Contemporary Evangelicalism

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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

This 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 McCloughry 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 ennumerates 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 aggresively 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 missioner. 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 "Premillenial 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 Icthus 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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