

# SOME WELSH MINISTERS

FROM HOWELL HARRIS TO CHRISTMAS EVANS



*J.R. Broome*

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By

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## Howell Harris (1714-1773)



Howell Harris was born at Trevecca, near Talgarth, in January 1714. His father was a carpenter, who had moved about the year 1700 from Carmarthenshire to the district of Talgarth in Breconshire. Howell was one of four children, having two older brothers and a sister. He was brought up in an outwardly religious life, and vividly remembered, as a boy of seven, walking to Talgarth Church with his brother to recite his catechism. At this tender age, God's greatness and the importance of eternity pressed so heavily on his mind, that if he saw the village children playing on the Sabbath, he

could not refrain from rebuking them. His eldest brother, Joseph, was a close companion, and his first teacher. While he followed the trade of a blacksmith, Joseph Harris was no ordinary man. He went to London in 1724, when Howell was ten years old, and became friendly with Halley, the royal astronomer. In 1737 he became assistant assay-master of the King's Mint, which gave him the right of residence in the Tower of London, and was appointed chief assay-master in 1748.

So, at the age of ten, Howell lost the friendship of his brother, though Joseph continued to take an interest in him, writing from London and urging his parents to give Howell as good an education as they could afford. In 1725 he went to a local elementary school, and in 1728 he was placed in a grammar school at Llwyn-llwyd in the parish of Llanigon near Hay-on-Wye. Here Howell studied Greek and Latin, and used to use a good deal of Latin in his earlier diaries. These reveal how he joined in all the amusements and innocent mischief with his fellow students. At the end of the summer of 1729, he was dangerously ill, and this doubtless checked his spirit. In August 1730 his brother Joseph pressed upon him the need to seek out a suitable career, and it seems at this time he had thoughts of the ministry of the Church of England. His brother, who sometimes sailed to the West Indies to test out nautical instruments, left England in 1730. While this was a loss to Howell, in March 1731 he suffered an even greater loss in the death of his father.

He was just seventeen, and was forced to leave the grammar school at Llwyn-llwyd, and go out to seek some means of earning his living. In January 1732 he was appointed schoolmaster at Llan-gors, a small township near Syfaddan Lake, not far from his home. He was here for about eighteen months, possibly a little longer. Llan-gors was a place with a doubtful reputation in those days, and Howell's mother was very anxious for her young son of eighteen, with little to occupy him, and no father or brother at hand to guide him. He became involved in godless company, he loved arguments, and delighted in mocking the few Nonconformists in the area. He described Llan-gors as, "the place where I first broke out in the devil's service." When preaching there some years afterwards, he said to his congregation, "Many of you used to go with me towards hell, and God's grace must have been free, or else I would not have received it, because I was the worst of you all." Yet his worldly amusements gave him no peace of mind. An occasional sermon would make his life distasteful to him, and on one occasion he dreamed that the great Day of Judgment had arrived, and that he was standing before the judgment seat compelled to give an account of himself. On such occasions he vowed to lead a better life, and even tried to pray. "I tried to turn to God in my own power, but I did not succeed until the day His power came."

When his brother returned from Jamaica, he came to visit him at Llan-gors, and found that Howell was dissatisfied with his position in life. Joseph advised him to stay where he was for the



while, promising to look for something better for him as soon as he could. This he did, eventually finding for him an appointment as a schoolmaster in Hampshire. In November 1734 he wrote to him, telling him of this post and pointing out that it would give him an opportunity of taking a degree at Oxford. By the time he received this letter, Howell had left Llan-gors, and was in charge of a school on the other side of the lake, in the old church of Llangasty (Tal-y-llyn). He was in lodgings with a gentleman named Mr. Lewis Jones of Trebinsiwn Mansion in that parish. While there, Howell regularly spent his weekends at his mother's home at Trevecca, and fairly regularly attended the Sunday services at Talgarth Church.

He was now twenty-one and his mind had been set upon the ministry for some years, yet he had never come to the Lord's Table. This could have been through sheer indifference, or quite possibly because he felt himself unfit and unworthy to approach the Table. Difficulties arose concerning his post in Hampshire, so that he was kept at Llangasty until November 1735. While he himself had no hand in this delay, he came before long to realise that the hand of God was in this matter, and this waiting period was to be the very time when God would call him by grace, and "make the insignificant schoolmaster of Llangasty, not a school-teacher in England, but the Apostle of Jesus Christ to the Welsh people, who at that time were in a condition of utter spiritual destitution." (The Early Life of

Howell Harris by Richard Bennett, Banner of Truth Trust, page 18.)

In the Established Church in 1735 there were a few gracious men left, while for the most part the clergy were content to leave their parishioners to live just as they pleased. Some clergymen, who had a more cultured and moral outlook, supported the schools of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and the Society for the Reformation of Manners, but they had little success. "This is not surprising because the Doctrine of Grace had vanished from the pulpits" (Richard Bennett). Mostly the ministry consisted of a dry morality, knowing nothing of the power of the Holy Spirit. Great emphasis was laid on men being ordained, and little on what they knew or preached. The Rev. Pryce Davies, the vicar of Talgarth, was one of these more moral clergymen. His worst faults were that he hunted, and was occasionally guilty of getting drunk. At the same time he laid great emphasis on regular Sunday services, and services on weekdays, and when he became a magistrate he tried to bring about a moral reformation which he had failed to obtain through his pulpit. Yet for all his efforts few attended his church, and even fewer came to the Lord's Table.

On the Sunday before Easter 1735, Mr. Davies preached on the necessity of coming to the Lord's Table, and among other things said; "You say that you are not fit to come to the Table. Well, then, I say that you are not fit to pray; yea, you are not fit to live, and neither are you fit to die." Howell Harris,

who had come to morning service quite unconcerned, was deeply convicted by the vicar's remarks, and determined to come to the Table on the following Sunday. Returning home, he met one of his best friends, Joseph Saunders, a blacksmith in the hamlet of Trevecca, and to him he repeated the vicar's words, so solemnly that the blacksmith could not forget them and they were eventually blessed to him as the means of his conversion. Further on, Howell Harris met Evan the Weaver with whom he had a long-standing feud. Obeying the command read at the end of the sermon, he approached him, admitted his fault, begged forgiveness and the two were reconciled.

His concern of mind remained with him during the following week, and he did attend the Lord's Table the next Sunday, an action which deepened the impressions already made on his mind by an apprehension that he had come unworthily. Now he resolved to follow a new life, while at the same time there remained in him a carnal spirit, seeking to draw him back to his old habits. On Sunday, 20th April 1735, for some reason he did not return home, but stayed at his lodgings at Trebinsiwn Mansion. About nine o'clock that morning when the convictions of the last three weeks were almost forgotten, he casually picked up an old book, "The Whole Duty of Man". Turning over the pages, he began to read the one headed "On self-examination," and as he read it the Lord suddenly convicted him for the first time as a lost and ruined sinner. He says, "All my natural faculties were confounded in the

shock.” At the same time, he knew nothing of the way of salvation, and as he had no one to guide him, he set about working for his salvation. He returned to Trevecca the next weekend, and told his friend, Joseph Saunders, of the light he had received on his condition, and his resolution to fight his way towards life. The blacksmith agreed to join him, and the next Sunday they rose early, and keeping away from the villagers, endeavoured to keep the Sabbath perfectly. After this, three of four others joined them in their efforts.

Harris set out to keep a holy life, reading, praying and fasting, and striving against sin. He cut himself off from all his pleasures, friends and everything he considered worldly, living on bread and water, fasting for three days a week, and sharing what little money he had amongst the poor. Such was his temptation that he considered it nothing to retrace his steps a long distance if he could not remember for certain whether he had closed gates or not. He really began to feel he was winning, until one Sunday he went to Talgarth Church and heard a young clergyman preaching about the necessity of growing in grace. This led him into utter confusion as he felt he was just holding his own, but certainly not making any progress. Now he felt he never could succeed, and he was tempted with atheistic thoughts, the shafts of Satan sent into his heart. About the middle of May, he went one day to pray in the belfry of Llangasty Church, and there felt a strange compulsion to cast his soul upon the Lord’s mercy. This seemed to ease his great struggle for a time, as

he felt submission in casting himself upon the Lord, but his great desire now was to know the Lord's love to him. Reading a book called "The Practice of Piety," he read there of pardon to be obtained at the Lord's Table, when sin was acknowledged and confessed, and faith was given to believe in the Lord. On Whit Sunday morning 1735 he came to the Lord's Table at Talgarth Church, and there, while Satan roared about him "there is no God", immediately before the Lord's Supper he felt Satan driven away, and in the service strength was given to believe that his sins had been pardoned on account of the shed blood of Christ. He says, "I lost my burden, O blessed day. Would that I might remember it gratefully evermore."

While this experience of forgiveness in Talgarth Church was sweet to him, yet he still had a feeling of further need in his soul, and it was later while in secret prayer in Llangasty Church that the love of God was more fully shed abroad in his heart. In his diary which he kept at this time, he tried to express what he felt on this never to be forgotten occasion.

There his earnest prayer was answered,  
There was heard his urgent plea,  
And his hungry soul was sated  
By Jehovah, One-in-Three.

Shortly after this, when angered by one of his pupils, the devil tempted him that he had fallen from grace, and he contemplated suicide, but the Lord mercifully restrained him with the word, "I the Lord change not," which came with great power into his

mind and brought peace. Never before had he heard this word of Scripture, but to his dying day, he loved it more than any word. "In the darkest periods, when every star was obscured, and all hope had vanished, his soul clung to this verse. This was his sure anchor, and it kept its hold a thousand times after all else had given way. This verse brought him to 'the glorious liberty of the children of God,' and to realise what alone mattered was God's 'mighty grasp of him.'" (Richard Bennett page 27.)

Though blessed as he was, in the early summer of 1735 Howell Harris was entirely ignorant of the terms commonly used to describe his experience. In fact, rather like William Tiptaft, in these early days he was an Arminian until the Doctrines of Grace were revealed to him about 1737. In looking back later over those early months, he sometimes wrote in his diary that he felt he knew nothing of faith or the work of the Holy Spirit until he met George Whitefield in 1739, but in quieter moments he would confess that it was the Lord's blessings at Talgarth and Llangasty in May 1735 which marked the beginning of His work in his heart. It is no easy task to weave one consistent story from these diary entries.

He stayed on at Llangasty from June to November 1735. He complains bitterly that he never heard the gospel being preached at this time in his life. Most books which he found, and every sermon he heard led him more and more along a pathway of duty, and less towards the Lord Jesus Himself. In his ignorance he respected his blind teachers, though he

had some realisation that had his soul depended on them, he would have starved spiritually. He says of this period, "Though I knew not the meaning of grace, I knew that God loved me. The question, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' filled my mind constantly, and the realisation that He loved me above all others, in turn made me love Him too with all my heart." Writing in 1742, he said, "I received the Spirit of Christ seven years ago, and I never after that knew anything of the love of money, or the love of the world, although I was plagued by every other corruption." His sense of "duty" led him to read to some of his neighbours in his mother's house concerning the Lord's Supper and church attendance. Then he started to visit the sick and read to them. There followed a visit to the village of Tredwstan to see an old man named Jenkin Laurence, who was an hundred years old, and while reading to him neighbours gathered to listen. This led Howell Harris to feel that he might be called a preacher, a name he disliked. On Sunday afternoons he started to go to three villages nearby to exhort his companions of his former worldly days. He refers to this and says, "Although I did not have much authority in exhorting them, I felt I had to go. I shared a little money between them until I had given all away." He had one companion in his pathway, the blacksmith, Joseph Saunders, but otherwise he had no one in his own family, and this included his older brother, Joseph, in London, of whom he was so fond, with whom he could converse.

In November he left Wales for Oxford. He says of this, "In November 1735 I was taken to Oxford, but the Lord brought me again from there. I entered my name at St. Margaret Hall. I took the Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty the King the day I matriculated. When I began to wear better clothes, my pride revived, and I lost some of my watchfulness. I soon tired of the place and longed for my freedom, which I soon obtained. I came home, and my brother offered to have me to live with him (i.e. in London); but God had such a hold on me that I could not go. Soon afterwards, I left my school, and devoted myself to exhorting every one I met to flee from the wrath to come." It seems clear that he did not stay longer than one term in Oxford, much against the wishes of his brother, who felt that an Oxford degree would be a great advantage to him, especially as it seemed that he might now enter the Church of England ministry. But this was not to be, and by December Howell Harris was back in Wales, going from house to house, reading, speaking and exhorting. He had felt it part of his duty to fast, and added to his great exercise of soul, his health began to be affected, all of which were the beginning of afflictions, as many began to persecute and despise him, even ministers of the Anglican Church (for which he had such reverence) calling him a "false prophet." He also suffered persecution in his own home and from his neighbours.

This led him towards the Independents and Baptists, people he had been brought up to despise. In March 1736 Howell Harris became acquainted



with William Herbert, a man of Baptist convictions, who met with a congregation at Tredwstan. It seems that William Herbert and the minister of his congregation, Philip Morgan, tried to persuade Howell Harris to join them, but Harris was still strongly attached to the Church of England, although he could see hardly any gracious ministers in her midst, and at the same time felt drawn towards those who no longer conformed. He was very exercised about continuing his practice of reading and exhorting, but after much prayer, felt led to go on. Opposition in the immediate surroundings of his home, and prohibitions by the Vicar of Talgarth from holding his public readings led him to go further afield to the surrounding districts—Llanfihangel, Trefidde, Tyle-crwn, Talach-ddu, Cathedin and the mountainous district towards Grwyne Fawr and Grwyne Fechan. He now travelled by night to avoid the anger of his persecutors against his innocent hearers. As the persecution increased, so the Lord blessed him in his own soul. He speaks again and again of a great blessing which he enjoyed about this time on Grwyne Fechan mountain while returning home from Cwm Iau, when he seemed to see God so smiling upon him that his heart was near to bursting under the powerful influences of Divine love. The spot was ever after to him a holy mountain. He now became accused of being a Non-conformist, and opposition greatly increased against his work. It became a perplexing matter to him that the various Anglican vicars should show such great contempt for him as he tried to encourage ordinary

men and women to attend church and observe the Lord's Day. In his innocence, he regarded these men as men of God.

The time drew near when the Lord would direct his steps to godly men within the Church of England. The Independents of Tredwstan told him, in May 1736, of one of the faithful men left in the Established Church, Griffith Jones, Vicar of Llanddowror, and at the end of May, Howell Harris set off for that place. He said of this visit, "Was it not free grace which brought me into touch with the saints, to know Mr. Griffith Jones, that I might be searched to the depths ... Providence provided me with money and a horse, and I went to see him." He found the gracious man to be a great help to him, and when he returned home began to correspond with him. It became clear that the Anglican Church was most unlikely to ordain him as a minister, not only on account of his youth, but also because he preached the truth so clearly. Some, however, advised him to apply, and he did. Several ministers supported his application, but the Bishop hardly noticed their names, being so full of prejudice against him, and turned down his application on the spot. This was a grief to him. He stayed for more than half the month of August 1736 at Llanddowror, Carmarthenshire, and returned home to Talgarth in September.

Now he had to look for a means of livelihood, though he did not give up his work of exhorting as far as he could. William Williams, the hymnwriter of Pantycelyn, wrote in his Elegy for Howell Harris:

Come and hear him now describing  
Man's foul heart—so prone to sin;  
Tracing every inward turning,  
Full of error, found within,  
And disclosing many secrets  
To the righteous on the way,  
While enlivening death's cold region  
With the glorious gospel ray.

Come and hear him now expounding  
Heaven's free, redeeming grace;  
Loudly praising the Redeemer  
Of our poor, apostate race:  
Lo! He causes many a pilgrim,  
Sore oppressed with fear and grief,  
To depart in joyous freedom  
From the bonds of unbelief.

He supports the arms that languish,  
And gives courage to the faint;  
He sustains them with his doctrine,  
Heeding to their souls' complaint:  
Glowing words, profound and earnest,  
Tempered in the flame's caress;  
Light to lead the weary pilgrim  
Safely through the wilderness.

As school teaching was the most congenial work for him, he opened a school of his own at Trevecca about the middle of September 1736, and Griffith Jones promised him every support. In correspondence with Griffith Jones in October 1736, Howell Harris described how a few gracious people met with him for prayer in Welsh morning and evening, and to receive instruction in spiritual things

on Saturdays. In his letter he says, "I have distributed all the books according to your orders. We are beginning to set up private societies." This is his first reference to the beginning of the Calvinistic Methodist Societies, which later became the Methodist movement in Wales. They were organisations attached throughout Howell Harris' life to the Church of England, though, as in England, they were later forced to break away and form a separate denomination.

Howell Harris had not opened his school at Trevecca long before he received news that the schoolmaster at Talgarth had left. This post was offered to him, and in November 1737 he took it over. But he was greatly concerned in his mind as to whether it was the Lord's purpose to take on this work, and he says that the night before he took it, "In the garden I could hardly contain myself because of the working of my soul within me; I can never give anybody any idea of it, fearful lest God did not want me to go to Talgarth to teach." While taking this position, he still carried on his work of preaching and exhorting. Often of an evening he would travel four or five miles from Talgarth to preach, returning home about midnight, almost sleeping upon the stiles along his route. He says, "Large numbers of young people gathered round me at the school, but their convictions were very slight, and many fell away for a time afterwards. Their love was only for me, and their reformation but outward."

News of his work began to spread, as is seen in a letter written to him by a bookseller in Abergavenny,

dated November 1736. The bookseller wrote, "It rejoices me that you do so much good in the world. My prayers shall not be wanting, as I hope yours will not for me. Whenever a convenient opportunity permits me, I will send some more books free of charge. We have but one Welsh Bible; I shall send speedily for one or two more. The price is five and six pence—it costs us five shillings. We have not one old one at present." This letter reveals something of Howell Harris' work, the news that was circulating about it, and also the scarcity of Bibles in Welsh. In his diary, towards the end of 1736, he records how the Lord helped him in the ministry. On December 28th he wrote, "I exhorted and prayed for about five hours, and wonderful authority accompanied my words ... how thankful and busy I ought to be when God turns not one or two, but hundreds through my words ..."

One night about Christmas he went to a place called Wernos in the parish of Llandyfalle, and there he established the first permanent society. He wrote, "God brought me to Wernos (I trust I can say so without presumption), and I hope some permanent proofs of grace have appeared." He always regarded Wernos as the first society, though various meetings had been held elsewhere previously. Wernos is a farmhouse seven or eight miles south of Builth, near the main road which leads down the Wye Valley, and here those blessed under his ministry gathered at regular intervals to speak of what the Lord had done for their souls. In Welsh they were often known as "The Experience Society or Meeting", the main

feature of which was the relating of religious experience. This Meeting at Wernos continued on its own, and Howell Harris records in 1745 how he returned there after establishing many other societies in many parts of Wales, "Full of joy to find an open door still here, and to see my old hearers to whom the Word was sent so many years ago. There was a great crowd there." Thus these converts of Howell Harris' ministry gathered regularly for their mutual edification. While they remained members of the Church of England, their activities more closely resembled the Nonconformists who held similar meetings, and it is clear that Howell Harris had a good deal of contact with Nonconformists, especially Baptists. To regularise matters, sometime in 1737, he asked the Anglican authorities to legalise the societies by giving permission for their members to meet "to read, to talk together about the state of their souls, to show the results of what they had learnt by self-examination, and to ground the ignorant in the principles of religion." His reasons for making this request were that such societies had been allowed by Anglican Bishops in London and other places already, and also because many were leaving the Church of England and joining the Nonconformists because the Anglican Church usually failed to provide more than the ordinary Sunday services for her members.

As he spent much of his time into the early hours of the morning travelling and preaching, he was often very tired when he came to teach the next day, and his school began to deteriorate rapidly. He

became very exercised as to whether he should continue there. His mother persecuted him for his religion, and things looked dark for him, but he continued his preaching. His old friend, the blacksmith Joseph Saunders, used to accompany him on his nightly journeys. There was another man, John Powell, a native of North Breconshire, who had been called by grace under Howell Harris' ministry in 1736, who preached among the Methodists for some time until he eventually joined the Baptists. On the 1st January 1737 Harris wrote, "I have much gladness from John Powell from beyond Builth. I saw in him great signs of God's Spirit, great humility, wisdom and love to Christ. I rejoiced in my spirit having seen him converted. I never found anybody else of this man's spirit. His words run through me with authority like a sword. He possessed much knowledge from his boyhood, but he received grace from God's Spirit through me." While John Powell preached against infant baptism, the two men often were in sharp conflict, but when it came to experimental religion, Howell Harris learnt much from John Powell. Powell professed and preached an experimental assurance of forgiveness and salvation, and Howell Harris, in looking back over his own experience, came to the same outlook. He wrote, "Had a seal through reading Revelation 21.7. O sweet day! I had this before in Llangasty Church of old: but through yielding to sin and carelessness, and being curbed by almost-Christians, and because it was not given through (a Scriptural) promise, I fell again into doubt. O how dear John

Powell of Abergwesyn is now, who was so despised by everybody because he had experienced things that none other of us have known." It is not known exactly when Powell left the Methodists, but he certainly was the means of bringing Howell Harris to preach experimentally. Howell Harris was much persecuted for the truth's sake, and in one place he speaks like this, "My bosom friends turn against me ... all Talgarth now persecute me, and this everywhere except by the few who are raised by God ... raise up some to protect us, for they have authority and learning which we have not."

Many times he was deeply cast down by these persecutions. Some wondered if he would leave the Church of England and join the Nonconformists, as his ministry seemed so much like theirs. Others wanted him to give up his preaching and spend all his time teaching in his school. But the Lord encouraged him by bringing him into contact with godly men such as William Herbert, a Baptist, who was the means in the Lord's hands of bringing him to a clear understanding of the Doctrines of Grace, so that afterwards Howell Harris became a convinced Calvinist, though much to Herbert's sorrow he remained in the Church of England. There were others at this time who influenced Howell Harris, such as Griffith Jones of Llanddowror. He did not favour the Baptists and warned Harris against associating with them.

Thus there was an inner conflict, so that while eventually he came to feel he should stay in the Church of England, saying, "It has been in my mind



since the day of my conversion that I am likely to do more good here," yet equally at the same time in his diary he wrote, "I love Nonconformists because they love Christ, and because their books and sermons are warm." Sometimes when left to criticise the Nonconformists his conscience accused him, and he felt a constant turmoil in the matter as he met with his Anglican friends who tried to fill him with prejudice. As some left the Church of England and joined the Nonconformists, he found it difficult to remain impartial, and often found his heart full of prejudice, at the same time desiring to be kept from a bitter spirit towards them. Yet he could not help noticing that many of those called out under his ministry were drawn towards the Baptists as they came to understand the formality of the Anglican Church, and read the gracious works of such Baptists as John Bunyan.

There was also a conflict in his mind regarding the doctrine of election. "The seed of belief in it," he says, "was sown when quite early on. I became certain of the immutability of God. But the doctrine did not develop for some time after that; and I, because of the darkness of my understanding, denied it and opposed it, until it pleased God to instruct me further." On the 30th March 1737, during a service, as the lesson, John chapter 17, was read, the Lord convinced him that there was such a thing as election, and gave him a hope that he was one of the elect. But he still continued to contend for man's power, saying, "What is the good of preaching if a man cannot turn and repent?" He was then asked

how he felt in secret prayer. Did he not need the help of the Holy Spirit? and had to confess that of himself he could not pray. The man with whom he was discussing then said to him, "Would you be telling the truth if you confessed that you could not pray?" "Yes, of course," I answered. 'If so,' he said, 'why do you lie to the people that they can believe and repent?'" Howell Harris says he was silenced and could not use those expressions any longer, since his own experience condemned him. Later he opened the Bible at John chapter 6, verse 44, and he says, "The devil became my teacher, whispering that God drew everybody. This served pretty well until I read verse 37 of the same chapter, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Then I was brought to believe election in my heart; my wisdom yielded to the wisdom of God, and I confessed with my mouth unto salvation."

By Easter 1737 Howell Harris was less eager to spend all his time in teaching, as his mind was more drawn to the work of the ministry. At the same time his affections were turning rather to the Church of England than to the Baptists, while he was turning his back on free-will, and being led by the Holy Spirit into an understanding of the Doctrines of Grace. In his diaries he wrote of his innermost feelings: "My understanding is opened more through one prayer than by reading or much conversation without Divine help. I see many truths, some of which I think I know well enough to preach on. This is no natural gift. I am full of observations, and although I cannot write them down, I rarely fail to

remember them when I need them. Lord, Thou knowest that I believe I do more good by going about at night to exhort than by reading privately at home. All knowledge comes from Thee; and as I have no time to read, I know Thou canst instil into my heart clearer and purer knowledge than I could ever suck from books. Therefore I will rather spend my leisure in prayer, leaving it to Thee to supply me with alms. Is this caused by laziness? When I read the Bible, I constantly discover something new in every verse. Such is my case that many of the Psalms are applicable to me. I find that in an extraordinary manner ideas have already become clear in my mind, which I subsequently discover in my reading. I see little humility within me. I often spoil my intentions to do good from lack of this. We are prone to take the example of Luther, a fearless man, when our cause is not the same as his. When the people are inside the walls of a town, a battering-ram is essential; but in open battle such a weapon is useless. So it is now, I imagine; and from this root grow all the dissensions in our midst ... I see that it is from a lack of humility that I take the liberty to censure others ... the humble address succeeds best in the school of Christ ... we ought to look into things carefully especially if we see a good man among our opponents ... I am afraid that it was pride that made me speak of my labours to Evan Rice, hoping that he would report them to my credit in Carmarthenshire. I nearly wrecked myself on the rock of pride once, and now again I am sailing on that same sea. In danger as the result of praise.

Thankful for persecutions to keep the balance.” “To Pwll-y-wrach to see my sick friend, William Price. I was melted with the hopes he had of going to his Father. I sat by the fire reading, but I slept. When I awoke I found he was about to depart. I tried to pray but I could not because of streams of tears. Then I saw him dying. For about an hour my face was washed by my streaming tears. My soul was so closely united to him that I could hardly leave the place. Great joy because the first I saw dying was so full of comfort, and because God had made me the instrument of his conversion. In a few minutes before this, he prayed with strong faith, full of consolation; he pleaded for a blessing and pardon for his parents, and when I asked him if I could lift him up, he replied, ‘Oh! you *have* lifted me – to heaven;’ and entreating our prayers, he died peacefully.”

In another place in his diary, he wrote, “I see two laws within me in all that I do; one seeking the praise of men and the other hating it. How good is God, suffering some people to expose my defects ... sin is a burden, especially laziness. Lord, wast Thou brought before the court for my sake this night (Good Friday), and shall not I too suffer ... I understand and feel that I cannot do anything without the aid of the Spirit ... I see that morality, as it is taught, tends to keep men from Christ as much as anything. I felt my own lack of power today more than ever. I see that grace is a free gift. This, and all that is good, comes from my Saviour’s intercession ... Lord, Thou knowest that nothing can make me hesitate, apart from doubts as to my commission.

Oh, that I knew I had been authorised ... Is it not the finger of God that makes so many stubborn and intractable persecutors to submit to reproof and to be so unmistakably reformed, when the clergy and others could do nothing? Oh, I must remember never to give up. I am fully persuaded that the work is of God.”

Throughout the summer of 1737, Howell Harris’ desires were set on several things; a desire to see the work spread and men raised up to defend him from his persecutors; a desire to have a Jonathan to walk with him in the work; a desire to see ministers of the Church of England truly awakened; a desire to have the truth more clearly and deeply revealed to him. In answer to the first of these desires the Sheriff of Radnorshire, Mr. John Williams, was raised up as a protector, but when one of his daughters was called by grace through Howell Harris’ ministry (seven years later Howell Harris married her, Anne Williams) he turned against the truth, and the Lord raised up in his place a powerful protector, Mr. Gwynne of Garth. He was a man who had come to one of the services intending to arrest Howell Harris, but had had his heart affected and was turned to be his supporter. They met for the first time in August 1737, and for many years he supported Howell Harris financially, and protected him from the gentry and magistrates of the neighbouring counties where he preached. It was through the help of Mr. Gwynne that Howell Harris went to preach in upper Breconshire. Later he went into Radnorshire,

Herefordshire and Pembrokeshire, and thus his ministry was extended.

When called by grace, Howell Harris had found himself very isolated. His mother had been against his religion. He had found spiritual companionship in the blacksmith, Joseph Saunders, but he longed for a close companion of his own age. This friend, Howell Harris found in another teacher who came to Talgarth named Howell Davies. He became Howell Harris' assistant at the school, and in him, Harris found a close companion with whom he could share his innermost experiences. They were together for only a year or two, until Howell Davies went to preach in Pembrokeshire (today he is known as the Apostle of Pembrokeshire). After they parted they met from time to time, and remained close friends, Howell Davies dying in 1770 at the age of fifty-three, Howell Harris dying in 1773.

In his desire to see ministers awakened in the Church of England, Howell Harris was brought into contact with the Rev. David Lewis, Vicar of Llanfinhangel Cwmdeuddwr, near the town of Rhaeadr Gwy in Radnorshire, whom he knew for about four years before the latter's death. Another minister was the Rev. David Lewis' son, Thomas, Curate of Merthyr Cynog. Both of these men preached the Doctrines of Grace. The third minister with whom Howell Harris was brought into contact was the well-known Welsh preacher, Daniel Rowland of Llangeitho, one of the founders of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. Howell Harris first met him August 1737, and was amazed at the power

and authority of his ministry, and felt a deep union of heart to him. Little did they know in 1737 that the Lord was to use them both in the following decades as the principal ministers of the revival in Wales in the eighteenth century.

As Harris was brought into the acquaintance of these men, so his eyes were open more and more to an understanding of the truth. He says, "Little by little my eyes were opened to know the mystery of the gospel. The Lord kept me from reading the mere letter of Scripture, from increasing merely in head knowledge. But as I grew inwardly, I gradually came to see and understand this verse and that. I received the gospel not from man or from a book, but from God; that which I experienced, proved and felt, and saw, and heard of the Word of Life, that also, I will proclaim. About Christmas 1736 I began to think of Christ as a result of William Herbert telling me that he was about to die, and that none but Christ could then support him. Before this I placed the emphasis on man's work. At Merthyr in 1737, I was first enlightened to see the doctrine of free grace. Was it not providence that brought me there? Mr. Thomas Lewis preached from John 1.12 at Gwenddwr; in the same year my eyes were opened to the light when I heard Mr. Rowland preaching on Proverbs 8.32. He was the means whereby I was brought to the knowledge of the truth about Christ. In the same year I read 'The Sincere Convert' by Thomas Shepard, which turned me from duties to depend only upon Christ." Thus he was led into the truth, and his prayers answered.