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A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ref-rev-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php)



*Reformation*  
**& REVIVAL**  
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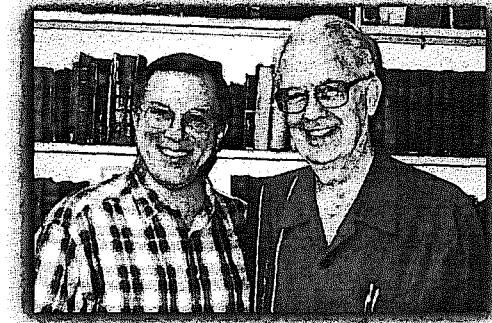
**REFORMATION  
IN REVIVAL**

*A Quarterly for Church Leadership*

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*A Reformation & Revival Journal*  
*Interview with Frank Farrell*



**F**or this quarter's interview, our editor-in-chief, John Armstrong, visited with Dr. Frank Farrell, professor of church history at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. Dr. Farrell might not be well known to most of our readers but his life includes some very instructive lessons for all leaders, as the interview demonstrates.

**R R J** —Tell us a little bit about your own background. How did you come to faith in Christ? And tell our readers about your family and about God's call on your life.

**F F** —I can't specify a distinct time in which I came to faith but I do remember during the depression that I was in a church where all I got in Sunday School were airplane stories. This was the early days of flight and the teacher had a friend tell us stories about the experience of flying. There was absolutely nothing about the gospel in this class. Eventually my family moved back to where I was born—Portland, Oregon. We attended a well-known Baptist Church where a Sunday School teacher got very specific about making a clear profession of faith. I was

about twelve years old at that time. I was baptized in that church the next year and the pastor's son became my best pal. In time I was struck by the fact that between grammar school and high school we lost nearly all of a rather large Sunday School class. We had an evening youth group that was solid and later the pastor's son suggested that we go to college together. Until then I had not contemplated further academic work. My friend and I went to Wheaton College where I was led to embrace the Reformed faith. We had a several shades of theology at Wheaton then. I majored in history and minored in philosophy. It was my history teacher, Gregg Singer, who promoted Calvinism strongly.

**R R J** —Was Gordon Clark still at Wheaton in those days?

**F F** —No, he had left a few years before. But Cornelius Jaarsma, a philosopher who had come to Wheaton from Calvin College, was a professor of mine. He and Singer were the two that persuaded me of the Reformed faith.

**R R J** —Was Earle Cairns, who later served as the chairman of the history department and was a personal advisor and mentor to me in the 1960s, there yet?

**F F** —Yes, Earle Cairns was there. As you may know he was a Presbyterian and he also exercised a good influence on me. As a history major, I had Cairns and Singer. With my philosophy minor I had several classes with Jaarsma. When it came time to look for further education my choice was Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. It had just opened the year before I graduated and was theologically Reformed. Carl F. H. Henry was on the initial faculty. The year I entered E. J. Carnell had come from Gordon. I studied theology and philosophy with both Henry and Carnell.

When it came time for further study I combined my various backgrounds and went to New College at the University of Edinburgh. I began to study the Puritans and that put me into the category of ecclesiastical history. About one-third of

my work was on the history of the Puritan movement with the other two-thirds on the theology of the Puritans, especially as reflected in Richard Sibbes.

**R R J** —You wrote your dissertation on Richard Sibbes? What was the approach you took?

**F F** —The title was: "Richard Sibbes, A Study in Early Seventeenth Century Puritanism." The first third placed Sibbes within the historical movement of his time and looked at his life. After this I looked at Sibbes' view of covenant theology and Christian warfare. Later in Puritanism you find John Bunyan writing *The Holy War* and *Pilgrim's Progress* but the themes of pilgrimage and warfare emerged much earlier in Puritanism.

**R R J** —What years were you in Scotland?

**F F** —The early fifties. After the first summer I went to Zurich to study under Emil Brunner. This was a fascinating time for me. Even though I didn't agree with Brunner's theology, especially since Carnell and Henry had been quite opposed to his thought, it was quite interesting to actually meet the man. He was enhanced in my own eyes because of a personal act on my behalf. I was challenging him, more than any other student in class, really, in relationship to neo-orthodoxy and the Scriptures. During this time I went to Brunner and said, "I am sorry, Professor Brunner, but I am going to have to drop out of your class before the course ends and go back to Edinburgh. I do not have enough money to keep me in Zurich because of a change in my employment." He said, "Come to my house this afternoon." He had a lovely home on a hill overlooking Lake Zurich. I went to his home and he peeled off money to give to me so I could complete his course.

At that time Professor Brunner had just come out with the first volume of his systematic theology. The view he took of the Trinity was that when you had Christ involved you had the love of God, but when Christ was not involved, i.e., when you had God apart from Christ, you had the wrath and the

judgment of God. I raised my hand in class and said, "Dr. Brunner, what about Jesus cleansing the temple?" That didn't seem to disturb him too much so then I said, "And what about the wrath of the lamb?" This observation really troubled him. It seemed to me that the idea caught him and he saw that he was going to have to revise his theology at this point. Once again he was greatly enhanced as a person in my eyes. He took my insight very seriously and said he hadn't thought of this point. What is important to note here is that all of this discussion took place before he gave me money to keep me in his class.

**R R J** —So did you finish Dr. Brunner's course?

**F F** —I did and it was a great blessing.

**R R J** —Did you ever have any direct contact with Karl Barth?



*"Today will go down as a very bleak day in history. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but remember what I say." Germany had just been given the right to re-arm.*

*Remember, Barth had been in Germany under Hitler and had to leave. Now he was feeling this development keenly and was quite upset.*

**F F** —Yes. I went to hear Barth lecture. He was in Basel, about fifty miles from Zurich. I went to hear him in the classroom, but in the evenings he also had an English-speaking seminar in his own home that I also attended. I can still remember

him coming down the stairs in his smoking jacket, with his pipe, saying, "Today will go down as a very bleak day in history. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but remember what I say." Germany had just been given the right to re-arm. Remember, Barth had been in Germany under Hitler and had to leave. Now he was feeling this development keenly and was quite upset.

It was nice to be in Barth's home to discuss things. I remember well one evening when a little girl had been run over by a streetcar. The conductor was in agony. We saw parts of body pieces and it made us all think. Barth is teaching existentialism and theology, i.e., a life and death crisis. He had just come out from the oppression of Nazism. His understanding reminded you of life and death and just how very serious the matter of theology really is.

**R R J** —So you went back to Edinburgh after your time in Switzerland and finished your doctoral work? You told me once that you also studied under the esteemed preacher and Pauline scholar James Stewart.

**F F** —Yes, he was teaching New Testament at that time. He would also preach on weekends. He was a marvelous preacher. Leslie Weatherhead, who was not regarded as an evangelical, was a well-known preacher and quite famous for his psychological work. He served the City Temple in London when I was there. Weatherhead said that James Stewart was the greatest preacher in Britain at the mid-century point.

**R R J** —Was he also a good teacher?

**F F** —He was a good teacher. He probably didn't get the recognition that William Manson got from the students. At this time the grad school at New College may have outnumbered the undergraduate in enrollment. Thomas Torrance was at the grad school and was teaching at both levels; his younger brother David was a student in the undergraduate school. It was commonly stated that there were more Americans studying

theology there at that time than anywhere else in the world outside of America.

Torrance had just come during those days. G. T. Thomson, for a time, was Karl Barth's main translator in English. John Baillie was also there at this time. When Thomson retired, Torrance moved from church history to join Baillie in theology.

**R R J** —Is John Baillie the brother of Donald Baillie?

**F F** —Yes, Donald was teaching then at St. Andrews.

**R R J** —When did you come back to the states?

**F F** —I came back in 1955.

**R R J** —Did you come to work at *Christianity Today* at that point?

**F F** —No. There was an interesting hiatus in my career that I often tell my students about. Students are so eager to get right into the work of ministry that if something doesn't open up for them they get easily depressed. In my case, I came back with a doctorate and my father died just ten days after I got home. I was looking for a teaching position, or even a pastorate. Nothing opened up so I got a job selling *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

**R R J** —This was in Oregon?

**F F** —Yes, in Portland. So all the time I was looking for a job I was selling *Encyclopedia Britannica*. I had to go into peoples' homes and persuade them to buy the books in order to put food on the family table. I got to know people pretty well. I look back on it as one of the great experiences of my early life.

**R R J** —Was it forcing you to relate to real people in human conversations?

**F F** —Exactly. I was very close to getting a teaching job at Portland State University, which was just getting started at that time. They had asked the state legislature for money to establish two chairs. They only got the money for one. The second one is the one that I would have been given. I would have taught Renaissance and Reformation. They also had one religion course that I would have taught. I was really very disappointed but I saw the reason for this a few months later. Carl Henry, who founded *Christianity Today* about eighteen months earlier, with Billy Graham and Nelson Bell, had previously come over to Edinburgh on his sabbatical where I got to know him much better. He offered me the position as his assistant at *Christianity Today*. He wanted me to do correspondence as well as cover general assemblies and religious conventions of mainline churches around the country. Having majored in church history I was about to find out how it actually worked.

**R R J** —When were you married in this process of personal history?

**F F** —Not for many years.

**R R J** —So you were still single at this point in your journey?

**F F** —Yes. And I like to encourage young people who haven't found their mates yet to wait for God's time.

**R R J** —Many men tend to panic when they get out of seminary without a wife, don't they?

**F F** —Exactly. We were told in seminary that the ideal is to get married as soon as you're out, maybe the summer after you graduate because when you go to a church you need a wife. Well, that leaves you only about three months.

**R R J** —So the Lord has three months to do it or else, right?

**FF** —That is one way to put it. When I went to Britain many graduates weren't as well off financially as they might be today, and young men were remaining single a lot longer. I had a marvelous time playing on the Edinburgh University basketball team. We played in Dunkirk and Paris. After my time with Professor Brunner I hitchhiked all over Europe from Naples right through Scandinavia. I also got into Berlin and then to the Holy Land the next summer.

**RRJ** —So you went to Washington in 1957?

**FF** —It was actually January of 1958. I had this period of wrestling with the Lord about why I had all this education while some of my fellow salesmen were dropouts from high school. But I was getting to know people and I saw if I had gotten the Portland State job I would have had to turn down Carl Henry. These were exciting days for *Christianity Today*. I traveled all over the country and into Canada.

It was during these years that two things happened to give me direction regarding marriage. One was related to Nelson Bell, our executive editor. He was Billy Graham's father-in-law. Dr. Bell gave a devotional at *Christianity Today* and told us about his time as a missionary in China. He showed how the Chinese language was a pictorial language, and the picture that they drew for trouble was a picture of two women under the same roof. That left a real impression on me. I had to pay attention to where I lived because the climate so affected my mother, whom I was now taking care of.

The other event that impacted me in this regard was that I was covering the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami Beach for *Christianity Today*. I went down the weekend before to visit a girlfriend at Nassau whom I had met in Britain. During that time I was stricken with a kidney stone. She had a boat and everything was great until this pain hit me. I went back to Florida but I wasn't able to attend the convention so I had a friend, an evangelical in the secular press corps, who did it for me. I was terribly weakened because I hadn't eaten or slept and had been misdiagnosed in the Bahamas. This girl

had been studying nursing in Britain so she sent her doctor to my hotel room. He called it stomach flu. I thought, "This is no stomach flu because this is killing me." So I called the hotel doctor in Miami Beach and he diagnosed my problem on the phone. I was panting and telling him this and that and he said it was a kidney stone, which he defined as the worst pain possible. So Nelson Bell had spoken about the two women under one roof and this kidney stone had come when I went to see an old girlfriend. I felt the Lord had not simply closed the door in that area but he had slammed it on my hand. He was telling me that marriage was not for me at this time. Years later when my mother was dying he brought my wife into the picture. She had been widowed and had also been a missionary and was raised on the mission field.

**RRJ** —Tell us more about her background.

**FF** —Marjorie Breaden was raised in the Holy Land by her parents who served with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. She lived in both Jordan and Beirut. This was before Israel became a nation. She had gone to an Anglican school in Jerusalem and an American high school in Beirut. She also served in India for a short-term with her first husband, but her health was affected by the climate there and they had to leave.

Her husband became a Presbyterian minister so for many years she was a minister's wife. He died and so she was a widow for some years afterwards. She did a masters' degree was at New York University and then she took another masters' degree at Wheaton College after the death of her husband. She then came to Fuller and completed another degree. That's when I met her. A fellow student of mine in Edinburgh was teaching at Fuller. He got us together during the time when my mother was dying.

Mother and I left Washington, D.C., to go to a better climate and thus we were then in California. By this time, I was editing the *World Vision* magazine. I had gone to California in 1965. I had a short stint with Gospel Light and their new Regal Books program. I was initially the head of that division in the

late sixties. I then joined World Vision in 1969 to work with Paul Rees. When he left I became the editor of their magazine, getting more involved with the field of missions.

**R R J** —Then what happened?

**F F** —My mother died in January 1977. Not long afterwards my wife and I went to Simpson College in San Francisco, a CMA college. We were there just a year at the college level. Then the dean of the Alliance Graduate School of Missions in Nyack, New York, asked me to teach at that level. So we had one year at the college, and then I moved to the seminary level where I felt much more comfortable. I was in on committee meetings to form the M.Div. program. The school became the Alliance Theological Seminary, and I taught theology and church history.

**R R J** —So you've worn an administrative hat, you've done both editorial work and journalism, and you've taught at both the college and seminary level. Did you ever pastor?



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**F F** —No. I encouraged students over the years to get as broad a base as they could because you never know where God will

use you. You start out in one direction and God has something else in mind. When I went for the doctorate I wasn't planning on being a teacher. At that time many were admiring Harold Ockenga, our Fuller president in absentia, as ministering at a high intellectual level. I thought I might become a pastor in a university town.

**R R J** —Tell us how you think church history, as a discipline, is doing in the American setting. You have with you as I speak Mark Noll's *History of Christianity in the US and Canada*. It would seem that both the American Historical Society and the American Church History Society are alive and well. Church history may be academically in a better position than it has been in for a long time. Is that an accurate appraisal?

**F F** —I think you're right. The American historiography folks didn't write about church history for years and years. It seemed that it was all about European church history. I guess people majored in European church history because American church history was derived from it. The groups from Britain and the Continent simply came across the Atlantic and started similar churches here so they never took American church history that seriously. But this has definitely changed. Now American church history is very respected as an academic discipline.

**R R J** —That's quite interesting to me as a history student. Now we not only teach it but we look at Pentecostalism, for example, in terms of its evolution and impact on the American church scene. This is being done in fresh ways we never would have imagined twenty-five years ago. The whole story is taken far more seriously as a historical discipline now.

**F F** —Exactly.

**R R J** —Billy Graham was involved with your early career path as well?



**FF** —Yes. These were very exciting times with Billy's crusades at a real peak in the 1950s and 60s. I attended Billy Graham's Rose Bowl crusade when I was in seminary. He later had come to Portland, which was one of the early crusades that put him on the map.

I was moving around the country attending some very important meetings with various denominations. Liberalism had made a great impact in the mainline denominations and I was supposed to be an evangelical critic. I would deal with press officers who weren't always sympathetic with *Christianity Today* but we did establish some friendly relationships nonetheless. All of this early experience would date back to my friendship with Carl Henry, which was to prove so very important to God's work in my life.

**RRJ** —Would the mainstream media, such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, pay any attention to evangelicalism during those years? Would they ever make the cover or get serious coverage in religion or did this only begin to change in the late sixties and early seventies?

**FF** —It was beginning to change a little earlier than this, thanks largely to Billy Graham.

**RRJ** —In those days you were trying to get *Christianity Today* into seminaries and the mainline churches as an alternative to the *Christian Century*.

**FF** —Yes, the *Christian Century* had come out, or we could say was re-founded, in 1908. It was a Disciples of Christ periodical, and then they made it a more interdenominational magazine that was moving in a more liberal direction. The *Christian Century* was celebrating its fiftieth year of publication when I got to *Christianity Today* in 1958. They were quite critical of Billy Graham because he kept saying, "The Bible says!" Carl Henry wrote to me and said "Let's find out what the *Christian Century* said about the Bible and other issues over the past fifty years." I would go up to the Library of Congress whenever I

wasn't on a story or editing, and go back over old issues of *Christian Century* to find out how their position had shifted. We showed how they contradicted themselves.

**RRJ** —Didn't Reinhold Niebuhr enter into this debate and express some concerns about Billy Graham?

**FF** —Well, he did, but he also became quite critical of the *Christian Century*. He had contributed to the *Century*, but it is important to recall that he was neo-orthodox and the people at *Christian Century* were mostly old-fashioned liberals.

**RRJ** —Niebuhr had a much higher view of sin and human responsibility than the editors did at the *Christian Century*. The perfectibility of the human race, he didn't believe it at all.

**FF** —No. And when I did my story on the *Century* it was in two different segments—one was on war and peace and the other was on domestic politics. I quoted Niebuhr extensively in these articles because he could be devastatingly critical of the *Century*.

**RRJ** —It's interesting that *Christian Century* adopted its name in 1908, which says a lot about how they saw the twentieth century before World War I.

**FF** —Exactly, they were very, very optimistic. They even said, about two or three years before World War I began, that thoughtful people are now realizing that war is passing away. Then we got a World War. When World War II began most of us thought that it was far more serious than they did.

**RRJ** —I've read the *Christian Century*, off and on, for about thirty years. I subscribed for periods of time and then I would give up on it and try again several years later. It seems to me that it still keeps moving and changing, sometimes for the better. For example, they now publish things clearly written by evangelicals. And the sermons they print are often orthodox in content. They show a little more respect to evangelicals

these days. Do you think that's an accurate appraisal and do you have any idea why? The present editor, John Buchanan, is not particularly a friend to evangelical Christianity, so what goes here?

**FF** —*The Century*, when I dealt with their theological views some years ago, admitted editorially that they considered very seriously becoming a secular journal. Liberalism will eventually get watered down to humanism. Their main theological conviction was to be found in humanism but, because they were in the ecumenical movement, they were required to deal with serious people far to the right of them, like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. You may recall that it was Barth who chastised the liberals at Amsterdam, at the 1948 World Council of Churches meeting.

In Edinburgh in 1910, you had a lot of evangelicals present, and then, with the rapid growth of liberalism, by 1928 the ecumenical movement was in the hands of liberals and modernists. This is why Barth made such a contrasting impact in 1938 in Madras. You also had Hendrik Kraemer on missions. As a result neo-orthodoxy helped bring the ecumenical movement back from the most extreme liberalism of 1928. This was just before the stock market crash, which was devastating to their optimistic liberal views. By 1934 Walter Marshall Horton (who dropped in on Brunner's class when I was there) said liberalism, as a theological discipline, was in a state of collapse. World War I had affected Europe more than America, but then the stock market crashed and the depression ruined the optimistic view that had prevailed in some circles here.

**RRJ** —What, in your judgment, happened to neo-orthodoxy as a movement? I'm not talking so much about individuals—obviously Barth and Brunner are still read and will be read, I think, for many decades to come. But the movement does not seem to have the vitality it had in the fifties and sixties. Did it get swallowed back into the larger liberal ethos and lose its momentum?

**FF** —You know that devastating definition of liberalism that Richard Niebuhr had? H. Richard Niebuhr defined American liberalism as a movement that had a God without wrath who brought men without sin into a kingdom that was without judgment through the administration of a Christ without a cross. This was a devastating critique.

**RRJ** —So neo-orthodoxy is still alive. The Torrance family alone has kept it alive in a serious academic setting in Britain and then there are Barth Societies that exists here and there.

**FF** —I rode on the train in Scotland once with the father of Tom Torrance. We knew each other as ministers coming from Sunday morning preaching by our clerical collars. He had been a China Inland missionary and had three sons who all became theology teachers or pastors. His three daughters married either missionaries or theologians. He was a godly old man and a delight to talk to.

Karl Barth, I've been told, regarded Thomas Torrance as his best student. In Edinburgh I sat in on his classes regularly. Though Barth had been accused of teaching universalism, Torrance never said so. Torrance himself could be quite forthright. At a Memorial Day service in Britain, a trusted source later told me, Torrance was making it quite clear to the people gathered that you don't go to heaven because you served your country well. He said that he had been a chaplain in World War II and he believed that most of the ones he served then are in hell today.

**RRJ** —This was Tom Torrance?

**FF** —It certainly was Tom Torrance. Most evangelicals, who would criticize him, would never go that far in such a setting. I introduced Torrance years later at Fuller Seminary where he was giving a short lecture series. I mentioned his love for Calvin and Barth and that maybe not everyone would agree with his interpretation of Barth.

**R R J** —There are several works on Thomas Torrance that have come out in the past two years. This is an extremely talented family.

**F F** —I agree. James Torrance may have been as sharp as Tom theologically, though he hasn't made the same impact. And then there was the younger brother David. I believe he went into the pastorate.

**R R J** —You taught at two different seminaries. You taught at the Alliance Seminary and then you taught at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando.

**F F** —I was at Alliance Seminary for ten years. I have been at Reformed Seminary in Orlando for thirteen years. I was here when they began this school.

**R R J** —That's a pretty significant amount of time. What are your thoughts after twenty-three years of teaching at the seminary level?

**F F** —The Alliance Seminary grew out of a school of missions, the Alliance School of Theology and Missions. Their big emphasis was on preparing missionaries, so anthropology loomed large there. In the very early days I taught all the theology and church history. The school had an activist missions mindset.

**R R J** —Did you have a lot of missionaries in your classes?

**F F** —Oh yes, quite a few and I still follow them in prayer through the Christian and Missionary Alliance prayer directory because they're all over the world. That's one of the joys of being a teacher. The Alliance has never taken a theological stance regarding Calvinism and Arminianism. You'd hear that in one section of the country one was stronger than the other. At the seminary when I taught there you had both. At the same time L. L. King was the foreign secretary and head of overseas



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missions before becoming president. Calvinistic writers had heavily influenced him so it wasn't that this theology was absent but when I came to Orlando I found a unanimity confessionally on Reformed issues. There was a much stronger emphasis on theology here in Orlando, which cheered me.

I recall one time that John Stott lectured at Alliance Seminary. A student asked him what should he major in to become particularly effective in our ministry. Stott gave him three answers that cheered me since theology wasn't that big a thing at the seminary. His three answers were—study very hard in systematic theology, historical theology, and contemporary theology. It wasn't what they were expecting to hear.

**R R J** —Now let's explore this for a minute. Just as in a missions context like you had in the Alliance, where you did not have as much emphasis on for systematic, historical and contemporary theology, do you see other weaknesses in more Reformed seminaries that might tend in a different direction?

**F F** —Yes I do. We haven't had as much emphasis on missions as I would like. In the Jackson RTS campus they've had more

of that than Orlando. My wife and I formed a missions forum and I teach the history of missions here as an elective, but I honestly get very few students who become missionaries.

**R R J**—One of my two majors in my master's degree work at Wheaton was in missions with Dr. Will Norton. You know him I am sure.

**F F**—Oh yes, he was at Reformed Seminary in Jackson for a while and now is at the Charlotte RTS campus.

**R R J**—What interests me so much in terms of your journey are the things you studied that later come back into usefulness in your life. I also studied missions, as I noted. I didn't think I was going to be a foreign missionary but I studied missions because I came to understand as a young guy that theology is really about missions. I think this is where we lose the connection. There is no disconnect if our theology is missiologically balanced. Missions is not a department of the Christian life. It is the life of the church, isn't it?

**F F**—It sure is. And one thing that impressed me about Emil Brunner was his desire to go to Japan and teach there after he retired.

**R R J**—That raises another question. Did you ever have contact with the late Lesslie Newbigin?

**F F**—Not personally, but I have read his work and I have always appreciated it.

**R R J**—I have appreciated him very much. His writing, his combination of a serious theology of mission with a generous orthodoxy is very attractive to me personally.

**F F**—I agree with you. My wonderful wife did a book on her missionary parents, *The Arabian Call*. In my preface I mentioned Samuel Zwemer, who is known as the apostle to Islam.

His background was Dutch Reformed.

**R R J**—Though most of Zwemer's books are out of print, I have collected some. There's some valuable thought there. He went to Princeton, didn't he?

**F F**—Yes, after his retirement from the field. He also used to go to Nyack College, which was then called the Missionary Training Institute, to give lectures. I heard him speak at Fuller, during my first or second year, when he had only had about two years to live. He did some great writing and he emphasizes theology in his mission to the Arabs. He was so respected and had a good theological background. He clearly served in one of the most difficult fields in the whole world. He could speak Arabic without an accent and knew well their literature. As a result he won great respect, though only a few converts. After those many years, he said that he would do it all again if given the choice. You don't get that mentality much today.

**R R J**—I like to always ask this next question. How have you, with all the academic work you've done in church history, historical theology, and as a writer/editor, kept your life centered on Christ day-to-day? What have you found helpful in the routines that you've used to stir up your own heart and mind?

**F F**—That's a very good question. I actually teach the devotional classics here at the seminary. So part of my answer is important as it relates to the life of future leaders. I went to an evangelical college and an evangelical seminary, yet I had never been encouraged to dig into the devotional and spiritual classics. I want to make this up to my students now. Sadly, as an example of my own deficiency, I had not read *Pilgrim's Progress* until I was doing a doctorate on the Puritans.

This reading in particular opened up this marvelous world of classical Christian writing. Still, I never got going on it strongly until I was at *Christianity Today* and we were up

against the *Christian Century*. They published an issue every week but we came out only every other week. I would lose many nights of sleep meeting deadlines so as to be competitive on timeliness of convention reports. I remember on one occasion working for forty-three hours on only three hours of sleep. I remember having a meal with several Christian leaders, including one named Ken Wilson, the editor of the *Christian Herald*. We were at a restaurant in Columbus, Ohio and on the way out of this restaurant I saw a rack of secular books, but they also had Brother Lawrence's *Practicing the Presence of God* and Henry Drummond's *The Greatest Thing in the World*. I picked these two books up that day. I was to take the train home because this deadline thing was really getting to me physically and the train gave me time to unwind and to get to know the countryside too.

I would travel overnight from Washington to Chicago so that I could get there about the same as if I had gotten up the next day and flown. A former religion editor at the old *Washington Star*, who didn't like to fly, would sometimes be on the train with me. He said the train is one place (this is before cell phones of course) where nobody can get at you. Well, that night on the train I got into Brother Lawrence and Henry Drummond and this is where this course on the classics started. I kept after the classics till they became a very basic part of my devotional life. I tell my students now that if it's a choice between the classics and the Bible then go for the Bible. But the classics are distillations of biblical truth as a rule so don't think that once you've read them you're through with them. There are some classics I have read more than fifty times.

**R R J** —That's amazing! What have you read more than fifty times?

**F F** —Well, you know that Spurgeon read *Pilgrim's Progress* more than a hundred times. Alexander Whyte read it almost a hundred times. I have some books that I read twice a year beginning at each semester.

**R R J** —Give some examples.

**F F** —When I was at *Christianity Today* someone who was apparently offended felt my writing had shown pride. They sent to me anonymously Andrew Murray's little book called *Humility*. I've read this particular book more than fifty times. I have struggles with pride, I really do, and so I just go back to that every semester.

**R R J** —What about *Practicing the Presence of God*?

**F F** —Yes, more than fifty times and Henry Drummond's little work more than fifty times because of its emphasis on love.

**R R J** —Now these are mostly Protestant works in spiritual formation? What about the Catholic writers?

**F F** —Brother Lawrence, of course, was Catholic.

**R R J** —There is a difference, and it would be interesting to talk about this briefly. What have you appreciated on the Catholic side of these classics and how have you benefited by these writers and how do you sort this out?

**F F** —Yes, I do profit from the whole body of classics. I had a student who was a nun and then became Protestant and later became a missionary to France. With her evangelical training she felt that she couldn't even read things like Thomas á Kempis because he was Catholic. So I reminded her that in the medieval period, this was the only game in town. And so I value Thomas á Kempis very highly. I have a little á Kempis calendar so that I read a paragraph of his every day. It's very rich stuff. And Brother Lawrence, as I said, I read twice a year along with Andrew Murray. I don't agree with everything these men teach but they have enough good shots that I need. These shots on pride, along with Alexander Whyte's Bible biographies, are great resources. I have marked parts of those on pride and on love and I'm into this virtually every day.

**R R J** —Do you read the monastics? Have you found some profit in any of these?

**F F** —Yes, I like to dip into John of the Cross. I also find some great things in the *Theologia Germanica*, the German theology that Luther thought very highly of.

**R R J** —What about the Pietists? How about Spener or the German Pietists?

**F F** —I haven't gotten into them as much as I might but I agree they are helpful too.

**R R J** —The Moravians are so much a part of the early missions movement, as you would know. What about them?

**F F** —Not as much, but I stress them in teaching both church history and devotional history. I put up a chart of the four wings of the Reformation—the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Anglican, and the Anabaptist. My students will say, "But what about the Moravians? Why aren't they here?" Well, they pre-date the various wings of the Reformation going back to John Huss, even back to Wycliffe. So, yes, I have great respect for these works too.

**R R J** —What about Savonarola, who precedes them by several centuries and was a marvelous grace preacher and devotional writer?

**F F** —I was in Florence once looking at the brass plate where they say he was burned at the stake. He was a tremendous preacher before the Reformation.

**R R J** —In your class on devotional classics do you have the students read from various classics? Is there any particular book or two that might be a text or do you just borrow from all the classics and have them read widely?

**F F** —Some of the texts I've used have gone out of print and so we bounce around a fair amount, but we go back to Augustine's *Confessions* in every class. I have each of the students pick one of the classics. They read in different areas but they pick one and they'll have to give a report on it. If I have fifty students in the class, they may only have five minutes, but that's their test for the term.

**R R J** —So they might pick Augustine's *Confessions* and have to report on that?

**F F** —The students get so enthusiastic about the material and their five minutes. Most of them have never gotten into this kind of material at all so they just start emoting about it before the whole group. I have witnessed this with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for example.

**R R J** —Have you ever used personally, or in class, Bonhoeffer's little classic *Life Together*?

**F F** —Years ago I was reading it when I was at World Vision. A colleague looked over and saw me reading *Life Together* and thought it was about marriage since I was about to get married. I agree with the book and I think it's just great material. I quote from it every time I teach that course.

**R R J** —I love it personally. I got into it some years ago and then of course began to study about this seminary in exile during Hitler's time. I was so moved by it that as a pastor I read excerpts at the Lord's Supper to my church. A page or a few paragraphs was all I needed because it is so rich about our life together and our common faith as believers. It's a great loss that evangelicalism, to varying degrees, got severed from this rich vein of devotional classics.

**F F** —Yes, it's really very sad. I reminded myself while I was teaching this particular course that I would never let this happen, even when I didn't have a course on these kinds of

books. I was telling my students that if you do well in theology, and Greek and Hebrew, but you miss out here you might not last long term in the pastorate. This is much more basic. If this area goes, you're gone as a pastor.

**R R J**—What about Helmut Thielicke, and his excellent book, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*?

**F F**—Yes, I use it too. I tell students that Thielicke is neo-orthodox, of course, and you won't agree with him on some higher critical things but he's very good. I say I wish this little book had been published when I was a theological student because it addresses the pride in all of us. Thielicke warns that this pride can kill you in studying theology.

**R R J**—Do you think this problem is one of the great failures of seminary education, as we know it today?

**F F**—Probably so. Knowledge does puff up, as the Apostle Paul reminds us. We should know that the more we know the more we know we don't know, but that's not enough. We've got to have the love of Christ. The more we know the greater the danger.

**R R J**—What do you tell a student is the great need in pastoral ministry?

**F F**—I tell them that keeping their heart hot toward Christ is a life and death matter. If they fail at that point Satan has won the battle. They will run out of steam with all the activity of the ministry unless they guard their own lives this way. You can't sustain such a lifestyle indefinitely. The time will come when there will be not only theological failure but, quite often, there will be moral failure. And lot of these egregious falls of famous men happen when they've become exhausted by doing good works for God, but haven't "stayed close to the fountain," as Abraham Kuyper put it.

**R R J**—Have you had any exposure to the renewal movements in the various mainline churches like the confessing movement in the Presbyterian Church, USA?

**F F**—Well, not as much as you have had, but I have great optimism there too. We're praying that such movements will help bring about recovery. Some stay in and bear a witness; others will say, "We're being compromised," and will get out. In the twentieth century you've had this response over and over. I think God uses both. I think some are led one way and some are led another. Each has its advantages, so each one has to search his own heart before God.

**R R J**—And each one has to be careful of the dangers in either choice?

**F F**—Exactly.

**R R J**—It seems to me that if you choose to leave the danger is to become divisive and angular. If you choose to stay the danger is to lose your cutting edge, to lose the fire, to give in at the point of the major political battles.

**F F**—Again, each one has to examine his own heart in these areas. Stay close to the Lord. Here again, the devotional life is absolutely critical to the ministry and purity of life. If we give God time, and we American activists don't like to take time to be holy, we would be amazed. Look at all that has to be done and remember what God can do in a minimum amount of time through a life surrendered to him. If all of our activity is based more on a kind of secular desire for success and achievement then we will lose all that really matters.

Evangelical means informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, as heard afresh in the sixteenth century Reformation by a direct return to Holy Scripture.

KARL BARTH (1886-1968)

Anglican evangelicalism is in a very peculiar position. We have been touched by "renewal" and even what is claimed as "revival" in recent decades, but at the same time we are further away than ever from Reformation. For example, within the "renewed" and "revived" Anglican evangelicalism of our generation, there is a new openness to the eucharist with vestments rather than the Lord's Supper with simple dress. Within our "renewed" and "revived" Church of England there is a growing interest in ministries which are not centered on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

DONALD ALLISTER

Evangelical theology is a *theologia viatorum* (a theology of wayfarers), not a *theologia comprehensorium* (a theology of those who have arrived conceptually). It sees itself on a pilgrimage to a heavenly city where faith will be supplanted by direct vision, but at present it is content simply to walk by faith.

DONALD G. BLOESCH

Who does not know that the holy canonical Scripture is contained within definite limits and that it has precedence over all letters of subsequent bishops, so that it is altogether impossible to doubt or question the truth or adequacy of what is written in it?

AUGUSTINE (354-430 A.D.)

Christianity is not the sacrifice we make, but the sacrifice we trust; not the victory we win, but the victory we inherit. That is the evangelical principle.

P. T. FORSYTH (1848-1921)

It is intolerable to think of decline, of a diminishing of numbers and interest in relation to what we knew in the past. People's standards have changed. They are accustomed to skilled and expert communication. They have been habituated to music and entertainment of a kind unknown only a relatively short time ago. They are used now to the theatrical and immediately impressive. They have accepted the reality of manipulation by the media.

JOHN R. DE WITT