

Reformation and Revival

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** The following article is offered with the hope that it will stimulate discussion on a matter which Christians should seriously consider – reformation and revival. It is not meant to read like an academic thesis but rather is meant to engage and help the reader to become familiar with certain key contours and writers who touch on various viewpoints relating to the theme of revival. We hope to continue this theme in 2009 with an article on Andrew Murray.*

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Editor

Introduction: Calvinists around the world differ about revival and reformation

Amongst committed Calvinists there are strongly opposed viewpoints concerning revival. Many Calvinists from Dutch Calvinistic backgrounds reject any idea of revival as un-Calvinistic and contradictory to reformation.

A typical exponent of this viewpoint was L. Praamsma of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He writes about the phenomenon that in times when the church degenerates into formalism and institutionalism, when there is a lack of love, zeal and discipline and the church loses its biblical character, many concerned Christians call for prayer for revival and renewal. Praamsma clearly rejects this approach and concludes, “To my mind not revival but reformation is needed in such a case” (Praamsma 1973:15, my translation, P.J.B).

In the same way, P.W. Buys of Potchefstroom in a publication on Methodism clearly pronounces a categorical rejection of a concern for revival. He states, “The way of awakenings and revivals is not the way of Reformed Christians, it is the way of methodism” (PU for CHE n.d. 48, my translation, P.J.B.).

Contradictory to this, some very loyal Calvinists hold the opinion that it is impossible for a Calvinist not to have a call for revival. The well-known Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “Then in turn, as I have been trying to say, true Calvinism is bound to emphasize the element of revival.... The true Calvinist is concerned about revival. Why? Because he is concerned about the glory of God” (Lloyd-Jones 2005:123, 124).

Lloyd-Jones even said, “If you are really burdened by the times in which we live, if you are really grieving in your heart as you see the godlessness of the world, if you have a compassion in your hearts for men and women in the bondage of sin and of Satan, your first duty is to pray for revival” (Lloyd-Jones 1982:81).

Another Calvinist known throughout the world, Dr. Francis Schaeffer, put it this way:

The church in our generation needs reformation, revival and constructive revolution.

At times men think of the two words reformation and revival as standing in contrast one to the other, but this is a mistake. Both words are related to the word restore.

Reformation refers to a restoration to pure doctrine; revival refers to a restoration in the Christian’s life. Reformation speaks of a return to the teachings of Scripture; revival speaks of a life brought into its proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.

The great moment of church history will have come when these two restorations have simultaneously come into action, so that the church has returned to pure doctrine and the lives of the Christians in the church have known the power of the Holy Spirit. **There cannot be true revival unless there has been reformation; and reformation is not complete without revival.** (emphasis mine)

Such a combination of reformation and revival would be revolutionary in our day – revolutionary in our individual lives as Christians, revolutionary not only in reference to the liberal church but constructively revolutionary in the evangelical, orthodox church as well.

May we be those who know the reality of both reformation and revival, so that this poor dark world may have an

exhibition of a portion of the church returned to both pure doctrine and Spirit-filled life” (Schaeffer 1970:9).

Abraham Kuyper published a book in 1883 with the title *Van de Refomatie der kerken* (*On the Reformation of the church*). In this book there is also a chapter on “Reformation through revival”. Although he was concerned about the dangers of pseudo-revival and pointed out the bad fruit of some revivals, he was clearly convinced that sometimes there is a need for awakenings and revivals of religion in the church.

Revival, according to Kuyper, is “... the wonderful times that God visits his people; with revelations, influences and workings of his Holy Spirit, going out with more power to the souls of his people than they have been used to for quite a while in the past” (Kuyper 1883:123) (my translation from his Dutch).

W. Stanford Reid (1913-1996), a very committed Calvinist and history professor in Canada, was of the opinion that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was the greatest revival since Pentecost. At the heart of the Reformation, according to him, was a dynamic spiritual force without which it could have accomplished nothing, so that the essence of the movement was a true Christian revival. The church was revived, and this happened not only in one or two places but over half of Europe was affected. Between 1517 and 1564, it had gained hundreds of thousands of adherents, practically turning the whole of Christendom upside down (Reid 1965:15-16).

In this regard, Dr. John R. de Witt (1982) former professor of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi, also said:

It is not so easy to analyze the Reformation of the sixteenth century with respect to its peculiar identity: Was the Reformation a reformation or was it a revival or was it both? Surely the answer to that question, on reflection, must be that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was both!

It was a reformation, in the sense that the church was brought back to the Scriptures. The church, the theology was brought back to the Scriptures. It was a bringing back of the church and of the faith of the church to the wellsprings. As Zwingli used to cry out, “*Ad fontes!*” Back to the fountains, back to the wellsprings of Holy Scriptures.

But the Reformation was also a revival; in that the church was spiritually quickened and in that great numbers of people were brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The

gospel spread like wildfire across the face of Europe and tremendous impact upon the church was perceptible as the word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit brought through preaching wrought those great transformations.

Another well-known Reformed theologian, Prof. Klaas Runia (1926-2006), once the moderator of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, thought along the same lines. In 1968 he wrote an excellent booklet entitled *Reformation Today*, in which he made the following statement, "I know groups in Australia that have been praying for revival for many years. We can only be grateful for this. Revival is indeed necessary" (Runia 1968:45).

He was also of the opinion that reformation and revival belong together. "They are the two sides of one reality. Just as there are two aspects in the church, the organizational-visible and the spiritual-visible, so there are also two aspects in the renewal of the church, revival and reformation. There is no contradiction between the two, they constitute an inseparable unity" (p. 45). Therefore Runia concludes:

This is what we need today. Yes, we need revival. We all should pray; "*Veni, Creator Spiritus!* Come, Creator Spirit". But this revival also needs ecclesiological form and structure; otherwise it will soon come to a dead end... The church also needs a reforming that will not only give new enthusiasm and understanding to the church, but also, through the church's witness and testimony in every sphere of life, bring about a revolutionary reforming of individual social life. This will come only when the church returns to its Reformation foundation and builds once again on the doctrines set forth and applied by the Reformers.

Many other well known Reformed theologians of the past and the present around the world have acknowledged the reality of the phenomenon of revivals and have urged Christians to long and pray for them.

The Puritans and the Reformed theologians of Scotland and Wales especially have published quite a lot about revival and the history of it. Iain Murray (b. 1931), has published a book, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*, in which he has given clear evidence of the concern many professing Calvinists of

England, Scotland and Wales of the past have had about revival (Murray 1975).

In this paper I do not intend to give an account of all the viewpoints of the many Reformed theologians around the world who are in favour of or strongly opposed to revival. Rather, I am going to go to the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments to examine the whole issue of revival and to try to draw a few theological principles concerning revival and reformation. I will then draw some practical implications for the life of the church and the individual Christian in society.

Biblical guidelines concerning revival in the Old Testament

The word “revive” comes from the Hebrew verb “*gajah*” (to live). In the intensive form it has the meaning of “making alive” or “to revive”. When this word is used in a physical sense, it is not only used when someone actually dies and is resurrected from the dead but also when someone has become very weak because of several different causes and is then revived. When someone has become so weak that he almost dies and his strength is restored so that he can function optimally again, it is said that he has been revived. In this way the word “*gajah*” is used in a physical sense in Genesis 45:27 to describe the restoration of Jacob from a depressed, psychosomatic condition after he almost died of his grief over his son Joseph, whom he thought had died. One of the well-known Dutch Old Testament commentaries puts it this way, “His heart had become cold as ice, until his sons informed him about Joseph and showed the wagons Joseph had sent to take them to Egypt. Then he was revived...” (Aalders 1963:157, my translation from the Dutch). In the King James Version this verse reads, “... and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived”.

The use of the word “*gajah*” in Judges 15:19 is also a striking example of how this word can be used to describe the restoration of someone who has almost died. We read how Samson almost died of thirst after he had killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass and then prayed to God for water. God then cleaved a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water from it. Then we read that, after Samson had drunk, “his spirit came again, and he revived...”. In this way the word “*gajah*” is quite often used in the Old Testament to describe a process of healing (1 Kgs 17:22; 2 Kgs 8:8-10; Isa.38:1, 9). These few references make it quite clear that the word “*gajah*” is often used in the physical sense of a restoration of life, a revival out of a

sunken physical condition. When this word is applied to the relationship between God and His people, it describes a process by which God in His sovereign grace works in the heart of His people to bring a renewal in their relationship to Him so that they love and serve Him with a willing heart and spirit.

One of the most striking examples of how this word is used can be seen in Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy: I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” In this verse the sovereignty of God is very clear.

One of the German Old Testament scholars, Claus Westermann (b. 1909) (1966:261) rightly comments, “... *der jetzt zu Israel spricht, ist der Gott, der sich aus seiner Hohe zu den Gebeugten und Geschlagenen herabneigt.*” (He who is now speaking to Israel is God who is bending down from his highness to the meek and lowly.) Those of “a contrite and humble spirit” are they who are in great need, under the punishing hand of God and under conviction of their sins before the great and holy God. They receive the promise that the living God will revive them.

Ridderbos (1953:203) comments on this verse that the humble and contrite are those that are bruised and faint especially in their inner being because the promise is that their hearts will be revived. The relevance of this verse for a restoration of the relationship between God and His people (His church) has become clear to me when I have read the title that Werner Kessler (1967:34) gave this portion of Scripture in his commentary, “Der Weg zu einer neuen Gemeinde” (The way to a new church).

Out of the exposition of this portion of this passage, four important principles concerning revival may be derived:

- 1) Revival is not the fruit of human effort and maneuvers, but a sovereign act of power of a holy and merciful God, Who revives His people in the depths of their inner being because He has forgiven their sins (cf. verse 16) and restores peace with them (cf. verse 19).
- 2) Revival goes together with true humbling and repentance.
- 3) Revival is an inner healing and renewal of God’s people. It is like a collective conversion.
- 4) Revival also goes together with joy and praises to God (cf. verse 19).

Life and death in the history of God's people

If we look at the history of God's people in the Old Testament, it becomes very clear that the following happens time and again: God's people sin against Him and evoke His anger and punishment; but after a while and in His own due time, God restores the relationship with them through a general conversion. This general conversion is described many times as a resurrection from death or as a revival.

One of the clearest examples of this use of the illustration of a resurrection to describe a general conversion and restoration of God's people can be found in Ezekiel 37:1-14, the valley of the dry bones. Here again God's people in their sins in exile are looked upon as though they were dead. And then God in His power and mercy raises them from death to life and fills them with His Spirit. They become an exceeding great army who, according to verse 13, acknowledge that Yahweh is Lord.

The history of God's people reveals that God continues with His people and establishes His Kingdom, although they time and again turn their backs on Him and sin to perdition so that they almost die in their sins. The way that God establishes His Kingdom is to bring His people to life from this condition of deadness in their sins.

John Calvin once said, "The main thing is that we must not despair, although the church sometimes does not differ from a dying or at least a mutilated man, because time and again God resurrects those that belong to Him in the same way He resurrects a dead man from his grave. We must see this, very clearly, because when the church doesn't shine as a light we oftentimes think that it has been quenched completely and has perished. But in this way (by successive resurrections) God preserves His church from the world. That is why the preservation of the church goes together with many wonders. We shall hold to this; the church does not live without resurrection, yes not even without many resurrections, so to speak." (Quotation from Van't Spijker, *Eenheid in verscheidenheid*, my translation from the Dutch).

The fact that God's people during the course of Old Testament history firmly believed in this kind of revival may be seen in the many prayers for revival, when they came to realize that they were dying in their sins. Look at the prayer of Psalm 85:4-6, "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

Look at many of the prayers of the prophets. See Habakkuk 3:2, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work

in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember thy mercy.” Look at the faith of the prophet Hosea in God’s mercy to revive His returning people.

And see Hosea 6:1 2 “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”

God’s people in the Old Testament believed in revival. They often prayed very sincerely for revival. They knew that they could do nothing to revive themselves. They could only pray fervently and cast themselves on the mercy of a holy and omnipotent God. They claimed the promises of His eternal covenant, confessed their sins and humbly implored His forgiveness and healing power in their lives.

Biblical principles concerning revival according to the New Testament

In the New Testament the word “revival” or “revive” is not used very often. In Luke 15:24, the parable of the lost son, his conversion is described in this way: he was dead and has been revived. The NEB translates this, “He... has come back to life again.”

The principle, though, that the whole church as the people of God can sin and then to a certain extent lose the blessings of God is found clearly in the New Testament. This condition of the church is called “deadness”, although the church still exists and possesses the Holy Spirit.

The church at Sardis, according to Revelation 3:1, had to hear the clear message from Jesus Christ Himself, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” They are then called upon to wake up and to put some strength into what is left. From the whole message to Sardis it is clear that this was a respectable, middle-of-the-road, peaceful church. But its peace was like that of a cemetery. The members of this church were merely going through the motions of religion. They were no doubt regular in their attendance at worship. According to man’s perspective everything was fine, but when God looked into the hearts of these people, He saw that they were nearly dead. They were the ones of whom Paul spoke, that they are “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Tim. 3:5). Their religion was empty, hollow formalism, because it is said that their works had not been found “full” (Greek: *πεπληρωμενα*) before God.

It is remarkable that this church was reminded that Jesus Christ holds the seven Spirits of God. They needed to be filled with the holy power of the Holy Spirit. They needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit again.

In the message to the church of Laodicea it becomes clear that a church of Jesus Christ can also become lukewarm. Because they were not really hot, they saw no need to go out of their way to serve Christ; and because they were not really cold, they felt no need for conversion. That is why Jesus wanted to spit (literally “vomit”) them out of his mouth!

In this message it is remarkable that they had an attitude of self-sufficiency. “How rich we are! And how well have we done! We have everything we want in the world” was their creed. They were exactly the opposite of those who are of a contrite and humble spirit (of Isa. 57:15) and who received the promise that they would be revived. They did not know that they were poor and blind and naked. They were suffering from spiritual insensitivity. They were ignorant of their condition before God because they were swollen with pride. They had no zeal for Christ and his Kingdom. Therefore they are called on to repent and become zealous again.

In his chapter on revival, Kuyper (1883:121) rightly also referred to Revelation 3 to emphasize the fact that the church of Jesus Christ can become fruitless, formalistic, with an empty pretence, although they do hold to pure doctrine in a formal way.

How does this happen? How is it possible that this can happen in a church that holds to pure doctrine? Has the Holy Spirit departed from them?

Ebb and flow in the work of the Holy Spirit

It is clear from the whole New Testament that the Holy Spirit never leaves the true church of Jesus Christ completely. Jesus Himself promises His church that He, through His Spirit, will be with them to the end of time (John 14:16, Matt. 28:19, 1 Pet. 4:14).

Many theologians hold the opinion that a revival is a repetition of Pentecost. On Pentecost the church was baptized with the Holy Spirit; the Spirit was poured out on the church on that day. These theologians believe that we must pray for the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit again. This seems wrong to me. The Greek word “ἐκχέω” used concerning the Holy Spirit is used only with reference to the great day of Pentecost. John R. W. Stott, in his excellent study *Baptism and Fullness: the Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, rightly states:

In the first place, it (Pentecost) was the last event of the saving career of Jesus, the long-promised outpouring of the Spirit consequent upon his death, resurrection and ascension. As such it completed the inauguration of the new or Messianic age, the age of the Spirit. In itself it is unrepeatable, as unrepeatable as the Saviour's death, resurrection and ascension which preceded it (Stott, 1983:29; see also Floor 1979:63).

However, we do read that the church was **filled with the Holy Spirit more than once**. The same people who were gathered together on the day of Pentecost and were filled with the Holy Spirit were filled again, according to Acts 4:31 and 13:52. Stott (1983:48) puts it this way:

The fullness of the Spirit in Acts 2:4 was the consequence of the baptism of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is not repeatable and cannot be lost, but the filling can be repeated and in any case needs to be maintained. If it is not maintained, it is lost. If it is lost, it can be recovered. The Holy Spirit is "grieved" by sin (Eph. 4:30) and ceases to fill the sinner. Repentance is then the only road to recovery. Even in cases where there is no suggestion that the fullness has been forfeited through sin, we still read of people being filled again, as a fresh crisis or challenge demands a fresh empowering by the Spirit.

A condition of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church may come as a result of the sin of God's people that has grieved and quenched the Spirit. It may also come as a revelation of the sovereignty of God, Who according to His will for a period of time does not produce all the fruit and blessings of growth and prosperity of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Grieving and quenching the Spirit

We read of grieving the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4:30, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Out of a semantic discourse analysis of the whole passage (vs. 25-32), it becomes quite clear that grieving the Spirit refers to all the sins mentioned from verses 25 to 32; namely lying, fighting, stealing, swearing, bitterness and wrath, and not forgiving one's fellow

believers. The whole chapter refers to the unity amongst God's people and how it should be maintained. Disunity, and anything that causes it, grieve the Holy Spirit. Looking at verse 24, it becomes clear that our failure to pursue righteousness and holiness is the main cause for these sins mentioned here that are grieving the Spirit.

When we fail to realize that Paul had Isaiah 63:10 in mind when he spoke about grieving the Holy Spirit, we shall not understand what the relevance of this teaching is for revival. Isaiah 63 makes it clear that grieving the Holy Spirit also has corporate or collective implications. When individuals grieve the Spirit by their sins, then God turns his face from His whole church and they will miss His spiritual blessings. A condition of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit then comes into being in the church. His people who are concerned about such a condition then cry out, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?" (Isa. 63:15)

It is not that God leaves His church completely and departs from it, because that can never happen. But it is a matter of experiencing the rod of God in the impotence of God's people against their enemies. J. I. Packer (1984:256), in his book *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, says, "The cry for revival springs from the sense of judgment (see Ps. 79:4-9; 80:12-14; 85:4-7; Hab. 3:2) and the coming of revival is God comforting his people after judgment." That is why revival always implies a quickening of consciences, a realizing of sins, and a plea for mercy – all in all, an unusual awareness of God in His holiness and love.

The change in this condition of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit to a situation of flow again is therefore entirely a work of grace, for it comes to people that merit only judgment. God brings it about in such a way as to show that His grace is decisive in it. Packer (1984:257) says in this regard, "Repentance on the part of Christians is regularly a harbinger of revival from one standpoint, and a real start of it from another."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19 we read, "Quench not the Spirit." This exhortation is flanked on the one side by exhortations to follow the good and to rejoice, pray and give thanks at all times, and on the other hand by warnings against disregard for "prophesying" (meaning God's word), against failure to discriminate and against evil involvements (Packer 1984:252). Heedlessness of these exhortations and warnings is likely to quench the Spirit both in personal and in corporate life.

Quenching the Spirit means to smother the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives by the ashes of our own sinful ideas and structures. It implies

a suppression of the operations of the Spirit in the congregation (Lang, in Kittel 1971:168).

Packer (1984:253) makes an important statement in this regard about the sovereignty of God in the restoration of this condition. He calls our attention to the fact that a dead fire cannot be made to burn again simply by stopping to quench it. It has to be lighted afresh. Similarly, it is beyond our power to undo the damnation that we have done when we have quenched the Holy Spirit. We can only cry to God in penitence, asking that He will revive His work.

The sovereignty of God in periods of ebb and flow in the working of His Spirit

There are indications in the Bible that a condition of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit is not always a revelation of God's judgment on His church, but sometimes a revelation of God's judgment on the unbelieving world. It is as if God sometimes takes away the salt that preserves society from complete corruption and gives up the unbelieving world to their uncleanness and vile affections and gives them over to their reprobate minds.

Something of this is described in Revelation 11. The two lamp stands and the two olive trees that symbolize the true church are taken away after they have finished their testimony. It is said that they died. The church is sometimes like these dead bodies lying in the streets of the godless world, which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, for a period of time that God had ordained. The world then rejoices and makes merry and unusual and unlimited outgrowth of evil and corruption and unrighteousness can be seen (Hendriksen 1952:131). It is important to note that in this case these things do not happen as a result of the sin of the church, but as God's condemnation and judgment of the unbelieving, sinful world.

And then, after this God-ordained period of time, God revives His church from the dead. In the words of Ezekiel 37:9-10, we read in Revelation 11:11, "And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them."

This is a description of the last great revival that is sure to come in God's true church around the world. It will be of such an extent that a great fear will fall upon the people outside the church because of the things that happen in the church. The glory of God and the power of His Holy Spirit will be seen; and, as happened many times in the days

of the book of Acts, great fear will come upon many who hear these things (Acts 5:11).

In concluding this section on the ebb and flow in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church, I want to use an illustration: the work of the Holy Spirit in recreating the world can be compared with the incoming tide of the sea. If you stand on the beach, observing the incoming tide, you will notice some waves that wash out very far on the sand, but then pull far back again, so that it might look as if on the whole the tide is not progressing at all. If you stay for a few hours though, you will observe that every now and then there are huge breakers that wash out further than the previous large breakers, so that on the whole there is progress. In this way the various genuine revivals during the course of history between Pentecost and the Second Advent of Christ are the various large waves in the coming of the Kingdom.

Characteristic marks of a time of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit

When we study church history in the light of the biblical teaching about the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, we can discern clearly some characteristic marks of a time of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In this paper it is impossible to deal with one specific period of church history in one specific place. I can only refer to some historical facts to illustrate the reality of the different characteristic marks of ebb in the Holy Spirit's work in the church as I deal with the different marks.

A lack of assurance of salvation

According to Romans 8:16, the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is, amongst others things, to give us a joyful assurance of salvation. He joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children; and if children, then heirs. When we find a lot of Christians in the church with a lack of a scripturally based full assurance of salvation, it is a sure sign of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church.

The clearest example of the detrimental influence of a lack of assurance of salvation among church people in the life of the church can be seen in the church of the Middle Ages before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Many of the leaders of the Reformation, especially Luther, actually started to realize the need for reformation in the church only after they had received a joyful, personal assurance of salvation. Luther's discovery that he was justified through faith by grace alone and that he was a possessor of eternal salvation not only

triggered many of his other insights concerning the practice of a biblical church but also continued to be one of the central themes of his whole theology.

J. Burns, in his thorough study *Revivals: Their Laws and Leaders* (1960:66), also notes this sign of ebb when he says, “Men in the pew even though they do not consciously realize it, are yet unconsciously affected by the absence of the note of certainty....”

Superficial sense of guilt before God

When church-going people do not have a profound and deep sense of the ugliness of their own sins before God, when there is no reverence before the justice and holiness of God, it is another sure sign of a time of ebb.

In such times people tend to think about God in the same way they think about Father Christmas. He is a kind of sweet old grandfather who smiles when his little grandchildren sin and keeps on bestowing gifts on them.

Though men may sing in times of ebb, “Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!”, there is no sense of trembling before the awesome holiness of God (Martin, 1980). The fruit of this superficial sense of guilt is always an increase in the moral decay of a society, even amongst church-going people. It is as if the work of the Holy Spirit, Who according to John 16:8 convicts us of wrong, cannot be seen.

Many times during the course of history the extent of immorality was severe and heinous just before a revival. For instance, it can be clearly shown in the state of moral decay in England just before the revival of the 1730s took place. Historians say of that period, “England was corrupt to the core!”

Presumptiveness

In addition to my first point, namely a lack of a scriptural-based assurance of salvation, many people that do have a kind of “assurance of salvation” in times of ebb have a false assurance, based on all kinds of unbiblical presumptions.

In this regard we can think of sacramentalism, the idea that some kind of religious ritual *ipso facto* places a person in a right relationship with God. Whether it is the water or the wafer, whenever men have begun to assume that because they have had the water of baptism placed on them or have been plunged beneath the waters, or because they have had the wafer, they are saved, this surely leads to spiritual deadness in the church (Martin, 1980).

We can also refer to the doctrine of presumptive regeneration in this regard. John Owen, the well-known Puritan, once said, "One of the great undoing and damning religious errors that has destroyed more souls of more people in more churches than any others is for men to think that they are prepared for heaven while they are strangers to the new birth." This is flatly to contradict our Lord's teaching in the third chapter of John, "Except a man be born again, he cannot perceive the kingdom of God" (quoted by Martin, 1980).

One of the best examples of this "prophecy" of Owen can be seen in the terrible state of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (G.K.N.), which officially accepted the doctrine of presumptive regeneration in the 1940s. Not only is this denomination declining rapidly, but they have decided to accept marriages between homosexuals, have some practicing homosexuals as pastors and elders, and have taken official decisions concerning the authority of Scriptures that in fact deny the reality that the Bible is God's revelation to us.

From this it can also be seen how one error leads to another and one characteristic mark of ebb can produce others. It is remarkable and ironic that Berkouwer, a former dogmatician of this same denomination, in an excellent study on the sacraments, has shown that the true meaning of the sacraments can only be appropriated in faith through the work of the Holy Spirit (Berkouwer 1954; 66-110).

Formalism

In close connection with sacramentalism, we can also mention formalism as a characteristic mark of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Albert Martin defines formalism as the idea that some people have that, "If I am only in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing, in the right way, in the presence of the right man, then I must be right with God."

I can also fully agree with J. Burns (1960; 48) when he says that it is a sure sign of spiritual decay in history when worship becomes formal, when the priesthood exalts the ritual until the spirit is crushed, and when religion is represented, not as a response of the soul to God, but as a rigid performance of outward observances and ceremonies.

According to John 4:23, we should worship the Father in spirit and in truth. When this does not happen, it is a sign of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Formalism can also be observed when acts and decisions of a church rest solely on synodical decisions of the past, on traditions, on church policy and church order without prayerful searching of the

Scriptures and humbly confessing time and again, “In thy light we see light.” This kind of formalism is the most severe quenching of the Holy Spirit because God’s prophecy is despised (1 Thess. 5:18).

Denominationalism

Denominationalism is the idea that everything of my denomination is correct and everything of other denominations is wrong. When someone’s orthodoxy is judged solely by his denominational ties without testing his teachings in the light of the Bible, the same attitude of the unconverted Samaritan woman at the well is displayed. She responded to the presentation of the gospel by our Lord and Saviour by comparing the worshipping manners of her Samaritan fathers to that of the Jews. She tried to start a discussion on “which is the right denomination?”

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of unity. Whenever Christians are not humbly praying for and working towards uniting true Christians, it is not only a mark of ebb, but also a continuation of grieving of the Spirit.

I find it very sad that the devil can mislead people to grieve the Spirit and then make them think that they are actually pleasing the Spirit. To my mind, the only justifiable reason to leave a denomination is when it has become completely impossible to believe and live according to the clear teachings of God’s Word within it. Until this happens, one should stay in one’s denomination and pray for revival and work for reformation, even though one might experience difficult times where God has called one to work.

A lack of evangelistic zeal and missionary power

Of all the many writers about revival whom I have consulted, each and every one of them believes that a lack of evangelistic zeal and missionary power in a church is a certain, characteristic mark of a time of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church. With a reference to John 7:39, J. H. Bavinck (1949:445) says that the Holy Spirit can never be imprisoned in the life of an individual but makes a channel of the individual Christians and the church as a body to reach out to others and bring them under the reign of Christ. When this is not seen amongst Christians, it is a sure sign of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit. That is why, during every revival of the past, an unusual harvest of newly converted Christians was gathered by churches.

Abraham Kuyper (1883:123) emphasizes this phenomenon of revivals by stating, “In the same way, the Lord still empowers every church that he awakes from a sleep of death to win people for his

Kingdom; not only through missions amongst Kaffirs or Eskimos, but still more glorious – by winning those who are near” (my translation from the Dutch). For example, it is said that the Presbyterian Churches of Ireland, during the revival of the last century, grew by 100,000 new members in one year (*The Banner of Truth*, 225, June 1982:1).

J. H. Bavinck, a well-known Reformed missiologist, has pointed out in this regard that the tendency to accept as normal the lack of missionary power and evangelistic zeal in many Reformed churches when whole districts in their vicinity are eaten up by unbelief, secularism and materialism is the most severe sign of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in such churches (Bavinck 1949:446; my translation from the Dutch).

A lack of joyful trust in the power of the Holy Spirit

When churches become self-satisfied and accept their voids easily as something that cannot be changed, it is another mark of a time of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit live and work in the faith of what God can do. The limits of the word “possible” are stretched much further when Spirit-filled Christians live in faith. They are people who have hope and who live by this hope.

I can only say “*selah*” when Packer (1984:259) reasons along the same lines and says, “Romantic complacency and resourcefulness in acting the injured innocent are among the most Spirit quenching traits imaginable, since both become excuses for doing nothing in situations where realism requires that we do something and do it as a matter of urgency.” Packer then asks this searching question, “If you were accused of honoring the Holy Spirit would there be enough evidence to convict you?” A mark of a time of ebb is to be found in this lack of evidence that we trust and honor the Spirit.

An increase in doctrinal error

The Holy Spirit guides the church into all truth, for He is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). When there is a time of ebb in the working of the Holy Spirit in the church, an increase in doctrinal error will be seen. It is a well-known fact that there was a large increase in Arminianism before the Great Awakening of 1739 in the American colonies. Also, a denying of the authority of Scriptures as the Word of God occurred (Evans 1960:11). James Burns says, “In every case also in which the life of the church has become feeble, and its witness ineffective, and its

worldliness pronounced, it will be found that the message of the Cross has fallen into decay; it is either denied or lost sight of.”

Here again I want to call your attention to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. In the beginning of the 1970s, the Free University of Amsterdam accepted the doctoral dissertation of Wiersenga, who defended the teaching that Jesus did not die on the cross to pay the debts of our sins and so turn away God’s wrath from us, but He only died to provide us with an example of self-sacrifice and to shock us in the depths of our inner beings when we see the result of our sins. This, of course, is part and parcel of all the marks of a time of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit in that church.

In some orthodox Reformed churches, the centrality of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion and the responsibility to offer Christ to unbelievers can be pushed aside by a faulty theology of predestination and election. They reason thus: Christ died for the elect only; therefore, we must first find out in some or other way whether someone belongs to the elect before we may freely offer Christ clothed in the gospel to that someone. In this way, they are so preoccupied with the doctrine of limited atonement that they do not realize the importance of presenting Christ in evangelism to a dying world. A wrong and unbalanced theology of election has always been detrimental to evangelism and assurance of salvation in the church and is yet another mark of ebb in the work of the Spirit.

Lack of discipline in the church

When there is a lack of discipline in the church, it also signifies a very low spiritual tide in the church. Sprague (1978:75) makes an important statement when he points out that the fact that the church in times of ebb can tolerate gross offences in its members proves that its character for spirituality is already low; but the act of tolerating them must necessarily depress it still more.

To my mind, a lack of discipline actually signifies a lack of love. When the Holy Spirit fills us in the church, God’s love floods our inmost hearts through the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of love will be seen (Rom. 5:5). We who are endowed with the Spirit will have zeal to correct our fellow Christians who have fallen into sin. Our zeal for the glory and holiness of God will impel us to cut off dying members of the body who keep on with unbelief and unrighteousness.

Ineffectual preaching

A very important mark of times of ebb is the ineffectual preaching during such times. The message from the pulpit largely loses its power to convince. The preachers display a certain conscious insincerity as men who are not quite sure of their ground (Burns 1960:66).

Characteristics of such ineffective sermons are their tendency to be speculative, philosophical and dry. In some Reformed churches, preachers love to expose the error and sin of other groups and denominations but fail to lead the flock under their care to meet God in Christ in the reality of His holiness and the unsearchable riches of His mercy and grace to sinners. That is why Martin (1980) can say, "In every age of Christianity, since John the Baptist drew crowds into the deserts, there has been no great religious movement of genuine piety, without new power in preaching, both as cause and effect."

During revivals, people have always felt themselves being brought face to face with God in the preaching from the pulpit, because the words of preachers have come to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:4).

Means that the Holy Spirit has used to revive his church*A growing sense of discontent with lukewarmness*

Many writers on the history of revivals emphasize that revival has started quite often in the past with a sense of discontent with the lukewarmness, deadness and fruitlessness of the church (Evans 1960:7; Bonar n.d.). Burns (1960:52) puts it this way, "There comes a growing discontent in men's hearts at prevailing corruption or backsliding: an intense craving in many for better things and a growing spirit of expectation in many that such changes are at hand."

Therefore, revival means for the church humiliation, a bitter knowledge of unworthiness, and an open humiliating confession of sin on the part of her ministers and people (Burns 1960:70).

Kuyper (1883:22) says, "When it pleases God to impress the sunken condition of the church in the hearts of some of his children or even one of his elect, in such an overwhelming way that he cannot keep silent but cry out, because – as Amos puts it – he has heard the roar of the lion, powerful preaching, leading to revival has often started."

When we study the Bible and extra-biblical history, it is overwhelmingly clear that revival has always come when and where the Holy Spirit of God has laid upon the people of God the spirit of prayer and supplication. The Holy Spirit works in answer to the prayers of the people of God. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 45, we

confess that God grants His grace and His Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him and are thankful of them. Burns (1960:127, 178 and 276) shows that Savonarola, Luther, Calvin, John Knox and many other leaders in times of flow in the work of the Holy Spirit were men of fervent prayers.

In the Korean Christian churches (that are growing faster than the birth rate of that country at the moment), Christians gather every day at five in the morning for prayer. It is not unusual for them to pray right through the night. The spirit of prayer in which a revival begins usually originates in the closet. There the sincere and concerned Christian may wrestle on behalf of Zion with as much earnestness as he wants to; there he may pour out his whole soul in tears and sighs and broken petitions, and the ear on which his importunity falls, will never be offended by it (Sprague 1978:236). Before and during revivals there is always an increase in united prayer and confession of sins. Kuyper (1883:124) says, "In the history of our own country there were also many gatherings of classes where the ministers united in confessing their own guilt and unfaithfulness before God and before his countenance promised together to improve their ministry and their lives."

Sharpening the arrows of preaching

The Holy Spirit usually works through the proclamation of the Word. Each and every revival of the past has had new power in preaching. In such times, the contents of sermons included:

- 1) The holiness of God and the totally depraved state of man without Christ, when he is measured by the spiritual standards of the law;
- 2) The unconditional grace of a holy God to lost sinners;
- 3) The absolute necessity of regeneration, conversion and repentance for everyone who wants to enter the kingdom of God; and
- 4) The necessity of a holy walk before God in every aspect of the Christian's life.

Deepening of fellowship by meeting in small groups

Many times in the past the gatherings of small groups have been used to bring revival about. I can remind you of the reunions and conventicles in the times of Whitefield and Wesley and the Reveille in the Netherlands.

Although such small groups have sometimes gone seriously astray, it cannot be denied that it has pleased the Holy Spirit many times in the past to use such gatherings of small groups as a channel of His grace to bring spiritual awakening.

Stimulating every member ministry

Where clericalism and hierarchy in the church are a sign of ebb in the work of the Holy Spirit, a stimulating of the priesthood of all believers many times in the past was not only used as a means to revival but has always also been a mark of revival. James Burns illustrates this from the history of the revival in Scotland in the time of John Knox. He quotes the poem of Robert Burns, “The Cotter’s Saturday Night”, describing the family worship being conducted by a simple farmer and then concludes, “Here as nowhere else, we are made to realize how religion became bound up with the common life of people, as we see this family kneel together in worship.”

Evangelistic efforts

A time of flow in the work of the Holy Spirit does not only see increased evangelistic zeal and missionary power in the church, but sometimes evangelistic efforts in a time of ebb have been used by God as a catalyst to bring about a time of flow in the work of his Spirit.

When Christians in a time of ebb start with organized evangelism, they very soon realize many other problems in the church. They find a lack of prayer, a lack of knowledge of the gospel and a lack of love in the congregation to receive new members warmheartedly. This realization in turn drives them back to prayer and more intensive study of the Bible and the humiliating realization that only a living church that is filled with the Holy Spirit will succeed with evangelism.

Wesley Smedes, a former minister of evangelism of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States once wrote in a letter to me, “Equipping our lay people for evangelism has been a real catalyst for total revival in many local churches.”

Lindeboom, a well-known theologian of the Netherlands at the beginning of the previous century, probably had something of this in his mind when he wrote, “Evangelism is not only a sign of a healthy church, but also heals the church, and keeps it healthy. For every church it is an issue of life, a condition for nothing less than life and prosperity. Evangelism has got to do with the well-being of the church itself” (Brillenburg Wurth and Wiersenga, 1953:44; my translation from the Dutch).

A spiritual quickening of one or a few leaders

Church history shows us many illustrations of one or only a few Christians that had been filled with the Spirit to such an extent that they could not keep silent but became men out of whom rivers of living water flowed. The one or the few had an influence on others, and they in their part on others, until the revival touched whole countries.

Abraham Kuyper (1883:122) says that revivals that have begun in one or a few hearts many times are like a fire – it has started with one spark and then grows with exceeding speed as the spark from one soul jumps to another soul, from one church to another, always under the breath of the wind of the Holy Spirit.

Horatius Bonar made a study of the characteristics of men that had been used during the course of church history as instruments of revival, like Luther, John Calvin, Knox, Whitefield and others and envisaged the following:

- 1) They were men who had hope and an expectation of success because they relied on the power of God.
- 2) They were men with a profound realization of their calling by God.
- 3) Although they many times sowed in tears, they still had an expectation to reap in joy some day in the future.
- 4) They were very hardworking men.
- 5) They had patience.
- 6) They had courage and persistence.
- 7) They were men of fervent prayer.
- 8) They held a pure Biblical doctrine, especially concerning the relationship of law and gospel.
- 9) They had a holy walk before God.
- 10) They were humble.

The dangers of revival and some bad fruit

Church history reveals that revivals of the past also sometimes produced bad fruit. When God builds His temple, Satan always tries to turn it into his synagogue and he definitely succeeded in doing this many times during revivals. It is important that we should also make a realistic study of this dark side of revivals of the past. In this way we are warned to be on the lookout for the cunning plans of the devil.

Schism, discord and indifference to the church

Church history reveals the sad fact that revivals many times broke out outside the institutional church. Many times it had started in the

institutional church but was then forced outside and became a movement alongside the church or even in competition with the church. An example in the Netherlands was the “Reveille”, which became a movement alongside the church and in many cases almost indifferent to the church (Du Toit 1977:227). The case could be argued that the Free Church of Scotland, likewise, emerged out of revival.

C. C. Goen wrote a book, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800*, in which he gives a documented historical review of all the theological issues and church policies that were at stake during the revivals in America and that led to separatism.

Burns (1960:69) concludes in this regard, “... Nearly every revival has originated outside the church and has awakened her active and embittered hostility.... It shows that in times of degeneracy the Spirit of Christ is often found in larger degree outside the church than within.”

Subjectivism

Almost every revival is accompanied by outbursts of excitement and by startling physical phenomena. Outbreaks of physical anguish are followed by outbursts of uncontrollable joy, and the effect of these extreme emotions on ill-balanced natures is often disastrous (Burns 1960:44).

Many church historians of our day believe that the subjectivism of John Wesley and the Methodism that grew from the revival of which he was a part led to Pentecostalism and the subjectivism of the charismatic movement (Brinsmead 1974).

Pursuit of the extraordinary

When Christians are misled to pursue the emotional phenomena of revivals, they are soon misled to continually run after the extreme and the extraordinary; and they do not hesitate to use all kinds of gimmicks and artificial methods to produce revivals. Finneyism is a good example of this.

Kuyper (1883:124) had a sincere concern for revival, yet rightly warned, “All artificially produced revivals are to be rejected. It brings forth wind only. We should remember to polish the ordinary furniture of our churches.”

Terminological confusion

The greatest problem concerning revival today is the wrong ideas that many Christians have about revival. These wrong ideas have come into being especially since 1850.

During revivals, many people who become converted usually experience a deep sense of their utter vileness before a holy and sovereign God and a deep and profound joy in the Lord because of His wonderful and unconditional forgiveness and grace. It has happened many times during revivals of the past that people whose consciences were quickened came under such an intolerable conviction of their sin that during public worship services they started to weep and cry out loudly in their desperate need for salvation. Because spiritual things become overwhelmingly real to many who have been lukewarm for quite a while, outward signs of emotional experience can be seen quite often in public meetings during revivals. Christians also usually become fearless in witness and tireless in their Savior's service during times of revival, so that the church reaps an unusual harvest of converts.

Because of these characteristic phenomena that can be seen during revivals, some Christians and church leaders, in their desire to see revival, have made the serious mistake of thinking that, if they could in any way produce these phenomena, they would produce revivals.

Charles Finney (1792-1875) was perhaps the first leader in this regard. His followers started what they called "the new measure". Finney was outspokenly anti-Calvinist. In every town and city, he made it his aim to destroy Calvinism and the doctrines of grace as believed by Reformed people. All this opened the way for the thought that man can produce revivals by using all kinds of gimmicks that produce emotional revival and the confessing of decisions for Christ. As Clive Tyler (1975:65) says, "... a battle resulted between the preacher and the will of the hearer to make a turn. To that end he used every possible means – coarse and violent language, the anxious seat, suitable music, the protracted appeal and many other means...."

The fruit of this approach is that many evangelical Christians still confuse a revival and an evangelistic campaign. Some advertise their evangelistic campaigns by saying, "There will be a revival at such and such a place and at such and such time." Tyler points out that the followers of Finney today even provide correspondence courses to study methods to induce revival by which someone becomes qualified to have a revival. Expressions like these are still seen on advertisements, "Don't have your revival until you have seen samples of our color posters" or "Revivals arranged, results guaranteed, terms moderate".

Such theology and such practices have proved to be detrimental to genuine revival. Reformed Christians who feared the Lord and believed in the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the

coming of the kingdom were repelled by the superficiality and bad fruit of these “revivals”. Many converts of these “revivals” did not only lose all appearance of religion very soon after the “revival”, but they became conceited, secure and gospel proof; so that, while living in the open and habitual neglect of their duty, they talked very freely of the time when they had experienced religion.

Because of a lack of discernment and in reaction to this type of so-called revival, many Reformed people are opposed to the whole concept of revival. Many times you will hear Reformed people saying, “Revival is a superficial whipping up of emotions without permanent results. We do not need revival; we need reformation. Reformation produces lasting results.” Finneyism, Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement to a large extent lie on the same line of development. Therefore many also have a wrong idea about revival.

Packer (1984:247) is correct in pointing out that the problem with some charismatics is that they have too superficial an idea of revival. What they have produced is renewal without the notes of humility and awe in the presence of the Holy God and of the need to realize the sinfulness of sin, the evil of egoism and the radical nature of repentance.

As a result, some charismatics may embrace and cultivate a “child-to-Daddy”, “buddy-to-Jesus” informality as a corrective of the cold and distant formalism of pro-renewal religion. This easily becomes more childish than child-like and actually stunts growth. It has been suggested that this confusion about the character of true Holy Spirit revival may be diminished by finding new terminology. The word “revival” may have a kind of charismatic, emotionalistic, and even Arminian flavour to the mind of some Reformed Christians.

Abraham Kuyper was of the opinion that the word “revival” had taken the place of the word “covenant renewal” that was used by older Reformed theologians. About this issue of terminology and the use of the word revival, I have the attitude of Romans 14:13 “... that no obstacle or stumbling block be placed in a brother’s way”.

If we can find a more acceptable word that brings out the idea **that the church can only have true reformation if there is a restoration in the relationship to the Holy Spirit, I shall be quite happy.**

Reformation, to my mind, refers to a restoration of doctrine to be more in line with true Biblical teaching, a renewal of our church structures and our structures of social life to live according to true Biblical doctrine, and the pursuit of love and righteousness in our daily lives with our neighbors regardless of their language and culture.

Revival refers to a renewed, Spirit-filled life and therefore renewed, constant awareness of God; it is a deepening in our understanding of the “*Coram Deo*” that the leaders of the sixteenth century Reformation confessed. It is impossible to say which of these came first. History has shown that in God’s sovereign will either can come first. What we must realize is that we need both.

Reformation and revival

Reformation without revival may result in superficial organizational changes and the production of all kinds of so-called Christian structures without men and women with renewed hearts working in these structures. It is even possible to have people who formally adhere to a Calvinist philosophy but who have a sad, mournful, scholastic type of Calvinism because they reason a lot about the truth that we hold but do not to the same extent worship and praise God for His truth that holds us.

Revival without reformation may produce a lot of emotion and noise but will not result in a constant, holy walk before God in every sphere of life.

A revival without reformation is not a true revival.

A reformation without revival is not a true reformation.

Our obligation

We have seen that revival is a God-given blessing that God in His sovereign execution of His redemptive plan bestows on His church in His own due time. Therefore true revival can never be produced by any human methods. This belief raises the question: If God is sovereign in revival and we cannot extort it from Him by any endeavor or technique, what should those who long for revival do? Twiddle their thumbs? Or something more?

I believe we should preach and teach God’s truth in such a way that we cannot be accused of being insincere, lazy, superficial, unbiblical or speculative. Bible truth, gospel truth, truth taken into the mind and heart is the most important means that the Holy Spirit uses to regenerate and convert sinners and to bring real spiritual life and growth in God’s kingdom. In addition to preaching and teaching, we should be willing to have a good look at our lifestyles and structures. Boulders in the way of the Holy Spirit, such as habitual sins, neglect of prayer and fellowship, and worldly-mindedness exhibited in materialism, love of money, indulgence of pride, jealousy, bitterness and hatred, should be taken away by way of true repentance. Radical

reformation of our personal lives, our churches and our structures of social life is required as we seek to come in line with God's revealed will in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

In addition to all this, we must learn to pray again. We should even pray to be taught by God's Spirit how to pray. Jonathan Edwards, the classical Calvinist theologian of revival said:

When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayers of his people; as is manifest by Ezekiel 36:37....And it is revealed that, when God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication (Zechariah 12:10). (Packer 1984:258)

Dirk Postma, the founder of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, wrote in a sermon in December, 1859:

... It was prayer that brought down the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth in the first Christian Churches, converted thousands on one day, and opened prison doors for God's persecuted servants.

If the church would have, and practiced the same spirit of prayer in our day it would, like a mighty wind blow all the stumbling blocks in the way of truth away, whether it had been laid down by men or devils. Prayer moves God, and when He works the work is already done. (Floor 1964:8; my translation from the Dutch)

Let us pray that God in His love and mercy bestow on us the fullness of His Holy Spirit again and unite all true Christians in fervent prayer to pray with Albert Midlane:

Revive Thy work, O Lord,
Exalt Thy precious name!
And may Thy love in every heart,
Be kindled to a flame.

Then we will have the zeal and courage and power, wrought by God the Holy Spirit, to live and work according to our confession of "*semper reformanda*", while we sing with Totius:

“... Laat die wat hul tot God
begeef,
herleef, met frisse krag bedou....”

(Afrikaans, Ps. 69:13)

But I pray to you, O LORD,
in the time of your favor;
in your great love, O God,
answer me with your sure
salvation.

(Ps. 69:13, NIV)

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