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Charles Simeon: Prince of Evangelicals

Arthur Bennett

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So much has been written about Charles Simeon by biographers, historians, and ecclesiologists that it may appear unnecessary to write more. But in dealing with his ministry, achievements and widespread influence, the spiritual principles that motivated his life and character may be largely by-passed. It is needful to ask, What made him the man and Christian he was as outstanding preacher, servant-leader of countless students, co-founder of missionary societies, voluminous correspondent, and counsellor of many who were in need? He counted amongst his close friends Henry Venn, John Berridge, Henry Thornton, John Newton of whose papers he was an executor, and William Wilberforce with whom he associated in emancipating the slaves. As Vice-Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and Minister of Holy Trinity Church in that city for fifty-four years, he became, in Constance Padwick's words, 'The strongest religious influence in England'.

Lord Macaulay went further. Writing to his sister in 1844, eight years after Simeon's death, he said: 'As to Simeon, if you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway in the Church was far greater than that of any Primate'. Eighty years ago, Sir Richard Temple claimed that: 'He was probably the greatest parish minister that ever adorned the Church of England … though he has been dead many years (his influence) still radiates'. Evidence of this assessment in the modern age is to be seen in the spiritual outlook and ministry of Lord Donald Coggan who early in his Christian life fell under Simeon's spell. It was from him, writes Margaret Pawley, Coggan modelled his ministry. She notes that he was attracted to him as a Churchman, for his love of the scriptures, personal discipline, and the importance of preaching, evangelistic, and missionary strategy. It is therefore not too much to say that Coggan's episcopal work at Bradford and archiepiscopal tenures of York and Canterbury were done under the shadow of Charles Simeon.

The intention of this article is to make a new approach to Simeon by delineating the spiritual forces that animated his Christian outlook, p. 183 utterances, and ministry and made him the 'Prince of Evangelicals'. But, first, a brief resumé of his life.

LIFE OF SIMEON

He was born at Reading in 1759 of middle-class parents, the youngest of four sons. His father was a formal churchman. Of his mother little is known. After Eton schooling he entered King's College, Cambridge, in 1779, where within a few months he passed through an intense religious conversion to an abiding faith in Christ who became to him his 'Adorable Saviour'. For three years he found no one to share his views until, having graduated and being made a Fellow of King's, he was ordained and became a voluntary curate at St. Edward's church, Cambridge where his preaching attracted great congregations. In November that year, 1782, at the age of twenty-three he was appointed minister of Holy Trinity Church where for ten years he faced much opposition from parishioners, disdain by college Fellows and Heads of Houses, and mockery from undergraduates. In 1786 Henry Venn wrote to Rowland Hill: 'He is rightly esteemed, and

exceedingly despised; almost adored by some, by others abhorred'. But his biblical preaching filled his church, and in time he was called to give thirty university sermons. His aim, he said, was to win souls, and to that end he itinerated in other parishes until advised against; but made four preaching tours in Scotland by invitation of leading Presbyterians.

His greatest and most lasting work was perhaps amongst students for whom he held Friday Tea Parties, Conversation Meetings, and Sermon Classes in his rooms. To enable poor scholars to enter university he formed the London Clerical Society, and for clergy and wives he kept regular Bible study and prayer meetings. He gathered his own church people into Societies under stewards, some members of which were made parish visitors. His social concern stimulated him to create a system of poor relief in villages around Cambridge, and to create a straw-plaiting industry for his own parishioners. One such at Leith, Scotland, that lasted many years, owed its origin to him. He was also closely associated in the founding and development of the Cambridge Providence Society.

In 1787 a letter from India relative to a mission to Calcutta opened a new field of activity that enabled him to seek out and send Chaplains to the East including Martyn, Corrie, Thomason, Dealtry, Wilson, and Buchanan. In 1799 Simeon became a founder-member of 'Africa and the East Mission' (now the C.M.S.), and was one of its first Honorary Governors for Life. He was associated with the rise of Home Societies p. 184 such as that of the Bible Society; but above all he wholeheartedly supported the Jews' Society for which he formed auxiliaries and travelled far and wide to speak on its behalf. His desire that Anglican pulpits should be filled with godly evangelicals able to communicate the gospel led him to create the Simeon Trust in 1833 for placing such men in key centres. To help preachers he produced six hundred skeleton sermons, and before his death saw the production of twenty one volumes of his writings.

Although Simeon reached high positions at King's—Vice-Provost, Dean of Divinity, and of Arts—and his name was household, he was never elevated to any important Church office, but remained throughout his fifty four years' ministry at Holy Trinity a curate-incharge. He died on November 13th 1836 and on the 19th was buried in King's College chapel where a simple grave slab marks the site. It is said that his funeral procession was greater than that of the Duke of Wellington. The once despised and scorned man was now honoured by the presence of 1500 gownsmen, choristers, the Vice-Provost, professors, graduates, and Fellows, the bells in all colleges tolling, and shops in the main streets closed. On the anniversary of his death a prayer in his memory is said in King's College Chapel, and his beloved Church of England has reverenced him by including in its Alternative Service Book the following words for 13th November: 'Charles Simeon, Pastor, Preacher, 1836'. Notwithstanding this, Charles Smyth could write, 'I doubt whether the genius of that man as an ecclesiastical statesman has ever received sufficient recognition'. He was, he continued, like a bottle-neck through which 'the main stream of traffic passed before it displayed itself upon the swelling plain of Victorian religion'.

It is singular that in literary recordings of Simeon's ministry and fecundity little sustained assessment has been made of his rich and deep spirituality, The following is offered as a catena of some of his spiritual insights and maxims in the hope that one, who has been called 'The Luther of Cambridge', may give guidelines on faith and action to modern evangelicals and the church at large, and encourage all ministers to be as true to Simeon's Saviour as was he.

SIMEON'S NEW LIFE

The source of his practical holiness lies in the depth of his sudden conversion to Christ as Redeemer and Saviour. It was an experience he often referred to in his utterances and writings. He had entered Cambridge loving horses, dancing, intoxicants and dress, on which he P. 185 spent £50 a year, but with no vital personal religion. An order to him from the Provost, Dr. William Cooke, to attend mid-week Holy Communion first awakened his conscience to his sinful state and drove him to intense self-examination, fasting, prayer, and the reading of religious books. But in these his soul-agony found no relief. Envying a dog's mortality, and thinking Satan was more fit to partake of the sacrament, he discovered Bishop Wilson's small book on Holy Communion and from it learned that Israelites transferred their sins to an offering. The effect was instantaneous. 'What, may I transfer all my guilt to another?' he said, 'Has God provided an offering for me, that I may lay my sins on his head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer.' And so he did, that Passion Week of 1779, and on Easter Sunday awoke crying, 'Jesus Christ is risen to-day! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! From that hour peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul; and at the Lord's Table in our Chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Saviour'. Against the verse in his Bible, 'That thou mayest remember the day thou camest out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life,' (Deut. 16:3) he wrote, 'So must I, and God helping me so will I, the Easter week and the Easter Sunday, when my deliverance was complete.' To the end of his life he kept Passion Week inviolate for prayer, Bible meditation and fasting, and partook of only one meagre meal a day.

Captivated by Christ he never lost the sense of his presence and Christian assurance throughout a long ministry. All that he afterwards became in godly living sprang from that time, and what he had experienced of saving grace he coveted for others, especially ministers of the gospel. He wrote: 'Let a sense of redeeming love occupy the soul, and the heart becomes enlarged, and the feet are set at liberty to run the race of God's commandments … There is no other principle in the universe so powerful as the love of Christ; whilst that principle is in the heart, no commandments will ever be considered grievous'. It was a love that subdued his natural pugnacity, and became the nerveknot of his spirituality and the heart of his preaching. A dying Saviour on a cross became for him the hub of Christian truth, the reason for Christ's incarnation, the key to understanding the Bible, and the spring of holy living.

SIMEON'S CONCEPT OF THE CROSS

The cross was seen as the means both of redemption and sanctification. He fully grasped the truth that the soul's sinfulness that remains in the Christian is to be met only by application to the merits of Christ's P. 186 death. Every day of his life, he admitted, he had to flee to the Saviour and plunge into his cleansing blood. In this sense, he said, 'Christianity is not a system but a remedy'. Further: 'My only hope is that there is a fountain open for sin and uncleanness, and that I am yet at liberty to wash in it.' The sense of cross-centredness as a present power to meet his soul's needs and take it along the godly road never left him. As to his preaching, he said in the sermon to mark his fifty years' ministry:

> I can appeal to all who have ever known me that to proclaim a suffering and triumphant Messiah … has been the one object of my life without any variation … and without any turning aside after novelties; or fond conceits, or matters of doubtful disputation.

He saw an eternal virtue in the blood of Christ because of his Godhead, and sought its present power to ease conscience and cleanse the heart. The Christ he knew, he said, not

only loved and washed sinners from their sins but continues to love and wash them: 'I have a consciousness that I ought to lie at the foot of the cross, and I have a consciousness that I do'. No more so than when facing strong opposition in which he rejoiced from the thought that: 'Stones on the sea-shore lose their rough edges by rough friction'. At that time he placed his finger on the verse, 'They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his (Christ's) cross'. Applying the word Simon (Simeon) to himself as a word of encouragement he said: 'To have the cross laid upon me, that I might bear it after Jesus—what a privilege! It was enough. Now I could leap for joy as one whom Jesus was honouring with a participation of His sufferings … Henceforth I bound it as a wreath of glory round my brow'. To Ellen Eliot, Henry Venn's daughter, he wrote, 'Only get your soul deeply and abidingly impressed with the doctrine of THE CROSS, … and everything else will soon find its proper place in your system'.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

But Simeon never dissociated Christ's cross from the Holy Spirit and his work. By a strong Trinitarian belief derived from scripture he held that the Triune God was in the redeeming work at Calvary, the Father being reconciled by the offering there made, the Son who voluntarily made it, and the eternal Spirit through whom it was offered. Thus: 'Christ is ALL in procuring salvation for us, so the Holy Spirit is All in imparting it to us'. And again, the Spirit is 'the AGENT who applies to our soul all the blessings which Christ has purchased for us … As Christ died for all, so does the Holy Spirit strive with all'. Out of this striving the soul, P. 187 he held, is born again. For the Spirit: 'is not merely God in the universe displaying himself around us, or as God in His church declaring his will to us, or as God in our nature interposing for us, but as God in our hearts dwelling and operating within us'. It was his belief that: 'we must refer to Him the entire change wrought in us in the conversion of our souls to God'.

Simeon's mature thoughts on the Holy Spirit as co-equal and coeternal with the Father and the Son were set forth in four university sermons which he preached in 1831 when seventy-three years of age entitled, 'The Offices and Work of the Holy Spirit'. He argued that no one can belong to Christ unless the Spirit indwells them. But to 'have' the Spirit did not mean possessing the power of miracles and healings, for 'the time of such things is past'. Possibly having the French Prophets, the Shakers, and the Irvingites in mind he affirmed that: 'No such power exists at this day, except in the conceits of a few brain-sick enthusiasts'.

To him the gifts of the Spirit were nothing less than his graces by which the regenerated person is transformed into Christ-likeness. On being asked, 'What is a spiritual man?', he replied that he was one with 'a sense of his own sinfulness … by an influence from above'. As the faithful indwelling Monitor he taught that the Spirit is Teacher, Sanctifier, Comforter, and Rectifier helping the believer to decide rightly on moral questions by being renewed in the spirit of his mind. 'If his operations do not produce holiness,' he said, 'as well as light and comfort, they are no better than a delusion, a desperate and fatal delusion.'

THE SCRIPTURES

Simeon grounded his faith, life, conduct, and ministry upon the integrity and authority of the Bible as God's ultimate and final revelation of himself. As to mankind he held: 'The only warrant for a sinner's hope is the written Word of God … It is exclusively through the written word only that we are now authorised to expect His gracious instructions … This

He applies to the heart, and makes effectual for the illumination and salvation of men'. Thus, the Scriptures are to be taken, 'with the simplicity of a little child … not softening or palliating any point in it'. He learned by experience, he said:

> The written Word is the medium by which the Spirit works and the standard by which His agency must be tried … I do not therefore sit down to the perusal of scripture in order to impose a sense on the inspired writers, but to p. 188 receive one as they give it to me … I wish to receive and inculcate every truth precisely in the way and to the extent it is set forth in the inspired volume.

Simeon doubted whether a person could be called a Christian if he did not read and pray over the Bible daily. But he must accept, he told a Parisian Duchess, that, 'Brokenness of heart is the key to the whole'. His own method was clear. In a letter to the Bishop of St. David's (Dr. Burgess) he wrote:

> My mode of interpreting scripture is this. I bring to it no predilections whatever … I never wish to find any particular truth in any particular passage. I am willing that every part of God's blessed word should speak exactly what it was intended to speak … It is by coming to the Scriptures with this in mind that I have been led into the views which I maintain.

His aim, he told Thomason his curate-friend was, 'not only to enter into the spirit of it, but to BREATHE the spirit of it in my ministrations'.

SIMEON'S HOMILETIC METHODS

His preaching bore this out. To the vast numbers of people who heard him he was God's ambassador bringing to them biblical mandates prayed over, predigested, declared and applied. He favoured textual preaching rather than broad expositions of Scripture or topical subjects, as likely to settle truth on the mind, move the affections and stimulate the will. His aim was to give to the text: 'Its just meaning, its natural bearing, and its legitimate use'. But it must not be divorced from the context in order to buttress a preacher's pet theory. He held that the sermon must come from the text and be given: 'the true, faithful, and primary meaning, plainly, simply, understandingly, like the kernel out of a hazel nut; and not piecemeal like the kernel out of a walnut'. To prospective ordinands he counselled: 'Regard nothing but the mind of God in it. Let the text speak, and let the preacher be its mouthpiece'.

As to sermon content: 'There should be but one subject in every discourse, and that subject be the very mind of the Spirit … I think that every sermon should have, like a telescope, but one object in the field'. It should come from a spiritual heart that lives upon the truths preached. The preacher must be also sensitive to the congregation, not judging it by those present who could endure strong meat, but bearing in mind those who would be choked by it. His leading principle was not what he could tell but what his people could receive. 'I desire no other office than to be a helper of their joy,' he said. To that end the p. 189 spring of a minister's action should be love: 'Always put love in the chair and give him a casting vote. If a man's heart is full of love he will rarely offend'. But such love could only be possessed by one who had close union with God.

SIMEON AT PRAYER

Simeon's spiritual life was fed by personal prayer for which he often arose at 4 a.m. When he changed his rooms he engaged in it on their eves. Prayer undergirded his utterances, friendships and ministry. His custom was to meet with his curate and a few others on

Sunday evening in his rooms for supper and spiritual devotion, a church dignitary once present being deeply moved by his closing prayers of humiliation and confession that 'our tears may be washed in the atoning blood of Christ'. He challenged others to pray, as in the second sermon preached to the infant Church Missionary Society in which he countered objections to overseas missions by pleading: 'Let all excuses be put away, and let all exert themselves at least in prayer to the great "Lord of the Harvest", and entreat Him day and night "to send forth labourers into His harvest".' He believed that church committees needed special prayer, because, 'as Cabinets their members are human and mistakes and errors will be made', but if there was more prayer God would better direct them.

His prayer intensity focused itself on those who opposed him, asked for his intercessions, or were unconverted. When slandered by a newspaper editor he answered, 'I will pray for him'. For his uncivil churchwardens who locked his church door against him he prayed: 'May God bless them with enlightening grace'. To an unknown correspondent he wrote that it was enough for him to hear from 'a fellow sinner in distress,' for he could then pray for him. He sometimes spent nights in prayer, and once interceded throughout a week for a friend in need. To John Venn he wrote: 'To my thanksgivings I added my poor prayers for still more rich and more abundant blessings that all which God has already done for you may be only the drops before the shower'. Believing in the power of prayer to soften the heart and open it to Christ, he told his brother John to pray to become a Christian. Often in company he would silently intercede for others, as once, when horse-riding, a young German agnostic came to him and asked why his lips were moving, and was met with the reply, 'I am praying for you my friend'. Subsequent conversation with Simeon led to his conversion.

He delighted in social prayer, and boldly introduced others to it, and p. 190 wherever possible, as at Stapleford and on his Scottish tours, he created prayer circles, some continuing for many years. When Miles Atkinson, Vicar of St. Edward's Church, Cambridge, proposed a universal prayer session at 9 p.m. on Friday evenings for the nation then at war with France, Simeon gave it full support, and persuaded his friends likewise. In 1807 at a time of malevolent slander he wrote to Edward Edwards: 'Amidst all that I feel to mourn over, my soul rejoices exceedingly in God my Saviour. I trust that this joy will be made to abound more and more when you put your live coal to mine, and blow it with the breath of prayer'. Often knowing that he did not love an opposer as he should, he tried, he said, to put the dearest object of his affections in his place and pray for him.

Simeon grounded his prayer life on the majesty and sovereignty of God, for; 'With Him there is no weariness, nor any defect either of inclination or of power'. But he must be sought not only for help but, 'much more for the communications of His grace, and manifestations of His glory'. It was his abiding conviction that: 'A close walk with God is necessary for maintaining of fervour in intercession … It is scarcely ever that we can intercede with fervour, unless we enjoy an habitual nearness to God'. To one who was ill he wrote that the seclusion would give her opportunity for: 'more intrinsic and abiding communion with your Lord … My prayer to God for you is that you may have such abundant discoveries of his incomprehensible love, as may be more effectual to "fill you with all the fulness of God" '. In his view every attribute of God deserved 'all imaginable praise from his creature'. Above all he must be contemplated in his Son who should be praised for 'assuming our nature, and expiating our sins by His own blood upon the cross, and as becoming the living head of all His believing people'.

THE ENGLISH LITURGY

After the Bible, he rooted his spiritual life in the English Prayer Book of which he believed, 'No human work is so free from faults as it is'. But he would have been glad to have had a few blemishes removed. To those who criticized its set forms he answered: 'The deadness and formality experienced in the Church, arise far more from the low estate of our graces than from any defect in our Liturgy … No prayers in the world could be better suited to our wants or more delightful to our souls'. Although he used its prayers privately, he confessed: 'Never do I find myself nearer to God than I often am in the reading desk'. He P. 191 longed that those who used them should pray them as they were meant to be prayed, and not mouth them.

That which drew forth his affection for the Church's Prayer Book was the sin content that runs through its services. He loved the confession 'There is no health in us', as a reminder of his fallen nature, and never tired of using the Litany phrase, 'Have mercy upon us miserable sinners'. The notes of contrition, humility, and brokenness of heart emphasized in the services, together with the theme of redemption through the Saviour's blood were to Simeon: 'The religion that pervades the whole Liturgy, particularly the Communion service, and this makes the Liturgy inexpressively sweet to me'. Using the analogy of the Jewish Passover meal as God's act of redemption by means of shed blood, and the partaking of the Paschal Lamb, he held that the Lord's Supper to Christians 'makes known the end of Christ's death to all generations'. It is thus an 'instructive emblem … a commemorative sign', testifying that the Redeemer has completed his saving work. There must therefore be an eating and drinking at the Communion to show affiance with Christ's death: 'It is by an actual fellowship with Christ in His death, and by that alone, that we can ever become partakers of the benefits it has procured for us'.

Simeon never lost the sense of Christ's reality in the ordinance that he had found at the time of his conversion. He advised others to 'get just views of the ordinance, realise the great truths declared in it (and) look forward to the feast prepared in heaven'. But he rejected the belief that attendance at the Supper could recommend a person to God, for: 'It is Christ alone that can save us, not the ACT of praying or the ACT of communicating at the Table'. He believed that the service is a medium of communion with Christ actually present with his disciples hosting them with bread and wine as the Giver of grace.

SIMEON AND NONCONFORMITY

Simeon's firm allegiance to the Anglican Church was as much a matter of spiritual duty as of love. In view of the cynical treatment he received from churchmen and university alike he may well have left it for Independency or Presbyterianism. But a godly imperative kept him in its fold. He was wedded to its doctrines set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles and Homilies, and expressed in its Prayer Book. In his opinion the Protestant Reformed Church of England was the truest and finest manifestation of the Christian Faith emanating from scripture and had everything in it to meet his spiritual needs. He was sad to see others departing from it into Dissent and sought, by forming parish Societies, P. 192 to prevent his own people following them. As to the clergy, Stephen Neill makes the point that the actions of evangelical clergy in the eighteenth century could have led to separation from the Church, but:

> The influence of Charles Simeon swung the movement the other way, and all the evangelicals of the first half of the nineteenth century were convinced and devoted churchmen. G. M. Trevelyan's powerful statement that owing to Simeon the drift of evangelical clergy into Dissent was arrested is incontrovertible.

Without him, he went on, 'the Church of England might perhaps have fallen when the tempest of Reform blew high in the thirties'. The respect that evangelicals obtained within the Established Church was, in James Downey's view, 'largely accomplished through the teaching and influence of Charles Simeon who finally won a general respect for evangelical preaching' by his structured presentation of Christian truth and note of authority, and that in a church that rejected Whitefield's and Wesley's effusive style. Credit must also be given to the ordinands who attended his sermon classes and used his homiletic methods in their churches.

But Simeon did not discount nonconformity. His sentiments were warm to those ministers who shared his spiritual views, even to supporting financially Joseph Stittle, a layman, who shepherded some extreme Calvinists who forsook Simeon's ministry. By joining with Free Churchmen in creating Missionary and Home Societies he formed a bridge between Anglicanism and nonconformity, avers Trevelyan. Of Methodism, which hardly touched Cambridge, he had little contact, and met John Wesley but twice, though he visited Fletcher of Madeley and received a warm reception. Wesley's Arminianism and doctrine of perfection were hardly likely to attract the sin-conscious Simeon. Presbyterianism was more to his liking. He made close friends of Scottish ministers, and preached and communicated in their churches. Towards Roman Catholicism he was extremely severe and held the traditional view that its system was not of God. He showed acid disfavour to the Catholic emancipation movement, even refusing to vote for Charles Grant's son, a candidate for Parliament, who favoured it. 'Gladly would I give to the Catholics every privilege that would conduce to their happiness. But to endanger the Protestant ascendency and stability is a sacrifice which I am not prepared to make,' he said.

In 1829 he set forth his views on Romanism in a Founder's Day sermon in King's College Chapel in which he uttered a stern warning to Church and State arguing that: 'The pursuit of religion is the principal p. 193 thing'. He saw, he said, that the Emancipation measure would expose the nation to the inundation of Papists, and their priests would proselytize in a rapid way for the human heart is more drawn to a religion of rights and duties than to grace alone. Apparently the sermon was widely approved. He questioned whether the Roman system could be reformed. In his view: 'There must be an extermination of it as a Church, and any conversion must be of the individual … I do not think Popery changed; Papists if they get the power are bound to use every endeavour to convert or destroy Protestants'. Spiritual man though he was, Simeon would never make pragmatism or tradition the ground of true doctrine, or evidence of saving faith. Nor could he accept that the Anglican Church is the *via media* between Romanism and Protestantism. For him there was only one religion, that of the Reformed Faith founded on the Bible. His ecumenicity was not directed towards the creation of a monolithic religious system. In his view Christ's prayer, 'That they may be one', was a desire for a unity of inward life not of outward uniformity. There was thus a need not to preach against purgatory or transubstantiation for these are only Romanist channels of salvation, but to preach 'the great fundamentals of religion', of which Christ's offering upon the cross is God's only means of salvation.

In the modern age, when the Anglican Church is bending over backward to accommodate itself to Roman Catholicism, it is important to note Simeon's incisive attitude on the matter. He never sacrificed principles to consensus opinion.

SIMEON'S TEMPERAMENT AND DISPOSITION

But towards individuals from whom he differed he did not show animosity. Motivated by a love that irradiated his irregular features, his outer life was thoroughly attractive to others who were drawn to him by his warm-hearted nature, eager conversation, and holy walk. 'Love ever beamed on Simeon's face', commented Dr. Dealtry. Wilberforce went further and wrote in his diary, 'Simeon is with us—his heart glowing with love of Christ. How full of love he is, and of desire to promote the spiritual benefit of others. Oh! that I might copy him as he Christ.' J. J. Gurney, the Quaker, noted, 'He is full of love towards all who love his Master, and a faithful sympathising friend to those who have the privilege of sharing in his more intimate affections.' The pure spirituality of an English saint shone forth in him translucent in all he was and attempted. Others noticed his bright smile that expressed joy and tranquillity of a heart at rest in Christ. 'I consider love as wealth,' P. 194 he wrote, 'and as I would resist a man who should come to rob my house, so would I a man who would weaken my regard for any human being'. Believing that faults and failings lie above excellencies he closed his ears to gossip, prejudice or blame. God's grace, he felt, can alone subdue the pleasure of hearing others despised, or in seeking to elevate oneself at their expense. From the time of his conversion, he said, he diligently cultivated the principle of loving all for Jesus' sake. 'If he had the character of a person to study', said William Jowett, 'he examined it to the best of his judgement impartially, without respect of persons, like Jesus'. For Simeon, love for others was a Christian duty provided it was subservient to the love of Christ. The constraint of Jesus' love, more than response to the dominical command to 'disciple' them, channelled his thoughts and energy on behalf of the unconverted and activated him in his work for the Jews, Indians, and the Bible Society.

Nor did his love for others diminish as years passed, for to him to love fervently meant to love intently. He could not bear parting from his intimate friends, and was once found weeping over the memoir of one he had known. His antidote for grief was that the bereaved should pour out love upon those who remain, so softening the anguish of a wounded spirit. His affection for Henry Martyn, the brilliant mathematician and classical scholar who died in Persia is well known. Lesser known is Thomas Thomason (and his wife) who became an East Indian chaplain through Simeon's influence. Bidding them good-bye at Portsmouth, he adored God 'for uniting our hearts in love', but could not bear watching the ship sail down the Solent. Later, he poured out his love upon their son James who, as a child, was placed under Simeon's care during his English schooling. This side of Simeon's character is not always realized. Great and influential as he was he could yet stoop to the mind and personality of a youth whom he said was, 'The most dear and acceptable of all earthly treasures'.

THE NATURE OF SIMEON'S SPIRITUALITY

It remains to consider what elements in Simeon's spirituality made him to be what Constance Padwick judged as, 'One of the most typical English saints that ever lived'. Handley Moule comes near it: 'Perhaps the English Church never had a more loving and devoted son and servant than Simeon'. At the age of seventy-four Simeon thought otherwise in describing his spiritual life as:

> That of a sinner before God—it is that I ever expected to be and in fact ever wished it to be—I cannot forget what I am—I do not desire to forget what I p. 195 am—I am even, so to speak, satisfied with being what I am,—that God may be the more glorified.

When once asked, What is the chief mark of regeneration? he answered, 'Self-loathing'; as it was also that of sanctification. 'I want to see more of this humble, contrite, broken

spirit amongst us,' he said. 'The sitting in the dust (Ezek. 36) is more pleasing to God … give me a broken-hearted Christian, and I prefer his society to that of all the rest.'

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My Experience With and Without Christ

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