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Are the Priorities and Concerns of Charles Simeon Relevant for Today?

Paul A Carr

Introduction

Charles Simeon has always been a great influence on evangelical Anglicans because of his undoubted zeal for the things of God. He is an exciting man to study for many reasons: his conversion experience; his self-discipline; his commitment to preaching and orthodox Bible teaching; his balanced views in a divided church; his passion for the Church of England and its Liturgy; his pastoral awareness and his vision for evangelism, mission and social action. However, the question we may ask ourselves is simply this: Are the priorities and concerns of his ministry relevant for us today?

This article seeks to examine why Simeon's philosophy of ministry is relevant to us when, arguably, the greatest challenge facing today's church is to reclaim the heritage of 'cutting edge' Christianity that, for the latter part of the twentieth century, was squandered by the onset of postmodernity – and the subsequent weakening of biblical standards – aligned with an unwillingness in church leaders to stand firm on gospel principles and to be unashamedly followers of Jesus: the way, the truth and the life. Jesus' response in situations of disagreement, of course, was never to do the contemporary theological backstroke – lowering the heat in order to keep his followers in tow – but to always teach the truth.

The indisputable choice facing the church in the twenty-first century is whether we allow ourselves to be changed by the world – in accordance with its own standards and values – or whether we are prepared to stand up for orthodox biblical Christianity which might enable us to become the God-driven church we are called to be. Charles Simeon was a man of principle and commitment who stood up for biblical truth. Whilst he did not align himself to any particular party line he was, ultimately, a gospel man who was not prepared to compromise – wherever the consequences of those convictions led him.

There are, however, noticeable parallels between the church of Simeon's day and the church of today, and, as we examine Simeon's priorities and concerns

we should take into account Max Warren's cautious view that 'we breathe a different air, confront different problems, in fact think differently on almost every subject from the men of the eighteenth and nineteenth century'.¹ Whilst that may be undeniably so, Rudolph Heinze's observation that 'there are aspects of his work and teachings which transcend the boundaries of time and change'² is also worth taking into consideration. With these thoughts in mind, let us be encouraged, and challenged afresh, by the example of Charles Simeon as we endeavour to be the church we are unmistakably called to be.

Simeon believed a conversion experience was an essential part of (evangelical) Christianity.

The religious training of Simeon's youth had little impact on his life. It was only when faced with the prospect of receiving Holy Communion in King's College at Easter that he embarked on a course of reading to prepare himself for the occasion which, in due course, led him to what can only be described as a genuine and life-changing conversion experience with the living Christ. It was a chapter in a book by Bishop Wilson, on the symbolism of the sin-offering interpreted as the Atonement – and how it compared with Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross – which had a profound impact on Simeon. (And was to have such a lasting impact throughout his ministry.) He wrote:

The thought came into my mind, What, may I transfer all my guilt to another? ... Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus; and on the Wednesday began to have a hope of mercy; on the Thursday that hope increased; on the Friday and Saturday it became more strong; and on the Sunday morning, (Easter-day, April 4), I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips, 'Jesus Christ is risen today! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!'³

Simeon attached primary importance both to conversion, as a consequence of his own experience, and a personal relationship with Jesus. When asked what he considered to be the mark of regeneration, he replied:

1 M Warren 'Charles Simeon' *Churchman* Vol 92 No 2 (London: Vine Books Ltd 1978) p 112

2 R W Heinze 'Charles Simeon – through the eyes of an American Lutheran' *Churchman* Vol 93 No 3 (London: Vine Books Ltd 1979) p 249

3 H Evan Hopkins *Charles Simeon Preacher Extraordinary* (Bramcote: Grove Books 1979) p 3

The very first and indispensable sign is self-loathing and abhorrence. Nothing short of this can be admitted as evidence of a real change ... I have constantly pressed this subject upon my congregation, and it has been the characteristic of my ministry. I want to see more of this humble, contrite, broken spirit among us.⁴

Simeon believed, fundamentally, in the atoning death and sacrifice of Christ on the cross as well as justification by faith alone and, on this issue, Heinze suggests, Simeon and Luther were kindred spirits.⁵

Simeon emphasized a lifestyle of self-discipline both for prayer and Bible study. He was committed to living a holy life.

The practical effects of Simeon's conversion were immediate and he began a life of devotional seclusion. He recorded in his journal: 'Monday in Passion Week (1780). I have determined that I will neither eat nor drink all this week, except at dinner, and that sparingly.'⁶ Simeon is renowned for his devotional lifestyle, rising at 4 am to spend four hours in Bible study and prayer. He voluntarily accepted strict self-discipline in an age that was easy-going and self-indulgent.

Simeon was committed to living a holy, Christ-like life and was aware, from his own painful experience (he is remembered as quick tempered, temperamental, cantankerous, proud and arrogant) that religion does not change one's personality suddenly or easily and was realistic of his own failings:

Religion gives, indeed, a new direction and tone to the mind. We are vessels, and religion, when poured into us, will taste ... of our natural dispositions ... it will eventually and gradually correct our natural failings, but will not obliterate the effects of nervous or constitutional weakness or infirmity.⁷

4 W Carus ed *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev Charles Simeon* (London: Hatchard and Son 1847) p 651

5 Heinze 'Charles Simeon' p 250

6 G W E Russell 'Charles Simeon' in *Dictionary of English Church History* S L Ollard and G Crosse edd (London: A R Mowbray 1919) p 559

7 H Evan Hopkins *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1977) pp 170-1

Whilst it could be argued that his personality 'traits' may have undermined, or been a barrier to, others receiving his ministry, Simeon faced this with realism and persistence and 'spent a lifetime seeking to overcome them'.⁸ We are reminded that the 'old man' human nature continues to influence our attitudes and personality and that we must recognize our need of the renewing and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

Simeon made such great progress in conquering his pride and temper that, by the end of his life, he was known as a man of humility. In a letter to Abnew Brown, Simeon remarked: 'The three lessons which a minister has to learn are; 1) Humility, 2) Humility, 3) Humility.'⁹

Simeon was committed to competent and effective preaching of the highest quality. He believed in systematic Bible teaching and sound doctrine for the building up, and discipling, of his congregation.

Simeon's understanding of the purpose of preaching was carved into the pulpit of Holy Trinity: 'Sir, we would see Jesus' (John 12:21). Simeon described the threefold object of all his preaching as: 'To humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, to promote holiness.'¹⁰ He believed: 'The majesty and Glory of the Saviour's atonement ... [should be] ... the central object of every minister's preaching.'¹¹

Simeon had a high regard for preaching though he himself was never regarded as a scholarly preacher but, rather, as a clear thinker who possessed deep spiritual insight. Nevertheless, he devoted much of his life to developing his preaching ministry and, after much trial and error, he became renowned as a distinguished preacher.

Simeon believed that 'quality' time devoted to sermon preparation was essential and spent a minimum of twelve hours 'many twice that time: and some several days'¹² on sermon preparation. He once remarked about the

8 Heinze 'Charles Simeon' p 242

9 A W Brown *Recollections of the Conversation Parties of the Rev Charles Simeon* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co 1863) p 17

10 C Simeon *Horae Homileticae* 7th edn vol 1 (London: Henry G Bohn 1845) p xxi

11 R Heinze Church History Lecture at Oak Hill Theological College 31st November 1995

12 Carus *Memoirs* pp 841-2

preacher's approach to preparation: 'Let him get his text into him in his study, and then get into his text in the pulpit.'¹³ On another occasion he explained:

I love the simplicity of the scriptures ... I wish to receive and inculcate every truth precisely in the way and to the extent that it is set forth in the inspired volume ... My endeavour is to bring out of Scripture what is there, and not to thrust in what I think might be there. I have a great jealousy on this head; never to speak more or less than I believe to be the mind of the Spirit in the passage I am expounding.¹⁴

Simeon was committed to systematic Bible teaching. Indeed, he saw sound doctrinal preaching as a priority for the continuing spiritual life of his congregation. However, he was a great believer in teaching, not from a system, but from the Bible alone: 'God has not revealed his truth in a system; the Bible has no system as such. Lay aside system and fly to the Bible; receive its words with simple submission, and without an eye to any system. Be Bible Christians not system Christians.'¹⁵ It is reported that Simeon never read a commentary. But, as someone wryly commented to me recently: 'It's amazing how much light the Bible sheds on a commentary!' Simeon, no doubt, would whole-heartedly agree!

Simeon avoided preaching on the same text more than once and followed the Bible wherever it led him, always seeking to mould his own life, and that of his congregation, on the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not find it necessary to define his theology according to current controversy or, indeed, to define the authority and inspiration of Scripture: he simply lived it and preached it. To quote his own epitaph: 'Whether as the ground of his own hopes, or as the subject of all his ministrations, he "*determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified*".'¹⁶

Simeon's preaching was by no means always evangelistic, much of it was expository. However, his preaching was informed, as it should be, by his deep pastoral concern and empathy with his congregation.

Although Simeon sincerely believed there was a definite method involved in

13 Brown *Recollections* p 180

14 H C G Moule *Charles Simeon* (London: Methuen & Co 1892) pp 96-7

15 Brown *Recollections* p 17

16 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* p 3

preaching, he knew that ultimately: ‘The power in preaching is never the skill of the preacher but the convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit.’¹⁷

Simeon maintained a balanced view at a time when Evangelicals were divided in many areas. He believed Evangelicals had much to learn about gentleness of spirit.

Simeon was fundamentally and essentially an Evangelical of the Evangelicals and is often described as the ‘Prince of Anglican Evangelicals’.¹⁸ And, though he ‘was no fundamentalist ... he was great on the fundamentals’.¹⁹

Simeon was a moderate – somewhat surprisingly when his personality would suggest otherwise. He maintained a much needed balanced view at a time when Evangelicals were divided through bitter theological controversies. Simeon applied his ‘Be Bible Christians not system Christians’ principles to the Calvinist-Arminian controversy which so plagued the church of his day. He believed that both points of view emphasized certain portions of Scripture at the expense of others. He was ‘persuaded that neither Calvinists or Arminians are in exclusive possession of that system’²⁰ He considered that ‘today I am a strong Calvinist, tomorrow a strong Arminian ...’²¹ Simeon never attempted to reconcile ‘opposites’ because he believed that different truths speak to different spiritual needs. In an interview with the ageing John Wesley on this same subject, Simeon remarked: ‘We will cordially agree to unite in those things wherein we agree.’²² This was typical of his independent outlook.

Simeon embodied the attitude of mainstream Evangelicals of the time with his famous statement: ‘The truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme; but in both extremes.’²³ In the preface to his *Horae Homileticae*, he shared his deepest conviction that:

the Scripture system is of a broader and more comprehensive character than some very dogmatical theologians are inclined to allow; and that, as

17 Warren ‘Charles Simeon’ p 118

18 Heinze *Oak Hill*

19 Warren ‘Charles Simeon’ p 114

20 Simeon *Horae Homileticae* p xiv

21 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 97

22 J C Pollock *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray 1953) p 6

23 Carus *Memoirs* p 47

wheels in a complicated machine may move in opposite directions and yet subserve one common end, so may truths apparently opposite be perfectly reconcilable with each other, and equally subserve the purposes of God in the accomplishment of man's salvation.²⁴

Simeon believed it was a minister's duty to become all things to all men and recognized the belligerent zeal of Evangelicals as being divisive. Simeon often pleaded with his evangelical colleagues: 'If you are gentle toward all men, and instruct in meekness them that oppose themselves, your arguments will appear stronger than they will if maintained in language of severity of triumph.'²⁵ He also exhorted Evangelicals to: 'Win souls by kindness, rather than convert them by harshness ...'²⁶

Simeon was suspicious of ministers who were too narrow-minded and once turned down a man who he described as 'one of the holiest of our age' as unfit for a particular post because he wanted a more open viewpoint: 'He could not, I am sure, become all things to all men. It is a minister's duty to be so.'²⁷ Interestingly, the 'Simeon's Trust' Deed never uses the word 'evangelical', rather the emphasis, as was Simeon's, is on the best man available to fill a vacancy.

Simeon was committed to the continuance of the evangelical tradition in the Church of England. He believed Evangelicals should reform the Church of England from within rather than through schism.

The hostility Simeon experienced because of his commitment to Evangelicalism is well documented. Moreover, he was able, in the midst of it all, to keep a gracious and forgiving attitude. Even when university students threw bricks through the church windows as he preached, he was pointedly ignored on the streets and ridiculed by citizens and scholars alike, the church wardens locked the church doors and seat-holders locked their pews, his response was to pray: 'May God bless them with enlightening, sanctifying and saving grace.'²⁸ It is remarkable to reflect that despite the fact that he was

24 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 97

25 Carus *Memoirs* pp 634-5

26 Carus *Memoirs* p 450

27 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* p 171

28 M L Loane *Cambridge and the Evangelical Succession* (London: Lutterworth 1952) pp 283-4

subjected to this sort of abuse for almost 30 years, he still stood resolute in his convictions – such was his commitment to Evangelicalism. Simeon reflects: ‘In this state of things I saw no remedy but faith and patience.’²⁹ This approach eventually had its rewards. Simeon overcame the opposition through his passion, devotion, enthusiasm, spiritual power, authority, zeal and, most significantly, his pastoral care. Warren, however, puts it down to ‘sheer endurance’.³⁰

Archbishop Donald Coggan, in his lecture on Charles Simeon in 1974, stated: ‘He loved the Church of England. He loved its liturgy and he was content to live and die a son of the Church of England, even though within that Church he suffered so much and saw so much that was weak and unworthy in its priests and people.’³¹

It is widely accepted that Simeon, by his loyalty to the Church of England, was instrumental in keeping evangelical Anglicans within the fold rather than following the Dissenters into Non-conformity. Many commentators consider Simeon to be a tremendous influence on (if not the leader of) the Evangelical Revival.

Simeon lived in, and through, the days of the French Revolution and was ever fearful of threats to the establishment of church and state. The fact that he was able to reform the church through peaceful means, was, perhaps, the greatest and most significant achievement of them all. He was able to do this: ‘because, although he recognized the weaknesses of the Church of England, he loved the Church and did not make the mistake of rejecting her because she was not perfect’.³²

At a time when Evangelicals are seriously discussing issues of parallel and alternative Episcopal oversight, we have much to learn from Simeon’s commitment to the Church to which God has called us.³³

29 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 38

30 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 115

31 F D Coggan *These Were His Gifts* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press 1974) p 16

32 Heinze ‘Charles Simeon’ p 248

33 The article by Rt Rev Wallace Benn entitled ‘Reform at the Crossroads’ in the *Church of England Newspaper* dated 12th November 1999 is well worth referring to in connection with this.

Simeon had a great respect and admiration for the Liturgy of the Prayer Books and the tradition of the Church of England.

Simeon had a pious devotion to Holy Communion, through his conversion experience, and total admiration for the *Book of Common Prayer*: 'Never do I find myself nearer to God than I often am in the reading desk ... the finest sight short of heaven would be a whole congregation using the prayers of the Liturgy in the true spirit of them.'³⁴ He also believed that: 'A congregation uniting fervently in the prayers of our Liturgy would afford as complete a picture of heaven as ever yet was beheld on earth.'³⁵ Simeon 'could rejoice in a Gospel ministry wherever he found it, but he had misgivings about any ministry not anchored to the Prayer Book'.³⁶ He was determined not to fall into the trap of some of his fellow Evangelicals and once posed the question: 'What if we *prayed* the prayers instead of reading them, and laboured *out of the pulpit* as well as in it?'³⁷

Simeon's determined churchmanship often created differences of opinion with his contemporaries who said that: 'Mr Simeon was more of a Churchman than a Gospel man.'³⁸ However, his true allegiance was to: 'The Bible first, the Prayer Book next, and all other books and doings in subordination to both.'³⁹

Simeon saw pastoral awareness as an imperative for his ministry.

Pastoral awareness does not often sit comfortably alongside evangelical theology. However, Simeon was persistent in his quest to provide adequate pastoral care for those in his parish and under the influence of his ministry. As you might expect, much of Simeon's pastoral theology was borne out of his own painful, personal experience and formed an integral part of his 'wholistic' approach to ministry.

As a result of the opposition he encountered in his early days at Holy Trinity, Simeon found it impossible to visit his parishioners. And so, in response to the needs of his congregation, he established a weekly meeting in a 'private'

34 Brown *Recollections* p 221

35 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* p 42

36 Warren p 113

37 Moule *Charles Simeon* p110

38 M Hennell and A Pollard edd *Charles Simeon (1759-1836) Essays Written in Commemoration of his Bi-Centenary* (London: SPCK 1959) p 29

39 Hennell and Pollard *Charles Simeon* p 29

room (he was unable to use the church) as a means of nurturing their faith and enabling pastoral oversight to take place. These groups were known as ‘Societies’ – the equivalent of house groups today.

After Simeon had established his credentials as a ‘genuine’ pastoral clergyman, receiving widespread acceptance, he enjoyed nothing more than mounting his horse and diligently visiting his congregation at home and at the workplace. His customary greeting was: ‘I am come to inquire after your welfare. Are you happy?’⁴⁰ Simeon on horseback was a familiar sight around the parish. A friend of Simeon’s wrote a letter of introduction for his nephew as he entered University: ‘When you call, he will probably be either in the stable with his horses, or by the sick-beds of his parishioners.’⁴¹ Simeon also undertook to visit prisoners in Cambridge and Newgate Prisons. And, despite the fact that he was single, Simeon had such a concern for clergy marriages and the pressure clergy wives found themselves under, that he arranged summer house-parties for like-minded clergy and their wives to give encouragement and support.

Simeon is famed for the many thousands of letters he wrote to offer counsel and support. It is an irony, therefore, that he disliked guidance by correspondence, preferring instead the personal approach:

If I speak with a man, I can stop when I see it is doing harm; I can soften the truth so as not to fly in the face of his cherished views ... written words convey ideas ... but they cannot convey exact feelings ... You cannot hesitate upon paper, you cannot weep upon paper, you cannot look kindness upon paper.⁴²

Simeon was motivated to influence society through a commitment to (the gospel exhibited through) social action, acknowledging his responsibility of caring and providing for his neighbour.

Simeon was greatly influenced by, and also helped to influence, philanthropic Christianity exemplified by the ‘Clapham Sect’. Simeon revelled and rejoiced in a sphere of society – the middle and upper classes – who were able to exert

40 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 29

41 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 55

42 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* pp 124-9

influence on the government of the day through their social reform agenda alongside the provision of resources for the physical and spiritual requirements of the under-privileged and those in need at home and abroad.

Simeon was totally committed to the service of God and man. With him, theology and practice were always united. He believed in practical Christianity – in action rather than words – and was consciously aware of the needs of the poor. Simeon shared the motto, along with other Evangelicals: ‘*Every hour and every shilling for God.*’⁴³ Simeon was an affluent man (more through thrift and careful management than inherited wealth) and often took advantage of that fact. As a young man he allocated a third of his income to good causes and, in later years, gave away the £5000 profit from his *Horae Homileticae*.

Several troublemakers, who were so persistent in voicing their hostility and disagreements towards Simeon’s ministry, eventually found themselves in jail. Simeon, in that distinctive way of his, ensured they were not released until they had made a contribution to the poor of the parish.⁴⁴

One example of Simeon’s social awareness was his response to the bread famine of 1788-89, when he subsidized bakers in surrounding villages so that they would be able to sell bread cheaply: ‘Every Monday he would ride out into the countryside to see for himself that the local bakers in the twenty-four villages on his list who had received a subsidy, were being honest in selling their bread to the poor as arranged at half price.’⁴⁵

Another example was his association with the parish of Stapleford – which he took on to provide the house and income for a curate – where he established a small factory to provide employment.⁴⁶

It was through his social action programme that Simeon pioneered the use of laity in the ministry of the church. He initiated a ‘Visiting Society’ whose brief was ‘to find out the modest and industrious poor in time of sickness and to administer to them relief for their bodies, and at the same time, instruction for their souls’.⁴⁷

43 J R H Moorman *A History of the Church in England* (Edinburgh: R and R Clark 1963) p 316

44 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* pp 79-81

45 Hopkins *Charles Simeon* p51

46 M Hinton *The Anglican Parochial Clergy* (London: SCM Press 1996) p 357

47 Simeon Sermon 2036

Simeon was committed to evangelism and mission at home and abroad.

At the end of one of his sermons, Simeon urged his congregation to:

cry mightily to God that the cruse of salt may be cast into the fountain [Cambridge] from which so many streams are issuing; that being salubrious they may fertilise this whole land, and be the means of diffusing life and salvation to the remotest corners of the globe.⁴⁸

Clearly, Simeon had a passion to see the kingdom of God extended at home and abroad. He often preached in unlicensed places and in what he considered to be neglected villages the length and breadth of the United Kingdom. It was as a consequence of this that Simeon came to realize the potential, and strategic importance of being able to influence the mission of the Church of England by purchasing rights of clerical appointments. An essential part of his evangelistic strategy, therefore, was to staff churches, most of them in obscure and unimportant villages, with converted clergy who knew what to preach and who believed in the importance of a sound doctrinal systematic of Bible teaching to disciple their congregations.

By the end of Simeon's life it was recorded that every leading parish church in Cambridge had an evangelical ministry. The widespread renewal of the Church of England came about, largely, through the continued flow from Cambridge into churches all over the country. Simeon is said to have trained over 1100 young clergy through sermon classes and personal counselling, providing the only ordination training in the Church of England at that time.⁴⁹ His purpose according to H C G Moule, 'was to make his younger friends intelligent and intelligible preachers'.⁵⁰

Simeon also had a fervent commitment to mission overseas and was instrumental in the setting up of many organizations including the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Church's Ministry to the Jews, the Church Missionary Society and the Church Pastoral Aid Society. All this is well recorded and need not be reproduced here. However, the call, and the task, of evangelism and mission is as important today as it was in Simeon's day. Perhaps, like Simeon, we

48 Simeon Sermon 359

49 Warren 'Charles Simeon' p 117

50 Moule *Charles Simeon* p 85

need to be visionary initiators to 'tap the untapped' potential for evangelism. As Charles Smyth observed: 'If ever Simeon took up one thing, we may be certain that it was something that met the needs of the age.'⁵¹ Douglas Webster commented on the bi-centenary of Simeon's birth: 'He knew the wavelength of his generation. They listened; they responded.'⁵² Can we, who seek to make the church and the gospel relevant to our world today do any better?

Final Thoughts

Charles Smyth wrote of Simeon: 'I doubt whether the genius of that man as an ecclesiastical statesman has ever achieved sufficient recognition.'⁵³ Zachary Macaulay believes otherwise: 'If you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway over the Church was far greater than that of any primate.'⁵⁴

Charles Simeon made a significant contribution both to the church in England and to British society. He was: 'an outstanding contributor to the overall process by which Evangelicalism became a socially acceptable expression of Christian faith in the early nineteenth century'.⁵⁵

The standards Simeon set as a preacher, pastor and director, and the fundamental aims and achievements of his remarkable ministry, are an abiding challenge; they should inspire not only Evangelicals but the whole Anglican Communion and beyond, so long as the Christian task remains unfinished.⁵⁶

Personal Reflection

Are the priorities and concerns of Charles Simeon relevant for today? Yes, I

51 C Smyth *Simeon and Church Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940) p 18

52 D Webster 'Simeon's Pastoral Theology' in *Charles Simeon (1759-1836) Essays Written in Commemoration of his Bi-Centenary* M Hennell and A Pollard edd (London: SPCK 1959) p 73

53 Webster 'Simeon's Pastoral Theology' p 6

54 A R Vidler *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd 1908) p 36

55 J M Gordon *Evangelical Spirituality – From the Wesleys to John Stott* (London: SPCK 1991) p 104

56 Webster 'Simeon's Pastoral Theology' p 118

believe they are: We have much to learn from his love for the Church of England and his persistence in the face of adversity. There is a strong argument for reforming the Church from within rather than through schism and we have a practicable model for pastoral care and social action. In closing, permit me to highlight three areas of Simeon's ministry which have greatly challenged me in my reflections and which, if we were to follow them, would have the potential to rejuvenate our ministry.

- 1 Giving priority to an effective devotional lifestyle, with a commitment to spending 'quality' time in Bible study and prayer.
- 2 A commitment to living a holy life, recognizing the need of the renewing and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.
- 3 That, along with Simeon, our understanding of the purpose of our preaching would be: 'Sir, we would see Jesus' (John 12:21).

As we seek to establish a platform for an effective ministry in our world today and as we continue to build up, and minister in, the church that Charles Simeon spent his life serving and preserving, his example, I believe, is one which all of us could do no worse than to emulate.

Hear our prayer, O Lord, that we who give thanks this day for the work of grace in the life of your servant Charles Simeon, may ourselves be given his love of souls, and his zeal for the proclamation of your word: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁵⁷

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⁵⁷ M Draper compiler *The Cloud of Witnesses – A Companion to the Lesser Festivals and Holydays of the Alternative Service Book 1980* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications 1982) p 185