

SPECIAL ISSUE

lion & lamb



Content

Evangelicalism - The Vital Ingredients

Welcome to this special edition of Lion & Lamb on the theme of Evangelicalism. The background to this issue has global dimensions as Evangelicals in different cultures seek to redefine historical Evangelicalism in the light of a growing fragmentation within the “family” and debate about the “separatist” and “fundamentalist” models of Christian witness. ECONI’s contribution to this conversation is a modest but hopefully considered one, as seen in Alwyn Thomson’s article *A World of Difference* in which he explores the relationship between the confessional, historical and experiential aspects of Evangelicalism.

Although this debate is worldwide, it has inevitably taken on a particular character in the Northern Ireland context, not least the issue of evangelical Catholics and their relationship to Protestant Evangelicals. Paddy Monaghan of Evangelical Catholic Initiative asks and answers the question *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* and makes a plea for acceptance and an end to the cold war among evangelical Christians. In *Sorting out the Family* David J. Montgomery asks if Evangelicalism is a purely Protestant phenomenon, while T. Gordon Hills raises concern in his article, *Evangelical Catholics*, about the “orthodoxy” of Roman Catholic Christians.

In our struggles for closed definitions and theological correctness there is the danger that orthodoxy is not matched by orthopraxis. John Ortberg, in *Do They Know Us by Our Love?*, reminds us that the first casualty in our cultural (and theological) wars is not truth but love and highlights the subtle temptation and dangers of being “right”. In *Decommissioning the Heart* David Bruce takes us on a prayer walk and in an honest and vulnerable way examines four areas in which Ulster Evangelicals have been compromised. He invites us to a new sense of mission that necessitates the disarming of our sectarian hearts.

I am conscious that not everyone who reads Lion and Lamb will identify with the Evangelical label and therefore this debate might seem to them too introspective. However, for ECONI and many of those who resonate with our concerns the struggle to define the nature of Evangelicalism goes right to the heart of our work. What does it mean for Christians who identify with this particular heritage and value its theological emphasis to engage in peace, justice and reconciliation in our divided society? In *From the Director* David Porter invites us to consider this challenge.

I sincerely hope that this issue of Lion and Lamb will contribute to the goal of an authentic Christian witness in our broken society.

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Comment

Faith Alone...

Grace Alone...

Scripture Alone...

To the Glory of God Alone...

"Ourselves Alone"

There is a sickness within evangelicalism: the founding principles of the Protestant reformation are being betrayed, another gospel is being preached.

To the pantheon of fundamental principles - faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone, to the glory of God alone - another has been added by some who profess to be evangelical Protestants.

It is the principle *soli nos ipsi* - 'ourselves alone'.

It is "the great and glorious doctrine" of separation - but separation as they understand it, for they claim exclusive rights to define its meaning and to judge its application.

For some, it seems, this doctrine of separation has become *the* defining principle of evangelicalism.

You may believe in faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone, to the glory of God alone, but unless you 'separate' to their satisfaction you are only a 'so-called' evangelical.

Is it not extreme to call this another gospel? Yes, but such it is. For this gospel is an offence to the work of the cross.

On the cross Jesus Christ made atonement for sin and called men and women from every tribe, language,

people and nation. He called them to be the Church of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

This other gospel is an offence to the doctrine of the atonement for it recognises the power of the atonement to bring salvation but denies its power to create fellowship within the Body of Christ.

To preach this doctrine of separatism is to preach another gospel.

And will God stand idly by while those who preach another gospel empty the cross of its power?

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By
Alwyn
Thomson

From the Director

In September 1988 following eighteen months of meeting for prayer, bible study and discussion a small group of twenty Evangelical Christians published a statement - *For God and His Glory Alone*. Some 200 other Evangelical leaders added their names as a commendation of the biblical principles it sought to promote among Evangelicals living in the divided community of Northern Ireland. The aim of the statement was to explore the implications of Christian conversion in the context of a community in conflict. It stressed allegiance to Christ and transformation of lifestyle as the primary meaning of conversion and questioned the effectiveness of the Evangelical community in applying this commitment and the biblical values it implied to their words and actions.

For want of a better description it was subtitled an *Evangelical contribution on Northern Ireland* and as the response grew and a movement emerged this became shortened to ECONI. Our aim was to apply biblical principles to the situation in Northern Ireland through a process of asking questions.

Questions that challenged the personalised pietism of Ulster Evangelicalism. Stressing the centrality of prayer and evangelism to Evangelical witness we asked whether the bible did not require that a concern for peace, justice and reconciliation should not also be central as a gospel imperative. Such concern should then be reflected in practical engagement with the search for peace and healing in our community.

Questions that challenged the politicised partisan nature of Ulster Evangelicalism. While endorsing the need for Evangelical Christians to be engaged with the world of politics we challenged the assumption that Evangelicalism and Unionism were synonymous. Biblical faith was not dependent on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. Further the real threat to gospel witness in this land was the absence of a Christlike spirit in many of those who loudly professed their commitment to God and Ulster.

In return we expected to be challenged and questioned. Our contribution was accompanied by an invitation to join with us in looking afresh at the biblical witness, which remains the authoritative test of Evangelical faith and practice. This was the debate and prayerful reflection we longed to see for the good of the gospel in our community.

Many outside the Evangelical community simply asked the question as to what was meant by the term Evangelical. For some, including a growing number within the Evangelical community, this raised the vexed question as to whether Catholics could be Evangelicals. The range of opinion within the ECONI Steering Group has always been reflected in our responses. Alwyn Thomson's article provides a masterly analysis of these issues in the context of world Evangelicalism.

Personally I am convinced that an Evangelical witness will always be historical, confessional and experiential. As I have stated in a previous issue of *Lion and Lamb* this implies that Evangelicalism is profoundly Protestant, both in terms of the historic community in which we are rooted and the confessional framework of our faith. However it is a grave mistake to assume that as such the Evangelical community is in total the Christian community. It is not our theology or heritage that makes us Christian, but the love and grace of God. And who are we to limit the work of God in the lives of those who acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God and confess him as Saviour and Lord?

I have always been hesitant about the need for ECONI to respond to pressure to define Evangelicalism. Our primary task is to discern, on the basis of our best understanding of scripture, the prophetic challenge facing Evangelicals as they live in a community in conflict. It is for others within churches and congregations to debate the finer points of self-definition. However, it is significant that the response from those within the Evangelical family whose commitment to God requires a commitment to Ulster is primarily to attack our

***We live under a
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reconciliation.***

It is not our theology or heritage that makes us Christian, but the love and grace of God.

Evangelical credentials rather than to articulate an alternative biblical framework. The more we address the specifics of our situation, the more our integrity as Evangelicals is questioned.

Why is this so? Evangelicalism in Ulster has on many occasions succumbed to the potent mix of religion and national identity. It has at times expressed its political preferences in terms of a religious crusade or sought to preserve its religious liberties by endorsing political dominance. At a time when Catholicism provided the cohesive dynamic for Irish Nationalism, the Evangelical revival of the 19th century in Ulster facilitated a similar process for Protestantism and emerging Unionism. As Dr A T Q Stewart comments:

'When Catholic emancipation came about... the increased threat to the Ascendancy caused Irish Protestants of all denominations to close their ranks, a process made easier by the growth of Evangelical religion.' (The Ulster Crisis pg. 30)

For a significant number of Evangelicals, remaining British is not just a political preference, but a matter of religious liberty and practice. It is the means of preserving the Ulster Protestant way of life. The people of God and the Protestant people of Ulster have become synonymous in the political discourse of some. In this context, any proposed accommodation is a threat, not only to national and cultural identity, or to constitutional status, but also to personal and public faith.

The events of recent months have seen this dynamic lived out on our streets and around the tables of the talks' process. Yet the fear and insecurity on which it feeds is present in the hearts of many of our people. Why else are we so hesitant to accept responsibility and seize the initiative for building peace in this community?

As ECONI said in 1994 a cessation of paramilitary violence is not peace. It is an opportunity to work for peace. Over the last three years many in our society have worked hard for peace. Growing polarisation and the despair and disappointment of a return to IRA violence did not deter them. Following the renewed cease-fire there are many good reasons to be concerned about the commitment of some within the

Republican movement to peaceful and democratic means of achieving change in this community. There are many hard questions to be addressed, not least on consent, decommissioning, prisoners and policing. Yet we cannot escape our responsibility to take this opportunity, however flawed, to make peace.

No one, least of all Jesus, ever said it would be easy to live up to our calling as children of God - to be peacemakers. Perhaps that is why he makes love the key to bridging the gulf of broken relationships - Love your enemies! Dare we remind ourselves that it was while we were still his enemies that he loved us, came into our flawed and sinful world, lived among us, talked to us and made peace with us through his death.

This is the core of the gospel that Evangelicals proclaim. It is not that others are the problem, be they the terrorists, the extremists, Loyalists or Republicans. We are all people who daily demonstrate the destruction of human sinfulness in our lives and remain the focus for divine redemption through the love and grace of God. It is Jesus who equates hate with murder, lust with adultery and breaks down the self-righteous distinction we make between attitudes and actions. As Steve Stockman has written - you may not have pulled the trigger, but did you point your heart?

It is here that our Evangelical faith and our responsibilities in this community at this crucial time intersect. Of course we will have our political preferences and for many Evangelicals it is to remain part of the United Kingdom. But we also live under a gospel imperative to be people of peace, justice and reconciliation. In a divided community it is this criteria that is a relevant measure of Evangelical credibility.

David Porter is the Director of ECONI.

A World of Difference

Evangelicalism is a family. Like all families, there are ties that bind and there are conflicts that divide. Our diversity is often a consequence and reflection of those conflicts.

ECONI, as part of this family, has been drawn into disputes not of its own making. In particular, some Protestants have argued that ECONI is not truly evangelical while some Catholics have called for ECONI to make common cause with them on the basis that they too are evangelicals. While in some senses these debates can seem a distraction from our work, in another sense they go to the heart of the matter of who we are, what role we should play in our society and how we conduct ourselves in relation to one another.

DEFINITIONS

Evangelicals are not a single group with an agreed creed or unifying structure. Any attempt to understand the nature of evangelicalism has to recognise both the coherence that enables very diverse groups of people to be so identified and the flexibility that enables evangelicalism to accommodate these very diverse groups.

Second, defining evangelicalism is no easy task, as the multiplicity of attempts to do so indicate. Writers on evangelicalism have used a number of metaphors - it is a kaleidoscope, a Rubik's cube, a twelve ring circus.

Attempts to define a core that holds these varieties of evangelicalism together vary greatly. Perhaps the most concise attempt to define the core of evangelicalism is that of John Stott: evangelicals are "Bible people and gospel people."

Alwyn Thomson

George Marsden prefers a fuller definition: Evangelicals are "Christians who typically emphasise 1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of Scripture; 2) the real, historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture; 3) eternal salvation only through personal trust in Christ; 4) the importance of evangelism and missions; and 5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life."

David Bebbington suggests four key marks - biblicalism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism.

Most of these offer a theological definition. However, evangelicalism can also be interpreted as "a dynamic movement, with common heritages, common tendencies, an identity, and an organic character." (Marsden)

Thus "'evangelical' denotes a style as much as a set of beliefs. Groups as disparate as Black Baptists and Dutch Reformed Churches, Mennonites, pentecostals, Catholic charismatics and Southern Baptists all come under the evangelical umbrella and demonstrate just how diverse the movement really is." (Institute for the study of American Evangelicalism)

While these and other writers offer differing definitions of evangelicalism, there are a number of discernible common themes.

The supreme authority of Scripture

Evangelicals believe that the Bible is the Word of God - breathed into existence by the Holy Spirit. It is truthful and authoritative. Scripture is interpreted and proclaimed by the Christian community - the Church of Jesus Christ - through the Holy Spirit, but the community itself stands under the authority of Scripture.

The majesty of Jesus Christ as incarnate God and as saviour through his work on the cross

Evangelicals affirm that God came to us in human form in the person of Jesus. Evangelicals emphasise the significance of Jesus' death on the cross as an



the evangelicals of econi

The lordship of the Holy Spirit in creating and sustaining Christian life

Evangelicals stress the sovereignty of God in making men and women Christians. The Spirit sustains that new life and brings about spiritual growth. In recent decades the growth of the charismatic movement - while sometimes controversial - has given new emphasis to the role of the Spirit in the Christian life and in the Church. This movement is widespread within, but not limited to, evangelicalism.

The need for a personal response of faith

At the heart of evangelical spirituality lies the concept of a personally appropriated faith. While evangelicalism has often focused upon a dramatic conversion experience, it is widely recognised that this need not be the experience of everyone. "It is present convertedness rather than the memory of experience of past conversion which is of fundamental importance." (Alister McGrath)

The necessity of evangelism

Evangelicals believe that all human beings are separated from God by their sin. Yet God has made it possible for men and women to be forgiven. God's desire is that the gospel should be made known to all. The task of achieving this is given to his people. Consequently, evangelicals have often been at the forefront of evangelism, both in their own communities and overseas.

The importance of the Christian community for Christian life and growth

While evangelicalism lacks a specific doctrine of church order, it is not lacking in the conception of the Church as the body of Christ. This is seen in the emphasis on the practice of Church life - Christian people meeting together to worship God and proclaim his truth - and in the ability of evangelicals

PROTESTANTS

ECONI grew out of and reflects the evangelical tradition within the broad Protestant community. Its Deed of Trust incorporates the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith. Its evangelical convictions and its place within the wider evangelical community in Northern Ireland have been set out in the PATHWAYS booklet, *The Fractured Family*. Members of its Steering Group are active in evangelical churches and in a wide range of evangelical parachurch groups.

Nonetheless, it is clear that some people we would recognise as evangelicals do not recognise us as evangelicals - or, at best, see us as evangelicals who have strayed. The ongoing criticism of ECONI from a number of groups, including Take Heed Ministries, the Independent Orange Order, the Evangelical Protestant Society and the Elim and Free Presbyterian churches, makes this clear.

The existence of these groups raises two issues: Why is there this hostility? How should ECONI respond?

True Evangelicals or New Evangelicals?

Recent issues of Take Heed Ministries' magazine - *News from the Front*, deal with ecumenism, Roman Catholicism and the charismatic movement. Within these broad categories the author criticises advocates of the Toronto blessing in the USA, UK and Northern Ireland and is particularly scathing in his criticisms of 'ecumenical evangelicals' - Charles Colson, Jim Packer, the Promise Keeper movement, Billy Graham, American Christian singer Michael Card, Steve Chalke and Oasis Trust, Gerald Coates and Pioneer Ministries as well as humbler bodies such as ECONI, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church and *Bread* magazine.

Their point is simple: evangelicalism is confessional. Where that confession is denied the proper evangelical response is separation. Any movement which does not share the evangelical confession - Roman Catholicism, liberal Protestantism, the charismatic movement - is to be avoided, exposed and condemned. Those who profess to be evangelical but do not practise separatism undermine their profession. Therefore, they too must be avoided, exposed and condemned.

Hostility to ECONI is only part of a wider hostility to perceived compromise and declension among professing evangelicals. Critics of ECONI are part of a wider debate over the identity, nature and future of evangelicalism.

A host of questions arise: Has there ever been an agreed understanding of evangelicalism? Is modern evangelicalism more fragmented than in the past? If so, what has caused this fragmentation? How should we understand evangelicalism - a movement, an ideology, a theology? Is it an historical phenomenon, a social one, a theological one, or some combination? Which approach should take priority? Is 'evangelical' synonymous with 'Christian'? If not, what does it mean? Is it just one way of being Christian? How should evangelicals relate to other Christians who are not evangelicals? Is the future for evangelicalism one of separate development of different evangelical traditions? Will we have to define the kind of evangelicals we are? Will we have to abandon these words altogether?

Fraying? Fragmented? Frustrated?

While evangelicals have always had their differences on important issues - the nature of ministry and the Church; the nature of the sacraments; approaches to

worship and evangelism; the extent and nature of the atonement; the meaning of sanctification - it could still be argued that evangelicalism is more fragmented than in previous times. Many explanations have been proffered. However, I want to focus on that suggested by David Wells in his essay. "*On Being Evangelical: Some Theological Differences and Similarities*".

Wells argues that evangelicalism has gone through three phases in the post-war years - confessional, transconfessional and charismatic.

Confessionalism, emerging after the war, defined evangelical belief in terms of biblical doctrine. "This kind of evangelicalism found its unity in commonly owned, commonly confessed truth..."

Transconfessionalism emerged in the 1970's. Outward success and growing diversity necessitated "a shift from confessional substance to simple, organizational fraternity...The ground of relatedness among evangelicals...has far less to do with living within the definitional parameters of what it means to be evangelical and far more with belonging

somewhere within the entrepreneurial and organizational life of this righteous empire."

Wells understands the charismatic tradition, emerging in the 1960's, to include both pentecostalism and renewal movements. These, he suggests,

"are forms of evangelicalism that are not primarily theologies." Instead, both arise centrally from a spiritual intuition about the presence of the Holy Spirit." The outcome is that biblical confession arises as an "adjunct to the experience of the Holy Spirit," an experience which also "provides the ground on which charismatics desire to meet others." Charismatic evangelicals have tried to re-establish links which had earlier been pursued by confessional evangelicals but had been allowed to wither by transconfessional evangelicals. However, whereas the confessional evangelical established the links on the basis of a shared confession, charismatic evangelicals did so on the basis of a shared spiritual experience.

Wells also argues that while the impulses that produced these developments may have predated the 1940's it is only in the post war world that they have taken shape. As a consequence he suggests that much of the work currently being done on earlier evangelicalism cannot help us in understanding "how the contemporary evangelical world is thinking about its own theological nature."

Don Carson broadly endorses Wells' argument and makes a significant contribution of his own. In essence he argues that evangelicalism has historically been a confessional movement. However, "especially in the evangelical world of the past three decades or so, there are growing components very largely disconnected from any theological definition. But it is far from clear to me that such diversity prevailed in any large-scale way earlier. The question, then, is whether we should struggle to

Has there ever been an agreed understanding of evangelicalism?

preserve what is godly and disciplined by Scripture in the movement, and insist on attaching such elements to the 'evangelical' label, rather than resorting too quickly to sociological categories."

The end result of applying a sociological definition to evangelicalism is that what was central for past generations of evangelicals - theology - is marginalised. Consequently the history of evangelicalism is distorted. Further, contemporary evangelicalism loses its connection with historical evangelicalism and the term itself becomes almost as meaningless in our world as the term 'Christian'.

Conclusions

This debate within evangelicalism is not going to go away or be resolved. Given that local manifestations of the debate will continue, how should ECONI contribute to this debate and how should we relate to our critics?

First, we need to recognise the bigger picture and see the issues in dispute between us as part of a much wider debate within evangelicalism.

Second, we should be willing to accept that there may be no way around the differences between us. They will not convince us that theirs is the only authentic understanding of evangelicalism, nor will we convince them to the contrary.

Third, we must respect their evangelical identity. There is no historical or theological basis for arguing that they are not 'authentic' evangelicals. The argument that they are 'fundamentalists' and that 'fundamentalists' are not evangelicals is not credible no matter how many times it is made. It would be wrong to oppose their exclusivist understanding of evangelicalism with one of our own.

Fourth, we may have to accept that evangelicalism is in need of some redefinition. While there may be a shared confessional identity, the outworking of that identity may lead to division and disagreement among us. Perhaps we have to accept that in the future we will have to define ourselves by the kind of evangelicals we are, rather than defining ourselves simply as evangelicals.

Fifth, while evangelicalism may be broader than it once was or than some people believe it should be, it cannot be endlessly flexible without becoming meaningless. There must be borders if there is to be any sense of standing in a recognisable theological or historical tradition. It follows that in ECONI we must be sure of our biblical and theological basis and ensure that our thoughts, words and actions are securely grounded and justified on that biblical and theological basis.

CATHOLICS

'Evangelical in the Strictest Sense'

The issue of relationships between 'evangelical Protestants' and those Catholics who identify themselves as evangelical is intimately connected to the wider debate within evangelicalism. Judgements on the credibility of a person's claim to be evangelical often turn on the question of their willingness to accept the legitimacy of a claim to be evangelical on the part of Catholics.

Moreover, as with the internal debate within evangelicalism, this debate has a much broader context. In fact, the debate is broader still since it is part of a debate about relationships between evangelicals and Catholicism generally. In this case, judgements on the credibility of a person's claim to be evangelical often turn on the question of their willingness to accept the legitimacy of Roman Catholicism and to make common cause with Catholics. The criticisms directed at Jim Packer and Chuck Colson for their part in preparing and endorsing the statement *Evangelicals & Catholics Together* is the best known example of this.

Once again it is important to keep this wider context in mind when thinking about our local situation. The following questions provide a framework for addressing this issue: Are 'evangelical Catholics' evangelical? How should we as 'evangelical Protestants' relate to 'evangelical Catholics' and, in particular, how should we in ECONI relate to Evangelical Catholic Initiative?

We are all Evangelicals Now?

It is generally accepted that the historical phenomenon of evangelicalism has its roots in the 18th century when a series of 'awakenings' took place among English speaking Protestants. While drawing on the traditions of English and New England puritanism, these awakenings "created a distinct set of new emphases in the Christian world."

Evangelicalism, understood in this historical sense, is a Protestant movement. Moreover, despite claims to the contrary, evangelicalism has always had an element of anti-Catholicism.

However, even if historically there is little

justification for applying the term 'evangelical' to Catholics, might there not be theological justification for doing so?

'Evangelical Catholics' and 'Evangelicalism'

Evangelical Catholic Initiative (ECI) has been the most active group in Ireland promoting 'evangelical Catholicism'. Their leaflet *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* contains a series of affirmations and statements of belief and some background notes. While many of the affirmations have a clear evangelical ring to them, there is more to the leaflet than these affirmations.

An overall assessment of the material in the leaflet cannot be based solely on these affirmations. As well as asking what ECI is affirming we need to ask what ECI is denying. Evangelicalism by affirming certain convictions is denying others. Thus evangelicalism, understood theologically, has both positive and negative aspects. The authors of *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* highlight the positive affirmations but seem reluctant to deny beliefs incompatible with evangelical conviction.

To take one example, in its affirmation on Scripture, the leaflet reads: "Scripture in its entirety (both Old and New Testaments) is the inspired authoritative Word of God." However, a note to the series of affirmations states that "points above are part of the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church" and makes reference to the *Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)* of Vatican II. While it is true that *Dei Verbum* does not say less than this, it is also true that it says a great deal more. Specifically, *Dei Verbum* affirms the role of Tradition in relation to Scripture and places both within the framework of the Magisterium of the Church.

This same difficulty arises in relation to the other affirmations, all of which are claimed to be part of the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

This raises a second issue, What do these affirmations mean? If they can be accommodated to the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church can they mean the same to 'evangelical Catholics' as they do to 'evangelical Protestants'? Even if the language is similar we need to ask if the content has changed and, if so, has it gone beyond the point at which we can still recognise it as the same

language. ECI, while making these affirmations, continues to distribute materials from other sources that affirm Roman Catholic doctrines incompatible with evangelical belief. Thus the article *Catholic Faith and Fundamentalism* by Raymond Brown, which ECI describes as "presenting the Biblical understanding of ten Catholic doctrines," reaffirms a host of Catholic doctrines that evangelicals would not accept.

It is not that 'evangelical Catholics' are deliberately setting out to subvert evangelicalism. It is rather that the theology of 'evangelical Catholics' is incoherent, eclectic and confused - incoherent in that it tries to affirm too many things without recognising that some are mutually exclusive (i.e. the evangelical view of Scripture and the Catholic Church's view of Scripture); eclectic in that it draws from official Catholic

The theology of 'evangelical Catholics' is incoherent, eclectic and confused.

teaching, evangelical tradition and renewal / charismatic traditions; confused in that most evangelical Catholics and the groups that represent evangelical Catholics have not yet managed to put all of these theological traditions together.

This brings us back to David Wells' analysis of post-war evangelicalism noted above. Most Catholics who identify themselves as evangelicals have come to faith through renewal and charismatic movements. If Wells is right, shared spiritual experience is a more important ground of association than shared confession.

If the historical and confessional considerations outlined above are the basis for an answer to the question, Are 'evangelical Catholics' evangelical? the answer has to be no. On the other hand, if we were to decide that we are evangelical on the basis of a shared experience of new birth in Christ we might want to answer 'YES'. However, in doing so we might also undermine the legitimacy of our own understanding of evangelicalism.

The difference between groups like Take Heed Ministries on the one hand and Evangelical Catholic Initiative on the other, is that Take Heed Ministries comes from a recognisably evangelical tradition and has at its core a recognisably evangelical confession - both positively and negatively. Our disagreement concerns the

outworking of those beliefs and that tradition in our contemporary situation. ECI does not come from a recognisably evangelical tradition, nor is its confessional core evangelical. Rather, evangelical beliefs -together with other beliefs have played an important role for 'evangelical Catholics' as they have reflected on their spiritual experience.

While we may sometimes feel more comfortable with the ethos and spirit of 'evangelical Catholics' than with that of some of our fellow evangelicals this is a different issue. For while evangelicalism *has* a spirituality, evangelicalism is not a *kind of* spirituality. Evangelicalism is a historical movement, subject to change.

However, throughout its history and in all its changes there has always been a fundamental theological, confessional core. To abandon that confessional core is to reduce the concept of evangelicalism to meaninglessness. However, if we believe that to be evangelical is to hold to this confessional core then we have to say that 'evangelical Catholics' are not evangelicals.

Conclusions

How then should we relate to those who wish to be known as 'evangelical Catholics'?

First, once more we need to recognise and bear in mind the bigger picture.

Second, we must make clear that we do not consider 'evangelical' and 'Christian' to be synonymous. God has his people beyond the bounds of evangelicalism. This is true, not only of believers within Catholicism, but also of those within Orthodoxy and many of the more confessional Protestant churches. It is also worth noting that many Southern Baptists would not consider themselves evangelical - evangelicalism being seen as a Northern phenomenon in the USA.

Third, we should make clear our concerns about the use of the term 'evangelical' by groups such as ECI. An honest debate on these matters is better in the long term for both groups than attempts to gloss over real and important differences. It follows from this and the previous point that questioning the claim to evangelical identity on the part of 'evangelical Catholics' is not tantamount to questioning the validity of their Christian faith.

Fourth, where possible we should enter into constructive debate with 'evangelical Catholics'. This debate might well have as its focus discussion of the nature of evangelicalism and the possibility of relationship, not on the basis of shared evangelical identity but on the basis of shared Christian faith. It might also focus on the possibility of 'evangelical Catholics' finding new ways of expressing their identity that do not rely on them being identified as part of the evangelical fold.

Fifth, where possible we should enter into constructive debate with our own evangelical constituency over the existence of groups like ECI. While making clear our own position regarding the claim to be evangelical, we also need to make very

clear that we accept our fellow believers wherever they are found. Since many evangelicals assume that questioning the evangelical identity of 'evangelical Catholics' is to question their Christian identity we need to actively challenge this view.

Finally, we need to engage in an internal debate over the nature of our relationship with 'evangelical Catholics' in practical terms. If we accept them as believers then what limits should we set on the practical outworking of that acceptance?

Suggested Reading

*The standard history of Evangelicalism in Britain is David Bebbington's, **Evangelicals in Modern Britain** (London 1989). For the United States the many works of George Marsden should be a good starting point. His **Fundamentalism and American Culture** (New York, 1980) is the standard work. Also useful is the collection of essays edited by Marsden, **Evangelicalism and Modern American** (Grand Rapids, 1984). For Ireland the key work is David Hempton and Myrtle Mill's **Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890** (London, 1992)*

*Critical analysis of modern evangelicalism can be found in Mark Noll's **The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind** (Leicester, 1993) Alister McGrath, **A Passion for Truth** (Leicester, 1996) and two works by David Wells, **No Place for Truth** (Leicester, 1993) and **God in the Wasteland** (Leicester, 1994).*

*Two collections of essays are also useful. Noll, Bebbington and George Rawlyk have edited **Evangelicalism** (New York, 1994) which contains the piece by Wells mentioned above, and Rawlyk and Noll have edited **Amazing Grace** (Grand Rapids, 1993).*

*Of the many studies on evangelical attitudes to Roman Catholicism the essay by John Wolffe **Catholicism and Evangelical Identity**, contained in Noll, Bebbington and Rawlyk, is a good starting point.*

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What is an Evangelical Catholic

Between 1972 and 1978 there was a major move of the Holy Spirit in Ireland when some 10,000 Catholics came into a deeper, or first-time, personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour and were baptised in the Holy Spirit. Within a short period there were vital charismatic prayer meetings in nearly every town and village in Ireland. A feature of this revival was its trans-denominational nature - very often God used Catholic Christians to bless Protestant and vice-versa.

In 1978 this revival seemed to dry up as major efforts were made to promote "single identity" renewal within individual Christian denominations, particularly within the Roman Catholic Church. From 1978 to 1988, while many Catholic Christians held on to an inter-denominational vision, most of the 400+ Charismatic Prayer Groups gradually became exclusively Catholic, while some left to form House Churches. This caused a measure of hurt, and gave rise to allegations of proselytism. New Age practices made some inroads and there was a return to more traditional forms of Catholic devotion.

In 1988, a group of Catholic Christians in Ireland produced a 6 page document *What is an Evangelical Catholic?*, published with the official permission of the Roman Catholic Church. It was updated in June 1992 with comments of welcome from Bishop Joseph Duffy, Dr. George Carey and others. It has now been translated into

Motivation

One aim in setting up ECI was to build bridges between Evangelicals in the Protestant and Pentecostal Churches and evangelical Catholics. We believe that what unites us is far greater than what divides. Indeed, what divides Christians in Ireland is often not doctrine, so much as history, culture, language and politics. Another aim was to foster genuine evangelism, while avoiding proselytism. We are convinced that it is only as Evangelical Christians within the Protestant and Pentecostal Churches find their brothers and sisters in Christ in the Catholic Church and vice-versa, that a real spiritual revival will sweep Ireland. The II Chronicles 7:14 principle surely applies that "If my people will humble themselves, turn from their wicked ways and pray God will hear.. heal..and forgive".

Mission Statement

The Evangelical Catholic Initiative has three objectives: (1) To see a Holy Spirit inspired renewal in the Roman Catholic Church, which is Father orientated, Christ-centred and grounded in the Holy Scriptures. In this we need the support of our brothers and sisters in the other

Paddy Monaghan, secretary of the Evangelical Catholic Initiative, gives us his answer.



Christians rediscover their Jewish roots they are enriched and find a greater unity together.

What do evangelical Catholics believe?

We believe that every person needs to come to know Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour, to read His Word and to grow in the knowledge of God. Salvation accomplished once and for all on Calvary is a free gift. We cannot earn or merit or inherit it. We need to receive it by faith. As we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour of our lives, we are changed. We enter eternal life today by entering into a living relationship with the living God. We now want to bring the good news to others. In Ireland many Catholics and Protestants have been over sacramentalised and under evangelised.

Our Identity

The term 'evangelical Catholic' helps to define identity. My primary identity is that I am a Christian. I am in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Secondly, I am evangelical (the Greek word for *gospel* in

By God's providence, I am a Christian in the Roman Catholic denomination. This is the Christian tradition I am working in for a Christ-centred, Biblically based renewal. It stands in need of reformation, but has also within it many Scriptural treasures.

Barriers to Relationships

Most barriers to relationships tend to be cultural, political, historical and linguistic. Many Catholics would react negatively when asked if they were born-again or saved. What many hear in this question are issues of proselytism that go back to famine days. They interpret the question as meaning: 'Have you become a Protestant yet?' However, the Gospel truth is that we are justified through faith in our Lord Jesus. We are justified by faith, not by the language of faith. Many Catholics are born again but may not use this terminology to express it.

Many evangelical Catholics would prefer not to be called "evangelical", because the word has come to have

Is it not time for the cold war among evangelical Christians to end?

Most evangelical Catholics would prefer to be called Catholic Christians, Committed Christians, Charismatic Catholics, born again Catholics or simply Catholics who love the Lord. However, whatever the label, they love Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour and are thus brothers and sisters of all true Evangelicals within the Protestant and Pentecostal Churches, under one Father. Our differences should not divide, when Christ is at the centre. God draws us to Jesus in various ways, but there is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus - John 14:6.

Doctrinal Differences

There are real doctrinal differences, but these are often exaggerated and misunderstood. In any case, doctrinal differences are a call for dialogue around the Holy Scriptures, and mainline Evangelical Protestants are now moving down this path in most parts of the world. Let us look briefly at two areas of difference - the Eucharist and Mary.

The Eucharist

Evangelical Catholics strongly affirm the Roman Catholic Church teaching that there is only one all-sufficient sacrifice for sins, accomplished once for all on

the Eucharist is: (1) a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord (2) a source of loving communion with Him in the power of the Spirit, and (3) a source of the eschatological hope for His coming again.

We also affirm a statement from the Anglican/RC International Commission on the Eucharist, in 1981, "Christ's redeeming death and resurrection took place once and for all in history. Christ's death on the Cross, the culmination of His whole life of obedience, was the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. There can be no repetition of, or addition to, what was then accomplished once for all by Christ."

Some Evangelical Protestants seem not to want to hear what our Church affirms on the once for all nature of the sacrifice of Christ. They seem unwilling to accept that this is the official teaching of the Catholic Church.

Mary

Mary is God's guarantee that His Son truly took on human flesh. He who was God drew His humanity from Mary, his mother, through the Holy Spirit. Mary is a model for us of walking in obedience, in humility and in the fear of the Lord. Luke 1:48 tells us that all generations will call her blessed. Jesus himself points out that Mary's blessedness is in hearing the word of God and observing it. Mary, as a disciple, is saved by faith in Jesus. Mary's natural relationship to Jesus as His mother was put in proper perspective by Jesus, in Matt. 12:48-50 ("Who is my mother? ... For whoever shall do the will of my Father...is my brother and sister and mother.").

In gratefully acknowledging the unique role of Mary as Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see no scriptural warranty for ascribing to her any other role in excess of

that. Jesus Christ alone is the one Mediator between God and human kind. However, we do believe that Evangelical Protestants, rather than reacting against Mary, should begin to state positively what part they believe she played as a “handmaid of the Lord” in God’s purposes. This would bring us closer in our understanding of this magnificent woman of faith.

How many evangelical Catholics are there in Ireland?

The 1993 edition of Operation World by Patrick Johnstone of WEC International estimated the number of evangelical Catholics in Ireland at 2.6% or 100,000. Our estimate would be considerably higher than this. They are to be found in all of the 1,400 parishes in Ireland. They might be participants in an Alpha Course or a Parish Prayer Group or Bible Study, in a Cursilio or Focalare Group, or they may just be ordinary parishioners or clergy.

Plea for Acceptance

Is it not time for the cold war among evangelical Christians to end? Surely we need to allow the Holy Spirit to remove the suspicion and prejudice from our hearts so that we can find one another across the divide, listen to each other’s testimonies and build friendships. Many Evangelicals feel threatened when they hear that a Catholic, who knows Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour, still worships God in the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps we need a revelation from God to see that the Body of His Son extends through all the Christian Churches. Then, like Peter, in Cornelius’ house, we might also affirm: “I now realise ... that God does not show favouritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.” Acts 10:34.

ECI Activities

ECI organises conferences, produces a newsletter and various pamphlets e.g. “Will I go to Heaven when I die? - no doubt about it” (a 16 page evangelistic tract). A second tract for Catholics entitled *Why you need to read the Bible* is published with ecclesiastical permission and has proved very popular (140,000 in print. 50 were sent to each of the

1,400 parish priests in Ireland, (sponsored by a N.I. evangelical Protestant businessman!). For three years ECI sponsored a Christian Leaders Conference, now an annual Charismatic Renewal Leaders Conference attended by mainline and Pentecostal/New Church Leaders. ECI also strongly promotes the Alpha Bible Study Course in various parishes and ran an Alpha Leaders Seminar last March. We are also involved in networking across the denominations and in supporting a major 2 year prayer initiative beginning shortly. ECI’s reconciliation work recently attracted a grant from the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

Moment of Grace for Ireland

We now have a second cease-fire and political talks will start in mid-September. Let us believers truly humble ourselves, seek God’s face, turn from our wicked ways and pray, then surely God will hear from heaven, forgive our sin and heal our land. This is a moment of grace for Ireland; as believers let us not be found wanting. Following the example of churches in South Africa, could not all evangelical Christians in Ireland commit themselves for a period of two years to praying for one hour per week towards these three goals: The removal of sectarian attitudes from all our hearts; Christ-centred, biblically based revival, North and South; A just political solution in Northern Ireland.

May Ireland again be a light to the nations, giving glory to God. Amen.

Paddy Monaghan is secretary of the Evangelical Catholic Initiative in the Republic of Ireland. Since 1980 he has worked part time as an evangelical Catholic lay missionary and part time in a small financial consultancy practice. He lives near Dun Laoghaire in County Dublin.

Decommissioning the heart

Reflections from a Prayer Walk

On the 11th July this year, I went for a walk. It was about 11.00pm, and I decided to walk around those parts of our home town of Lisburn closest to where we live. I wanted to pray for my community. There had already been confrontations in Belfast and Portadown between the residents of predominantly nationalist areas, and the Orange marchers who wanted to parade through. In a small, directionless, emotional way, I felt that by praying specifically for a peaceful marching day, some good might come to Lisburn. The 11th July is a special night of celebration for many in our community. However as I walked the sombre streets it seemed that parts of the town were completely ablaze.

What is it that makes us evangelicals? It might be said that it is our understanding of the Bible - that it is true and trustworthy, inspired and authoritative. Some might say it is our convictions about the cross - that there, Jesus Christ died as our substitute, taking our sins upon himself in legal satisfaction of the just requirements of God's law. Others might say it's because we don't drink, we don't dance and we don't surrender. What is it that defines us as evangelicals in Ulster today?

As I walked towards the edge of the Old Warren estate in Lisburn, I saw a group of three men approaching me in the opposite direction - at least they were more or less approaching me - sometimes they were, sometimes they weren't. They were singing

at the top of the voice "We won't be mastered by no Fenian b_____ " placing, with considerable skill borne of years of practice, the musical emphasis on the last word of each line. They swayed this way and that, arms around each other's shoulders, until they saw me coming. The hairs on the back of my neck began to stand up as the first one, and then his friends swept across to my side of the street and headed straight for me. "Oh no!" I thought, (good evangelical to the core) "I am going to have to speak to these people."

Evangelicalism in Ulster is different from Ulster evangelicalism. That is to say, it has not always been as it is today. Before partition, and especially in the first half of the last century, evangelicalism here was diverse in political outlook. That has been less the case in recent generations, and certainly the all-important perception from outside, and particularly in the South of Ireland, is that evangelicalism and unionism march in step. Interestingly, as new evangelical movements and churches have emerged over the last twenty years, many of them have displayed a profound suspicion of this state of affairs, and are more politically ambivalent than has been the case in recent history.

As they swayed their way towards me in the semi-darkness, I could smell their breath from fifteen feet - a happy cocktail of ketchup and Carlsberg. I thought to myself, "You have three options here; 1. Say and do what most sensible people in these circumstances would

by
David
Bruce

say and do - i.e. nothing. In fact, pretend they aren't there. Look over the hedge as if you are inspecting the double-glazing in the houses along the street. 2. No holds barred compromise. Look them straight in the eye and bluff. Shout "Wey hey lads! No Surrender!" Even throw in a drunken stagger as if to say, "I don't condemn you - I'm just the same as you are." 3. Witness to them - verbally. None of this pious stuff about your life being the only Bible they will ever read. They need it straight between the eyes. This is their only opportunity. Don't blow it. They came closer.

I want to suggest four ways in which we Ulster evangelicals have been influenced beyond our basic trust in the Bible. Four ways in which evangelicals in N. Ireland have been prone to affirm the norms of our culture, rather than challenge these norms when they evidently fall short of God's standards.

The first influence is individualism. JC Ryle once said, "The Bible knows nothing of individual religion". When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they are incorporated into a Body. They are engineered into a Building. They are meticulously prepared to be a Bride. To be a lone Christian is a contradiction in terms - when Paul enthused the Ephesian Christians to do battle against the principalities and powers (Eph.6:10ff) - he addressed them together as a church, not as individuals. Much further back in the purposes of God, when God addressed the problem of his sinning, compromised creation, he did not look to individuals to bear witness for him, but a people. His expectations were invested in a holy nation composed of millions of followers.

For many evangelicals, this is difficult territory. We are children of our age, and have been affected by the inexorable drive towards individualism, which has been the flavour of the era of those thinkers who have moulded us. In 1610 the mathematician/philosopher Rene Descartes led us on the first leg of our journey away from Judeo-Christian values in this regard. "I think, therefore I am", he said. In this one short sentence, the rationale which lay behind the foundations of the Christian faith was undermined. Descartes insisted that it is our ability to reason which defines us. Suddenly, humanity rather than God became the fixed point around which everything else

revolves. The basis of human dignity and worth is no longer what God has made in his image from above, but what we have conceived about ourselves from within. He broke the mould, and others were quick to follow. Soon, the idea of human sinfulness was under attack. Jean Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) "Social Contract" begins with his best known words: "Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains." What is it that chains us? A sinful nature, from which we can be released by the grace of a loving God? Not at all - but rather the social circumstances of our upbringing and nurture, which by the power of reason the individual may conquer. To

Evangelicals in N. Ireland have been prone to affirm the norms of our culture...

Rousseau, humanity was good, experience was good, and individuality was good. Another century on and John Stewart Mill created an entire system of morality based on self-interest. The goal of society as he saw it was to give the greatest pleasure to the greatest number - society as a concept only exists as the sum of individuals pursuing their own personal pleasure.

In our own day, the people who shape the thinking of our generation have been essentially individualists. Margaret Thatcher insisted in 1982 "There is no such thing as society" - and taught the individual in us all that it is our responsibility to create our own welfare. The basis of welfare is wealth creation, and this is up to the entrepreneur (as the ultimate individual) to achieve. This is the American dream - the creation of economic independence. It is the foundation of modern capitalism and the reason why most people go to work each morning.

We evangelicals have found it easy to slot in here. Simply put, we have come to believe in Christianity as a religion of the individual. That is the way we preach it. Invite Jesus into your heart as your own and personal saviour. We hold that our personal walk with God is more important than the faithfulness of the Church to the values of the kingdom. That our personal witness to our neighbour matters more than the corporate witness of the body of Christ to the world. That individual conversion to Christ is the central strategy of God in the world, above any hopes God might have of transformed communities. This is not to negate the importance and necessity of individual conversion, and of course it is true that God lovingly deals with us as individuals, but it is to affirm the individual as part of the whole.

Standing in the street, my mind flashed back to another walk on another 11th night when I had seen the naked face of sectarianism around a bonfire. Irish tricolours burned with the rubbish of discarded pallets and Chinese take away containers. A child, no more than seven or eight years old danced round the fire, denouncing the Pope as if that particular Polish churchman had personally visited his street and kicked the door in. With childlike movements he incanted adult hatreds with astonishing vocabulary. His mind was already made up, and had been brutalised by the pornography of the images placed there by his mentors. Now, on this day, I saw the results of this nurture as, like a scene from High Noon, I faced the three friends, hooting their derision, barely supporting each other in a vertical position. Still they came towards me.

Our mission field is coming down the street towards us. It is dressed in July orange and August green.

Secondly, there is dualism. The dualism I am thinking of here is that which separates the sacred and the secular. According to this view there is part of life which is essentially of God, and another part which is not. It is an old error, found in the earliest centuries of the Church, and formulated

most clearly in the heresy of Manichaeism which taught in the third century AD that the flesh was essentially evil. It was therefore necessary to subdue the flesh if holiness could ever be attained - and this led to a variety of ascetic practices, few of which were of any great benefit. The foundational problem here is that there is no biblical evidence to uphold the notion that the world is divided in this way, rather the reverse. All of creation fell with Adam, and now groans for the appearance of the second Adam.

A Church of Scotland minister was being interviewed for the position of temporary pastor in an American Presbyterian Church some years ago. A well-meaning elder asked him how he managed his spiritual life in relation to his life in the world. "I don't have a life in the world" was his startling, but biblical answer. He wasn't saying that he didn't go shopping with his wife or go to the movies with his children. However, he was right to insist that as a child of God his life was entirely spiritual. In other words, he went shopping and preached the word and watched movies as unto the Lord. He was a Christian shopper, rather than a shopper who happened to be a Christian.

We Ulster evangelicals have to ask ourselves, "Are we Christian citizens, or citizens who happen to be Christians?" Does our faith apply to the totality of our lives, or not? If we compartmentalise to allow the Christian parts to flourish on their own while looking at our daily work, social relationships, political concerns etc. as "secular" activity, then we are dualists, and have succumbed to the spirit of the age. We have closed off the public sections of our lives to Christ.

In the darkness, the glow of the 11th night bonfires seemed threatening. Say nothing? Compromise? Witness to them? What should I do? What could I do? What would I do? In the event, when they were about ten paces away, they turned down a side alleyway, and the decision was taken out of my hands.

Our mission field as evangelicals is coming down the street towards us. It is dressed in July orange, and it is dressed in August green. It is drunk and it is sober. It is hostile and it is open and what it needs is Jesus. To my shame, I heaved a middle-class sigh of relief as those men avoided contact with me.

Thirdly, the forces of polemical fundamentalism have shaped us. I am using the word “fundamentalism” here, not in the sense used by James Packer in his important book, *“Fundamentalism and the Word of God”* (1958), but in its original sense coined by American Baptist, Curtis Lee Laws in 1920. Laws and the many who followed after him was a militant anti-modernist, determined to resist the influence of higher criticism as a means of approaching the Bible. This was a genuine threat to orthodox Christian belief, and the fundamentalists opposed it at a time of great vulnerability. It was also, co-incidentally, the time of partition in Ireland.

It is fair to say that fundamentalism was the dominant flavour of evangelicalism here and in North America until after the Second World War. JN Darby and the dispensationalism he taught within the Brethren movement provided the popular theological muscle fundamentalism required. One of the central tenets of dispensationalism is the ruin of the Church in this period of history before the kingdom actually comes. Ultimately true believers will be raptured out of the world to meet their Lord in the air. This idea that the Church was essentially corrupt led fundamentalism (in the 1930’s) down the road of separatism - many independent congregations and denominations were founded. It was militantly anti-denominational, and especially anti Roman Catholic. By the Second World War, a large group was emerging which was unhappy with this separatist approach. Led by Carl Henry and others (later, John Stott) they at first called themselves neo-evangelicals and (by the 1950s) simply evangelicals. In Ulster, separatist fundamentalism has always been significant - and was strengthened by the strongly anti-Catholic rhetoric which was part and parcel of its proclamation. It wasn’t hard for people who came from a strongly unionist tradition, to find on their conversion through the revivalism of the 20’s and 30s, their already established prejudices against nationalists given theological justification. Their Romanism and their nationalism qualified them as “the enemy”.

Watching the three revellers lurch away from me, I felt a deep sadness mixed with a personal sense of relief. It was the sadness of self-knowledge. I had compromised Christ in my heart just as surely as if I had pretended to be drunk and shouted “No surrender” at the

top of my voice. Why? Because I am not sure that I know the kind of Jesus who lives in my heart. I have made him in my own image. I do not feel his burdens or shed his tears over this particular Jerusalem. I don’t care as he cares.

Evangelicals are happier being curators of ancient traditions than creators of radical new models of Kingdom living.

Fourthly, we have identified politics with faith. Evangelicalism has not been the force for difference Christ intended it to be in the world. There have been noble exceptions of course - but in general, evangelicals, once established within a culture, are happier being the friends of the powerful than the champions of the weak. Happier cultivating godless Presidents than establishing Godly precedents. Happier being curators of ancient traditions than creators of radical new models of Kingdom living. It is not unusual to find evangelicals propping up corrupt dictatorships, just as it is more usual to find radical liberals at the forefront of the call for change. Given this scenario, is it so surprising that the record of we evangelicals in Ulster has been so patchy?

Pushing open the gate of my own home after midnight, I stood outside for a time and wondered, “What difference does my living here really make?” In my personal journey with Christ I have sought to let go of all that is incompatible with his nature and will - not least the crude identification of my personal politics with biblical faith. (How absurd and arrogant it is to assume that the Lord of glory is a political sympathiser of mine, and that he wants what I want for the future of this island!) That’s an important admission for me to make, but it is a necessary one if the decommissioning of my sectarian heart of stone is to be replaced with a heart of flesh. Perhaps that transformation might make all the difference in the world.

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Evangelical Catholics

It was in the 1970's that I first detected that some evangelicals began to adopt a different attitude towards the Roman Catholic church and its teachings. The particular incident, which drew my attention to this trend, was the reprint, by an evangelical publishing house, of a popular paperback dealing with the cults. The reprint had entirely removed all references to Roman Catholicism. The previous editions had dealt in detail with the doctrinal errors of that organisation. There was no explanation as to the omission of this section of the book and at that time I thought that it conveyed the emergence of a changing attitude towards the Roman Catholic church. Twenty years later that change is clearly in evidence.

Prominent evangelical magazines now refer to Roman Catholic Christians in quite a routine way, as though there was no grounds for questioning their orthodoxy. The naivety being expressed is hard to understand but it may have its basis upon the new pragmatic manner in which orthodoxy is being tested, not through the application of Scripture, but by assessing the sincerity of the individual and the genuineness of their experience, however that is not a thesis I wish to develop here. There seems to be no serious concern regarding the doctrinal differences which completely separate them from those committed to the historic Christian faith.

I need to make it abundantly clear that I believe in the possibility of a Roman Catholic coming to a saving knowledge of Christ while still a member of that church. There is insufficient appreciation by some evangelicals of the real difficulties Catholics face as they try to find their way through the maze of those Christian things they were taught while Catholics, which are correct and other things they were taught which are erroneous! Furthermore a converted Catholic, whose whole view of the Christian church is one of a united visible entity, is not helped as he looks at the divisions existing among the evangelicals. He is immediately encouraged to believe that they have a clearer grasp of the truth, so tolerance needs to be exercised towards those who profess genuine faith but are still practising Catholics.

There is however a considerable difference between an evangelical Catholic emerging into light and another professing the same stance but who sees himself as an apologist of heretical Catholic doctrine and makes it clear that he considers that non-Catholics have missed the truth. Such a

**By
T. Gordon
Hills**

position is taken by Keith A. Fournier who serves as Dean of Evangelism at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio and who is hailed by men like Charles Colson who has written a foreword of his book carrying the title *“Evangelical Catholics”*. As I read some of the prominent evangelical and charismatic journals published in America, I note that there is a growing trend to accept Catholic Christians as though they were part of mainstream Christianity. I am concerned that truth is being sacrificed on the altar of a Christian “togetherness” (it cannot be called fellowship) where the all important goal is expressing an acceptance of each other in spite of what God has said.

In recent times a number of people have asked for my opinion on a movement which takes the name “Evangelical Catholics”, consequently when I saw Fournier’s book carrying this title my curiosity was aroused sufficiently to send for it. The first point I noted was that the author wanted to change the interpretation of the normal usage of the word “evangelical” so that it better suited his particular position. As I turned to the dictionary for its definition and read “the school of Protestants maintaining that the essence of the Gospel consists in the doctrine of salvation by faith, and denying that either sacraments or good works having any saving efficacy”, I was reasonably satisfied that even the secular world had an understanding of who we were. Fournier however caricatures the interpretation of the word by referring to a select few movements and individuals who have used it historically and arrives at a definition based upon a conglomeration of their differences, which he says is unacceptable! It’s a pity he didn’t read a good dictionary. If I were to be allowed the same kind of latitude as Fainter takes, and reinterpret the words “Roman Catholic”, I could make a case that the word “Roman” is a synonym for Paul’s teaching in his letter to Romans. I could then quite happily proceed to use the term Roman Catholic to mean that I am a member of a church which is based upon the doctrine of salvation as declared in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Anything is possible when you change the rules! However the difficulty lies with common usage of words and terms and I know that I would be completely misunderstood and would need to do what

We now refer to Roman Catholic Christians in a quite routine way, as though there was no ground for questioning their orthodoxy.

Fournier has done, i.e. write a book to explain my usage of this term. This is what makes the whole matter so very subtle.

As an “evangelical catholic” Fournier espouses his belief that authority lies in the church not the Bible which is the product of the church; in the “real presence” in the sacrifice of the Mass; in the hierarchical structure of the church its head and bishops. He defends praying before a statue and promotes the idea that conversion is not a single experience and that the faith of an individual cannot bring salvation. He espouses that scripture teaches that the faith of others can bring salvation to an individual, as is the case in infant baptism. Fournier complains that too often his church is not accepted by others when it is in fact the Mother church. My conclusion on reading this work is that nothing has changed, only the language being employed at times but even it has to be reinterpreted.

It is the use of language and terms which is causing so much confusion. It is easy to formulate a creedal statement, which appears to be quite orthodox, but it is how those terms are normally understood by the writers of the creed which is the key to its interpretation. Another example of the confusing use of language is to be found in a pamphlet emanating from Dublin, which

churches” the writers, both lay and clergy, affirm “That the Eucharist (or Mass) is not a repetition of Calvary, i.e. Jesus dies once and for all. The priest and people enter into that one all-sufficient sacrifice by Grace”. It all sounds quite orthodox to an unenlightened evangelical. To the best of my knowledge it was only ill-informed Protestants who ever believed that the Mass was a repetition of Calvary, it certainly was never promoted by the Catholic church. The Catholic church has never officially taught that the Mass was a repetition of Calvary. Their actual position is that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead and in the Mass there is offered to God the very same sacrifice as was offered at Calvary. The Catholic church has always been careful not to state that it is a repetition. But even the use of the words “by Grace” need to be understood when used by a Catholic, for to a Roman Catholic (and Evangelical Catholics are Roman Catholics) grace is something conferred by the Virgin Mary through the sacraments of the church and not something which is normally mediated directly from God to the sinner.

The pamphlet goes on to explain that Evangelical Catholics are committed to “A respect for and obedience to the teaching authority of the Pope and Bishops of the Catholic Church unless that obedience goes against one’s conscience as enlightened by Scripture and Church teaching”. The qualifying statement seems to allow for some latitude. However when you realise that these people have already accepted the Catholic position that “it belongs to the Church and to the Church alone, to determine the true sense of the Scripture, and that we cannot interpret contrary to the Church’s decision, or to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, without making shipwreck of our faith” it rather robs it of its influence.

A great many people are being influenced to believe that the Catholic Church has gone through some considerable changes. This influence may have been the result of hearing a practising Catholic expressing their personal beliefs, or through reading some book which has been written by a Catholic, which challenges or reinterprets some of the teachings of that Church. There are many such publications in circulation but they do not carry the official “*Nihil Obstat*” from the censors department, which is a declaration that the work is free from error, consequently it is not a reflection of the teaching of the Church.

What is not sufficiently understood is that Catholic doctrine is enshrined in dogmatic theology which is defined as “ the Scientific exposition of the whole theoretical doctrine revealed by God about God Himself and His activity and which (Catholics) accept on the authority of the Church”.

A Catholic must accept what the Church has revealed as a dogma if he is to continue to be a Catholic. To quote one official source: “If a baptised person deliberately denies or doubts a dogma properly so-called, he is guilty of the sin of heresy and automatically becomes subject to the punishment of excommunication” (*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by Ludwig Ott). Every Catholic is obliged to believe the dogma promulgated by Pope Pius XII on 1st November 1950 that “Mary, the immaculate perpetually Virgin Mother of God, after the completion of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven”. This is not open to discussion or a different interpretation. If a Catholic fails to believe it they are automatically subject to excommunication. The fact that a local priest may be unaware that one of his congregation does not accept this dogma changes nothing and the protestations of its members cannot bring about any doctrinal change. There may be changes in things peripheral, but not in essential teaching, as Martin Luther discovered. Although a great deal has been said and continues to be written concerning the value of Vatican II, (an ecumenical council, which took place in the early 60’s), no doctrinal change took place through that gathering of Bishops.

We should not exhibit intolerance...

There has been a concentrated effort over the last thirty years, by the Catholic church, to find acceptance within the mainstream of Christianity. This has been fostered through the various ecumenical committees it has set up through the Vatican and involves continuing dialogue with all the major Protestant denominations. They are striving for recognition and evangelicals ought not to be aiding them in their quest. However our stance towards that church as a heretical organisation, must not be confused with our approach towards individuals within that church who are sincerely searching for truth. We should not exhibit intolerance towards such individuals who have been deceived into believing lies; nor should we expect the full blaze of truth to immediately shine upon their pathway when they take those first steps of faith, for that was not the experience of any one of us. Let not the use of familiar terms, jargon or even songs be the criteria by which we judge the true spiritual state of anyone who professes to be born again, whether they are generally referred to as Catholics or Protestants or Pentecostals.

T. Gordon Hills is the Field Superintendent of the Elim Pentecostal Church. His previous positions involved pastorates in both England and Ireland. For 18 years he served as an Evangelist in the Republic of Ireland. 'Evangelical Catholics' is printed with the permission of the author.

Sorting out the family

Is Evangelicalism a purely Protestant phenomenon ?

by David J. Montgomery

The emergence of the Evangelical Catholic Initiative and the publication five years ago of the pamphlet “*What is an Evangelical Catholic?*”, has raised interesting questions for many traditional Evangelicals. Is Evangelicalism a purely Protestant phenomenon? If not, how would an ‘Evangelical Catholic’ reconcile her evangelical faith with certain traditional Roman doctrines?

Since this is a controversial topic, and one where misunderstandings are prevalent, it is important that I nail my colours to the mast at the beginning. I am evangelical in spirituality and theology. I have been born again by the Spirit of God, justified by grace through faith and I submit to the authority of Christ through Scripture which is my only rule of faith and practice. I am not ecumenical, in the sense that I do not believe that the formal amalgamation of denominations is either possible or desirable, or that unity can be achieved at the expense of truth.

Nevertheless, through looking at how evangelical leaders in the past regarded Roman Catholics, and above all, through personally encountering Roman Catholics who have been converted to Christ and who have chosen to live out their bible-based faith in the context of the Roman Catholic church, I have been made aware of

two things. Firstly, the right of those Catholics who are born-again and committed to the primary authority of Scripture to be called ‘Evangelicals’ and to be accepted as thus without qualification; and secondly, the incompatibility of polemical anti-catholicism with a true evangelical faith and spirit. It is the purpose of this short article to develop both these strands of thought.

Evangelical Catholic - a contradiction?

Those who are reticent to admit Catholics into the evangelical family, tend to argue that Evangelicalism is historically and theologically a subset of Protestantism. It arose from within Protestantism, and was built on a ready-made foundation of Reformation beliefs. However, there are significant problems with such a narrow historical definition. The historian David Bebbington, in his seminal work *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: 1730-1980*, highlights four sine qua non of Evangelicalism: a belief in the supreme authority of Scripture, missionary activism, the centrality of the cross, and the necessity of the new birth. Now, it is clear that Evangelicals will differ from some strands of traditional Roman Catholic teaching on these issues, but it is significant that Bebbington’s definition implies that

Evangelicalism is essentially about issues of personal faith, spirituality and discipleship, not about identification with a historical community. In fact, there are several major problems in regarding Evangelicalism as primarily a historically-bound movement: Who founded it? Who are its leaders? Where is its headquarters? What is its manifesto? If a Catholic embraces the four tenets of evangelical theology and practice, on what grounds will he be accepted as an Evangelical? Only if he joins a Protestant church? What if a Protestant who is thoroughly Evangelical in theology and experience decides, because of a change in personal circumstances, to worship and receive fellowship in a Catholic church, does she forfeit the right to be an Evangelical, simply on the grounds of denominational affiliation? In the N. Ireland context these examples may seem far-fetched, but they are not uncommon in other parts of the world where the increase in secularism and materialism, and the developing spiritual renewal within Catholic communities, is leading to greater personal contact, co-operation and fellowship across the traditions. The fact is that, whatever its historical roots, the very nature of evangelical faith allows it to embrace individuals from all sorts of backgrounds.

***Evangelicalism
is essentially about issues of
personal faith,... not about
identification with a historical
community.***

It is undeniable that Evangelicalism arose from within Protestantism and that the majority of Evangelicals worldwide are part of the Protestant community. It is also true that due to the theology and structure of the Roman Catholic Church, and the traditional antipathy between Evangelicals and the Catholic hierarchy, Catholic Evangelicals will find it more difficult to be at home in both the evangelical community and their own denomination - difficult, but not impossible. Methodism began within Anglicanism, can only Anglicans become Methodists? If Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, and Anglicans can enjoy fellowship because it is mutually accepted that there is a shared evangelical conviction and experience, why should born again, bible-believing, spiritually-on-fire Catholics be any less at home within Evangelicalism? We need to accept that Evangelicalism, like Pietism, Charismaticism, and Restorationism, has gone on to influence and embrace a wider constituency than that which gave it birth.

In his book *Evangelical Catholics*, Keith Fournier claims that 'Evangelical' is an adjective, not a noun. The choice, I believe, is false, for it is clearly both. Like Protestant, Catholic, Liberal, Conservative, Radical and countless other epithets, the adjective refers to certain principles, qualities and beliefs, while the noun refers to the person who exhibits those characteristics. The problem with any strict historicist approach, is that it places birth above belief. By this argument, loyalists who threaten, maim and kill in the name of Protestantism, have the right to use that term because of their historical tradition, even though their actions deny all that true Protestantism stands for.

Similarly, the key issue faced by those who desire to be called Evangelical Catholics, is also one of priority. Are they Catholics first and Evangelicals second (an impossibility, I believe)? Or are they in essence Catholic Evangelicals, willing to critique their denomination in the light of Scripture and in the context of the life of faith, in which case their Evangelicalism has precedence?

It is important that all Evangelicals begin to see themselves as Christian first Evangelical second, and Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic, 'New-church' etc., third. Only in this way, can Evangelicalism actually become a visible sign of the reconciling power of the gospel in the Irish context.

Voices from the Past

Space does not permit a detailed look at how evangelical leaders throughout history have regarded Roman Catholics. However it is significant to note how, in spite of a uniform rejection of Roman Catholic theology, and living in a historical context where a confrontational approach was much more understandable, there was a willingness to accept regenerate Roman Catholics as brothers or sisters in Christ, regardless of whether or not they leave their church.

This was the case with Zinzendorf, Whitefield, Wesley, Wilberforce, Irving, Spurgeon and reformed leaders such as Machen and Warfield. Wesley's Letter to A Roman Catholic is often quoted, and Spurgeon's diary records this fascinating quote: "In Brussels I heard a good sermon in a Romish church...the good priest - for I believe he is a good man - preached the Lord Jesus with all his might. He spoke of the love of Christ...and the preciousness of His blood, and of His power to save the chief of sinners.... He did not tell us we were saved by grace, and not by our works; but he did say that all the works of men were less than nothing when brought into competition with the blood of Christ, and that

the blood of Jesus alone could save. True, there were objectionable sentences...but I could have gone to the preacher and have said to him, 'Brother, you have spoken the truth;'I was pleased to find my own opinion verified, in his case, that there are, even in the apostate church, some who cleave unto the Lord." (*Autobiography vol.ii. pp.21-2*)

Common Threads

In recent years I have examined the writings of those leaders mentioned above, on this issue, and I have discerned six threads common to most, if not all: (a) a uniform rejection of the Papacy, and an adherence to Reformation theology; (b) a desire, almost a determination, to qualify their judgments and accept believers within the Catholic system; (c) a willingness to accept light from any quarter and a refusal to lay claim to a monopoly of the truth; (d) an openness to praising the strengths within Catholicism and decrying the weaknesses within Protestantism; (e) a condemnation of self-righteous anti-catholicism; (f) a readiness to attend Catholic services, correspond with the Catholic leadership and engage in rational discussion.

This last point raises a further issue. In many circles "ecumenical involvement" is regarded as a test of orthodoxy - a sign of whether or not one is a 'true Evangelical'. There is no biblical, theological, historical or logical basis for this. While views will differ about the usefulness, or even wisdom, of involvement in particular events, services, or councils, charity must be evident at all times. To maintain that mere attendance at certain places of worship constitutes compromise, is to add to the Gospel in a most unwise and legalistic way. Degrees of ecumenical involvement is as much adiaphora as modes of baptism and views on eschatology. In fact, the many Gospel imperatives to be peace-makers and reconcilers, mean that the onus is squarely on the uninvolved to seek parallel and alternative ways of combatting division and strife, or risk forfeiting their right to be taken seriously as people of the 'Evangel.'

Evangelical anti-catholic - a contradiction?

We move now to the issue of anti-catholicism within Evangelicalism. Again, definition is crucial here. By anti-catholic, I do not mean a rejection of Roman Catholic theological positions. By that definition everyone outside, (and not a few inside), the Roman communion would be deemed anti-catholic! No, it is an undeniable feature of both Reformation and historical evangelical theology that sub-Biblical and extra-Biblical doctrines such as the Infallibility of the

Papacy, Transubstantiation, and the decrees on the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary, must be rejected. All of the Reformers and major evangelical leaders have been utterly opposed theologically to Roman Catholicism in these areas, many of them saying (according to the spirit of their time) extremely harsh things about the Papacy in particular. Does this mean that they were anti-catholic? Not necessarily. Theological disagreement need not involve suspicion or hostility. For the purposes of this article I wish to highlight four aspects of anti-catholicism which have existed from time to time within Evangelicalism but which I believe are foreign to its true spirit.

Blind Prejudice

At the simplest and most sinister level, anti-catholicism bears many of the marks of racism, anti-semitism, or other prejudices aimed at cultural or ethnic groupings. These feed on stereo-types and ignorance, and look for evidence to support their preconceived ideas.

Conspiracy Theories

Blind prejudice leads to a second characteristic, the means by which these prejudices are often rationalised or justified. The Roman Catholic church, it is argued, is undemocratic and authoritarian, and it has at heart an anti-Protestant agenda which it would ruthlessly employ given half a chance. In the past these conspiracy theories were expressed through popular 19th century anti-catholic lectures in Britain, the writings of Paul Blanshard and the comics of Jack Chick in the USA, nor are they difficult to find in N.I. today. It is worth noting that the writings of Chick have since been exposed as lies by *Christianity Today* and Blanshard himself retracted many of his statements later in life when he gave up professing the Christian faith altogether.

Lies, Half-truths & Innuendoes

These tendencies can be seen in the delight with which the exaggerated or blatantly false depictions of the worst aspects of the Catholic tradition are unfavourably compared with the best aspects of the Protestant tradition. The most famous example of this is the regularly reprinted tale of "Maria Monk," first published in 1836 and telling of enforced convent prostitution and strangling of babies. Monk was later discredited along with several ex-priests who had been popular on the 'anti-catholic lecture' circuit.

Confrontational

Methodology

So far, the correct response to these anti-catholic tendencies should be fairly clear. Such tendencies while not uncommon, are extreme, unevangelical and can rightly be denounced as sinful. Prejudice, rabble-rousing, inducing fear, lying and rumour-mongering are never right. Scripture is clear about that. However the fourth characteristic cannot be so easily dismissed. While I have made it clear above that all Evangelicals will reject aspects of Roman Catholic theology, how we deal with those differences, and the importance we attach to them, are matters of dispute. Some Evangelicals will choose to discuss the issues as they arise in the context of friendship and dialogue, while others will view the Catholic church as the enemy and will see the public renunciation of Roman dogma as an integral part of promoting the evangelical faith. It is this confrontational methodology which I see as the fourth characteristic of anti-catholicism. Not, let me stress, because doctrine is unimportant, but because such a methodology attributes to Roman Catholicism a status it does not merit and a power it has long since lost. Furthermore, confrontational methodology can prove harmful to perpetrator, listener and opponent alike.

The Perpetrator

For the perpetrator, constant negativity and witch-hunting can prove detrimental to one's spirituality and lead to an unhealthy imbalance where dogmatic formulations assume an idolatrous position. The eventual loss of faith of leading anti-catholics such as Blanshard, Pierce Connolly, and ex-priest Giacinto Achilli should act as a warning to all who embark on such a negative track.

The Listeners

For the Protestant listeners, continual exposure to anti-catholic teaching can confirm prejudices and even inflame bigotry, regardless of how often the speaker attempts to distinguish between Roman doctrines and Roman Catholic people. Furthermore, it is difficult to see what purpose such teaching serves. Few Protestants are likely to become Roman Catholics so, in a divided society such as Northern Ireland, should the emphasis not be on how to build bridges personally and live with our differences, rather than constantly outlining what separates us, however valid that separation may be?

The Opponents

Few Catholics can differentiate between an attack on their church and an attack on them. When they hear

Catholics, this too has failed since rather than facilitating communication, their polemical style has in fact hindered it.

Conclusion

Historian John Wolfe recognises that anti-catholicism is more evident at times of crisis and conflict, but he argues that it runs too deeply within the veins of Evangelicalism to be limited to these periods alone. In fact, he says it "has been an inescapable part of the historical landscape of Evangelicalism." Be that as it may, from a historical perspective, the question still needs to be asked: 'Should it be so? To what extent are anti-catholic attitudes and behaviour consistent with the spirit and ethos of true Evangelicalism?' I believe they are consistent with neither the defining characteristics of Evangelicalism, nor with the views of significant evangelical leaders throughout history, nor with the spirit of the Gospel which Evangelicals seek to embody.

On the contrary, the prejudice of anti-catholicism offends the Christ in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, its political motivation offends the Christ who demands our sole allegiance, its half-truths and innuendoes offend the Christ who commands us not to bear false witness, and its confrontational nature offends the Christ who commands us to speak the truth in love.

We cannot be prisoners to our history, even evangelical history. Rather, I suggest it is time for the evangelical family to take two bold but related steps forward. Firstly, to affirm as fellow members those Catholics who are prepared to stand with us on Scripture, the Cross, Conversion and the Great Commission, and to be Christians first, Evangelicals second, and Catholics third. Secondly, to disown those who deal in division, court controversy, revel in rumour-mongering and perpetuate prejudice; reminding them that regardless of the theology they espouse or the constituency from which they emerge their credibility as gospel people lies in how they live, and how they love. For without love we are all but "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal".

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the Assistant minister in Stormont Presbyterian Church. He is a member of the Irish Evangelical/Roman Catholic Dialogue Committee.

Do They Know Us by Our Love?

The first casualty of the culture wars is not truth.

In the culture wars of the first century, there was a group of activists who came down on the right side of all the values questions. They rejected relativism and secularism. They were unwavering adherents of ethical absolutism. They were committed to the Judaeo-Christian values of monogamy in marriage and chastity outside it. They promoted monotheism against polytheistic Roman paganism. Clearly, the Pharisees were considered the Religious Right of Israel.

But it is interesting that the people who held the “right” values were the ones least responsive to Jesus’ message and most likely to receive his reprimands. His message was received with the greatest eagerness by those who came down on the wrong side of all the values issues - the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the religious half-breeds.

To be sure, Jesus frequently occupied the Pharisees’ circles as a dinner guest and intellectual companion, and there were even those within the group who embraced him. Nonetheless, most Pharisees could not accept Jesus’ radical claims and actions in light of their reading of the Holy Scriptures.

The ironic result of their “rightness” in belief and practice was that they became unable to love - did not want the sick healed on the Sabbath, did not want an adulterous woman to be forgiven, did not want sinners to share fellowship with the righteous. They came to see people they were called to love as “the enemy.”

But they are not the only ones. The Inquisition, the Crusades, slavery - all these were entered into by people who believed in ethical absolutism and even defended their actions with the Bible.

This is a common temptation for all of us who take faith seriously. I regularly get fundraising letters from Christian organisations that paint society in conspiratorial “us” versus “them” colours. Although I usually agree with their moral positions, I rarely sense from them a caveat - let alone a consistent tone - acknowledging that love must be the ultimate aim even in disagreement.

John Ortberg

It is a dangerous thing on questions of truth and significance to be wrong. But there may be a more dangerous thing: being right and knowing it.

Dallas Willard said once that it is very hard to be right and not hurt anybody with it. Look at schoolchildren - their pleasure in being right is boosted by knowing somebody else is wrong. Indeed, if nobody is wrong, being right would not be so special.

It is possible to be so caught up in the joy of being right, in the thrilling sense of being morally superior to those who are "not right", that you become more wrong than your most degraded opponent. This is why certain Pharisees - who were so careful not to commit adultery or steal or murder - were so deeply offended when Jesus said they were further from the kingdom of God than, say, Hugh Hefner or Madonna.

Occasionally those on the front lines of the culture wars will acknowledge they could be more loving. Usually the unspoken subtext, however, reads: "The main thing is I'm on the right side."

But what if it is at least as important to love as to be right? What if Jesus really meant it when he said the heart of the law is to love God with your entire being and to love your neighbour as yourself? What if Paul really meant it when he said that even if he had all knowledge, even if he got everything right, he was nothing if he didn't have love?

An old saying suggests that the first casualty of war is truth. This is not quite true. The first casualty of war is love. And so it is in emotion-charged culture wars.

The primary task of the church is not to make a powerful apologetic for Christian values in society. It is to participate in, and witness to, the gospel. And the gospel Jesus proclaimed is an invitation to life in the presence and under the reign of God: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

Loving our cultural enemies

Although the culture warriors who opposed Jesus saw themselves as the defenders of values, Jesus' charge was that their list of values was arbitrary and lacking. They valued, for instance, a rigid adherence to circumcision over the gracious inclusion of Gentiles. They tended to emphasise not those values that were most important, but those values that most readily distinguished themselves from their opponents.

I think this is a failing among many who debate cultural values. In the church where I grew up, for example, I heard many messages on the family and sexual purity. Yet I don't remember hearing a single

One phrase often used in the culture wars is traditional values. It conveys our deep concern that classic moral values such as marital commitment, stability of the home, and common human courtesy are rapidly eroding. These concerns need to be articulated carefully and thoughtfully, but when we call for a return to "traditional values", we must ask to what tradition we want to return.

I have never heard an African-American Christian use this phrase - and for good reason. The "traditions" of the mid-twentieth century included Jim Crow-style segregation and the denial of equal access to housing and education based on race. As a young man, my own grandfather had among his jobs the task of telling any persons of colour who came through town that they were not welcome to spend the night there.

Thankfully, part of being a Christian, and in particular a Protestant, is the conviction that all traditions constantly need reform. The gospel is about eschatology, not nostalgia. The values to which we are called are not the values of any past tradition, but the eternal values taught and lived by Jesus and expressed authoritatively in the Bible, which stand over and above every party platform and political agenda.

Beyond Ideology

I am not advocating silence or neutrality on the controversial issues of today. But I do fear that with the current culture wars comes the devaluing of one of the church's primary tasks: discipleship. The reduction of Christianity to an ideology allows people to evade that task of true discipleship. It does not come through holding a certain set of values but by living a certain kind of life. It is far easier to promote values than to live them.

"All men will know that you are my disciples," Jesus said, not "if you promote my agenda" but "if you love one another." A watching world will be persuaded not when our values are promoted but when they are incarnated.

As the wars rage on and the church enters the fray, may we remember that Christ's call is not an invitation to be on the right side; it is an invitation to become the right person.

John Ortberg is teaching pastor of Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago and the author of "The Life You've always Wanted: Spiritual transformation for Ordinary People" (Zondervan). Reprinted by permission of the author.

Loyalist Speak

By Robert Dunlop

You ask me who I am
Don't be asking me
Ask out Willie
Him of Ballykilbeg
Or wee Kennaway.
They'll explain themselves
Tell you all you need to know.
The facts you want,
the facts you'll get
Anyway, what you see
is what is there,
Not the fancy write offs
Up at Queen's
by you know who.

You want me to talk
Man, how can I talk when
they're all screaming at me?
What's the point?
I'm tired of talks
and when I speak
My accent gives me away
No one listens to a word I say.

You think I'm blind
I think you're dumb
Can you not see from
all the grandeur
set out upon my stall
That I am one,
and proud to be just one
even the only one
of the Loyal Sons of Ulster.

What more do you want
Me to explain myself
Apologise for being who I am
Give more away?
When you, huddled up with
Taigs, and Brits and Yanks
and Free State Prods
tell me the vulture has
all the culture
And we have nothing.

Well let me tell you
What we have
We have the past
The past is me
I am the past
The past will be
The future too.

Don't say I said it
But stick around
Not like the bigots of the BBC
or the bloody Japs
Who pick our bones
and hang us out to dry
on that accursed thing they call TV.
Just be there for us
Take the soundings of our pain
Not for fat reports
or high profiles
But for the sake of one
who holds the key
and, is in the end
the last friend left
for you and me.

Robert Dunlop is the Pastor of Brannockstown Baptist Church, County Kildare. He has had a number of books of poetry published. Robert wrote 'Loyalist Speak' on the 12th July this year while attending the ECONI Summer conference 'Back to the Future'.

book reviews

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey Through the Evangelical Subculture in America

Randall Balmer

Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993

DID YOU SEE the seventies Christian film *A Thief in the Night*? Could this be the ultimate criterion for 'true evangelicalism'? I saw it - I remember the flared jeans and bad haircuts - so I'm definitely in. The director of the film was Donald Thompson and - believe it or not - this film represented a quantum leap in the quality of Christian film-making.

Thompson is just one of a gallery of characters we meet during Balmer's journey through American evangelicalism.

Some are reasonably well known. John Perkins' evangelical convictions drove him to establish a host of ministries designed to help black Americans help themselves. "I had to combat the emotional, simplistic gospel that black folks had already accepted. It provided an emotional outlet for them, but little else," he says. (180)

Others represent the rank and file of American evangelicalism. Beverlie Tuttle, on the campaign trail for Pat Robertson, objects to a treaty with the then Soviet Union: "Signing a treaty with atheists is being unequally yoked," she asserts. (168) Herb Bateman, a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, advocates premillennialism but adds, "that's not to say that someone is any less a Christian because he believes that Christ will return during the tribulation rather than before." (45) Roger, attending a Camp Meeting recalls, "My mother never had a haircut in her life, never wore jewellery or cosmetics. I'm sure glad the Lord saved me from a life of sin." (242-243)

Still others are quite unlike anything most of us have ever encountered. There is the magnificently named Father Harald Eagle Bull, Native American rector of the Episcopal Church in Cannon Ball, South Dakota. Then there is Neal Frisby, "a small, stocky man, wearing a spearmint-green sportcoat and a loosely knotted tie, rush[ing] to the pulpit, waving a Bible..." (73)

Stan White, former Assemblies of God pastor takes his independent, charismatic church into the Episcopal church - "I

envisage a church which is fully charismatic, fully evangelical, but also fully liturgical and sacramental." (118)

Douglas Frank, a man with a deep sense of the failings and weaknesses of contemporary evangelicalism, will not walk away - "it's part of who I am," he says. (273)

As for Balmer himself? He is a pilgrim, raised in the bosom of evangelicalism but no longer embracing or embraced by it. Yet he is a perceptive and loving pilgrim. His observations along the way are heartfelt and challenging. However, like Frank, evangelicalism is part of who he is. And in his dedication he expresses the wish that his son, Christian, "will find his place in the patchwork quilt of American evangelicalism." (v) Others among us will not walk away either - it is part of what we are.

So here it is - a journey into the sometimes weird and wacky, often wonderful and glorious, but always fascinating world of evangelicalism. The bad news is that this book is out of print. But if you want to get to the heart of evangelicalism and get away from often sterile debates, get down to your local library.

Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States

George Rawlyk, Mark Noll (eds)
Baker, Grand Rapids 1994

Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond 1700-1990

Mark Noll, David Bebbington,
George Rawlyk (eds)
Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994

Evangelicalism is the theme of this issue of *Lion & Lamb*, but as noted in a number of places the issues facing evangelicalism in Northern Ireland today are facing evangelicalism world wide.

Wheaton College has established its Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals as a forum for tackling many of these issues. One of its roles has been to organise conferences bringing together some of the best known

contributors to the debate on evangelicalism.

One such conference “Evangelicalism in Transatlantic Perspective” was held in 1992 and these two books contain many of the contributions to that conference.

In *Amazing Grace* the essays of particular interest include ‘Noisy Methodists and Pious Protestants: Evangelical Revival and Religious Minorities in Eighteenth Century Ireland’ by Professor David Hempton and David Bebbington’s ‘Evangelicalism in Modern Britain and America: A Comparison’.

In *Evangelicalism* an important essay, given the subject matter of this issue, is John Wolffe’s contribution, ‘Anti-Catholicism and Evangelical Identity in Britain and the United States, 1830-1860’. While identifying particular factors that influence evangelical anti-Catholicism during this period, Wolffe also argues that “anti-Catholicism has been an inescapable part of the historical landscape of evangelicalism.” (193) Hempton crops up again, this time on ‘Evangelicalism in English and Irish Society, 1780-1840’, arguing that despite similarities of theology, structure and purpose “the relationship between evangelical religion and

its surrounding culture was significantly different in the two countries.” (171) Finally, David Wells’ contribution ‘On Being Evangelical: Some Theological Differences and Similarities’ is an important analysis of the changing nature of post war evangelicalism. His closing sentence sums up the current dilemma for many: “What, then, is the essence of being evangelical today? Well, that all depends.” (407)

These are the highlights - there are a further twenty-eight essays in these two collections - all of them worth reading. Perhaps we could go further and say that they should be compulsory reading for anyone who ventures into this field. The issues surrounding the debates about evangelicalism are too often historically and theologically superficial, too often highly emotional and fraught. In this environment, books like this are vital.

Alwyn Thomson

Alwyn Thomson is Research Officer with ECONI and is currently involved in the 'God, Land & Nation' project. He is author of a number of ECONI publications and Editor of our most recent book, 'Faith in Ulster'.

NEWS & events

Journey In Understanding

23 September - 28 October

&

11 November - 16 December

A six week course exploring the influence of Culture, Politics, History and Religion in shaping our identity

Journey in Understanding is designed to help participants consider the nature and consequences of division and conflict in our society. Through biblical reflection, group discussion and expert input participants will seek to understand the dynamics of personal and group identity and explore the implications for an authentic Christian witness in a divided community.

ECONI Sunday

Sunday 2nd November

Separation and Sharing in a Divided Society

ECONI Sunday is an opportunity to consider, in the context of a Sunday service, issues facing Christians in a divided society. Each church will receive a ministry and resource pack designed to help congregations plan their day. Last year 65 churches took part and ECONI staff and members of the Steering Group spoke in different services around the country. To register please contact the ECONI office and ask for details.

Christian Citizenship Forum

October 1997 to May 1998

Negotiating the Future

A new series of monthly meetings planned to coincide with the multi-party talks on the future of N. Ireland. Each month we will be inviting a key politician to present the view of their party on an acceptable settlement. The evening will also include a panel discussion, a biblical reflection and questions from the audience. See the enclosed leaflet for details or contact the ECONI office.

Bridge Builders

2nd October - 4th December

A ten week training course to equip and empower Christians to be bridge builders in Northern Ireland.

Bridge Builders aims to motivate and equip Christians to engage with the hostile and sectarian realities of our divided community. The goal is to resource the participants with skills and insight for an imaginative involvement in peace building and to be a catalyst for others to be become similarly involved. The course will include informed perspectives from guest speakers, biblical reflections and group interaction. There are a few places left on this course. For details and a booking form contact Earl Storey (01232 325258).

ECONI Conference

Saturday 1st November

The Politics of Holiness: Separation and Sharing in a Divided Society

This year's conference will be exploring the meaning of biblical holiness for our life and witness in a divided society. Our two keynote speakers (**Derek Poole and Bishop Harold Miller**) and eight workshop speakers will consider the nature of separation & sharing in a community polarised by historical and religious division. The venue is Stranmillis College, Belfast and a detailed brochure and registration form is enclosed in this issue of Lion & Lamb. If you would like to promote this event, or any other ECONI initiative, extra brochures are always available from the office.



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ECONI

Resourcing Christians for a Biblical Response