

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Charles Simeon: his methods in the local church, the Church of England and the nation

MAX WARREN

How are we, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, going worthily to commemorate in just over a year's time the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Charles Simeon during Holy Week and on Easter morning in the year of grace 1779? The story has been well told by many, but by none more movingly than in Charles Simeon's latest biography by Hugh Evan Hopkins.¹ That volume and many other books, together with a personal devotion of 41 years, lie behind what I here set forth.

I will divide my material into three parts. First, let us look at the enormous changes which have taken place in the life of church and nation since Simeon's time. Only within the communion of the saints can we claim to be his contemporaries. In other respects we breathe a different air, confront different problems, in fact think differently on almost every subject from the men of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth century. Lest our commemoration become pure romanticizing, we must recognize the dimensions of change since 1779.

Secondly, in the major part of this paper I will attempt to deal with my brief. Thirdly, in closing I will make a few tentative suggestions of some elements which may deserve consideration as the planning for 1979 goes forward.

Changes since Simeon's time

'Change is inevitable. In a progressive country change is constant': I quote appropriately from a Tory prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli; for Charles Simeon was a Tory. Indeed he was a Tory of a far more rigid kind than was Disraeli. Simeon lived in and through the tumultuous days of the French Revolution and was ever fearful of threats to the establishment in church and state. Perhaps we owe more to Disraeli than to any other nineteenth century politician that today we think politically in so different a fashion from Charles Simeon. We must not underestimate this difference. Bewildering as are the changes through which we ourselves are living, our response to them is radically different from that of our evangelical forefathers. They lived before Darwin, Karl Marx and Freud.

Again, we must remember that as yet the Church of England herself had not experienced that second reformation, one of whose architects was Simeon himself. In 1799, out of 11,194 parishes in England, 7,358 had no resident parson. It looks as if we are rapidly moving in the same direction today but at least it is not for the same reason!

Language also has changed, and very particularly the language of devotion. This is more significant than might appear. Unless, in all our praying, we adhere strictly to the discipline of Cranmer, as Simeon certainly did not do except in church, we find ourselves in a very different climate of devotion. And it is changes in the language of devotion which create peculiar barriers to the full appreciation of the nature of religious experience as enjoyed in another age than one's own. Among my treasured possessions is the diary of my great-grandmother, who died only a few weeks before Charles Simeon in 1836, and I possess a memoir written by her husband which contains two letters written to him by Charles Simeon. Both are moving documents, but they use a language we could not use today.

In this connection it is also of some importance to appreciate the very considerable change in our understanding of the Holy Communion. For Simeon it was a profoundly personal experience, born of the very occasion of his conversion. We must pay due tribute to the impact of the Oxford Movement in teaching us more of that corporate significance which, in so many significant ways, has come to influence our thinking not least on the life of society, of economics and politics. All this would have seemed strange and unexpected, though not necessarily unwelcome, to Simeon.

Again, despite Carey's vision, the Ecumenical movement as we know it had not yet been born. In the records of Simeon's ministry we find an ambivalent attitude to all outside the Church of England. He could rejoice in a gospel ministry wherever he found it, but he had his misgivings about any ministry not anchored to the Prayer Book. As an evangelist he was prepared to learn from anyone, but the lessons learnt were applied within the confines of the Church of England. Charles Smyth's great study of *Simeon and Church Order*² leaves us in no doubt about this, and how vital was Simeon's influence in this respect in the circumstances of his time.

We who live in circumstances so dramatically different—we who are the spiritual heirs of the 1859 revival, of Moody and Sankey, of Keswick, of Edinburgh 1910, of the Children's Special Service Mission and Crusader movements, not to mention the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, the Student Christian Movement and Pope John XXIII—will need to be very conscious of how vast a gap of Christian experience separates us from the man whose spiritual children we are proud to be.

Even more dramatic than any of these changes is the understanding that we bring to the study of the Scriptures, and the use which we make of them. Simeon was a man of one book, the Bible. As far as we know, he never read a commentary, though he may have dipped into Thomas Scott's volumes. How very different it is with us! We can hardly exaggerate the change, even though for us it remains as true as it was for Simeon that 'the Bible finds me', to quote Coleridge.

CHURCHMAN

Ours, of necessity, is a complicated attitude in comparison with his simplicity. We cannot recover that simplicity, nor ought we to try to achieve it. Simeon was no fundamentalist, though he was great on the fundamentals.

Suffice it of these changes to note the enduring importance of an observation of Charles Smyth that 'If ever Simeon took up a thing, we may be certain that it was something that met the needs of the age.'³ Can we who make such a virtue out of 'relevance' do better? Douglas Webster puts it differently in his magnificent essay on 'Simeon's Pastoral Theology' in the volume commemorating the bi-centenary of Simeon's birth.⁴ There he writes of Simeon: 'He knew the wavelength of his generation. They listened; they responded.'⁵ Do we? Do they?

There are some words of Hugh Evan Hopkins which I will take right out of context but which are very much to our point. 'He (Simeon) lived before the railway was dreamt of. He speaks to a generation brought up on thoughts of supersonic speed.'⁶ That is one profound measure of the changes of which we are thinking.

Shelley, a contemporary, whose poetry I doubt if Simeon ever read, can perhaps appropriately close this section:

Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.⁷

Simeon: his methods in the local church

Under this section I am going to make a distinction which I believe that Simeon, after some hesitation, would approve. I am going to leave all consideration of his work in and influence upon the University to the following sections. Here I will limit myself to the parish of Holy Trinity and its inhabitants, all of whom Simeon considered to be his responsibility—Roman Catholics, Dissenters and all. There is a pleasant memory recorded by one friend that if you wanted to find Mr Simeon he would either be by the sick-bed of a parishioner or out riding his horse. No 'conversation parties' or university sermons in that memory!

I make this distinction also for a personal reason. When to my astonishment and complete surprise I received an invitation from the [Peach] Trustees to be interviewed for possible appointment as vicar of Holy Trinity, it was impressed upon me that the work was primarily among undergraduates. No mention was made of the fact that there was a considerable congregation of townspeople and that Holy Trinity had the highest diocesan quota of any church in the Ely diocese. I was soon to learn how little the trustees appeared to know about the real significance of Holy Trinity! Simeon certainly learnt by the hard way that the citizens of Cambridge had minds of their own. So in a very much gentler way did I!

What were his methods in regard to his primary cure of souls? I am inclined to put first his spiritual quality of sheer endurance, of refusal to be defeated by hostility and abuse. He 'endured as seeing him who is invisible'. Because he was a parish priest for 54 years, the first thirty of which saw open or covert hostility, he became the man for whose funeral not only were all university lectures cancelled but—what was far more significant—all the shops in Cambridge closed, although it was market day. That does not happen for any ordinary man. Those 54 years made the man, just as they made a congregation out of a somewhat cantankerous assembly of disgruntled and suspicious opponents.

How did he do it? From first to last he was an evangelist and a pastor, both held in balance. He determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. In season and out of season he insisted on this. It does not take much imagination, as one looks at those superb studies of Simeon in the pulpit which are part of the delight of Hugh Evan Hopkins' recent book, to see that Simeon is preaching about something that matters more to him than anything else in the world. He finds it in Scripture; he knows it in his own experience; he interprets what he knows; and from the depth of his heart he pleads with his hearers.

I do not suggest that his preaching was the most important part of his ministry in Holy Trinity. His own grotesque mannerisms, the force of his personality and the character of his message for years produced, in the main, bitter hostility. Only very slowly did the truth he proclaimed and lived win its way. But it was an age of sermon-tasting, almost infinitely remote in this respect from our own. The constant drip, drip of the water of life gradually wore away the stony encrustations on the hearts of his hearers. Simeon knew he was a minister of the Word and he minded his business.

But there was much more than this. In a much subtler way he won his congregation. In an age of mumbling and careless incantation of the liturgy, Simeon prayed the prayers of the Prayer Book. This was something quite novel in that age. 'Pray the prayers, and don't read them only',⁸ he said. 'The finest sight short of heaven would be a whole congregation using the prayers of the liturgy in the true spirit of them'⁹ was his ambition. He was convinced that the prayers of the church were 'full of the things requisite for every sinner'.¹⁰ Think of the impact of such worship going on year after year. You might be irritated and antagonized by the sermon, but you were off your guard while the minister prayed the prayers. I would guess that this was not the least part of the secret of Simeon's evangelistic ministry.

He was, however, not only an evangelist. He was a pastor, and he demonstrated this in two significant ways. He was determined to get to know his congregation and to this end started a meeting outside the routine of church services, where he gathered together a growing

CHURCHMAN

company of those with whom he could deal more intimately and personally than in church. He was still vicar and leader, but he was no longer 'ten feet above contradiction'. Commentators have dwelt on the irregularity of his actions, particularly when, in order to get larger accommodation, he hired a room in another parish—though this seems to have caused no trouble at all. Other have dwelt on his own disappointment when these more informal gatherings led to factiousness and insubordination. Nevertheless, he did not give up the practice of using these informal gatherings but simply changed their character by constituting smaller gatherings or house-groups, as we would call them today.

Another significant aspect of Simeon's ministry was the way in which he pioneered the use of the laity in the work of the church. He organized a team of twelve stewards to whom he committed the management of the church finances and any matters of charity and relief that might come their way—no doubt, being Simeon, basing his actions on Acts 6: 2-4. And, in parallel, he organized the more pastoral side of the parish by constituting a 'Visiting Society' whose design was 'to find out the modest and industrious poor in time of sickness and to administer to them relief for their bodies, and at the same time instruction for their souls.'¹¹ Here was the laity being used in pastoral evangelism. In most of the Church of England in 1977 we are still talking about the idea, as if Simeon had not demonstrated its value more than one hundred and eighty years ago.

One final point, for many a poor contemporary and some not so poor, as important as anything he did, was Simeon's practical concern. In the bread-famine of 1788-89 Simeon not only made a generous contribution to a subscription list, but when he discovered how people in the surrounding villages were suffering he organized relief for them. 'Every Monday he would ride out into the countryside to see for himself that the local bakers in the twenty-four villages on his list who had received a subsidy, were being honest in selling their bread to the poor as arranged at half-price.'¹² Yes, that was also where you would find Simeon—on his horse, when he wasn't at the sick-bed of a parishioner. It is on record that some 7,000 people benefited from one relief scheme in the severe winter of 1795. I do not find it difficult to imagine Simeon on his horse meditating on the feeding of the five-thousand and reckoning that he was very much on the Lord's business, just as much as when he was in the pulpit in church.

Simeon: his methods in the Church of England

Referring to Simeon, Charles Smyth makes this remarkable claim: 'I doubt whether the genius of that man as an ecclesiastical statesman has ever received sufficient recognition. He seems to me to rank with

Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, the Remodeller of the Episcopate, as Burgon calls him, as one of the Founding Fathers or remodellers of the Church of England in the nineteenth century.¹³ Can that remarkable claim be substantiated? I believe it can. And once again it is to be related not this time to 54 years as vicar of Holy Trinity but rather to his 54 years as a Fellow of King's. At first, it appears that his religious views were so looked at askance by the other Fellows that they would hardly speak to him, and undergraduates who presumed to associate with him were sometimes reported to their parents. It was not only in Holy Trinity Church that Charles Simeon learnt to 'endure as seeing him who is invisible'. But far more rapidly than in his church, the quality of the man and the force of his preaching began to influence undergraduates. And some senior members of the University, like Professor Farish of Magdalene and Isaac Milner, President of Queens', gave him consistent support.

Slowly but surely his rooms in the fine Gibbs building at King's became the meeting-place for men who had been challenged by the sermons in Holy Trinity. And it was in those rooms that he began the only kind of ordination training that was given in the Church of England of that time. A very high percentage of the undergraduates of that day were, in any case, destined for Holy Orders. It was such that Simeon began to influence. And over many undergraduate generations, Simeon taught hundreds of young men to love the Church of England and to count service in the ministry as a calling than which none could be higher. Assiduous as he was in seeking to bring everyone he knew to a personal encounter with Jesus and a total commitment to him, he was always deeply concerned to help these ordinands over the practical tasks which would confront them in their ministry. Himself a preacher who had taught himself to preach, not without grief and pain, he discovered that he could teach others to preach. Whether the *Horae Homileticae*, Simeon's great labour of love, ever exercised a profound influence on the English pulpit, we may have leave to doubt. But in the process of producing it he demonstrated that the Bible was not only an 'establishing book' but also a 'converting book'. Furthermore, he impressed upon hundreds of future preachers that there is a method in preaching and, quite as important, a method in preparing to preach: a preparation at once prayerful and careful. An aphorism of his is as valid today as when, addressing any preacher, he said: 'Let him get his text into him in his study, and then get into his text in the pulpit.'¹⁴

Writing in 1893 Liddon, in his *Life of Pusey*, had this to say: 'The world to come, with its boundless issues of life and death, the infinite value of the one atonement, the regenerating, purifying, guiding action of God the Holy Spirit in respect of the Christian soul, were preached to our grandfathers with a force and earnestness which are

beyond controversy. The deepest and most fervid religion in England during the first three decades of this century was that of the Evangelicals.¹⁵ What Liddon was referring to was not the great preaching ministry of Wesley and Whitefield but what began in Charles Simeon's rooms in King's.

In the bicentenary volume Ronald Reeve has a chapter on Simeon's doctrine of God, in which in even stronger words he makes one of Liddon's points. In writing of Simeon's scriptural insistence on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual, he describes him as aiming to correct 'the highly individualistic pneumatic teachers who flouted Church Order, and secondly, to restore to his own communion an article of the Catholic Faith which was being neglected to the detriment of her faith and practice.'¹⁶ With Simeon, theology and practice were always united. The power in preaching is never the skill of the preacher but the convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit.

Simeon, in his early years in the ministry, had been desperately lonely. He knew just how lonely a gospel-ministry could be, and it was one fruit of his ever-practical mind that he inspired the creation of clerical societies to bring together isolated evangelical clergy—no small factor, these, in creating the cohesion of the evangelical movement throughout the nineteenth century. But in another respect he was far more of a pioneer. Uniquely, he was concerned for the wives of the clergy. Himself a bachelor, he had a lively sense of the immense importance of the wives of the clergy in the ministry of their husbands. They were always invited to the conferences he arranged for clergy, a practice begun in a small way in his 'conversation parties' in King's College. Perhaps we have something to learn from this vision of Simeon's. Today, with so many clergy-wives having to go to work in order to supplement their husbands' incomes, Saturday is necessarily devoted to the housework impossible during the week. Many of them feel deprived of their proper share of their husbands' ministry. This suggests a pastoral need today which calls for a new kind of pioneering, much more difficult than Simeon's. But he set us an example.

All this was at a deeply personal level of concern. But in two respects the statesmanship of Simeon touched the Church of England at a structural level. Charles Smyth, in his *Simeon and Church Order*, is emphatic that in no respect was Simeon wiser in his generation than in seeing that if the evangelical movement was to achieve continuity and remain within the Church of England, provision must be made for securing an evangelical 'succession' in as many parishes as possible. This he achieved by the purchase of advowsons. A great deal of heat and a minimum of light have been generated on this whole subject of party trusts, obscuring, as the controversy has

always done, the historic fact that the possession of an advowson, that is the gift of a living, has been in private or corporate hands for a thousand years of English history. We may judge that such a practice has outlived its usefulness; but in its time it has served an indispensable purpose and never more so than in the nineteenth century.

Simeon, in establishing his Trust, was concerned with one thing only: the securing of the best man to fill a vacant living, and by the best man he meant a spiritual man with a spiritual message. That was all that mattered, for such a man would serve the true interests of the people of the parish concerned and know himself to be answerable to God for a grave spiritual responsibility. It is perhaps worth noting that Simeon's Trust Deed never uses the word 'evangelical'. Simeon was not a 'party man'. He was ever faithful to his own principles and he has been faithfully followed by those who have been responsible as trustees for the continuing discharge of his purpose.

Preaching in Holy Trinity Church on 22 November 1936, during the celebration of the centenary of Simeon's death, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Cosmo Gordon Lang, went on record as saying: 'No better manual for all patrons of Benefices could be found than the Deed which declared his Trust. I am bound to add that in my experience his trustees have been loyal to the spirit of his trust.'¹⁷ This was a notable testimony from one in the highest authority, not himself of Simeon's persuasion.

In one other respect Simeon shaped the structural life of the Church of England. As much as any man, at a time when England's political influence was to become literally world-wide, he looked with prophetic and practical gaze to the ends of the earth. If India became a prime sphere of his missionary activity, it was not the only one. Through Samuel Marsden he touched New Zealand; through Perry, Bishop of Melbourne, he helped to shape the Church of Australia; through his vigorous membership of the Eclectic Society he was one of the foremost founders of the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society; and, from his own reading of Scripture, he made as his deepest concern the work of the Church's Ministry to the Jews. All this is well-recorded history and needs no amplification here. But it is easy to forget that in the strange out-working of the purpose of God the sudden and rapid expansion of Britain's world-wide influence was paralleled by an astonishing outburst of spiritual energy in the missionary movement. This was of much wider reference than any one church could claim, but it is not a negligible fact that sixty of the young men who sat in Simeon's rooms in King's found themselves, in due course, CMS missionaries. At least this can be claimed, that Simeon was not only a 'remodeller' of the Church of England. As much as any man he helped to transform it into the Anglican Communion.

At the end of one of his sermons we hear him urging his congregation to 'cry mightily to God that the cruse of salt may be cast into the fountain (Cambridge) from which so many streams are issuing; that being rendered salubrious they may fertilize this whole land, and be the means of diffusing life and salvation to the remotest corners of the globe.'¹⁸ Turn to the inside of the cover of *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* and look at the silhouette of Simeon 'Imploring', and you can the more easily sense the passion of that quotation. On the thought of those streams issuing from Cambridge to 'fertilize' this whole land' and be the means of diffusing life and salvation to the remotest corners of the globe, we can appropriately turn to the third subject of my brief.

Simeon: his methods in the nation

In the deepest sense Charles Simeon's impact on the nation is largely to be found in what we have already seen of his impact on the Church of England at a time when the fact that it was the established church was far more significant than that fact is today.

Yet certain things may be said. Simeon was an indefatigable traveller. He was one of the most famous preachers of his time, perhaps the one to whom most people came to listen. On one holiday tour he records that he gave 75 addresses between 18 May and 19 August and estimated that he had had an audience of 87,310 people. Allowing for an error even of hundreds on either side, that was a phenomenal figure for the year 1798. The next to achieve anything like it was probably Dwight L. Moody, three quarters of a century later. This was, of necessity, a diffused ministry, far different from the intensity of the impact which he could make in his own parish and university. But it meant that Simeon was a name to conjure with.

More potent for influence, judging by purely human standards, was that in a century whose standards were set by the upper middle class, Simeon's most significant direct impact was made on that class. It was not that he went out into society, rather to the contrary, but the young men at the university in his time would have been in very considerable measure drawn from that class. His influence, behind the scenes, on the class which was in so large a measure to dominate the national life can be calculated not so much by those he personally influenced, as by the immense range of influence of those who looked to him for spiritual guidance. And it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Cambridge as, to use his own phrase, 'a fountain from which so many streams are issuing.'

In terms of spiritual strategy we are reminded by Arthur Pollard, writing in the bi-centenary volume in his chapter on 'The Influence and Significance of Simeon's Work', that in seeking for advowsons in

industrial centres like Bradford and Preston, Derby and Liverpool and many others, Simeon 'was acting with prophetic foresight. He recognized, as only Bishop Sumner of Chester seems to have done in that day, the ecclesiastical implications of the increasing urban growth in England.'¹⁹

One final point may be made which I believe deserves consideration. It is a matter of history that a significant number of those who were to conquer and then govern the new British Empire were profoundly Christian in their faith and morals.

Not all who attended Holy Trinity Church and the 'conversation parties' in Simeon's rooms in King's were to become clergymen and parish priests. Some at least were to go overseas in government service. The class which we have seen to be so profoundly influenced by Simeon provided most of the officers in the army and navy, as well as those who were to govern India and the other dependencies of the rapidly spreading Empire. It is fashionable today to denigrate the Empire. Imperialism is a dirty word. No doubt but that much was done in the imperial age which we see to have been an affront to the human dignity of the subject peoples. No defence of that affront can be made. But it was one of the least brutal empires recorded in history. Justice was administered with responsibility. Order replaced anarchy and the administration was incorruptible. In some large measure the moral idealism which did in fact penetrate Britain's imperial age derived directly from the fountain whose streams were 'rendered salubrious' by the salt of the gospel of which Simeon was so notable an exponent.

I do not think I can better close my brief than by quoting the final summing up by Douglas Webster of his chapter on 'Simeon's Pastoral Theology' in the bi-centenary volume; remembering that all he writes, and indeed all that has been culled in this paper from so many sources, derives, as to its fidelity to the life of Charles Simeon, from what happened in that life in Holy Week 1779 and on the Easter Day which followed it:

Perhaps enough has now been said to illustrate the kind of teaching which Simeon gave during his famous ministry of over fifty years. It is all pastoral theology in the sense that it was theology for the congregation rather than the lecture-room. There is nothing original, let alone brilliant, in Simeon's writings. His great achievement was the way in which he interpreted and stated the doctrines of Scripture so as to help men live their Christian life. He did this with independence of mind, shrewdness of judgement, and lucidity of speech and pen. He knew the Bible and he knew the human heart. He steered his own way through the celebrated controversies of his day, accepting and proclaiming the doctrines of predestination and election in moderate language, not because they were in Calvin but because they were in Scripture, teaching and warning his people about apostasy, not because of Arminius and Wesley but because of the New Testament, and because he knew the perils and pitfalls of the Christian pilgrimage. He led men to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour, because he preached Christ crucified and expounded the meaning of justification by faith; but he led them onward to stability and maturity by emphasizing the importance

CHURCHMAN

of right reception in the case of both baptism and the Eucharist, and he distinguished between regeneration and conversion in the case of baptism. If for no other reason than this, his pastoral theology deserves to be remembered. The language that he sometimes used is of a day that will not return. His preaching belongs wholly to a past which it would be folly to attempt to imitate or reproduce. The controversies of his age have largely disappeared from Anglicanism as we know it now, though in some circles there are occasions when these issues still live. But the standards Simeon set as preacher, pastor and director, and the fundamental aims and achievements of his remarkable ministry, are an abiding challenge; they should inspire not only evangelicals but the whole Anglican Communion and beyond, so long as the Christian task remains unfinished.²⁰

Towards 1979

Within a period of 43 years, such are the accidents of history, we will have celebrated the bi-centenary of Charles Simeon's birth, the centenary of his death, and be preparing to celebrate the bi-centenary of his conversion. We are indeed right to praise famous men and our fathers which begat us. But let us be careful not to isolate the individual. This would outrage Simeon himself more than anything we could do. It would be an outrage on all his own testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men and women. What a mighty work of that same Holy Spirit was achieved among Simeon's own contemporaries: Hannah More, William Wilberforce, Charles Grant, Henry Thornton, Foxwell Buxton, not to mention Henry Martyn, Thomas Thomason, Claudius Buchanan. William Carus, Daniel Corrie—to list but a handful, and those only within our own Church of England. Who can measure what the Holy Spirit did when he would not allow William Carey to obey the order, 'Young man sit down, sit down. You're an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me.'

I make this point seriously, for I am quite sure Charles Simeon would insist on it.

Because it is the bi-centenary of a conversion which had such far-reaching results, let us hope that the whole subject of conversion will be a subject of very serious study, and that this will be encouraged on the part of all who can be interested. For conversion ought to mean total commitment, a commitment ever becoming more total as its implications for all living are discovered in experience. Simeon would insist on this. Commitment is not a very popular idea today. It carries with it uncomfortable overtones of continuity for a generation which, as regards the past is rootless, and as regards the future full of doubt and fear. The message of 1979 could be very timely.

The marvellous work of sanctifying grace that went on in Simeon till the very day of his death, which made of that naturally arrogant and quick-tempered man a wonderful example of humility, had for its background a deep sense of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, more particularly his own sinfulness. William Temple, in his

discussion on grace and freedom in his book, *Nature, Man and God*, wrote: 'All is of God; the only thing of my very own which I can contribute to my own redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed.'²¹ Simeon would have said a heartfelt 'Amen' to that.

A necessary sequel of this for Simeon was 'brokenness of heart'. Once, when asked what he considered to be the mark of regeneration, he replied: 'The very first and indispensable sign is self-loathing and abhorrence. Nothing short of this can be admitted as evidence of a real change. . . . I have constantly pressed this subject upon my congregation, and it has been the characteristic of my ministry. I want to see more of this humble, contrite, broken spirit among us.'²²

That has certainly been characteristic of all the great revivals of religion. It was a notable characteristic of the East African revival in our own day, which played so vital a part in the response of many African Christians in Kenya during the Mau Mau terror; and in Uganda in the recent years of horror. Can we give it some contemporary shape in England in 1979? I doubt if Simeon will be thinking very much of our efforts if we fail to do so.

I would like to come back to a point raised earlier—Simeon's pastoral concern for the wives of the clergy. By some standards it may not rank very high in the record of God's work through him. Yet I would press it upon you as being worthy of a very great deal of hard thought. It is not a matter just to be written about or talked about. Simeon, ever practical, would want us to wrestle with this problem in our contemporary setting, and refuse to be paralysed by obstacles. Things may have to be done quite differently in different places, and in every place be begun in quite a small way. But it would be wonderful if a real conscience on this subject could be created wherever it does not yet exist.

Finally, may I express the hope that we will not be allowed to forget that for Simeon the place of his ministry was a 'fountain', from which he prayed that streams might flow out to 'the remotest corners of the globe'. We live at a time when something bordering on paralysis afflicts the Church of England as to its missionary responsibilities. There is a crisis of nerve about the whole missionary task. Even the missionary societies are not immune to this corrosion of spirit. There is in fact far too little preaching of conversion of the kind which makes for commitment to 'the remotest corners of the globe'. With Simeon we will, of course, always remember that this means the remotest corners of our own Britain and every corner of its life, but we will not allow our horizons to be limited. How marvellous it would be if 1979 provoked a ministry in even one place, part of whose outcropping would be the Henry Martyns and Thomas Thomasons of our generation.

MAX WARREN was formerly General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society and then a Residentiary Canon of Westminster Abbey.

NOTES

This paper was prepared by Dr Warren, just before his death, to read to an informal consultation concerning the celebration of the bi-centenary of Simeon's conversion.

- 1 Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* (Hodder & Stoughton : London 1977).
- 2 Charles Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order* (CUP : 1940).
- 3 *ibid.* p 18.
- 4 *Charles Simeon (1759-1836)* ed. by A. Pollard & M. Hennell (SPCK : 1959).
- 5 *ibid.* p 73.
- 6 Hugh Evan Hopkins, *op.cit.* p 61.
- 7 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound* II.iv.119.
- 8 Abner W. Brown, *Recollections of Conversation Parties* (1863) p 12.
- 9 *ibid.* p 221.
- 10 *ibid.*, loc. sit.
- 11 Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae*, sermon 2036.
- 12 Hugh Evan Hopkins, *op.cit.* p 51.
- 13 Charles Smyth, *op.cit.* p 6.
- 14 Abner W. Brown, *op.cit.* p 180.
- 15 Liddon, *Life of Pusey*.
- 16 A. Pollard & M. Hennell, *op.cit.* p 68.
- 17 *Charles Simeon, An Interpretation* (1936) p 100.
- 18 *Horae Homileticae*, sermon 359.
- 19 A. Pollard & M. Hennell, *op.cit.* p 178.
- 20 *ibid.* p 118.
- 21 William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (Macmillan : 1934).
- 22 William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon* (Hatchard & Son : 1847) p 651.