

'Darkness and Light'

- Enlightenment and Awakening in the 18th century

MIND AND SPIRIT

Discovering and questioning

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a rise of science, which in turn had a profound impact on philosophical speculation. This revolution in thinking and understanding, paralleled with the monumental upheavals in both church and politics brought about most of the changes that we recognise distinguish the modern world from the mediaeval. The discovering and questioning had both a disturbing and liberating impact; greater understanding of the natural world was exhilarating while challenges to traditional ways of thinking disturbed many. Inspired by science the earliest thinkers took logic as their starting point and were concerned to understand the basis of 'knowing' (epistemology). They were not hostile to God but were rather more intrigued by the rational structure of the universe, but increasingly belief in God became marginalised and would stir a wind of doubt and skepticism that was to chill the faith of many with consequences we shall observe. As this period of 'enlightenment' develops human reason becomes enthroned as the touchstone of truth. The ideas 'rationalism', 'empiricism' and 'deism' have been described by Karl Barth as 'a system founded upon the presupposition of faith in the omnipotence of human ability'.

Rationalism

In the winter of 1619 the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650), was serving as a mercenary in the Bavarian army during the Thirty Years war. In an attempt to come to an understanding of the basis of human knowledge he decided to sit by the warmth of a stove and disbelieve everything he had ever believed. The experience reduced everything down to the simple fact of his own existence and led him to the conclusion, 'Cogito ergo sum' ('I think therefore I am'); the very fact that he is questioning proves that he must exist. He then proceeded to reconstruct the world around him very much as he had left it. The fact that Descartes died a nominal Roman Catholic, with a belief in a God who guarantees the validity of our thoughts about the world, raises questions about the significance of his ideas. What is significant about Descartes is that he brings a new departure; he set up human reason and individual consciousness as the final criterion of truth, a trend, which has dominated western thought ever since.

Empiricism

While philosophical thinking on the Continent was dominated by the 'rationalism' of Descartes and others, in Britain it was 'empiricism' that was seen as the key to knowledge. This says that 'experience' is the key to knowledge: -

- **John Locke** (1632-1704) argued that reason is dependent upon the senses in order to operate, "reason is what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell"; the senses are the basis of knowledge;



- **George Berkeley** (1685-1753) argued that to exist demanded either to perceive or to be perceived; all reality is in the mind it is not primarily material. It is the mind of God that is the sustaining basis of reality;
- **David Hume** (1711-1776) argued that 'only feelings exist, not the self'; he questions the very idea of cause and effect, arguing that we only experience disconnected events to which the mind gives the impression of continuity.

While both Locke and Berkeley believed in God, but David Hume was agnostic and attacked the notion of miracles as incapable of proof. He launches the most severe attack on natural theology and has been described as 'the patron-saint of skepticism'.

Deism

Like 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' the ideas of 'deism' were also increasingly hostile towards the Christian faith. 'Deism' originated in the seventeenth century with Lord Herbert of Cherbury who tried to show that religious belief was reasonable without having to appeal to the special revelation of the Christian faith. The ideas spread to the Continent where, while atheism was rare and dangerous, philosophers argued that religion was needed for order but the natural religion of 'deism' because Christianity was a hindrance to the good nature of humanity. We see this clearly in the French philosophers:

- **Voltaire** (1694-1787) proclaimed that "God is a Being beyond all beings, mystery beyond rational thought, human reason and conscience the standard to judge issues by", nevertheless with regard to the church and Christianity he cried, "Let us obliterate the infamy!";
- **Jean Jacques Rousseau** (1712-1778) wanted more than Voltaire's dry rationalism and wanted sentiment in natural religion, he saw the human person as 'essentially good but corrupted by their environment'.

All this questioning and skepticism began to spread through the universities of Europe and from there into society; it was inevitable that it would have a negative influence on the life of the church.

Spiritual malaise

The end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries saw the countries of northern Europe and the colonies in America in a state of spiritual malaise. The spiritual fervour of the generations involved in reform and dissent of the Reformation was spent. Added to this the doubt that was engendered by 'rationalism', 'empiricism' and 'deism' spread like a cold mist across the church:

- **Germany** had been caught up in the struggles of the Thirty Years war (1618-1648) with foreign armies crossing their territory, tyrannising the population with multitudes of refugees fleeing for their lives. In the aftermath of the war there was famine and disease that further decimated the population. Accompanying these events was a clear moral decline, one pastor said, "Old and young can no longer tell what is of God or of the devil, poor widows and orphans are counted for dung, like dogs are pushed into the street, there to perish of hunger and cold". The church was more concerned with



doctrinal dispute than pastoral care; the salaries of the clergy were paid by the state so they had little incentive to change.

- **Britain** was dead spiritually. Many Anglicans feared extremes and took a 'middle way of moderation'; sermons were little more than highly polished moral essays. The political climate was also opposed to the gospel, with cynics of the day suggesting that any day a bill could go through the Parliament 'taking the words *not* out of the commandments and placing them into the Creed'. With the widespread collapse of personal faith there was an inevitable decline in moral standards. Speaking of England in their day:
 - **John Wesley**: 'ungodliness is our universal, constant, and peculiar character';
 - **Isaac Watts**: 'there is decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of people';
 - **George Berkeley**: 'Morality and religion in Britain has collapsed to a degree never known in a Christian country'.
- **New England** saw the zeal of the early pioneers and spiritual frontiers people turn into paralysis. Those who, a generation before, had left Europe to escape persecution and establish religious freedom were now an "as dead a sleep as ever". This was the assessment of a Boston preacher of the colonial churches in 1727. Many had established the 'halfway covenant' which allowed anyone who was 'not scandalous in life' to be admitted into church membership and to partake of communion. Church involvement had become no longer a matter of faith but social convention.

NEW HORIZONS

The Pietists

Pietism, with its concern for 'experiencing the Christian faith', arose within the Protestant churches of Continental Europe during the closing decades of the seventeenth century as a challenge to the spiritual malaise which was taking hold. It had as its central interest:

- The renewal of spiritual life within the individual;
- The belief in the Bible as the guide to faith and life;
- The complete commitment to Christ evident in life;
- The nurture of devotional life : preaching, hymns, cell groups;
- The concern to meet social needs;
- The requirement of mission;
- The desire for ecumenicity;
- The fulfilment of the Reformation.

Pietism had various antecedents such as devotional mystics, English Puritan piety and Dutch Precisianism. While it had run its main course by the middle of the eighteenth century it, nevertheless, continued, and continues, to influence a whole variety of movements right up to the present day. For all its variety and diversity it is generally agreed that Pietism began in the Lutheran churches of Germany.

- **Philip Jacob Spener** (1635-1705) was a pastor in Frankfurt who became appalled by the decay in the Lutheran church of his day. He sought to rediscover Luther's 'appeal to the heart'. He set up house meetings ['collegia pietatis'] for prayer, Bible study and



sharing; everything to encourage the priesthood of all believers [all the teaching was in total harmony with Luther's theology]. His book 'Pia Desideria' became a manual for Pietist reform in the Lutheran churches and beyond. The movement spread widely, groups everywhere. Spener identified six requirements for church renewal:

- People must have a better knowledge of the Bible;
- Restoration of mutual concern;
- Emphasis upon good works;
- Avoidance of controversy;
- Spiritual people as ministers;
- Return to fervent preaching.

Spener did not want to break with Lutheranism but rather see the Lutheran church of his day reflect the spiritual life of the early Christians. Spener was strongly influenced by Johann Arndt's 'True Christianity'; his uniqueness was the energy he brought to the movement.

- **August Herman Franke** [1663-1727] was strongly influenced by Spener during his university days, and at the great man's death he took up the leadership of the German Pietist movement, making its centre at Halle where he taught. He worked with the destitute and depressed, setting up a poor school, orphanage, hospital, widows home, teachers' training institute, Bible School, book depot and Bible house. He had strong emphasis on foreign missions; sending two people to India. He produced a new spirit of ecumenism throughout Europe. He was known as an uncommonly kind and gentle person who was generally concerned about everybody's problems. He saw the groundwork of his ministry as, 'a life changed, a church revived, a nation reformed and a world evangelised'.

Pietism was a look forward; it inspired hymn writers like Paul Gerhardt. It was also to influence many other groups besides Lutheran; Reformed, Catholic and in radical reformed circles. It was to inspire the Moravians and be an important influence behind the revivals in England, Wales and America.

The Moravians

Following the execution of Jan Huss in 1415 his followers were severely persecuted, some escaped and in 1457, under the leadership of Gregory, they organised themselves in to a church called 'Unitas Fratrum' or 'Unity of the Brethren'; now known as the 'Moravian Church'. By the time of the Reformation there were 400 congregations with some 200,000 members. They now became a persecuted and scattered church, especially with the events of the Thirty Years war; their chances of survival appeared slim. Nevertheless, they clung to a belief that they were 'hidden seed' and that yet again their ancient church would be reborn. Surprisingly, the story of that rebirth begins in Pietist Germany.

- **Count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf** (1700-1760) was born into the German aristocracy; yet his grandmother was an important Pietist and Spener was his godfather. He was sent as a pupil in Franke's school in Halle where his early spiritual devotion was seen when he began the 'grain of mustard seed' club. Here boys pledged themselves to 'love the whole human family and to spread the gospel'. On leaving university he travelled



Europe on a 'grand tour' before settling to a career. In Dusseldorf art museum he saw Domenico Feti's 'Ecce Homo' which carried the inscription 'I have done this for you; what have you done for me?' Its challenge led him to pledge his life to Jesus' service. He then married and went into state service in Saxony, but was also an active Pietist; sponsoring a meeting in his home and trying to reconcile the Lutherans with Pietism. In 1721 he bought an estate at Berthelsdorf where he had the vision to form a Christian community. Its fulfilment was to emerge from a surprising turn of events.

- **'Herrnhut'** : In 1722 a lone Moravian, Christian David, came to Zinzendorf's door asking if refugees from the 'Unitas Fratrum' could settle on his estate. He was later described by Zinzendorf as 'one who burnt with zeal like an oven' and as 'a Moravian Moses'. Initially there were six adults and four children but by 1726 there were 300; Christian David having made ten journeys across the border to bring different groups. Soon after the settlement began, there was a prophecy that said, 'the estate would become a light to illuminate the whole land'. From that time on it was given the name 'Herrnhut' ['under the Lord's watch' or 'on watch for the Lord']. Zinzendorf and his wife were increasingly drawn into the life of the community, but by 1727 problems began to emerge. They were a mixed group and there was economic pressure; added to this a false teacher caused upheaval in the community. Under Zinzendorf's leadership they drew up a 'Brotherly Agreement'; this was seen as a true rebirth of the 'Unitas Fratrum'. On the 13th August 1727 a great out pouring of the Holy Spirit took place binding the community together in love and commitment to Jesus.
- **Mission** was to become the abiding hallmark of the Moravians. In 1731 Zinzendorf was the guest at the coronation of King Christian V1 in Copenhagen. While there he met a slave, Anthony Ulrich, from the West Indies, who pleaded for missionaries to go and work among his people. With his return to Herrnhut Zinzendorf's missionary zeal was fired with a passion to carry the gospel to every land. This was to have phenomenal results. On 21st August 1732, the first two Moravian missionaries Leonard Dobler (a potter) and David Nischmann, were sent to the island of St Thomas in the West Indies to work among the slaves. They were prepared to sell themselves as slaves in order to work among them; this in the end was not necessary. This was the beginning of the 'golden decade' of Moravian mission; by 1742 the small community of only 600 had sent 70 missionaries to many parts of the world (Greenland, Lapland, Georgia, Surinam, Ghana, North America, South Africa, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Rumania and Turkey). By 1760, the year of Zinzendorf's death, they had 226 missionaries and some 3000 converts. And so the story continues. Moravian mission and evangelism has been estimated as achieving more than the totality of all Protestant effort before them. Their love and self-sacrifice was amazing. It is estimated that the Moravian ratio of missionaries to those at home was 1: 60, compared to 1: 5000 for the rest of the Protestant church. The whole church was a missionary society. Moravians inspired the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society,¹ the London Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society and very much more. They were a spiritual 'tidal wave' against 'rationalism'.

¹ The Moravian missionary work began more than half a century before William Carey 'the father of modern missions' began his work.



BRAND FROM THE BURNING

John Wesley

John Wesley (1703-1791) was born in the reign of Queen Anne; the fourteenth of 19 children (8 dying in infancy). At the age of seven he was rescued from their burning home, which led his mother Susannah to speak of him as 'a brand plucked from the burning'. She was devout, strict and an organised woman. His father Samuel, an Anglican clergyman in Epworth, was exacting; a scholar and relentless preacher. Both parents were godly and had nonconformity in their background; they organised a 'religious society', popular at the time, in their home. The family shared devotions before dawn, the children were taught strict study habits and were used to physical hardship.

John went to Oxford in 1720 and he proved an able student. He set patterns, which would characterise the rest of his life. He read widely; 100 books a year during his lifetime, and was always open to new ideas. He learnt seven languages. He loved riding, walking and was a good swimmer. He learnt to live on a mere £28 per year, well below the poverty line even in his day. In 1728 he was ordained an Anglican priest, teaching at Oxford but also helping his father.

▪ Spiritual development

In 1729 his brother Charles [1707-1788] went to Oxford, he formed a small 'club' with two other students to help them each other with their studies and to encourage one another in fellowship and spiritual development. In the November of that year John returned to Oxford, he took over leadership of the group and saw its membership grow to about 25. John later identified this as the beginnings of Methodism. It was nicknamed the 'Holy Club' and its members were called 'Methodists'; a title used in the seventeenth century for groups using 'method' to develop spirituality. They were strongly influenced by the ideas of William Law in his book 'Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life'. George Whitfield joined the group, only 20 years old; he was guided in his devotional reading by Charles and was converted in the same year.

In Oxford John, like the rest of the group, gave himself to self-examination, the study of scripture, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, and working among prisoners in the local jail. In 1735 he preached a sermon entitled, 'Circumcision of the heart'; he would later say that it contained all the principles of his ministry in the years ahead. However, at the time he did not know them as his own, either emotionally or spiritually.

▪ Spiritual crisis

1735 also saw the death of Samuel Wesley, and John and Charles travelling as missionaries to Georgia in America. During their voyage they met Moravians whose fearlessness in the face of possible death during a storm left its mark on John; it revealed the inadequacy of his personal faith. Their leader, Spangenburg, challenged him, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" John replied, "I know he is the Saviour of the world", "True, but do you know he has saved you?" Though he lacked personal assurance John worked among the Native Americans in the colony, but returned to England the next year; ill, disheartened and shamed in a failed love affair.



In London John sought out the Moravian leader, Peter Bohler, who spoke to him of, “self surrender, instantaneous conversion and the conscious joy of salvation”. Asking if he should stop preaching till he had faith Bohler replied, “Preach faith till you have it and then preach faith because you have it!” On Wednesday 24th May 1738, after attending evensong in St Paul’s, John went to an informal meeting of an Anglican society in Aldersgate. Arriving late, someone was reading from the preface of Luther’s commentary on Romans. As he listened John had a tremendous experience, “I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death”. The experience so gripped him that he set out to become a preacher and organiser with few parallels within the story of the church. It has been said that, ‘what happened in that little room was of more importance to England than all the victories of Pitt on land or sea’.

During these early days there was great friendship between the Wesleys, Whitfield and Benjamin Ingham (Moravian evangelist). On 1st January 1739, at a ‘love feast’ held in the Moravian meeting place in Fetter Lane in London, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. John said, “About three in the morning we were praying when the Holy Spirit came mightily upon us.. many cried out for exceeding joy, many fell to the ground”. This experience launched a campaign of extensive evangelism all over England and beyond.

Methodism

John Wesley began preaching at the age of 37, but increasingly churches were closed to him. By late 1739 George Whitfield’s sermons in the open air were seeing remarkable response, so John went to investigate. He saw hundreds of coal-grimed miners, tears furrowing their faces, finding God. So John went into the open fields to preach. He travelled and preached wherever he could get a hearing. Anglican law forbade preaching in the parish of another minister without their permission, so John declared, “The world is my parish!”; soon to become a Methodist watch word.

Wesley faced much persecution from both clergy and violent mobs. His preaching attracted mainly the lower and middle classes; there was spiritual hunger everywhere. John had neither the eloquence nor physical presence of Whitfield. His sermons in print seem prosaic, but when preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women sometimes screamed, were physically convulsed and even fell unconscious. Wesley’s primary gift was his ability to organise and administer the ‘Methodist societies’ that he established throughout the nation. Further, all those who were committed were ‘discipled’ through the ‘class’ system that he set up. He was revolutionary in encouraging both men and women ‘lay preachers’, a key feature of Methodism, on the advice of his mother. The statistics of his ministry are challenging:

- He averaged 60 miles a day, regardless of the weather, some 5000 miles a year, and 250,000 during his ministry, mostly on horseback;
- He rose at 4am daily and was preaching by 5am; an average of 15 sermons a week and 40,000 in his lifetime;
- He covered the whole of Britain; visiting Wales, Scotland [22 times] and Ireland [42 times];



- He translated hymns and scripture, wrote 5000 books and articles and numerous letters, he also kept an important journal and coded diaries;
- He trained hundreds of men and women;
- His brother Charles wrote 6500 hymns;
- He saw 79,000 Methodists in England, and a further 40,000 in America, the year that he died.

In his later years he was greeted with acclaim almost everywhere; his journeys became like triumphal progresses. His slight figure, clean-shaven, ruddy face, bright eyes and snowy hair brought a response akin to veneration. Opening clinics and orphanages for the poor, making cheap books available, preaching spiritual dignity, cleanliness, thrift and temperance. Sadly his late marriage to Mrs Vazeille in 1751 was one of the worst mistakes of his life, it was very unhappy and they parted in 1755, but did not divorce.

John Wesley was always an Anglican and personally desired to remain with it, simply spreading holiness throughout the land, but in 1784, when he was 81 years old, he ordained ministers to serve in America and on the basis that 'ordination is separation' the break began. A conservative in political outlook but radical in faith John Wesley can rightly be called an 'apostle of England'.

GREAT AWAKENING

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was born the same year as John Wesley and was the person whose ministry lit the torch of the 'great awakening' in America. The son of a devout Congregational minister Jonathan was both pious and precocious as a child and had a conversion experience that involved a sense of the total sovereignty of God and his complete dependence upon him; which led him to a Calvinist position in theology. He studied at Yale, and then in 1726 he became the assistant pastor to his famous grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at Northampton, Massachusetts in New England. He encountered the sleep of spiritual deadness first hand and sensed the congregation was "very insensible to the things of religion". By 1729 he was the senior pastor and he began to proclaim 'justification by faith.' His powerful preaching began to bring about a change. By 1734 revival began to swell, and 'souls came by floods to Jesus Christ ... the town was never so full of love, nor so full of joy, nor yet so full of distress, as it was then'. In this small town of only a few hundred people nearly thirty people a week were regularly being converted; over 300 in a period of six months. Soon the effect swept into neighbouring Connecticut he realised that this was the beginning of something very significant; this proved to be correct.

In September 1740 George Whitfield arrived from England; he had only been converted five years earlier, but had already been a pioneer in the revivals there. With Whitfield's arrival the awakening that began in 1734 now burst into full flame. In Boston the crowds were soon too large for any building, so he went out into the open air and the numbers increased by thousands on each occasion with powerful movements of the Holy Spirit on each occasion. At his farewell sermon in 1741 there was a congregation of 20,000 people. Revival continued for a further eighteen months after Whitfield left. Apart from the thousands of individuals who met God, some 30 religious societies were formed in Boston



alone, churches were overcrowded, and there was new life and spirit in the ministers. It was said that 'even the very face of Boston seemed to be strangely altered'; and the same was true for much of New England.

A consequence of the 'awakening' was a growing concern about mission as well as evangelism. Individuals like David Brainerd (1718-1747), engaged to one of Jonathan Edwards's daughters, worked among the Native Americans of eastern Pennsylvania. In a period of three years he rode 3000 miles on horseback, but was finally overcome by disease; yet he saw 130 people saved. He died of consumption at the age of twenty-nine, but his diary, published by Edwards after his death, stirred hundreds of people to become missionaries; Henry Martin and William Carey included.

In 1750 Jonathan Edwards was dismissed from Northampton because of a dispute over communion. He and his wife moved to the frontier town of Stockbridge to be pastor to the settlers and missionaries to the Native Americans. Since his death in 1758 from smallpox he has been regarded by many as having produced some of the greatest theological and philosophical writings in American history. While he could be a hell-fire preacher he was also compassionate and generous. He attempted to enable faith to come to grips with a changing world of science and philosophy by uniting head and heart.

George Whitfield

George Whitfield (1714-1770) was one of the outstanding figures of his day; as is clear from our earlier references to him. He was born in Gloucester, the year Queen Anne died, to a publican, and went to Oxford where he came to faith in Christ through the 'Holy Club'. In 1736 he was ordained as a deacon of the Anglican church at the age of twenty one. His first sermon, in his hometown of Gloucester, was said to have been so fervent that complaints were made to the bishop that he had driven fifteen people mad. Between 1736-37 he did missionary work in Georgia at the inspiration of the Wesleys. In 1739, once again in England, he discovered his gift of open air preaching. In 1740 he made the first of seven visits to America and his involvement in the 'great awakening'. His contact with Jonathan Edwards persuaded him in favour of 'Calvinism' and led to conflict with the Wesley's Arminianism; while initial bitterness gave way to renewed friendship, but there was never complete reconciliation.

In 1741 Whitfield began a round of enormous evangelistic enterprise in England, which he continued until the end of his life; he called himself 'one of God's run abouts':

- He regularly preached 20 powerful sermons a week;
- He travelled all over England and visited Scotland fourteen times;
- He toured throughout South Wales with Howell Harris on several occasions and developed a very close association with the Calvinistic Methodists;
- He was supported by Selena, Countess of Huntingdon, who opened her homes to him and built chapels for his converts; 'The Countess of Huntingdon Connection';
- He built and supported the work of an orphanage and school;
- He had little interest in administration so his movement was very weak in structure; he said that compared to the Wesley's his converts were 'like a rope of sand'.



Whitfield probably has only Latimer as his equal as a preacher; none was more eloquent or moving. JC Ryle said 'No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers so entirely as he did for thirty four years'. He had a striking physical appearance and astonishing range of voice that commanded rapt attention. He created atmosphere with the use of question and exclamation, and the famous actor David Garrick claimed he would give a hundred guineas just to be able to say the word, "Oh" the way Whitfield did. While his sermons had a tedious sameness due to under-preparation, his preaching was dynamic and compelling with a style that was plain, unadorned and often colloquial. His message centered on the Puritan themes of sin, justification by faith and new birth. His work complements that of Wesleyan Methodism and in some ways he anticipates them in; using Bristol as a base, publishing a magazine, founding a school, summoning a conference of preachers and speaking in the open air.

Wales and revival

Since the reign of Charles 11 Wales had been spiritually neglected and as a consequence 'lay under a veil of darkness'. As the eighteenth century dawned there were important individuals, like Griffith Jones (1683-1761) who prepared the way for what was to come. However, the 'evangelical revival' proper focused on the work of two people in particular, Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris.

- **Howell Harris** was the school master, in the village of Talgarth, in the Brecon Beacons. He lived a self-indulgent life, but became conscience stricken about his behaviour, this led to his being converted at the Whit Sunday communion service in 1735. He was filled 'with fire and the love of the Lord' as a result. He immediately became an evangelist, even though it was against his temperament; his witness drew others to experience salvation. He also cared for the sick. The remarkable response to his preaching brought hostility from the clergy; eventually being dismissed from his post in the school. He travelled from town to town, often facing violence, and displayed exceptional power as a public speaker. However, he could also be shy, awkward and even quarrelsome. Howell Harris remained a 'lay preacher' in the Anglican church all his life. It has been said of him that he was 'the most successful preacher that ever ascended a pulpit or platform in Wales, an extraordinary instrument raised up by providence, at an extraordinary time, to accomplish an extraordinary work.'
- **Daniel Rowland** was a curate in Llangeitho in Cardiganshire but was without any genuine spiritual experience; more interested in sport than faith. Struck by the success of an independent preacher, Philip Pugh, Rowland went to hear him and subsequently to copy his style. The experiment appeared to be a great success and his church filled as he thundered at the congregation about God's judgment. But when they asked what they should do he had no answers! Remarkably Daniel Rowland came to faith through his own preaching and the prayer and influence of Griffith Jones. By 1735 he began to bring spiritual awakening to his parish and people streamed to hear him preach; he had great oratory. Howell Harris described him as 'a second St Paul in his own pulpit'.

By 1737 Rowland and Harris joined forces to bring revival to Wales. In 1752 Harris' home in Trevecca became the centre for 'revivalist' activity and a training centre, sponsored by Selina the Countess of Huntingdon. The also had strong links with George Whitfield. These leaders and others working with them influenced thousands. John Owen said of



them both, “The revival of religion in the church was their avowed object from the first and their professed object through life”.

Anglican evangelicals

The whole ‘evangelical’ movement in Britain, in the eighteenth century, originated from within the Anglican church, though it continually burst its banks. The Wesley’s, Whitfield, Rowland, Harris and others were Anglicans; revealing the poor state of the independent and dissenting churches of the day. However, parallel to ‘Methodism’ there was a similar movement that remained within the Anglican structure; having the same purpose and theology but not the itinerant style and with a view of church order that looked for revival within existing structures. Nor must we think the movement was simply a by-product or response to ‘Methodism’; it was not. Influenced, yes; but originating in significant instances before the conversion of either Whitfield or Wesley. It had no overall organisation, no concerted action on a national scale; so it was less spectacular than ‘Methodism’ and based on ‘opinions rather than personalities’. The movement spread throughout the nation, the West, the North, the Midlands and London. While a Wesley or a Whitfield did not lead it there were nevertheless important figures; we shall mention three as an example of the many:

- **Samuel Walker** (1714-1763) was born exactly the same day as George Whitfield. He came into the ministry with little call or conviction and was pleased to go to Truro in Cornwall because the town had a reputation for worldliness which suited his interests. Within a year he had been brought to faith through the influence of the local schoolmaster. His new preaching had a dramatic impact upon the town and two rooms had to be hired to create space for the people needing counselling. Within a short time there had been some 800 conversions from a population of only 1600 people; most of the adults. All converts were organised into small groups to aid them spiritually, in a way that Wesley would later do. The influence spread into other areas. The area was geographically isolated and Walker died early, yet in the first stages of Anglican evangelicalism clergy throughout the country looked to Samuel Walker for a lead.
- **William Romaine** (1714-1795) was a vain and scholarly clergyman looking for social advancement within the church. He came to salvation through his personal study of the scriptures about 1749. His early ministry met with frustration but he came to be recognised as London’s principle preacher. He was a friend of Whitfield and the Countess of Huntingdon and drew large crowds. He appears to be the earliest leader connected with Anglican evangelicalism in London.
- **William Grimshaw** (1708-1763) was born in Lancashire and became a pleasure-seeking parson in Todmorden. In 1734, around the time of the death of his young wife, he began to give himself to prayer and his life was changed. In 1742 he moved to Haworth (later famous for the Brontes) and his preaching soon filled the church. At his arrival only 12 attended communion, soon there were as many as 1200. His ministry extended into four counties; Yorkshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire, with a circuit that usually involved preaching 30 times a week! He collaborated with both Wesley and Whitfield when they were travelling in the North. After his death the work continued from strength the strength under the influence of individuals like Henry Venn.



Fruits of revival

It is impossible to measure or quantify the true fruits of the revivals that influenced the Continent, the Colonies and the British isles; but some broad observations can be made:

- Thousands were genuinely and life-changingly converted;
- A new standard of pastoral care and dynamism was released into the church;
- Many new Christian societies were founded; like the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society;
- Many new missionary societies were born by the end of the century; like the Baptist, London, Church and Methodist;
- There was momentum for Christian education through the Sunday School movement with people like Robert Raikes and Hannah Ball;
- There was a new passion for social justice; with actions like the beginning of the campaign for the abolition of slavery;
- There was strong impetus for prison reform with individuals like John Howard, a friend of Wesley's;
- There were huge efforts to provide food and clothing for the poor, dispensaries for the sick, workshops for the unemployed, care for widows and orphans plus the development of bank and legal advice for the needy along with other relief agencies.

Questions

1. What are the significant features of the move of God in the eighteenth century? What can they teach us for our own day?

Reading & Resources

- JC Brauer '*Protestantism in America*' SCM 1966
H Brogan '*The Longman History of the United States*' Longman 1985
JHS Burleigh '*A Church History of Scotland*' Oxford 1960
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