

I KNOW THAT FOR THE RIGHT PRACTICE OF IT, THE HEART MUST BE EMPTY OF ALL OTHER THINGS; BECAUSE GOD WILL POSSESS THE HEART ALONE; AND AS HE CANNOT POSSESS IT ALONE, WITHOUT EMPTYING IT OF ALL BESIDES, SO NEITHER CAN HE ACT THERE, AND DO IN IT WHAT HE PLEASURES, UNLESS IT BE LEFT VACANT TO HIM. ■ THERE IS NOT IN THE WORLD A KIND OF LIFE MORE SWEET AND DELIGHTFUL, THAN THAT OF A CONTINUAL CONVERSATION WITH GOD: THOSE ONLY CAN COMPREHEND IT WHO PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE IT; YET I DO NOT ADVISE YOU TO DO IT FROM THAT MOTIVE; IT IS NOT PLEASURE WHICH WE OUGHT TO SEEK IN THIS EXERCISE; BUT LET US DO IT FROM A PRINCIPLE OF LOVE, AND BECAUSE GOD WOULD HAVE US.

BROTHER LAWRENCE



A recent question from a friend left me scratching my balding pate: “Would you consider yourself a ‘Calvinist?’” He asked in an e-mail message.

Honestly, I don’t expend much time or energy contemplating such things. It is a perfectly respectable question, but I’ve never been big on labels—especially when it comes to the things of God. God, to me, is personal, intimate, and while He does not change in the least, the relationships He enjoys with his many and different children are each unique from the others. The members of the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—do not have relationships with labels; they have relationships with *people*—people of beating hearts, doubts and misgivings, ecstatic joys, and desperate needs.

So when people start throwing around

fifty-cent “—isms,” such as Augustinianism, Calvinism, Christocentric Trinitarianism, Arminianism, anthropocentrism and theocentrism, my eyes glaze over and I reach for the nearest bottle of aspirin.

First cousins to the aforementioned group labels are the names of formal creeds and “confessions,” such as the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, or, more common, the Apostle’s Creed. Unfortunately, overmuch emphasis placed on these implies that one is required either to accept or reject each in their letter-perfect totality.

And speaking of confessions, I must confess that when the question regarding my “Calvinism” was posed, I hadn’t a clue whether I was a Calvinist, an Arminian, or

a prehensile turnip. So I turned to the books to find out.

All in All

Come to find out, I *am* something closely related to a Calvinist: a Reformist. Who would have guessed? While I wait for my membership card to arrive in the mail, permit me to pass along the evidence for such.

According to the *New Dictionary of Theology*, the *centrality of God* is a central theme of “Reformed theology.” Its position is that “human self-knowledge is attained only in the light of the knowledge of God,” and that “we are able to recognize who we are only when confronted by the supreme majesty and transcendent holiness of the living God as He makes Himself known to us in His word, by His Spirit.” According to

Reformed theology, “salvation in its entirety is the work of God.” Most pointedly, “*the whole of personal and corporate life is to be subjected to God.*” Reformed theology has consistently sought to order the whole of life according to the requirements of God in Scripture.”

You have my permission to refer to me as a Reformist, a Calvinist, an aging Baptist, or a card-carrying prehensile turnip. All I care about is that God, through Christ, is at the center of everything we know and hope to know.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:36

For the God-seeking Christian, everything points to God. God is all in all, and if we choose to seek Him, we will find Him wherever we look.

Omni-influence

It isn't that we find ourselves bumping into God at every turn; it is not necessarily like running into an old friend we might happily meet on the street. Rather, it is like seeing and experiencing everything in our life as if through our own private “God filter.” The Holy Spirit, in residence in our body, receives and translates every experience into a form that both glorifies God and illumines His character for us. It begins with God's omnipresence, but then expands and matures into His *omni-influence*.

○ Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar.
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, ○ Lord, You know it all.
You have enclosed me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is too high, I cannot attain to it.
Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

Psalms 139:1-10

Oil and Water

Most people segment and segregate portions of their lives, ignoring the fact that everything points toward, or leads forward or back to, God. Most people would rather isolate the spiritual part of their life—if it exists at all—literally restricting it to Sundays, or otherwise segregating it from their day-to-day, secular activities.

If they spend forty hours during the week roofing houses, for example, that activity is, for them, separate from Sunday morning worship; like oil and water, cohabitating, but never mixing. That doesn't mean that for those forty hours they are despicable heathen, and on Sunday morning magically become sanctified saints. It is just that they

see no obvious connection or relationship between what are to them disparate parts of their lives.

Revelation

The God-seeking believer, in contrast, welcomes into his life all that God is willing to reveal of Himself at *any* time. And what is that revelation? Oehler has said that this is

...the whole nature of God, by which He attests His personal presence in the relation into which He has entered with man, the divine self-manifestation, or the whole of that revealed side of the divine nature, which is turned towards man.

Commentary on the Old Testament

by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

This means, then, that the believer is always ready—even eager—to learn from and worship his or her God at any time. As God is revealed, He is worshipped: one cannot be illumined by the truth of God without, as a result, worshipping or praising the one just revealed. For what is revealed is not natural, but supernatural. The revelation of God—whether found inside a majestic cathedral or atop a roof littered with new shingles—should have the effect of bringing us to our knees in awe-struck adoration for the one who created not only us, but everything about us.

Next Week: *The Fingerprint of God*

*His priest am I, before Him day and night,
Within His Holy Place;
And death, and life, and all things dark and bright,
I spread before His Face.
Rejoicing with His joy, yet ever still,
For silence is my song;
My work to bend beneath His blessed will,
All day, and all night long—
For ever holding with Him converse sweet,
Yet speechless, for my gladness is complete.*

Gerhard Tersteegen