

EVANGELICAL  
EUCHARISTIC THOUGHT  
IN THE CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND

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## CHAPTER I

### *The movement, the thesis, the method*

#### THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

To define and analyse the Evangelical grouping within the Church of England is a difficult task.<sup>1</sup> The breadth of contemporary Evangelicalism, which spans Reformed rigorists on the one side and Charismatic innovators on the other – with a good deal in between – makes a straightforward identification, quite apart from a simple definition, almost impossible. At this stage I shall attempt a more general definition, which covers the general sweep of Evangelical identity, and leave a more detailed analysis to the end of the chapter and to a note at the beginning of part 2.

Even in their most embattled and therefore unified times, Evangelicals have been notoriously difficult to organize into a distinct party, and have preferred to see their mutual alignment in terms more of adherence to common principles than of institutionalized structure. Although they recognize their immediate origins in the Revival of the eighteenth century, they have always seen themselves in continuity with an evangelical tradition stretching back from the eighteenth-century Evangelicals to the Puritans, to Luther and the other Reformers, to Augustine, to Paul and indeed to Christ himself. Hence Evangelicalism in its classic form has seen itself not as one tradition amongst many, each with an equal claim on the truth, but as the custodian of pure New Testament faith: 'It is, we maintain, the oldest version of Christianity, theologically regarded, it is just apostolic Christianity itself.'<sup>2</sup>

This is a big claim to make. It has its source in the two underlying elements of the Evangelical consciousness: the existential and the theological. Within Evangelicalism there exist side by side a strongly pietistic strain and a unified theological structure. It is tempting for its prosecutors and defenders to start and finish with its recognizable

theological tenets. However, despite Evangelicalism's conviction that it possesses a revealed deposit of truth which must not be compromised, it has not seen this in terms of an abstract theological system but as a theological edifice built on the foundation of God's redemptive involvement with the soul. In other words, piety and theology form one interdependent structure, which provides the Evangelical with a coherent way of understanding.

*Gospel and Bible: the relationship between piety and theology*

The categories of Narrative Theology and the Sociology of Knowledge can be of some help in delineating more clearly the relationship between piety and theology. Narrative Theology seeks to unite experience and reflection in an epistemological whole, by defining the redemptive process in terms of an interaction between the personal identity of the individual and the corporate identity of the community. The former is the personal search for meaning and the latter is the community's interpretation of Scripture. The 'collision' between the two is a revelatory self-disclosure in which the individual finds his meaning in the truth about God as held and communicated by the community.<sup>3</sup>

The language of the Sociology of Knowledge is similar: 'Society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallized in the same process of internalization'.<sup>4</sup> An individual perceives a sense of identity through an apprehension of reality as it is communicated by the society. Individuals are able to make sense of themselves and their world because they have been provided with a convincing plausibility structure by the mediating structures of a given community. 'Meaning' (that is, objective reality) confronts, invades and then pervades 'Identity' (that is, subjective reality) by the mediation of a set of attractive principles.

When John Stott described Evangelicals as 'Gospel people' and 'Bible people',<sup>5</sup> he was referring to the sort of dialectic identified by the categories of Narrative Theology and the Sociology of Knowledge. The Gospel is the essence of Christianity. The appointed means for its preservation and communication is the Bible. Similarly, when defining 'Evangelical Religion', J. C. Ryle made use of the same relationship:

[for] a religion to be really 'Evangelical' and really good, [there] must be the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, as Christ

prescribed it and expounded it to the Apostles; – the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; – the terms, the whole terms, and nothing but the terms, – and in all their fulness, all their freeness, all their simplicity, all their presentness.<sup>6</sup>

Here, for both Ryle and Stott, ‘Gospel’ is not just a message, still less personal belief, but rather the joining of the two. In other words, it is engaged message. Thus we may simplify the relationship between piety and theology into apprehension of the Gospel and communication of the Gospel.

I have said that Evangelicals see themselves in a tradition of spirituality which holds certain theological priorities in common. And I have implied that they do so not (primarily) in order to maintain a coherent and unified scheme, but because these theological priorities articulate the reality at the heart of the faith – the encounter between Christ and the individual. The appeal to Scripture finds its final justification not as a gift of propositions from God but as a text that has its root, its confirmation and its authentication in a continuity of experience:

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement ‘the just shall live by his faith’. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise (Luther).<sup>7</sup>

The existential grasp of God’s absolute salvific grace is rooted in a confrontation with Scripture and leads to a series of rudimentary theological insights: we are incapable of saving ourselves (utter helplessness of man), but Christ has achieved our salvation for us (sole sufficiency of Christ’s work), leaving our part as only the recognition of his part (justification by faith) and full participation in the life of the Church (priesthood of all believers).

Writing from the storm centre of the Evangelical reaction to Ritualism at the turn of the century, Henry Wace described the essence of Protestantism as its rediscovery of the doctrine of original sin: ‘That is the real point, from which the whole movement of thought and spiritual experience starts.’<sup>8</sup> Whatever theological qualifications modern Evangelicals might want to give to the concept of original sin, they would agree with Wace’s identification of the utter helplessness of man before God and the complete helpfulness of God towards man in Christ, as the basis of Luther’s Gospel and the

central concern of the Evangelical movement as it looks back to him and beyond him to the Pauline Gospel.

*Conversion: assurance, holiness, evangelism and fellowship*

The fundamentals of Evangelicalism as listed by most Evangelical apologists are not exhausted by the Reformation priorities so far discussed.<sup>9</sup> They extend to several characteristics of spirituality: an emphasis on the Spirit's role in assuring the believer of the salvation received and in effecting the signs of that salvation in the person's life, a concern for evangelism, a conviction of the necessity of conversion and a desire to meet with like-minded Christians.

The hallmark of Evangelical spirituality is often seen to lie in its emphasis on conversion. Whilst this is often misunderstood, the significance Evangelicals attach to conversion does provide a helpful insight into the character of the movement:

Begin by considering what the Evangelical means by conversion and before you know where you are you are face to face with the majesty and holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the divine compassion and the divine Redeemer, the new birth, the new life.<sup>10</sup>

Conversion is thus the category Evangelicals use to describe the experiential apprehension of the reality of the Gospel as it is mediated by the principal theological tenets.

Similar revelatory moments to Luther's could be echoed from countless heroes of Evangelical history as well as from the grass roots of Evangelical Church life. However, Evangelicals do make a distinction between the state of conversion and the experience of conversion. The means of the appropriation may be through a definite experience, a movement of faith or participation in the corporate memory. The way is secondary. What is primary is its realization in the life of the individual. In short, if it is an authentic encounter with the truth of God it will have ramifications for the emotional, ethical and spiritual life of the believer. There will be a consciousness of salvation (assurance), a working out of salvation (holiness), a desire to communicate that salvation (evangelism), and an eagerness to join with those who are also conscious of their share in the same salvation (fellowship).

In summary, there is an experiential core at the heart of Evangelicalism – a meeting between the individual and God in the person of



Jesus Christ. This is not necessarily the experience of the blinding light on the road to Damascus. It may be rather more akin to a non-sacramental Emmaus-road experience: the encounter with Christ in the present arises from the encounter with Christ in the Scriptures. As this encounter often breaks through inherited assumptions, the Bible is placed above its interpretation in the community. Just as the Jewish hermeneutic failed to provide Cleopas with the suffering Messiah from Nazareth so did the medieval Church's understanding obscure from Luther the freeness of the Gospel's message. At its best, Evangelicalism has been prepared to follow this through consistently and apply the same principles to its own stake in the Protestant heritage.<sup>11</sup> However, this is a difficult challenge to meet, for as has been shown, there is a close, almost indivisible link between piety and theology in the Evangelical framework: a grasp of the Gospel, enabled by the presentation of a theology, results in a given spirituality.

The distinguishing mark of Evangelicalism may be seen to lie in the particular mix and interaction between experience and theology which it contains and displays. When trying to define the distinction between Evangelicalism and other forms of Churchmanship, J. C. Ryle described it in terms of a theology held in a distinctive set of proportions.<sup>12</sup> Thus other traditions may hold to the same theological beliefs, but with proportionally different emphases. He used a baking illustration to show that use of the same ingredients does not guarantee the same outcome. What counts is the measures and methods used. In terms of the foregoing analysis, it could be said that emphases in Evangelical theology and their interrelationships are in direct relation to the recipe set by the experience of the Gospel.

#### THE THESIS

Disagreement and division between Evangelicals and other (particularly more catholic-minded) Christians have often centred on the Eucharist. Luther's charge in his 'Babylonian captivity' shows that the Sacrament became a focus in the Reformation protest:

By far the most impious of the bondages in which the sacrament is held is that at this day there is no belief in the Church more generally received or more firmly held than that the Mass is a good work and a sacrifice. This alone has brought in an infinite flood of other abuses.<sup>13</sup>

The Reformation understanding of the Gospel stood so at odds with the inherited sacramental doctrine that the two appeared to be irreconcilable. *Justification by faith* involved a direct relation between the individual and God mediated only by Christ, not by the Church. The *total sufficiency of Christ's work* involved a completed, past act requiring only acknowledgement and apprehension, not contribution or extension. The *utter helplessness of man* made any attempt at active, participatory involvement in the maintenance of Christ's work invalid, futile and even blasphemous. The *priesthood of all believers* involved open access for all, not a closed shop for some.

Nevertheless, though the mainstream Reformers rejected the sacramental principle of the medieval system, that is, the causal relationship by which the Church in its divinely appointed presence (institution) and action (sacraments) participates in the salvific work of Christ, they did not want to displace the (dominical) sacraments from a central place in the theology and spirituality of their own system. They might have abandoned medieval sacramentalism, but they did so only in order to recover an authentically evangelical form of sacramental experience.<sup>14</sup> The polemic of much sixteenth-century Protestant comment on the Eucharist should not detract from the robust and dynamic sacramental spirituality which was waiting to find expression. Cranmer tried to hold the two together in his Declaration of 1553 (though in so doing he also highlighted the tension): 'Therefore, when ye see the Sacraments at My Table, look not so much at them as at that which I promise you through them, Myself, the food of eternal life.'<sup>15</sup>

The three points just touched upon (the relationship between the Eucharist and the Gospel, the apparent theological problems of combining an Evangelical theology with a sacramental spirituality, and the presence of a positive regard for the Eucharist within the Protestant consciousness) set the scene for an outline of the contentions of this study. They will be related first to the general history of Evangelicalism and then to the more recent period.

### *The contentions*

#### *Evangelical history*

The first contention of this study is that within Evangelicalism there is a theological and empirical basis for the centrality of the Eucharist. On theological grounds, if the concept of the Gospel and the

interpretation of the Bible preserved in the Evangelical tradition (as judged by the standards of its own criteria) is to have any Christian authenticity and credibility, it must have a significant place for the Eucharist, for the Sacrament has an intimate connection with the biblical Gospel:

This is my body which is for you ... For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11; 24, 26).

On empirical grounds, the very annals of Evangelical tradition which have been called upon to validate the more familiar Evangelical tenets of faith also reveal a spirituality of sacramental reality. From Paul to Augustine, from the pre-Reformation movements of reform to the Reformers themselves, from the Puritans to the Wesleys and their Evangelical peers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Eucharist has been found to be a dynamic context for an encounter with Christ. The first contention, therefore, is quite simply that if Evangelicals are Gospel people and Bible people, they must be also, in some sense, Eucharist people.

The second contention is that there are significant theological forces which militate against the expression of an Evangelical form of sacramental faith. These stem from the Reformation break with a theology which incarnated Christ in the life and liturgy of the Church, in favour of a theology of direct spiritual interaction between the individual and God in Christ. They can be seen in Luther's paradoxical commitment to the real presence, alongside his radical emphasis on justification by faith. The two appear to be juxtaposed rather than theologically related, thus giving the impression of an isolated anachronism due more to the psychology of the man than to the truth about God. At first sight, Zwingli appears the more consistent. By working through the logic of the Reformation he arrived at a more or less symbolic concept of the Sacrament in which it was reduced to a witness of something that happens by means other than itself. Bucer, Calvin and Cranmer may have tried to steer a middle way but, as the rubric for the Communion of the Sick in the Prayer Book shows, the crucial challenge to the Evangelical Protestant is to identify the *real value* of the Eucharist over and against that of hearing and believing the Word:

But if a man ... do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood: the Curate shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and

stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed his Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.<sup>16</sup>

The third contention is that, as well as theological forces, there are also historical forces working against the expression of an evangelical form of eucharistic spirituality. Such historical factors need to be defined in fairly broad terms as those which have influenced or determined the contemporary culture and consciousness of Evangelicalism. The following criticism of Zwingli's and Oecolampadius's eucharistic theology by Calvin points to a very real dynamic in the quest for a Protestant sacramental theology:

they laboured more to pull down what was evil than to build up what was good. For though they did not deny the truth they did not teach it so clearly as they ought to have done.<sup>17</sup>

We shall see that the extent to which the dynamic is active will be in close relation to the perceived threat from other, alternative systems.

This points to the fourth contention, which is that, when the historical context is sympathetic, the sacramental instinct inherent within Evangelicalism will begin to emerge and flourish. Such a climate may be produced either through the weakness of the negative historical forces at that particular moment (in relation to the survival of the particular Evangelical grouping), or through the health and creativity of the internal life of the grouping itself.

The fifth and final contention is that a sympathetic historical climate is not in itself sufficient to sustain the development of a healthy Evangelical expression of sacramental spirituality. Some attempt to grapple with the theological forces is needed in order to ensure that the sacramentalism remains Evangelical and that the Evangelicalism remains sacramental.

### *The recent period*

Evangelicalism has experienced enormous changes in recent decades. For reasons which will become clear, our attention will be focused on the period just before 1960 to soon after 1980. During these years Evangelicals showed a growing concern to place the sacraments and

especially the Eucharist in a more central position in their practice and theology. We may account for this in terms of the changing environment in which Evangelicalism found itself. Broadly speaking, there were three factors which changed the way in which Evangelicals viewed themselves and others within the Church. The first was the gradual strengthening of their political position within the Church of England. The second was the ecumenical climate of the wider Church. The third was the influence of the Charismatic Movement on Christians of all types, including Evangelicals.

The winds of change forced Evangelicals to review critically their own state of theology and spirituality. Many found it necessary to distinguish the essentials from the extras, the core from the culture, and in so doing identified missing motifs and retarded understandings in both. Although this was a general feature of Evangelicalism's life (even to the extent of creating the acknowledged identity problem at the end of the 1970s), the process was particularly noticeable in an increasing appreciation of the Eucharist amongst Evangelicals. Evangelicals began to engage with the theological forces within the Protestant system which inhibit sacramental expression, and which are most consistently and radically emphasized in their own tradition. However, the process remained at an early stage: it was rudimentary and instinctive rather than developed and systematic. If the rising sacramentalism observable in this period is to be sustained in later decades, the process of theological reflection and integration must also continue. If it does not, then the sacramental quest will be quashed when the historical context becomes less hospitable, and it will die the death of a burst of enthusiasm inadequately rooted in a consistent conceptual framework.

There are signs that this change of context is already happening at the beginning of the 1990s. Pragmatic concerns for evangelism and Church growth have become priorities for the end of the century and beyond. These emphases are, of course, nothing new for Evangelicals, but they have recently taken on a new precedence. Along with other branches of the Church, Evangelicals are concentrating attention on the creation and initiation of new converts rather than on the renewing and upbuilding of present Christians but, unlike at least the Catholic end of the Church (in all its manifestations), they are not doing so from a position of a thoroughgoing practical commitment to the centrality of the Eucharist supported by a developed and coherent theological structure. The particular challenges for the

Church at this stage of its history underline the need for the process of systematic reflection on the place of the Eucharist in Evangelical theology and spirituality.

#### THE METHOD

The first task, in part 1, is to survey the broad sweep of Evangelical eucharistic thought from the Reformation to the beginning of the 1960s. The aim is to meet the challenge set by Max Warren in 1946 that Evangelicals should:

study afresh our whole doctrine and practice with regard to the Lord's Supper in the light of the practice and teaching of men to whom all Evangelicals look back with veneration. I suggest that this will involve us in a rediscovery of certain emphases which have too commonly been lacking, and for lack of which we are in want of an Evangelical expression of Eucharistic worship which gives worthy form to the central insights of our tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Such an attempt need not, however, be restricted to those occupying places of honour upon the Evangelical mantelpiece, but may be extended to significant individuals and movements that sought to maintain and defend the basic Reformation insights which Evangelicals hold dear.<sup>19</sup> The brief, therefore, is not to offer an extensive history but rather to chronicle an Evangelical strand mainly, but not exclusively, within the Church of England, in order to identify the factors which have helped or hindered the expression of an Evangelical form of sacramentalism. No study of Evangelical doctrine can be credible without a grounding in the theology of the mainstream *Reformers*, and so it is with the thought of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Cranmer that I begin. The rest of the study will focus on England (with occasional reference to Scotland) and move from the seventeenth-century *reinterpreters* of the Reformed tradition to the *revivalists* of the eighteenth. I shall conclude with the *reactors* to Tractarianism and Anglo-Catholicism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The task of part 2 is to chart the characteristics of eucharistic thought amongst Anglican Evangelicals in recent decades. The period from just before 1960 to soon after 1980 was one of dramatic change in the life of Evangelicalism as it responded to the considerable developments in the life of the Church. As these decades span the period of liturgical revision, the publication of the ecumenical

statements which touch on the Eucharist, and the consolidation of the movements and influences affecting the spirituality of the Church, I shall concentrate on them in depth – though with reference to developments up to the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Evangelical involvement in and reaction to the liturgical revision of the Eucharist will be analysed. The impact of the Ecumenical Movement upon Evangelicals' understanding of the Eucharist will be assessed. The place of the Eucharist in Evangelical piety – particularly in terms of the influence of the Charismatic Movement – will be considered. The aim will not be to provide an exhaustive phenomenological analysis but rather to assess how the tradition of a positive Evangelical regard for the Eucharist, as identified in the general survey, was received and used amidst the specific features which marked the years from just before 1960 to soon after 1980. Thus, I shall attempt to show how the various theological methods and historical influences which have plagued or profited an Evangelical expression of a eucharistic spirituality were operative during this period.

The task of part 3 is to use resources which the tradition has at its disposal, both from within its own history and from the contemporary debate in the wider Church, to continue the process of theological reflection and integration, which has been identified as already happening and which is in need of further development. The classic themes of the sacramental function of the Eucharist, the experience of the eucharistic presence and, finally, the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist will be then explored. The challenge will be to express the intrinsic relationship between Gospel, Bible and Sacrament, which is implied by the Pauline statement that 'as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup [Sacrament], you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes [Gospel]'; (1 Cor. 11: 26); and by the dominical saying, 'This is my Body [Sacrament] which is given for you [Gospel]' (Luke 22: 19); and by the Emmaus experience: 'he interpreted to them in all the scriptures [Bible] the things concerning himself [Gospel] ... When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them [Sacrament]. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him [Gospel], (Luke 24: 27, 30).

Again, limits must be set. I am not attempting to answer the detailed liturgical questions which are inevitably raised in any theological discussion of the sacramental, Christological and sacrificial dimensions of the Eucharist. Neither am I attempting a

definitive systematic treatment. Rather I am pointing to the directions that Evangelical theology must travel if it is to defend and extend its rediscovery of the central significance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. In the language of the Sociology of Knowledge, I am examining the coherence of the plausibility structure which has a tendency towards minimizing the significance and necessity of the Eucharist. To do so, I shall have to consider whether the elements which mediate the meaningful world-view to the Evangelical consciousness have been sufficiently related to the anatomy of both Gospel and Bible. I shall have to look at what happens as those mediating structures begin to be altered by, for example, spiritual experience (Charismatic Renewal), or the widening of one's circle of 'significant others' (Ecumenical Movement), or a creative hermeneutic within one's own tradition (made possible by increased political confidence). And I shall have to consider ways in which the 'partial transformation' (that is, integration) of centrality for the Eucharist into the contemporary Evangelical system may be maintained and developed without creating the need for an 'alternation' (that is, an abandonment of Evangelicalism in favour of an alternative system more readily compatible with a sacramental theology and spirituality). The means and methods of partial transformation are key issues for contemporary Anglican Evangelicalism. They represented the challenge behind both the identity problem, which Evangelicals talked much about in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the claim that Evangelicalism is losing direction and distinctiveness, which has been voiced at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, it is worth considering whether the work of religio-educational psychologists may help to identify the dynamics of the contemporary life of Anglican Evangelicalism. These psychologists trace a series of stages in an individual's journey to faith: an intuitive grasp is consolidated by affinitive group solidarity and moves, eventually, to an independently reasoned position.<sup>21</sup> An application of J. W. Fowler's delineation may provide a useful perspective on the history of Evangelicalism: the movement was forged out of an experiential, intuitive discovery of religious meaning and development into a cohesive, self-affirming grouping which defined that meaning in relative isolation from competing and undermining explanations. However, it has now emerged into a period of self-confidence which has, in turn, bred a healthy self-criticism in which



it is aware of its possible deficiencies and sensitive to the alternatives. Fowler describes this phase – conjunctive faith – in the following way:

Stage 5 involves the integration into self and outlook of much that was suppressed or unrecognized in the interest of Stage 4's self-certainty and conscious cognitive and affective adaptation to reality. This stage develops a 'second naïveté' (Ricoeur) in which symbolic power is reunited with conceptual meanings. Here there must also be a new reclaiming and reworking of one's past. There must be an opening to the voices of one's 'deeper self'. Importantly, this involves a critical recognition of one's social unconscious – the myths, the ideal images and prejudices built into the self-system by virtue of one's nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like.<sup>22</sup>

Fowler's description of conjunctive faith resonates in a remarkable way with the profound changes which have been happening in the life of Evangelicalism over the last thirty years. The 'symbolic power' of fundamental features of the movement have sought expression in 'conceptual meanings' which are not merely a repetition but 'a reclaiming and reworking of one's [corporate] past'. This has involved both a 'critical recognition of... the myths, the ideal images and prejudices built into the system' and 'an opening up to the voices of one's "deeper self"'. Signs of this liberation into the deeper self include a deeper contact with the sacramental, pentecostal and ecumenical dimensions of Christian experience and the missiological and hermeneutical complexity of Christian service.

Clearly, some Evangelicals are either regretful over the movement's entry into this phase of development or impatient with its length and complexity. Regret is expressed by those who bewail contemporary Evangelicalism's departure from the traditional characteristics of classic Evangelicalism. For them the majority of Evangelicals have lost their commitment to the central doctrines of the movement and betrayed its cause by compromise in the campaign to restore the Church of England to its authentic evangelical-Protestant identity.<sup>23</sup> Impatience is expressed by those who feel that the process of integration has created such diversity within Evangelicalism that it has lost its cohesion and its distinctiveness. For them Evangelicalism is in danger of becoming so broad in its make-up that it fails to speak with a clear voice and take a firm lead and so forfeits the opportunity decisively to influence – even determine – the future of the Church.<sup>24</sup> However, on purely pragmatic grounds, those who

feel that by either attempting the process of integration or by taking too long over it, Evangelicals have lost their chance to affect the future course of the Church of England, cannot fail to be challenged and encouraged by the presence of an Archbishop of Canterbury who represents precisely the liberation which so much of Evangelicalism has been experiencing and the integration for which it has been striving.<sup>25</sup> And on more theoretical grounds, the basic characteristics of Christian existence require both individuals and movements to be open to a deeper apprehension of the fullness of God's revealed truth. In terms of Fowler's analysis of faith development, there is a remaining stage to be reached after conjunctive faith, and that is the realization of faith's full potential. The extent to which this is reached depends on the success of the liberating and integrating process of the earlier stage.

We must not be further side-tracked into attempting a phenomenology of Evangelicalism's past and present or into making a prediction about its future. Our task is more precise. It is to survey the broad history of one aspect of Evangelicalism's theological life, analyse its passage through one period of rapid change, and then present ways of developing its consistency with the fundamentals of Evangelical theology and experience as they are reflected upon in the light of the contemporary theological world in all its ecumenical breadth.