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Canal, River and Rapids : Contemporary Evangelicalism in the Church of England

Graham Kings maps out the shape of Evangelical Anglicanism in England today. He uses the metaphor of watercourses – canal, river, rapids – to describe conservative, open and charismatic evangelicals. For each category he describes key theological and ecclesiological features, organisations and people. He relates each evangelical type to its historical influences, and so reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of the contribution of each constituency today. Significant Anglican leaders can navigate more than one watercourse, and he concludes with a plea for Anglican Evangelical leaders to see NEAC 4 as an opportunity to reflect together on the challenges of our times.

Introduction

David Edwards, in a perceptive article on the church that Dr Rowan Williams has been called to lead commented: 'He will preside over a Church of England where the vitality is now mainly evangelical.'¹ There have been worrying signs over the last year, particularly in response to the appointment of Dr Williams, that this vitality could be dissipated in internecine strife: this would be tragic and is unnecessary. Ironically, the appointment of Dr Jeffrey John as Bishop of Reading elicited a more united response.

In 2003 there are at least four significant evangelical Anglican events. In January Peter Jensen, the new Archbishop of Sydney toured eight churches of the Reform network;² in March 'Islington Conversations: Eclectics' (ICE) took place at St Mary Islington with conservative, open and charismatic speakers on the theme of 'Our Mission in Britain'.³ In July, at Limuru, just outside Nairobi, Kenya, the second

1 David Edwards, 'A Master Mariner Meets the Storm' *The Tablet*, 27 July 2002, p 4.
2 Reform, a conservative movement, was founded in 1993 in response to the vote by General Synod to ordain women as priests. William Taylor, Rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate, London and successor to Dick Lucas (a founder of Reform) has been the main organizer of Peter Jensen's tour.

3 The Islington Clerical Conference, founded by Daniel Wilson, vicar of St Mary's Church, ran from 1827-1983. The Eclectic Society was founded in 1783 by John Newton and others and refounded in 1950 by John Stott. ICE started in 2003, by combining these two. It will meet annually and is also open to lay people. Eclectics continues to hold a residential conference in November each year.

international consultation of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC) gathered about 140 leaders to consider the theme 'Celebrating Anglican Mission Today.'⁴ In September, in Blackpool, the fourth National Evangelical Anglican Congress will meet with the title 'Fanning the Flame: Bible, Cross and Mission'.⁵

One way of seeking to hold together our movement under stress is to attempt a preliminary exercise in some general 'mapping' that may make sense of our unity and diversity. This 'mapping' is exploratory and suggestive rather than definitive and fixed. The metaphor explored in this article is that of the movement of water in three different watercourses: canal, river and rapids.⁶ It seems to me that our evangelical Anglican identity is 'one' but that we have 'three' theological shapes within it: conservative, open and charismatic.

The advantage of the metaphor of the movement of water is fluidity. The river can flow into rapids and can feed the canal. However, we do need to avoid the disadvantages of literalism in our interpretation. As evangelicals it is perfectly possible to be in more than one course at a time and at different times. Many evangelicals are conservative on some issues (e.g. homosexuality, as manifested in the debate concerning Dr John's appointment), open on particular subjects (e.g. the importance of hermeneutics) and charismatic in certain perspectives (e.g. prayer for healing). Some are conservative and charismatic, others open and conservative, and others charismatic and open.

In this article we begin with suggested current outlines of the movement, move to historical reflections, and then consider particular theological themes.

A. Current Outlines of Watercourses

In giving broad outlines of these three watercourses, I am very conscious of the dangers of generalization (i.e. floating ideas without the space to develop clear definitions) and of overly neat categorizations (giving the impression of definite boundaries and firming up identities).⁷

4 EFAC was founded in 1961 by John Stott. In 1993 the first international consultation was held at the University of Kent, Canterbury and the papers were published in John Stott and others, *The Anglican Communion and Scripture*, Regnum Books, Oxford 1996.

5 The pre-conference book is Paul Gardner, Chris Wright and Chris Green (eds), *Fanning the Flame: Bible, Cross and Mission*, Zondovan, Grand Rapids 2003. Previous NEACs, and their main emphases summed up in a single word according to the report of NEAC 3, were: NEAC 1 at Keele in 1967

('involvement'); NEAC 2 at Nottingham in 1977 ('hermeneutics'); NEAC 3 at Caister in 1988 ('integration'). John Stott 'What is the Spirit saying', CEEC, Chippenham 1988, p 3. It will be interesting to see what may be the summary word for NEAC 4.

6 Watercourse: 'A stream of water, a river or brook; also an artificial channel for the conveyance of water.' The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, OUP, Oxford 1973, s.v.

7 I am also conscious of the danger of echoing the sketches on David Frost's programmes in the 1970s. John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett used to act out upper, middle and working class caricatures.

1. Canal: Conservative Evangelicals

Conservative evangelicals claim the concepts of infallibility or inerrancy in their doctrine of Scripture: while taking the science of hermeneutics seriously, many are often worried that it may distract from this stress.

John Oman, in his seminal book, *Grace and Personality*,⁸ contrasted the canal with the river. He opened his book with questions addressed to Catholic and Protestant infallibilities and continued with considering God's grace and work in nature and history:

The expedition demanded by man's small power and short day produces the canal, but nature, with a beneficent and picturesque circumambulancy, the work of a more spacious and less precipitate mind, produces the river. Why should we assume that, in all the rest of [God's] ways, he rejoices in the river, but, in religion, can use no adequate method save the canal? The defence of the infallible is the defence of the canal against the river, of the channel blasted through the rock against the basin dug by an element which swerves at a pebble or a firmer clay.⁹

Yet canals also have very positive aspects to them. They transformed the movement of raw materials and heavy industrial products; they are the only watercourse where there can be movement uphill; they are steady and calm; and today they have experienced a renaissance in development which has provided relaxing leisure activity and a delight for the ecologically concerned.

Perhaps an attempt may be made to summarize the use of the term 'conservative evangelical' in the following affirmations. In particular, they are:

Committed to:

- the infallibility or inerrancy of the Scriptures
- penal substitution as the defining model for the atonement
- evangelism as the defining mode of mission
- headship in gender issues
- combating the promotion of homosexuality

Open to:

- hermeneutical insights (particularly from evangelicals)
- church planting across parish boundaries (even without permission)
- working with fellow conservative evangelicals in other denominations
- the use of non-liturgical worship

Significant 20th century influences on this watercourse include the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union and its wider movement, the Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF), later renamed the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), and the summer camps organized for public schoolboys under the auspices of the Childrens' Special Service Mission (and later Scripture Union). Of particular

8 John Oman, *Grace and Personality*, CUP, Cambridge 1917.

9 Oman, *Grace and Personality*, p 14.

importance was the Iwerne Minster camp, whose architect was Eric Nash (known as 'Bash').¹⁰

Conservative evangelical Church of England organizations are Church Society¹¹ and Reform¹² and these led the opposition to the appointment of Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury. Closely linked world mission agencies include Crosslinks (formerly Bible Churchman's Missionary Society, which split from the Church Missionary Society in 1922) and various interdenominational societies.

They tend to look for inspiration towards Dick Lucas, former Rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate for many years and a founder of the Proclamation Trust and Reform, William Taylor, currently Rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate, David Holloway, Vicar of Jesmond Parish Church (Clayton Memorial), Newcastle, Wallace Benn, Bishop of Lewes. Philip Giddings, Reader at Greyfriars Church, Reading, is a key conservative lay person. A focal theologian is James I. Packer, former Associate Principal at Trinity College, Bristol and former Professor at Regent College, Vancouver. Packer's 1978 booklet *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem: an analysis*¹³ provides a helpful overview of this position:

And when evangelicals of any denomination are invited to see their theology as one strand or fragment of truth needing to be set in a larger ecumenical framework they demur, humbly but firmly insisting that, on the contrary, evangelical theology itself provides the framework into which all biblical insights should be fitted, and that any deviating from this framework will be to that extent a deviating from Christianity. Evangelicals see all theological truth as belonging by right to the whole Christian church.¹⁴

This seems to be a totalizing, 'given' identity with little room for exploring an identity oneself. The phrase 'the framework into which all biblical insights should be fitted' is particularly worrying. One of the fascinations of John Calvin's commentaries is precisely that he often did not squeeze his interpretation of the Scriptures into the framework of his *Institutes*.

The only theological college currently specifically conservative, is Oak Hill in London, although previously Trinity College, Bristol and to some extent Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, have been a focus for conservative students. Patronage societies include Martyrs Memorial and Church Society and some also look to the Simeon Trust. The conservative journal is *Churchman*, currently edited by Gerald Bray,

10 See a fascinating article by David Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910-1971,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2003), pp 62-88. 'Between 1935 and 1939 all CICCU's presidents were "Bash campers" and the union was marked by his methods: a very simple evangelical gospel; meticulous preparation; a wariness of emotions or intellect and assiduous "personal work" before and after conversion.' p 70.

11 Founded in 1835.

12 Founded in 1993 as a specifically Anglican society, with inspiration from the interdenominational Proclamation Trust, in response to the vote in General Synod for the ordination of women to the priesthood. For John Stott's critique concerning the founding of Reform see Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, IVP, Leicester 2001, p 414.

13 J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem: an analysis*, Latimer House, Oxford 1978.

14 Packer, *Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem*, p 16.

whose editorial attack on Rowan Williams caused considerable comment, and Latimer House booklets form a focus for their thinking. Favoured non-denominational evangelical conferences are Word Alive, at Easter, which developed as a conservative form of Spring Harvest, and, to some extent, the Keswick Convention, in the summer. Some representative churches include: St Andrew the Great, Cambridge (the congregation formerly worshipped at The Round Church); St Ebbe's, Oxford; St Helen's Bishopsgate; All Souls' Langham Place; Emmanuel, Northwood; St Peter's Harold Wood; Jesmond Parish Church; and Christ Church Fulwood, Sheffield.

2. River: Open Evangelicals

In Oman's parable, mentioned above, we may note the contrast between the canal and the river. The canal is direct and straight and its channel is blasted through obstacles: the river is indirect and meandering and moves around things in its pathway. This may be applied to the particular importance 'open evangelicals' give to hermeneutics in their doctrine of the Scriptures. The concept of 'trustworthiness' is often preferred to 'infallibility'. If the latter term is raised, one way of elucidating it may be to say that: 'The Bible is exactly as God wants us to have it' and it needs to be interpreted contextually and imaginatively.

Rivers are often uneven, untidy and take circuitous courses. They have turbulent currents and require more navigation than the canals. They are directed towards the sea.

Gavind Reid, in his recent autobiography *To Canterbury with Love: Windows into a Church in Turbulent Times*¹⁵ states that he has been identified as someone who is an 'open evangelical' but 'I remain somewhat bemused by the term and how it emerged'.¹⁶ Many would consider George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, Colin Buchanan, David Sheppard, James Jones, Michael Nazir-Ali, Pete Broadbent and Vivienne Faull to be open evangelicals. A key lay person is Christina Baxter and a focal theologian for many is Anthony Thiselton.¹⁷

Perhaps an attempt may be made to summarize its current use in the following affirmations.

Open Evangelicals are committed to:

- the intrinsic authority and trustworthiness of the Bible (which is to be interpreted in context and with insights from the world-wide Church)

15 Gavin Reid, *To Canterbury with Love: Windows into a Church in Turbulent Times*, Kingsway, Eastbourne 2002. Reid was an evangelist with CPAS, chief organizer of Billy Graham's 'Mission England' and later Bishop of Maidstone. The headline to David Edwards' positive review of the book in *The Church Times* of 7 Feb. 2003 refers to Reid as 'an open Evangelical who is also a realist.'

16 Reid, *To Canterbury with Love*, p 114.

17 Carey is the former Archbishop of Canterbury; Buchanan, Bishop of Woolwich; Sheppard the former Bishop of Liverpool; Jones the current Bishop of Liverpool; Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester; Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden; Faull, Dean of Leicester; Baxter, Principal of St John's College, Nottingham and Thiselton, Professor Emeritus of the University of Nottingham. See Colin Buchanan, 'Anglican Evangelicalism: The State of the Party' *Anvil*, (1984), pp 7-18, for insightful perspectives on the evangelical movement.

- the longing for conversion to Jesus Christ of all people (from others faiths and none)
- working for renewal within the structures of the Anglicanism (at local, national and international levels)

Open Evangelicals are open to:

- surprises of the Holy Spirit (in the charismatic movement)
- learning from other traditions (within Anglicanism)
- working ecumenically (with other denominations)
- positive fruit of biblical scholarship (which builds up the body of Christ)
- issues of justice (which are integral to holistic mission)
- significance of the sacraments and liturgy (which embody regular worship)
- learning from other faiths (dialogue as well as proclamation)
- ordination of women (to the three orders of the Church)

The three commitments refer, with elucidations, to the Bible, Gospel and Church. John Stott's definition of Evangelicals at the second National Evangelical Anglican Congress in Nottingham (1977) referred to 'Bible people and Gospel people'. Tom Wright wrote a perceptive booklet in 1980, *Evangelical Anglican Identity: the Connection between Bible, Gospel and Church*.¹⁸ This seems to have been written as a more 'open' response to Jim Packer's 'conservative' booklet mentioned above and John Stott's definition. Wright argued that for evangelical *Anglicans* the dimension of Church needed to be included in the definition:

The church is not something tacked on at the end of the gospel as in much old dogmatic theology and much modern evangelical misunderstanding. If the gospel is wrenched out of the context of the people of God, it will not resonate with all its true overtones: that is, it cannot be properly understood except as the climax of Israel's history and the foundation of the church.¹⁹

The eight statements of 'openness' may be contrasted with conservative reservations about the charismatic movement and its contemporary use of the gifts of the Spirit, about insights from other Anglican traditions (e.g. concerning spirituality), about ecumenism (apart from evangelical inter-denominationalism), about biblical criticism (which develops distinctiveness between the gospels), about holistic mission (which may be seen as detracting from the primacy of evangelism), about the sacraments (which may appear to distract from the 'word'), about other faiths (which are seen as offering little light about the one true God in them) and about the ordination of women (which is held to contradict principles of biblical 'headship').

Wright wrote concerning the discussions at NEAC 2 in Nottingham, 'talking about hermeneutics is not an automatic indication of incipient liberalism.'²⁰

18 N. T. Wright, *Evangelical Anglican Identity: the Connection between Bible, Gospel and Church* Latimer House, Oxford 1980.

19 Wright, *Evangelical Anglican Identity*, p 22. It is interesting to note that the doctrinal basis of the Inter Varsity Fellowship was changed

in 1960: there was a new stress on the doctrine of God and an additional clause about the church. See Goodhew, 'Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union', p. 84.

20 Wright, *Evangelical Anglican Identity*, p 11.

Liberalism is a contested word amongst evangelicals; 'open evangelicals' are sometimes accused of it by conservatives but they usually insist that their 'openness' is not the equivalent of theological liberalism. Martyn Percy, the Director of the Lincoln Theological Institute at Sheffield²¹ and editor of *Modern Believing*, as a theological liberal, comments on extreme openness which resulted in the demise of the Student Christian Movement:

The Student Christian Movement declared itself open and removed its boundaries: but the life of the body flowed out, rather than the people coming in. As David Martin has pointed out, 'the unbounded is soon the empty.' The cost of inculturation is the alienation of those who joined the body because it was different.²²

Christopher Cocksworth, an open evangelical and charismatic theologian, currently principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, outlines early 20th century Liberal Evangelicalism in his perceptive book *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England*:

In 1905 a number of younger Evangelical clergy formed themselves into the Group Brotherhood, which in 1923 led to the formation of the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement and the publication of *Liberal Evangelicalism*.²³

Cocksworth continues later:

Liberal Evangelicalism may have been paternally related to the process [of the Evangelical reawakening] by fathering the ethos of modern Evangelicalism, maternally related by nourishing its values, and even fraternally related by forging ahead to model a new kind of Evangelicalism with all its potential and pitfalls. Nevertheless, the remarkable feature of the recent period is that by the early 1960s Liberal Evangelicalism had ceased to exist as a distinct and recognizable entity within the Church, and had thus left Conservative Evangelicalism free to take the Evangelical label as its own.²⁴

It may be suggested that one possible distinction between contemporary open evangelicals and former liberal evangelicals is the concept of 'universalism.' Universalism in the sense that in the end all people, without remainder, everywhere and at all times, will be included in the kingdom of God was sometimes seen as a distinctive feature of liberal evangelicals but is usually rejected by open evangelicals.²⁵

The Church of England society looked to by open evangelicals is the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), and the Church Mission Society and the South

21 The Institute may appear to bilocate, with its wonderfully named locational identity crisis, but it developed in Sheffield with funds resulting from the closure of Lincoln Theological College.

22 Martyn Percy, *Power and the Church: Ecclesiology in an Age of Transition*, Cassell, London 1998, p 216, quoting David Martin, reviewing Kieran Flanagan's work, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Jan. 1997), p 106.

23 Christopher Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England*, CUP, Cambridge 1993, p 91.

24 Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought*, p 103.

25 For further discussion of this topic, see N.T. Wright, 'Universalism and the World-wide Community' *Churchman*, 89 (1975), pp 197-220 and, with particular reference to Max Warren, see Kings, *Christianity Connected*, pp 144-148 and 159-164.

American Missionary Society (SAMS) are the foci of their world mission concern. Of the six evangelical theological colleges, currently five are open evangelical: Wycliffe Hall, Oxford; Ridley Hall, Cambridge; Trinity College, Bristol; St John's Nottingham; and Cranmer Hall, Durham. The patronage trusts are CPAS, Simeon's Trust, and the Peache Trust. The 'open evangelical' journal is *Anvil*,²⁶ and Grove Books, founded by Colin Buchanan also consolidates 'open evangelicalism.' A favoured non-denominational evangelical conference is Spring Harvest at Easter. Some representative churches include: Holy Trinity, Cambridge; St Aldate's, Oxford (though this may now be seen as more naturally charismatic); St Mary Islington; St Nicholas Durham (this may now be seen as conservative); Bath Abbey and Christ Church Clifton, Bristol.

3. Rapids: Charismatic Evangelicals

John Oman did not mention rapids in his parable, but it may be legitimate to develop his thinking in this way concerning charismatic evangelicals. The vitality and energy associated with this watercourse may be appropriate. Rapids are in rivers and locks are in canals.

Charismatic evangelicals usually hold a conservative doctrine of Scripture, without always insisting on infallibility or inerrancy, but also believe in the importance of receiving God's word today, through prophecies, which have to be tested by Scripture. For them the Spirit opens the truth of God in Scripture with a focus on listening. This Spirit-filled listening can top up conservative evangelicalism with the Spirit or deepen the river of open evangelicalism.

Perhaps an attempt may be made to summarize the use of the term 'charismatic evangelical' in the following affirmations.

In particular, they are *committed* to:

- the dynamic authority and trustworthiness of the Bible (which is often interpreted in the context of Spirit-filled 'listening')
- mission in the power of the Spirit (which includes encounters of 'signs and wonders')
- the exercise of spiritual gifts in church (including tongues, prophecy and healing)

And they are *open* to:

- sharing conferences and celebrations with other denominations including Roman Catholics
- the ministry of women at differing levels of leadership
- the advantages of modern media for presentation and publicity
- the reality of possession, and oppression, by evil spirits
- world-wide pentecostal and charismatic movements
- the importance of the communal aspect of being church
- explorations of creative, alternative worship

26 *Anvil* was founded in 1984 by many of the former board of *Churchman*, who had resigned out of solidarity with the editor, Peter Williams. Williams had been sacked by The Church Society, who owned *Churchman*.

Since 1984 *Churchman* has had a distinctly conservative ethos and *Anvil* has continued the policy of openness, characterized by the former *Churchman*.

James H. S. Steven, in his recent doctoral analysis of this tradition, *Worship in the Spirit: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England*, comments:

The development of the Charismatic Movement has led to aspects of Pentecostal spirituality, albeit in adapted form, influencing many parts of the Church of England. Large, successful charismatic parishes have developed, bishops and others in leadership have been baptized in the Spirit, service agencies and conferences have grown, died and then re-emerged in new guises, and the term 'charismatic' has become another accepted churchmanship label. It seems that the desire of the original pioneers for the new movement of the Spirit to be spread throughout the church has, to a degree, been realized in the Church of England.²⁷

In 1980 Jim Packer published two thoughtful articles on the movement on which Christopher Cocksworth later commented:

Packer's sympathetic appraisal of the Charismatic Movement still worked within an essentially dispensationalist philosophy, and thus he concluded by commending the inward and spiritual dimensions of the Movement whilst demythologizing its external phenomena.²⁸

Cocksworth also discussed an important report of General Synod, which mentioned a growing appreciation of the sacraments in the movement:

The report, *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England* identified 'a positive sacramentalism even amongst those who had previously been non-sacramentalist, or even anti-sacramentalist.'²⁹

Charismatic evangelicals look to the late David Watson, for many years vicar of St Michael-le-Belfry, York, as a founding figure. Watson and David MacInnes, recently retired Rector of St Aldate's Oxford, were mentored by their training incumbent, John Collins, who later laid the foundations for transforming Holy Trinity Brompton. Currently charismatics look to Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle, Graham Cray, Bishop of Maidstone, Sandy Millar and Nicky Gumbel, vicar and curate at Holy Trinity Brompton. A key lay person is Ken Costa, churchwarden and Holy Trinity, Brompton. Focal theologians include Mark Stibbe, vicar of St Andrew's Chorleywood and Christopher Cocksworth, principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge.

Their Church of England 'agencies' are Alpha (founded at Holy Trinity Brompton) and New Wine Network (wider than Anglican but originating from St Andrew's Chorleywood) and Sharing of Ministries Abroad (SOMA) is the equivalent of their World Mission agency.

The five open evangelical theological colleges all have charismatic students but preference is given by some students to Ridley Hall, Cambridge and St John's College, Nottingham. In terms of patronage of parishes, there is none, apart from

27 James H. S. Steven, *Worship in the Spirit: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England*, Paternoster Press, Carlisle 2002, p 36.

28 Christopher Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England*, CUP, Cambridge 1993, p 161 commenting

on J. I. Packer, 'Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement', *Churchman*, 94 (1980), pp 7-25, 103-25.

29 Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought* p. 157, citing *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England*, Church Information Office, London 1981, p 37.

where a charismatic vicar or bishop have patronage. There is no specific theological journal (since the closure of *Theological Renewal*), but several Grove Booklets deal with charismatic issues and both the magazine *Christianity and Renewal* and the literature of the Alpha movement form a focus. The *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield Academic Press) has many evangelical Anglican subscribers. Favoured non-denominational evangelical conferences are Spring Harvest, at Easter, and New Wine in the summer. Some representative churches include: St Thomas Crookes, Sheffield; Holy Trinity, Brompton, London; St Andrew's, Chorleywood; Holy Trinity, Cheltenham; St Nicholas, Nottingham; St Michael-le-Belfry, York; St John's Harborne, Birmingham; St Philip and St James, Bristol; St Barnabas, Kensington, London; All Saints, Woodford Wells; St Barnabas, Finchley, London and St Paul's, Ealing, London.

4. Navigators

In concluding this section of outlines, it may be helpful to mention three significant evangelical Anglican leaders and prolific authors who, like many, navigate more than one watercourse, thus showing again the importance of the fluidity of the metaphor. John Stott³⁰ is the architect of the postwar renaissance in evangelical Anglicanism. He may be seen as an example of someone who navigates the canal and the river: a conservative evangelical who in the 1970s realized increasingly the importance of the issues of social, political and ecumenical involvement.³¹ Michael Green,³² an evangelist and theologian, was greatly influenced by David Watson and may be seen as an example of someone who navigates the river and the rapids: an open evangelical who saw God's vitality in the contemporary use of the gifts of the Spirit. Alister McGrath,³³ a key focal theologian of the evangelical movement, may also be seen as someone who navigates both the canal and the river: increasingly open to women's issues, his current major publishing project is on the interplay between science and theology and he has publicly welcomed the appointment of Rowan Williams, while still disagreeing with him on the issue of homosexuality.³⁴

B. Historical Reflections on the Watercourses³⁵

Particular readings of history may well be notoriously tendentious. The following reflections are offered as discussion starters rather than as conclusive closures. All three watercourses claim to be united in being rooted in the Reformation but where are the differences?

30 Stott, still continuing writing in his 'retirement', has been Rector of All Souls' Langham Place, London and President of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

31 See Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, chapters 7 and 9 in particular and a forthcoming Cambridge PhD thesis by Alister Chapman.

32 Green has been Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, Rector of St Aldate's,

Oxford, Professor of Evangelism, Regents College, Vancouver and co-leader of the Archbishops' Initiative in Evangelism, Springboard.

33 McGrath is Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Oxford and Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

34 Alister McGrath, *Church of England* Newspaper, 8 August, 2002.

35 I am grateful for insights and discussions with Rod Green concerning the following perspectives.

1. Canal

Conservative evangelicals trace their identity back to Thomas Cranmer in England, John Knox in Scotland and John Calvin on the continent. The theology of these men was formed during the first wave of the Reformation, in the face of great opposition and violence. Since it is born out of conflict, this tradition has an exclusive identity. The stress on the historic formularies of the Church of England (especially the 39 Articles) is often held to exclude other expressions of Anglicanism as being authentically Anglican. Conservatives then see their tradition developing through the Puritans, who considered that the church had not yet been reformed enough and rejected the Elizabethan Settlement. In remaining faithful to its Reformation and Puritan forbears it is almost uniformly Calvinist in orientation. George Whitefield and J. C. Ryle, continued this tradition and also ministered in times of threat and conflict. Whitefield held the Calvinist line in the face of Wesleyan opposition. Ryle is seen as having stood for a clear Reformed faith against the rising tide of liberal theology and at the time Darwinism was impacting the Church of England. Currently, there is a firm belief that liturgical revision is moving the Church away from Reformation doctrine and that many evangelicals who hold positions of responsibility in the church are no longer authentically evangelical. Is this feeling of marginalisation essential to conservative evangelicalism, so that it is difficult to recognize the position of strength evangelicals generally have in the Church of England?

2. River

Open evangelicals may trace their origins and traditions in a different way. Many also see their roots in Thomas Cranmer, but, on the continent, more in Martin Luther than in John Calvin. Generally speaking, Luther was prepared to accept some church traditions, e.g. bishops, that he considered to be not against scriptural principles, whilst Calvin was more restrictive and sought specific scriptural warrant for traditions. Open evangelicalism may be seen to develop more in times of pluralism and diversity, when combatants are exhausted by theological debate and argument. Richard Hooker is a key figure, who defended the Elizabethan Settlement against puritan attacks and was positive about the structures of the church. In this tradition, there is a willingness to recognize episcopal authority and the validity and contribution of differing insights within the church. After a period of destructive conflict between Calvinists and Arminians, Charles Simeon is seen as continuing this open tradition, (in that he recognized evangelical identity as being broader than Calvinism);³⁶ he stressed the importance of liturgy and of Holy Communion (having been converted during the service of communion) and opposed sectarianism (he encouraged evangelicals to stay within the Church of England, when many were tempted to join Methodism). Simeon and the Clapham Sect (John Venn, William Wilberforce and others) founded the Church Missionary Society in 1799, which ever since has been involved in holistic mission, campaigning for the abolition of slavery and spreading the gospel throughout the world. The Clapham Sect founded *The*

36 A famous quotation by Simeon, concerning election and freedom, runs: 'The truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme, but in

both extremes.' Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge*, Hodder & Stoughton, London 1977, p 176.

Christian Observer, which was wide ranging in its interests and influence. The more conservative and narrow *Christian Record* was founded in 1828.³⁷

3. Rapids

Some charismatic evangelicals may wish to trace their tradition back to the radical reformation of the continental Anabaptists, but it may be that it is in John Wesley's pietism, and the emotive response to his preaching, that most find their roots. This tradition may be seen to develop as a radical renewal movement within a wider evangelical movement, summoning the original to its own further challenges. It may be seen as continuing through Edward Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church (which included speaking in tongues), the Keswick Convention (with its emphasis on a second blessing) and Handley Moule's profound spirituality (which combined scholarship with translucent piety).³⁸ The Pentecostal movement, which burst on the scene in Los Angeles at the beginning of the 20th century and spread throughout the world, influenced evangelical Anglicanism especially in the 1960s. Evangelicals had long been asking nominal Anglicans whether they were truly born again; now they were on the receiving end of a similar, sharp question: have you been baptized in the Spirit?

C. Theological Reflections on the Watercourses

Having sketched some outlines of the contemporary evangelical movement in the Church of England, and reflected on their historical influences, we turn now to consider some theological themes. Lack of space prohibits more extended treatment and these comments are deliberately left without elucidations to elicit further reflection and response.

1. Authority

All three watercourses tend to be uncomfortable with the *equality* of 'scripture', 'tradition' and 'reason' as Anglican authorities, and are united in preferring to hold to the supreme authority of Scripture. In expounding the NT general preferences for certain texts may be discerned: is it fair to describe conservatives as tending to gravitate to the epistles, open evangelicals to the gospels and charismatics to the Acts of the Apostles?

In effect, it may be possible to discern three sub-authorities, under Scripture, which are sometimes in danger of becoming supra-authorities and affecting hermeneutics. In the canal, this may be 'evangelical tradition', which is sometimes hardened into doctrine; in the river, these may be 'reason' and 'church tradition,' which can lead astray; and in the rapids this may be 'experience,' which, while live-giving, may be unstable as a foundation.

37 John Henry Newman, then an evangelical, was one of the founders; see Randle Manwaring, *From Controversy to Co-Existence: Evangelicals in the Church of England 1914-1980*, CUP, Cambridge 1985, p 22. Is there a dissertation waiting to be written comparing the 'Recordites' with contemporary members of Reform?

38 See Christopher Cocksworth, 'Windows of Grace and Truth: Envisaging Anglican-Evangelical Methodology through the Iconography of a Chapel' (Inaugural Lecture, Cambridge, 6 November 2001), *Theology* Mar/Apr 2003.

Concerning 'reason',³⁹ our contemporary philosophical context is currently much disputed. Have we fully entered a postmodern period, which has left modernity behind? Can we strike while the irony is hot? Is this shift entirely new or are there significant historical precedents for such philosophical counter movements? It could be suggested that the Romantic movement's subjective reaction to the Enlightenment may well parallel the postmodern reaction to modernity. It is not that the Romantic movement replaced the Enlightenment, rather the Enlightenment continued underneath the Romantic movement, as a sort of musical base line. Similarly, postmodernity may well not replace modernity, for modernity is also continuing underneath as a base line. The positive side of postmodernity could be reconstrued as 'contextuality' and the negative side as 'contextualism'. 'Contextuality' takes the local perspective seriously while still recognizing universal values: 'contextualism' only takes the local seriously and rejects universal values or insights.

All three watercourses are united in rejecting the claims of 'contextualism'. Open and charismatic evangelicals seem more at home in rejoicing in 'contextuality' than conservatives: Would it be fair to say that conservatives tend to be more happy in 'modernity' than 'postmodernity' and open and charismatic evangelicals have responded to the arrival of postmodernity with more equanimity and relish?⁴⁰

2. Eschatology

All three are united in recognizing the importance of eschatology and that the kingdom of God is both present and yet still to be consummated on the last day.⁴¹ Conservatives tend to stress the future kingdom, after an individual's death or at the second coming, more than its present reality. In their preaching the kingdom may not be mentioned very much, since Pauline epistles are often favourite texts and Paul mentions the kingdom rarely. Open evangelicals have recovered the dynamic of the presence of the kingdom breaking in now, with all its radical effects in good news for the poor and liberation for the oppressed. Charismatics also stress the presence of the kingdom. The kingdom was present because Jesus of Nazareth was present in Galilee and Jerusalem and is now still present with the continuity of his presence being his Spirit poured out on the church. There is not a 'gap of the kingdom' between Jesus' ascension and his parousia; the kingdom continues in hiddenness and power throughout the ages.

39 Interestingly, the Anglican Communion's 'Virginia Report' in the section on Scripture, tradition and reason includes 'particular cultures' under the category of 'reason': 'It refers to what can be called 'the mind of a particular culture', with its characteristic ways of seeing things, asking about them, and explaining them. If tradition is the mind that Christians share as believers and members of the Church, reason is the mind they share as participants in a particular culture.' The Inter-Anglican Theological and

Doctrinal Commission, 'The Virginia Report', in James Rosenthal and Nicola Currie (compilers), *Being Anglican in the Third Millennium*, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg 1997, p 244.

40 See Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical*, Triangle, London 1995, and the response, Graham Cray and others, *The Post-Evangelical Debate*, Triangle, London 1997.

41 The old quip, 'just because we do not know the meaning of eschatology it is not the end of the world', may be relevant.

Concerning judgement, all three believe in the reality of judgement for eternity, but differ on the meaning of the phrase 'eternal destruction'.⁴² Conservatives usually believe in eternal torment, and imply that the verb 'destroying' is eternal i.e. the destroying of individuals goes on for ever and ever. They have difficulty, however, in coping with Paul's recapitulation and integration verses e.g. in Ephesians 1:10 '...a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth'. How can everything in heaven and earth be summed up in Christ if torment is still going on for all time? Open evangelicals may believe more in the concept of 'annihilation', where the word 'eternal' in the phrase 'eternal destruction' refers to the noun 'destruction' which happens once and for ever i.e. the results of destruction are eternal. This view combines the serious warnings of Jesus and Paul concerning hell with the cosmic recapitulation promised by Paul. One way of looking at this is that those who totally reject God are de-created back into the nothingness out of which creation originally was summoned. Then, all that will be left will in fact be summed up in Christ.⁴³ Charismatics may tend to vary, with some believing in 'torment' and some in 'destruction.'

3. Ecclesiology

As well as the creedal marks of the church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic), Luther focused on the 'word' and 'sacrament' as key marks and Calvin added a third of 'church discipline'. All three watercourses stress the 'word' as a mark of the church but differ in the pairing mark. In the canal, it may be suggested that 'discipline' is the other key mark;⁴⁴ in the river, 'sacrament' and in the rapids 'Spirit'.

Concerning the creedal mark of apostolicity, in the canal it could be interpreted as the stress being particularly on the biblical *doctrine* of the apostles; in the river the emphasis could be seen as being on the catholic link of *orders* back to the apostles (but without any commitment to unbroken chains); in the rapids the weight may be given to the continuity with apostolic *mission*. Teaching what the apostles taught, being linked with their ministry throughout 2000 years and following their footsteps in witness energized by the same Spirit, all unite the watercourses, but different emphases may be detected.

In terms of being involved in the structures of the wider church, conservative and charismatic evangelicals often tend to focus on the local congregation and national and international links with similar partner churches. Open evangelicals are more willing to give time to serving on synodical committees and groups. Perhaps other channels for the canal lead away towards Presbyterianism, for the river towards Catholicism and for the rapids towards Pentecostalism?

42 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

43 For my fuller argument for this position of 'annihilationism', see Graham Kings, *Christianity Connected*: pp 159-161.

44 Calvin's mark of 'discipline' is usually referred 'downwards', from pastor to

congregation: may it be appropriate to see some conservative evangelical campaigning attitudes to bishops, particularly concerning the appointment of Rowan Williams to Canterbury, as their 'discipline' upwards in the hierarchy?

4. Worship

All three watercourses are deeply involved in worship, but its meaning is contested. In the canal, stress is made on worship being part of the whole of a Christian's life. Perhaps in a reaction against long 'praise and worship' periods in charismatic services, corporate worship is seen as, essentially, for 'teaching'. We come to church to be taught by God through expository preaching. The direction of worship, strangely, then is, to use traditional language, downwards rather than upwards and the stress is on the individual receiving teaching.⁴⁵ Some older leaders⁴⁶ still encourage a return to the Book of Common Prayer, as being the way to safeguard reformation legacy, but this suggestion seems to have little impact on most younger leaders' congregations. In them, liturgy is often used very lightly. Traditions of spirituality wider than evangelicalism, are often regarded as suspect and the individual 'quiet time' is greatly encouraged. Some conservatives have reacted very strongly against charismatic emphases on the gift of tongues, prophecy and healing. They may hold, and teach, a generally dispensationalist view of some gifts (e.g. the gift of tongues ceased after the apostolic age); others are reinterpreted (prophecy becomes expository preaching);⁴⁷ and others are still held to be relevant today (e.g. the gift of discernment, and healing through medicine).

In the river, worship is often seen as being centred on Holy Communion and recent liturgical revision has been welcomed. Some churches are exploring 'alternative worship services' and consciously draw on traditions of spirituality wider than evangelicalism (e.g. Taize and Iona styles, use of icons and modern art). The corporate nature of worship is emphasized. Concerning gifts of the Spirit, the dispensationalist view is rarely held and many churches, even those where the gifts of tongues and prophecy are not particularly encouraged, have developed prayer ministries for healing. Sometimes prophecy is interpreted as speaking out on local, national and international issues of justice.

In the rapids, worship has had a renewed emphasis. The charismatic movement was born in worship and the meaning is often focused on 'praise'.⁴⁸ Extended periods of praise songs are regular features and there is an emphasis on the corporate body of the church offering praise and thanksgiving. Some churches have rediscovered the centrality of Holy Communion. Recent liturgical revision is used, sometimes lightly, and new 'praise song style' settings for the 'prayer for purity,' gloria, and sanctus are sung. There are experiments with 'Alternative worship services', including video, projected art, movement and symbols. The gifts of the Spirit are believed to be very relevant for today and prophecy is seen as a 'word from the Lord' for comfort and challenge, specific to the person or congregation.

45 Concerning individualism in worship, there is a disturbing mistranslation of the Greek in Romans 12:2 in the New International Version of the Bible, a favourite version for conservatives. Instead of '...present your bodies as a living sacrifice...' (i.e. many bodies, one corporate sacrifice), it reads '...present your bodies as living sacrifices...' (i.e. many bodies, many sacrifices).

46 Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney, made this point about the Book of Common Prayer at St Helen's Bishopsgate on 20 January 2003.

47 Often this is explicitly held to be what Paul himself meant in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

48 'Worship leader' usually refers not to the president at Holy Communion but to the leader of the music group who introduces and links a series of praise choruses.

5. Mission

All three are engaged in mission, but with differing understandings and emphases. In Romans 15:19 Paul describes his mission '...by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...'. It may be observed that proclamation, social action and charismatic miracles, or 'words, works and wonders,' feature particularly, and respectively, in the canal, the river and the rapids.

Conservatives stress proclamation as the primary means of mission and this is through meticulous, personal discussion as well as through expository preaching, particularly of the doctrine of the cross of penal substitution. Many may agree that acts of mercy and development are also important but the primacy of evangelism is the focus and 'signs and wonders' were for the apostolic age only. Mission is what God commands us to do. Attitudes towards people of other faiths focus on conversion rather than dialogue, and there is a fear that unless they become Christians they will suffer eternal torment in hell. Some, perhaps most, believe that those who have never had a chance to hear the gospel, will also be condemned to eternal torment.

Open evangelicals stress God's holistic mission.⁴⁹ It is God's mission that we are involved in and since human beings are created 'mind, body and spirit in community',⁵⁰ then God is seeking to address and reach all these aspects of humanity. We follow in his wake, not bringing him into the various situations for he is there already, ahead of us.⁵¹ Thus evangelism, social action and political engagement are all inextricably part of God's mission and to enter into arguments concerning priority is to accommodate ourselves into the unbiblical dualism of spirit and body. There is often an emphasis on the gospel of the kingdom, which is seen in culminating in the cross (with a variety of 'models of atonement') and resurrection. Attitudes towards people of other faiths include attentive listening in dialogue as well as sensitive sharing of the good news and joint action for justice. Many believe that on the last day, there will be many surprises and that God will welcome into his kingdom many (but not all) who have not even heard of Jesus Christ but who have faith in God as they know him. As Abraham is justified by faith before the coming of Christ and the cross (Romans 4), so he may be a model for those who really do trust in God as they know him in faith but without having heard the gospel.⁵²

Charismatic evangelicals stress the leading of the Holy Spirit in mission who empowers and guides. Salvation and healing are seen as inextricably linked, for we are embodied people, and emphasis is put on this double meaning of the Greek verb translated as 'to save.' Weight is given to the gospel of the kingdom breaking in with power and the 'Christus victor' model of the atonement, in which Christ is

49 For further discussion on this see Graham Kings, 'Evangelicals in Search of Catholicity: Theological Reflections on Lausanne II in Manila' *Anvil* (1990), pp 115-128.

50 The growth of Jesus in Luke 2:52 provides a fascinating model for humanity: 'Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and people.'

51 This could be summed up in the phrase: 'Christ comes to Africa from the Father, not from Europe.'

52 For further discussion on this see Graham Kings, 'Facing Mount Kenya: Reflections on African Traditional Religion and the Bible', *Anvil* (1987), pp.127-143 and Kings, *Christianity Connected*, pp 160f.

portrayed as triumphing over all evil powers is prominent, amongst others. There is a missional belief in the converting power of worship, of healing miracles, and testimonies to them. Social action and political involvement are increasingly seen as relevant. Attitudes towards people of other faiths, and belief in the possibility of salvation for those who have never heard the gospel, vary from the conservative to open positions.

6. Warning Signs?

To conclude this section on theological reflections, it may be helpful to consider warning signs concerning directions in which some extreme conservative, open and charismatic evangelicals may be heading.

Concerning style, leadership models in the canal may be in danger of being authoritarian, in the river of being bureaucratic and in the rapids of being superspiritual. While conservatives and charismatics may need to be careful not to define themselves too narrowly, open evangelicals need to be aware that they can define themselves too broadly. In the canal, extremists may need to guard against doctrinal snobbery, in the river academic snobbery and in the rapids spiritual snobbery.

Amongst the Jewish groups of Jesus' day, the Pharisees were seen as keen, holy, lay people, who were scrupulous in their attitude to the written and oral law and looked down on others. The Sadducees were seen as the priests who ran the establishment of the Temple, who too often collaborated with the Romans. The Essenes had withdrawn to the desert to set up an alternative model of the people of God. Extremists who have ears to hear, let them hear.

Conclusion: Rigour without Rancour

As we approach the fourth National Evangelical Anglican Congress in September 2003, let us hope that all three watercourses will be represented there, for it should be an encouraging and challenging gathering. The planning group for NEAC 4 was originally mostly conservative and the themes announced at the Anglican Evangelical Assembly in May 2001 were 'Bible and Cross'.⁵³ Some open evangelicals considered that this was not 'outward and forward looking' enough. The themes are now 'Bible, Cross and Mission.' The invitation to Rowan Williams to open NEAC 4 came not without some considerable struggle, but it is a crucial reminder that NEAC does have an 'A' in it, for Anglican.

As we prepare for NEAC 4 let us learn from three particular periods of our past. Charles Simeon died in 1836, Daniel Wilson was called to be the Bishop of Calcutta in 1832 and William Wilberforce died 1833. These three evangelical statesmen, through death or the missionary call, were not present in England in the mid 1830s.

53 In his section on CICCUs history during the period 1910-1919, Goodhew comments on a CICCUs tract: 'CICCUs attitude was epitomised in the contents and the title of one of its tracts 'Old Paths in Perilous Times', a fierce defence of verbal biblical inspiration and penal substitution, wary of Roman Catholicism and seeing social action

as a secondary activity for Christians.' Goodhew adds later: "'Old Paths" ceased to be promoted from 1942, being seen as "misleading in some respects." The dropping of the pamphlet in turn signalled a new wariness of the stridency which had marked earlier evangelism.' Goodhew, 'The Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union,' p 65 and 73.

Therefore evangelicalism faced the rise of the Oxford Movement without moderate, wise and strategic leaders who could combine rigour without rancour.

Christopher Chavasse, evangelical Bishop of Rochester, wrote the foreward to Max Warren's 1944 booklet *What is an Evangelical? – An Enquiry*. His comments form a warning:

When in 1918 (as the last war was concluding) that great missionary, Canon W. E. S. Holland, toured England as Director of the Archbishop's Campaign for Christian Service, he was told by bishop after bishop that the future of the Church lay with the Evangelical School of Thought. Ten years later, he returned on furlough from India to this country, to find Evangelicals weak and discredited. They had split over the Bible and Prayer Book.⁵⁴

Peter Johnston's remarks in his chairman's address to the 1967 Islington Conference before the first NEAC at Keele were particularly pertinent.

The Church of England is changing... Evangelicals in the Church of England are changing too. Not in doctrinal conviction (for the truth of the gospel cannot change) but (like any healthy child) in stature and posture. It is a tragic thing... that Evangelicals have a very poor image in the Church as a whole. We have acquired a reputation for narrow partisanship and obstructionism... We need to repent and to change... I for one desire to be rid of all sinful 'party spirit'. Evangelical is not a party word.⁵⁵

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54 Max Warren, *What is an Evangelical? An Enquiry*, The Church Book Room, London 1944, p 3.

55 Peter Johnston cited, without reference, by Packer, *Evangelical Identity*, p 12.