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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_evangelical\\_quarterly.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php)

## CHARLES SIMEON

1759-1836

IT was in the second last month of 1836 that Charles Simeon finished his work on earth. The centenary of his death has just now gone by and at the space of a hundred years it is possible to take stock of a man better than when one is near at hand. There are few that are remembered at all at such an interval of time after their activity among their fellows on earth has come to an end; and if the question is put about Simeon, is there anything that still remains to tell of the work that he did in his day? The very fact that such a question may well be put is a confession that the man in regard to whom it is asked must have done something worthy of note. Were this not so no such question would arise in regard to him, when the memory of his contemporaries save a very few is covered with the moss of a century's oblivion. Macaulay, who was brought up in a circle sympathetic with those things for which Charles Simeon stood and who knew well the place that was held by his father's friend, could speak of him as wielding a power over the religious side of the life of England as great as that of either of the Metropolitans of her national Church. It was all this and it was more. It has left the name of Simeon known when few could tell who in his day held the sees of York or Canterbury. There must have been something exceptional about a plain Presbyterian of the Anglican Church who was not a dignitary in her hierarchy when he held such a power as this and wielded it for years without ostentation from the rooms where he lived as a Fellow in King's College, Cambridge.

It might be somewhat of a paradox to say that Charles Simeon was a very ordinary man whose power was raised to a very extraordinary degree. He was a man of ordinary talents but of very unusual diligence, devotedness and usefulness. This last word, indeed, strikes the key-note of his life. He was not an idealist nor was he a dreamer; but he was one whose heart was set on doing good and on showing himself diligent in the use of those talents that were entrusted to him as steward. In this respect he was eminent even in a brotherhood whose ambition it was to devote themselves to the service of their fellows for

the glory of God. It was in a consecration to such usefulness as their aim in life that the strength of the Evangelical Fathers of the Church of England was to be seen. In pursuing this as the object of their aspiration they tended to show themselves remarkably free from any slavish subjection to a system or a hide-bound or rigid consistency in the region of intellectual thinking. But they were Christian men who had taken upon them their Lord's yoke, and whose aim in life was to make the most of the opportunities presented to them in their place and station. Among men of this cast of mind in a generation in which they showed their quality and did great things Simeon was pre-eminent. Here was the secret of his influence, and it is for this reason that his name still lives.

Mr. Simeon was born at Reading in the year 1759. He sprang from a family of the landed aristocracy who had an aptitude for business. The positions that were held in business and public life by two of his brothers tell of the measure of sense and capacity that marked them out. One of them was trusted with the administration of the private estate of King George III, while the other became a Director of the Bank of England. As a boy Charles Simeon went to school at Eton and from Eton proceeded to Cambridge on one of the school foundations, which took him to King's College, of which in due course he became a Fellow; and a Fellow of King's he remained to the end of his days. It was shortly after he went to Cambridge that the religious crisis came which determined the character of his subsequent life. He came to know almost at the beginning of his first term at College that it was expected that he would partake of the Communion in about three weeks' time. This threw him into great distress. Quite likely he would have been confirmed before this; but he felt, to use his own words, that Satan was as fit to communicate as he was. The distress that was thus awakened was the beginning of a period of serious concern which continued until in about three months' time he had the experience of peace proclaimed in his conscience by the discovery of the meaning of substitution. In particular he was deeply impressed by a word which he came across in Bishop Wilson of Sodor and Man on the Lord's Supper to the effect that the devout Jew knew well that by laying his hand on the head of the sacrificial lamb he consented to the transfer of his sins to his substitute. He discovered the Lamb that God has provided and was enabled

in faith to lay his hand on the head of that Lamb and consent to the transfer of his transgressions to such a Substitute. This discovery led him into an enjoyment of the peace that reconciliation to God through the blood of expiation brings to the awakened conscience. In those early days of his new life he had no Christian friend to be his counsellor and guide. He was thrown on the Scriptures and his Church's Liturgy, and he found himself able to join from the heart in the confessions and prayers of the Prayer Book and to find them as marrow and fat to his soul. This experience of fellowship with God through these prayers knit him to them in a peculiar manner and perhaps served to account for the growth in his later life of his correct Conformity with ecclesiastical requirements.

## I

## HIS EARLY METHODISM

We have spoken of the growth of his correct Conformity. There was room for it. For his conversion brought him into touch with those who were Evangelicals before him; and they were less studious of exact conformity to a strict Anglicanism than their successors came to be. John Berridge and Rowland Hill touched about the limit of liberties taken by Anglican Methodists. Hill, indeed, though in half orders in the State Church, was for the greater part of his life an ecclesiastical free lance. The Evangelicals of those days shared the reproach of Enthusiasm, as it was called, with their Evangelical brethren in the Non-Conformist Churches. Thus John Newton in his Olney days was on the most friendly and brotherly terms with his Non-Conforming neighbour, William Bull of Newport Pagnell. The attraction of a common faith and experience drew them together. Those earlier Evangelicals were as a class true to the Doctrines of Grace, and so they were in sympathy with the characteristic message of the Puritan Pulpit. They did notable work in their time in the midst of all the reproach and obloquy that fell to their lot from an untoward generation. They were known as Calvinists. There was one of those worthies, and he was one of the choicest of them all, into specially close fellowship with whom Simeon was brought. This was Henry Venn, who had already done his great life work in Huddersfield, before, as a man broken in health, he accepted a small country charge at

Yelling, which is only about a dozen miles from Cambridge. Owing to their nearness to one another he, the elder, and Simeon, the younger man, were thrown very often into one another's company. Simeon was also in touch with Berridge in his last years and with such warm Evangelicals as Thomas Robinson of Leicester and the Eclectic circle. In those early years of his ministry he had to run the gauntlet of bitter and unscrupulous opposition in his parochial work at Cambridge. Some forms of this opposition hardly died down, if they did at all, until the very close of his career. The opposition which thus vexed those years was both from recalcitrant elements in his own parish and from the men of influence in the University. The High Church type as it was to be found in Cambridge was more of the High and Dry than of the High and Ghostly type which had its home and stronghold in Oxford. Perhaps as prominent as anyone as a leader of the opposition was the well-known Herbert Marsh, who became Bishop, first of Llandaff and then of Peterborough. Marsh, while in his critical standpoint he made an approach to continental criticism, was a very hard-shell opponent of the Evangelicals and a champion for close conformity to a stagnating use and wont. This use and wont loathed Enthusiasm which was the nickname that it gave to all lively spiritual religion. Its advocates maintained for years their attitude of scorn and contempt for Simeon, because of what they looked upon as his puritanic strictness and the fanaticism with which they were wont to credit the brain-sick disciples of hated Methodism. It was during this earlier Methodistic phase of his life that Mr. Simeon undertook two tours to Scotland which made him well known to his Northern brethren.

## II

### HIS WORK IN SCOTLAND

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Simeon paid his chief visits to Scotland. There he came in contact with a number of the Evangelical worthies that shone as lights in the darkness of the "Moderate" régime. He does not seem to have come to know any of the Seceders though he had at an earlier period some correspondence with John Brown of Haddington. Simeon was a State Church man to the South of the Tweed and he associated with the State Church men to the North. He

spent some time in Edinburgh and when there communicated with and preached for his Scottish brethren who were in the succession of those who had welcomed George Whitefield. His special friend was Walter Buchanan of the Canongate Parish, but he was in intimate association with David Dickson and David Black who were men very much after his own heart. He came to know Dr. John Erskine of the Greyfriars who was a surviving link with the early days of Whitefield. He also made the acquaintance of good Dr. Colquhoun of Leith who was the outstanding representative in his day of the "Marrow" Theology and also of such leading Evangelicals as Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood of the West Kirk and good Dr. Davidson of the Tolbooth, whose grandson was the late Randall Davidson of Canterbury. With men like these Simeon mixed freely, treated by them as a brother, and in turn treating them as brethren.

Those were the days before Robert and James Haldane were driven out of their mother Church; and on one of Mr. Simeon's journeys into the Highlands he had the younger of these brothers as his travelling companion, whose son, Alexander, was in later years as Editor of the *Record*, to be such an Evangelical force in the Church of England. On this tour they spent a night in the Manse of Moulin, where they had as their host Alexander Stewart, the young Minister of the Parish, who had begun to be seriously concerned about his lack of knowledge of the power of the Gospel. Simeon's conversation with him was the means of bringing Mr. Stewart into the light, and before many years passed, there was under his ministry a powerful Evangelical awakening in his congregation. Among those who felt its power were the parents of Alexander Duff, who in after years was to do such a remarkable work in the Indian Mission Field. In him at a second remove the fruits of Simeon's work told not only in India, but throughout the English-speaking world as far as the fiery electric eloquence of Duff went to stir up the Churches, to send the Gospel to the regions beyond. On one of his Northern tours Mr. Simeon reached as far as Tain in Ross-shire and came to know there the excellent Angus Mackintosh, whose work in the Northern Highlands was so richly blessed. On this tour also he preached for the saintly Charles Calder of Ferintosh and was the guest of his brother Hugh at Croy, so that he came to know a little of the men who were largely the Fathers of Foreign

Missions in Scotland. The latter half of the eighteenth century was the halcyon time of Gospel power in parts of the Synods of Moray and Ross, and this reflected itself in the fact that, when Foreign Missions were taken definitely up by the Edinburgh Missionary Society, almost half of the total givings in the first year for the whole of Scotland came from the Evangelical congregations of those Synods. It was in those days that Mr. Simeon held pleasant converse with his Northern brethren. This Scottish work, however, was only a passing incident in the life of a laborious worker in his Lord's vineyard. It took place in a decade of great interest.

### III

#### A GREAT DECADE, 1791-1800

The last decade of the eighteenth century was a time of upheaval in national and in international life. It was a time of shaking and awakening in the Churches. The cataclysm of the French Revolution shook Europe out of its torpor, but hand in hand with this rude awakening there were the beginnings of concerted action on the part of the friends of the Evangel in a variety of enterprises that have lived and that have told on a wide scale on the state of the world. It was the epoch of Tract and Missionary and Bible Societies. It was in those years that the Baptist Missionary Society was set on foot. Shortly afterward it was followed by the London Missionary Society, and before many years elapsed the Church Missionary Society was instituted. The Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society both owe their origin to the fruitful movements of those years. In the work of such Societies Simeon took his full share. In particular he was one of the very first to move for the launching of the Church Missionary Society. He was a member of that Eclectic Society whose records have been edited by Josiah Pratt. It was at a meeting of this Society that the subject of starting an Anglican Missionary Society was seriously mooted and discussed. The Eclectic was an exchange for ideas to promote the work of the Gospel in the world. There gathered at its meetings round the venerable John Newton a cluster of like-minded men of God who devised liberal counsels for the work of their Lord. There were to be found Thomas Scott and Richard Cecil and Josiah Pratt himself and not least when he was in London, Charles Simeon.

The bluff and hearty and cheerful saint of Olney in those years held court at 6 Coleman Street Buildings, and round him gathered not only brethren in office but brethren in the faith of the Gospel. The enterprise of Clarkson and Macaulay and Wilberforce in their campaign against the horrors of the slave trade had the benediction of one who knew that work at first hand. The old captain of a Guinea Slaver was still in the dark as to the unlawfulness of his occupation when he took part in the slave trade. He was already a new man in Christ before he gave it up. In his case the individual conscience needed to be enlightened on the subject just as the public or national conscience did. And Sir James Stephen might well have spared the superior censures that he passes so unctuously on the inconsistency between Newton's *Christian Life* and his occupation. Grace was still but at its beginnings in the soul of the young convert. When it became strong he turned his back on an employment in which he looked upon himself as a jailer. And as his judgment got light and his conscience guidance he came to be in later life the very centre of that circle within whose orbit the brilliant Wilberforce came. The efforts of Newton's friends were crowned with success and that in the very last year of his life, just as in the very last days of Wilberforce's life the existence of legal slavery came to an end in the British Dominions overseas. The slave trade came to an end in 1807; slavery itself in 1833.

But we have digressed. The policy adopted and favoured by the brethren of the Eclectic was that which gave tone and direction to the activities of Simeon in his ministry from the time that his judgment ripened. It was one that had a definite end as its aim. But it was content to be cautious until the way in providence should be opened for reaching the goal. This Society of his contemporary Evangelicals was a seed plot of new ideas. And these in due course germinated, grew and bore fruit. The line that he and his fellows took was less out and out, more denominational, more formally correct in ecclesiastical law than had been the greater freedom that the earlier Evangelicals allowed themselves. They now began to sheer away from close fellowship in the Gospel with their brethren outside the pale of the Church of England. In this, however, the fault was not all on the one side. For one of the products of the ferment and agitation in the political world of those years was the definitely hostile attitude taken up by militant Non-Conformity



to State Churches in general and to the Church of England in particular. This brought in a cold wind between brethren who in their agreement to differ had in the fellowship of the Gospel walked in much harmony under the reproach of Methodism for over half a century. There was now, however, a parting of the ways. It was the fact also that Evangelicalism in the Church of England was growing in strength and in influence. Its leaders knew this, and they made up their mind to make the most of their position and to assert their rights in the national Establishment. And Simeon was very definitely one of those that took this line. It introduced an era in which the Conforming Evangelicals were less heroic but more successful; Clapham's day had come.

#### IV

##### THE CLAPHAM SECT

Clapham was in the suburbs of London when John Venn began his ministry there. He was the friend of Simeon's early days, and the son of his revered Mentor, Henry Venn of Yelling. Quite a number of the leading Evangelicals of London lived in the Parish, waited on Venn's ministry, responded to his preaching, were drawn into close fellowship with one another, and strengthened each other's hands in the good causes which they espoused. The leading men among them were William Wilberforce, who was the parliamentary leader in the Crusade against the slave trade, and Charles Grant who was much less in the public eye. Grant was a Scottish Highlander of Jacobite upbringing, who had gone early to India and there came to know the Gospel in its power. He had risen rapidly in the service of the East India Company, and when he came home to Britain he was in almost everything the dictator of its policy and administration from its head office in Leadenhall Street. In this position he was able to wield an enormous influence for good, on Britain's expanding sphere of control in the East. He was virtually the business head of the great Company. Yet such was the type of secular estrangement from the interests of the Kingdom of God that controlled the outlook of the mercantile community that Grant for all his influence could not get his way in regard to securing freedom for definite missionary work within the region of the Company's interests. To him however

it was largely due that men like David Brown and Corrie and Thomason and Henry Martyn went out as Anglican Chaplains under the ægis of the East India Company. They were Simeon's men, and they set a pattern that told on the administrative classes in Bengal, that made it possible for Christian men of sterling character to give tone to the Anglo-Indian Civil Service which faced the horrors of the great Mutiny and saved a half Continent from relapsing into the trough of the unrelieved heathenism of former ages. When Dr. A. A. Hodge spent some of his early years as an American Presbyterian Missionary in India he saw for himself the good fruit of the exercise of Christian influence by such British rulers; and the impression which it made upon him so told on his thinking that American citizen as he was he ever afterwards had a high value for civil countenance given to Christian effort. The prejudices against a friendly working understanding between Church and State with which he went to India were dissipated and he came to the conclusion that such civil countenance shown to, and accepted by the Church, is quite a good thing. The Lawrences and Thomason and Edwardes and Donald Macleod were but outstanding members of the ruling caste which did such wonders and put forth such a beneficial influence. There were many of the rank and file or who held subordinate posts, who like their leaders were deeply in sympathy with the Evangelical outlook on life. Here was the outworking of the spirit that informed the Clapham Sect. With its leaders Simeon was in closest touch. There was, as it were, an alliance between himself and Charles Grant. Their mind was set on doing good on an imperial scale, and they did more than dream of it. They translated any dreams that they had into solid realities and substantial results. The civilized world can never prize too highly the pervasive leaven that went out to transform the life of the World from this fellowship of Christian men; the work was not done in a corner.

## V

## HIS CAMBRIDGE INFLUENCE

If the early years of his work at Cambridge were made difficult by opposition from town and gown alike, Simeon held on the even tenor of his way and though his first beginnings were small his latter end greatly increased. Henry Martyn,

though the best known of his disciples, was not the only Senior Wrangler that was a seal to his Ministry. The men that came under his spell were by no means the weaklings of his time, and as Cambridge is one of the two great Academic foci of the Church of England, in increasing numbers a rising Evangelical Ministry that owed much to his teaching began to tell on the life of England throughout its borders. It would be an exaggeration to say that by the end of his life the Church of England was permeated with Evangelical conviction or even sentiment. The Evangelicals were never near being a majority of the Clergy. But by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century they were the party whose activity was telling out of proportion to their numbers most unmistakably on the Church and on the nation. Non-Conformity was as a rule Evangelical also, and between the Evangelicals within and without the State Church the Evangelical ideal went largely to produce what is now sneered at as Victorianism ; it did much to elevate the nation though much was left unachieved.

For the last ten years of his life Simeon reached a place that has never since the Reformation either before his day or since been held by an ordinary Presbyter of the Reformed Church. In the days of Elizabeth and the first Stuarts, when Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was the Puritan stronghold, and men like Perkins or Preston or Sibbes in the Cambridge Pulpit moulded the rising ministry there was a somewhat similar influence wielded by noted Evangelicals on the life of the country as a whole. But none of these men exercised such a far-reaching and pervasive influence on their generation as he did. The University which at the outset of his ministry was cold when it was not definitely hostile, was so conciliated by the end of his days that when Charles Simeon passed away he had such a funeral as Cambridge has never given to any other of her sons. The ordinary man had done an extraordinary work. This goes to show among other things the importance of holding and making the most of a key position. As crop after crop of students felt the power of the word that he preached that word through them as they left their Alma Mater was able to tell on the circles and communities in which they laboured, and not a few of those young men were labourers that did not need to be ashamed, as they rightly divided the word of life. Thus could a little one become a thousand.

## VI

## HIS TEACHING

In his preaching Mr. Simeon was a genuine son of the Church of England. Her articles belong to the Reformed Confessions although in some expressions they are less definite or less developed than the full exhibition of the Reformed Faith. In the days of Queen Elizabeth there was no distinction between Conformist and Puritan as far as their definite Predestinarianism was concerned. Whitgift was as much in this respect a Calvinist as Cartwright, or Travers or Whitaker. At the Synod of Dort the English Theologians were men of high standing such as John Davenant, Joseph Hall, George Carleton, and Samuel Ward. They concurred in the condemnation of the Five Points of the Remonstrants. Yet there was a note struck in the teaching of at least some of these Divines that might lead one to think that in regard to the extent of the Atonement they were in sympathy with something like the mediating tendency of John Cameron of Saumur, and Moses Amyrald. These New-Methodists, as they were known in the great Huguenot Church, were on the subject of the extent of the Atonement what were called Hypothetical Universalists. The teaching of Davenant of Salisbury pointed in this direction, and might be defended from the view-point of the wording of the Church's Articles. Thus the Calvinism of the Church of England might be held to be distinctly moderate. In this respect Simeon was an Anglican. He expressly disclaimed rigidity of Doctrinal System and was the advocate of what he sometimes spoke of as Biblicism as over against consistent system. Yet in disclaiming system he had a system of his own. It is easy to see that the type of Calvinism which he disclaimed was a very human and lopsided one. True Systematic Theology does not make a partial choice among the statements of Holy Writ. For example, it does not refuse to acknowledge on the one hand the full truth of man's responsibility as a free agent for obedience both to the Law and to the Gospel. Nor does it on the other hand refuse to hold and teach the absolute sovereignty of God in His grace. The discussions on these subjects that were called forth by the uprising of Wesleyanism were remarkable for very extreme and unguarded statements on the right hand and on the left.

The extremes repelled Simeon and in regard to such controversies he showed a caution that might be almost termed a timidity. He tried to shun the reproach which he failed to escape. He was known as a Calvinist ; and such at bottom he was. But he was certainly one that eschewed controversy. The strain of militancy that may have been latent in his nature he managed to hold well in hand. He gave no uncertain sound when he taught that no man can come to Christ unless he is drawn by the Father. With equal emphasis he taught the true perseverance of the saints that those who have come to Christ must abide in Him. He did not lose sight of true repentance as the lifelong companion of the true believer. So he was eminently a textual preacher, and few men have left more abundant monuments of their preaching diligence than the author of volume upon volume of outline discourses which were known as Simeon's Skeletons. He set himself to help weaker brethren to make sermons and in this endeavour he met with no small success. In his method of sermon building, which when he adopted it was for him largely original, he followed much the same lines as the great French Huguenot preacher, John Claude of Charenton, lays down in his *Essay on the Composition of Sermons*. Simeon prepared carefully for the pulpit but he did not trust in his preparation as enough. He steeped it in prayer for he was eminently a man of God. This gave him power.

## VII

### HIS RELIGIOUS LIFE

We have said that Mr. Simeon was a man of prayer. This he was to an uncommon degree. He was a living Christian and as such he was no stranger to the dark side of trial that falls to the lot of the exercised soul. Yet in spite of such trial and darkness he was as a rule very bright and cheerful before his fellows. This was the case even though he often uttered a deep sigh. Such sighs he was wont to heave when alone by himself. But sometimes others heard and noted them. He has left on record a striking account of the meaning of those sighs, for he learned that some of his friends thought that they were a token that things were not quite as they should be with him in his life as Christian believer. This document is too long to quote at

length. But we shall give the gist of it and that in his own words. It is headed "Circumstances of my inward experience."<sup>1</sup>

"It is now a little above forty years since I began to seek after God, and within about three months of that time after much humiliation and prayer I found peace through that Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. About half a year after that I had some doubts and fears about my state in consequence of an erroneous notion . . . about the nature of saving faith. But when I found . . . that justifying faith was a faith of affiance and not a faith of assurance, my peace returned ; because, though I had not a faith of assurance, I had as full a conviction that I relied on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation as I had of my own existence. From that time till the present hour I have never for a moment lost my hope and confidence in my adorable Saviour ; for though, alas ! I have had deep and abundant cause for humiliation I have never ceased to wash in that fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, or to cast myself upon the tender mercy of my reconciled God.

"With this sweet hope of ultimate acceptance with God I have always enjoyed much cheerfulness before men, but I have at the same time laboured incessantly to cultivate the deepest humiliation before God. I have never thought that the circumstance of God's having forgiven me was any reason why I should forgive myself ; on the contrary, I have always judged it better to loathe myself the more in proportion as I was assured that God was pacified towards me. Nor have I been satisfied with viewing my sins as men view the stars on a cloudy night, one here and another there, with great intervals between, but have endeavoured to get and to preserve continually before my eyes, such a view of them as we have of the stars in the brightest night ; the greater and the smaller all intermingled and forming as it were one continuous mass ; nor yet as committed a long time ago and in many successive years ; but as all forming an aggregate of guilt, and needing the same measure of humiliation daily as they needed at the very moment they were committed. Nor would I willingly rest with such a view as presents itself to the naked eye ; I have desired and do desire daily, that God would put (so to speak) a telescope to my eye and enable me to see not a thousand only, but millions of my sins, which are more numerous than all the stars which God himself beholds, and more than the sands upon the seashore. There are but two objects that I have ever desired for these forty years to behold, the one is my own vileness, and the other is the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; and I have always thought that they should be viewed together, just as Aaron confessed all the sins of all Israel while he put them upon the head of the scapegoat. The disease did not keep him from applying to the remedy nor did the remedy keep him from feeling the disease. By this I seek to be not only *humble and thankful*, but *humbled in thankfulness* before my God and Saviour continually. . . .

"The consequence of this unremitted labour is, that I have, and have continually had, such a sense of my sinfulness, as would sink me in utter despair, if I had not an assured view of the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save me to the uttermost. And at the same time I have such a sense of my acceptance in Christ as would overset my little bark if I had not ballast at the bottom sufficient to sink a vessel of no ordinary size. This experience has been now so unintermitted for forty years that a thought only of some defect, or of something that might have been done better often draws from me as deep a sigh as if I had committed the most enormous

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, by Canon Carus, second edition, pp. 518-22.

crime ; because it is viewed by me not as a mere grain of sand but as a grain of sand added to an already accumulated mountain. . . .

“Hence then my sighs and groans when in secret, and which, when least thought of by me may have been noticed by others. And if the Apostle Paul so felt the burthen of sin as to cry ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ (Romans vii. 24) ; if he who ‘had the first fruits of the Spirit groaned within himself waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body’ (Romans viii. 23), yea, ‘groaned being burthened’ (2 Cor. v. 4), who am I that I should not so feel and so express my feelings ; or that I should even wish to be exempt from them ? So far am I from wishing to be exempt from them that I wish and long to have them in a ten-fold greater degree ; and as already in my daily approaches to the throne of grace and in my solitude and in my rides it is in sighs and groans that I make known my wants to God more than in words, for he knoweth the mind of his Spirit speaking in me ; so I desire yet more and more that the Spirit of God may make intercession both in me and for me with groanings which cannot be uttered since words would fail to give them utterance. . . .

“Nor is it on a personal account only that groanings are uttered. A Minister who knows what it is to ‘travail in birth with his people till Christ be formed in them’ will find many occasions of sorrow. . . .

“But supposing those expressions of my feelings to have been on a personal account only and that only from a sense of my unworthiness I am far from conceiving it to be on the whole an undesirable experience for by means of it my joys are tempered with contrition and my confidence with fear and shame. I consider the religion of the day as materially defective in this point ; and the preaching of pious ministers defective also. I do not see, so much as I would wish, an holy reverential awe of God. The confidence that is generally expressed does not sufficiently, in my opinion, savour of a creature-like spirit or of a sinner-like spirit. . . .”

Such words may be allowed to speak for themselves. They give us the authentic Charles Simeon.

## VIII

### THE JEWS AND PROPHECY

Missions to the Jews have had few warmer friends than Simeon of Cambridge. The London Jews’ Society, which has done so great work in this field, found in him not only one of its fathers and founders, but one of its most strenuous and successful advocates. An interest in the return of Israel to their place in the olive tree goes hand in hand with a believing study of what we are warranted to look for in regard to the seed of Abraham after the flesh. These two were in close fellowship in his case. In many instances such an interest in the restoration of the Jews has signalized itself by the stress that it lays on some pre-eminence that those that cherish it attribute to the restored of Israel when

they are brought in. And in particular it has been characterized to an unwonted degree with its devotion to the hope of our Lord's Premillennial return. Such was not the case with him. Some of his dearest friends like William Marsh of Colchester and some of his most zealous collaborators like Lewis Way, were keen Premillennialists. Indeed, the latter might almost be called the most ardent as well as one of the first promoters of modern Chiliasm. The teaching of such brethren began soon to tell on the outlook of the Anglican Evangelicals as a class, though it took some time before it became so prevalent among them as it now is. Mr. Simeon viewed with concern and a measure of alarm the shifting of the centre of gravity in the thinking and in the interest of so many of his friends. It was his fear that the expectation of a Kingdom and a Crown on earth was coming to displace the glory of the Gospel of a crucified Saviour. On this subject we may again let him speak for himself and we shall hear from his own mouth how he allowed liberty to others though he differed from them on what he held to be a very minor matter, while he was filled with a jealousy for the Gospel because his friends were giving a place and a proportion to their views of unfulfilled prophecy which he thought threw into the shade the matter that is the special burden of the Gospel and the special theme of the song of the Redeemed. He is writing to Ellen Elliott, the grand-daughter of his venerated friend Henry Venn, and we see from his words the deep anxiety that the displacement of the balance of interest on the part of so many of his friends was causing him.

Here are his words (Memoirs by Canon Carus, second edition, pages 657-9).

“ February 19th, 1830.

“ MY DEAR ELLEN,

“ A thousand thanks to you for your kind letter. There is a passage in it that speaks volumes—I will copy it: ‘ I can perfectly understand that there is a great tendency in many minds to dwell too exclusively on prophetic subjects and to be led away in consequence from the practical and heart-searching doctrines of the Bible.’ My dear Ellen, if your honoured Grandfather were at your side he would rise from his chair, and with his wonted ardour would say, ‘ My dear Ellen, it is not from *the more practical and heart-searching doctrines*, etc., but from the *more mysterious and fundamental doctrines of the Cross* that they are led aside; from Christ crucified to Christ glorified personally upon earth; from the doctrine which is both the wisdom of God and the power of God to a doctrine which is neither the one nor the other, from that which will to all eternity form, as it does already form, the great subject of praise and adoration in Heaven, to a doctrine in which no two of its



advocates agree, and which, as adding to the honour of God or the happiness of the redeemed does not weigh so much as the mere dust upon the balance ; from a doctrine which humbles, elevates, refines the soul, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, to a doctrine which fills only with vain conceits, intoxicates the imagination, alienates the brethren from each other, and, *by being unduly urged upon the minds of humble Christians, is doing the devil's work wholesale.*'

"Yes, my dear Ellen, it was by the cross that our adorable Lord triumphed over principalities and powers ; and by the doctrines of the Cross will He subdue the world to Himself ; and if instead of looking to find in some detached passages what may appear to establish the idea of the personal reign of Christ, you will read the Scriptures to see what is *their great scope*, what the great subject of the Apostolic preaching and what the means of effecting the moral revolution wrought upon mankind, you and I shall soon agree. I have no objection to your believing the personal reign of Christ and His saints ; I object to the prominence given to it, and to its *thrusting into the background* all the wonders of *redeeming love*. . . . only get your soul deeply and abidingly impressed with the doctrine of the *Cross*, and labour from day to day to comprehend the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ displayed in it, and everything else will soon find its proper place in your system. *That* is all I want ; whether the personal reign of Christ be a part of your system or not I have not the slightest concern. . . ."

It is obvious from how earnestly Mr. Simeon expresses himself that he felt deeply on this subject, and obvious also that there was in his nature an explosive volcanic element that could at times assert itself. These words were written when modern Millennial interest was in its youth. Over a hundred years have gone since he wrote them and with the judgment that he expresses in this letter one may easily see how he and the older Evangelical worthies of whom he was one would look on the record of Pre-millennial speculation and discord, that the years can unfold. He would regard this absorbing interest in the "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" of the future which waits to be unveiled as a side-tracking of the thinking and interest of the people of God. He is not positive or dogmatic in regard to what should be the answer to the question : "Is the Lord to come again before the Millennium to introduce it ? or only in the glory of His advent to judge the world ?" and the other possibility, "Do those that look for a Millennial Sabbatism on earth understand the symbolical language of the book of Revelation at all ?" He had many like-minded yoke-fellows who laboured with him in the good cause of giving the Gospel to Israel ; but unless one ventured to name Legh Richmond it would be hard to find another of the Anglican Evangelical leaders that more whole-heartedly than Charles Simeon was devoted to the ingathering to Christ and His obedience of the dispersed of Israel.

## IX

## VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

One can scarcely, in dealing with the work of Simeon, pass over one of the means that he employed to influence the undergraduates. He was in the habit of having private conversation parties which brought him into close contact with a class that he sought to reach and to mould; and not in vain did he conduct these parties. He was at bottom an aristocratic conservative who had no quarrel with the age-long ways of his Mother Church. Militant Dissenters who fought for their ideal of Religious Equality were said to claim a vested interest in the abuses of the Establishment. It suited their object that these should remain as they were, that they might have a better target at which to aim their shot. One of those venerable abuses was the system of Patronage that prevailed throughout the Church. If there was any virtue in this system Simeon would have his share of it. So he bought up advowsons in large towns and important centres that he might staff the charges with men of his own serious Evangelical outlook. This was the origin of the Simeon Trust. Unless rumour is a lying jade the holders of the Simeon benefices must in many instances have travelled far away from his standpoint; or it may be that the Trustees interpret their Trust with a latitude of meaning which would welcome as Evangelicals men who represent such doubtful things in the life of the present day as Central Churchmanship and Neo-Evangelicalism. Those who are called the Neo-Evangelicals justify the name by which they go in so far as it is a new thing under the sun that men with their opinions and outlook should in any sense of the word claim to be Evangelicals. It was Simeon's aim to take up and hold strategical points that the old Gospel which he prized and loved might be preserved and transmitted and perpetuated wherever his influence could tell on its behalf.

## X

## HIS CHARM

Charles Simeon was one of the big figures in the Evangelical world. He exercised the fascination of a heart that overflowed with kindness and good-will; and his life was a radiant epistle

from his Lord. He had a genius for friendship and he put this talent out to usury. His life is written by his friend William Carus, who was in full sympathy with him. Canon Carus also wrote a life of Charles Pettit McIlvaine, the American Bishop of Ohio. In this latter work we can see how Simeon won the love and the reverence of his Transatlantic friend. In their friendship it is evident how a man of stronger mental power and more disciplined theological training could surrender his heart to his venerable friend. This we mention only as a specimen of how his friendly disposition found an outlet for winning his fellows. It drew people to him in every rank of society and this very ordinary man who was a man of extraordinary devotedness and unity of aim was honoured in his old age as a very Patriarch ; and after the passing of a century since he went to be with his Lord, his memory is fragrant. It is one of the treasures that Evangelical England will not lightly let go.

JOHN MACLEOD.

*Edinburgh.*