

REVIVAL AND Reformation

HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER

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Contents

1. Definitions.....	1
2. Creation is Revival.....	2
3. What is Reformation?.....	6
4. Is There a Work of Reformation after Creation?.....	7
5. Is There Also a Work of Reformation after Resurrection?.....	9
6. Is there a Work of Reformation after Rebirth?.....	10
7. A Singular and Perfect Revival.....	10
8. Not a Perfect Human Nature.....	12
9. Two Parallel Tasks.....	12
10. Revival and Reformation Belong Together.....	14
11. Redemption.....	17
12. The Goal of Reformation.....	19
13. A Closer Look at Spiritual Reformation.....	22
14. The Experience of the Disciples.....	26
15. What Needs to be Done First?.....	29
16. The Experience of John the Baptist.....	29

Revival and Reformation

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The Review and Herald, February 25, 1902:

God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.

A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.

Definitions

The terms “revival” and “reformation” rarely appear in the Bible. However, the underlying principles of what the Spirit of Prophecy refers to as “revival and reformation” can be found throughout the Bible.

Revival usually signifies a raising from the dead.

Matthew 3

⁹ God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

It is a process of “making alive again.”

Romans 14

⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Reformation is the growth and renewal of the new life.

Colossians 3

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

¹⁰ And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Ephesians 4

²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

We will now study the Bible explanation of the principles of revival and reformation and in so doing, we will learn some important, practical lessons from them.

Creation is Revival

Genesis 1

³ Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

This was the first revival that took place on this earth, and the record of creation has been preserved for us so that we can understand just what this means.

Before God created the light,

Genesis 1

² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

We may not realize what the creation of light really means, because light is usually something that we take for granted. Without it, there would be darkness on the earth—no light from either natural sources (from the sun and other stars) or from artificial ones. It would be totally dark!

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 418:

Light is a blessing, a universal blessing, pouring forth its treasures on a world unthankful, unholy, demoralized.

Light is one of the essential conditions for all forms of life.

This is why the heathen worship the sun. Instead of honoring the Giver of light, they pray to the sun itself.

The original, dark condition of this world can be compared with death. There was no life present. And indeed, the Bible draws a parallel between darkness and death.

Job 10

²¹ Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, to the land of darkness and the shadow of death,

²² A land as dark as darkness itself, as the shadow of death, without any order, where even the light is like darkness.

Creation brought life, and the first step of creation was the introduction of light. A careful study of *Genesis* 1 reveals the process of creation. It was the Word of God that brought forth light and life:

Psalms 33

⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 148

⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.

The Word of God contains the power that brings forth life out of death. The same process of creating life from something that is lifeless is seen in the resurrection of the dead, as is confirmed in *Ezekiel* 37:

Ezekiel 37

¹ The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.

² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.

³ And He said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? So I answered, O Lord God, You know.

⁴ Again He said to me, Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!

⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.

⁶ I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.

⁸ Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Also He said to me, Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.

¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

When we compare these biblical records we see that in both creation and resurrection the same procedure was followed. In both cases God spoke and life came into existence.

Genesis 1

³ Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

Ezekiel 37

⁵ O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!

¹⁰ ...and breath came into them, and they lived.

The text in *Ezekiel 37* reveals that there is not just a physical resurrection but that the physical resurrection is a symbol of resurrection from spiritual death.

Ezekiel 37

¹¹ Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!

¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Creation and Resurrection: The Same Process



In the parable of the prodigal son Jesus also drew a direct comparison between physical and spiritual revival.

Luke 15

²⁴ For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.

When someone was baptized in the early church the Christians often sung a song from the text of *Ephesians 5*:

Ephesians 5

¹⁴ Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.

And Paul wrote:

Colossians 1

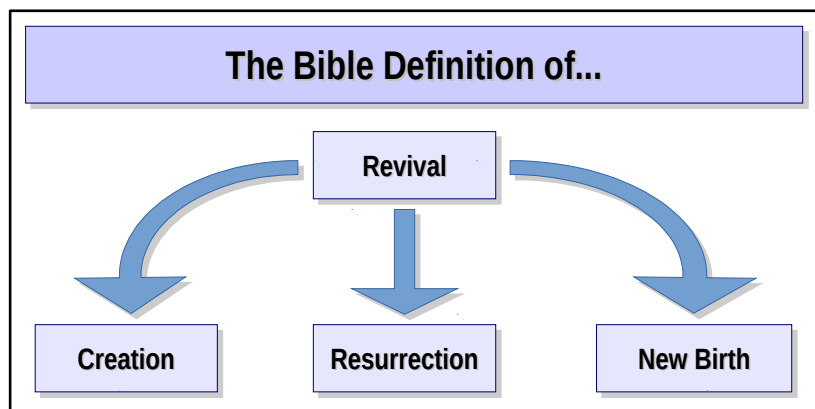
¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

2 Corinthians 4

⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

These texts show that when there is a spiritual resurrection, namely the rebirth, this involves the same procedure as that of creation.

Revival is, therefore, creation. It is a resurrection from physical death, and it is a resurrection from spiritual death, otherwise known as the rebirth.



What is Reformation?

The next question is: What is the meaning of “reformation”? In answering this question we again want to take the Bible as our guideline. And once again we want to understand the principles involved in this procedure so that we can see how it is applied in different situations.

Colossians 3

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

¹⁰ And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

The putting off of the old man, and putting on of the new man is the rebirth experience—the spiritual creation that makes a person a Christian. But this text also mentions a second work, namely the renewing of the new man. The original Greek word for “renewed” signifies a repetitive renewal or “growing” renewal. The same word is used in:

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁶ Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward

man is being renewed day by day.

This text also shows that the work of renewal is a work of growth. In other words, the work of revival is followed by growth. This second work is called “reformation.”

Is There a Work of Reformation after Creation?

Reformation is the continuation of revival. In the beginning, the Lord did not just want to give light and life, He wanted this life to be maintained—to develop and grow.

Genesis 1

²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

²⁹ And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.

Genesis 2

⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

After the creation of this world the Lord declared that His work “was very good.” *Genesis* 1:31. But can something which God Himself has declared to be “very good” be improved upon? It is evident that in this particular case reference is being made to the growth and maintenance of a very good creation, and not to the correction of a rather poor creation. This second work involved the following elements:

1. Human beings were to multiply;
2. They were to subdue the earth;
3. They were to eat the food that the Lord had provided;
4. They were to eat from the tree of life in order to live;
5. They were to pass the test concerning the tree of knowledge.

Humanity had no part to play in the work of creating the world. In fact, man could not possibly have been involved in it because the world was created before he even existed. Likewise, humanity had no part to play in its own creation.

However, in the work of reformation we must cooperate with God. This is evident in all the five points mentioned above. It is as if God, by creation, had given us materials to work with, and then said, “Now go to work!”

But even in doing this work God does not leave us alone. In fact, quite the opposite is true, for in every phase of reformation God is, and always will be, the Source of all life and growth. We are only His co-workers.

1 Corinthians 3

⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers.

We will now study the five aspects of reformation mentioned above from the perspective of our cooperation with God.

1. It is obvious that we have to do something in order to multiply. It requires spiritual, mental, and physical effort to be a parent. But without the continual working of the Life-giver nothing could be reproduced.
2. The task of cultivating the fertile earth as it came from the hand of the Father was, and still is, a tremendous responsibility. It requires the greatest efforts of science and technology, as well as our own mental and physical strength.

But what is all too often overlooked is that without the continual working of the Life-giver we could not be successful in any line. Indeed, the destructive works of an atheistic world are enough evidence to show how incapable we are of reaching this goal when we work without God. If God were to withdraw Himself completely, then we could do nothing at all.

3. We all know that we have to eat in order to live. We

have to work for our food and we also have to consider carefully what kind of food is good for us. And yet we cannot live from food alone. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” *Matthew 4:4*.

4. The tree of life offered a special kind of food. In this example it is easy for us to see how dependent we are on the Life-giver. Only God can give life, and He revealed this truth in giving the tree of life. But man had a work to do as well—he had to eat of it.
5. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was given to humanity, as was the tree of life, for the growth of character. Only the Lord could keep Adam from temptation, but Adam had to do his part as well. He had to avoid the tree of knowledge. If our first parents had withstood this temptation and passed the test, they would have grown mightily in character.

Is There Also a Work of Reformation after Resurrection?

We have seen that in all the five points mentioned above there was a work of reformation which followed creation, and in which humanity needed to cooperate with God. Now we want to see if there is also a work of reformation after physical resurrection. And we are especially interested in finding out if the same is true of spiritual resurrection.

Since we are dealing with the same procedure in all the cases of revival mentioned, we can expect that the Bible will also describe the work of reformation in each situation.

In the case of the resurrection of the faithful from physical death, the answer is plain. As we read in the Scriptures, this revival is followed by a life similar to what was originally possible for humanity after creation. For example, we read that those who are resurrected will have access to the tree of life and eat the fruit of it.

Revelation 2

⁷ To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Revelation 22

¹ And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22

¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

The description of these conditions, so similar to those of paradise, indicates that there will be growth after the resurrection just as there was after creation. This growth likewise relates to the spiritual, mental, and physical areas of life.

The Great Controversy, p, 644:

Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will “grow up” (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory.

Is there a Work of Reformation after Rebirth?

In *Colossians* 3:9-10 and *2 Corinthians* 4:16 Paul describes the spiritual reformation that takes place after rebirth. It is therefore obvious that such a work exists, and that it is indispensable. Every serious Bible student will understand that a spiritual reformation must inevitably follow the revival from spiritual death. The Bible clearly teaches this.

A Singular and Perfect Revival

Before studying any further texts we want to emphasize the thought that the Lord created this earth only once. A second creation was not necessary because the first was “very good.” After this it was only necessary for the new creation to

grow.

The restoration of the earth after the thousand years' rest is not a second creation in the sense that the first creation was incomplete. It is rather a new creation, which is only necessary because the first heaven and earth have passed away.

Revelation 21

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

The same is true of the resurrection from physical death, which is actually a re-creation.

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁰ Nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

After this, there is only growth.¹ The pattern is always the same: there is a single, perfect revival that is followed by growth. There are many Bible texts which confirm that this revival is perfect.

Philippians 3

¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.

Colossians 1

²⁸ That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 John 3

⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born

¹ An exception to this rule is people like Lazarus who were resurrected to a mortal condition. In these cases, theirs was not the resurrection that is promised at the second coming, but only an illustration of it. Of those who have been resurrected to the promised immortality, like Moses for example, we read that "the second death has no power" over them. *Revelation 20:6.*

of God.

The revival from spiritual death is a work that the Lord says is “very good” or perfect. And because it is perfect it does not need to be repeated. What does need to take place after revival is reformation.

Not a Perfect Human Nature

There is another aspect which needs to be clarified before we can really understand the reformation that follows spiritual resurrection.

The revival we are discussing here is a spiritual resurrection, not a physical resurrection of the body, or of human nature. Our spiritual rebirth does not change our mortal, sinful flesh because God sent “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” *Romans* 8:3.

This of course means that the condition of a person after their spiritual revival is different from that of man before the fall. It is because of our sinful, human nature that we cannot be said to be sinless.

1 John 1

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

The perfect work of revival in this context refers to the spiritual nature, not to human nature.

Two Parallel Tasks

Consequently, the reformation that follows spiritual resurrection covers two areas:

1. The spiritual life that is “very good” and “perfect” must grow. It can develop, and it must be repeatedly renewed, as we have already seen.
2. A work must be done on our human nature. It has to be

cleansed from sin and undergo a change in its thinking patterns and habits.

Both of these tasks must be carried out concurrently. The success of the work of reformation depends on this. The one task cannot be done without the other.

Romans 13

¹² Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

The new, spiritual life can grow only when the work of cleansing in the human nature progresses, because “new wine must be put into new wine-skins.” *Luke 5:38*. It is only when we escape the corruption in the world that the seed of Christ can grow within us.

2 Peter 1

⁴ That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The work of cleansing the human nature however, can make progress only when it is founded on a strong and growing spiritual nature.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

To whatever extent our human nature is not cleansed, our spiritual nature cannot grow. And to whatever extent our spiritual nature does not grow, we lack the power to cleanse our human nature. The two must proceed together, for they are inseparably related.

The work of spiritual reformation is described in many places in the Bible. The following texts are some examples of them. Concerning growth we read:

Ephesians 4 [NIV]

¹⁵ ...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Peter also clearly describes this growth as a series of steps:

2 Peter 1

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

⁶ To knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness.

The goal of this growth is character perfection:

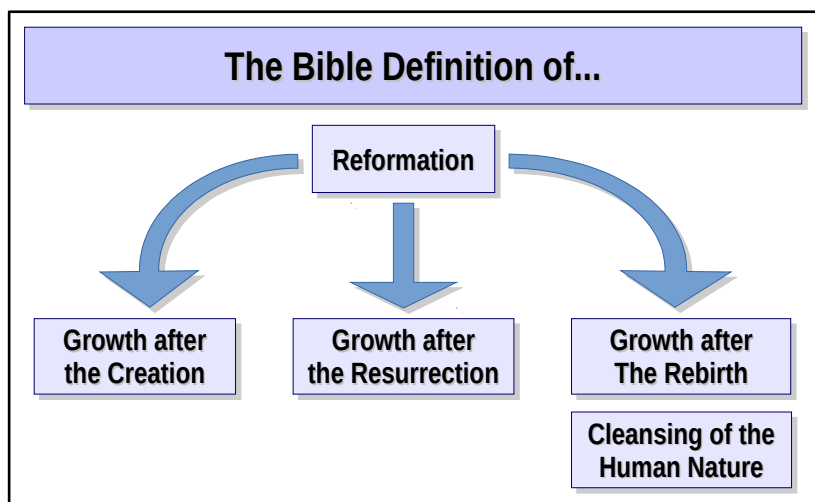
Ephesians 4

¹³ Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Concerning the cleansing of our human nature we read:

2 Corinthians 7

¹ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.



As we will be dealing with the work of spiritual reformation in more detail later in this article, these Scriptures should suffice for the moment.

Revival and Reformation Belong Together

Revival and reformation have to work hand in hand, otherwise the work will not be complete.

It is impossible for reformation to take place without a revival first. Without the creation described in Genesis, there could be no growth or reproduction, nor would it be possible to subdue the earth etc. Similarly, it is easy to see that there can be no reformation without a physical resurrection. A dead person cannot eat from the tree of life or grow.

Both of these examples are so obvious that nobody would even try to do the second work without the first. But when it comes to the spiritual application of this principle, people repeatedly try to take the second step without taking the first. In *Romans 7* Paul describes the utter futility of attempting to carry out reformation without a revival:

Romans 7

¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Finally, he is forced to cry out,

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

It is therefore obvious that a reformation cannot occur unless there is first a revival. But the opposite is also true, namely that revival alone cannot fulfill God's plan.

Let us first consider this in the example of creation. The creation was complete in itself, and even "very good," so that there was no need of a second creation. But God wanted a reformation to take place as well so that the earth would be filled with sinless, happy people.

Unfortunately, this reformation did not take place. The first couple did not stand the test in regard to the tree of knowledge and this rendered the work of creation null and void. Everything on this earth will finally die and it will return to its original darkness. This fact reveals how important it is that the work of reformation follows revival.

In the case of the physical resurrection of the wicked we see that the same principle applies here as well. A resurrection without an ensuing reformation, which would mean eating from the tree of life in this instance, is of no value. The wicked will have to die again because, although they have been resurrected, they will not eat from the tree of life.

Revelation 20

⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

Revelation 21

⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

As we would expect, the same principle also applies to the spiritual resurrection. Although the rebirth is a mighty work, it will prove to be worthless unless the spiritual reformation follows. Jesus referred to this truth when He gave the following parable.

Matthew 12

⁴³ When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.

⁴⁴ Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.

⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.

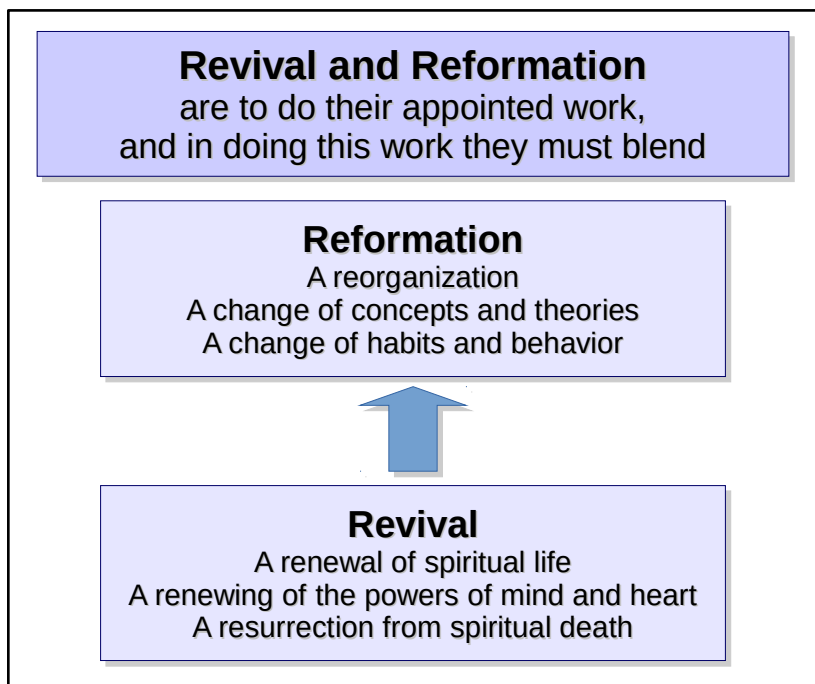
The opening quotation of this article also makes us realize the necessity of revival and reformation blending together.

The Review and Herald, February 25, 1902:

God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.

A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices.

Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.



Redemption

The work of redemption includes both revival and reformation. It cannot begin without revival, and without reformation it is incomplete and therefore of no value. It is the spiritual resurrection, the deliverance from the bondage of sin, which is primarily of the greatest interest to us, and therefore demands our greatest attention.

The creation of this world and the physical resurrection of the dead are valuable examples that help us to understand the work of redemption better. Through studying the Bible records of these two events, the work of revival and reformation becomes much clearer.

Spiritual revival is a new creation, a resurrection from death. It has nothing to do with waking up a sleeping person. It is true that the Bible does speak of death as a sleep (see *John* 11:11-13), in order to help us understand how easy it is for God to wake us up. But sleep is different from death, because it does not require creative power to wake up a person from their normal sleep. In contrast to this, it is impossible to raise up a dead person without creative power.

Ephesians 2

¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Jesus describes the spiritual resurrection as being born again:

John 3

³ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Through this process God creates a new spiritual nature in us:

John 3

⁶ That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ He is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

With the new birth the Christian life begins that then needs to grow.

As we have already seen, it is impossible for the spiritual life to grow unless the human nature is cleansed at the same time, and this cleansing is a painful process. Let us take a closer look at this work.



The Goal of Reformation

What is the goal of reformation? Where does it lead us? The goal is the restoration of the image of God in humanity.

Romans 8

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-

born among many brethren.

Jesus confirms this goal with the words,

Matthew 5

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

To be perfect means to be without sin. John also confirms that the goal of reformation is sinlessness:

1 John 3

⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

The freedom from sin that is promised here does not mean freedom from our sinful flesh. Before we can be freed from our sinful flesh every sin within us has to be destroyed, as it is written,

Romans 8

³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.

In every age the work of reformation has prepared individual believers for eternity. But this work must achieve the goal of perfection for the church of God as a whole. When it can be said of the church of Christ that “in their mouth was found no deceit,” and that “they are without fault” (*Revelation* 14:5), then they will be ready for the sealing described in *Revelation* 7:

Revelation 7

¹ After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.

³ And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom

it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.

There will be a special phase of reformation for the church of God in the last days before Christ can come again.

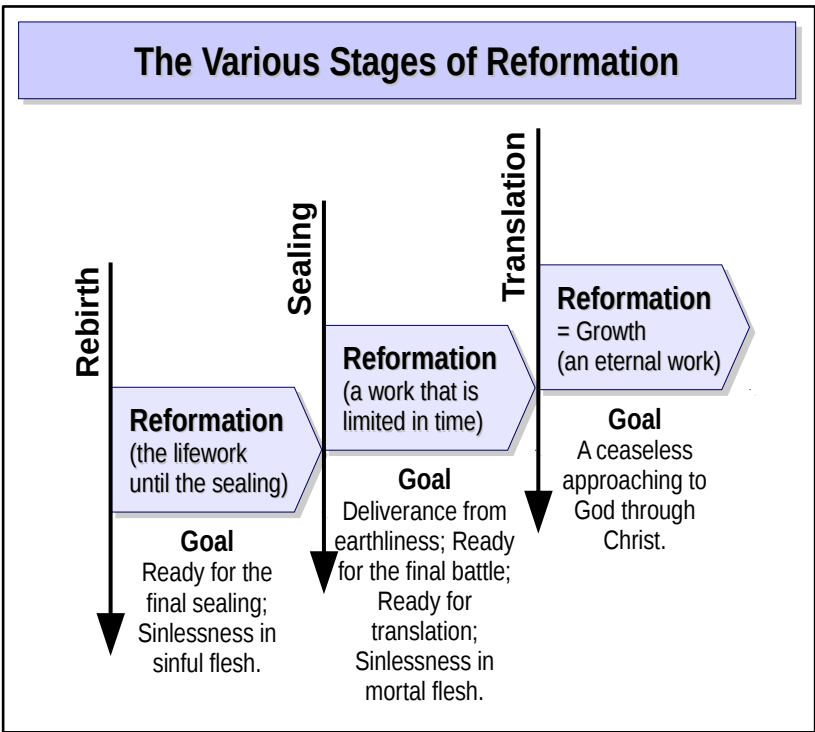
Malachi 3

² But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderer’s soap.

³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.

The Great Controversy, p. 621:

God’s love for His children during the period of their



severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.

By permitting this cleansing work to be done in them, the believers prepare the way for the instantaneous resurrection and translation of God's people from all ages. See *1 Corinthians* 15 and *1 Thessalonians* 4. When the dead are raised incorruptible, and the living have been given an immortal body, then the final phase of reformation can take place, for there is still room for growth after that.

2 Corinthians 3

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Desire of Ages, p. 331:

Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ.

A Closer Look at Spiritual Reformation

Nature testifies to the fact that it has been fashioned according to a uniform pattern. Whatever happens in the macrocosm can also be observed in the microcosm. There are similar processes and systems in both. This fact is apparent in the science of biology as well as in physics.

We might compare the rebirth with the macrocosm and reformation with the microcosm. Although there is a difference between the two, there are also fundamental similarities. The same spiritual laws apply, as the following verse confirms:

Colossians 2

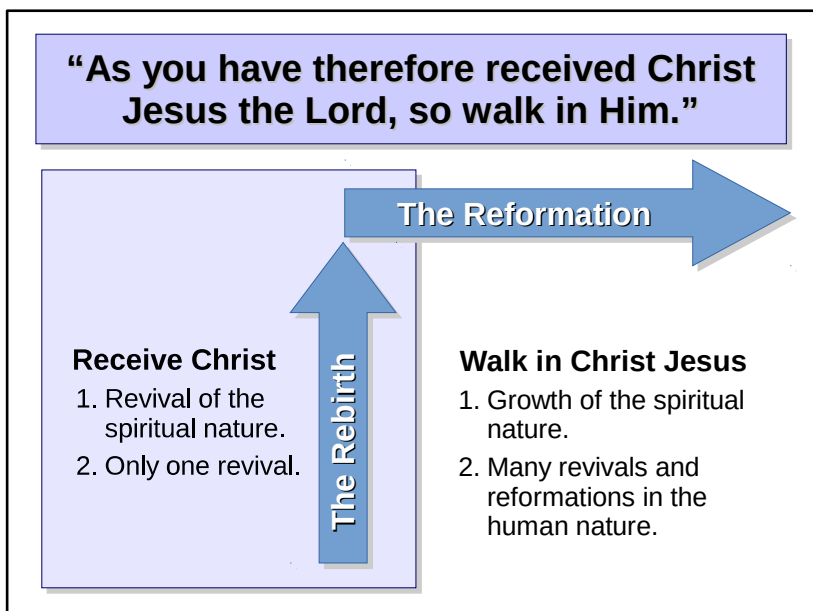
⁶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

To “receive Christ” is to experience the new birth. To “walk in Him” refers to the work that follows—the reformation. The word “as” connects the two works. “As” means “in the same

way” or “according to the same principles.”

Just as creative power is necessary for the rebirth, so it is also necessary for the reformation. Creation means revival. And the works of revival and reformation are actually repeated at every step in the cleansing of the human nature.

This is not a repetition of the rebirth, because that work has been fully done, but it is exactly the same creative process that occurs at rebirth. The following diagram should help us to understand this point more clearly.



For this study it is important for us to understand that the work of reformation includes many phases of revival and reformation, or growth. This is the only way our human nature can be cleansed. This aspect has not always been seen so clearly in the past. And yet we make a disastrous mistake when we ascribe something to the work of the rebirth when it actually belongs to the work of reformation, or vice-versa. In the past, this lack of understanding has led some to interpret their experience wrongly.

Is it not quite natural to assume that the desire to do right will automatically spring from the inner soul once a person has the new heart? Why is it then, that we are forced to admit that this is not always the case? Why are we not perfectly united as the people of God, when we all believe the same truth? Why is there often still a secret desire for the highest position?

We could say that these unfortunate circumstances exist because there are people like Judas in the church, tares among the wheat, the foolish among the wise virgins. But we should not look for the answer in these things alone. Apart from the fact that we cannot pluck out the tares ourselves, there is also no point in searching out the mistakes of others. If it is true that there is a Judas among the disciples, then the disciples will still have to answer as to why they so easily fall for his evil suggestions.

The reason for our lack of growth must lie elsewhere. We have indeed made honest efforts in the area of reformation, but we cannot make any progress without the work of revival that needs to accompany it.

The Review and Herald, February 25, 1902:

Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.

In the life of a Christian there must be several revivals and reformations (corresponding to the various areas of our lives) within the extensive work of reformation that follows the re-birth experience.

What often happens is this: the word of God is preached with clarity and power. Under the searching ministry of the Holy Spirit we clearly see our wrong thoughts and bad habits. We desire a real change, and even make a straight confession where we condemn our sin and express our consecration to

righteousness. We understand our past sins and can show where we went wrong. We understand that we were blind. But despite our plain confession we see the old problems coming up again and again.

It is simply not enough for us to be converted in our understanding. What is needed is a conversion of heart in regard to this particular sin. The change of heart and change of mind must occur simultaneously. Only when this is done have we really taken a step forward in the work of reformation. Then we will soon be able to learn more, which of course will lead to further cleansings.

The co-working of revival and reformation in the human nature is necessary for every sin which has to be removed from us before we can be ready for the final sealing. David had a right conception of this work when he prayed,

Psalm 51

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

David had already experienced the rebirth. Like the disciples in the upper chamber, he was “clean” (see *John* 13:10) in regard to his spiritual nature. But he needed a new heart in regard to the work of cleansing from sin in his human nature. He knew very well that a mere acknowledgment of his wrong behavior was not enough in order to be cleansed.

It was not enough for him to see the far-reaching consequences of his sin, or to be sincerely sorry for it. In order for David to obtain a lasting forgiveness, he needed a deeper cleansing—a change of heart.

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 114:

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He “will abundantly pardon,” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded

all that we could comprehend:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:7-9.

God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalms 51:10

Revival and Reformation
are to do their appointed work,
and in doing this work they must blend

Reformation

Instruction
Cleansing of ideas and habits
Convalescence



Revival

Conversion
Cleansing of the heart
Healing

The Experience of the Disciples

How closely revival (or cleansing of the heart) and reformation (or cleansing of wrong concepts and habits) need to work together can be seen in the example of the disciples. From the outset they had wrong concepts, and this led to their

hearts being contaminated.

The Desire of Ages, p. 409:

Those who classed themselves with the followers of Jesus, but who had not left all in order to become His disciples, were influenced in a great degree by the reasoning of the Pharisees. They were often vacillating between faith and unbelief, and they did not discern the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ. Even the disciples, though outwardly they had left all for Jesus' sake, had not in heart ceased to seek great things for themselves. It was this spirit that prompted the strife as to who should be greatest.

First of all, the disciples were influenced by the reasoning of the Pharisees. Then, these wrong concepts led them into unbelief, and each became ambitious to be the greatest. Finally, this sorry state of heart led to strife.

The extent to which their wrong concepts of the kingdom of God repeatedly led them into disputes can be clearly seen in the following statement:

The Desire of Ages, p. 643:

There was "a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." This contention, carried on in the presence of Christ, grieved and wounded Him. The disciples clung to their favorite idea that Christ would assert His power, and take His position on the throne of David. And in heart each still longed for the highest place in the kingdom.

On the one hand, their wrong concepts led to strife, and on the other hand, it was not possible for them to grasp Jesus' messages because their hearts were unclean.

The Desire of Ages, p. 432:

On the journey through Galilee, Christ had again tried to prepare the minds of His disciples for the scenes before Him. He told them that He was to go up to Jerusalem to be put to death and to rise again. And He added the strange and solemn announcement that He was to be betrayed into the hands of His enemies.

The disciples did not even now comprehend His words. Al-

though the shadow of a great sorrow fell upon them, a spirit of rivalry found a place in their hearts. They disputed among themselves which should be accounted greatest in the kingdom.

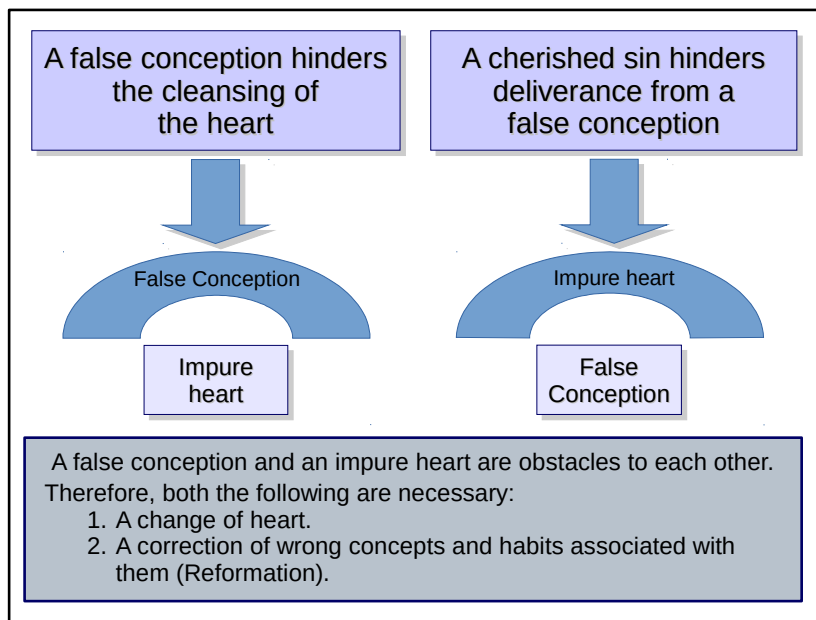
The Desire of Ages, p. 643:

On this last evening with His disciples, Jesus had much to tell them. If they had been prepared to receive what He longed to impart, they would have been saved from heart-breaking anguish, from disappointment and unbelief. But Jesus saw that they could not bear what He had to say. As He looked into their faces, the words of warning and comfort were stayed upon His lips. Moments passed in silence.

In the example of the disciples we can clearly see that it is not enough to have just our wrong concepts corrected.

The Desire of Ages, p. 437:

It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom. What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him



in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness.

What Needs to be Done First?

It is indeed a vicious circle. A wrong concept stains the heart; and an impure heart clouds the understanding so that we cannot grasp the words of Jesus—which are designed to correct our understanding. How can we break this cycle? Where do we have to start so that we can make real progress in the work of reformation?

Despite our spiritual blindness, the Holy Spirit is sometimes successful in convicting us of sin and showing us our wrong concepts. But this is not the entire work. Conviction of sin is only the first step.

The most important work must follow—the cleansing of the heart. Once the sin has been seen, we can cooperate with God. Like David, we can humble ourselves before God and ask him for a clean heart and a right spirit. When this work has been done, our minds will be more perceptive so that we can recognize the sinfulness of sin in ever clearer lines.

The Experience of John the Baptist

There is however another way for our hearts to be cleansed of sin, and it is much better. Like John the Baptist, we can gain clearer and clearer conceptions of the character of Jesus, and by beholding we become changed. Through this process, the heart is cleansed by the working of the Holy Spirit. Consequently our minds are prepared to understand the words of Christ, and even welcome His rebukes.

John the Baptist is an excellent example of the success of this way. He too had false concepts about the kingdom of

God, but he buried himself in meditating upon the Messiah, and as he studied His character he forgot himself.

The Desire of Ages, p. 103:

He looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was forgotten. He beheld the majesty of holiness, and felt himself to be inefficient and unworthy. He was ready to go forth as Heaven's messenger, unawed by the human, because he had looked upon the Divine.

In this way John experienced a change of heart, even though he still lacked a right understanding. Jesus said of him,

Matthew 11

¹¹ ...he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Desire of Ages, p. 103:

John did not fully understand the nature of the Messiah's kingdom.

What did John need now—a change of heart or to have his understanding corrected? By beholding the character of Christ, John's heart had been purified, and so it was mainly his understanding that needed to be corrected. A simple rebuke from the mouth of the Saviour was enough, and John understood immediately.

Matthew 11

⁶ Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.

The Desire of Ages, p. 217:

The disciples bore the message, and it was enough.

The Desire of Ages, p. 218:

The principle of the Baptist's own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah's kingdom.

The hearts of John and Jesus were in full harmony, and that is why John did not find it difficult to give up his wrong concepts. Once we have achieved the maturity of John the Baptist, we will be able to learn very fast indeed. There will be no more strife among us because we will all be sitting at the feet

of Jesus.

The disciples of Christ were not as advanced as John, even though they were born again and had testified to their experience by baptism. The cause of the problem was not to be found in their spiritual nature. They did not need to be baptized again. What they did need was a cleansing of their hearts that had been stained by sin; a cleansing of the evil spirit of jealousy, envy, and pride. This cleansing is illustrated in the foot-washing.

At the Passover meal the Saviour did more for His disciples than just cleanse them of their wrong concepts. He also cleansed their hearts so that each was willing to give the other the highest place. Judas of course had no part in this victory. He retained his evil spirit and went out into the darkness to fulfill the desires of his impure heart.

Whichever way the Lord chooses to reveal our problems to us, we should be willing to accept the revelation and ensure that we do not experience only a reformation, nor just a revival, but both together. All the power of the Creator is available to us, so that both heart and spirit can be made pure.

At the same time we should make an effort to apply the principle that “by beholding we become changed.” In this way the spiritual life within us will grow so that we can be transformed into the image of Christ. Only thus will we be able to grasp the greater depths of present truth—the truth that is to prepare us for the final sealing and the final battle.