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**Contemporary Evangelicalism** ■

**Anglican Evangelicals** ■

**Jewish Evangelism** ■

**Evangelical Definitions** ■

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# Editorial

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Aspects of contemporary Evangelicalism come under the spotlight in this issue of *Foundations*. This is mainly done by means of reviews of several books which have been recently published. Here is, therefore, an opportunity to make sure that we are up to date with what is being thought and advocated at the present time in the evangelical world in the United Kingdom. The aim of these reviews is more to inform than to interpret – analysis and evaluation of where we are (and where we are likely to go!) will appear in a future issue. The longer reviews appear here as Review Articles, while three briefer reviews are set together towards the end of this issue.

This year is the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Dr Lloyd-Jones and the thirtieth anniversary of the watershed meeting of evangelicals at the Central Hall, Westminster. Readers who are not familiar with the events of 1966-67 would do well to read about them.<sup>1</sup> Reference is made to them in some of the items in this issue.

Addressing the Inter Varsity Fellowship (now UCCF) in its fiftieth annual Conference in 1969, the Doctor spoke from 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 on *How to safeguard the future*.<sup>2</sup> He emphasised that the apostolic answer to this question was (and is) “to keep in memory ... things that are central and foundational and to hold on to them”. What are these “first things of the gospel”?

First there is the doctrine of Scripture: “according to the Scriptures”. This inspired, changeless and final revelation of God must be treasured. The second doctrine is that of the fall, and the third, salvation by grace alone: “by which you also are saved”. Fourthly, this redemption is through Christ alone; to Him the Scriptures point and in Him find their fulfilment. There is an urgent need for Evangelicals to “stand” firm and unshakeable in the Bible and to pray and work for a full recovery of the biblical faith.

<sup>1</sup> cf., *The Fight of Faith*, Volume 2 of the Doctor's biography by Iain Murray (Banner of Truth, 1990), pp. 427-569 and 789-796.

<sup>2</sup> cf., *Knowing the Times* (Banner of Truth, 1989), pp. 278-290.

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# Evangelical: a meaningful term?

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Eryl Davies

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Well, it all depends on the level at which the question is discussed. At a biblical level, for example, the term “Evangelical” is very meaningful indeed; in fact, it is rich in content and in its implications. And there is no ambiguity at all. The word “Evangelical” originates from the Greek noun *euangelion* which translates as “good news” or “gospel”. Together with the verb *euangelizomai* (to announce good news), these two Greek words occur almost a hundred times in the New Testament. Through its Latin equivalent *evangelium*, these Greek words have been absorbed into the English language. But in its New Testament context, the evangel “is the momentous Biblically-attested good news that God justifies sinners who for spiritual and moral salvation rely on the substitutionary person and work of Jesus Christ”.<sup>1</sup> Evangelicals, therefore, are “Gospel people” and evangelicalism is “the movement associated with the Gospel”.<sup>2</sup> In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, this Gospel is Biblically described as the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead on the third day thus fulfilling God-given prophecies in the Old Testament. Here is the only way in which sinners can be reconciled to the Holy God. It really is good news. One important reason for defining and emphasizing the term “evangelical” at this biblical level is in order “to safeguard the Gospel, to keep the evangel clear, to be concerned about the salvation of men and women...”.<sup>3</sup>

At the historical level, again the term “evangelical” is meaningful. As far back as 200 AD, Tertullian was probably the first to use the term as he defended biblical truth against the false teaching of Marcion. An important use of the term in a later period was in 1519 when Martin Luther described some of the teachings of the martyred Hus (1415) as “altogether Christian and evangelical”. Luther later regarded the term as the only appropriate label to describe his own teaching. It was the Roman Catholic, Sir Thomas More, who attacked William Tyndale in 1532 and referred to “those Evangelicals”. More may have been largely responsible for introducing the term into the English language. In this brief historical overview, we note that the nineteenth century has been described as “the evangelical age”<sup>4</sup> with the growth of the evangelical group within the Anglican Church and the effective preaching of nonconformist leaders like Spurgeon and, in Wales, John Elias. In 1846 the Evangelical Alliance was launched in London with the aim of uniting Christians, not churches, in fostering religious liberty, evangelism and inter-denominational fellowship.

From a low-ebb earlier in the twentieth century due to the impact of theological liberalism on the historic denominations and colleges, there was a gradual resurgence of Evangelicals and biblical theology by the middle of the century. In the early decades of the century, the terms “Fundamentalist” and “Evangelical” were interchangeable. During the 1930s and onwards, fundamentalism<sup>5</sup> became increasingly more separatist in ecclesiology, dispensationalist and negative both in its attitude to scholarship and also social-cultural involvement. A number of Evangelicals in the United States from the 1930s wanted to remain loyal to Scripture and fundamental doctrines yet, at the

same time, rejecting dispensationalism to go back to nineteenth century American evangelicalism. They desired to embrace a virile but moderate Calvinism as well as a higher regard for scholarship, apologetics and social action. The establishment in 1942 of the National Association of Evangelicals was significant and included a good cross-section of conservative Evangelicals from various church groupings.

Despite many encouragements in America, it was, by 1967, “impossible to regard American evangelicalism as a single coalition with a more or less unified and recognised leadership”.<sup>6</sup> One major issue which began to divide Evangelicals was inerrancy and this emerged in the United States, for example, with regard to Fuller Seminary.<sup>7</sup>

In the United Kingdom, new evangelical leaders emerging in the post-war years repudiated the label “Fundamentalist”<sup>8</sup> and were known as conservative Evangelicals. Once again, however, as in America so in Britain the term “evangelical” has been qualified and interpreted differently during the past twenty or more years. Clive Calver claims triumphantly that Evangelicals are now increasing towards 50 % of Protestant church attenders in the United Kingdom and have “rapidly become a force to be reckoned with”.<sup>9</sup> Some writers, however, insist that any attempt to describe the term “evangelical” must fail because of its historical diversity and the fact that it is constantly changing. Defining the term is like “trying to pick up a slippery bar of soap with wet hands”.<sup>10</sup> Amongst some Anglican Evangelicals, for example, it is claimed with considerable justification that the term “evangelical” is “functioning simply as an adjective, describing the type of Anglicans they are, rather than the primacy being given to Evangelicalism in defining their theological outlook and practice”.<sup>11</sup>

Amidst the contemporary confusion concerning the qualification of the term “evangelical”, the following terms or labels can be noted :

## **1. Neo-evangelical**

This term was used by Carl Henry, for example, to describe “the cooperating Evangelicals” who were bitterly attacked by “isolationist Fundamentalists” in the immediate post-war years. These neo-Evangelicals were generally sound in theology and committed unreservedly to inerrancy, but they often worked, and cooperated, with those in mixed denominations and ecumenical agencies”.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. New evangelical**

There are three distinct but related contemporary uses of this term and care is needed in distinguishing them.

- a) The older usage in which the term is interchangeable with that of neo-evangelical. Harold Ockenga first coined the phrase “new Evangelicals” in 1947 in order to distinguish it from the negative aspects of fundamentalism.
- b) In 1971, in his famous addresses on “What is an Evangelical?” at the IFES Conference in Austria, the late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones declared: “You have in America something which boasts the name of the ‘new evangelicalism’...it is no longer the old. There is a suggestion of some difference, whatever it may be”. He refers to a “very subtle change”<sup>13</sup> in the definition of what it means to be an Evangelical. This was a perceptive observation on the part of Lloyd-Jones. He was unhappy with the stance of some American Evangelicals or “new Evangelicals” because of their ecumenical involvement, mixed-denominational commitment, a

renewed emphasis, or even over-emphasis, on social involvement and an uncritical acceptance of Billy Graham's evangelistic methods and policy of seeking wide, even "liberal", support for his missions. It is also extremely probable that, in addition, Lloyd-Jones was referring to disturbing developments during the 1960s with regard to the Fuller Seminary staff crisis concerning inerrancy or limited inerrancy. He was certainly distressed over doctrinal divisions at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary: "They were once a body of evangelical people who stood united in the defence of the historic Faith. But", he concludes, "that is no longer true...Can you introduce certain changes and still say that you are the same, that you are still evangelical?"<sup>14</sup> What Lloyd-Jones emphasised in this context was "the subtlety of the change". This has always been true historically, he insisted. Despite making important and often valuable affirmations of the Faith, such people at the same time have often introduced changes but in a subtle way. Such changes, he adds, "generally take place on the periphery and not at the centre" which again "is a part of the subtlety of the process".<sup>15</sup> Because of the unity of divine truth and the interrelatedness of individual doctrines, changes even on the peripheral will, sooner or later, have a domino effect on the Faith.

- c) A third use of the term "new Evangelical" was by John Gunstone in 1982. Gunstone was referring to Evangelicals within the Anglican Church and he traced some of the changes which had occurred since the 1967 Keele Congress. He described these "new Evangelicals" as being "comprehensive rather than exclusive", "more relaxed theologically" and more Anglican than evangelical.<sup>16</sup> This third use overlaps considerably with the second one and justifies the concern expressed by Lloyd-Jones.

### 3. Radical evangelical

This term is used by several writers who emphasise the crucial importance of social justice; it involves a misunderstanding of the teaching concerning the "Kingdom of God". Whether it is "Kingdom ethics" or "Kingdom ministry" or "Kingdom praying", the biblical teaching concerning the Kingdom of God is often unbalanced and in need of important modifications. It is not true, as is often claimed, that the Kingdom of God is *ipso facto* present when social justice is sought and established. One reason is that the Kingdom of God refers to God's universal rule now mediated through the exalted Christ. Secondly, within this divine rule there is the spiritual Kingdom which people enter by spiritual, not political or social, means. Exponents of this radical evangelical approach include Ronald Sider and Chris Sugden.<sup>17</sup> The implications of this radical approach are far-reaching; for example, it is claimed that social action is integral to mission and that non-Christians are within God's Kingdom even though they may not be regenerate.

### 4. Liberal evangelical

Liberalism in theology denotes a critical and rational approach to the Bible which developed in Germany early in the nineteenth century and slowly extended its influence until, by the early decades of the twentieth century, almost the whole of Protestantism in Western Europe had embraced its critical presuppositions, methods and conclusions. Liberalism itself has gone through various phases but the term "liberal Evangelical" refers to those who accept the uniqueness of Christ and the necessity of conversion

while embracing a liberal theological framework. For such a person, the Holy Scripture is no longer an infallible and inherent record of God's self-revelation.

At this point we need to beware. Douglas Johnson expressed the matter succinctly:

The liberal Evangelical appears in general to retain much that is good, including most of the Gospel. It is not easy to notice that fatal step from the firm ground of objective truth, once given by God, on to the quicksands of tentative hypothesis and subjective reconstruction... After that step, it is only a matter of the degree and how far one plunges on into the quicksands.<sup>18</sup>

Johnson reminds us that at the end of the nineteenth century it was several liberal Evangelicals, not out and out Liberals, which "first caused the deviation... who made the first move..."

Liberalism amongst Evangelicals has been a matter of concern to us for nearly two decades. Recently, however, Don Carson has raised the matter with regard to some Anglican Evangelicals.<sup>19</sup> No doubt we shall have to face this issue on a wider front.

## **5. Post-evangelical**

Yes, the term represents another major departure from the biblical Faith. The term as popularized by Dave Tomlinson<sup>20</sup> has "no formal definition, there is no body of theology behind it..."<sup>21</sup> For many, we are told, it is "a welcome rallying point, a symbol of hope" for those who want to progress into a more "grown up" experience of faith.<sup>22</sup> In other words, such people do not want to be restricted by a narrow biblical theology and basis; rather, they want to interact with and often embrace, non-evangelical perspectives and theologies. To be post-evangelical, in Tomlinson's words, "is to take as given many of the assumptions of evangelical Faith, while at the same time moving beyond its perceived limitations".<sup>23</sup> But this "moving beyond" is radical; truth is understood as something "more provisional and symbolic",<sup>24</sup> the Scriptures can be in error and they only "become" the Word of God. The Atonement is no longer regarded as penal and substitutionary. All this represents a radical departure from the Faith.

## **6. Ortho-gelicals**

Have you come across this term yet? Recently it was used to describe those participating in talks representing Evangelicals and different Orthodox churches. The talks commenced after the WCC's Canberra Assembly (1991) when it became apparent that Evangelicals and Orthodox shared concern over several issues such as the centrality and authority of Scripture, apostolic and trinitarian dogma and the limits of legitimate diversity within the life of the World Council of Churches.<sup>25</sup>

## **What then?**

Should we now abandon the term "Evangelical" in view of the considerable confusion prevailing over the use of this term? Not necessarily. One lesson is that we must be aware of the fact that the term is used in several different and conflicting ways. Another challenge is that we must rediscover its proper biblical and historical meaning. In the words of Lloyd-Jones, it is "a limiting term"<sup>26</sup> and eliminates many ideas but includes and emphasizes certain distinctive truths. One major and foundational truth is the doctrine concerning the Bible; its inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency and supreme authority. In all respects, the Evangelical submits himself to this Book. He begins and

ends with the Bible. And nothing is added to the Bible nor taken away from it. All that the Bible clearly teaches then the Evangelical believes and obeys. Such Bible teaching centres in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and includes the seriousness of sin, the penal substitutionary Atonement of Christ, Justification by Faith alone, the necessity of the new birth, the personal return of Jesus Christ in glory as King and Judge, and the consummation of God's purposes.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Carl Henry, "Who are the Evangelicals?" in *Evangelical Affirmations*, (Zondervan, 1990), p. 75
- <sup>2</sup> Derek Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals?*, (Marshall-Pickering, 1994), p. 11
- <sup>3</sup> Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times* (Banner of Truth, 1989)
- <sup>4</sup> E.g., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell (ed.), (Marshall-Pickering, 1985), p. 380
- <sup>5</sup> The term is linked originally with a series of twelve books entitled *The Fundamentals*, the first book being published in 1910 in the United States. Fundamentalism as a term came to refer to those believers who, in opposition to theological Liberalism in the churches, re-affirmed the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith such as the infallibility of the Bible, the virgin Birth of Christ as well as His substitutionary Atonement and physical resurrection, etc. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* distinguishes three phases in the history of Fundamentalism, see p. 435.
- <sup>6</sup> George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 74
- <sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *Biblical Authority*, Jack Rogers (ed.) (Word, 1977), and an even more serious attack on inerrancy in 1979 in *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*, Rogers & McKim (eds), Harper & Row. They argued that the doctrine of inerrancy was not embraced by Augustine or Calvin, but originated with seventeenth-century Protestant scholasticism and then adapted by the Princeton theologians.
- <sup>8</sup> E.g., John Stott in *Fundamentalism and Evangelism*, (London, 1956); James Packer in *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, (IVP, 1958); John Stott in *Essentials*, (1988), pp. 90-91
- <sup>9</sup> Derek Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals?*, p. x
- <sup>10</sup> Idem; writers include Mark A. Woll (p. xi) and Derek Tidball (p. 12)
- <sup>11</sup> *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis*, Melvin Tinker (ed.), (Christian Focus, 1995), p. 9
- <sup>12</sup> Carl Henry, *Faith at the Frontiers* (Moody Press, 1969), p. 100
- <sup>13</sup> DM Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, p. 303
- <sup>14</sup> Idem, p. 304
- <sup>15</sup> Idem, p. 305
- <sup>16</sup> *Pentecostal Anglicans* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1982)
- <sup>17</sup> See, R Sider, *Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice*, (Grove Books, 1977) – Chris Sugden, *Kingdom and Creation in Social Ethics*, (Grove Ethical Studies, no. 79, 1990) – George Carey, *I Believe in Man*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), p. 125
- <sup>18</sup> *Contending for the Faith*, (Leicester: IVP, 1979), p. 343
- <sup>19</sup> See *Evangelicals Now*, November 1995. Also "Observations of a Friend" in *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis*, pp. 203-222
- <sup>20</sup> *The Post Evangelical*, (Triangle SPCK, 1995)
- <sup>21</sup> Idem, p. 1
- <sup>22</sup> Idem, p. 3
- <sup>23</sup> Idem, p. 7
- <sup>24</sup> Idem, p. 87
- <sup>25</sup> "A lot in common" in *One World*, October 1995, pp. 12f.
- <sup>26</sup> DM Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, p. 306

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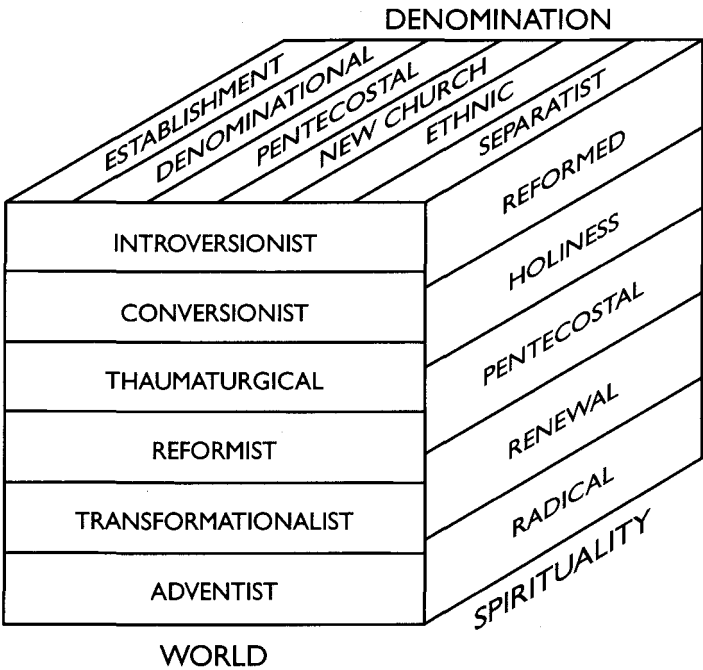
# An evangelical identikit

I believe it is helpful to picture contemporary evangelicalism as something like a Rubik's Cube ... Moving the individual pieces around will give all sorts of permutations. So it is with evangelicalism. As the individual pieces are moved, so a whole variety of different evangelical identities can be seen ... So, for example, an Anglican evangelical may plug into the evangelical network at very different places in terms of spirituality and go either to Keswick, or to Renewal conferences, or to Puritan fraternals and so on. A Baptist evangelical may be devoted to the King James Version and be pietistic in spirituality or in touch with the latest trends, familiar with the field of rock music and have a radical social involvement. Evangelicals with similar labels will network with very different people, plug into different events, support different parachurch groups and, as a result, have a very different feel to their evangelicalism from one another.

The Rubik Cube allows us to make distinctions on a number of different dimensions and to create a variety of identikit pictures of evangelicals. It is only an approach like this which makes sense of the complexity of contemporary evangelicalism. My tentative suggestion would be that the most important dimensions are attitudes to:

- Church
- Spirituality
- World

The cube would then look like this diagram:



*Derek J Tidball, Who are the Evangelicals?, pp. 20-24.*

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# Contemporary Evangelicalism

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Neil Richards

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## For Such a Time as This.

Perspectives on evangelicalism, past, present and future

*Edited by Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon.*

*Scripture Union, 1996, 304 pp., £7.95*

**T**his book is first and foremost a commemoration of the founding of the Evangelical Alliance 150 years ago in 1846, but it is also a tribute to Gilbert Kirby on his 80th birthday. Sir Cliff Richard writes the Foreword, in which he expresses his own appreciation of Gilbert Kirby. Our attention is attracted to the book for more than one reason. First, the Evangelical Alliance has had a resurgence of life during the last 30 years or so. It has undoubtedly increased its influence amongst evangelicals in this country and is now often turned to by the media for evangelical comment on church matters and social issues. So we open these pages with interest to see how the Evangelical Alliance sees itself and what are its hopes for the future. But the book has an interest beyond the welfare and prospects of the Evangelical Alliance; it attempts to show the state of evangelicalism and the directions in which we ought to be going. The Evangelical Alliance would like to be able to speak for us all; while it is humble enough to recognise that at present that is not so, its aim is to become an alliance of all evangelicals.

Most of the writers are well-known names drawn from the various segments of evangelicalism and from different spheres of Christian service – pastors, writers, lecturers and evangelists. This diversity of authorship does, perhaps inevitably, leave the work somewhat uneven, though I must say that in the main I found it very readable and stimulating. The book has an irenic spirit, and I hope this review will not be found lacking in that quality.

The first chapter contains a *biographical sketch and warm tribute to Gilbert Kirby* by Steve Brady, senior minister of Lansdowne Baptist Church, Bournemouth. Kirby did his training at Cheshunt College, Cambridge, the Congregational college, and was the only student at that time who held a “conservative” view of Scripture. His first church was Halstead Congregational Church, Essex, to which he was ordained and inducted in 1938. From there he went to Ashford in 1945, where he remained for some ten years. When Dr Lloyd-Jones began the Westminster Fellowship, Kirby was one of the very early members along with Alan Stibbs of Oak Hill Theological College, G.R. Beasley-Murray, and Ernest Kevan. In 1957 Gilbert Kirby became the General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance. One significant change which took place during his period was the introduction of “church” membership – up until then the membership had been on an individual basis. The second National Assembly of Evangelicals took place in the autumn of 1966, by which time Kirby had succeeded Dr Kevan as Principal of the London Bible College. These are the bare bones upon which Steve Brady puts flesh. The piece is very warmly written and will be appreciated by friends and colleagues of Gilbert Kirby.

## Who we are and what we do

The rest of the book is divided up into four main sections. The first deals with Evangelical Alliance identity. Two chapters recount experience in pursuing unity at a local church level. Then David Bebbington, Reader in History at Stirling University and author of *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, contributes a piece entitled *Towards an evangelical unity*, but the picture is very blurred – a point to which I want to return later. Joel Edwards, who was general secretary of the African-Caribbean Evangelical Alliance and is currently EA's UK director, gives a very positive, up-beat view of EA's present position and the scope of its work. He says, "EA in Britain has provided a container in which the kaleidoscopic nature of British evangelicalism has been sustained and stimulated." Then, referring to Clive Calver's vision for EA, he compares it to "the table top on which all the pieces of the jigsaw are assembled, an umbrella that covers evangelical diversity, a platform for united action..." Statistics are quoted to show the phenomenal growth of the EA over the past ten years; individual membership has risen to almost 50,000, with 688 groups/societies and 2,690 churches, while Wales and Scotland each have their own general secretary. EA's Council, Edwards believes, "is ideally suited to act as an evangelical parliament". Whilst the reviewer heartily shares the vision for unity in general he has some discomfort with such bold statements and the implication that dissent from the EA is itself a form of disunity.

A chapter on *The World Evangelical Fellowship: facing the future* is contributed by Jun Vencer, who is WEF's international director. The term "evangelical" is examined historically – "The Reformation became a mighty revolution to make the fundamentals of the faith the standard of orthodoxy. Sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christo, soli Deo gloria". In the words of John Stott "the evangelical faith is not some eccentric deviation from historic Christianity. On the contrary, in our conviction, it is Christianity in its purest and most primitive form".

Then *The church "in" the world* by Ken Gnanakan, general secretary of the Asia Theological Association. The writer makes a plea for a "more positive evaluation of the world", and speaks of our need to "actualise the Gospel within the world ... through concrete expressions of God's Kingdom". "This needs to be seen in the way in which Christians are socially, politically, and environmentally relevant to the world." Whilst not denying the implications of the gospel for the whole of life, we wonder whether the New Testament emphasis does not fall much more firmly and particularly on holy living. The relevance of the gospel appears even when Christians are powerless to have any direct influence on social, political or judicial structures, which was certainly the case in New Testament times and is still true for Christians living in Islamic states.

## Here we stand

The second main section focuses on theological and ethical commitment. The first contributor is Don Carson from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the USA and his subject is *The biblical gospel*. Dr Carson begins with a study of gospel words: *euangelion* itself, "kingdom", and the gospel as Paul unfolds it. He then develops this in terms of the gospel and Biblical theology: "the gospel is integrally tied to the Bible's story line. Indeed it is incomprehensible without understanding that story line". Those who hold to a Biblical gospel have, nevertheless, not always formulated it in precisely the same way – here differences between Reformed and Arminian Christians are cited. These

differences are by no means insignificant, but both positions in their best forms have far more in common than is sometimes appreciated. His concluding section stresses “the primacy of gospel”. Carson warns against the danger of “assuming” the gospel but being passionate about some relatively peripheral aspect of God’s truth. He says, “The good news of Jesus Christ will never allow us to be smug and other-worldly in the face of suffering and evil. But what does it profit us to save the world from smog and damn our own souls? There are lots of ways of getting rid of pornography. For example, one does not find much smut in Saudi Arabia. But one doesn’t find much of the gospel there, either.” Then finally a warning against “a litany of devices designed to make us more spiritual ...”, but which have the effect of diminishing the gospel. It is a fine contribution.

Next, a piece by John Stott on *Preaching and the Preacher*, which is vintage Stott. He deplores *The Times* “Best Preacher” awards – “thus the solemn declaration of God’s Word is cheapened into a prize-winning competition”. Good quotations abound: “Nothing undermines preaching like scepticism about the Bible, and nothing inflames it like the confidence that this is the Word of God.” His comments on the importance of sound hermeneutics are helpful, though we fear some are going astray in this area and seem to have discovered hermeneutical principles which enable them to stand plain scriptures on their heads. “...the right way is to sit humbly under the authority of the biblical authors, to allow them to say what they do say and not to force them to say what we wish them to say. No hermeneutical principle is more important than this. Yet the conviction that the meaning of the text lies within the text, and must be yielded up by the text, runs counter to the prejudices of post-modernism”. There is much more that is good. Stott’s final appeal is to keep the Word and the Spirit together. He warns against seeking to make room for the Spirit at the expense of the Word. “It would not be possible to justify this imbalance from Scripture”.

Howard Marshall, Professor of New Testament Exegesis in Aberdeen University, offers a piece on *Paul’s idea of community*. He draws attention to the comprehensiveness of the New Testament church in the sense that it included in the same congregations men and women, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and masters, rich and poor. The gospel breaks down barriers – is there something here that we need to face up to? The remainder of the essay deals with Paul’s missionary methods, the relationship between missionaries and churches, and the communal character of local church ministry. Marshall thinks it helpful to distinguish between eldership and leadership – eldership being an “office” based on character and gifts with a pastoral ministry in the local church, whilst leadership is based entirely on the particular gift of the Spirit and concerned with administration and management of the church.

From Fran Beckett, chief executive of the Shaftesbury Society, comes an appeal for Christians to pursue *the cause of justice* in a cruel and unjust world.

*New Testament Evangelism* is Tom Houston’s subject (he is Minister-at-large of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism). He concentrates on the word “evangelism” and the various ways in which it is understood and practised in the church, and follows this by a brief study of the New Testament usage.

Roy McCloyghy is director of Kingdom Trust and lectures at St John’s College, Nottingham. His subject is *Overcoming social barriers to the gospel*. These he sees as profound and complex changes in culture and the prevailing world view which, if not

accommodated by the church, will act as an effective jamming device so that people cannot hear the message. He says, "It is crucial that Christians are enabled to see the difference between that which is essentially Christian and that which is cultural and transient in our own beliefs." Even the church itself is seen as a part of the barrier. "In a post-modern world the institutional church is a problem not a solution." Two opposite responses are discussed: the strategy of accommodation and that of defence. The first involves negotiation with the world about what it is prepared to believe, and the other is a defensive position in which "authority (or rather authoritarianism) asserts itself over relevance". Two things bothered the reviewer (perhaps because he does not know the author): how recognisable will this culturally-adjusted gospel be? – and are we not in danger of becoming preoccupied with cultural barriers to the neglect of the more profound and universal spiritual barriers upon which the New Testament manifestly concentrates?

## **Where we come from**

The next section is historical. Ken Hylson-Smith – author, and bursar of St Cross College, Oxford – writes on *Roots of pan-evangelicalism: 1735-1835*. The chapter traces a number of attempts to promote a wider unity among evangelicals and explores some of the reasons for the failure.

There follows a more significant piece *The Rise and Fall of the Evangelical Alliance, 1835-1905* by Clive Calver, director general of the Evangelical Alliance. This is a very thorough, well-researched piece. The EA was formally inaugurated at a conference held in London in 1846. It was "the first major interdenominational ecumenical conference, though restricted to evangelicals, that the world has ever known". There is, the reviewer recalls, a fuller description of it in Poole-Connor's *Evangelical Unity*, which includes, at one point, a discussion on the subject of eternal punishment. Some were for omitting this from the doctrinal basis, but Dr Wardlaw's powerful speech carried the day, and it was included. One wonders whether such an article would be allowed to stand today. This newly expressed unity was soon to be severely tested by the slavery issue. When it was proposed that no slave-holder should be admitted to the EA the American representatives found that unacceptable. Calver enumerates the early uncertainties and struggles of the EA – the temptation to become simply an anti-Catholic league; the lack of strong clear leadership, and the issues of religious liberty.

A further historical chapter follows: *Schism and Unity: 1905-1966* by Ian Randall, lecturer in church history and chaplain at Spurgeon's College, London. Martyn Gooch, general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance from 1904 to 1950, attempted to give the Alliance as broad an appeal as possible and so in 1912 a briefer trinitarian statement of faith was adopted. Randall goes on to show how that "broadness" manifested itself, with even orthodox men like Graham Scroggie being unwilling to commit himself to any one "theory of inspiration" as he put it. The influence of the Church of England was very strong during those years, with a succession of bishops as Presidents of EA. As the century progressed the influence of liberalism became more strident. Gooch's response was weak and not until 1939 was a more clear and powerful voice to be heard in Dr Lloyd-Jones.

During those early years special prayer meetings were held, to pray for the renewal of the church. Gooch's policy was to enlist the support of prominent church leaders regardless of their lack of evangelical commitment, so Randall Davidson, Archbishop

of Canterbury, spoke for the Alliance, as did the Bishop of London and J. Scott Lidgett, the leading Methodist. The reviewer cannot help observing with sadness that the Alliance's policy has not changed – the present Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, was the main speaker at the recent EA Celebration.

The years after the Second World War saw a resurgence of evangelicalism and a new commitment to mission. There was a new optimism. Gilbert Kirby believed that “modernism is dead, it is no longer a thing to worry about”. In 1950 Westminster Central Hall and Westminster Chapel were packed with eager listeners to men like Tom Rees, Alan Redpath and WE Sangster. 1954 saw the Billy Graham Crusade at Haringay; this marked a turning-point for the EA. However, the storm clouds were gathering. The issue which was to disrupt this unity so seriously was the Ecumenical Movement and evangelical attitudes towards it. As early as 1948 the FIEC had made it plain that they could not condone the way in which the Alliance invited to its platform those whose views were largely at variance with the Alliance's doctrinal basis. The following year EA policy towards the ecumenical movement was defined as “benevolent neutrality”, but for a number of evangelicals this was very unsatisfactory. Gilbert Kirby was aware of this and in 1966 a National Assembly was called with the specific aim of studying evangelical attitudes to ecumenism. He wanted a balanced picture and so Dr Lloyd-Jones was invited to give his views on evangelical unity and, as they say, the rest is history.

That history is recounted for us by Peter Lewis, pastor of Cornerstone Evangelical Church, Nottingham, in *Renewal, Recovery and Growth: 1966 onwards*. He describes the optimism of the early 1960s among evangelicals in the main denominations, and the expectation that those denominations could be won back to their evangelical roots, and that, meanwhile, non-evangelicals had the right to be treated as fellow Christians. Dr Lloyd-Jones did not share this optimism and believed that the EA was avoiding the whole issue of the nature of true evangelical unity with implied separation from those who did not maintain a biblical gospel. What happened at that first session of the Assembly is fairly well known by now, especially among readers of this journal. Dr Lloyd-Jones made his appeal for evangelical church unity – “a visible association of churches [not a new denomination or an ‘Evangelical Church’] free from the compromises inevitably associated with ecumenical involvement and previous denominational loyalties”. John Stott, who was chairing the meeting, expressed his disagreement publicly as soon as Dr Lloyd-Jones had finished speaking. The reviewer, who was present, remembers well the sense of shock and embarrassment, and then the realization that good men were deeply divided on the issue.

Peter Lewis describes the impetus which these events gave to the BEC which “developed quite suddenly into a large and notable body on the British evangelical scene.” (Those who want a more extended comment on the Doctor and the BEC should read Dr Hywel Jones' introduction to the Doctor's BEC Addresses and volume 2 of Iain Murray's Biography of Dr Lloyd-Jones.)

The following year saw the National Evangelical Anglican Conference held at Keele University. Lewis quotes David Bebbington's assessment of this as “the chief landmark in a post-war evangelical renaissance...” NEAC “accepted the right of ‘broad’ and ‘high’ churchmen to co-exist with evangelicals in the Anglican church, and also expressed their desire to enter and take a full part in current ecumenical dialogue in local, national

and international levels. The resulting statement is widely regarded by evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike as “one of the most important ecclesiastical documents not only of the sixties but of the century” (Alistair McGrath “Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity”). For this reviewer these events represent a wrong turning and a serious set back in the evangelical cause, and are so regarded by not a few Anglican evangelicals today.

The response of the EA to the “Inter-church process” and to the “Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland” is carefully explained. In 1990 the Council of Management met to discuss an invitation to become a participating member of the CCBI. It declined to do so for three reasons. First, “It was the unanimous view of the Council that it would be impossible for the Alliance which is based on a credal confession to enter into membership with a Body whose Basis of Faith was significantly different from our own.” Second, the fact was stated that “we incorporate evangelicals who had differing views of the ecumenical debate which would make our membership of the new Council inconsistent.” Third, it was pointed out that “The Evangelical Alliance has existed for 150 years seeking to draw together individual Christians, local churches, denominations and agencies, around an evangelical Basis of Faith which reflects Biblical, historic, Christianity.” For some of us that does not resolve all the issues, but we are thankful for this stand by the EA.

Finally Lewis comments on the growth of the charismatic movement, which he views positively, and sees “the evidently pro charismatic leadership” as “necessary, in the wisdom of God to capture the minds and hearts of a new generation.”

## **Where are we heading?**

The final main section is a mixed bag. David Pope, a director of Saltmine Trust, writes on *Worship and Prayer*, and pleads for tolerance amongst evangelicals.

*Five personal views* are presented about the 21st century. First Michael Baughen, Bishop of Chester, with a very optimistic view of the Church of England – 50% of ordinands are now evangelicals. However, there is a warm, heartfelt plea for unity and peace amongst brethren, with which we will not argue, though it does raise the question “Who is an evangelical?” – to which we will return. Then Gerald Coates, the director of Pioneer, a network of churches in the UK, gives an exhortation to view seriously the plight of men and women without God and to realise that we evangelicals are the only hope of the nation. “The Kingdom of God is not dragging our past around with us, but getting a hold of our future and aggressively pulling it into the here and now”. Rosemary Dowsett, working with OMF and lecturing at Glasgow Bible College, gives us a Scottish perspective. North of the border church traditions are still strong – amongst those who still attend church services, that is – but “Christians will be increasingly impatient with maintaining denominational secondary distinctives. To do so represents an immoral wastage of limited resources of manpower and money. Are we prepared to find ways of burying at least some historical hatchets?” Donald English, a Methodist minister, is a writer, broadcaster, scholar, ecumenical leader and missionary. He looks at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and draws out a series of principles which he then applies to our lives. Phil Wall, a youth evangelist with the Salvation Army, calls his contribution “Premillennial Investment”, though why I am not sure. Fresh leadership and “mentoring” is what we need.

A chapter on *Evangelism Tomorrow* follows, by Steve Chalke, general director of Oasis Trust, and Rob Frost, a Methodist national evangelist. Steve Chalke urges us to get out into the “market place” and learn to communicate with our world. Dealing with moral and social issues makes the church relevant and the gospel effective. Rob Frost calls for more drama, and appeals, for support, to Whitefield’s dramatic preaching and the mediæval mystery plays! At this point the reviewer almost lost his irenic spirit.

Next, *Growing a Church*, with first a contribution by Roger Forster, founder and leader of the Ichthus Fellowship, which has seen remarkable growth since its inception in 1974. There were then just fourteen adults meeting together; today the Fellowship numbers over 2,000 adults divided into thirty congregations. Forster acknowledges his own indebtedness to the teaching of Donald McGavran on church growth and gives an uncritical summary of two of McGavran’s books, *The Bridges of God* and *Ten Steps for Church Growth*. Peter Wagner’s book *Young churches can grow* is also extensively summarised.

Colin Dye, senior minister of Kensington Temple, London, makes the second contribution here. He recounts the story of the Temple from its founding by George Jeffreys to his own appointment as senior minister in 1991. The congregation is now ten times the capacity of the building and new churches are being planted at the rate of one a week. Growth factors are then listed.

Ian Coffey is senior minister of Mutley Baptist Church, Plymouth. His title is *Forward Together*. He begins by reminding us of the “new found strength and influence” of evangelicalism; the opportunities that face us and our need to learn to co-operate with each other. Co-operation is not an optional luxury but a Kingdom goal and as such is a vital necessity. And yet it does not come easily. Coffey then suggests a number of areas in which co-operation is called for, such as evangelism and social action, stemming the tide of secularism, the battle for the mind – by which he means that evangelicals need to do some hard thinking on the issues that face society today.

The new principal of London Bible College, Derek Tidball, writes on *Facing Contentious Issues*. The first of these he sees as focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit. The charismatic movement has had a vast impact on evangelicalism, causing numerous divisions. “Perhaps the crucial division has been on the different status accorded by evangelicals to the authority of Scripture and the authority of experience. Whilst all would agree on a high view of the Bible, they have differed over the actual place it has in their theologies and practice.” Dr Tidball gives a deliberate caricature of these two very different positions and then summarises the differences quite helpfully in the form of ten questions, for example: “Is the Bible our only source of God’s authority or can it be supplemented by God speaking in a direct way to His people today?” “What is the nature of Christian initiation? Is it repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone, albeit expressed in water baptism, or is it all this plus baptism in the Holy Spirit? Further “contentious issues” include denominations; evangelism and social action; hell – an alternative view (which Dr Tidball describes as “conditional immortality”) is now put forward by “many respected evangelical statesmen like John Stott, John Wenham and Roger Forster”. “One of the most contentious issues has been the role of women in the church and in society” “Recently, many evangelicals have reassessed key texts on the place of women, and women have had a greater freedom to work, lead and minister.”

Others argue that these changing attitudes simply reflect changing public opinion. Dr Tidball sees the issue of hermeneutics as lying behind many of these differences. “All evangelicals believe that Scripture is divinely inspired, but some will take that to mean it is a divine book which is to be believed and obeyed in the most obvious and direct way; whilst others will see divine inspiration as channelled through specific human beings who lived at particular historical times and in distinct cultural settings, and our interpretation of Scripture needs to take that into account. These positions, crudely expressed, lead to some very different understandings of the meaning of the one text to which all evangelicals wish to be loyal.” The way forward, Dr Tidball concludes, lies in agreeing together on what are the central truths of the gospel, knowing where to draw the circumference, and “behaving towards each other in humility, love and non-judgementalness.”

It is perhaps a tribute to the generosity of the Evangelical Alliance and to the integrity of Alan Gibson and the esteem in which he is held, that the general secretary of the British Evangelical Council has been invited to contribute to this book. He does so under the title *The role of separation* (though his own preferred title was *Separation and Cooperation*, which sounds a more positive note). The first heading is *Separation from the World*, that is, separation from the world in its wickedness and unbelief and living out the new life in Christ which is characterised by godliness and God-honouring behaviour. “If evangelicals today were a little more concerned about being biblical in their teaching than being exciting in their presentation, then perhaps we would see fewer moral aberrations to bring dishonour on the Name of Christ.”

Then *Separation within the Church* – made necessary because the world has too often invaded the church, for example changes that followed the conversion of Constantine in 313AD. The Reformation came as a move to recover the gospel and reform the church. “For Calvin and others, the break necessitated by the Reformation was not a schism of the true church but a separation from a spurious church, which was no more than a religious institution of the fatally deluded, to restore the integrity of the genuine church.” Maintaining the uniqueness of the gospel involves the issue of church relationships. “There is also a duty for churches to bear witness to the gospel, not only by their preaching but also by the company they keep.” For some evangelical churches this means separation from churches that deny the gospel – to them it is a matter of conscience and loyalty to the Saviour Himself. Gibson says “It is unhelpful for the pejorative term ‘separatist’ to be used of these churches, for they may be in the very forefront of co-operation with genuine gospel churches beyond their own group.” Some of the complexities of the issue are then explained. The rest of the chapter is devoted to *Co-operation within the Church*, and we are reminded of the reality of this cooperation in the New Testament churches. What are the present-day hindrances to co-operation between evangelical churches? Alan Gibson admits that the situation is “confusingly complex”, but goes some way to unravelling the issues. His final section focuses on “the more significant factors that will influence evangelical separation and co-operation in the foreseeable future”. One of these is “Justification”, which has been fatally fudged in the recent Anglican-Roman Catholic discussions (ARCIC). Differences over the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture amongst evangelicals are becoming increasingly serious. “The so-called ‘open’ evangelical is apparently ready to accept not only errors in the Bible but contradictions between Jesus and Paul, together with

serious ambiguities about moral guidance.” Then follows *Uncertainties over the Lost*, both in terms of the nature of hell and of the possibility of salvation without the gospel. The matter of *Forms of Worship* is very serious even though it does not come into the realm of gospel essentials. It makes practical co-operation in evangelism, youth work and leadership training very difficult indeed.

Robert Amess, senior minister of Duke Street Baptist Church, Richmond, offers an interesting contribution on *Evangelicalism, cerebralism and unity*, in which he argues historically that true evangelicalism affects the whole man, not only his mind in holding right doctrinal convictions, but also his affections and his practical living. The classic expression of this all-round evangelicalism Amess sees as the 18th century leaders. His argument that 17th century Christians who held to the teaching of the Westminster Confession were not “evangelicals” because their confession pre-dates the birth of modern evangelicalism seems rather strained. The historical roots of evangelicalism, so far as the usage of the word is concerned, can be traced back to the English Reformation. However, it is true that where the biblical and historic faith is confessed, yet with little concern for evangelism or compassion for a lost world, such people are hardly worthy of the name “evangelical”.

*Maintaining New Testament unity* is contributed by RT Kendall, minister of Westminster Chapel, London. He thinks we have gone astray in this matter because we begin at the wrong point – we begin with doctrine, whereas we ought to begin with the Holy Spirit.

The final chapter is by Peter Cotterell who was, until last year, the principal of the London Bible College. Having been for many years a missionary with SIM it is appropriate that he should write on *Looking Forward: Mission*. The advance of mission is to be seen in terms of the King and His Kingdom. Dr Cotterell quotes from his own book *Mission and Meaninglessness*: “Mission will always be a power confrontation which includes those signs of the presence of the Kingdom so confidently announced in the New Testament. Mission is more than the multiplying of missionaries or even churches. It is rather the contradiction of the human condition, of human meaninglessness, and in the Name of God so resolving it that God’s Kingdom comes.” He thinks the often repeated reference by evangelicals to the reign of God (“God is on His Throne”) is more appropriate to the Muslim view of God than to the Christian view. The reviewer felt this was unfair to the Christian understanding of God’s sovereignty which distinguishes between God’s powerful reign over all things in providence and His reign in grace over the hearts of His people. However, the section produced the little gem “The greatest event in world history is not that man once stood on the moon, but that God once stood on earth.” “Mission in advance”, says Dr Cotterell, “is far more than adding numbers to congregations. It involves challenging the “second kingdom” (i.e. the devil’s), refusing to accept exploitation of the poor, the widows, the orphans, the stranger ... Most mission societies today are putting very large resources into relieving physical human misery.”

## Some conclusions

Those who have persevered and are still with me in this marathon review will appreciate the considerable breadth of subjects covered by the book, and the consequent difficulty which any attempt to sum up faces. However, a number of matters do call for some comment.

1. Although the Evangelical Alliance has now attained widespread support amongst evangelicals, it does need to appreciate that it does not have all of us on board. This dissent is not due to indifference to the unity and peace of the church, but to misgivings

about the direction which the EA seems to be taking on a number of issues. This fact should give the EA leadership cause for concern and for serious reflection.

2. One of the gravest issues which we face here is the continuing dilution of evangelical convictions. More than once in these papers the question of evangelical identity is raised – what is an evangelical? The answers given are often vague and lack discrimination. It was particularly disappointing to see that David Bebbington has written the chapter on *Towards an evangelical identity*. He sees the belief in biblical inerrancy as a feature of “fundamentalism”, along with “a pugnacious manner and a repudiation of the intellect”. Perhaps he is unaware that biblical inerrancy (formerly termed “infallibility”) was held by BB Warfield and Dr Lloyd-Jones, and is held by JI Packer and John Stott. Another way in which evangelical conviction is reduced is by asking the question “Can you be a Christian without being an evangelical?” An affirmative answer to that leads Ian Coffey to say, “Many of us recognise the godliness of other professing Christians who themselves would be uncomfortable with the theological definition ‘evangelical’. We have much to learn from those beyond our ranks in the realms of theological reflection, spirituality and missions.” But such statements are misleading. Alan Gibson is surely right when he says, “The question, however, is not whether individuals can be Christians and not evangelicals, but whether, in Luther’s words, justification by faith remains the doctrine of a standing or falling church.” The question which is to govern what truths should form the basis of evangelical unity is not “How much must a person believe in order to be a Christian?” but “Which truths are essential to the maintenance of a Biblical gospel?”
3. The EAs obvious commitment to the charismatic movement (acknowledged by Peter Lewis) comes through unmistakeably in the book. Not that all the writers are card-carrying charismatics, but the signposts all point in that direction. The only hint of dissent comes in the context of *exhortations* – with which the reviewer entirely concurs that differences between us be handled with integrity and in a spirit of brotherly love. Might it not have been more helpful, and presented a more honest view of where we are, to have allowed one voice to express the misgivings which many evangelicals feel on charismatic issues?
4. The issue of how the evangelical faith is to be maintained at the level of church relationships is still unresolved. The fact is that the apostolic response to those whose teaching undermines the apostolic faith is not matched by many evangelical churches today. Comprehensive denominations in which men who blatantly reject truths central to the gospel and historic Christianity are allowed to teach and to function as church “pastors” endangers the gospel, further confuses the world about us, and dishonours the Saviour and Head of the church. To dismiss these concerns – as many do – as “fundamentalism” or “separatism” or the desire for a “pure church” (Derek Tidball ought to know better than to attribute such a view to Dr Lloyd-Jones – p. 257) is to descend to a level of debate that lacks integrity and is worldly in spirit.
5. We need to appreciate every effort that is made to strengthen the peace and unity of the church. The Evangelical Alliance’s genuine concerns to encourage love and integrity in all discussions and disagreements command our sympathy and support.

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Neil C Richards is pastor of Wheelock Heath Baptist Church, Cheshire

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# Evangelicals in the Anglican Church

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Reg Burrows

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## Has Keele Failed?

*Edited by Charles Yeats, Hodder & Stoughton, 218 pp., £8.99*

## The Anglican Evangelical Crisis

**A radical agenda for a Bible based church**

*Edited by Melvin Tinker, Christian Focus. 222 pp., £7.99*

In both these books Anglican evangelicals consider the issues they face in the national church. *Has Keele Failed?* looks back to the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele University in 1967, when, according to John Stott, evangelical Anglicans repented of their withdrawal from the visible Church into the parish, and from the secular world into their own pietistic circles. After Keele there certainly was a great increase in evangelical involvement in synodical government, diocesan structures and liturgical change. The book, while accepting that it is too soon for a final assessment on Keele, asserts that without it the Church of England today would be in a far worse state than it is. (*REFORM*, the evangelising and reforming network of “conservative” evangelical parishes that emerged after the passing in November 1992 of the legislation to ordain women presbyters, believes that Keele was a disaster.)

The book has three sections. The first is a chapter by Michael Saward, one of the main architects of Keele. He was involved with the pressure from the Eclectic Society of younger evangelical clergy to change the plan of the Congress from set-piece addresses to discussion sessions working to produce the Keele Statement. He describes the events leading up to Keele and takes a positive view of the development of the evangelical Anglican movement afterwards.

The second section is a debate between David Holloway, a leading member of *REFORM*, and Peter Baron. Holloway argues the case for reform. The nation is adrift spiritually and in need of evangelising. The Church of England is adrift doctrinally, morally and in terms of social significance. The things required for a human organisation to function well are not present in the Church of England. Centralism has taken over. Too many decisions are taken by diocesan officials and bureaucrats. Attempts by evangelicals since the war to reform the Church of England have failed. Keele was part of this failure. Holloway is a gospel man concerned about the spiritual state of Church and nation, although he sometimes uses sociological rather than scriptural analysis. He argues the case for reform (that is, for reformation), but I do not think he establishes the case for *REFORM*, with its particular objectives and methods. One short paragraph describes *REFORM*'s structure and objectives.

Baron writes against *REFORM*. He accepts a vague evangelicalism and writes “Broadly, an evangelical may be defined as someone who elevates the authority of Scripture, who believes in the conversion of individuals, and exalts the cross in doctrine and spirituality: I will leave the subtlety of definition there.” For him “evangelicalism

is much more a cultural phenomenon than we realise". For him, Keele was the (legitimate) birth of the "open" evangelical – someone who is not a liberal, but is willing to listen. This is contrasted with the "closed" evangelicalism of the supposed ghetto before Keele, which regarded itself as the true church within the Church of England. This closed evangelicalism, resurrected in *REFORM*, has three features that must be rejected – "dualism" (the idea that the Word of God is objective, entirely definite, and the same for everyone); "perspicuity" (which is unattainable) and dogmatism. The open evangelical follows Hooker, who "recognised that the mere Scriptures are not sufficient. We need the authority of the Church and the preacher to induce us to consider them favourably."

Baron has little time for reforming zeal. "The temptation within evangelicalism is to define the true Church as invisible, but then to argue that the moral life of the visible body should conform to it." It is wrong, he says, "to deny the catholic visible nature of the church and to confine it to one congregation (*ecclesia*)". The centre of the church is Christ (as in the Gospels), but the boundary is fuzzy. The church is inclusive, comprehensive and fallible. These marks are both Anglican and scriptural. For him, Keele did not fail. It gave evangelicals the courage to open themselves to different theological traditions. He sees *REFORM* as a reaction to modernity which will split evangelicals, send them back to the ghetto, and cause them to repudiate Keele and Nottingham. Baron regards a leading *REFORM* member who circulated the House of Bishops asking them to repent of listed sins, as demonstrating a lack of understanding of episcopacy as well as "an arrogance born of an over-confident approach to Scripture".

The third section is correctly entitled *Keele Evangelicals on Reform* on the contents page (rather than *Keele Evangelicals on REFORM* at the beginning of this part of the book). Most of the writers approve of the direction set by Keele and describe themselves as "Keele evangelicals". But with one notable exception, there is absolutely nothing evangelical about what they write. They are concerned almost entirely with methods, structures and procedures. These chapters could equally well have been written by liberals. They contain no gospel. They largely ignore Scripture. They do not face up to the other gospels, the heresy and the unbelief in the Church of England. If these are the descendants of Keele, then – by any scriptural test – we have here the answer to the book's title. Keele was a dismal failure.

Michael Turnbull, the evangelical Bishop of Durham, writes on "Paying for ministry", a description of how the Church Commissioners and the Church of England in general have an "option for the poor"; the system is geared to provide a ministry for areas and churches that cannot afford it themselves. John Pritchard, Warden of Cranmer Hall (an evangelical theological college in Durham), discusses how ministerial training can be improved when training in theological colleges is the most expensive and not necessarily the best method. David Day, Principal of St John's College (a university college in Durham linked with Cranmer Hall), discusses the ministry of the laity. Most of the chapter is a plea for lay presidency at the Lord's Supper. Margaret Masson, a lecturer in English Literature at St John's, writes on the ministry of women. She seems to be a slightly aggrieved feminist who sees in the three aspects of Christian tradition – "the Bible; the language, imagery and symbolism of the Christian tradition; and the structures and shape of the institutional Church itself" – no real hope of rapid moves forward to having women bishops. Ruth Etchells, former Principal of St John's, discusses

the ministry of bishops in very Anglican terms. John Arnold, the catholic Dean of Durham, deals with the ministry of cathedrals which – quoting Hooker – are to be regarded as temples of the living God.

The one ray of light in this spiritual gloom is the chapter by Michael Wilcock, Vicar of St Nicholas, Durham, writing on the ministry of the parish clergy. He takes us on a “flight of fancy”, imagining an ecclesiastical world in which all the traditional Anglican structures, buildings, investments, hierarchies have been swept away. Such a “‘stripped-down’ version of the Church would be not something lesser, but something greater than the complexities and pomp of any presently existing denomination, or even of all the modern ‘churches’ put together.” It would be a priestly church with direct access into God’s presence, and a prophetic church, sent out by God to speak to the world. The priestly and prophetic people of God are guided by “shepherds” – pastors who are presbyters, and who bishop. This is the real work of the parish clergy.

Overall, there is value in the first part of the book. Michael Seward’s chapter is a helpful summary of events with an insight into the inner workings of Keele. The second part is a useful introduction to the present debate among Anglican evangelicals. It is also useful to have the Keele Statement included as an appendix – it has been out of print for a number of years. The third part – except for Michael Wilcock’s chapter – has no value whatever as a programme for reformation. It only serves to illustrate the desperate spiritual condition of Anglican evangelicalism today.

*The Anglican Evangelical Crisis – a radical agenda for a Bible based church* is refreshingly different. It is partly a response to *Evangelical Anglicans*, a symposium published in 1993, whose writers were associated with Wycliffe Hall (an evangelical Anglican theological college in Oxford). *Evangelical Anglicans* maintained that the 39 Articles were not intended to be a confession of faith. It revealed that many evangelical scholars no longer accept the traditional authorship of New Testament books. It did not regard the historic evangelical gospel of the Reformers as the essential truth of God and the heart of true Anglicanism.

In his preface to *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis* the editor, Melvin Tinker, discerns a crisis of identity among Anglican evangelicals (with desperate attempts recently to hold together those who call themselves evangelicals), of theology (a movement being pragmatically, not theologically driven), and of purpose (not standing up to the Peters of today like Paul did). This book sees Evangelicalism as authentic Christianity.

Under the title *Semper Reformanda* David Holloway, Vicar of Jesmond in Newcastle upon Tyne, argues for reformation in the Church of England. For the Reformers the essence of Christianity was neither the church itself, nor its ministry, but its faith. He argues for a return to Prayer Book doctrine (not a general use of the 1662 Prayer Book) in a church where “the bishop is his Diocese” is now the defining mark of the Church. The church must retain the shape of biblical Christianity, the bishops must repudiate the validity of homosexual relationships, feminism must be rejected (although Holloway wants more women deacons – and preachers?). In addition, there must be a commitment to making new disciples, to removing bishops and clergy who deny fundamentals – and to reinstating the local congregation as the unit (see Article 19), with the right to withdraw its money from supporting work in gospel-denying parishes.

Mark Thompson, an Australian from Sydney diocese, writes on *Saving the Heart*

**of Evangelicalism.** He insists that evangelicalism can only be defined theologically and gives a heart-warming summary of historic, Reformation evangelical doctrine which would be of great help to any believer seeking instruction and encouragement. He declares that much contemporary evangelicalism has “surrendered to a caricature of itself as narrow-minded and negative, and obligingly transformed itself into an amorphous entity which stands for nothing and smiles benignly at the compromise of its most cherished beliefs. It has forgotten that genuine Christian unity is unity in the truth.”

Melvin Tinker writes on *Currents of change – Trends in Anglican Evangelical Theology Today*. He condemns the misuse of the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God, the idea that “wherever social justice and peace are promoted, there we are to see the Kingdom of God, even if Christ is not acknowledged or salvation experienced.” He writes helpfully on the relationship between doctrine and experience; an experience is only Christian if it comes from true biblical doctrine. It is a perverse hermeneutic that can lead us to say the exact opposite of what Paul is saying and at the same time claim that we are being faithful to him. There must be a new commitment to teach the Bible; it should shape the way we function. It is not just the content of teaching that matters, but the context – the “style of worship” also conveys a message. Are we being ruled by God’s Word or by denominational regulations?

In a brilliant historical survey Gerald Bray asks *Whatever happened to the authority of Scripture?* He sheds much light on problems with Bible interpretation today. Luther interpreted the Bible in the light of justification by faith. Later on covenant theology became the interpretative principle. John Wesley based his doctrine of perfectibility on one verse (Matthew 5:18) – and it has become a characteristic of much of the evangelical movement to “find a text to back up your inspiration/experience”. Evangelicals still affirm *sola Scriptura*, but without having the Reformation framework of systematic biblical theology. The problem today is *sola exegesis*, interpreting a passage using modern academic methods but with no systematic theology to help. The resulting sermon is an arid lecture, or the text becomes a launching-pad for the preacher’s own thoughts. We must have a coherent theology again. But it looks as though the present situation will get worse and worse.

Douglas Spanner, writing on *Men, Women and God*, does not offer a closely reasoned argument, but some helpful thoughts, which will both stimulate and reassure those who accept the traditional biblical position. It is a pity he does not tackle the “new orthodoxy” among conservative evangelicals that leaves the door open for women to preach (as long as they do so under the authority of a male elder). This is the position of John Stott and Jim Packer, in a recent statement from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, and of the Danvers Statement by leading North-American evangelicals in 1988. It is also the view of many members of *REFORM*, who are in favour of women deacons. (Deacons in the Church of England are normally licensed to preach).

In *Towards an Evangelical view of the church* Melvin Tinker focuses on the church as the people God. He sees the local church – “the congregation of faithful men” of Article 19 – as the unit, an outcrop of heaven (Hebrews 12:22-24). Bishops are not hierarchical bishops in tactile succession, but the pastor-teachers of the local congregation. Where apostolic truth is rejected no unity exists. Denominations are para-church organisations supporting the work of local congregations. Ecumenism is not

bringing denominations together (for they are not churches), but fostering unity among evangelical congregations.

Jim Packer deals with comprehensiveness in the Church of England under the title, *Never mind the quality, feel the width*. He describes the traditional understanding of comprehensiveness as calculated inclusion, not a tight-rope between Rome and the Reformation, or between Rome and the Anabaptists, but a broad-based, definite Protestantism. He finds other interpretations “feeble and wet” by comparison. But he ends very limply with the hope of what Anglicanism may be tomorrow, “when (please God) it reapprehends its heritage and is renewed in doing so.”

Another Sydney Diocese evangelical, Peter Adam, writes encouragingly on *Preaching and Pastoral Ministry*. Evangelicals in the Church of England seem to have lost their way in the area of preaching. *The Nottingham Statement* did not include in its *Intentions* a commitment to preaching and teaching the Bible. He argues cogently for a ministry of the Word that is biblical, expository, applied and passionate. The challenge is to nurture and train such preachers. There are useful reminders for every preacher here.

John Woodhouse is also from Sydney Diocese. In *The Lay Administration of the Lord's Supper: A change to stay the same* he argues persuasively that to stay the same (that is, to remain true to Reformation and biblical principles) you have to change (namely allow lay administration of the Lord's Supper). The New Testament says nothing about who may administer the Lord's Supper in the local congregation. Lay administration undermines wrong sacramental theology, removes groundless taboos and helps people to understand the gospel better. (Interestingly, this is a much more realistic and biblical case than that of David Day in *Has Keele Failed?*)

In *The Word in an Age of Image. The Challenge to Evangelicals* Os Guinness describes the shift from word to image as the means of communicating in our society. He shows how this has happened and what the effects of the shift are. It should be compulsory reading for all preachers – and others – who have not read anything on this subject.

David Field writes on *Homosexual Relationships and the Bible*. He presents the essence of the biblical case in a refreshing and clear way, and is very good on encouraging the right attitude to homosexual people. It is a perhaps a pity that he does not touch on the problem of homosexuals who actively oppose God's standards and campaign to lead others into their practice.

An outstanding contribution is Rachel Tingle's chapter – *Evangelical Social Action Today: Road to Recovery or Road to Ruin?* – She traces the history of evangelical social action from the nineteenth century to today. It is a very perceptive analysis of what has happened, and of the dangers facing evangelicals today, not just Anglican evangelicals. The warning is clear: “Social action should not usurp the gospel, or be presented as if it were the gospel.” The debate is really about the meaning of the gospel.

The book ends with observations from a (non-Anglican) evangelical friend, Don Carson. In fact he compares this book with *Evangelical Anglicans*. There are some perceptive comments on the Anglican evangelical position. Why does this book make no reference to the 1966 call by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones? Carson knows of no mainline denomination where decline has not been accelerated by the decision to ordain women. The same hermeneutic is used to champion the ordination of homosexuals. We can already see this pressure building up in the Church of England.

What then of the book as a whole? Some of the chapters are outstanding introductions

or summaries of their topics – those by Mark Thompson, Melvin Tinker (on trends in theology), Gerald Bray, Peter Adam, Os Guinness, David Field and Rachel Tingle. The book can be recommended for the value of these chapters alone. Other chapters should encourage contending for the faith – those by David Holloway, Melvin Tinker (on the church) and John Woodhouse.

But there are weaknesses. There is no doubt that the contributors consider the evangelical gospel of the Reformation to be the essential truth of God. David Holloway writes approvingly of Hooker's definition of the faith of the church as "credal orthodoxy". But is that enough? Is not justification by faith alone the sign of a falling or standing church? In the General Synod battles of the 1980s is it not sad that a great stand was made for Christ's resurrection and virginal conception and against homosexual practice, but comparatively no fuss was made about justification by faith, the heart of the gospel? Don Carson cannot see how Jim Packer finds the Articles to be so tolerant of Anglo-Catholicism. The mindset is still to embrace, as Ryle did, those who affirm the 39 Articles, and also those who embrace the Galatian heresy.

This book does much to stimulate right thinking and reforming action. But it lacks a sense of horror at the unbelief and heresy that permeates the central life and official pronouncements of the Church of England. The "both and" approach, seen in the bishops' report affirming the biblical view of marriage and tolerating homosexual relations among lay members of the church, is not wise or kind. It is an expression of sheer unbelief.

I am encouraged by much in this book. I shall continue to pray for my Anglican brothers. But until they accept responsibility to reform the connexional church to which they belong rather than retreat to the parish as they do in this book, until they resolve to do something to drive Liberalism and Anglo-Catholicism out of the visible church of Christ, and until they aim for an evangelical Church of England and be willing to secede if, having mustered the troops, they fail to achieve it – only then will they have a truly radical agenda for Bible-based church. Only then will there be any hope for the Church of England. Only then will they themselves be safe from being corrupted by the rotten apples in the Anglican barrel.

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*Reg Burrows was formerly vicar of St Barnabas' and St Jude's Church, Newcastle upon Tyne*

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I am very grateful for the invitation to be an observer at Keele, partly because the British Council of Churches desires an understanding relationship with all Christian traditions and partly because I personally owe much to the evangelical tradition.

While I could not go the whole way with the Congress statement, there were three major emphases at Keele which I warmly welcome – the stress on theology, the desire to take a responsible part in the corporate and central life of the Church of England, and the recognition that Christians must show the implications of the gospel for the social, moral and international problems of our time.

An evangelicalism that can combine these wider concerns with personal devotion to Christ as Saviour and Lord, can, I believe, enrich the life of the Church of England, deepen the ecumenical dialogue, and strengthen the total Christian witness in our country in coming days.

*Bishop Kenneth Sansbury  
General Secretary of the British Council of Churches 1967*

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# Exegesis 21: Was Phoebe really a deacon?

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Richard Myerscough

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## An exegesis of Romans 16:1,2

Phoebe has become something of a *cause célèbre* in the debate surrounding women deacons. Her celebrity status hinges on the use of the word *diakonos*: was Paul saying that Phoebe held office as a deacon in the church at Cenchrea or, as most translations have it, that she was a servant of that church? The issue was highlighted at the BEC Study Conference on *The Ministry of Women* (see *Foundations* No. 35) with women deacons supported in the paper *A Diaconal Role for Women*?

Commentators are divided on the issue, even those who are avowedly Reformed. For example, John Murray states that “there is neither need nor warrant to suppose that she occupied or exercised what amounted to an ecclesiastical office comparable to that of the diaconate”<sup>1</sup> whilst Charles Hodge calls her a “deaconess”<sup>2</sup> and John Calvin refers to “her office”.<sup>3</sup> CEB Cranfield, widely respected for his exegesis of Romans, believes that it is “virtually certain”<sup>4</sup> that Phoebe held office as a deacon, whereas his colleague CK Barrett believes that the use of the word is too early to allow for certainty in the debate and that “the question...is wrongly put”.<sup>5</sup>

The list of commentators could be lengthened *ad infinitum*, but it has to be said that the weight of opinion favours the view that Phoebe held diaconal office. In the light of this, the chairman of the BEC Study Conference commented that “there seems to be a gap between theory/theology and practice. Whereas a significant number of commentators and theologians agree...about a diaconal office for women, not many evangelical churches have female deacons”.<sup>6</sup>

Given such divergence, it would be presumptuous to suggest that a definitive exegesis of the verse is easily attained. However, I feel that there are some points that have not been given the attention they deserve and others that have been made and need challenging.

Beginning with the context, verse 2 seems to indicate, as EK Harrison has noted, that Paul “is not stressing office but service”.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis is upon what Phoebe has come to do and not whether she comes holding an office in the church at Cenchrea. This is seen in the phrase “give her any help she may need from you” and Paul’s description of her as a “great help”, which is clearly not a term that suggests office.

Turning to **the use of *diakonos* in the NT**, the word occurs 29 times in all, 21 of which are Pauline, but it is very rarely used with the more technical meaning “deacon”. In fact, excluding Rom. 16:1, there are only 3 instances where the word can possibly bear that meaning, Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12. This alone should make us very cautious in ascribing to any use of the word the aspect of office. In each of those 3 instances, the context makes it clear that Paul is referring to an office in the church; such contextual evidence is entirely absent from Rom. 16:1,2 (see above).

Dunn argues that *diakonos* “could be understood simply in terms of a regular pattern of service undertaken by Phoebe on behalf of her local church...but this would probably have been expressed by use of *diakoneo* (cf. 15:25) or *diakonia* (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15)”.<sup>8</sup> But

as we have seen, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the NT authors, mostly Paul, have deliberately chosen to use *diakonos* when they **do not** have the office of deacon in mind. That is to say, they have used *diakonos* to refer to “a regular pattern of service”, the context providing the specific details, as is indeed the case with the use of both *diakoneo* and *diakonia*.

But is there any significance **in the use of *diakonos* with a genitive**? DJ Moo asserts that “with the official sounding addition “of the church of Cenchrea” it is more likely that Paul is identifying Phoebe as holding the office of deacon”.<sup>9</sup> Is he right? In addition to Rom. 16:1, *diakonos* is used in a genitival construction 17 times in the NT, and in each instance *diakonos* cannot mean deacon; in every reference the word is used functionally.<sup>10</sup> Far from supporting Moo’s assertion, then, the evidence points in the opposite direction: the fact that Paul refers to Phoebe as a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea is more likely to indicate function than office.

Are there any other specific **grammatical arguments** that support the case for understanding *diakonos* as meaning “servant”? Against what I have been arguing, both Cranfield and Dunn believe that the presence of the participle *ousa* (“who is”) with *diakonos* “points more to a recognized ministry”.<sup>11</sup> But there is no reason to suppose this to be so. Although the participle is governed by the verb “commend”, Paul is equally likely to commend someone for their service to the Lord as he is for their official position in the church. Indeed, it could be argued that he is more likely to commend someone for their service than for their office. This interpretation is strongly supported by the fact that Paul’s commendation of her and his request that she be hospitably received are made on the grounds that “she has been a great help to many people, including me” (v. 2b); that is to say, on the grounds of service, not office.

## Conclusion

I believe that the above arguments go a long way towards showing that, although Phoebe served the Cenchrean church, she did not hold office in that church as a deacon. Although prevailing opinion is weighted against this interpretation, I do not believe that alternative exegeses make better sense of the context, the NT use of *diakonos* or the grammar of the verse.

If the above interpretation is granted, where does this leave the debate on women deacons? In terms of the exegesis of specific verses, we are still left with the very complex data of 1 Tim. 3:11. But would it not be careless, perhaps even reckless, for churches to make what amounts to a significant and historic change in church polity on the basis of one much disputed verse?

## Postscript

I am very much aware that the tone of a paper such as this can so easily sound negative, which is a matter of very real regret because Paul is saying something tremendously positive in these verses. It is clear that our concern, the issue of women deacons, was not his concern at all. Although I believe that, along with the rest of the NT, these verses offer no support for the idea of women deacons, it would be wrong in the context of the ongoing debate about the role of women in our churches to neglect the implications of what Paul was saying to the church in Rome. There are significant **challenges** here for us.

Firstly, **the humble service of every believer is to be greatly prized and encouraged.** Do we recognise and teach that to serve is to be Christ-like and is a privilege of the highest order? Do we encourage every member of the body to believe that they too can serve the Lord and that their service is vital for the glory of God and the well-being of the church? Do we foster creative service, encouraging people to actively look for ways to serve? And do we acknowledge faithful service when it is given, avoiding “both congratulation (which corrupts) and silence (which discourages)”<sup>7</sup><sup>12</sup> It seems that Paul had no qualms in writing commendations that would doubtless be read by the very people he was commending.

And, secondly, **that includes the service rendered by women.** The right use of God-given gifts by the women in our churches must never be disallowed or discouraged; as with Phoebe, they have a tremendous amount to give. We must ask ourselves if we are afraid to allow women to perform “headline” tasks. Phoebe was presumably in Rome on “church business”, serving the Cenchrean church and, by implication, representing them. Are we secure enough to see that, far from such sponsorship threatening recognised offices and authority in the church, it is something to encourage and be thankful for?

## References

- <sup>1</sup> J Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols (Eerdmans, 1965), 2:226.
- <sup>2</sup> C Hodge, *Romans* (Banner of Truth, 1972), p. 447.
- <sup>3</sup> J Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, 2 Volumes (St Andrews Press), p. 320.
- <sup>4</sup> CEB Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Volumes, (T&T Clark, 1979) 2:781.
- <sup>5</sup> CK Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (A&C Black, 1957), p. 282.
- <sup>6</sup> M Johnston, “Trying to Tie the Threads Together”, Study Paper No. 6, BEC Study Conference *The Ministry of Women*, p. 6/4.
- <sup>7</sup> EF Harrison, “Romans”, in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1976), 10:161.
- <sup>8</sup> JDG Dunn, “Romans 9:16”, *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Word, 1988), p. 886,887.
- <sup>9</sup> DJ Moo, “Romans”, in *New Bible Commentary*, 4th Edition (IVP, 1984), p. 1158.
- <sup>10</sup> The references are: Mt. 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43; Rom. 13:4; 15:8; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15; 11:23; Gal. 2:17; Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:7,25; 1 Thes. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6.
- <sup>11</sup> Dunn, p. 886.
- <sup>12</sup> JRW Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1991), p. 145.

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As the poor were supported from the public treasury of the Church, so they were taken care of by those in public offices, and for this charge widows were chosen, who being free from domestic concerns, and cumbered by no children, wished to consecrate themselves wholly to God by religious duties, they were therefore received into this office as those who had wholly given themselves up, and bound to their charge in a manner like him, who having hired out his own labours, ceases to be free and to be his own master...

*John Calvin on Romans 16:1*

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# Theological Reflection and Jewish Evangelism

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John Ross

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The paper from which this article was originally prepared was entitled *The Impact of Theological Reflection for Jewish Evangelism in Europe Today*.

During July the Lausanne Consultation for Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) held its 5th International Conference in Jerusalem at kibbutz Ramat Rachel. All the participants held the event to be of great significance and, probably, not since the Acts of the Apostles had such a discussion been held in Jerusalem. Not since 1910 had an international conference on Christian world mission been held in that city; and that had only a small place for the evangelisation of the Jewish people. Some felt that Jewish missions had at long last come home; an altogether understandable reaction, in view of the previous obstacles that the ideologically and religiously divided city of Jerusalem had produced. It was deeply moving to wake up each morning, open the curtains and look across the quiet fields to the little town of Bethlehem where the Messiah of Israel was born.

The vitality and vibrancy of Jewish Christianity impressed itself on more than one visiting leader. The generosity of the Lord to the movement was seen in the many abilities demonstrated. For example, we were treated to a preview of the new opera by an Israeli Christian leader, David Loden. The libretto takes its material from the story of David and Bathsheba and intercuts it with the words of the penitential psalms, especially Psalm 51. Through this medium Loden seeks to challenge the popular Israeli icon of King David and sets forth the universal themes of human sin, the proclamation of divine judgement, repentance, God's pardon and gracious restoration.

The Jewish Christian contribution to the world of the fine arts was also well represented through the exhibition of paintings and sculpture in the foyer. Slightly less obvious but still very evident was the academic seriousness that is a growing feature of the best segments of the movement. A significant number of both field missionaries and those occupied in support ministries are currently pursuing research, both formal and less structured.<sup>11</sup> The practical consequences of their researches are making an impact at the point of witness and in the nurture of new believers.

As the European co-ordinator it was my responsibility to report on the impact of theological reflection on Jewish missions in Europe today.<sup>2</sup> The period under investigation was that from the last international conference at Zeist, Holland in 1991 to the present; the past four years. During Spring 1995 a questionnaire was sent to a representative sample of European members of LCJE. This sample included large and small evangelistic organisations, messianic congregations and traditional churches, groups and individuals, academics and practitioners in the field. The group also represented the broad spectrum of European church traditions. It included the Church of England, Dutch Reformed Churches, Finnish Lutheran Church, the German Lutheran

tradition, Independent Evangelical Churches, and the Scottish and Irish Presbyterian Churches. This article is essentially based on that report and follows, more or less its format.<sup>3</sup>

## **Issues considered during the last four years**

Our respondents reported that twenty-four issues had been considered; they can be grouped in five subject categories, Theological and Biblical, Missiological, Historical, Apologetics, and Traditional and Messianic Jewish studies.

### **Theological and Biblical**

*The Willowbank Declaration* was produced in April 1989 by an international consultation of theologians who met at Willowbank, Bermuda, under the auspices of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Their task was to produce a statement on questions relating to Jesus Christ and the Jewish people. Jean Paul Rempp, a Reformed Baptist pastor from Lyon, France, has translated the document into French and has produced a detailed set of Biblical references for this most useful tool. Rempp, like others, uses the document to convince hesitant church leaders of the Biblical basis for a distinctive witness to the Jews. In the UK the BEC has taken a lead in encouraging churches to espouse the principles of Willowbank, making copies available from its St Albans offices.<sup>4</sup>

Sadly there are many Church leaders (including some evangelicals) who fail to see *the need for Jewish Evangelism*. Some have conceded to the prevailing liberal and pluralistic opinion that argues that evangelism to the Jews is unhelpful and inappropriate. Not least among such wrong-headed clergy is the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has tacitly expressed censure of the work of the evangelical Anglican *Church's Ministry to the Jews* by refusing to be its patron.

The powerful force of the *Two Covenant theory*, which sees Israel as a necessary partner in ecumenical dialogue rather than an evangelistic target, cries out for a definitive evangelical response. In a nutshell the Two Covenant theory teaches that God's covenant with the Jews actually precludes them from accepting Jesus as Messiah. By remarkable theological gymnastics these theologians turn on its head the question addressed by the early Church in the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council. Then the question was: is Jesus for the gentiles? Today the question is: is Jesus for the Jew? The answer of the Two Covenant theologians is, no!

What is *the place of Jewish Evangelism* in the mission of the Church? This important question raises issues such as the exegesis and application to missionary theory of such passages as Romans 1:16 (including the meaning of *proton* and the use of the present tense) and the practice and rationale of Paul and his missionary team. The result of such a study will demonstrate whether or not there is a Biblical justification for believing that Jewish evangelism enjoys a continuing priority in the missionary strategy of the Church.

Although the term *Replacement Theology* is not in wide currency throughout much of the Church its leading idea is. It is the growing tendency of some evangelicals to stress the radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Unlike classical covenant theologians, such thinkers believe that God has rejected ethnic Israel and it has no continuing part to play in the unfolding history of redemption. This view may not be dissimilar to that held by some of the anti-Jewish early church Fathers. The

resurgence of such ideas may have serious repercussions for Jewish evangelism and has therefore necessarily occupied the thoughts of a number of the LCJE European members during the past four years.

### **Missiological**

*The challenge of pluralism* remains one of the most crucial issues confronting evangelicals today. The idea that one religion is uniquely true and all others are false is generally considered unacceptable by many professing Christians today. The corollary of this view is that the strongly pluralistic Jewish community views traditional missionary activity as an anachronistic arrogance; an act of hostility not an expression of compassion.

The presuppositions of pluralism often form the context of Jewish and Christian dialogue and determine *the state of contemporary Jewish / Christian relations*. Relations between Christians and Jews have been revolutionised since the Second World War. Indeed the holocaust is described with some justification as the major event of twentieth century *Church* history. How can we again evangelise Jewish people when millions of baptised Christians were willing or silent accomplices in the mass murder of six million European Jews? Have not evangelicals forfeited the right to call Jews to repentance if they themselves have the blood of the innocent on their hands? Jews and Christians, especially those espousing a loose concept of witness, equivalent to open-ended dialogue, are, after nineteen centuries of drawing apart, building bridges, mending fences and developing common ground. They are also making common cause against missions as traditionally understood. This in turn has resulted in a largely healthy critique by contemporary Jewish missions of their past and present practices.

Many involved in the leadership of Jewish missions are much troubled by *Christian Zionism*, especially the insistence that support for the state of Israel can be a substitute for a clear gospel witness.

Europe generally knows nothing of the growth of the *Messianic Jewish congregations* seen in the USA. However in Britain we have seen something like thirty messianic groups which have come into existence in the recent past. Some are small fellowship groups, for Jewish Christians and enquirers, held on Friday evenings. Such cannot be said to be in competition with the churches but rather supplement their ministry, encouraging Jewish people to associate with the wider Body of Christ. Others have felt the impact of the Church Growth school's encouragement of mono-ethnic congregations. A small fringe, with orthodox Jewish trappings, concessions to Talmudic Judaism and pseudo-synagogue structures, is in danger of becoming ensnared in something akin to the Galatian heresy. At Jerusalem this year it was significant to see some, who in years past had encouraged the messianic Jewish emphasis, now intent on getting the genie back into the bottle. Others, emphasising the importance of the unity of the Body of Messiah, nevertheless justifiably resent the imposition of gentile culture leading to the diminishing of a distinctive Jewish identity in the Church. Others feel that Messianic congregations, of a more moderate nature, serve as valuable evangelistic bridges into the Jewish community, which generally believes that a Jewish Christian is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms.

With *Messianic Prophecy* being such an essential component of Jewish evangelism, more and more attention is being focused on matters of hermeneutics and exegesis. This is also true of the often over-heated subject of *Israel in eschatology*.

## Historical

Some excellent historical work has also been undertaken over the last few years, largely of a biographical nature. Subjects have included *David Baron the missionary and Zionist*, *John Duncan & the Budapest mission*, as well as research on the correlation of Jewish mission and revival in Scottish church history. However, the most significant work on the history of Jewish missions to emerge for many years is the result of the research undertaken by Dr Kai Kjaer-Hansen, the Danish scholar and International co-ordinator of LCJE, on the life and influence of *Joseph Rabinowitz*.<sup>5</sup> Rabinowitz, a Russian Jew, “discovered” on the Mount of Olives in 1882 that Jesus was Israel’s king and Messiah, the brother of the Jews and thus the answer to the so-called Jewish question. Rabinowitz was feted by the Jewish missions of his day and invited to address the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1896. What so fascinated and attracted interest was the existence of the Messianic movement and its Jewish Christian congregation in Kishinev under Rabinowitz’s leadership. Kjaer-Hansen’s research and subsequent book is of great value to all struggling with the questions of messianic Jewish identity. Among other things it helps us define the questions that need to be addressed today.

## Apologetics

While witness to Israel today builds on the legacy of the past it must also develop an apologetic related to the questions in the minds of contemporary Jewish people.

Various Jewish attempts to “rehabilitate” Jesus as a Jew have encouraged many in Jewish mission to re-assert *the Jewishness of Jesus* without detracting from either his deity or the supreme authority of the New Testament. Jewish people need to understand that the Jewishness of Jesus is revealed so clearly in the Gospel accounts. After all, Christianity despite its misrepresentation by some gentiles, is a religion whose roots run deep into the Jewish world of the Hebrew Scriptures. To state clearly the Jewishness of Jesus leads the Christian missionary to affirm his status as Israel’s Messiah. In turn he will then have to pick his way through the minefield of *Rabbinic objections to the Messiahship of Jesus*. Having established that point he will discover it to be linked to the doctrine of *the Trinity in Old and New Testaments*. Seeking to communicate these highly controversial doctrines to the enquiring Jewish mind calls for both great skill and sensitivity.

## The issues that need urgent consideration

The following table lists the crucial issues which, in the opinion of LCJE European leaders, need urgent scholarly attention. The interesting omission is that of historical research. This, in view of the prevalence of Jewish revisionism, seems a strange blind spot, neglecting as it does such issues as the accurate understanding of Christian origins and Jewish / Christian relations throughout the last nine centuries.

### Theological and Biblical

- ☐ The Great Commission and the priority of Jewish evangelism.

### Missiological

- ☐ The refutation of alleged theological grounds for not witnessing to Jews.
- ☐ The challenge of universalism and pluralism.

- ☐ A theological affirmation of respect for minorities, the rejection of racism and anti-Semitism.
- ☐ The integration of scholarship and leadership in evangelical Jewish missions.
- ☐ Mobilising the Church in witness to the Jewish people in a pluralistic culture.
- ☐ The problems Christians may have in reaching into the Jewish faith community.
- ☐ The need to develop a theology of inter-mission co-operation.

### **Apologetics**

- ☐ Developing apologetics to demonstrate the Biblical and cultural authenticity of messianic Jews.
- ☐ Traditional and Messianic Jewish Studies.
- ☐ The uniqueness of Jesus.
- ☐ Understanding Jewish mysticism.
- ☐ Dealing with Jewish anti-mission objections from an exegetical platform.

### **Our greatest theological weaknesses**

Continuing in an introspective mood, the sample group were asked to highlight the particular weaknesses they considered prevalent in our movement. The following are those so identified:

#### **Biblical and theological**

- ☐ The negative influence on missions and evangelism of certain Dispensational schemes.

#### **Missiological**

- ☐ The generally low level of theological competence of many entering Jewish evangelism.
- ☐ How to communicate the gospel sensitively and winsomely without loss of content.
- ☐ The need for higher theological educational institutes to provide programmes in Jewish missions and Jewish studies.
- ☐ The development of a distinctive Jewish Christian apologetic.
- ☐ The field of Christology.

#### **Traditional and Messianic Jewish studies.**

- ☐ The Church's generally inadequate level of understanding of Jewish thought and history.
- ☐ The inadequacy of evangelical responses to Jewish suffering and the Holocaust.

### **Resourcing theological study**

All contributors agreed that theological reflection was "as important as evangelism" or that it was "an essential pre-requisite to evangelism". None concluded that it was "less important than evangelism" or that it was "an alternative to evangelism". 60% of respondents indicated that their organisations or churches made special provision for theological activity through the allocation of funds, time and personnel. However that leaves 40% who, for whatever reasons, do not provide any special resources, though they too indicated its importance in the overall scheme of Jewish evangelism.

## The concrete results achieved

The concrete results achieved over the past four years form an impressive list. This itself reminds us that lying behind every evangelistic encounter, every tract printed and every book on the bookshelf, lies theological work. Such work must continue and it shows every sign of being continued.

- ☐ Books commissioned and published.
- ☐ Pamphlets/tracts written.
- ☐ Theological consultations undertaken.
- ☐ Lectures and papers given.
- ☐ Theological students made more aware of the issues.
- ☐ Churches and Christian groups informed, thus increasing support for and interest in Jewish evangelism.
- ☐ Greater and clearer insight into Jewish thought and practice gained.
- ☐ Deeper conviction of the legitimacy and centrality of Jewish mission.
- ☐ Creation in the churches of greater confidence in Jewish evangelism.
- ☐ Commencement of new areas of evangelistic activity (most notably in Germany).
- ☐ Increased intercession and prayer for the salvation of Jewish people.
- ☐ Clearer and more incisive presentation of the gospel to Jewish people.

## Conclusion

In a recent article in *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Dr John Stott, reviewing the significance of the “Lausanne” movement for mission today, stresses the need for cultural sensitivity and clear sighted, focused vision.<sup>6</sup> He cites what took place with the collapse of the European Marxist empire as a “most unseemly scramble of Western missionary organisations... bringing acute embarrassment to historic national church leaders, and enormous confusion”. This was the context in which was revealed the inherent dangers of “our evangelical tendency to individualism and empire building”.

There is no doubt in my mind that serious and humble reflection on questions of theology and history provides a valuable corrective to such arrogant tendencies. The ultimate object of theological reflection must be the sovereign God himself; his being and his acts in human history. Such study must result in something akin to the humbling experience of Isaiah; who seeing God “high and lifted up” was forced to confess his own personal sinfulness and natural inadequacy. What better preparation could there be for the calling and equipping of today’s servants of the Lord whose primary task is to say to the cities of Judah “Behold your God!”

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Except where explicitly stated, the author reserves his own opinion regarding research projects currently being tackled.
- <sup>2</sup> LCJE is open to evangelicals who affirm commitment to the Lausanne Covenant.
- <sup>3</sup> The documents of the 5th International Conference are available on application to the author in writing or by phone or fax from Christian Witness to Israel, 166 Main Road, Sundridge, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN14 6EL – phone: 01959 565 955, fax: 01959 565 966.
- <sup>4</sup> The BEC issued a press release stating “We, therefore, wholeheartedly adopt and affirm the principles set forth in the Willowbank Declaration as consistent with Scripture and our evangelical heritage. We encourage Churches and individual Christians to engage both in witness to the Jewish community

and in prayerful support of the British evangelical agencies presently exercising this ministry.” British Evangelical Council Press Release, *Jews Still Need the Gospel, Evangelicals Insist*, 29 June 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *The Herzl of Jewish Christianity – Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*. Handsel Press & Wm B. Eerdmans, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Dr John Stott, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 19, No 2, April 1995, p 53.

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## **Evangelism and Jewish people**

### **Article IV.19**

WE AFFIRM THAT sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with lost humanity is a matter of prime obligation for Christian people, both because the Messiah commands the making of disciples and because love of neighbour requires effort to meet our neighbour's deepest need.

WE DENY THAT any other form of witness and service to others can excuse Christians from labouring to bring them to faith in Christ.

### **Article IV.20**

WE AFFIRM THAT the church's obligation to share saving knowledge of Christ with the whole human race includes the evangelising of Jewish people as a priority: "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16).

WE DENY THAT dialogue with Jewish people that aims at nothing more than mutual understanding constitutes fulfilment of this obligation.

### **Article IV.21**

WE AFFIRM THAT the concern to point Jewish people to faith in Jesus Christ, which the Christian church has historically felt and shown, was right.

WE DENY THAT there is any truth in the widespread notion that evangelising Jews is needless because they are already in covenant with God through Abraham and Moses and so are already saved despite their rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

### **Article IV.22**

WE AFFIRM THAT all endeavours to persuade others to become Christians should express love to them by respecting their dignity and integrity at every point including parents' responsibility in the case of their children.

WE DENY THAT coercive or deceptive proselytising, which violates dignity and integrity on both sides can ever be justified.

### **Article IV.23**

WE AFFIRM THAT it is unchristian, unloving and discriminatory to propose a moratorium on the evangelisation of any part of the human race, and that failure to preach the Gospel to Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the Gospel.

WE DENY THAT we have sufficient warrant to assume or anticipate the salvation of anyone, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

### **Article IV.24**

WE AFFIRM THAT the existence of separate churchly organisations for evangelising Jews, as for evangelising any other particular human group, can be justified pragmatically, as an appropriate means of fulfilling the church's mandate to take the Gospel to the whole human race.

WE DENY THAT the depth of human spiritual need varies from group to group so that Jewish people may be thought to need Christ either more or less than others.

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*The Willowbank Declaration, 1989, section IV*

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# A Candle in the Wind

## Conscience in natural man

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Gary Brady

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**M**atthew Henry speaks of conscience somewhere as, “the candle of the Lord which was not quite put out”. Though it is not God’s voice as such, the conscience, including the moral record in the heart and a man’s mind or opinion, is a good gift from God. However, like every other good gift from God, the conscience has been affected by the Fall of man. George Washington spoke of the conscience as “that little spark of celestial fire” and the Puritan George Swinnock called it a “deputy deity in the little world man”. Such expressions are acceptable as long as we remember that conscience is only a spark and the deputy is a fallible deputy at best.

### Fallen

It has been denied by some but it is a fact that man had a conscience, that is a moral faculty, even before the Fall. The way Eve responded to the serpent by stating God’s command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil shows this. When Adam and Eve fell man fell. When man fell his conscience fell too.

The Dutch theologian GC Berkouwer, in his work on the doctrine of man, rightly insists that any inclination to good characteristic of the conscience is:

dispelled by the reality of man’s inclination to evil... We can never look to conscience as something which enables man to retain a relative goodness in a special organ standing outside the effects of corruption.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly the great Jonathan Edwards though he spoke of the natural conscience as being “as it were, in God’s stead, as an internal Judge” yet he also argues very strongly in many places for the Biblical doctrines of original sin and total depravity. In a sermon on Hosea 5:15 he says,

Natural conscience remains, but sin, in a great degree, stupefies it, and hinders it in its work.<sup>2</sup>

This is one reason why in the 19th century Scots holiness teacher Oswald Chambers, German Lutheran Franz Delitzsch, English doctor Alfred Schofield and others who wrote on the conscience all insisted that it is wrong to speak of conscience as the voice of God. Similarly, AH Strong, in his *Systematic Theology*, quotes DW Faunce approvingly,

Conscience is not God – it is only part of one’s self. To build up a religion about one’s conscience as if it were God is only a refined selfishness.<sup>3</sup>

Chambers says “If conscience were the ‘voice of God’ it would be the most contradictory voice ever heard.” To demonstrate this he instances the conscience of a Hindu mother and that of a Christian mother.<sup>4</sup> Schofield asserts that conscience is no

more God's voice than the piano is Paderewski's voice. It will respond to a little girl's touch as much as to the master's.<sup>5</sup>

Conscience is not the single virtue untainted by the Fall. Every faculty in every man is affected by the sin of our father Adam. We are separated from God. His image in man has been defaced, shattered. Just like all God's other gifts conscience is misused, abused and defective. This is true also of the record of God's requirements in our hearts (the moral record) and our capacity to think correctly (the mind).

## The moral record

The mediaeval Roman Catholic scholar Aquinas spoke not of the moral record but of *sunteresis* or *synderesis*. The word was apparently first used by the Greek church father Origen to denote man's nature or the remnant of the image of God after the Fall. Aquinas held that this faculty, which supplied moral principles, was itself infallible. Later this idea was upheld by certain mystics but denied by the Jesuits who were happy to supply its place with their own rules. Although the term *synderesis* was used by the Puritans there was no suggestion that it was anything less than fallible.

When Paul says in Romans 2:15 that the Gentiles have the requirements of God's Law written on their hearts he cannot be suggesting that each individual is born with an innate and thorough knowledge of God's Law. If that were so why would there have been any need for the revelation at Sinai? Paul is not holding up the very limited conformity of the Gentiles as a moral example. The point he is driving at, in fact, is that "there is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). As Professor John Murray points out in his commentary on Romans, Paul specifically states that it is the requirements of the Law that are written in men's hearts.<sup>6</sup> In other words, everyone has some idea of right and wrong, but not a clear idea of God's holy law.

Even if fallen man's conscience functioned perfectly it would not be bearing witness to a full and accurate record of God's commands. Thus in John Bunyan's classic, but lesser known allegory, *The Holy War*, we read that Mr Mind had only, "some old and rent and torn parchments of the law of good Shaddai in his house".<sup>7</sup> We should not be surprised, therefore, to find men not only excusing and defending themselves for things such as murder, idolatry and immorality contrary to God's Law; but also condemning themselves for eating meat or travelling in a car or missing mass, things not forbidden in the Law.

Conscience itself is a witness not a lawmaker. It can only act on the evidence available and the known law. It is like a skylight not a light bulb, a *means* of knowledge not a *source*. It refers us back to our own moral standard and urges us, with varying strength, to comply. If our moral record is faulty, proper obedience to God will be impossible.

There are a number of contenders for the role of chief informant to the moral record. Tradition and trends vie with the truth. This is the reason sometimes for inward confusion and conflict. In his Bishop Sanderson Lectures, Christopher Wordsworth warns against following the example of men however learned or pious they may be. We must teach our consciences not to consider highest the opinions of others or even our own opinions as such but the Word of God.

## Conscience proper

The conscience itself is also imperfect, of course. It is not useless, but it is unreliable. It can be variable, deceived, corrupted, intermittent or simply unable to cope with complex issues. Bunyan has Mr Conscience as the town recorder. After the fall of the town of Mansoul he would have terrible fits at times when he would “make the whole town of Mansoul shake with his voice” and yet at other times he would say nothing at all.<sup>8</sup> We can all identify with that state of affairs.

Speaking of this element in conscience Oswald Chambers uses the illustration of what Ruskin called “innocence of sight”. Artists are usually trained to paint what they see, not what they believe is there. The fallen conscience is like an untrained artist, it makes the mistake of not recording exactly what it sees. There is always a distortion.

## The mind

Further, when conscience’s faulty message is assessed in a man’s thoughts he often suppresses it or finds other ways of ignoring it. In *Holy War* terms Mansoul becomes convinced that Mr Conscience is mad and not worth listening to. We see “the whole town in a rage and fury against the old gentleman”. “Yea” says Bunyan “the rascal crew at some times would be for destroying him”.<sup>9</sup> John 3:19-21 reminds us of the usual reaction of the fallen conscience.

## God’s spy

Everyone has a moral awareness. Anthropologists have failed to discover a totally amoral society. All realise there is right and there is wrong.

The beginning of Paul’s argument in his letter to the Romans makes clear that even unbelievers know there is a God, a God who will judge them concerning right and wrong. Therefore, even though the information available to the conscience is incomplete “the echo of the voice of God” does reach them. Jacques Ellul notes that, “The protests that indignity and injustice evoke from unbelievers as well as Christians indicate that the voice of conscience has not been utterly silenced and obliterated.”<sup>10</sup>

It is important for believers to remember this. God has a “spy” in the hearts of unbelievers, what Thomas Brooks called “a preacher in the bosom”. The conscience, however imperfectly, gives a man at least some idea of what God thinks of him and of his actions. Of course, the better informed a man’s conscience the better the preaching; the more effective the espionage. This is why the unbeliever so often studiously avoids going to church or reading the Bible or having contact with Christians. He wants to “turn down the volume” or “do a deal” with his conscience. He will do almost anything to pacify it.

We can almost always reckon on a man having a conscience that is active in some area. It is important for Christians to bear this in mind when witnessing to unbelievers. Where a man’s conscience is relatively healthy we have an ally on the inside. As we bear witness to the truth from without, so does conscience within. Like Paul, we should aim to set forth the truth plainly, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God (see 2 Corinthians 4:2). We seek to enlighten the conscience of the unbeliever with the lamp of God’s Word.

## Keep listening

Although the conscience of the unbeliever is imperfect and fallible he ought to be encouraged to listen to it. Like a Supreme Court judgement or one from the House of Lords (or should we say Strasbourg?) the conscience speaks categorically and absolutely. There is no room for further appeal.<sup>11</sup> In each case conscience must be followed.

At one point in his *Christian Directory* Richard Baxter opposes this view.<sup>12</sup> He calls it a dangerous error to think that the conscience must always be followed. What about when the conscience is misinformed? One recognises his point but once you begin to ignore or disobey your conscience, confusion and trouble are bound to follow. Surely Luther's famous dictum is correct, "To act against conscience is neither right nor safe". Matthew Henry agrees, "We must never be over-awed either by majesty or multitude to do a sinful thing and go against our consciences." It is surely never right for a man to do what he believes to be wrong.

"Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves" (Romans 14:22).

There is a dilemma here of course. RC Sproul has dubbed it the "double jeopardy dilemma".<sup>13</sup> If we follow conscience into sin we are guilty. Yet to act against conscience is also a sin. This is not to support the Roman Catholic idea of what is called *invincible ignorance*, rather it is to stress that it is imperative that all men seek to conform their moral record to the revealed will of God.

When we mention Luther's dictum quoted above we must remember that he began by saying "My conscience is captive to the Word of God". It is not enough to set your watch by the kitchen clock, you must also be sure that the clock is conforming to the astronomical standards of time.

Bishop Charles Gore, the first Bishop of Birmingham, got it right when he said "Man's first duty is to enlighten his conscience not to follow it". Do not waste time and cause damage by endeavouring to get anyone to act against their conscience. Instead concentrate on encouraging them to keep their moral record informed by the Word of God. Listening to your conscience is not a problem. It is a good thing. It is in the inadequacies of the moral record that the problem lies.

## The content

We can understand, then, why John Knox could say to Mary, Queen of Scots, that her conscience was useless – because it was not properly informed! What matters so much is the content of the moral standard to which conscience bears witness. Jiminy Cricket's advice in song "always follow your conscience" is fine as far as it goes, but what good is it if my moral record is ill-informed?

Oswald Chambers points out in his book on Biblical psychology that to speak of educating the conscience is half truth, half error. As AH Strong puts it, conscience itself can only be educated "in the sense of acquiring greater facility and quickness in making decisions".<sup>14</sup>

Chambers uses the illustration of the effects of coloured light. We need the pure white light of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts if we are ever to see things as they really are. The education we need is for God's requirements to be laid on our hearts.

Similarly in his book on *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who

died at the hands of the Gestapo, speaks of people in his day who said, “Adolf Hitler is my conscience”. By that they meant that the Führer was their moral standard. The ramifications of such a hopeless statement are now obvious to all. Rather, as Bonhoeffer rightly says, people should say, “Jesus Christ is my conscience”.

The high court of conscience is not the highest court, it can only look to a higher one, the law of God itself. Paul makes this clear in 1 Cor. 4:4,

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

(The apostle is a notorious example, before his conversion, of an excusing conscience where his actions were anything but pleasing to God. Cf. Acts 23:1, 26:9; Philippians 3:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:3; John 16:2). As Herman Ridderbos and many of the older Reformed commentators point out, the reference here is not so much to the inadequacy of conscience but to the importance of the coming judgment.<sup>15</sup> What matters is not what our peers think or what other men think. Not even what we think ourselves. What matters is God’s verdict. However, the verse also implies the imperfect nature of the conscience and this ought to be remembered. The judgment of conscience does not mean the end of all dispute – something to which those who break the law in just causes ought to give careful thought.

The healthy conscience is often consistent, although never infallible. A healthy conscience is not easily fooled. It is stubborn. It is not swayed by popular opinion or fear of danger. Obstinate, persistent and inflexible your conscience is a good friend to have when it is right, but it is a real handicap otherwise. A misinformed conscience can lead you into big trouble and also cause harm to others.

It is something like a magnetic compass. While the needle points to magnetic north all is well. But if at some stage you enter a strong magnetic field which is not that of the earth itself disaster may well follow if you continue to rely on that compass. Or to put it another way, following your nose is a good way to get to a place, but first you have to point your nose in the right direction!

## **Resistible**

Another problem with the conscience, even the well informed conscience, is that although it is usually persistent it can be resisted. The conscience can pursue a man for crimes committed decades ago. Even the memory of a relatively minor misdemeanour can haunt a person for years. “The torture of a bad conscience is the hell of a living soul” wrote Calvin. “I would bear any affliction rather than be burdened with a guilty conscience” said Spurgeon. Thunderbolts, tornadoes, a dungeon full of snakes, being burnt at the stake – all were preferable to him.<sup>16</sup> Some people have even taken their own lives rather than live with their accusing conscience.

The conscience truly is, at times, “an awesome force with which to reckon”.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless it can be resisted. If it cannot be ignored it can still be defied. An active conscience will guarantee nothing. If desensitised enough it can even be hardened to the point where it virtually ceases to function.

## **Inadequate yet an ally**

We need a balanced view of the strengths and weaknesses of conscience. On the one hand, the conscience is inadequate to save a man.

“Did any man’s conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation?” asks Spurgeon. “Did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? Did conscience ever bring a man to such self-renunciation that he totally abhorred himself and all his works and came to Christ?”

Such questions have to be answered in the negative. The conscience is not the same as God’s own Word.

On the other hand, the conscience is still a God-given gift witnessing to the state of our relationship with our Maker. It is an eternal voice speaking into this temporal life, “a certain mean between man and God”, “a line connecting man to his Creator”.<sup>18</sup> Every man has a conscience, even total pagans. In each case the conscience is a potential ally, a fifth columnist, in the war to recapture the souls of lost men and women. Thanks be to God for the conscience!

## References

- <sup>1</sup> G C Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Eerdmans, 1962), p. 170
- <sup>2</sup> See Jonathan Edwards in *Nature of True Virtue* and *On Original Sin* and sermon (p. 61) in *Select Works*, Vol. II (Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), quoted and summarised in REO White, *The Changing Continuity of Christian Ethics* 2 volumes (Paternoster Press, 1981), 2:259,260.
- <sup>3</sup> AH Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Pickering & Inglis, 1962, reprint of 1907 edition), p. 501.
- <sup>4</sup> Oswald Chambers, *Biblical Psychology* (London, 1912), p. 217
- <sup>5</sup> AT Schofield, *The Springs of Character* (London), p. 198
- <sup>6</sup> See John Murray, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1955-65)
- <sup>7</sup> John Bunyan, *The Holy War in Works*, 3 volumes (Baker Book House, 1977 reprint of 1875 edition, first published 1682), 3:263
- <sup>8</sup> Bunyan, 3:261
- <sup>9</sup> Bunyan, 3:262
- <sup>10</sup> Ellul, quoted by PE Hughes, *Christian Ethics in Secular Society* (Baker Book House, 1983), p. 33
- <sup>11</sup> Kant spoke of conscience as the “Categorical imperative”. A Professor Shairp in the 19th century spoke of it as “The absolute in the soul”. In his “Sermon on Human Nature” Butler says that “without being consulted” the conscience magisterially asserts itself in approving or condemning.
- <sup>12</sup> Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory* (Soli Deo Gloria Reprint), Grand Direction X: “...There is a dangerous error...that a man is bound to do everything which his conscience telleth him is the will of God and that every man must obey his conscience as if it were the lawgiver of the world, whereas indeed it is not ourselves but God who is our lawgiver. Conscience is not authorised to make us any duty which God hath not made us, only to discern the law of God and call upon us to observe it: an erring conscience is not to be obeyed, but to be better informed.”
- <sup>13</sup> RC Sproul, *Right and Wrong: Ethics and the Christian Today* (Scripture Union, 1986), p. 93
- <sup>14</sup> Chambers p. 219, Strong p. 500
- <sup>15</sup> Ridderbos, *Pauline Theology*, p. 292ff.
- <sup>16</sup> CH Spurgeon, see the entry under “Conscience” in Tom Carter, *Spurgeon at his Best* (Baker Book House, 1988)
- <sup>17</sup> Rudnick, p. 127
- <sup>18</sup> The phrases are those of Calvin and PE Hughes respectively.

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# Book Reviews

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## The Post-Evangelical

Dave Tomlinson

*Triangle, 1995, 151 pp., £5.99 paperback*

**S**ome books are so shocking that they are dismissed out of hand. One suspects that this particular volume may already be in peril of suffering that fate in at least some evangelical circles. The shock value is not hard to find. The title itself is enough to set alarm bells ringing in most conservative groupings and the first few pages only serve to make them ring more loudly. But it is not just the content of the book which shocks, it is the fact that the author was himself an evangelical at an earlier stage, but now deems himself to have moved beyond that phase.

His book is intended to provide some serious reflection on his own personal pilgrimage and, insofar as it represents the experience of others, to demonstrate what appears to be yet another crisis for the evangelical movement.

Tomlinson's style is attractive and readable. As might be expected from one who identifies himself with those on the frontiers of contemporary culture in our media-oriented world, he communicates well.

### Biographical sketch

In a very helpful and non-ostentatious way Dave Tomlinson provides his readers with an autobiographical sketch (pp. 11-13). His evangelical pedigree is beyond dispute. Born and raised in the Brethren movement, he professed faith as a teenager and before long came under the influence of the emerging Charismatic movement. He was attracted to this particular expression of the Christian faith, but soon

found that it was not welcomed in the circles to which he belonged. This led to his departure from Brethrenism and the start of a long association with what came to be known as "the New Churches". He was involved for over twenty years in these circles, playing a significant role in leadership and also being involved in church-planting.

He points to the late 1980s as a time when he and his wife felt they needed a fresh focus in their lives and, without intending it, "became caught up with those who were either on the edges of evangelical and charismatic churches or who had fallen off the edges altogether" (p. 12). Many of these "ex-churchgoers" he met at the Greenbelt arts festival and he reckons their numbers to be in the tens of thousands.

His involvement with these people led eventually to his starting a "church" which meets on a Tuesday night in a pub in Clapham with the somewhat memorable name of "Holy Joe's". Not surprisingly, the format of a typical "service" in Holy Joe's is as unusual as its name.

### Central concerns: the author's

The purpose of the book is threefold: to provide some kind of justification for the type of person who might be found in this group in Clapham, to offer some kind of pastoral support to them and to air some of the difficulties which have been catalysts in the departure of these people from their evangelical roots.

The opening chapter is entitled, *A Symbol of Hope*. In it we are introduced not only to the terminology of the world of post-evangelicals but also to the framework of their thinking. The author demonstrates the close link between this group as a religious phenomenon and the

broader cultural and intellectual phenomenon of post-modernism in the secular sphere. The affinity between post-evangelicals and the New Age movement is noted, particularly with reference to the fact that both groups are virtually impossible to define neatly.

After providing a sweeping, but fascinating survey of recent evangelical history in the second chapter – where he highlights the success of popular evangelicalism with the title *We've Never Had it so Good* – he goes on in the next chapter to give a more down-beat analysis. He argues there that much, if not all traditional evangelical religion is hopelessly out of touch with the contemporary world in which it is placed.

The book goes on to describe those who have outgrown the confines of that kind of faith and who are desperately looking for some kind of spiritual alternative, but are having trouble finding any. Various anecdotes of real people in very real situations are given by way of illustration – one ending up in a liberal Anglo-Catholic church, another abandoning Church altogether. Tomlinson then analyses the experience of such people and the experience of those who they left behind using the model of Scott Peck's four stages of spiritual growth in his book, *To a Different Drum* (pp. 47-51).

In chapter five, the author moves into "pre-emptive strike" mode. He anticipates obvious objections, especially from conservative evangelicals and attempts to answer them in advance. This move is in many ways counter-productive, because he ends up caricaturing the opposing arguments. His reinterpretation of the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector into the more contemporary genre of "the Spring Harvest Speaker and the Liberal Bishop" (pp. 61-62) is interesting – not least because he has the

Liberal Bishop going home justified and not the evangelical. (His argument being that, "everyone who thinks he has arrived at his destination has actually hardly begun, and he who continues searching is closer to his destination than he realises" (p. 62)).

The really interesting bit comes in chapters 6 through 8. There he outlines the essence of his hermeneutical approach. He describes how the latter part of the twentieth century has developed a new approach to the way we interpret what we see and hear. Translating that into the realm of how we interpret the Bible, he contrasts what he calls the evangelical "flat-pack" approach with the more versatile, post-evangelical approach, which he compares with working with a Meccano set, an approach with almost limitless permutations of understanding (p. 82). In the chapter entitled, *The Truth, the Whole Truth and Something Quite Like the Truth* he deals with epistemology and how that affects our view of Scripture. Then he goes on to develop this more fully in *Is the Bible the Word of God?* Here he rubbishes the doctrine of inerrancy, commends Karl Barth's doctrine of the Word of God and argues that we need to move beyond it in the light of contemporary scholarship and theories of knowledge.

In the last two chapters we are given a post-evangelical vision for the future of the Church in the world. A future in which the Church is not aloof from culture, but thoroughly integrated in a positive way and thus equipped to survive into the next millennium.

### **Main concerns: the reviewer's**

For some, the mere summary of the contents of the book will be enough to say that it warrants no further consideration. But I suspect there is a growing number within the evangelical community who will actually find the issues Tomlinson is raising

most interesting. Therefore we would do well to offer some kind of critique. There are at least **six key areas** in which serious concerns need to be expressed. They hang together in logical sequence.

*His methodology is self-determining.* He adopts a kind of mix-and-match approach where he draws a little bit from contemporary psychology, something else from current theory of knowledge and a little bit more from the Bible. The point is not that he is drawing from a range of sources – we can all do that with profit – but rather that he has no clearly defined and sustained starting point. Despite his claim not to be “a woolly liberal” he adopts precisely the same approach as the classic liberals when he says, “we need to approach it [the Bible] with all the critical skills available, while also bringing to it qualities of faith and imagination through which we can expect to find God revealing himself” (p. 122). He makes the Word the servant of his faith and not vice versa.

*He exaggerates the place of culture.* From the very outset he is preoccupied with culture in its various dimensions. Where he seems to be coming from is a reaction against that kind of evangelical sub-culture which characterises many churches and groupings, but is not a fair representation of the historic Faith. The effect is to give culture a controlling influence over how we understand and apply the message of the Bible. If the term did not have pejorative overtones, Dave Tomlinson might actually feel quite at home with the expression “cultural relativism” for that is what he effectively propounds.

*He redefines the nature of truth.* He talks about a paradigm shift in epistemology, arguing for an understanding of truth “as something more provisional and symbolic and therefore less able to be put into hard and fast statements” (p. 87). In so doing he is inevitably saying

something about God and Christ himself who declared himself to be truth itself and truth which cannot change. Is he also “provisional and symbolic”?

*He ends up with a Bible that is shaped by humanity and not a humanity shaped by the Bible.* Without for a moment dismissing the importance of the humanness of Scripture, to say “imagination is the essential thing in hearing God’s Word...” (p. 118) gives a controlling influence to contemporary human thought which makes an authentic understanding of God’s message virtually impossible.

*He regards the doctrine of inerrancy as “a load of tosh”* (p. 106) and those who believe in such a concept as naïve. He sees it as a hangover from the nineteenth century fundamentalist - liberal controversies and as being a non-issue in our contemporary world. It is tempting to say he is the one who is naïve, but he is not, for he is fully aware of what he is saying and what its implications are.

*He dismisses the notion that we need to have certainty in life.* For him, true maturity is to be able to live happily with not being sure of anything because he believes that true certainty is unattainable. Exhaustive certainty is certainly beyond our reach, but authentic certainty is not. The central thrust of God’s message – that which makes it Good News – is that there is a certainty which can be ours in the face of a changing world and ultimately in the face of death itself. Remove that from what God is saying and the Bible becomes esoteric nonsense.

### **Do we take him seriously?**

It is hard not to read this book without feeling agitated – from whatever perspective we might be coming. Some may well give vent to their agitation by consigning the book to the waste-paper bin,

or the equivalent section of their library. The only thing about that is that it does not make the issues go away. The fact that the editors of *Evangel* magazine saw fit to include an article by Dave Tomlinson in their Hermeneutics issue (13.3 Autumn 1995) shows that they were prepared to take him seriously and if they, then others also. It would be unfair to dismiss him.

It is the issue of hermeneutics more than any other which makes this book worthy of our attention. The kind of hermeneutical principles which Tomlinson advocates are not academic rarities, but are rather fast becoming the academic norm and this not merely in the kind of liberal institutions where one might expect to find them, but in evangelical ones as well. What is striking is the way Tomlinson provides us with a living example of where such principles of interpretation can potentially lead. However valid some, if not many of these tools of interpretation may be, one is left asking what controls they are subject to. Here is proof that it is possible to reinterpret the message of the Bible at every level from the cross at one end of the spectrum to sexual orientation at the other, rejecting practically every tenet of the faith commonly respected in successive generations, and still lay claim to being faithful to God!

It is not hard to see how the step from evangelical to post-evangelical is so easily followed by Christian to post-Christian and for that reason, if for no other, all who still cherish the faith of the Bible need to be aware of Dave Tomlinson's views because they are shared by a growing number. Our pastoral concern for those who are "on the edge or over it" must be equal to his, but not manifest itself in confirming such people in their doubt, but rather strengthening them in the faith.

The issue is but another strand of the question, "Where is evangelicalism

going?" Sadly, it is going in all kinds of directions of which this is but one – or is it the many? If there is not some kind of recovery of belief it will be unrecognisable before we know it.

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Mark G Johnston

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## **Together We Stand**

*Clive Calver & Rob Warner*

*Hodder & Stoughton, 1996, 178 pp, £8.99, paperback*

A "seething pot" is how Jim Packer sees current evangelicalism in his *Foreword* to this celebration volume for the 150th anniversary of the Evangelical Alliance. From the safety of his transatlantic ivory tower he commends the authors of this book in their attempts to monitor and direct evangelicalism in the UK. Not all readers will agree that these undoubtedly influential men are yet in a position to "direct" the whole national scene but we can at least review here their paperback attempt to "monitor" it. It is a warts-and-all snap-shot of how things really are. Packer, for example, contrasts the predictable cold routines of his own youth with the "wonderful...new vitality" he sees today as, "The tidiness of sedate death is giving way to the untidiness of immature life".

Individual chapters are not, unfortunately, credited to one of the two stated authors, Clive Calver or Rob Warner, although those who know both men will have little difficulty with most personal references. For the general reader, however, the use of the first person sometimes leaves the readers wondering about the author's identity. It is ironic then that the earlier chapters address the fact that "Evangelical Christians have largely been

passing through a twentieth-century identity crisis". They offer the broad definition that, "An evangelical is a person who has committed his, or her, life to Jesus Christ, seeking to live under his Lordship and authority, believing and accepting the Bible for what it says" (p. 14). When they trace the biblical and historical roots of our rich heritage they do, however, descend into caricature, as when *organisational* unity is contrasted unfavourably with *relational* unity (p. 13) or when *Fundamentalists* are contrasted with *Evangelicals* (p. 20).

Overall, the book depicts much that is good about evangelicalism. Few of us would quarrel with the spiritual dimension shown by the priority that, "The true nature of our unity lies in that single word 'love'" (p. 31). Scripture is quoted freely and objective truth is seen to be foundational. Clive Calver has done a great deal of good in strengthening evangelical backbones against the pluralism crippling many wobbly churches today. Some of us outside the EA do not see how he could sit so comfortably alongside George Carey at *Spring Harvest* but we certainly applaud him in his public debates with Islamic scholars and the secular media. Chapter 4, *All One in Christ*, contains a spirited stand "in defence of the truth" over against the modern mood of easy-going toleration. He properly disowns the downward path to inter-faith syncretism by quoting John Stott with approval, "tolerance can degenerate into an unprincipled confusion of truth with error and goodness with evil" (p. 56).

This does not imply, of course, that Christians should not exercise legal tolerance towards those of other faiths. What it calls for is, "the obligation to present the truth of the Christian faith. Indifference is not an option to which we are entitled" (p. 56). Evangelism and world mission are shown to lie, in fact at the

deepest roots of our unity, "We are committed to the truth of the gospel and the principle that freedom of religion should include the right to propagate it" (p. 58). Excessive individualism is demonstrated to be unbiblical and a whole chapter is given to better ways of handling disagreements on lesser matters among those agreed about essentials (ch. 9). This contemporary hot-potato is further illustrated by an Appendix re-publishing the *Practical Resolutions of 1846* about how the founders of the EA covenanted to treat each other, beginning in paragraph 1, "We encourage one another in making public comment to place the most charitable construction on the statements made by fellow Christians..." Regrettably, it is not only those within the EA membership who need this reminder.

The short but clear section on *Hermeneutics* (pp 69-71), while seeing this as a potentially divisive subject, does not accept uncritically the subjective excesses of recent work in this field. "If modern evangelical scholarship produces techniques that require years of academic learning to master, we may repeat the error of the medieval church and take the Bible away from the people, with the implication that the untutored are not in a position to comprehend God's Word" (p. 70).

Because it is such a faithful representation of current gospel church life, perhaps we should not be surprised at the theological fuzziness which runs through this book. An important central chapter is called *Fracture Points* and it lists no less than 13 "reefs on which evangelical unity...has been regularly prone to shipwreck" (p. 60). There is no doubt about the reality of these hazards but their doctrinal distinctiveness is not well defined here. No genuine Calvinist will recognise him or herself in this inept analysis in which "human free will" is confused with

“human responsibility” (pp. 61-62). No evangelical committed to cessationism will agree that their respected and historic view should be summarily dismissed because the authors believe it “has lost credibility” (p. 67). Nor should the emotive debate on women’s ministries be credibly discussed without any reference to the crucial concept of *headship* (pp. 78-81).

In attempting to classify the diverse streams of evangelical Christianity in chapter 8, the authors are all at sea (pp. 128-9). Surely it is time for Clive Calver to pension off his simplistic division into “twelve tribes”. Such a model is inadequate to define the realities of the UK church scene today and is least appropriate where clarity is most needed, that is, outside the EA itself. At least Derek Tidball’s *Rubik’s Cube* model recognises more than one dimension to their differences (*Who are the Evangelicals?* 1994, p. 20), while some have found even that to be inadequate (*For such a time as this*, 1996, p. 275). The “tribes” classification fails to do justice to the reality that there is more than one watershed on which churches separate. Some divergence is geographical, some theological, some denominational and some merely pragmatic. Where does Calver locate the many UK churches holding Reformed views of salvation, independent policies in church government but which readily co-operate on a gospel basis? Evangelical churches are not mailing items, readily pigeon-holed by adding a postcode. We deserve better from a book which claims so much.

It is in its treatment of *ecumenism* that this tract on unity is most disappointing. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ 1966 call is misrepresented as being for “a single united evangelical church” (p. 127), which is simply untrue. To suggest that his “fiery rhetoric” was “impassioned eloquence...in the heat of the moment” (p. 65) also gives

the reader a false impression. His theologically reasoned address publicly presented the position he had privately set before the Commission which reported to the National Assembly of Evangelicals. The Doctor’s call was rejected not because of his passionate manner but because John Stott and others disagreed with the content of what he had said. Sadly, this book does nothing to dispel the myth that Dr Lloyd-Jones and those who supported him in 1966 were the destroyers of evangelical unity.

Perhaps the present reviewer may be permitted to insert here a previously unreported experience which sheds some light on those significant events. The organisers of the Assembly had helpfully provided time on the morning following the Doctor’s address for the discussion of motions from the floor. The late Kenneth Paterson, then an FIEC pastor in Tooting, shared my own concern that the opportunity to consider the practical implications of the call should not be missed. We consulted by telephone and, before the day’s business began, submitted to the chairman a motion, properly worded and duly seconded, proposing a discussion of the substantive issue from the night before. A wide range of evangelicals were present and there was a real buzz of anticipation. Then, to our huge disappointment, the chairman opened the first session by explaining that the organising committee had already met and decided that no such motions would be accepted. A formal resolution approving the (uncontroversial) *Report of the Commission on Church Unity* was approved without discussion. The truth is that responsibility for closing down any real consideration of secession in order to attain genuine evangelical church unity does not belong to John Stott alone. It lies with the 1966 officers of the Evangelical Alliance who changed the advertised

programme and denied the Assembly, set up for that very purpose, any opportunity for practical consideration of the issues the Doctor had raised.

The fascinating crystal-ball chapter 10, *The Futures of Evangelicalism*, picks up the obvious danger of what is perceived as growing influence of evangelicals within denominations leading to their being re-assimilated into the mainstream. "Will senior evangelicals become increasingly distanced from one another as their energies are poured into their denominational duties?" (p. 152). Looking ahead they also question the optimism of those who think they can reform their denominations from within. They perceptively comment on the powerful cultural bias in favour of the *status quo*, "The reluctance of Christians to cause more disarray or disruption than is absolutely necessary means that some who entered the denominational structures as reformers have later confessed to losing their way, not knowing how to move forward an institution so capable of ensuring its self-perpetuation" (p. 153). Further fragmentation is seen to be another danger, especially when sustained growth is accompanied by complacency about self-destructive tendencies. In addressing the recent corrosion in biblical convictions, they warn that what is now trendily called the "post-evangelical" is nothing more than "mild-mannered and moderate liberalism". Regrettably, however, they fail to grasp the nettle stinging so many today by answering their own key question, "when does an evangelical cease to be an evangelical?" (p. 154).

There is a widespread perception that the EA is dominated by charismatics. It is salutary, then, that the first "threat to evangelical unity" listed among the *Fracture Points* is "Charismatic renewal" (p. 66). This is a useful corrective to those

who persist in seeing it as God's way of uniting his people in these Last Days. It is, however, when some hazy figures emerge from the prophetic mists that the authors' personal perspectives are betrayed. Their preview of future prospects for *Realignment and Renewal* make interesting reading. Rob Warner's optimism about the Baptist denomination conveniently overlooks what he has previously said about the difficulties of reform from within (perhaps he only meant the Anglicans there!) but he forecasts that a re-aligned, non-liturgical, believer-baptising coalition would be predominantly charismatic. Furthermore, he extrapolates present trends to suggest that, "by the end of the century no less than one half of all evangelicals will identify themselves as charismatics" (p. 158).

The main body of the book closes with a reminder that, "The greatest prospect is the one most beyond our control. While we can pray for revival, it cannot be manufactured." (p. 160). Perhaps it is just here that one of the greatest tensions of today's evangelicalism emerges. The writer of the closing chapter rightly reminds his readers that revival is invariably preceded by a sense of need and that where there is complacency, no revival will come. The overall impression of the book, however, is that evangelicals, as depicted in its pages, are on the march. The EA 150th Anniversary Celebrations are an understandable opportunity for the leadership to congratulate their members and to encourage the troops. The size and worship culture of these events, however, tend to feed the triumphalism which is among the greatest dangers facing evangelicals today. Warner includes himself among those who "believe revival to be a real prospect for the western world in this generation". Is there not an equally real danger that we might be urged to seek

revival for the vindication it would bring to our gospel principles or for the moral impact it would make on our society? How hard it is for us, in our technologically sophisticated and pragmatically managed churches, to set our sights on the most supreme goal of all. Our priority must be to seek God himself as we cry out for him to revive his church, "that your people may rejoice in you" (Psalm 85:6)

In that prayer all evangelicals, whether in the EA or not, should be able to say, *Together We Stand*.

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Alan Gibson

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## **Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal**

### **Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980**

*Edited by John Wolffe*

*SPCK, 1995, 221 pp., £10.99, paperback*

The publisher's blurb explains that this volume of nine papers "reassesses the great tradition of evangelical, social and political action over two hundred years". Except for Clive Calver, Director General of the Evangelical Alliance, who has contributed an "Afterword", the writers are all teachers of history at the tertiary level. The book arose out of a symposium sponsored by the Evangelical Alliance in 1992. Of the authors, the editor explains that "their own attitudes to evangelicalism might be characterized as a mixture of the sympathetically critical and the critically sympathetic" (pp. 2,3). They have aimed "to cross the boundary between past and present" and that between "history and theology" (p. 3). They have also worked with a definition of evangelicalism enunciated by David Bebbington in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989).

This word "is used to denote those movements in the Protestant churches that derived their original inspiration from the upsurge of revivalistic movements that broke out across the north Atlantic world in the 1730s" (p. 4). This reviewer believes that such a definition imposes unhelpful historical and geographical limitations on the term evangelical. Such a definition must appeal to those who argue that evangelicalism is a late arrival on the Protestant and Reformed scene.

The writers have argued convincingly that evangelicals have always had a concern for the earthly and material needs of their fellows. Against that it has to be admitted that, "recent images of evangelicalism have tended to see it as an escapist religious movement offering a sense of eternal security but little constructive engagement with contemporary society" (p. 1). The book ranges from the work of such men as Wilberforce, Shaftesbury and Chalmers to more recent organisations such as CARE and Tear Fund. The move from the dynamic individual leadership to committee action is of interest. It is also salutary to contrast what could be achieved in the aftermath of revival with what has been done in the late twentieth century when, in David Bebbington's words, evangelicals were limited by "their sheer weakness. They were dimly aware that their collective influence over the tone of British life had been slowly declining since the middle years of the previous century" (p. 183).

Ian Randall has written on the social gospel. For those who consider that this was a liberal phenomenon he has some surprises. He introduces a number of figures with varying degrees of commitment to evangelicalism, but he focuses on the work of FB Meyer in Leicester and London. He describes what

he calls Meyer's "massive socio-political involvement". He points out interestingly that in the 1920s, Meyer's "socio-political activities declined and his energies were directed towards the premillennial Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement which he began in 1917" (p. 170).

A very useful chapter is that by David Bebbington, *Decline and Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern 1918-1980*. He links Keswick theology and premillennialism with a weakening of evangelical social concern. He proceeds to consider factors which helped to restore a concern. These include JI Packer's "vigorous onslaught" against Keswick teaching in 1955 and the recovery of Reformed theology associated with Packer and Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He considers that an even more important factor was the charismatic movement where positive attitudes to social concern contrasted sharply with those found in the older Pentecostalism. He also sees as significant a softening of evangelical attitudes towards the ecumenical movement.

This reviewer found *Gender Attitudes and the Contribution of Women to Evangelism and Ministry in the Nineteenth Century* to be the least satisfactory paper. It begins by acknowledging "specific biblical passages, in particular teachings found in Paul's epistles, which appeared to forbid the public ministry of women" (p. 98). After showing ways in which women did begin to exercise public ministry in Britain and on the mission field, the last paragraph tells us that "women had been seen to be effective preachers and evangelists, not only among other women, but also in mixed gatherings". This pragmatism leads on to the conclusion, "they could not now be stopped for reasons of propriety or prejudice, they were still willing to serve in the background, but where they felt that active leadership was appropriate, they were ready to demand and take up appropriate positions. We all

today – both men and women – are their debtors" (p. 113).

This is a significant book which opens a mine of important detail and as such it is to be welcomed. It is also a book with a message and it is at this point that one has reservations. It is good to know of a continuing and perhaps growing evangelical concern for the needs of society. Recent evangelical efforts to challenge the ills of society have been numerous, but those detailed on pages 190, 191 have not been very successful. Popular media figures continue to advocate permissiveness and seemingly have plenty of followers. Sunday observance is further undermined. Abortion continues unchecked and the homosexual lobby grows even more aggressive. All this contrast sharply with what was achieved in the early nineteenth century. To make these observations is not to say that there should have been no resistance to the rising tide of wickedness. It is however somewhat disturbing that as the book comes to a conclusion social concerns seem to fill the horizon. This is the more significant when we remember that the writers have worked with a definition of evangelicalism that was inspired by the eighteenth century revivals. By the time the reader comes to the end of the book the possibility and significance of revival seems to have completely disappeared. We are told that, "evangelicals in the closing years of the twentieth century possess a firm desire to recover the identity and emphasis of their predecessors" (p. 209). There is no evidence that this desire includes a burden for revival. God alone can give revival, but it would be sad if a very commendable compassion for the needy eclipses our prayerful concern for the vast numbers who face a lost eternity. The middle way between an unhealthy pietism and a social gospel needs to be probed more deeply.

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Robert W Oliver

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1. To articulate that theology characteristic of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.
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