

THE COMING OF BRITAIN'S AGE OF EMPIRE AND PROTESTANT MISSION THEOLOGY, 1750—1839

by James Manor

The second half of the eighteenth century in Britain witnessed a growing enthusiasm for evangelical theology and the development of considerable strength by several Protestant evangelical groups, be they sects separate unto themselves or evangelical parties within established churches. Particularly during the last quarter of the century, as the first inklings of Britain's nineteenth century role overseas began to dawn, these evangelical groups began to develop keen interest in efforts for the evangelization of the non-Christian world coming within their reach. To that end, a number of foreign missionary societies were formed by the various groups around 1800. And before the century was out, a few British missionaries were at work in Bengal, harbingers of a small army to follow in the early nineteenth century when support for missions developed concurrently with Britain's eminence as a world power.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the theologies of four men who played roles of some importance in this process. JONATHAN EDWARDS and JOHN WESLEY, both of whom dabbled in mission work, are the two great Protestant theologians of the generation before the missionary awakening, and their theologies carry the seeds of the awakening. But for each of them, mission work was a digression from the mainstream of their lives, more important as a means than an end, and the structure of their theologies restrained them from the preoccupation with activism which will be so marked in the succeeding generations. Edwards and Wesley also represent two separate theological traditions, calvinism and arminianism respectively, which will make contributions to the missionary movement. Their thought will be examined in the light of the later movement. CHARLES SIMEON, though not a missionary himself, was one of the preeminent catalysts of the mission movement in Britain from his pulpit in Cambridge during the first generation of mission enthusiasm in its fullness. He is of the evangelical wing of the Church of England, and can be said to share Wesley's arminian heritage. His is a full-blown theology of activism. ALEXANDER DUFF was raised in the calvinism of the Church of Scotland. Well known for his pioneer mission efforts through education in India, he is of the generation after Simeon, in which enthusiasm for missions perhaps reached a zenith. Duff is a missionary first and a theologian second, and his theology is meant to be the servant of his devotion to his work. Years of exposure to the hard realities of India had molded Duff into a stern pragmatist, aware of the immensity of the task he had chosen, and this is reflected in his thinking.

The thought and faith of these men will be examined to determine what changes took place in their theologies in relation to the developing

concern for activism and missions. Certain elements of their theologies will be emphasized at the expense of others, some will be found more compatible with activism than others. Beyond the immediate concern with the theology of the Christian mission, this is an enquiry into the manner in which theological elements interrelate.

Since stress will be placed upon the differences in the theologies under examination, it should be observed for the sake of balance that all four men shared certain views. Biblical authority was supreme for all of them. All assented to the view that human depravity was „the ground and occasion“¹ for Christ's redemptive work, though there would be differences as to the definition and extent of the depravity. All agreed that the Holy Spirit is the agent by which Christ's message comes to man², though there would be disagreement as to the degree and constancy of intimacy with God which could result. The necessity of conversion for salvation would also command accord among them, although there would be disagreement as to the psychology of conversion, i. e. the manner in which it is accomplished in man.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of the development of Christian missionary theology in this period. Simeon and Duff in particular are only individual figures in an extremely variegated movement. This paper is merely a preliminary groping for a pattern which must be tested by further exploration. Moreover, there is a distinct artificiality about an attempt to construct neat, consistent systems of thought from the writings of these men. With Edwards, it is a less objectionable process than with Wesley who is basically a tactical thinker, adjusting his words to the occasion and the audience. And in the cases of Simeon and Duff, who share the evangelical aversion to speculative theology and the tendency to write for homiletic purposes, it becomes even more risky. But, given the shortcomings of this particular approach, it may nonetheless yield some useful insights.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Although he spent his entire life in North America, Jonathan Edwards was a major influence on developing enthusiasm for foreign mission work in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Born in 1703, „the greatest of the defenders of Calvinism“³ was the key figure in the revivalist movement in New England in the 1740's and '50's, and himself served as a missionary to the Indians in western Massachusetts from 1751 to 1757, although he regarded it as an interim post after dismissal from a pulpit. His influence upon the British movement was primarily due to two publications, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Ex-*

¹ V. F. STORR, *The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1800—1860*, p. 67

² *IBID.*, p. 71

³ V. L. PARRINGTON, *The Colonial Mind, 1620—1800*, p. 151

plicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Rivival of Religion and Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth and *An Account of the life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd*. The former work was published in America in 1747 and received limited exposure in Britain until an edition, which was published in England in 1789, attracted considerable attention in evangelical circles. The latter work appeared in America in 1749, but did not reach a large British audience until an Edinburgh edition came out in 1765. The generation in Britain around 1800 which saw the proliferation of missionary societies and sent the first wave of missionaries to the East was influenced by these works. WILLIAM CAREY, the best known of those missionary pioneers, is known to have been deeply affected by them.

The *Life of Brainerd* is an abridgment by Edwards of the journal of a young man who shared Edwards' theological views and devoted a major portion of his short life to work among the Indians beyond the fringes of the New England settlements. The young BRAINERD had contracted tuberculosis in the wilderness and had died in Edwards' home, where Edwards' daughter Jerusha lovingly tended him, caught the disease from him and died soon thereafter. The book is a memorial to them both in which Edwards sets forth an example of the ideal life of Christian faith. The book is essentially an account of the young Brainerd's attempts to suppress his own depraved nature and establish communion with God. It follows a pattern of oscillation between moments of abysmal despair and soaring ecstasy, as Brainerd daily sees himself as a „poor worm“⁴, a „dead dog“ or „the worst wretch that ever lived“⁵, only to be touched by God's sweetness which alone can lift him out of his utter infirmity. One who reads that text with an eye to the missionary efforts of Brainerd finds only occasional mention of the Indians and his activities among them and it soon becomes more than clear that Brainerd „found myself engaged for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in my own soul more than in others, more than in the Heathen world“⁶. Brainerd's wrestling with his soul does not spring from fear of perdition as did LUTHER's, but rather from a *this-worldly* concern with his unworthiness. He faces the next world with perfect trust, wishing that he could be called „to my eternal home, where I may fill up all my moments, through eternity, for God and his glory“⁷. For Brainerd, mission work among the Indians is a means before it is an end. He entertains no thought of earning salvation by his efforts, a notion no doubt abhorrent. But rather, he seeks first to glorify God and second to partake of God's blessedness as fully possible. Brainerd is happiest „in my *pilgrimage-state*, and I was delighted with the thoughts of labouring and *enduring hardness* for God“⁸.

⁴ J. EDWARDS, *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd*, p. 42

⁵ *IBID.*, p. 51

⁶ *IBID.*, p. 68—69

⁷ *IBID.*, p. 69

⁸ *IBID.*, p. 179

In *An Humble Attempt*..., Edwards argues for a continuation of observance by some Christians in Scotland and New England of a regular period of devotion each week

„earnestly praying to (God), that he would *appear in his Glory*... and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind, by an abundant effusion of his *Holy Spirit* on all the churches and the whole habitable earth... and to deliver *all Nations*⁹“.

Central to his work is the eschatological vision Edwards sets forth of the coming of the kingdom of Christ which will usher in a millenium when „wickedness shall be rare... as virtue and piety had been before¹⁰.“ He feels that the time may be near at hand. „Who knows but that the generation here spoken of may be this *present* generation?... and great multitudes of others, that should be converted thro' these prayers, occasion to praise his name¹¹.“ But note that it is to be the *prayers* of the pious which bring in the new age. Indeed, while some chroniclers of missions would like to make Edwards into a campaigner for mission work, no call to that task is to be found in this book. The coming of the new era toward which „all the revolutions and restless motions of the sun and other heavenly bodies¹²“ tended, was to be God's work, and the proper human posture was to be prayerful.

God, in wonderful grace, is pleased to represent himself, as it were, *at the command* of his people, with regard to the mercies of his nature... God would have his people ask of him, or enquire of him by earnest prayer, to do this for them... and he cannot deny anything that is asked for their comfort and prosperity¹³.

This is a strange sounding Jonathan Edwards, but perhaps the strict calvinist can be forgiven a moment of ardor. In order to make the imminence of the new age strike the reader more sharply, Edwards speculates as to how the deliverance of the world might be accomplished by the year 2000. Fifty years would be required for truth to achieve conquest among Protestants, another half century „to gain ascendancy over what is now the popish world“, fifty years more to dispose of the Jewish nation and Islam, and a final century thereafter for „the whole *heathen* world¹⁴“. While this does not constitute a bar from foreign mission efforts, it is clear that Edwards' sights at least in the short run are set much closer to home where he envisions the first results from God's outpouring of Spirit. The point is made yet again in his summation when he says that he is asking nothing of his readers „that will be likely to expose us to any remarkable trouble, difficulty or sufferance¹⁵“. This is a call to occasional prayer, not to the rigors of the mission field.

⁹ J. EDWARDS, *An Humble Attempt*..., p. 13

¹⁰ *IBID.*, p. 41—42

¹¹ *IBID.*, p. 55

¹² *IBID.*, p. 47

¹³ *IBID.*, p. 57

¹⁴ *IBID.*, p. 135

¹⁵ *IBID.*, p. 162

Any attempt to understand the theology of Jonathan Edwards must take account of the ideas against which he defended traditional calvinism. This great enemy was extreme arminianism, with HOOKER as its champion, which argued that the will of man was free and that salvation could be attained through good works which made each individual man responsible for his own destiny. This system of ideas cut to the quick the calvinist doctrines of the elect and divine determinism¹⁶. Central to Edwards' thought and life was the „conception of the majesty and sufficiency of God¹⁷“, a God who was, by definition, total sovereign. Necessarily, the sovereign's will was absolute, and those who would meddle with the concept of determinism were flirting with crucial error. Arminianism reflected the humanism of the day in its view of „religion consisting of benevolence toward men rather than union with God¹⁸“, but for Edwards, no matter how comforting this doctrine was, it underestimated „the divine idea existent in God's mind and expressed in His stable will¹⁹“. The lines were thus drawn for the struggle between the emphases on God's love and God's will. Edwards insisted upon the traditional doctrines of the total depravity of man and divine election. But these doctrines did not ring fully true in pastoral New England villages where moral rectitude and friendly cooperation were common, and where the old class psychology which had meshed so neatly with idea of election was the victim of the levelling process of their spartan life²⁰. Edwards dared not compromise on the issue of depravity, but he found leeway with the concept of the elect which permitted him to inch away from the old ‚hyper-calvinism‘ which had immobilized the past calvinists from nearly all forms of activism, mission work included. In *An Humble Attempt*... and elsewhere, he expressed his hope that the time was at hand when the elect will be expanded through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to embrace perhaps the vast majority of men.

In the old quiescent ‚hyper-calvinism‘, the elect was seen as a rather small group which showed no signs of changing in size in the immediate future. When coupled with strong emphasis on pre-destination, this made the elect group little concerned beyond the fringes of the group. This outlook ran at cross currents to the spirit of the times, as was found to be true in England where „Calvinism ceased to play an important part in intellectual life²¹“.

Edwards opened up the idea of the potential elect to include many then outside the faith, implying that the elect can, and should be a growing entity. He reinforced this opening by developing an eschatological vision, a tremendous leap from a Newtonian spatial world view, moving from a view of history as immutable or cyclical to a sense of „a

¹⁶ PARRINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 149

¹⁷ *IBID.*, p. 152

¹⁸ *IBID.*, p. 155

¹⁹ *IBID.*, p. 156

²⁰ *IBID.*, pp. 150—51

²¹ *IBID.*, p. 149

dynamic process of realization within temporal existence²². For his own generation, this encouraged calvinists to extend their concern beyond the limits of present believers. For generations thereafter, it would serve as an element in the movement to actively evangelize the world. It could not operate in that manner for Edwards, because his strict adherence to and emphasis upon the doctrine of predestination restrained from him such activism.

This raises interesting insights into the function of the calvinist doctrine of predestination within an activist theology, be it involvement in missions or in some other activity. The God who predestines is absolute. Thus, the determinism which is predestination cannot be of a partial or limited nature. *All* human action is thereby foreordained. In the hyper-calvinism of the seventeenth century, the believer was bound by his faith to inaction. But a belief in predestination need not bind one so severely. Changing one's view of the potential elect and talking as little as possible about predestination can neutralize its binding effect to a considerable degree. But there is no way in which this doctrine can be made to operate as a spur to activism. The doctrine of predestination cannot be made to have partial sway over events. And in the mind of an activist, the idea that his choices and actions are foreordained cannot but detract from his vigor. Consequently, as the activist spirit grows in the later mission movement, men of the calvinist tradition will either de-emphasize or abandon the doctrine of predestination.

Edwards himself was too close to traditional calvinism and too concerned with the defense of the sovereignty of God against the arminians to be termed a mission activist, but his writing was to aid in the missionary awakening of CAREY's generation and beyond. When these succeeding generations read Edwards, they took note of his concern for the realization of Christ's kingdom in *this world* in *An Humble Attempt*... and they felt themselves caught up in the momentum of his eschatological vision. The impact of his insistence upon sudden and complete individual conversion was coupled with his encouragement of itinerant preachers to break the restraints of institutional churches on the evangelical movement and mission efforts. Edwards' theocentricity, known existentially²³, opened the way for the anthropocentrism of the later generations of evangelicals seeking to come to terms with the humanistic trends of their time.

JOHN WESLEY

JOHN WESLEY is also regarded as a fore-runner of the foreign mission movement, but he developed his activist ideas out of high church Anglican tradition of quietism, which was distinctly different from quiescent

²² ROOY, *The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition*, p. 326

²³ J HUNT, *Religious Thought in England*, vol. 3, p. 287

‘hyper-calvinism’ against which Edwards reacted. The God of the ‘hyper-calvinist’ loomed so large as to make man’s endeavors meaningless, whereas the high church Anglicans assigned such a substantial role to the cleansing power of the sacraments, that there seemed little need for further effort for a God made remote by the growth of the rationalism of the day within the established Church. Born in the same year as Edwards, Wesley was raised in the high church tradition, studied at Oxford and entered the ministry as a loyal high churchman, believing in the necessity of the sacraments for salvation and viewing external ordinances and good works as prerequisites to justification²⁴. Feeling somewhat unsettled in his faith, he went to Georgia as a missionary to the Indians in order to have an experience akin to that of the church fathers in the days of primitive Christianity. He remained dissatisfied with his faith, and returned to Britain, viewing his mission work as a failure. In 1738 he underwent a conversion experience and began to develop new ideas in light of that experience which were to form the groundwork for the *Methodist movement*²⁵. His intent was to awaken the Church of England to the inadequacies of the icy rationalism it espoused and to spur it to an enthusiastic arminianism which would better meet the spiritual needs of men. Wesley also wished to avoid the errors he saw in the calvinist position, and in his efforts to establish a middle way, he is frequently inconsistent. Thus, with Wesley more than with Edwards, the artificiality of attempting to delineate a unified theological system becomes apparent.

After his conversion, Wesley’s emphasis shifts from baptism to conversion as the most important event in the Christian life, and from Church institution to personal religious experience as the way to justification²⁶. The doctrine of the Fall and consequent human depravity receive emphasis from Wesley, for which the remedy was regeneration via the Holy Spirit which had to remain constantly present in man’s life in order to achieve *present* salvation, in this life. This salvation could only be accomplished in a man who had faith, a term connoting not only assent to belief in God, but „a disposition of the heart”²⁷. The implication here was that the Holy Spirit was to be felt intuitively, to be grasped by a means more profound than rational perception²⁸, a concept with strong romantic overtones. The man who was thus filled by the Holy Spirit could achieve thereby a kind of ethical purity, implying the idea of the perfectibility of man via the Holy Spirit²⁹, an idea which echoed the humanistic notion of perfectibility popular in the Enlightenment. The Wesley who here was reacting to rationalistic tendencies in the Church of England continued in this direction when he insisted that only through the faith described above can men be saved, and he further stated that the truly religious man, filled with the Holy Spirit,

²⁵ HUNT, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 286

²⁶ Ibid., p. 286

²⁷ J. WESLEY, *Works*, vol. 5, p. 9

²⁸ STORR, op. cit., pp. 41—42

²⁹ WESLEY, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 191

³⁰ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 191

was far better than the mere moral man, who was in fact dangerous because he set a deluding example³⁰.

Particularly in his later work, when he felt himself tending too much toward calvinism, Wesley spoke with a different voice. Throughout his life he was devoted to the Church of England, and his later writings show an effort to develop an arminian position as an alternative to high church rationalism. His conception of two-step justification permitted good works to assume a greater importance in his theology. According to this idea present justification comes through faith as described above, but final justification at judgment is contingent upon doing good works which should follow upon present justification³¹. The sacraments of the Church could thus assume an important role. This emphasis upon human action was carried further by Wesley as he later denied the depravity of man.

What the Heathens call reason, Solomon wisdom, St. Paul grace, St. John love, Luther faith, Fenelon virtue, is all one and the same thing, in the light of Christ shines in different degrees under different dispensations³².

He even claimed that MARCUS AURELIUS, a just man, but no Christian, would be accepted while merely nominal Christians would be cast out by God at judgment, and he developed the idea of varying degrees of rewards and punishments at judgment in order to blur the line between the lost and the saved.

All of this shifting of direction in Wesley's thought is somewhat bothersome, but it becomes a bit less exasperating when seen in the light of the over-riding principle of Wesley's life and theology. This can be seen in an examination of the reasons for Wesley's aversion to calvinism. In his sermon *Free Grace* (1740), Wesley calls „this horrible doctrine³³“ of predestination „blasphemy“ because „it is to represent the most high God... as more cruel, false and unjust than the devil³⁴!“ A God who predestines must create certain souls for the purpose of destroying them, and this idea violates Wesley's view of *love* as the central attribute of God's nature. The Calvinist emphasis of the sovereignty and the will of God at the expense of the concept of God's love provoked Wesley more strongly than anything else, and he scrupulously avoided this pitfall. As a result, there is much less emphasis upon eschatology in Wesley's work because it gave too great an emphasis to the *will* of God in history. In Wesley's idea of the perfectibility of man via the Holy Spirit, a much more intimate and constant relationship between the Christian and his God is to be found than in Edwards' ideal

²⁴ *IBID.*, p. 287

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 56 and 61 and vol. 7, p. 455

³² HUNT, *op. cit.*, pp. 291—292

³³ WESLEY, *Works*, vol. 7, p. 197

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 197

of that relationship as exemplified by David Brainerd. Thus, the more loving God of Wesley would give himself more fully to the Christian man than the sovereign God of Edwards. It was because the High Church rationalists denied this intimacy between God and man that Wesley took issue with them. Thus, he attempted to move away from the rationalists in order to assert the intimacy between the believer and the loving God which must follow from the divine love. But, in his efforts to avoid the calvinist emphasis on the sovereign will of God, and the consequent de-emphasis on God's love, he swings toward a pelagian position on the freedom of man's will.

Wesley's ambiguities on such crucial matters as the extent of human depravity and the criteria for salvation, while united by a common purpose, rob his theology of the clear-cut impulse to activism that will be required by later generations of mission enthusiasts. The activist theologies to follow will require a certain degree of *simplification* as well as change.

CHARLES SIMEON

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century there arose to strength in Britain three groups which taken together, comprised what was known as the Evangelical movement: the Methodists, holders of wesleyan arminian ideas who broke from the Church of England; the calvinists, a predominantly Scottish party; and the evangelical group which remained loyal to the Church of England, and included both wesleyans and calvinists. During this period, the Evangelical movement gained respectability as well as strength and embarked on an activist policy with regard to reforms at home and missions overseas.

Perhaps the leading figure in the Anglican evangelical group in this period was CHARLES SIMEON, who, from 1782 until his death in 1836 was rector of Trinity Church, Cambridge, and fellow of King's College. Simeon's own tenure at Trinity Church demonstrates the change in attitude toward the Evangelicals in this period. In the early years of his ministry, his parishioners responded to his evangelical ideas by leaving the church and locking their pews so that the few who did come had to stand in the aisles³⁵. In those days there was always the threat of undergraduates, often, drunk, disrupting services or insulting parishioners as they left the church, and Simeon's colleagues at the university shunned him openly³⁶. These early troubles were a result of rationalist intellectuals' disdain of 'enthusiasm' which was compounded after 1789 by fear of the fervor of the masses in light of events in France³⁷. The evangelicals were seen as 'enthusiasts' who stirred up the lower classes

³⁵ W. CARUS (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon*, p. 117.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124

³⁷ STORR, *op. cit.*, pp. 75—76

with their itinerant preaching, while they argued that they were merely trying to warm up a Church theology made moribund by rationalism and to make the Church a creative force among the growing urban labor force. By 1818 the restoration of order on the Continent, the growing acceptance of evangelical ideas and Simeon's humility had made Trinity Church „sweetly harmonious“ and filled to overflowing³⁸.

Simeon's avid interest in foreign missions was reflected in his involvement in the establishment and early years of the *Church Missionary Society*, and in the number of young men who went out from Cambridge University to the mission field having been influenced by Simeon's preaching and his regular evangelical discussion meetings. In Simeon's generation, British evangelical activism came to full flower, and Simeon's theology was carefully honed to operate as a spur to activism. At first glance, this theology bears considerable resemblance to aspects of Wesley's thinking. He affirmed the necessity of faith in Christ for entry into the 'kingdom of grace', a term which implied not only the hereafter, but a state of regeneration via the Holy Spirit in this life. Thus, regeneration was for Simeon as for Wesley, a two-step process which assigns a position of importance to good works. Simeon also shared Wesley's loyalty to the Church of England, his aversion to predestinarian views, and his avoidance of eschatological and millenarian rhetoric.

However, there are significant differences to be found as well. The key to the basic difference lies in Simeon's psychology, for while Wesley emphasized human *feeling* as the means by which the impulses of the Holy Spirit are perceived, Simeon placed a greater emphasis on *reason* and insisted on a greater role for the human will. He denied that the process of regeneration need begin „suddenly“ and that the Holy Spirit's impulses are „irresistible“.

For in all cases man is a free agent; he is never wrought upon as a mere machine. He is drawn, indeed, but it is with the 'cords of a man', that is, by considerations proper to influence a rational being and by feelings which those considerations excite in his soul³⁹.

Clearly, the feelings are excited by the rational „considerations“ and are thus *secondary to them*. Simeon liberated man to be a rational actor to a greater extent than Wesley while still maintaining the Wesleyan sense of intimacy with God and the fear for the souls of the unregenerated⁴⁰, a question on which Wesley had been ambiguous.

Thus, it can be said that a more pelagian view of man toward which Simeon and, at times, Wesley tended, opens up man's freedom of action, but does not necessarily maintain a sense of urgency for action, particularly in the realm of missions. With Wesley, the opening to pelagianism

³⁸ CARUS, op. cit., p. 156

³⁹ C. SIMEON, *Horae Homileticae*, vol. 9, pp. 132—139

⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 483

allowed the Christian to be more active, but it also led him to claim that Marcus Aurelius might be saved without hearing Christ's name. Thus, the spur to mission activism suffered. Simeon, on the other hand, claimed a larger role for human agency, but insisted that salvation could be achieved only through regeneration in Christ. Thus, man's latitude for action grew, but the urgency of the need for Christ among non-Christians remained constant, resulting in a greater incentive to activism.

Above all else, Simeon was concerned with devising a theology which would have „practical efficacy“ among believers⁴¹, which would lead them to exertion. His aversion to the doctrine of predestination was primarily the result of his fear that it would hinder human actions⁴², rather than the wesleyan objection that it misrepresented the loving God. He favored a streamlining of theology, de-emphasizing any trappings that might tend toward „weakening or destroying (the) efficacy“⁴³ of symbols or ceremonies. Thus, all practices and even dogmas in the Church were tested as to their usefulness in producing Christians who will ardently strive. The purpose of this streamlining, which in the extreme becomes a form of simplification, was to heighten the impact of the message of the Church in the world at large, in order to extend this greatest of all goods to the greatest number of potential beneficiaries. In his emphasis upon efficacy, human reason and benevolent action, Simeon was clearly echoing the philosophical utilitarianism of his day. Certainly, this shift in emphasis was partially an attempt to make evangelical theology palatable in the somewhat hostile atmosphere of Cambridge. But compromises in form often have a way of growing into substantive changes in basic thought. Where to draw the line with Simeon must remain an open question, but the trend is undeniable.

In drawing distinctions between the thought of Wesley and Simeon, care must be taken not to overstate the case emphasizing Simeon's innovations. He still described man as 'depraved' and insisted upon the necessity for reliance upon the Holy Spirit, „not only to regenerate us at first, but progressively... to render us meet for our divine inheritance“⁴⁴. But beneath the rhetoric, there is a notable change on fundamental issues. When Simeon assigned a more prominent role to human reason and agency, and thus to human responsibility, he could not avoid a corresponding decline in the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the importance of the figure of Christ as atoner and procurer of salvation remained a constant. Thus, even a small decline in the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit tended to disturb the perfect equality of the Persons of the trinity. To this can be added what has been called the Holy Spirit's

„incurable tendency to self-effacement“, which is manifest from the fact that where the spirit is most certainly present, there we invariably

⁴¹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 632

⁴² Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 132—139

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 191—197

⁴⁴ Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 158—162

see Christ and not the Spirit, since it is his work to take of the things of Christ and show them to us⁴⁵“.

Simeon was sufficiently acute to see where his thinking might lead, and, in dealing with the Persons of the trinity, he staunchly insisted upon absolute equality. But the way had been opened for some of his less careful followers, eager to stress human responsibility as a spur of action, to develop a Christocentric emphasis tending toward the exclusion of the other figures of the trinity⁴⁶. This later tendency was fraught with dangers for the evangelical movement. Simeon had maintained a delicate balance, emphasizing human agency to a degree which catalized activism without making man appear so self-reliant as to stifle concern with the salvation of souls. By 1840, however, the evangelical movement was on the defensive in England because stress on christology, on the incarnation, was increasing at the expense of soteriology and the atonement. Careless evangelicals had added to the momentum of this trend alongside opponents of their viewpoint.

An investigation of one source of Simeon's aversion to eschatological rhetoric will open up further useful insights. The eschatological vision of Edwards held all earthly institutions to be ephemeral, to be swept up in the consummation to come. In this view, the Church, or a church, becomes a mere interim institution until the coming of God's Kingdom. This is the result of the abandonment of the medieval notion of the Church and the Kingdom of God as coextensive. In the latter view, there is less of a tendency to focus on eschatological visions because the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness is simply the expansion of the institution of the Church to embrace all, and thus, it lacks the aura of newness that the other vision possesses. As a consequence, Churchminded men tend to avoid emphasis on eschatology, even if they have consciously abandoned the medieval idea which forms the basis for it. Old modes of thought have this tendency to linger on past their time.

But, on the conscious level, Simeon's church-mindedness was well under control. With Simeon, as with all evangelicals of his generation soteriological concern clearly eroded and superseded ecclesiological considerations. His concern with the saving of souls, possible only through regeneration via the Holy Spirit, was uniquely of crucial importance. Consequently, the sacraments of the Church of England, while „instructive“⁴⁷, were not indispensable for salvation⁴⁸. This soteriological concern permitted Simeon to approach with complete openness non-Anglican groups who shared that concern. The concern with the saving of souls became a metadogmatic norm in Simeon's generation, binding heretofore disparate elements together in common endeavor and was to become one source of the modern ecumenical movement.

⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 158—164

⁴⁶ STORR, op. cit., p. 73

⁴⁷ C. SIMEON, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 191—197

⁴⁸ Ibid., vol. 8, 277—282 and vol. 9, pp. 41—48

Simeon's theology impelled men to exertion for the salvation of others much more forcefully than that of the previous generation. He insisted upon the necessity for regeneration via the Holy Spirit⁴⁹ — an issue on which Wesley is ambiguous. He further asserted that Christ would reject none who sought him⁵⁰ — an idea which Edwards would have found unacceptable. Here the lines were clearly drawn, and his insistence upon the importance of man as a free agent, able to function as „God's... appointed means⁵¹“, opened the way for men to struggle for the souls of their fellowmen. Here then was the reason that theology must be „efficacious“ — men's souls lie in the balance. Coupled with the growing awareness that dominion over much of the non-Christian world was to be Britain's destiny, this idea was to spur the first significant Protestant efforts in foreign missions.

ALEXANDER DUFF

ALEXANDER DUFF was born in Scotland in 1806, raised in the Church of Scotland and educated at the University of St. Andrews. His father had been strongly influenced by Charles Simeon, and, upon his ordination in 1829, the young Duff set out for Calcutta as the first missionary of his church. He spent five years in India concentrating his efforts in the field of Christian education in English language institutions which were becoming popular among Indians who saw the advantages of knowing the language of the ruling power. Duff sought to employ Western learning, both secular and religious, to shatter the Hinduism of his students, replace it with Christianity and thereby create a native clergy to bring about the conversion of India to Christianity. He returned to Britain in 1835 and spent the next four years campaigning for support of missions in India. His speeches and tracts from that period have been preserved in great volume, and they represent the changed views of a generation of missionaries who have a more real appreciation of the resistance of Indian religions to encroachment by Christianity.

It was no easy task to generate enthusiasm for missions in the Church of Scotland, even as late as 1839. ‚Hyper-calvinist‘ views that divine agency alone would be sufficient for the task had delayed the involvement of the Church in mission endeavor for a full quarter century after the first wave had gone out from England, and antipathy to missions was still widespread when Duff returned. What's more, there were strong objections to Duff's wedding of Christian teaching to secular education which was thought to taint and demean the religious message⁵². In response, Duff mustered arguments, generously laced with florid rhetoric, to show that his methods were not only realistic but theologically justified. Because he is engaged in an apology for missions, Duff does not

⁴⁹ Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 16—20 and vol. 8, pp. 158—160

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 277—282

⁵¹ Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 198—210 and vol. 7, pp. 91—95

⁵² A. DUFF, *A Vindication of the Church of Scotland's India Mission*, p. 33

expound on theological issues as directly as the writers discussed above. Instead, his views often must be gleaned from what is implicit in his remarks. Nonetheless, there is a consistent structure of ideas which will provide interesting contrasts to Edwards, Wesley and Simeon.

Several realities which had been less plain to earlier groups of missionaries, who had gone out from Britain under the influence of Simeon and others, now confronted Duff and his contemporaries and strongly affected his thought. First, and of primary importance, India was not responding to missionary efforts as readily as had been expected. The number of converts particularly among the educated classes, was very small in comparison to the effort expended, and in light of the nearly apocalyptic expectations. In Bengal, where Duff centered his early work, the Hindu intellectuals of Calcutta indulged their appetite for amusing debate by mounting a very clever anti-missionary campaign⁵³. An immediate result of this, as reported by Duff, was that the clergymen of the various Protestant viewpoints in Calcutta had ceased their squabbling over doctrinal differences in order to address themselves to the larger problem of evangelization⁵⁴. Thus, at the outset, can be seen the tendency of this generation to be missionaries first and theologians second. Another reality only then becoming a clear trend, was the growth of a secularized and westernized class of Hindus, educated in the staunchly secular institutions of the East India Company, who had abandoned Hindu belief under the influence of Western thought, but who refused to accept Christianity. This was cause for alarm in the evangelical camp, because the 'superstition' of a Hindu was considered an easier mark than the rationalism of a Benthamite. Finally, in light of the firm British dominion over India, there had arisen among British missionaries the conviction that India was „ours“⁵⁵, and that it was now the duty of Britain to Christianize her.

In his zeal to galvanize his Scottish colleagues to greater support for missions, Duff did not conceal the urgency of the plight of Indian missions. „Now is the time (for further mission involvement): *now* is the favourable moment; but let us beware lest it be *now, or — never*.“ It was still not too late to rescue India from „the disastrous power of (Western) knowledge unsanctified“, but „a few years hence, and the state of things may be beyond the reach of Christian coalitions“⁵⁶. Gone was the old confidence that the successful evangelization of the world is assured. And the admission of the possibility of failure was to have a profound impact upon Duff's mission theology. Edwards' eschatological vision of relentless progress toward the predestined end, the conversion

⁵³ M. M. ALI, *The Bengali Response to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833—1857*, pp. 36—56

⁵⁴ A. DUFF, *Missions, The Chief End of the Christian Church*, pp. 60—61

⁵⁵ DUFF, *Vindication . . .*, pp. 52—53

⁵⁶ *IBID.*, p. 22

of all men and nations to Christianity, was threatened. Rather than abandoning this vision, Duff attempted to wield it as a prod to action. This generation in Britain had the opportunity to contribute to the realization of this plan on a scale never before possible, and perhaps even to see the coming of the Kingdom. The question was whether British Christians would rise to their lofty destiny.

If we be neglectful of the means by which God puts it in our power to advance the interest of all, or any, who partake of our common nature, we are unquestionably answerable for such neglect⁵⁷. Implied here and stated explicitly elsewhere⁵⁸, was the notion that unconverted Indian souls will charge reticent British Christians with their doom on judgment day. But more than the future peace of mind of Duff's audience was at stake, for they were warned of the „heaving earthquake that may ere long rend asunder the mightiest empires⁵⁹“. The very existence of the empire, source of pride and profit, was contingent upon Britain's response at this propitious moment. It must be remembered that Duff's immediate audience in this appeal is the Church of Scotland, in which predestinarian views were commonly held. Duff knew that his implication that the future of British dominion in India might be contingent upon the Church's response assigned too much importance to human agency and smacked of the abandonment of predestination. Consequently, he hastily added that the destruction of the empire might happen no matter what response the Church made⁶⁰. But this remark was in the form of an aside, a brief digression for the sake of form, and immediately thereafter, Duff returned to his original argument which clearly ran counter to predestinarian views. This pattern can be observed throughout Duff's writing. Lip service was regularly paid to orthodoxy, while in substance, his arguments stressed human responsibility and the need for action to a degree incompatible with traditional calvinist determinism. Duff had to avoid the denial of predestination. But the doctrine was not susceptible to moderation, so he simply talked around the issue.

Duff's concern with human agency was perhaps best demonstrated when he urged the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to pray at regular intervals that „Thy Kindgom come“. The parallel with Edwards' *An Humble Attempt*... is clear, but the results anticipated were quite different.

And if the heaven-ordained practice of praying for the speedy diffusion of Gospel light throughout the world were to become regular and universal, would not it ultimately incite thousands to corresponding efforts, in order to realize the glorious object habitually prayed for⁶¹?

⁵⁷ A. DUFF, *India and India Missions*, P. 453

⁵⁸ DUFF, *Vindication* . . . , p. 23

⁵⁹ DUFF, *India Missions* . . . , pp. 35—36

⁶⁰ *IBID.*, p. 36

⁶¹ DUFF, *Vindication* . . . , p. xii (italics mine)

Edwards sought to hasten the divine intervention which alone could realize his hopes. Duff saw that habitual prayer will foster concern for missions, and exertion for missions would be more likely as a result. All elements of Duff's theology were tested and molded to lend their weight to the cause of missions. This was clear in his characterization of conversion (which he viewed as necessary for salvation) as „the germ of what, when matured and nourished till it ripen into full growth, becomes the very flower and vigour of the missionary character⁶²“.

It is interesting to note here that Duff's view of conversion as a beginning of the regeneration process requiring further development was consistent with Wesley and Simeon. But it was a departure from fellow-calvinist Edwards who saw conversion as sudden and complete regeneration. PERRY MILLER points out that Edwards' view was conditioned by thinking in New England at the time which held that a child was just as capable as an adult at grasping an inspiration or a set of ideas in their entirety, wholly and maturely. Thus, Duff's view of progressive regeneration would seem to be more a product of his time than a break from calvinist tradition. Duff's involvement with education as a vehicle for missions implied that he assigned *reason* an important role in conversion, although he was never explicit on that issue. If that is true, it separates both Simeon and Duff from the insistence of Wesley and Edwards that the *feeling* must predominate in conversion. On this issue, then, the lines seem to be drawn between earlier and later generations, with the mission activists together on one side of the line.

Once again, however, care must be taken not to overstate the case. Duff was no arminian masquerading as a calvinist. It was a God of wrath who threatens the mighty British Empire with ruin, and Duff was perfectly straightforward in his insistence upon man's „entire and unqualified dependence on the influence of the Holy Spirit, for the rise, progress and final consummation of true religion in the soul of man⁶⁴“. In addressing the Church of Scotland, he faced a dilemma. He could not depict the immensity of the need for manpower and funds which he knew to exist in the mission field without encroaching on the confidence in divine agency of traditional calvinism. But surely this was a dilemma he faced in his own devotional life as well, and the recurrent vacillations in his rhetoric show that it was an ongoing struggle.

Nonetheless, the predominant tendency in his thought is unmistakable. The reception of the Holy Spirit, that is, in Duff's words „being evangelical“, was no end in itself. It is rather a means to the highest end of the Christian life, „being evangelistic“. Indeed, no church can be „evangelical“ without also being „evangelistic“. If a church was content to receive the Spirit without sharing it, it ceased to be a true church and incurred damnation⁶⁵. For Duff the necessity for mission activism operated as the supreme dogma against which all else was tested. Bound

⁶² DUFF, *Chief End* . . . , p. 37

⁶³ P. MILLER, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 327

⁶⁴ DUFF, *Vindication* . . . , p. 35

up in this were the eagerness to obey Christ's imperative to preach the gospel abroad, a man's natural tendency to assign importance to his work, and other factors, no doubt. But, as the title of one of his tracts demonstrates, the Christian mission constitutes *The Chief End of the Christian Church*.

At this point an overview of these four figures, moving from the generation of Edwards and Wesley to those of Simeon and then Duff, is in order. Even a superficial comparison demonstrates that the richness and comprehensive quality of the theologies of Edwards and Wesley are not to be found in the thought of Simeon and Duff. In part this is because Edwards and Wesley have the latter figures outclassed intellectually. But the progressive narrowing of perspective on the part of Simeon and Duff is of greater significance in this trend. Edwards and Wesley devise theologies of *life*, while Simeon's is a theology of *activism* and Duff's a theology of *mission activism*. There is, with the latter two figures, a growing tendency to subordinate theology to the achievement of a specific end, to downgrade speculative thought in order to be more persuasive in catalyzing action. This is illustrated by the tendency of the theologies of Simeon and Duff, products of the arminian and calvinist traditions respectively, to converge, to sound almost identical much of the time. Theology is made the servant of activism even to the extreme of over-simplifying complex issues in order to obtain clear-cut answers. In part, this tendency is merely an natural outgrowth of their work. Simeon was a preacher, who, week in and week out, capsulized theological arguments into neat thirty-minute packages. Thus, he developed the habit of paring down complex issues into simple, persuasive form. Duff's work had been in presenting Christianity in India, which required great simplification and the selective presentation of those elements of his faith which would most appeal to his audience. But this is far from an adequate explanation. Edwards and Wesley also spent their lives as preachers and both had taken Christianity to the American Indians.

The primary reason for this trend toward simplification is the growing importance of the concern with saving the souls of non-Christians. It cannot be said that Edwards and Wesley cared less for their fellowmen than did Simeon and Duff. But it is true that Simeon and Duff possessed an greater confidence in their own agency for the conversion of the heathen than did Edwards, and a fuller sureness than Wesley that those unregenerated through Christ stood in utter darkness. This greater confidence in themselves and the uniqueness of their message does not appear to have originated from forces present *within* the theological systems examined. Thus, it would seem that the historian seeking the roots of this change must look beyond theology, to the changes in the self-consciousness of a Britain coming to the realization of her pre-eminence in the family of nations.

⁶⁵ DUFF, *Chief End* . . . , p. 6