

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

I

*RELIGION IN THE HOME*



Family religion is of unspeakable importance.

*On Family Worship*  
(*Works* of the Rev. Richard Cecil, M.A.  
2nd ed. 1816, vol. iii, p. 430.)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Chapter One

*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND in the nineteenth century is punctuated by three funerals, upon the significance of any one of which it would be possible to expatiate at length. All three were, in their different ways, spectacular and memorable and significant: and in each case the man thus honoured in his death was one who throughout the greater part of his life had been the object of a storm of obloquy, derision, and mistrust, and who, in his years of most laborious and most fruitful service, had been widely regarded as an open traitor to the doctrine and discipline of the Church he served.

There can be little difficulty in identifying the three funerals to which I have alluded. Probably the most obvious is the funeral of Dr Pusey in Christ Church, Oxford, on St Matthew's Day, Sept. 21, 1882; the most obvious, because the memory of the scene has been preserved for ever in one of the most deathless pages of Scott Holland's incomparable prose. '... At last, the end, so long delayed as to have become almost incredible, had come. The old man was dead. And up from every corner of the country came creeping the old men still left to whom his name had been a watchword and an inspiration. It seemed the last act of the historic Movement... We younger men watched the long procession of men whose names had been familiar, but whom we had never before seen in the flesh. Here they were—bowed, grey, tottering, making their final effort, delivering their witness to the end... As they turned away from the grave, they knew that they would never meet again in such a company, on this earth... So we buried him: and, with him, we buried a whole generation, which could never quite recur. As we turned from the grave, we passed into another atmosphere with another perspective. We had left an epoch behind us.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Scott Holland, *A Bundle of Memories* (1915), pp. 99–101.—It is instructive to compare with this Dean Church's account of Mr Keble's

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## RELIGION IN THE HOME

Two years earlier, in what was then one of the most squalid and vicious districts in the East End of London, there had taken place another funeral, which differed from the former not only in being utterly unacademic, but also in the circumstance that it marked the birth, and not the death, of a magnificent tradition. The funeral of Charles Lowder, formerly Vicar of St Peter's, London Docks, took place on Sept. 17, 1880. 'We have called it a funeral in compliance with established phraseology', said *The Church Review* (Sept. 24, 1880), 'but in truth it was a triumphal progress through the crowded streets of East London, such as England has never before seen in this 19th century.'<sup>1</sup> Of the history that lay behind it—the riots at St George's-in-the-East, the cholera epidemic of 1866, the years of devotion and self-sacrifice—there can be little need to speak. The significance of Father Lowder's funeral was that it stereotyped the tradition of the Anglo-Catholic slum priest: and there are those who will remember the echo of it in the funeral of Father Stanton of St Alban's, Holborn, in the days before the War.<sup>2</sup>

The span of almost half a century separated the funeral of Dr Pusey from that of the Rev. Charles Simeon, who was buried in King's College Chapel on Saturday, Nov. 19, 1836. If

funeral at Hursley, April 6, 1866. 'It was more like a festival than anything else, though there was black and white about. But the sun and the fresh keen air, and the flowers just coming out, and the beauty of the place and the church, and the completeness of that which had come to its last stage here, put all the ordinary thoughts of sorrow, not aside, but in a distinctly subordinate place. There were some seventy or eighty people, I should think, at the eight o'clock celebration, with *him* in the midst of us, once more in his chancel, and before the altar. At the service and funeral itself the church was crowded, and Rogers, Dean Hook, and I were glad to get a school children's bench in the corner. Yet it was a strange gathering. There was a meeting of old currents and new. Besides the people I used to think of with Keble, there was a crowd of younger men, who no doubt have as much right in him as we have, in their way—Mackonochie, Lowder, and that sort. Excellent good fellows, but who, one could not help being conscious, looked upon us as rather *dark* people, who don't grow beards, and do other proper things.' (*Life and Letters of Dean Church*, ed. Mary C. Church, 1894, p. 172.)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *St Peter's, London Docks, Parish Magazine*, Oct. 1930, p. 128. Cf. *Charles Lowder: A Biography* [by M. Trench], pp. 358 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. photographs reproduced in *Arthur Stanton: A Memoir*, by the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell (1917), p. 312.—'No living was ever offered to him except one in Chicago, but *omnia vincit amor*, and when he died, thousands of men uncovered, and women knelt down, to watch the progress of crucifix and coffin from Holborn to Waterloo Bridge' (*Further Letters from A Man of No Importance*, 1932, p. 73).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## RELIGION IN THE HOME

Dr Pusey's funeral marked the end, and Father Lowder's the beginning, of a movement, the funeral of Charles Simeon may be said to mark a movement in mid-career. And if Dr Pusey's funeral was academic, and Father Lowder's was parochial, the funeral of Charles Simeon combined both characters. The ante-chapel was packed with townspeople, parishioners and members of his congregation at Holy Trinity, 'the greater part ladies and respectable females',<sup>1</sup> while more than 1500 gownsmen, according to Dean Close's estimate,<sup>2</sup> thronged into the building, the undergraduates, all in mourning, standing throughout the service in the space between the coffin and the Communion rails. Many were turned away, unable to obtain admittance. The day was cold and wet, intensifying the sepulchral gloom of the proceedings. 'The funeral was not designedly public; Simeon had desired that it should be very simple.'<sup>3</sup> Yet Bishop Moule is surely right in saying that 'probably Cambridge never saw quite such a funeral as Simeon's'.<sup>4</sup> 'The procession round the quadrangle, used on the burial within the precincts of a College resident, was very striking. The persons who made up the procession, walking three or four abreast, nearly extended round the four sides of the quadrangle.'<sup>5</sup>

It was headed by the choristers, with their surplices, followed by the Scholars and Fellows in hat-bands of long silk, and large silk scarfs covering their gowns; last of these came the Provost of the College, Dr Thackeray, in deep mourning. The principal mourner, Sir Richard Simeon, a nephew<sup>6</sup> of the deceased, followed the bier,

<sup>1</sup> Account in the *Standard* of Nov. 21, reproduced in *The Pulpit*, vol. xxix (1837), p. 218; also in Williamson, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Moule, p. 275. Cf. however *A Brief Sketch of the Character and Last Days of the Rev. C. Simeon, A.M.*, in Close's *Occasional Sermons preached in the Parish Church of Cheltenham* (1844), p. 193, where he says: 'One thousand members of the University followed him to the grave.' The paper cited by Moule is dated 1882.—The most detailed accounts of the funeral will be found in *The Pulpit*, vol. xxix, pp. 215, 217–18. For other contemporary descriptions by eye-witnesses, vide Carus, pp. 827–8 (by Dr Dealtry: Moule, p. 274); *Life and Letters of Rowland Williams*, vol. 1, pp. 32–3; also A. R. Pennington, *Recollections of Persons and Events*, pp. 192–4.

<sup>3</sup> Moule, p. 272; Carus, p. 827.

<sup>4</sup> Moule, p. 274.

<sup>5</sup> Dealtry, in Carus, pp. 827–8.

<sup>6</sup> Son of Charles Simeon's elder brother, Sir John Simeon, Bart. In 1814 Charles Simeon had received from another brother, Edward, a legacy of £15,000: of this, he spontaneously transferred £10,000 to his nephew's account when the latter was returned to Parliament in 1832 as Member for

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

which was borne upon the shoulders of six men; among the other mourners were the trustees of his livings, and many of the incumbents that filled them; and the rear was brought up by an immense body of the Members of the University, among whom were the Professors, and many of the Heads of Houses, and a very large number of Fellows of Colleges and resident Masters of Arts. Last of all came a long array of Under Graduates, who indeed, though last, constituted, from their number, the largest part of the procession. . . .<sup>1</sup>

According to one estimate,<sup>2</sup> eight Heads of Houses, six Professors, about 100 Masters of Arts, 100 Bachelors of Arts and 500 undergraduates were present. Less than forty years earlier, it had been a University crime to speak to Simeon, and was reported to parents;<sup>3</sup> and Dr Dealtry could remember one occasion when he had been hissed in the Senate House on going up to vote.<sup>4</sup> But on Nov. 19, 1836, all the shops in the principal parts of the town were closed during the funeral, although it was market-day, and twelve out of every fourteen respectable people that were seen in the streets were in mourning; 'and, what was an unusual mark of respect in the University, in almost every College the Lectures were suspended'.<sup>5</sup> 'Thus', wrote the Dean of Jesus (who had not himself been present, owing to the inclemency of the weather), 'is buried a true servant of God; one who (like us all) had his failings, but who has been enabled to do more good for the Church of Christ in England than any person now living.'<sup>6</sup> It was therefore with a good deal of justification that Mrs Butler rebuked her feckless offspring—the future Butler of Wantage, then a scholar of Trinity—for his omission to be present: 'I should have been better pleased had you on the day of Mr Simeon's funeral made the attendance upon it instead of your water excursion.'<sup>7</sup>

the Isle of Wight (Moule, p. 176). Sir Richard does not seem to have been extravagantly grateful (cf. Brown, p. 40).

<sup>1</sup> *The Pulpit*, vol. xxix, p. 217; Williamson, pp. 133–4.

<sup>2</sup> *The Pulpit*, vol. xxix, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, p. 117.—As late as 1817, Moule's father, a freshman at St John's, 'was warned not to enter Trinity Church because of the bad character of its fanatical minister' (H. C. G. Moule, *The Evangelical School in the Church of England*, p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> Pennington, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> Carus, p. 827.

<sup>6</sup> *Memorials of G. E. Corrie, D.D.*, ed. M. Holroyd (1890), p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> *Life and Letters of W. J. Butler, late Dean of Lincoln, and sometime Vicar of Wantage* (1897), p. 14. [Letter misdated Nov. 30, 1838 (for 1836).]

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

I apologise for what may appear to be a somewhat morbid avenue of approach to the subject of these lectures, albeit one perhaps not wholly inappropriate to All Souls' Day.<sup>1</sup> But if my course required or deserved a sub-title, I should be inclined to borrow it from the title of the Funeral Sermon preached by the Rev. Thomas Scott (the Biblical Commentator) in commemoration of Mr Pentycross of Wallingford: namely, *The Duty and Advantage of remembering Deceased Ministers*.<sup>2</sup> For the history of the Evangelical Revival is essentially a history of personalities, rather than of opinions. And the outstanding personality in that Revival, after the heroic age of Whitefield and the Wesleys and the formidable Lady Huntingdon, is the Rev. Charles Simeon. I doubt whether the genius of that man as an ecclesiastical statesman has ever received sufficient recognition. He seems to me to rank with Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford—the Remodeller of the Episcopate, as Burgon calls him<sup>3</sup>—as one of the Founding Fathers, or Remodellers of the Church of England in the nineteenth century. Now, there are two types of statesmanship, whether ecclesiastical or secular. There is the statesmanship which, confronted by a succession of problems, discovers the solution for each one of them (ignoring those that do not matter), and, what is more—and this is where the quality of statesmanship comes in—succeeds in keeping these solutions consistent with each other, by framing each in turn in strict consistency with some body of fixed principles which provides, under all circumstances, the criterion of thought and action. The other type of statesmanship is that which does not wait for problems to confront it, but, having excogitated the solution, then manufactures the particular problem to which the solution is to be applied. Again, there is the same reference to fixed principles: the difference lies in the fact that the solution anticipates and deliberately evokes the problem, instead of being

<sup>1</sup> This lecture was delivered on Nov. 2, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *The Duty and Advantage of remembering Deceased Ministers: being the substance of a Funeral Sermon, preached in the church of St Mary, Wallingford, on Hebrews xii. 7, 8; for the Rev. Thomas Pentycross, A.M., during more than thirty years vicar of that parish.* By Thomas Scott, Rector of Aston Sandford, Bucks. (1808).

<sup>3</sup> In *Lives of Twelve Good Men*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

anticipated and evoked by it. The latter type of statesmanship reveals, perhaps, a higher order of genius: but it is far more dangerous to apply, because it leads so often to what Bishop Creighton, with unerring judgment, stigmatised as the principal ingredient in the failure of Archbishop Laud, namely, the fatal tactic of fighting ‘for great principles on small issues, a method which still survives, and which makes the history of religious thought in England so obscure and difficult to follow’.<sup>1</sup> Simeon’s statesmanship was of the former—the more pedestrian, yet probably the more effective—type; and his career may be regarded as one of the supreme examples of its application. ‘As to Simeon,’ wrote Lord Macaulay in 1844, ‘if you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway in the Church was far greater than that of any primate.’<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary, therefore, that these lectures on the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the eighteenth century should concern themselves primarily with the incidents and with the issues of that remarkable career, and that they should find in Simeon both their *terminus ad quem* and also their *terminus a quo*. Or, if I may be permitted, not so much to vary as, rather, to confuse that metaphor, Simeon was the bottle-neck upon which those Origins converged. There were by-passes, of course: but the main stream of traffic passed through that bottle-neck before it deployed upon the swelling plain of Victorian religion. This may explain, if it does not excuse, the somewhat unorthodox and discursive treatment which my material seems to have forced upon me. I propose in each instance to take, as my point of departure, Simeon’s contact with a problem: and, if not in the actual delivery, at least in the preparation of these lectures, I have worked backwards and forwards from that point.

It may also be a heartening thought to those of us who are, or

<sup>1</sup> Mandell Creighton, *The Mind of St Peter, and other sermons* (1904), p. 98 (*The Failure of Laud*).

<sup>2</sup> Letter to his sister on Sir James Stephen’s *Edinburgh Review* article on the Clapham Sect: quoted in Sir G. O. Trevelyan’s *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (ed. 1908), p. 50 n.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

who are to be, professional historians, that these lectures have been compiled almost without any recourse at all to manuscript sources. I mention this, because I have for some time felt very passionately that, at this stage of things, anyone who produces a competent piece of research without reference to any unprinted documents is striking a real blow for academic freedom. I have not the audacity to suggest that these lectures are going to constitute such a blow: for one thing, I am not altogether persuaded that they are a competent piece of research: and, for another, there are in fact one or two manuscript references in them for which I am indebted to the generosity of my friends. It would of course be silly (and no doubt, for a mediaevalist, impossible) to make a fetish of not using manuscript sources. But the temptation which doth so easily beset us as historians is not this, but rather the temptation to make a fetish of invariably and even ostentatiously using manuscript sources, however trivial, and of virtually denying the name 'research' to any piece of work in which they have not been employed. We are, I think, in real danger of capitulating without a struggle to the tyranny of archives.<sup>1</sup> Clearly I do not mean that the historian is entitled to neglect primary sources—memoirs, autobiographies, correspondence, reports, and so forth. But what is intolerable is the glossing of the word 'primary' with the word 'unprinted'. For in a subject such as this—and it is a field in which a vast amount of research is still waiting to be done—the printed authorities are sufficiently overwhelming both in quantity and in bulk, and, although some are more valuable than others, it is clear that between them they do contain most, if not all, of the really important stuff. And when this condition of affairs obtains, the historian whose time is limited will be ill-advised to go out of his way to hunt for manuscripts merely to give his work a *cachet* which academically-minded critics might be disposed otherwise to deny to it.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hilary Jenkinson, *Manual of Archive Administration* (2nd ed. revised, 1937), p. 1: 'It is hardly necessary to say that History, as it is understood now, has become very largely dependent on Archives.... It is more than doubtful if any authoritative historical work will ever again be published without copious notes referring to verifiable manuscript sources....'



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

My second point concerns not so much the writing of history in general as, rather, the writing of ecclesiastical history in particular. I need not say that I felt deeply sensible of the honour when, as an assistant curate in the town, I found myself invited by the Council of this College to deliver the Birkbeck Lectures for this year. At the same time, I could not help but feel that there was something peculiarly appropriate in the invitation, not of course as regards my personal qualifications, but as regards my calling. For the parochial clergy are, after all, in every age the primary material of Church History: and our knowledge of the eighteenth century, in particular, has been distorted in the past by a preoccupation with bishops and doctrinal controversies, to the neglect of any adequate examination of the life and labours of what Professor Seeley used to call 'the average clergyman'.<sup>1</sup> Professor Norman Sykes' memorable Birkbeck Lectures of 1931–3, on *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*, did much to redress the balance, and thereby to correct, if not to revolutionise, our notions of the Hanoverian epoch in the Church of England. But if the parochial clergy are the primary material of Church History, it follows that they have a right to be heard in the interpretation of that material. Any intelligent atheist could write a perfectly competent, although probably a somewhat biased history of Popes and Councils and all that sort of thing. But Church History is something other than the record of ecclesiastical statecraft and diplomacy or even of those great doctrinal controversies by which it is so much conditioned and controlled. And I would go so far as to say that nobody can write Church History who is not either a parish priest or at least a person who has some real understanding of the problems of the parish priest. Indeed I would go even farther by suggesting, in all humility, that the right place in which to begin to learn to understand Church History is not the library, but the confessional, or its equivalent.

For the central theme of Church History—and, as I myself should naturally claim, of all human history—is Sin and Redemption. This theme is not always visible, not always on the

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Seeley, *Lectures and Essays* (1870), pp. 255, 256, 285.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45882-6 - Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century: The Birkbeck Lectures for 1937–8

Charles Smyth

Excerpt

[More information](#)*RELIGION IN THE HOME*

surface: but it is never absent. And every now and then, whether in the life of the individual, or of the parish, or of the diocese, or of the Church, there is a moment of crisis—that is, of judgment—at which the theme becomes apparent and articulate. In order to illustrate my meaning, I beg leave to quote from J. B. Mozley's essay on Carlyle's Cromwell, in the first volume of his *Essays Historical and Theological*, the celebrated passage in which he analyses the character of the Protector's speeches. 'Has any one of our readers ever had the curiosity, at a wild-beast show, to give a pebble to a rhinoceros? His large heavy jaws take it in, and work it from side to side with a heavy seesaw motion; the stone just makes its appearance near the lip, and then an immediate sweep of the large tongue engulfs it in the recesses of a cavernous mouth. The subject of one of Cromwell's speeches fares much in the same way. He rolls it, buried underneath his tongue, from side to side, sometimes just showing a corner of it, and then covering it again. An interminable rolling motion goes on; and the wide jaws move before the solemn assembly for their appointed time. With large quotation of Scripture, and reference to chapter and verse; with endless allusion to "Providences", "Mercies", "Deliverances", "Dispensations", "Witnessings"; with proofs from the Psalms, the Prophets, the Epistles; with sentimental allusions to his own grief at being compelled to bear the burden of power; with long parentheses about no ascertainable subject-matter; with the heavy, swaying movements and the inarticulate rumbling noises of a bituminous volcanic lake; he comes at last to a conclusion, quite clear, and level to the plainest capacities—"Mr Speaker, I do dissolve this Parliament."<sup>1</sup>

So is it also with Church History. There are long and almost unintelligible passages, choked with statecraft, priestcraft, piety, controversy, accommodation, churches being built and churches being burned, the hubbub of apocalyptic language, apologetic language, dogmatic language, pietistic language, clergymen being broad-minded and clergymen being narrow-minded, conflict and battle, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, or

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Mozley, *Essays Historical and Theological* (1878), vol. i, p. 295.