

EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALITY AND THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

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*What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear:
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer.
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.*

This hymn, written in 1855 by Joseph Scriven, who had studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and later emigrated to Canada, evokes the heart of evangelical spirituality. Evangelicals are Trinitarian, but their central concern is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The American evangelist and singer Ira D. Sankey added a tune to Scriven's words, and the hymn became so well known that it was parodied by soldiers as 'When this bloody war is over/Oh, how happy I will be'.¹

The evangelical movement, of which Joseph Scriven was a part, has its origins in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century.² Although the evangelicalism that emerged in the eighteenth century was led in England principally by two Church of England clergymen, John Wesley and George Whitefield, it had strong links with the Protestant Reformation and with the English Puritan movement of the seventeenth century. Evangelicals followed Martin Luther in preaching the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and in calling for

¹ Gordon Giles, *The Music of Praise: Through the Church Year with the Great Hymns* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2002), 81-85. For more see Ian M. Randall, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005).

² David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), 20.

adherence to Scripture.³ Like John Calvin and the English Puritans they stressed the practical outworking of faith in the sanctified life. However, the Puritans tended to see a 'settled, well-grounded' assurance of personal salvation as something relatively rare.⁴ By contrast, the evangelical leaders considered that believers could normally expect to have an assured sense of personal salvation through a relationship with God in Christ.

The most prominent theologian of the early evangelical movement was Jonathan Edwards, a scholarly Congregational pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts, who was known as much for the powerful 'awakenings' that took place through his ministry as for his profound theological thought. Edwards brought reason and experience together. In so doing he was a primary shaper of evangelical spirituality. In Edwards' phrase, 'holy affections' constituted a great part of true religion. 'The Holy Scriptures', he asserted, 'do everywhere place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, zeal'.⁵ Yet for Edwards evangelical spirituality was not simply a matter of feelings, however pious. As he put it: 'Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from the information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge'.⁶ Through powerful preachers and writers, desire for these 'holy affections' spread rapidly.⁷

As I see it, evangelicalism is essentially a strand of spirituality.⁸ Recent studies of evangelicalism have generally been based on David

³ For the thinking of the Reformation see Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

⁴ James I. Packer, *Among God's Giants: Aspects of Puritan Christianity* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1991), 236-240.

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, 'Concerning the Nature of the Religious Affections and Their Importance in Religion', in *The Select Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 3 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961), 31.

⁶ Edwards, 'Religious Affections', 192.

⁷ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003).

⁸ For further detail, see my study of evangelical spirituality in England between the two world wars: *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism, 1918-1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999). My analysis followed Philip Sheldrake's suggestion (see *Spirituality and History* [London: SPCK, 1991], 52) that spirituality is concerned with the conjunction of theology, communion with God, and practical Christianity.

Bebbington's account of the movement as comprising all those who stress conversion, the Bible, the cross, and activism,⁹ and this article will use Bebbington's framework, paying particular attention to connections with the 'Church Catholic'. It must be noted, however, that in the twentieth century the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, with their emphasis on gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy, speaking in tongues and healing, have significantly reshaped evangelical experience.¹⁰

Conversion

John Wesley, who shaped much early evangelical thinking, recorded in his diary for 24 May 1738 the following words, which were to become among the most famous in the story of Christian experience:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.¹¹

This account, describing as it does how John Wesley came to a point of personal reliance on Christ's work on the cross for salvation, later came to be seen as describing a typical evangelical conversion, although in one sense it is less a conversion than an experience of assurance as regards salvation.¹² In 1735, three years before this event in Aldersgate Street, George Whitefield, who with Wesley was central to the rise of evangelicalism, had had a similar experience of

⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2-17.

¹⁰ See Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996) and Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Development Worldwide* (Peabody, Ma: Hendrickson, 1997).

¹¹ *The Works of John Wesley*, volume 18, *Journal and Diaries I (1735-38)*, edited by William R. Ward and Reginald P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 249-250.

¹² For a full discussion of the meaning of John Wesley's experience see Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1989), 144-157.



John Wesley

evangelical conversion.¹³ John Wesley, his brother Charles, and Whitefield, had been members of a small group in Oxford in the early 1730s called Methodists, or the 'Holy Club', composed of people who wanted to take their religion seriously. In order to understand their later evangelical experience—Charles Wesley had such an experience a few days before John—it is important to trace a number of broader spiritual influences which led to their conversions and shaped their spirituality.

John and Charles Wesley had been shaped by three differing traditions, partly through their family. One was the Puritan trad-

ition, which spawned English Dissenting Christianity. Although John and Charles Wesley's parents were staunchly high Church of England, they came from Puritan stock.¹⁴ The second stream of influence on the Wesleys and other early evangelicals was Catholic and high church devotion, which set out rigorous demands for the spiritual life. In 1725 John Wesley read Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* (1651), which made a profound impact on him, as a result of which he resolved to dedicate his life to God. A year later he read *The Imitation of Christ*, which directed him to 'the religion of the heart'. He was also affected by the writings of the high churchman William Law, such as *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728), which helped to create within him moral longings. A final element in the evangelical mix was a more

¹³ For George Whitefield, see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

¹⁴ Dissenters who were influential in the early eighteenth century included preachers such as the Congregationalist Philip Doddridge, who wrote about his conversion in the famous hymn 'O happy day', and the even more influential hymn-writer Isaac Watts. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (London: Epworth, 1967).

mystical spirituality, such as that expressed in the book *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, by Henry Scougal of Aberdeen, a Scottish Episcopalian.¹⁵ The evangelical stress on a changed life thus drew from existing streams of spirituality.

The next generation of evangelicals continued to make wider connections. John Newton, who had experienced a dramatic conversion when he was a slave-ship captain, and who later became a Church of England clergyman, had a significant bridge-building role.¹⁶ His own conversion was expressed in the very personal words of assurance that we find in the most popular of the hymns he wrote:

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd.¹⁷

Both slave-traders, such as Newton, and slaves, such as Olaudah Equiano, experienced the same evangelical conversion. In 1789 Equiano, who was by then free, wrote about his remarkable story in his widely read *Interesting Narrative*. After his freedom he had tried to find spiritual truth in many places, and as part of his search began to attend evangelical services. The result was that he had an instantaneous conversion, in which, as he put it, he 'saw clearly, with the eye of faith, the crucified Saviour bleeding on the cross on Mount Calvary'. This vision convinced him that he was 'a great debtor ... to sovereign free grace'.¹⁸ Such testimonies express the classic evangelical understanding of conversion as a personal encounter with Christ.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who became known as the Prince of Preachers of the Victorian era, described his own conversion in

¹⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 37-38. See also Arthur S. Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1967), chapter 3.

¹⁶ Douglas B. Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), chapter 4.

¹⁷ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, chapter 7, especially 276-277.

¹⁸ Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 272.

similarly classic terms. He went to a Primitive Methodist chapel one Sunday as a fifteen-year-old. Spurgeon later wrote:

In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. ... [A] very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. ... The text was: 'LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.' ... Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, 'Young man, you look very miserable But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved'. ... 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. ... [W]hen I heard that word 'Look!', what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun...¹⁹

Spurgeon was subsequently baptized by immersion and became the most famous Baptist minister of the nineteenth century. In his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, London, where he preached to 5,000 people every Sunday morning and evening until his death in 1892, the strongly evangelistic Spurgeon always stressed conversion.²⁰ But although Spurgeon was a committed evangelical and Baptist, he opposed the kind of conversionism which aimed to boost only one denomination. In 1886, speaking about unity, he argued that unity was not achieved by one church calling itself 'the Church of Christ'—whether Roman Catholic, Anglican or Plymouth Brethren—and he condemned 'party spirit and bitter exclusiveness'.²¹

In the twentieth century, Billy Graham emerged as the leading evangelist within the world-wide evangelical community. Graham had to make a choice whether he would cooperate only with evangelicals, or whether he would identify himself with other Christian leaders. In 1946, when he was a little-known figure in Britain, Graham accepted an invitation from Ernest Barnes, who was then the Bishop of Birmingham and viewed by some as an 'extreme liberal', to talk to a

¹⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Autobiography*, volume 1, 1834-1854 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 88-89.

²⁰ See Mike Nicholls, *C. H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1992).

²¹ *The Sword and the Trowel* (October 1886), 514-516.



Billy Graham with Pope John Paul II

diocesan gathering on evangelism.²² In 1948, Youth for Christ leaders, including Graham, decided that young people should not be discouraged from adhering to churches that were not evangelical since the presence of those recently converted fostered renewal.

It was during his huge London meetings of 1954 that Graham's support broadened significantly. There seems little doubt that the approval of Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Leslie Weatherhead, Minister of the City Temple, London, affected Graham's thinking. Weatherhead was widely quoted for his argument that what really mattered was not a particular theological tradition but Graham's ability in 'gathering in the people we have all missed and getting them to the point of decision'.²³ Graham's acceptance in 1955 of an invitation from the Protestant Council in New York to speak under its auspices enraged fundamentalist evangelicals, but encouraged those

²² John C. Pollock, *Billy Graham: The Authorised Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), 64. For Barnes, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 207-208.

²³ William Martin, *The Billy Graham Story: A Prophet with Honour* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 181.

evangelicals—the majority—who were committed to a more inclusive evangelical spirituality.²⁴

The Bible and Prayer

The second major feature of evangelical spirituality is serious personal engagement with the Bible, often combined with personal prayer. John Wesley often referred to himself as a '*homo unius libri*', a man of one book. In the preface to his sermons he spoke of the way of salvation as being 'written down in a book', and he continued: 'O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me.'²⁵ Yet this exalted estimation of the Bible was not one that Wesley came to hold only as a result of his evangelical conversion in 1738. As early as 1729 he and others in Oxford had wanted to be, as it was put, 'downright Bible-Christians'.²⁶ For Wesley, the Christian life was nourished by the Bible and by prayer. Prayer included the use of words to express adoration, but also silence and the sense of God's presence.²⁷ Wesley preferred spontaneous prayer to set forms. In giving instructions about visiting the sick, he advised that every visit should conclude with prayer, and continued:

If you cannot yet pray without a form you may use some of those composed by Mr Spinckes [*A Complete Manual of Private Devotions*], or any other pious writer. But the sooner you break through this backwardness the better. Ask of God, and he will soon open your mouth.²⁸

Hymns have regularly expressed central themes in evangelical spirituality. An outstanding example is Charles Wesley's 'And can it be?', with its expression of heart-felt praise and wonder at what Christ has done:

²⁴ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 162-165.

²⁵ *The Works of John Wesley*, volume 1, *Sermons I*, 1-33, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 105; see also Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 211.

²⁶ *The Works of John Wesley*, volume 8, *Addresses, Essays, Letters*, edited by Thomas Jackson (Kansas: Beacon Hill, 1978), 348.

²⁷ Gordon Mursell, *English Spirituality: From 1700 to the Present Day* (London: SPCK, 2001), 96.

²⁸ 'On Visiting the Sick', in *The Works of John Wesley*, volume 3, *Sermons III*, 71-114, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 392.

'Tis mystery all! Th' Immortal dies:
 Who can explore His strange design?
 In vain the first-born seraph tries
 To sound the depths of love divine.
 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore!
 Let angel minds inquire no more.

This is followed by a typical evangelical expression of assurance:

No condemnation now I dread;
 Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
 Alive in Him, my living Head,
 And clothed in righteousness divine,
 Bold I approach the eternal throne,
 And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Charles Wesley is estimated to have written over 8,000 hymns, an average of more than one for each week of his career. In introducing *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People of God Called Methodists* (1780), John Wesley spoke of the book as expressing 'experimental and practical divinity'. John Wesley, who liked bold songs of assurance, encouraged his brother (although he once described some of his brother's hymns as 'namby-pambical'), and in fact it was through the hymns written by Charles, marked as they were by vibrant classical theology and splendid poetry, as much as through Methodist preaching, that the evangelical message spread. The hymns were also a means of prayer, with a section of the *Collection of Hymns* devoted to intercession for the world.²⁹

Although the Bible has been central to evangelical life, it is not the case that evangelicals have always held to a rigid theological position regarding the inspiration of the Bible. The primary concern has been with a living relationship with God through Scripture. In the nineteenth century Charles Simeon, who influenced many Cambridge undergraduates and others throughout his 53 years of ministry at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, wrote that in the Bible,

²⁹ James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1991), 33-35; Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 260-269; Mursell, *English Spirituality*, 97.

... no error in doctrine or other important matter is allowed; yet there are inexactnesses in reference to philosophical and scientific matters, because of its popular style.

He also argued that biblical writings reflected the characters of their writers. Some were poetic; others were prosaic and plain.³⁰ One of Simeon's concerns was that Christians should begin each day with prayer and bible study.

For C. H. Spurgeon, the reading of scripture required a quite particular attitude. Like George Whitefield, his hero, Spurgeon encouraged those reading the Bible to take time over it. 'I am afraid that this is a magazine-reading age, a newspaper-reading age, a periodical-reading age, but not so much a Bible-reading age as it ought to be', he once commented. Serious reading of this kind involved meditation and prayer. Above all, Spurgeon believed that scripture should be read in the presence of Christ. This is how he put it, in rather mystical language:

He [Christ] leans over me, he puts his finger along the lines, I can see his pierced hand: I will read it as in his presence. I will read it, knowing that he is the substance of it—that he is the proof of this book as well as the writer of it; the sum of this Scripture as well as the author of it You will get at the soul of Scripture when you can keep Jesus with you while you are reading.

Yet this did not mean that scholarly approaches to the Bible were rejected by Spurgeon. Speaking in 1874 to fellow ministers, Spurgeon insisted that 'our main business is to study the Scriptures', and suggested that evangelical pastors had to be 'greater Biblical scholars'.³¹

³⁰ Abner W. Brown, *Recollections of the Conversation Parties of the Revd Charles Simeon* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1863), cited in David K. Gillett, *Trust and Obey: Explorations in Evangelical Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993), 134-135. One of Simeon's concerns was that Christians should begin each day with prayer and Bible study. Despite his best intentions, however, he himself overslept on several occasions, especially in winter. He once decided he would pay a fine of half a crown to his college servant when he overslept. A few days later, lying comfortably in bed, he reconsidered this plan. His next decision was that when he overslept he would throw a guinea into the river. This, apparently, he did, but only once—before deciding that he could not afford to pave the river-bed with gold. See Handley C. G. Moule, *Charles Simeon* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1948 [1892]), 66.

³¹ C. H. Spurgeon, 'How to Read the Bible', sermon on Matthew 12:3-7, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, volume 25 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1879) no. 1503, 634; *The Sword and the Trowel* (May 1874), 221. This latter address was later published in C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), 40-66.

In the twentieth century P. T. Forsyth, the leading Congregational theologian of the time, also drew together prayer and Bible reading. He spoke of the need for 'serious, thinking, private prayer ... prayer with the historic sense, church-nurtured and Bible-fed'.³² Spontaneity in prayer could, said Forsyth, be 'gruesome', as when a young man began his prayer (in Forsyth's hearing) with the words 'O God, we have come to have a chat with thee'. Prayer and theology, Forsyth argued, must interpenetrate, so that each would keep the other 'great, and wide, and mighty'.³³ For him prayer was 'an art to be learned'. 'Associate much', Forsyth advised, referring to the classic traditions of prayer, 'with the great masters ... especially with the Bible; and chiefly with Christ. Cultivate his Holy Spirit. He is the grand master of God's art and mystery in communing with man.'³⁴

Samuel Chadwick, a powerful figure within the Methodist holiness constituency in the early twentieth century, used Catholic devotional manuals in his private prayers, especially during Lent, and had a particular interest in the spirituality of the mystics. In the second half of the twentieth century, John Stott, Rector of All Souls' Church, Langham Place, London, evangelicalism's most influential thinker, advocated daily devotion as an 'extremely valuable discipline' that had 'brought untold benefit to many generations of Christians'.³⁵

The Cross

Evangelicals, despite what their language sometimes implies, are surely not alone among Christians in having a devotion to the cross. What is distinctive about evangelical devotion? Perhaps one distinctively evangelical feature is the link which evangelicals make between the cross and personal conversion. This is brought out well in the hymn by Charles Wesley, 'O for a thousand tongues to sing', which was the first hymn in the later Wesley hymnbooks and was intended, significantly, 'for the anniversary day of one's conversion'. The opening expresses general praise and prayer:

³² P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer* (London: Kelly, 1916), 77.

³³ Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer*, 118.

³⁴ Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer*, 105.

³⁵ John R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (London: Scripture Union, 1972), 244.

O for a thousand tongues to sing
 My great Redeemer's praise,
 The glories of my God and King,
 The triumphs of his grace!

But then the focus moves to Christ's redemption, and in particular to how it 'availed for me'.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
 He sets the prisoner free;
 His blood can make the foulest clean;
 His blood availed for me.³⁶

For Evangelicals there is also an important connection between the unique event of the cross and our continuing to receive the love of God in Christ. This is powerfully expressed in the hymn 'Just as I am', written in 1835 by Charlotte Elliott, which became one of the most-used hymns in the English language.³⁷ The sentiments were drawn from the words of a Swiss evangelist, Cesar Malan, who had been instrumental in Elliott's evangelical conversion. Although this hymn has often been used in evangelistic settings, for example by Billy Graham, Elliott wrote it when she was—as a Christian—suffering from depression and doubt. She decided to write a hymn which focused on divine acceptance through the cross. These are the first two verses:

Just as I am, without one plea,
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,
 And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
 To rid my soul of one dark blot,
 To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.³⁸

David Gillett suggests that there are parallels here with Roman Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.³⁹

³⁶ Frederick C. Gill, *Charles Wesley: The First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth, 1964), 72.

³⁷ Gillett, *Trust and Obey*, 78, citing Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*.

³⁸ Frank W. Boreham, *A Late Lark Singing* (London: Epworth, 1945).

³⁹ Gillett, *Trust and Obey*, 79.

A number of evangelical opinion-formers have been willing to draw explicitly from Catholic devotion in thinking about the cross, who by the late nineteenth century was the leading international speaker connected with the annual evangelical Keswick Convention, spoke in mystical terms of the cross as 'fresh today', with the nails 'not rusted or blunted', and he could deduce from the mystery of the indwelling Christ that every Christian was a mystic.⁴⁰ In a talk to an Evangelical Alliance audience in 1901, Meyer acknowledged his indebtedness to 'saintly mystics'.⁴¹ These included Francis of Assisi, Brother Lawrence and Madame Guyon.⁴² Another Keswick speaker of the same era, Handley Moule, who became Bishop of Durham, commended meditation on the cross at communion and, more controversially, commended disciplines often associated with Roman Catholic spirituality, such as fasting and confession. 'I shall not be suspected of any lack of loyalty to my most dear Mother Church, Catholic and Reformed', said Moule, referring to the Anglican Church, 'if I say here that the Roman Catholic Church has some important lessons to teach us'.⁴³ We might in this context recall what B.L. Manning, Senior Tutor of Jesus College, Cambridge, and a Congregational medieval historian, wrote in 1942: 'So in piety, do extremes agree: Catholic and Evangelical meet, and kiss one another at the Cross'.⁴⁴



For C.H. Spurgeon the celebration of Holy Communion was an essential means of encounter with the crucified Christ. Spurgeon often preached on the Lord's Supper, which he celebrated at least weekly. A volume of his communion addresses has a preface which notes that a

⁴⁰ F.B. Meyer, *At the Gates of the Dawn* (London: James Clarke, 1910), 74; Frederick B. Meyer, *The Soul's Pure Intention* (London: Bagster, 1906), 45.

⁴¹ F.B. Meyer, *Moses: The Servant of God* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1893), 99; an address given to the Annual Evangelical Alliance Conference in November 1901, *The Evangelical Alliance Quarterly*, 11 (January 1902), 206.

⁴² F.B. Meyer, introduction to George W. Robinson, *The Philosophy of the Atonement and other Sermons* (London: Dent, 1912); *Keswick Week* (1924), 156.

⁴³ H.C.G. Moule, *The Call of Lent to Penitence, Discipline and Christ* (London: SPCK, 1917), 65, 68, 71-72.

⁴⁴ B.L. Manning, *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts: Five Informal Papers* (London: Epworth, 1942), 133.

number were delivered to 'the little companies of Christians' who gathered around the communion table in Spurgeon's sitting room at Menton, in the south of France, where he went regularly to build up his health or recuperate from illness.⁴⁵ For Spurgeon there was a real presence of Christ at the Supper, and fellowship with Christ was central. Speaking at Menton on the subject 'I will give you rest', Spurgeon affirmed:

... by faith, I see our Lord standing in our midst, and I hear Him say, with voice of sweetest music, first to all of us together, and then to each one individually, 'I will give you rest'. May the Holy Spirit bring to each of us the fulness of the rest and peace of God!⁴⁶

Activism

Evangelical activism flowed from evangelical belief in the need for conversion, specifically through personal appropriation of Christ's work on the cross. Thus Charles Wesley, for example, made a point of speaking about Christ to fellow-passengers when travelling by coach, encouraging them to make a personal response. Once a lady was so offended that she threatened to beat him; but on another occasion Charles so impressed another passenger that the coach stopped for a time of prayer. Charles recorded: 'We sang and shouted all the way to Oxford'.⁴⁷ Here we have the stress on active personal witness with the aim of personal conversion. Another expression of this activism was a commitment to world mission. This was not new—the Jesuits were, of course, involved in world mission in the sixteenth century, and indeed Henry Venn, the full-time Secretary from 1846 of the (evangelical Anglican) Church Missionary Society, wrote a life of Francis Xavier.⁴⁸ Mission also included action for social change. Evangelical lay people such as Hannah More and William Wilberforce, both of whom had been influenced by John Newton, became known for their practical expressions of evangelical faith.

⁴⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *'Till He Come': Communion Meditations and Addresses* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1894), preface.

⁴⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, 'I Will Give You Rest', in *'Till He Come'*, 197.

⁴⁷ Gill, *Charles Wesley*, 75.

⁴⁸ Henry Venn, *The Missionary Life and Labours of Francis Xavier, Taken from His Own Correspondence* (London: Longman, Green, 1862).

What is striking is how often evangelical activism was nourished by a rich spirituality. Hannah More, whose main work was in education, believed that the 'hour of prayer or meditation' at the beginning of the day would consecrate the day as a whole.⁴⁹ Wilberforce, who became an MP in 1780 at the age of 21, read Philip Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* in 1784-1785 and experienced an evangelical conversion.⁵⁰ In 1797 he published his very influential *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*. This book, which advocated a greater sense of moral responsibility, saw the basis of such reform in a turn from nominal Christianity to real Christianity.⁵¹ Wilberforce's campaign against slavery, on which his reputation primarily rests, was nourished by his relationship with John Wesley. Wesley published his *Thoughts on Slavery* in 1774, and his last letter was to Wilberforce urging action against the 'execrable villainy' of the slave trade. For Wesley the campaign was a spiritual one, in which Wilberforce needed divine help; otherwise he would be 'worn out by the opposition of men and devils'.⁵²

**A rich
spirituality
often
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evangelical
activism**

Socio-political action by evangelicals increased as they grew in strength in the nineteenth century. Josephine Butler, who campaigned successfully in the 1880s for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, under which prostitutes were given health inspections while no action was taken regarding their clients, spoke of those who supported her by prayer during debates in the House of Commons. Butler pressed for the age of consent for lawful sexual intercourse to be raised from twelve to sixteen (her research in Liverpool showed that of 9,000 prostitutes, 1,500 were under fifteen), and this goal was achieved in 1885. She believed her campaigns advanced when they were 'openly baptized, so to speak, in the name of Christ', and she thought she had

⁴⁹ Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality*, 5, citing Jeremy and Margaret Collingwood, *Hannah More* (Oxford: Lion, 1990), 133.

⁵⁰ For William Wilberforce, see John C. Pollock, *Wilberforce: God's Statesman* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2001).

⁵¹ William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity*, edited by Vincent Edmunds (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).

⁵² *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, edited by John Telford, volume 8 (London: Epworth, 1960 [1931]), 265.

observed in the 'worldly atmosphere of Parliament' something new—'signs of a consciousness of a spiritual strife going on'.⁵³ Ministers such as C.H. Spurgeon called for evangelicals to be politically active. Prior to one general election, Spurgeon wrote and distributed leaflets in Lambeth and Southwark urging voters not to re-elect their Conservative MPs, but to support the Liberal candidates. He wrote:

Are we to have another six years of Tory rule? This is just now the question. Are we to go on invading and slaughtering ...? How many wars may we reckon upon between now and 1886? What quantity of killing will be done in that time, and how many of our weaker neighbours will have their houses burned and their fields ravaged by this Christian (?) nation? Let those who rejoice in War vote for the Tories; but we hope they will not find a majority in Southwark.⁵⁴

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the social vision that had characterized nineteenth-century evangelicals gave way to a fear that social involvement diluted the 'pure' gospel. Thus in 1949 Basil Atkinson, a leading statesman behind the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, stated that the only work given to the Church was evangelization. Social ministry, as an end in itself, was rejected.⁵⁵ But in the second half of the century evangelicals again became active in social transformation as well as evangelization. As they did so they recognised the common ground shared with Catholics. In 1994 a core group of seven Roman Catholics and eight evangelical Protestants in the USA issued a historic 8,000-word declaration entitled 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium' (ECT). Recognising that evangelicals and Catholics 'constitute the growing edge of the missionary expansion at present and, most likely, in the century ahead', it sought, without downplaying

⁵³ Millicent G. Fawcett and Ethel M. Turner, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and their Meaning for the Twentieth Century* (London: Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, 1927), 99-100; compare Lisa S. Nolland, *A Victorian Christian Feminist: Josephine Butler, the Prostitutes and God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

⁵⁴ Reproduced in Nicholls, C. H. *Spurgeon*, 65.

⁵⁵ David W. Bebbington, 'Decline and Resurgence of Social Concern', in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980*, edited by John Wolffe (London: SPCK, 1995), 175-197.



the differences, to set out areas of common affirmation, hope, action and witness.⁵⁶

The evangelical story has been one in which conversion, the Bible, the cross and active service have been central. Evangelicals have regularly preached on these themes; they inform, too, the hymns and songs both of classical figures such as Charles Wesley and John Newton, and of more contemporary song-writers such as Graham Kendrick and Matt Redman. For Redman, when we come to God in worship, we focus in a particular way on Christ, the crucified saviour. We see,

⁵⁶ For the full text see *First Things*, 43 (May 1994), 15-22: <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9405/mission.html>.

... the lion and the lamb, the sinless friend of sinners, who terrifies and befriends, thunders and whispers, reveals and conceals ... his footstool is the earth but he bent down and washed the earth off the feet of his disciples.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, as evangelicals have explored other traditions of spirituality, they have also discovered common ground. In 1996 the evangelical theologian James Packer wrote a book entitled *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Working Towards a Common Mission*. In it, Packer expressed his thankfulness for qualities he had frequently seen in Catholics: 'the wisdom, maturity of mind and conscience, backbone and sheer guts, reverence before God, and above all love for my Lord Jesus Christ'.⁵⁸ At the same time, there has been a concern to renew the evangelical tradition precisely by recovering traditions of spirituality. As Stanley Grenz put it in his influential book *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, contemporary evangelicals seeking to respond to a postmodern setting need to recapture an evangelical theological tradition which is 'rooted in spirituality'.⁵⁹

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⁵⁷ Matt Redman, interviewed by John Buckeridge, in 'Heart of Worship', *Christianity* (July 2004), 13.

⁵⁸ James I. Packer, 'Crosscurrents among Evangelicals', in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Working Towards a Common Mission*, edited by Charles Colson and Richard J. Neuhaus (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), 159, 164, 171.

⁵⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 57-59.

RECENT BOOKS

Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: The Memoriale of Luis Gonçalves da Câmara, translated by Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitiz (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005). 0 85244 512 1, pp. xxi + 252, £12.99.

This is an exasperating, yet wonderful, contribution to the understanding of everyday life in the early Society of Jesus and of Ignatius Loyola as the Society's founder. It gives us a day-to-day itemisation of Ignatius' likes and dislikes both in matters of substance, such as the formation of novices within the new order, and in matters that appear downright trivial, such as the kinds of games that Jesuits ought to play in their free time. The text thus challenges the impression of discretion and freedom one finds in the *Constitutions* of the Society. There is often a considerable distance in this narrative between how Ignatius actually lived with his fellow Jesuits and how he legislated that they ought to live their vocation. As the editors remark in their helpful introduction: 'in the *Memoriale* there are times when it is difficult to recognise this person as the same Ignatius'. On a first reading, one might consequently find the *Memoriale* uneven and even disturbing, presenting an Ignatius one might wish not to know. However, the challenge of this everyday account is that the humanity of the early Jesuits, and especially of their founder, predominates.

Clearly, Ignatius is presented as a figure of incisive spiritual wisdom, for example in his insistence on 'indifference' as the ability to be touched by God in new circumstances and to respond generously to new apostolic demands. But he is also portrayed as a leader frequently too ready to reprimand seemingly slight defects. Gradually the reader appreciates, or guesses at, the reasons why Ignatius allowed da Câmara to observe and document him so closely. The magnanimity of Ignatius' spiritual ambition and religious intensity was a grace, not just a human attainment. If the Society of Jesus was to develop, then those who would constitute its future had to look through Ignatius to the God of Ignatius. We have to interpret the *Memoriale* in the light of two fundamental and insistent Ignatian convictions: one's experience is one's own and cannot be normative for all, but the God of experience is faithful in the way of proceeding that leads to peace and light, to that consolation which helps people find happiness in their work.