

**"Remember the Poor" An historic evangelical distinctive?**

**ED LOANE**



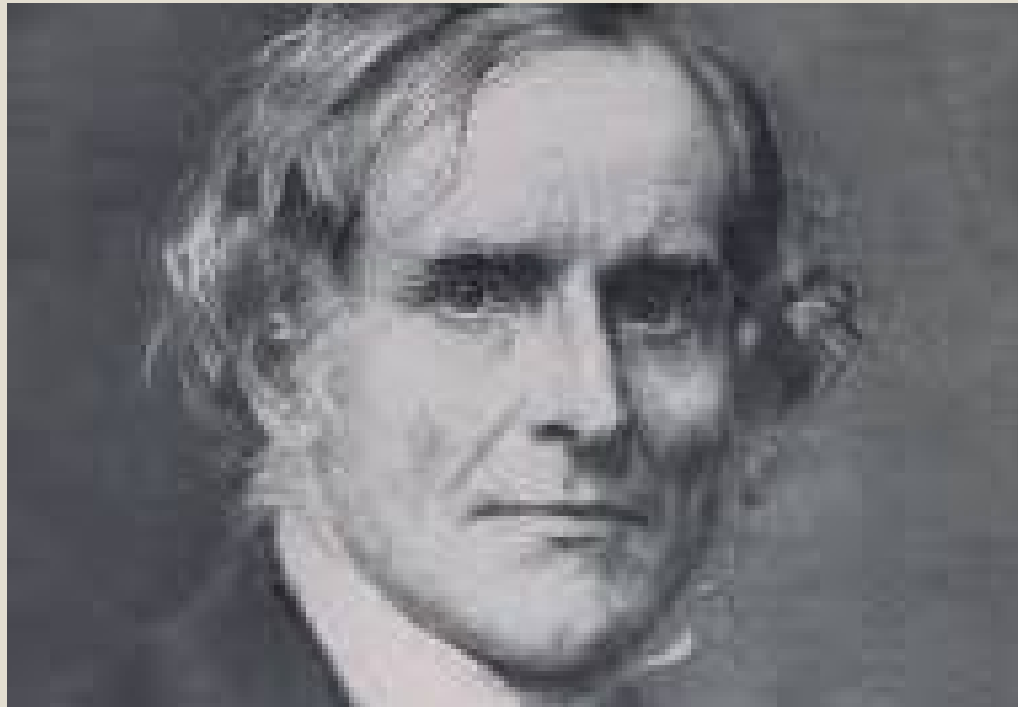
**Anglican Aid**



# **“Remember the poor”: An historic evangelical distinctive?**

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# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Broad Church – Christian Socialism



- Contrast with Tractarians
  - Strong aesthetic themes and nostalgia for pre-reformation England
- Contrast with Evangelicals
  - Pietistic introspection
  - Premillennial disengagement with the world
- Amendment at Synod this week
  - “Not what we’re known for...”

# Galatians 2:10

- All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.



# Defining a Movement...

David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*

- *Biblicism*
- *Crucicentrism*
- *Conversionism*
- *Activism*

# Background: Social

- Industrial Revolution shifts in age old population centres
- Ways of living changed
- Ecclesiastical structures inadequate



# Population Changes

	1700	1750	1800
England and Wales	5.3 mil	6.3 mil	9 mil
- London	.52 mil	.67 mil	1 mil
Scotland	1 mil	1.2 mil	1.6 mil
Ireland	2.5 mil	3.2 mil	5.2 mil
America	.25 mil	1.1 mil	5.3 mil

# Holy Club (1729)

- Charles Wesley (Christ Church College) + friends
  - Prayer
  - Spiritual reading
  - Self-examination
  - Good deeds for poor
  - Fasting
    - Gifting what would have spent





# Wesleys' New Beginnings 1738

- Charles and John to Georgia 1735
  - John: "chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul"
- Back from Georgia 1738
  - Meets Moravian Peter Böhler
    - "Preach faith *till* you have it, and then, *because* you have it, you will preach faith"
  - Prisoner in Oxford converted by J. Wesley's preaching
  - 21 May C. Wesley "found myself at peace with God"
  - 24 May J. Wesley "heart was strangely warmed"
- 1539 Field Preaching to Kingswood Colliers



# John Wesley and the poor

- “Will thy Master say, ‘Well done, good and faithful steward’? O justice! O mercy! Are these pictures the blood of this poor maid?”
- “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can”
  - 30 pounds per year (60, 90, 120,... 1400)
  - Estimated he gave away around \$10mil (in today’s money) dying with less than \$3,000 assets
- Raised money for poor
  - 5 weeks fundraising in London winter – raising over \$150,000
  - Aged 81!
- Regularly visit prisoners
- Founded homes for poor widows, orphans, poor schools
- Reasons:
  - 1. Commanded to in Scripture
  - 2. Help grow holiness
  - 3. Less attachment to worldly items



# Education

- Robert Raikes (1725-1811) – Newspaper proprietor
- 1780 – Sunday Schools for urban poor
  - Christian instruction + basic literacy and science
- Society for promoting Sunday Schools (1785)
- 1797 – 1,000 Sunday Schools in England
  - 70,000 scholars
- 1820 – 2,568 Sunday Schools, 274,845 scholars
- 1835 – 7,842 Sunday Schools, 909,618 scholars
- Ragged School Union (1844)



# Law and Order in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Britain

- Enclosure Acts – small farmers/labourers from land
- Those without work
  - Rely on charity or steal
- Govt. increased penalties – 204 crimes face death
  - Stealing, forging, poaching, theft of articles worth more than 12p
  - 'being in the company of Gypsies for more than a month'
  - 'being in disguise while committing a crime'
  - 'strong evidence of malice in a child aged 7-14'



# Prison Reform

- John Howard (1726-1790)
  - Travelled to Portugal 1755 – was captured by French privateers and imprisoned.
    - Released on prisoner exchange
  - 1773 High Sheriff of Bedford – shocked at state of prisons
  - Inspected prisons across England
  - Published works and pushed government for reforms
- Botany Bay to Evangelicals was a social and moral reformation along similar lines to the religious reformation



# Abolition of Slavery

- John Wesley – Anti-slavery
- George Whitefield – slave owner
- John Newton (1725-1807)
  - Converted and traded slaves 4 more years
  - Later campaigned against slave trade
  - Significant influence on young William Wilberforce





## William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

- Wealthy family in Hull... educated by Joseph Milner
- Uncle and Aunt encouraged methodism
  - Mother – encouraged worldly pleasures
- Political Career – Member for Hull 1780



## William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

- Converted 1785
- William Pitt letter "Surely the principles as well as the practice of Christianity are simple, and lead not to meditation only but to action."
- Newton encouraged staying in politics
- John Thornton allowed him to stay at his house in Clapham to think – became friends with Henry Thornton





## William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

- From 1787 led movement against slavery
  - 1807 vote ended Atlantic slave trade
  - 1833 Slavery Abolition Act
- Reformation of Manners
- *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians... "Real Christianity"*

# Some caution about abolition?

- Not unanimous evangelical support
- Some thought conversion of slaves far more important
- Some thought slavery sanctioned in the Bible
  
- Evangelicals worked with others (e.g. Quakers, Unitarians) for a common cause of anti-slavery

# Clapham Sect

- William Wilberforce
- John and Henry Thornton
- Hannah More
- Granville Sharp
- Henry and John and Henry Venn
  
- More socially respectable to be Evangelical – political engagement



# Common Features

- Evangelistic Zeal
- Generous Philanthropy
- Social Betterment
  - Through Structures
  - Independent of Structures

# Societies

- James Stephen – “Ours is the age of societies. For the redress of every oppression that is done under the sun, there is a public meeting. For the cure of every sorrow by which our land or our race can be visited, there are patrons, vice-presidents and secretaries. For the diffusion of every blessing of which mankind can partake in common, there is a committee.”
- Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing Comforts of the Poor (1796)
- Edinburgh Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick (1785)
- London Association for the Relief and Benefit of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor (1817)
- Society for the Relief of Distressed Widows (1823)

# Rich Evangelicals

- Countess of Huntingdon
- Wilberforce
- John and Henry Thornton
- Charles Simeon (Eton, King's)
- J.B. Sumner
- Robert and James Alexander Haldane

# Evangelical and Social Justice

- Building institutions
  - Orphanages
  - Education
- Changing social structures
  - Prison reform
  - Slavery
  - Child labour laws

# Activism = Social Justice?

- Sabbath Observance
- Temperance
- Blasphemy
- Prostitution
- Gambling
- Vice Society
- Mission



# What happened?

- Societies – personal disengagement?
- Growing prosperity
- Public Education
- Better healthcare
- Unions
- Welfare State
- Social Gospel