

Evangelical Identity in Anglicanism

Justyn Terry¹

Evangelical identity has been much contested over the years, with the meaning of the term being understood differently in different times and contexts. This paper makes the case that, in the Anglican context at least, there is a consistent underlying Evangelical identity which is about an emphasis on biblical preaching that calls for conversion to Jesus Christ and encourages holiness of life, lived out in the context of Anglican polity and practice.

Key Words: Evangelical, Anglican, identity, conversion, Biblical

Evangelical identity has been hotly contested since the eighteenth century.² Theologian Roger Olson recently identified seven different forms of it,³ and that was before the emergence of Evangelicalism as a voting bloc in the USA, which played a significant role in electing Donald Trump as President in 2016,

¹ The Rev. Dr. Justyn Terry is Vice Principal and Academic Dean, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. Email: justyn.terry@wycliffe.ox.ac.uk. This paper develops a presentation given at The Evangelion Conference, at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA, USA on April 28, 2016, under the title of, “A case for Evangelical Anglicanism.”

² “In every generation, from the eighteenth century to the present, evangelical identity has been contested.” Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones, “Evangelicals and Evangelicalisms: Contested Identities,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to the History of Evangelicalism* ed. Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 1–21 at 3.

³ The seven are: 1. Authentic Christianity, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (as used about, and by, Roman Catholic and Protestant writers); 2. Protestant, rooted in the Reformation: salvation by grace alone through faith alone (as used by Lutherans like the ELCA, and Reformed Churches); 3. An Anglican party, promoting Protestant aspects of Anglicanism (which tends to be “low church,” preferring simple liturgy, stressing the priesthood of all believers, emphasizing personal conversion, and rejecting baptismal regeneration); 4. Reform and revivalist movement in Protestantism, stressing repentance and faith (known as Pietism in Germany; Moravian Brethren; and including John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards); 5. Reaction to liberalism, often seen as synonymous with fundamentalism (E.g. J. Gresham Machen of Princeton); 6. Post fundamentalist “neo-evangelicals” of the 1940s and 1950s (E.g. Billy Graham, Carl Henry, Harold Ockenga in the USA, John Stott, and J.I. Packer in the UK; and 7. Enthusiastic and mission minded people, not necessarily Christian (often used by journalists for Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims, as well as some Christians). Roger E. Olson, *Pocket History of Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 8ff. He does not distinguish between “evangelical” and “Evangelical” as other scholars do.

adding an eighth.⁴ When we narrow the field to Evangelicalism within the Anglican Communion, the problem of definition is reduced but does not entirely disappear. That is in part because of the ways in which the Communion tends to have distinctive characteristics in its forty-two provinces and constituent dioceses, with their differing histories and influences.

The historian David Bebbington has proposed four characteristics of Evangelicalism that are widely used to define Evangelical identity:

1. Conversionism: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a life-long process of following Jesus;
2. Activism: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts;
3. Biblicism: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority;
4. Crucicentrism: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.⁵

Another way of describing Evangelicalism is suggested by J.I. Packer, which offers a fuller description, and is endorsed by John Stott and Alister McGrath,⁶ who, like Packer, have been leading figures in the Evangelical Anglican movement, giving this approach a particular attraction for this study. Packer describes Evangelicalism under these six distinctives:

1. The supremacy of Scripture as God-given instruction, a sufficient, self-interpreting guide in all matters of faith and action;
2. The majesty of Jesus Christ our sin-bearing divine Savior and glorified King, by faith in whom we are justified;

⁴ Atherstone and Jones note the disagreement on the number of forms of Evangelicalism: “Taxonomies are likewise multitudinous, ranging from Oliver Barclay’s simple polarities of ‘conservative evangelicals’ versus ‘liberal evangelicals’, to Robert Webber’s fourteen sub-categories (Fundamentalist, Dispensational, Conservative, Non-denominational, Reformed, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, Holiness, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Black, Progressive, Radical, Mainline).” Atherstone and Jones, “Evangelicals and Evangelicalisms,” 4.

⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1930s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1–17.

⁶ The endorsements by McGrath and Stott are in Alister E. McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1995), 51, and John R.W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 24ff.

3. The lordship of the Holy Spirit, giver of spiritual life by animating, assuring, empowering and transforming the saints;
4. The necessity of conversion, not as a stereotyped experience but as a regenerate condition, a state of faith in Christ evidenced by repentance and practical godliness;
5. The priority of evangelism in the church's agenda;
6. The fellowship of believers (the faith-full) as the essence of the church's life.⁷

The two sets of criteria have many similarities, which is unsurprising if Evangelicalism is, as Packer thought, simply “apostolic Christianity.”⁸ The word “Evangelical” is, after all, from the Greek, *evangelion*, meaning “of the gospel.” Both indicate that Evangelicalism is not to be confused with Fundamentalism, because Evangelicals are more open to engage with critical views of Scripture and theology.⁹ Packer's analysis of Evangelicalism, however, makes more explicit the evangelistic drive of Evangelicalism, which is somewhat muted under Bebbington's “Activism.” It gives greater prominence to the role of the Holy Spirit, which we will take to include empowering the word preached, as conservative Evangelicals stress, and the manifestation of spiritual gifts, which charismatic Evangelicals emphasize. It also gives a proper place to the church in God's mission to the world. Stott points out that the first three are convictions about God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which lead to the second three, that are responses to God, in conversion, evangelism, and corporate discipleship to cultivate holiness.¹⁰ So, it is Packer's understanding of Evangelicalism that will be deployed here.

The argument being advanced in this paper is that Evangelical identity is found in its emphasis on biblical preaching that calls for conversion¹¹ to Jesus Christ, which cultivates holiness of life. We shall see that this identity, rooted

⁷ J.I. Packer and N.T. Wright, *Anglican Evangelical Identity: Yesterday and Today* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2008), 125f. The list was originally published as “The supremacy of Holy Scripture,” “The majesty of Jesus Christ,” “The lordship of the Holy Spirit,” “The necessity of conversion,” “The priority of evangelism,” and “The importance of fellowship.” J.I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem: An Analysis*. Latimer Studies 1 (Oxford: Latimer House, 1978), 20-23. Mark Thompson also arrives at a set of six distinctives, with different headings but covering similar territory. Mark Thompson, “Saving the heart of Evangelicalism,” in *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis*, ed. Melvin Tinker (Fern, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1995), 28–41 at 29–38.

⁸ J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (London: IVP, 1958), 39.

⁹ Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, 24–40, and Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 17ff.

¹⁰ Stott. *Evangelical Truth*, 25.

¹¹ “Conversion” as explained by Packer in his fourth distinctive of Evangelicalism above.

in convictions about the supreme authority of Scripture, the majesty of Jesus Christ, and the lordship of the Holy Spirit, has remained constant over five centuries of Evangelical Anglicanism. It becomes clearest when Evangelicals are responding to what they see as movements away from the core commitments of the Christian faith, whilst upholding Anglican polity and practice. To make the case, we shall consider Evangelical identity in its historical context, focusing on leading Evangelical figures in Anglicanism since it first emerged from the Roman Catholic Church in England in the sixteenth century, drawing out the distinctive contributions they have each made to Evangelical identity.

Evangelical Responses to Medieval Roman Catholicism: Archbishop Thomas Cranmer

The origins of the Evangelical movement in Anglicanism go back prior to the Reformation to those who, like John Wycliffe, blazed a trail for it in the fourteenth century and before. But since the history of Anglicanism is seen as beginning with the reforms that took place in England under King Henry VIII, brought about by his Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, we shall start our exploration there.

To call Cranmer an Evangelical might be seen as an anachronism, although Olson includes him as an Evangelical under his second usage of the term, Protestant.¹² Bebbington would suggest that Cranmer was an “evangelical” understood as a Reformation Christian, but not an “Evangelical” meaning someone who stresses the emotive element of the Christian faith, which he associates with the ministry of John Wesley.¹³ Bebbington’s desire to reserve the term “Evangelical” for such a use has been widely contested,¹⁴ and not without cause. Cranmer showed evidence of all six of Packer’s characteristics of an Evangelical. We notice, for instance, the priority he gave to the Bible, and to personal faith in Christ. His view of biblical authority grew through contact with continental reformers even before appointment as King Henry’s

¹² See footnote 2.

¹³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 1. See also Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer and Tudor Evangelicalism,” in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2008), 221–251 at 230.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Michael A.G. Haykin, “Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment,” in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, Haykin and Stewart, 37–62 at 60, and Paul Helm, “Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Thesis,” in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, Haykin and Stewart, 199–220 at 220.

ambassador to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, in Regensburg in 1532. From his earliest days as Archbishop, when he was investigating the case for Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, it was to the Bible that he primarily turned. As historian Peter Newman Brooks puts it, "[i]ncreasingly scripture was becoming central to his thought."¹⁵ He also affirmed justification by faith, saying ". . . we know God's mercy and grace promised by his word (and that freely for Christ's death and passion sake) and believe the same, and being truly penitent, we by faith receive the same."¹⁶ He wanted to strengthen the connection between faith and baptism, saying, "Those that come [to baptism] feignedly, and those that come unfeignedly, both be washed with the sacramental water, but both be not washed with the Holy Ghost and clothed with Christ."¹⁷ Cranmer promoted a "lively faith"¹⁸ that moves the heart, and affirmed the priesthood of every believer, which all suggest that he was an Evangelical.¹⁹

Cranmer's contribution to the Reformation was not that of a theological innovator, like Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer or John Calvin. His gift was for using his experience as a Cambridge University fellow to affirm the insights of such theologians from Scripture and the Church Fathers, and to inculcate them into the Church of England. He wrote the preface to the second edition of the Great Bible of 1539, the first official English language Bible, made available in all the churches of England. He also simplified and reformed the prayer books of the Church of England in 1549, with further reforms in 1552, both in the English language, that became the basis of the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662. There is a strong emphasis on Scripture, with the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer providing a

¹⁵ Peter Newman Brooks, "The Theology of Thomas Cranmer," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David Steinmetz, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

¹⁶ Thomas Cranmer, "Notes on Justification," in *Three Sermons on St. Paul's Doctrine of Justification by Faith, Original Sin, Predestination* by Thomas Young (Whitefish, MO: Kessinger, 2010), 243.

¹⁷ Quoted in William Goode, *The doctrine of the Church of England as to the effects of baptism in the case of infants* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1850), 216. "Feignedly" here means without faith.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Cranmer's fourth homily in his *Book of Homilies*, "Of the true and lively faith."

¹⁹ Ashley Null notes that "[Diarmaid] MacCulloch's magisterial study [of Cranmer] convincingly answers that Cranmer was simply a deeply committed English evangelical." Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.

steady diet of Bible reading, going through most of the Old Testament annually, the New Testament twice a year, and all the Psalms every month.

Cranmer commissioned a Book of Homilies, published in 1547, to address his concern that preaching was widely neglected, and frequently of a poor standard. He had twelve sermons written to be preached in churches: “A Fruitful exhortation to the reading of holy Scripture,” “Of the misery of all mankind,” “Of the salvation of all mankind,” and “Of the true and lively faith,” and others addressing the practical outworking of that lively faith. Cranmer wrote at least three of these homilies, and collected and edited the others.

His view on the primacy of Scripture shaped his Forty-Two Articles of Religion, published in 1553, which became the basis of the Thirty-Nine Articles. These continue to be held in high regard by Evangelicals for their clarity about the supremacy of Scripture (Articles VI and VII), their emphasis on justification by faith (Article XI) and salvation through Christ alone (Article XVIII), and for their view of Holy Communion (Articles XXVII–XXXI).

It was Cranmer’s theology of Communion that was central to his condemnation and execution under Queen Mary in 1556. His 1552 prayer book put into liturgical form a decisive break with transubstantiation, the view that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ at consecration.²⁰ Cranmer, like the other reformers, rejected this. He argued that the bread and wine were the body and blood of Christ only when received by faith. As he put it in the words of distribution: “feede on him in thy hearte by faythe, with thankesgeving.”²¹ He believed this is what Jesus taught in John 6; that it is a spiritual feeding on Christ, not a literal one. Cranmer affirmed the real presence of Christ at the eucharist, as did fellow reformers and martyrs, Nicolas Ridley, Bishop of London, and Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester. They taught that Christ was present sacramentally and spiritually by the Holy Spirit in due administration of the bread and wine, rather than in the elements themselves. For Cranmer, this was the Lord’s supper, not a propitiatory sacrifice, and it took place on a table, not an altar. As Cranmer scholar, Ashley Null, explains, “The sacrament’s proper focus was not the transformation of

²⁰ See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1376. “Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.”

²¹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1552, http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1552/BCP_1552.htm.

the elements, but of the human will, by means of union with Christ through Spirit-empowered faith.”²²

Cranmer may not be seen by everyone as an Evangelical in today’s terms, but he did emphasize biblical preaching, calling for a response of faith that led to holiness of life. He played a key role in the work of reform of the medieval Roman Catholic Church in England, which has made the Church of England attractive for many Evangelicals. His emphasis on Christianity being about a transformation of the heart in response to the love of God made known in Christ crucified, which he crafted into liturgical form in his prayer books, has been transformative not just for the people in England, but also for the world-wide Anglican communion.

Evangelical Responses to the Elizabethan Settlement of 1558–63: The Puritans

Cranmer and his fellow reformers achieved a great deal that is welcomed by Evangelicals, but it was by no means received with thanksgiving by the whole Church of England. There were powerful voices amongst the bishops, clergy and laity raising concerns that the reforms had gone too far, especially regarding the changes to Holy Communion. This gave rise to anxiety in the royal court that the reforms were proving divisive for the nation, threatening, and at times provoking, unrest. Queen Elizabeth I responded with a religious settlement in two parts. The first was the Act of Supremacy (1559), establishing Elizabeth as supreme governor of the Church of England, and the second, the Act of Uniformity (1559), which mandated the use of the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, a form of the 1552 version amended to allay some concerns from traditionalists,²³ and requiring the whole nation to attend church weekly. Altars were replaced with tables, though priests were permitted to put crucifixes and candles on them, and pilgrimages were forbidden. The Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 became law in 1571, which helped define the distinctives of Anglicanism. As historian David Starkey puts it, Queen Elizabeth's

²² Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer’s Reputation Reconsidered,” in *Reformation Reputations: The Power of the Individual in English Reformation History*, ed. David J. Crankshaw and George W.C. Gross (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 189–221 at 208.

²³ This involved removing the last rubric in the Communion service (the “Black Rubric”), that said kneeling during Communion did not imply worship of the elements; combining the sentences used for administration of the elements during Communion from the 1549 and 1552 Prayer Books; omitting prayers against the Pope from the Litany; and adding a rubric to Morning Prayer which prescribed the use of traditional vestments.

settlement resulted in “a Church that was Protestant in doctrine, Catholic in appearance.”²⁴

For some, this settlement made too many concessions to those seeking to preserve more Catholic doctrines and practices. Those protesters, labelled “Puritans” by their critics for their desire to purify the church, sought to promote a more Reformed vision of the Church. Packer, who studied the Puritan Richard Baxter for his doctorate, helpfully summarizes the characteristics of the movement as:

1. The integration of daily lives;
2. Quality of spiritual experience;
3. Passion for effective action;
4. Programme for family stability;
5. Sense of human worth; and
6. Ideal of Church renewal.²⁵

As such, the Puritans had a significant impact not only on the Church, but also on society, including giving women a higher status, since, as Amanda Porterfield points out, “Puritanism's emphasis on marriage and family life as the foundation of Christian society invested women's domestic roles with great social significance.”²⁶

Williams Perkins emerged as the father of Puritanism, so we will focus our attention on him and his contribution to Evangelical identity.

Born in 1558 in Warwickshire, England, Perkins experienced a conversion during his years as a student at Christ's College, Cambridge, the university which produced many other Puritans. He became a fellow of the college, and a lecturer at St. Andrew's the Great Church in Cambridge. In 1590, he published *Armillæ Aurea*, which was translated the following year as *A Golden Chain*, becoming the first work of English Systematic Theology. He affirmed the supreme authority of Scripture, and stressed literal interpretation of the Bible, though he left room for figurative and analogical usage where context permitted. He held to justification by faith, and taught that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers. Perkins also endorsed double predestination, meaning that both election and reprobation are predestined, and published Theodore Beza's “Order of Salvation and Damnation,” that presses Calvin's ideas on election into a fully worked out schematic.

²⁴ David Starkey, *Crown and Country* (New York: HarperPress, 2011), 314.

²⁵ James I. Packer, *Among God's Giants* (Brighton and Hove, UK: Kingsway, 1991), 26ff.

²⁶ Amanda Porterfield, “Women's Attraction to Puritanism,” *Church History* 60, no. 2 (1991): 196–209 at 209.

Perkins opposed the Act of Uniformity, and objected to Archbishop John Whitgift's repression of Puritanism using subscription to enforce unity in the Church of England. The Puritans questioned the use of ornaments, rituals, organs, surplices, genuflection, and the loss of the black rubric in the Book of Common Prayer,²⁷ saying these all lacked biblical support. Perkins preached against kneeling at Communion in 1587, since that suggested adoration of the elements, and was called to account for it by the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University.

Perkins also opposed non-conformists and other separatists, who felt they could no longer stay in the Church of England and were creating deep tensions in the nation. One of the main points of contention was around the role of bishops, which Puritans felt lacked a clear biblical mandate. Perkins was one of the Puritans who remained in the Church of England throughout his ministry, accepting that, as Calvin said, the Bible did not require the role of bishops, though he felt a biblical case could be made for them.

Political and religious tensions erupted into the English Civil Wars of 1642–1649, which resulted in the execution of King Charles I, and the installation of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector in 1653, when Puritan values shaped national law. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 after Cromwell's death, another Act of Uniformity (1662) passed, requiring ordained ministers to confirm their willingness to conform to the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, with its clear role for bishops. Such affirmations were required by August 24, 1662, St Bartholomew's Day, and on that day over 2,000 ministers left the Church of England,²⁸ including Richard Baxter, in what has become known as the Great Ejection. That significantly strengthened the non-conformist movement, and weakened the Evangelical witness in the Church of England.

Many Puritans emigrated from England to live out their beliefs with greater freedom. Their role in the formative years of New England was enormous, not only in terms of theology but also for the character of the emerging nation.²⁹

²⁷ See footnote 23 for further details about the black rubric.

²⁸ Andrew Roycroft, a Review of *The Great Ejection 1662* by Gary Brady (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2012), October 26, 2012, <https://banneroftruth.org/uk/resources/book-review-resources/2012/the-great-ejection-1662-a-review-by-andrew-roycroft/>.

²⁹ See, for instance, Kenneth and William Hopper, *The Puritan Gift: Reclaiming the American Dream Amidst Global Financial Chaos* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2008), which argues that the Puritan vision of hard work, desiring the kingdom of God, and putting others first underlies the success of the American economy. These values had a positive impact on the British economy for the same reasons. Porterfield, "Women's Attraction to Puritanism," 208.

One such émigré was Anne Bradstreet, who went to the Massachusetts Bay Colony at its founding in 1630. She became an influential poet, sharing her faith through her writing, declaring her trust in God even when her house burned down. In the final verse of *Upon the burning of our house* (1666), she says:

And when I could no longer look,
I blest His grace that gave and took,
That laid my goods now in the dust.
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was his own; it was not mine.
Far be it that I should repine.

Perkins' scholarly and moderating voice, with his commitment to Christ-centered biblical preaching, calling for conversion and holiness of life, brought many to Evangelical faith. He was an inspiration to George Herbert and William Ames, later Professor of Theology at Franeker, and his influence was also felt overseas, including by New England pioneers like Jonathan Edwards. Puritans continue to have their impact on the Evangelical movement in Anglicanism and elsewhere, both in their scholarship and ministerial practice, and may be seen as leaving a more Calvinistic inheritance to Evangelicalism.³⁰

Evangelical Responses to the 17th and 18th Century Enlightenment: John Wesley and Charles Simeon

With the publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* in 1687, describing how the movements of heavenly bodies follow simple mathematical laws, there was considerable philosophical activity, especially in France, some of which raised questions about the role of God in the universe. The "Enlightenment" philosophy that emerged cast doubt on divine providence, the miraculous, and the divinity of Jesus Christ, support for which rests heavily on God raising him from the dead, which David Hume, amongst others, called into question. Immanuel Kant, one of the leading figures of the movement, explained it as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding

³⁰ Richard Turnbull says Evangelical Anglicans have their roots in "moderate Calvinism." Richard Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), 93.

without the guidance of another.”³¹ The Enlightenment was therefore not just a challenge to particular Christian doctrines, but to the whole idea of following a belief system that comes from others, and especially from previous, ‘unenlightened’ eras.

Christians in the Church of England responded in a number of diverse ways to these significant challenges. Some felt it necessary to reconsider the fundamental tenets of the faith by moving towards deism, the belief that God has created the universe but is not daily sustaining and guiding it but letting it run its course, an approach taken by Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, for instance. Others, like the Latitudinarians, felt there should be freedom, or ‘latitude,’ to loosen the interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and strengthen the role of reason, which increasingly became associated with common sense. Still others resisted the call to adapt the Christian faith to a new context, and questioned some of the rationalist assumptions of the Enlightenment, calling people to radical discipleship of Jesus Christ. Two of the main proponents of such an approach were John Wesley and Charles Simeon, both of whom have had an enduring impact on Evangelical identity.

John Wesley was born in 1703 and went to Christ Church College, Oxford, after which he was ordained and became a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. He served his father as Curate in Wroote, Lincolnshire, and began the “Holy Club” in Oxford with his brother Charles, the hymn-writer, in an effort to cultivate serious Christian discipleship. In 1735, he went on a mission to Georgia, USA, with his brother and James Oglethorpe. They met some Moravians, whose witness on board ship, especially their calm confidence in the face of a life-threatening storm, had a significant impact on him. Then on May 24, 1738, Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed,”³² and had an assurance of salvation as he heard Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans read at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London. This was a turning point for him, and he began preaching itinerantly, often outdoors, following the example of George Whitefield. Wesley scholar Ralph Waller summarizes his impact by saying, “Through his efforts, keelmen and miners, prostitutes and prisoners, sailors and smugglers, all became devout people with a purpose in life, and valued in society.”³³

³¹ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” 1784, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1992), accessed December 9, 2023, https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/kant_whatisenlightenment.pdf. Kant’s use of “man” has been retained, but should be understood as “humanity.”

³² John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, May 24, 1738.

³³ Ralph Waller, *John Wesley: A Personal Portrait* (London: SPCK, 2003), 128.

Beyond his commitment to evangelistic preaching, Wesley's main contributions to Evangelical identity lie in demonstrating the value of small group ministry, and for taking the quest for holiness to new and probably unsustainable levels. Those who responded to Wesley's preaching formed into groups called "classes" of eleven members and a leader, who met weekly to read Scripture, pray, discuss religious matters, and collect funds for those in need. They were encouraged to avoid evil, do good, and use the means of grace.³⁴ This small group approach to discipleship may be seen in contemporary home groups, though normally without the probing questions, or collections.

How holy someone could hope to become through such a process became controversial. Wesley had met a few people who claimed to have achieved perfection without striving, at least for short periods of time. He wanted to hold that out as a goal, clarifying that it was not "sinless perfection," but experience of "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love."³⁵ This raised questions about the nature of sin and the meaning of temporary perfection, but it encouraged a quest for holiness that was taken up by the Keswick movement, and elsewhere.

Another major Evangelical figure, Charles Simeon, was born in 1759, the same year as William Wilberforce, who became a lifelong friend. Wilberforce was one of the main leaders of the Evangelical Clapham Sect with Henry Thornton, Hannah More, and Simeon himself, which worked hard for the abolition of slavery. Simeon went to King's College, Cambridge, where he was required to attend Holy Communion occasionally. That got him thinking seriously about his life. As he later reflected, "Conscience told me that Satan was as fit to go there [Communion] as I; . . . so greatly was my mind oppressed with the weight of my former numberless iniquities . . . that I frequently looked on dogs with envy."³⁶ The Evangelical clergyman Henry Venn helped him come to a personal faith in Christ, and Simeon was ordained and became

³⁴ Kenneth Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 43–59 at 50.

³⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. chapter 6, response to question 1, accessed December 9, 2023, <https://www.worldinvisible.com/library/wesley/8317/831706.htm>.

³⁶ Russell Levenson, "To Humble the Sinner, to Exalt the Savior, to Promote Holiness': Reflections on the Life, Ministry and Legacy of Charles Simeon," *Sewanee Theological Review* 42, no. 1 (1998): 47–65 at 49.

Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge, in 1782. He was very young to take on such a significant role and met strong opposition, with wealthy pew holders absenting themselves and locking their pews for fourteen years. Simeon was prone to bad temper and to vanity, and was considered an academic. He was, however, a strong preacher, spending twelve hours a week in preparation. He worked hard for the poor and imprisoned, and was good at pastoral visitation, where he would often introduce himself by saying, "I am come to inquire after your welfare. Are you happy?"³⁷

Simeon's contributions to Evangelical identity are mainly around preaching and parish life, and in encouraging the formation of mission societies. He developed expository Bible preaching, something he learned from a French Reformed minister, Jean Claude.³⁸ Simeon said, "I do not sit down to the perusal of Scripture in order to impose a sense on the inspired authors, but to receive one as they give it to me. I pretend not to teach them, I wish like a child to be taught by them."³⁹ He offered sermon classes using Claude's method, attracting many Cambridge students preparing for ordained ministry, who were getting little, if any, instruction in homiletics. Simeon also started Friday evening conversation parties to answer questions, and annual summer retreats, known as 'house parties' for ministers and their wives. He remained Rector of Holy Trinity Church until his death in 1836, having served there for 54 years.

Simeon also helped start some influential mission agencies. In 1799, he was involved in launching the Society for Missions in Africa and the East, now the Church Mission Society.⁴⁰ Ten years later, he was one of the founders of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, now known as the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People. He began the Simeon Trust in 1833 to purchase livings for Evangelical preachers, initially using an inheritance of £15,000 from his brother Edward, who had been a director of the Bank of England. Having patronage of those parishes meant Evangelical clergy could find churches in which to serve.

Wesley and Simeon played significant roles in bringing revival to the Church of England and to strengthening its Evangelical witness at a time when that was much needed. They gave priority to biblical preaching, calling people

³⁷ Levenson, "To Humble the Sinner, to Exalt the Savior, to Promote Holiness," 54.

³⁸ Through reading "An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon" by Jean Claude in 1792.

³⁹ Quoted in Handley Moule, *Charles Simeon: Pastor of a Generation* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2001), 77.

⁴⁰ It was renamed in 1812 the "Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East," and became the "Church Mission Society" in 1995.

to faith in Christ, and to discipling those who responded towards holy living. John Stott goes as far as to say Simeon was “One of the greatest and most persuasive preachers the Church of England has ever known.”⁴¹ He and Wesley were committed to mission, in England and around the world, and invested significant time in equipping others for leadership. These are significant legacies for the Evangelical movement today.

Evangelical Responses to the 19th Century Catholic Revival: Bishop J.C. Ryle

The Evangelical revival had a major impact on the Church of England. By 1848, when the Evangelical bishop John Bird Sumner became Archbishop of Canterbury, it is said that between a quarter and a third of Anglican clergy were linked to the movement.⁴² There was also a substantial impact on the wider nation, especially through the work of the Clapham Sect, and through Lord Shaftesbury, “England’s most prominent Evangelical.”⁴³ They were concerned not only with the freedom of slaves, but also for the well-being of other vulnerable people.⁴⁴ They played such a significant role in the development of Victorian morality, through their campaigning, philanthropy and example, that theologian Stephen Tomkins concludes, “The ethos of Clapham became the spirit of the age.”⁴⁵

Another major influence on the Church of England traces its history to 1833, when John Keble, Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford, preached at the University Church against the government’s plan to remove ten of the twenty-two bishoprics in Ireland, with a sermon entitled “National Apostacy.” Keble questioned what right the state had to decide on the organization of the Church, and asked what had become of the Church that it might be willing to accept such a proposal? Ninety tracts made the case for a

⁴¹ John Stott in his introduction to Charles Simeon, *Evangelical Preaching* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), xxvii.

⁴² Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 175.

⁴³ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?*, 146.

⁴⁴ Nigel Scotland summarizes their achievements in this way: “Among the most notable were revision of the penal code, the abolition of the press gang, improvements in the care of the mentally ill, the relief of climbing boys, the regulation of factory conditions and the promotion of schools and other educational ventures.” Nigel Scotland, “The Social Work of the Clapham Sect: An Assessment,” *Themelios* 18 (October 1992), 17.

⁴⁵ Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce’s circle changed Britain* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), 248.

higher view of the Church and its sacraments, and of its priests and bishops, some written by other tutors from Oriel, Keble's college, including Edward Bouverie Pusey, Professor of Hebrew, and the Chaplain, John Henry Newman. The Oxford Movement, as it became known, encouraged daily public prayers, regular fasts and feasts, and promoted the decoration of the house of God, which, as Pusey put it "acts insensibly on the mind."⁴⁶ The Anglo-Catholic movement that developed later in the century implemented many of these ideas more fully. They practiced daily Communion, and used candles, incense, and vestments that had, until then, been associated with Roman Catholic practice.

Whilst the proponents of this Catholic revival shared a common concern with Evangelicals about the rise of liberalism, Evangelicals objected to the introduction of their more Catholic theology and practices into the Church of England. Chief amongst the objectors was John Charles Ryle, whose grandfather, John Ryle, had been a convert of John Wesley. J.C. Ryle was born in Macclesfield, England in 1816 and went to Christ Church College, Oxford, where he got a congratulatory first-class degree. Whilst there, he got sick with an inflammation of the chest, and began to read the Bible and pray. He was converted through hearing Ephesians 2:8–9 read in St Aldate's Church, Oxford. After a few years studying law and then working in his father's bank, he was ordained. Ryle became established as a leading figure in the Evangelical movement, noted for his preaching and pastoral visitation. He published *The Bishop, The Pastor and The Preacher* in 1854, based on the lives of Hugh Latimer, Richard Baxter, and George Whitefield, showing that he saw the Reformers, Puritans, and Evangelical revivalists as holding the same core views. As Church historian Andrew Atherstone points out, for Ryle, Evangelicalism, "was no eighteenth-century innovation . . . , but a consistent position."⁴⁷ Ryle published widely, including, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (1856) for household devotions, *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century* (1869) on Evangelical history, *Knots Untied* (1874) arguing for the Evangelical nature of the Church of England, and *Holiness* (1877) which has become a classic of Evangelical spirituality. In 1880, he was consecrated the first Bishop of Liverpool and continued to press for Evangelicalism, though now mindful of his wider responsibilities as a diocesan bishop.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 42.

⁴⁷ Andrew Atherstone, "J. C. Ryle and evangelical churchmanship," in *Making Evangelical History Faith, Scholarship and the Evangelical Past*, ed. Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (London: Routledge, 2019), 81–101 at 90.

Ryle described himself as a moderate Calvinist, though he accepted that Arminians, who argued that God foreknew who would come to faith but did not predetermine it, could be Evangelicals too. He played an important role in defining Evangelicalism, setting out his understanding in the following form:

1. The first leading feature in evangelical religion is the *absolute supremacy it assigns to Holy Scripture* as the only rule of faith and practice, the only test of truth, the only judge of controversy. . . .
2. The second leading feature in evangelical religion is *the depth and prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption*. . . .
3. The third leading feature of evangelical religion is *the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the nature of the salvation which He has wrought out for men.
4. The fourth leading feature in evangelical religion is *the high place which it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man*.
5. The fifth and last leading feature in evangelical religion is *the importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man*.⁴⁸

These have significant overlaps with Packer's distinctives of Evangelicalism, though without explicit mention of evangelism, or the role of the Church, Packer's fifth and sixth points.

One of the key issues of debate with his Catholic interlocuters was whether a baptized infant should be regarded as regenerate, i.e., born again. The service for the Public Baptism of Infants in the *Book of Common Prayer* states, almost immediately after the baptism, "Seeing now that . . . this child is regenerate." Ryle argued that should not be taken out of the context of the whole service, in which commitments were made to raise the child in the Christian faith, and to bring them to confirmation, where they would express their repentance and faith.⁴⁹ Such a rejection of invariable baptismal regeneration was recognized as a legitimate understanding of Anglican doctrine in the landmark decision of the Gorham Judgement of 1850,⁵⁰ causing some conversions to Roman Catholicism, including Henry Manning, later

⁴⁸ J.C. Ryle, *Knots Untied* (Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan, 2000), 3–7. It was first printed in 1874. Original usages of "man" and "men" have been retained, but they should be understood as referring to men and women.

⁴⁹ Ryle, *Knots Untied*, 165.

⁵⁰ For more on the Gorham Judgement, see Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?*, 99–101.

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. However, as Bishop Colin Buchanan observes, it “preserved evangelicalism within the Church of England.”⁵¹

Ryle, driven by a fear that the Church of England would give up its Reformed heritage and return to the Roman Catholic Church, worked tirelessly to avoid that happening. In so doing, he left significant resources for Evangelicals in the Church of England to respond to those who would seek to move it in a more Catholic direction, and to reassure Evangelicals in the Church of England that they are properly Anglican.⁵² Packer says of him, “No Anglican to my knowledge has ever expounded this [Anglican Evangelical] position more fully, fairly or masterfully than did Ryle.”⁵³ He gave a clear example of prioritizing biblical preaching that calls for conversion and cultivates holiness of life.

Evangelical Responses to Liberalism and Revisionism of the 20th and 21st Centuries: The Rise of the Global South

The impact of Bishop J.C. Ryle on Anglican Evangelicalism remains strong, mainly through his writings, to which Evangelicals continue to turn for theological and pastoral guidance. Despite his best efforts, however, Ryle was not able to persuade all those who had been raised in Evangelical homes in his own day to maintain, or return to, Evangelicalism in adult ministry, most notably in the cases of John Henry Newman, and Robert and Henry Wilberforce, sons of William Wilberforce, who all played leading roles in the Oxford Movement. Historian David Newsome concludes that this was a result of many factors, but underlying them was their sense that the Catholic revival might provide the best way for the Church to resist the onslaught of secularism.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Colin Buchanan. *Historical Dictionary of Anglicanism*, 2nd ed. (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 285.

⁵² McGrath says, “Too often, evangelical Anglicans have been hesitant over affirming their Anglicanism; surely the time has come to change this?” Alister McGrath, “Evangelical Anglicanism: A contradiction in terms?,” in *Evangelical Anglicans: Their Role and Influence in the Church Today*, ed. R.T. France and A.E. McGrath (London: SPCK, 1993), 10–21 at 19.

⁵³ J.I. Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J.C. Ryle* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 34.

⁵⁴ David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: the Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 16. One Tractarian commentator wrote of Evangelicals, “Personal religion declines among them, and a high standard of holiness can now only be found among Catholics—with perhaps a few exceptions, belonging to a generation fast dying out, and leaving no successors.” “The Last Thirty Years in the English Church: An Autobiography,” in *The Church and the World: Essays on Questions of the Day* ed. Orby Shipley (London, 1866), 215–218 at 216f.

The twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen the ongoing rise of secularism, with its combination of materialism, hedonism, liberalism, and revisionism. Evangelicals have engaged the intellectual challenge to good effect, rising to the highest levels of biblical, theological, apologetic, ethical, sociological, and missional scholarship, with N.T. Wright, Alister McGrath, John Webster, Amy Orr-Ewing, Oliver O'Donovan, Elaine Storkey, and Christopher Wright amongst those achieving international distinction. Evangelicals have also responded to these challenges with fresh approaches to gospel ministry. For instance, under the leadership of Nicky Gumbel, 28 million people worldwide have taken the Alpha Course from Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) since launching in 1993.⁵⁵ Since 1985, HTB has helped to start over 100 church plants,⁵⁶ which in turn have inspired further church plants, bringing new life to many struggling churches. The New Wine Network has also brought charismatic renewal to many Anglican churches especially through summer conferences and church planting, and conservative Evangelicals have been growing through the ReNew conference and its regional initiatives.⁵⁷ These are all having a significant impact on the Church of England and its outreach to the nation.

This period has seen the ongoing spread of Evangelical Anglicanism globally, due in significant part to mission agencies like the Church Mission Society and its work in Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Middle and Far East, and North America. Their ministry in Australia, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, India, Rwanda, South Sudan, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda has proved especially significant for the shape of Anglicanism today, with Evangelicalism being the main expression of Anglicanism in several of these countries.

The story of the development of Evangelical Anglicanism could be told for each province.⁵⁸ As an example, in the USA, the work of John Wesley and George Whitefield in the 1740s had a powerful impact, and Evangelicals like Deveraux Jarrett, Alexander Griswold, and Richard Moore proved very

⁵⁵ Ian Paul, "What has been the influence of the Alpha Course?," *Psephizo*, September 7, 2022, <https://www.psephizo.com/reviews/what-has-been-the-influence-of-the-alpha-course/>. This is part of an interview with Andrew Atherstone regarding his book, *Repackaging Christianity: Alpha and the Building of a Global Brand* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022).

⁵⁶ Church Revitalisation Trust, "Plants and Revitalisations," accessed January 6, 2024, <https://revitalisetrust.org/plants-and-revitalisations>.

⁵⁷ *ReNew Conference*, "Home," accessed December 9, 2023, <https://www.renewconference.org.uk/>.

⁵⁸ For a history of the Anglican provinces see Part III of *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion*, ed. Ian S. Markham, J. Barney Hawkins IV, Justyn Terry, and Leslie Nuñez Steffensen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

effective in The Episcopal Church, especially in low church areas of the middle and southern states. The growing influence of the Oxford Movement, introduced by missionaries from the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and others,⁵⁹ made Evangelical ministry more difficult, and led eight clergy and twenty laity to start the Reformed Episcopal Church (REC) in 1873. Their departure weakened the fragile Evangelical witness in The Episcopal Church, which did not grow significantly again until the charismatic renewal a century later. The REC was to become one of the founding constituents of the Anglican Church of North America, launched in 2009 in response to the revisionism in The Episcopal Church, which has become the home of a growing Evangelical movement.

Throughout this time, Evangelical scholars have been emerging in the Global South, many supported financially for doctoral research by the Langham Trust.⁶⁰ These scholars include Femi Adeleye in Nigeria, John Chew in Singapore, Las Newman in Jamaica, David Zac Niringiye in Uganda, Michael Lolwerikoi in Kenya, and Paul Swarup in India. The emergence of such theologians helps explain why there are now Evangelical seminaries serving the Anglican Communion in Chile, Egypt, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Sudan, and Uganda.

Evangelical identity continues to be formed and contested in the Anglican Communion, including over proposals for same-sex blessings. Most Evangelicals resist the proposals on biblical grounds, but some are questioning that.⁶¹ New coalitions have emerged, like the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFAC), which began meeting in 1994 to uphold traditional teaching on marriage. There is also the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), which first met in 2008, bringing together Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and others from across the Anglican Communion to “guard the unchanging, transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ and to proclaim Him to the world.”⁶² Their Jerusalem Declaration, and GSFAC’s Cairo Covenant of 2019, show a clear commitment to the Evangelical principle

⁵⁹ Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?*, 53ff.

⁶⁰ This was set up by John Stott, and initially funded by royalty payments from his many publications, like *Basic Christianity* (1958), *The Cross of Christ* (1986), and commentaries on biblical books.

⁶¹ E.g., Mark Vasey-Saunders, *Defusing the Sexuality Debate: The Anglican Evangelical Culture War* (London: SCM, 2023).

⁶² GAFCON, “About GAFCON,” accessed December 9, 2023, <https://www.gafcon.org/about>. See Mark Thompson, “The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON),” in Markham et al., eds., *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion*, 739–749.

of the supremacy of Scripture.⁶³ Both GSFAC and GAFCON express the shift of the center of gravity of the Anglican Communion towards the Global South. Their task is not so much to define Evangelical identity as to seek to uphold it, by focusing on biblical preaching, calling for conversion to Jesus Christ, and cultivating holy lives.

Evangelical identity is notoriously hard to define, even within Anglicanism, but what we have seen here is, I hope, sufficient to show that it is essentially about prioritizing biblical preaching which calls for conversion to Jesus Christ that encourages holiness of life. That has meant recovering justification by faith from medieval Roman Catholicism, arguing for biblical priorities in the face of Tudor political expediency, bringing revival to a church struggling with rationalism and moral laxity, resisting calls for a more Catholic expression of Anglicanism, and uniting to contest liberalism and revisionism. Evangelicals are contenders for the gospel, and in particular for evangelism, conversion, and holiness of life. They have also often shown a strong concern for social justice.

There are, no doubt, differences to be observed between the work of the Anglican Reformers, the Puritans, the Revivalists, J.C. Ryle, and the Evangelicals of the global Anglican Communion, but we have seen evidence to support Bebbington's contention that Evangelicalism has "a common core that has remained remarkably constant down the centuries."⁶⁴ That core is biblical preaching, calling for conversion to Jesus Christ, and encouraging holiness of life, which stems from commitments to the supreme authority of the Bible, the unique saving role of Jesus Christ, and the lordship of the Holy Spirit. It is a vision for a gospel-centered ministry, which has helped bring vitality to the global Church, and blessing to the nations.

⁶³ GAFCON, "Jerusalem Declaration," accessed December 14, 2023, <https://www.gafcon.org/jerusalem-2018/key-documents/jerusalem-declaration>. See especially the authority of Scripture and the role of the Thirty-Nine articles in paragraphs 2 and 4.

And for the Cairo Covenant, see "A Covenantal Structure for The Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA), updated October 15, 2021, [https://assets-global.website-files.com/64c7520a09b851adae283880/64f6cf1ea4f7e1c49c0619c3_GSFA%20Covenantal%20Structure%20\(adopted%20on%2015%20Oct%202021\).pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/64c7520a09b851adae283880/64f6cf1ea4f7e1c49c0619c3_GSFA%20Covenantal%20Structure%20(adopted%20on%2015%20Oct%202021).pdf).

⁶⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 4.