This was what he longed for, and craved for, and what he believed was absolutely essential in connection with the preaching of the gospel.

III

I turn now to certain other Interesting Features in his Ministry, which are perhaps primarily of interest to preachers. First, his method of preaching. He referred to himself always as an exhorter. He was very sensitive on that point. He had intended originally to be a parson, a clergyman. But he was never ordained; the bishop of the diocese in which he lived would not ordain him; and he was very careful not to trespass upon the prerogatives and the privileges of ordained men. At the same time he was never slow to point out to them that he was 'in the field' before all the ordained men, and he did not hesitate to reprimand them when the occasion arose. He did so quite frequently. He reprimanded Daniel Rowland, he reprimanded George Whitefield, he reprimanded the Countess of Huntingdon, though he was not an ordained minister but only an exhorter. He felt that he had authority from God to deal with these people, and to tell them how they should conduct and comport themselves.

His method of preaching was most unusual. He described how he began to preach. We have seen that he at first began by going to visit the sick, and reading out of a book. Having done that for some time he began to add to what was in the book. He was really exhorting, preaching to them, but still kept looking at the book. This is how he describes the situation: 'All the people began by now to assemble by vast numbers so that the houses wherein we met could not contain them. The Word was attended with much power that many on the spot cried out to God for pardon of their sins. I took no particular texts but discoursed freely as the Lord gave me utterance. As to the subject of my discourse it was all given unto me in an extraordinary manner without the least premeditation, it was not the fruit of my memory, it was the effect of the immediate strong impulse felt in my soul. 'Tis the presence of the Spirit only that is my call to preach'. And again, 'In all my discourses, before the power comes I open the contexts'. He felt he was capable of himself of opening the context, and that is what he did until 'the power' came; but when 'the power' came he just allowed these words that were given to him to pour out. Here are some other statements which he makes in this connection. He says on one occasion, 'I attempted to speak without the divine commission and I was humbled'. Do we know anything about that? He writes again, 'Learning not to speak when not called; if I do, I shall do no good'. Then he says on another occasion, 'Because I still read, and no one took any notice of my gift of speech which I now exercised, they thought that everything was in the book, and that I prayed from the book, because I kept it before my eyes, seeing no harm in this at the time'. 'No preparation. Leaning wholly on God. Receiving such ability and blessing that I wondered where the words came from, so clear, so prolific, so appropriate. There for nearly nine hours till broad daylight. No weariness. How sweet everything is while He works with me. I feared that pride might rise in my heart, so extraordinary was the gift'. In other words he took these books with him, and read out of the books; but when he reached this point when the Spirit came, he began to speak to them directly. He was no longer reading, but he still looked at the book. Eventually he gave up the reading altogether and just spoke directly to the people. Richard Bennett says that, 'In 1737 his ministry became more scriptural than it was before. He preached more and more in the following months on Zacchaeus, Revelation 3:20, and portions of the last chapter of St Luke.' He still came to the people without any preparation, his head throbbing with pain, his voice hoarse, and he would pour out that which was given him at the time. It is true that he now divided the matter under headings, but he did not allow himself to be fettered by headings or anything else.

I ask a question at this point. Was not this what the New Testament calls prophesying? Was this not the prophesying that we read of in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14? I would venture the opinion that it is. This is a man delivering what is given to him. It is immediate inspiration and it pours out through him. It is not revelation, but inspiration.

I turn now to another interesting aspect of this man's life, namely his doctrinal development, or, if you prefer it, his development in the knowledge of doctrine. This is most important for many of us gathered in this Conference. Here are quotations from his diaries:

'For a time I endeavoured to convert myself and the people by reasoning, without looking upon it as the work of the Spirit. I fell into the error of exalting the power of man, arguing that all men could repent and turn. I knew but little concerning Christ, although I spoke much of Him, and was deeply conscious of Him in my heart. My inner teachings compelled late t

o confess that I could not do anything of myself; however, I spoke in this inconsistent manner for a long time. Although the Gospel was within me I was led by the principle of the Law, because I simply did not follow my inner teachings, but sermons, books, and my own carnal reason. For a short while Christ left me too, even as He did the Apostles of old. I hesitated when I understood that the carnally minded clergymen were pleased that I was calling Election the doctrine of the devil. When I denounced Election many who formerly hated me began to love me; but yet I continued to proclaim that man could turn himself: as otherwise my preaching was in vain'.

In other words there was a conflict between his head and his heart. To continue:

'Although experience always taught me that I could do nothing except it be given to me, yet I was a strong Arminian, and at Werns I debated with great zeal against those who held pre-destination. I withstood that doctrine for a long time, and all the people, and all the reasons in the world, could not bring my proud stubborn heart to embrace it. I was taught the doctrine of Election slowly, in stages. The seed of belief in it was sown when, quite early on, I became certain of the immutability of God. But the doctrine did not develop for some time after that, and I, because of the darkness of my understanding, denied it and opposed it, till it pleased God to instruct me further. Little by little my eyes were opened to know the mystery of the gospel. The Lord kept me from reading the mere letter of Scripture, from increasing merely in head knowledge. But as I grew inwardly I gradually came to see and to understand this verse and that. I received the gospel not from man, nor from a book, but from God. That which I experienced, proved, and felt and saw and heard of the Word of Life, that also I proclaim'.

He goes on to say that this change in his doctrine and in his understanding took place towards the end of 1736. Remember that the great experience had taken place in June 1735. He writes, 'About Christmas 1736 I began to think of Christ. Before, I had placed the emphasis on man's work. At Merthyr (Cynog) in 1737 I was first enlightened to see the doctrine of free grace, although my experience had shown me from the beginning that I could do nothing in my own power'. Then he adds, paying tribute to his great contemporary, 'Rowland was the means whereby I was brought to the knowledge of the truth about Christ. It was in that same year also, I think, that I came across a book called The Sincere Convert by Thomas Shepard which was used to turn me from duties and frames to depend only upon Christ'. Again he says, 'At Merthyr Church heard the doctrine of Free Grace being pressed home warmly, clearly and powerfully - so I had been under a cloud until this hour. I cried out, O Lord, let me hear this wholesome doctrine in every pulpit. Never before had I been so stripped of self. How thankful we should be for a good ministry'.

That is a brief account of his doctrinal development. At this point I would make a comment, and put it in the form of a question. Is there not a real danger of our becoming guilty of a very subtle form of Arminianism if we maintain that correct doctrine and understanding are essential to our being used by the Spirit of God? It is sheer Arminianism to insist upon a true and correct understanding as being essential. The case of the young Harris disproves this. For eighteen months he was used in this mighty manner while still not merely confused, but actually wrong in his doctrine. The same, of course, is true in the case of John Wesley. I remember speaking once in the Anniversary at the Central Hall, Westminster. I said that at I felt I was there to represent George Whitefield, and in discoursing a little on the difference between the theological standpoints of Whitefield and Wesley I made a remark which I repeat on this occasion. I said that John Wesley was to me the greatest proof of Calvinism. Why? Because in spite of his faulty thinking he was greatly used of God to preach the gospel and to convert souls! That is the ultimate proof of Calvinism - predestination and election. It certainly comes out quite clearly in the case of the young Howell Harris.

The next matter to which I would refer is in connection with the Societies which Harris and others formed, and as we were reminded so well by Dr Eifion Evans, these were primarily 'experience meetings'. Harris says that they were meant for people 'to read and to talk together about the state of their souls, to show the result of what they had learned by self-examination, and to ground the ignorant in the principles of religion. Let me emphasise and underline that in the innermost Societies there were full members who gave proof of 'having the witness of the Spirit in their hearts'. There were Christians who had not received that, but this was the first demand for admission to this innermost circle, that they had proof of the witness of the Spirit in their hearts. This was a point that was frequently emphasised by all these men.

I pass on next to his irenic spirit. I do not like to refer to it as an 'ecumenical' spirit. That word has such overtones at the present time that I doubt whether we should use it at all in connection with Harris. But as to his irenic spirit there is no question whatsoever. You cannot read his diaries, or the diaries of Whitefield and of Wesley concerning him, without being struck by this powerfully. This man, of all these men, was the one most concerned about unity amongst true Christian people; but to suggest, as Professor Buick Knox seems to do, that Howell Harris was the great precursor of the modern ecumenical movement is simply ridiculous. It is not difficult to imagine what he would have thought and said of so-called Christians who deny the deity of Christ, His atoning blood, and the Person of the Holy Spirit. But he was grieved at the divisions among those who held the true Faith and shared a common experience of 'life in the Spirit'. Thus we find him in 1742 in London saying, 'We should not espouse the names put on us to our shame - Presbyterians, Quakers, Church of E

England, Anabaptists, Methodists, etc. and espouse only the name given to us in the Scripture - Christians; for I am sure, infallibly sure, that it is God's will that all His followers should be as one as the Father and the Son are one'. I could adduce many similar quotations to demonstrate this point. Here is another most interesting quotation, 'I will not look on small things lest they should obstruct me in great things, as they do with so many'. That was his constant rule. He was constantly troubled by the question of whether he should stay in the Church of England, or whether he should leave that Church and join the Nonconformists. He went through agonies concerning this matter and especially in the early years. In his diaries there are constant references to this.

But he did remain in the Church of England. Why did he do so? It seems to me that there are a number of reasons. One was certainly his great humility. He was a curious man in whom there was a combination of a strange humility - almost of morbid introspection at times and a timorousness and a self-abnegation, but, on the other hand, he could roar like a lion, rebuke great people and be afraid of no-one. But he was essentially a humble man. His upbringing had been in the Anglican Church. His great experience had been in connection with such churches; and this always influenced him. Then there was the influence of that great man Griffith Jones of Llanddowror, who started the circulating schools and who was a kind of 'morning-star' of the great Revival. Harris trembled to go against the advice of such a man. He was also greatly influenced - and I would say this was the overriding consideration - by the evangelistic need and opportunity among the Anglicans. The national Church was then the Church of the people, and everyone was supposed to be a member of it. If people ever went anywhere they went there, particularly on special occasions such as christenings, weddings, and burials. Harris saw in that a great evangelistic need and opportunity. He felt that the Nonconformists had the Truth, but here were these masses of people in utter ignorance; and he trembled to do anything which might militate against this evangelistic opportunity. He felt that if he left the Church of England those people would no longer listen to him. They would say that he had become a Dissenter. Thus he would be shutting the door of evangelism in his own face. It seems quite clear to me that this was the overriding consideration. It led to many difficulties, but I would put that as the chief argument that constantly prevailed with him.

Again, he could see very clearly that neither the Church of England nor the Nonconformists, the Dissenters, could nurture the converted that had come into being as a result of his great evangelistic ministry. So, as neither could deal with these people, why not stay in the Anglican Church and form the societies and go on in that way? But let us not forget that the state of the Nonconformists at that time was not a very spiritual one. The story of the Nonconformists in the early part of the 18th century in Wales, as indeed in England, was one of doctrinal disputations. They were learned men, they were able men, and they were well versed in doctrine; but they spent most of their time in arguments and disputations with one another. Furthermore, many of them were hyper-Calvinists. There is no doubt at all in my mind that Harris was held back from accepting the doctrines of election and predestination very largely by the hyper-Calvinism of some of the Dissenters. That has often hindered people from accepting the doctrines of grace. As a result of these various considerations Howell Harris remained in the Church of England for the whole of his life.

IV

I close with certain remarks concerning his end, in June and July 1773 - 200 years ago. During those last days he wrote a great deal. Let me give a few quotations which show how this man faced the end of his earthly journey. He writes:

'My spirit is like one at the door waiting to be called in. I could have no access to ask for anything but that I may go home, and that he would make haste and make no long tarry. Oh, Thou who didst bleed to death, and who art alive, come and take me home; and as for the passage, I have committed that to Thee to take care of me. I am Thine here and for ever. I am one of Thy redeemed, the fruit of Thy blood and sweat, and Thy will is my heaven. I feel my spirit continually, as it were, from home, and that I am one of the Lamb's company and belong to Him and cannot be long from Him. My spirit cries, Lord, Thou canst not be God and not pity and love me, because Thou hast given me what Thou hast promised in pity to a poor, broken penitent and humble spirit, and also faith to lay hold of Thy righteousness and blood. Oh Lord, Thou canst not leave me long here, Thou must pity and call me home, for I am a stranger here. I love the glorified spirits and I long to be among them because they behold His glory and because they have no guile, nor deceit, nor sin, nor strange goods, nor any other corruption; no wisdom, no righteousness but only in the Lamb'.
He writes again;

'My dear Saviour did shine upon me so sweetly this afternoon. Oh let me eat no more the bread that perisheth, but be Thou to me from henceforth bread and food for ever.' 'I feel my Spirit' he writes again, 'leaving all places and men here below and going to my Father and to my native country, home, yea my own home, and though I am here below in His kingdom yet whilst I wait to be called home my longings and cries are insatiable indeed, and when the Lord of Glory answers me that I shall soon go to Him my spirit does so burn with love to that dear Saviour that I flee to Him and can take no de

nial. I cannot stay here, and though I am but a bit of dust and nothing before Thee, yet, O Father, may I without offending ask Thee one special favour. Oh Saviour, give me leave, though a worm, to ask without offending that my time be shortened. Oh my dear Lord, I must love Thee and weep at Thy feet and wrestle with Thee till Thou appearest unto me. This is Thy lower house and Thou art gone before me and therefore I must come. Thou canst not leave me long. Thou art both here and there, also my Heaven. 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 by the same rule that each of these is dear to others. He must be dear to me, 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 liberty, an heir for the full possession of his estate, so in all these respects I cannot help longing to go home.'

Very often, according to his first biographers, he joyfully repeated these words, 'Glory be to God. Death hath no sting'. And again he broke out as one full of faith and assurance, 'it is more clear to me that God is my everlasting Father and that I shall go to Him soon'. He over and over again expressed how exceeding dear and precious the Saviour was to him. 'This is following Jesus; we are come to Mount Zion. I saw a great glory before in that God-Man Jesus, but nothing to what I now behold in Him'. That is how he triumphantly and gloriously faced the end.

I cannot refrain from quoting the brief account of his funeral written by the Countess of Huntingdon. 'On the day Mr Harris was interred we had some special seasons of Divine influence both upon converted and unconverted. It was a day never to be forgotten, but I think ought to be remembered with holy wonder and gratitude by all who were present. No fewer than 20,000 people were the assembly on this solemn occasion We had 3 stages erected and 9 sermons addressed to the vast multitudes, hundreds of whom were dissolved in tears Though we had enjoyed much of the gracious presence of God in our assemblies before, yet I think I never saw so much at any time as on that day; especially when the Lord's Supper was administered, God poured out His Spirit in a wonderful manner. Many old Christians told me they had never seen so much of the glory of the Lord and the riches of His grace, nor felt so much of the gospel before'.

That is what happens, you see, even in the funeral of such a man. In the same way, on the day that Daniel Rowland died in Llangethro a revival broke out. The news of the death of these men could lead to revival. Here are the last words in the Countess' account: 'When the long and mournful procession arrived at the Parish Church at Talgarth, the service was to have been conducted according to the rites of the Church of England. But amidst the sorrow and tears of the audience that thronged the building an interruption took place. The officiating clergyman, being unable to proceed on account of his emotion, handed the Prayer Book to another - that does not often happen - but the second clergyman also lost self-control and passed the book to a third, when he again by reason of the same cause was unable to go on; and thus in silence were the remains of the great man laid to rest in the chancel in the Parish Church at Talgarth, and in the same grave in which his wife had been buried a few years before'.

I close by asking a series of questions in the light of all this. How many churches do you know of today in which experience meetings of the type held by Howell Harris and others could be conducted? Secondly, are we aware of the rich possibilities in this life for the Christian believer, especially in the matter of direct dealings with God? Does our doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and His work, leave any room for revival either in the individual or in the church; or is it a doctrine which says that we have all received everything we can have of the Spirit at regeneration, and all we need is to surrender to what we have already? Does our doctrine allow for an outpouring of the Spirit - 'the gale' of the Spirit coming upon us individually and collectively? Do we recognize and acknowledge that in the sovereignty of God an Arminian may be 'filled with the Spirit' and greatly used by God in the salvation of souls, and the edification of the church? It is an inevitable question.

Is not the greatest sin among Evangelical people today that of 'quenching the Spirit'? Do we regard the exhortation of the Apostle in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, as being applicable only to the church in the time of the Apostles? Do we recognise that this is our greatest sin, or do we satisfy ourselves, and pacify our hearts and consciences, by saying that that only applied to the early church and the Apostolic era? Is not our greatest need today an outpouring of the Spirit of God individually, as well as upon the churches in a more collective sense? We are again in a condition of darkness and of deadness so similar to that of the early years of the 18th century. What produced the change then? The outpouring of the Spirit of God! Is this not our greatest need? We are not simply to exhort people to surrender to what they have already, but rather to pray that God would shed forth His Spirit again as he did on the day of Pentecost, as He has done repeatedly in the great Revivals in the history of the church, and as He did, not least, on Howell Harris on June 18th 1735.