

Church History Understanding our heritage gives us an anchor, and helps us to know how we got here.

What do we mean by 'Evangelical' and 'Revival'? By **Evangelical** we mean the part of the Church which emphasises personal commitment to God and accepts the Bible as the final authority for our doctrine. Evangelicals believe that the Gospel needs to be shared with others. **Revival** is a time when God moves in peoples hearts in a particular time and place. It always accompanied with good preaching. Romans 10:14-15.

Background In the 150 years before 1700, the Church of England had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church. Non Conformists were often seen as outcasts. Across Europe there was the 'Age of Enlightenment', as scientific knowledge had leapt forward, and traditional beliefs were now being challenged. The UK in 1700 was in a sorry state: alcohol abuse (The Gin Craze), gambling and there was great poverty, new born babies were sometimes even abandoned in the streets. The slave trade had begun. Crime was rife, with public executions being used to try and curb the crime wave. Church was in an awful state, many clergy knew nothing of God. Immorality was not uncommon. Doctrine was ignored, and nominal Christianity was the norm, 2 Timothy 3:5. Whitfield wrote of the clergy "How can dead men beget living children?" At the time the CoE was predominate, there were small numbers of Catholics and also Dissenters, (e.g Baptists, Quakers, Moravians) both groups faced legal restrictions such as having some jobs, or even access to the Universities. People could only marry in an Anglican Church. Yet 100 years later the nation had changed considerably, God had moved.



Hogarth's painting

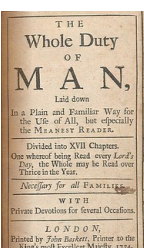
The Evangelical Revival The Evangelical Revival happened in Britain, but a similar revival was happening in the North American Colonies, which is called there the 'Great Awakening'. In America Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) provided a scholarly basis. Wesley, & in particular Whitfield also spent time in the colonies preaching to huge crowds.

The Causes

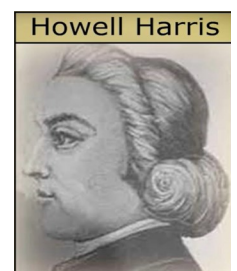
1. People read the writings of the Reformers, & the Puritans, and learned about doctrine & personal commitment.
2. People were moved by the serious devotion to God by people known as Pietists, e.g. The Moravians
3. God's Spirit just moved, and outbreaks happened in different places, in an seemingly uncoordinated way.

The Holy Club At Oxford University in 1729 a groups of students who wanted to take their faith more seriously. Members included the Wesley brothers, George Whitfield and averaging about 20 members over the years. Many were ordained but not necessarily 'born again'. They set themselves strict rules, of study, prayer, fasting, and good works. They were very methodical, hence the nickname Methodists, in fact they received much abuse. They were even called 'Bible Moths'. Charles Wesley founded the club, later John ran it. Whitfield joined later. It all focused on their efforts to please God. However the Wesley's and Whitfield later were converted, they came to understand the grace of God Ephesians 2:8-9. The three of them were used to reach tens of thousands and changed the nation.

Howell Harris (1714-1773) Harris was Weish School Teacher, and came to faith by reading an old Puritan book 'The Whole Duty of Man', and a moment in Church taking Communion. After his conversion he began preaching



almost immediately, and he spent hours studying the Bible. He went from village to village preaching. He was rejected by many because he was not an ordained Priest. The Church even took legal action, charging him with 'enthusiasm'. In 1739 he met up with George Whitfield, who he introduced to preaching in the open air, with Harris translating to Welsh. He set up small groups, outside of the formal Church. With the support of an aristocrat, The Countess of Huntington, they set up a college to train preachers. In his mid years he had a break down, but came back to preach again, some say with a deeper edge. He knew and admired the Wesley brothers, but differed with them on the doctrine of election.



Howell Harris

The Wesley Brothers



John Wesley

Charles Wesley

(John 1703-1791 Charles 1707-1788) They were sons of a Vicar, and brought up by a strict Godly mother. In 1709 there was a fire at the Vicarage, John miraculously escaped just before the roof collapsed. In 1725 made a deacon, and ordained as a Vicar. At Oxford he formed the Holy Club. In 1735 went to America, it was not successful and returned to England discouraged. 1738 he had a conversion experience that transformed him. At the invitation of Whitfield John was invited to preach outdoors at Moorgate London. This was the beginning of years of travelling, preaching the gospel from town to town. John did more of the speaking, while Charles did preach but wrote 6,500 hymns. John travelled up to 300,000 miles preaching, visiting Warrington at least five times.

Name the top 10

George Whitfield

(1714-1770) was born into a fairly poor family which ran an inn in Gloucester. As a youngster he took part in drama, which gave him skills he used later as a preacher. He managed to get into Oxford as a 'servitor'. He had searched for peace with God by discipline but was shocked when he read the need to be 'born again'. He grasped the concept of salvation by grace alone. He was ordained into the CoE and began to preach. Many in the clergy hated his message of new birth. So he took to preaching out doors as churches closed to him. He began preaching to a few hundred but soon it was thousands and people responded. Over his life he preached 18,000 times to an estimated 10 million.



The split between Whitfield and the Wesley's

The different views on the doctrine of Election, caused a major split between the friends. The young men fervently held to their positions, firstly exchanging views in letters. Then John published a sermon criticising the Reformed position, the public airing of their disagreement upset Whitfield. He then preached against the Arminian position with Charles sat on the stage next to him. The two parts of the move-



ment then split. As the men grew older they agreed to disagree, and John preached at Whitfield's funeral. **Philip Doddridge** (1702-1751) There was more to this move of God than just the Wesley's and Whitfield. Someone largely forgotten is Doddridge. He was the pastor of a independent church in Northampton. He wrote a book that in part lead to the conversion of William Wilberforce. He helped link the believers in the CoE such as Whitfield, with the Dissenters such as Isaac Watts (1674-1748). He started Sunday Schools before Robert Raikes, and started hospitals for the poor.

By 1800 the spiritual state of the nation had been transformed, much of the church was no longer dry, and many in all classes, had found a personal faith. Missionary work and social action had begun to flourish.

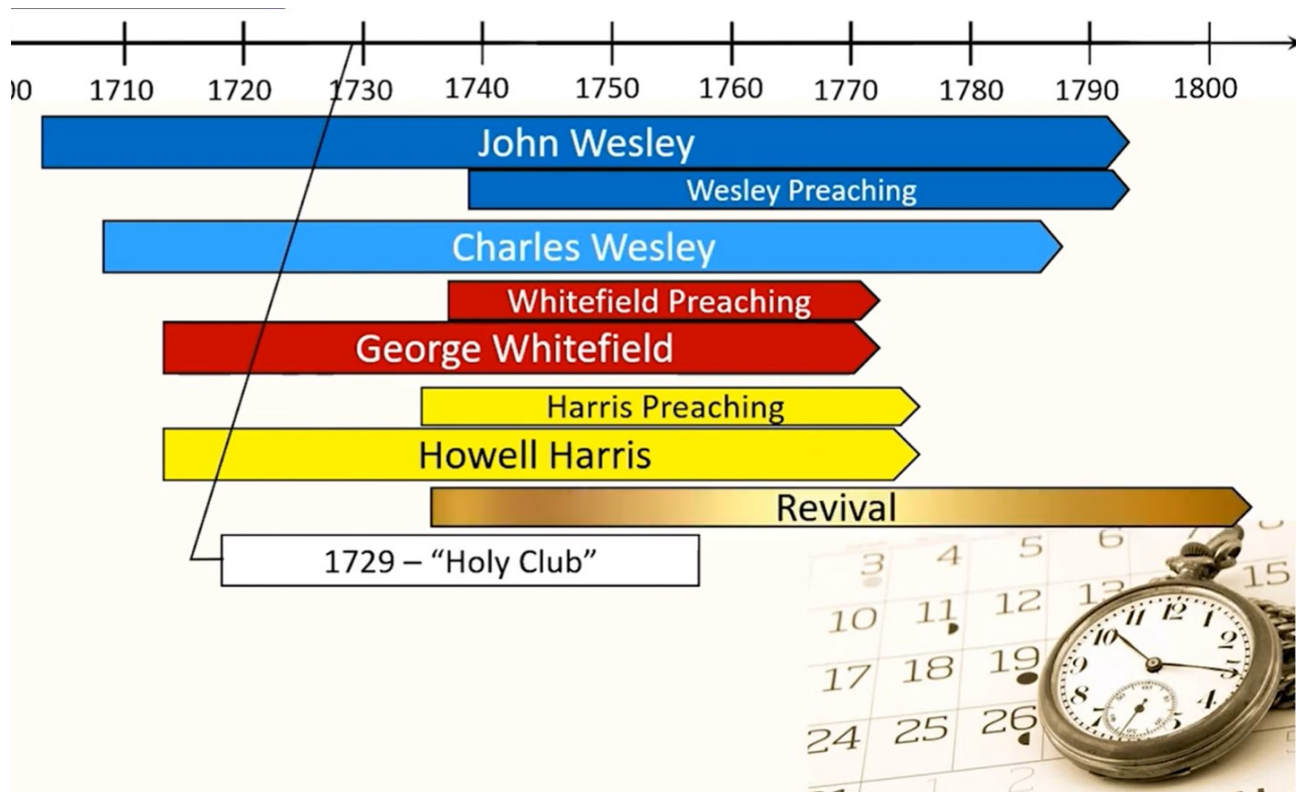
Issues raised by the Revival that echo today.

- Disagreements over doctrine** There was a clear and sometimes acrimonious split between the Wesley's and Whitfield over Arminianism and Calvinism. Sometimes they failed to properly understand the positions to each other. John Wesley couldn't understand why Whitfield preached, as a Calvinist and said so publicly. They wanted to be friends, and Whitfield left in his will that John Wesley preach at his funeral. It raises the issue of where to draw 'red lines', and how to handle relationships with genuine believers you disagree with.
- Inside traditional church structures or outside?** The early leaders were committed Anglicans. However they found the Anglican church often tried to prevent them from preaching. Methodism began as a movement within the Anglican Church and only later had to be separate. That tension was echoed in the 1960's between John Stott and Martin Lloyd Jones over being in the CoE. Today some still ask, should you belong to a 'mixed' denomination?
- Social action** From the beginning of the revival, the revival inspired social action. Notably towards the end of the century by people such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833), Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845).
- Role of the laity** Until the Revival, ordinary Christians were expected to just attend church, not to be to active in it. Preaching was reserved for the clergy, but in the Revival roles of ordinary members were changed. 1 Peter 2:5.
- Small Groups** The Wesley's and Whitfield set up small groups (Called Societies) for the new converts, and they encouraged people in them to participate, praying and sharing together. Similar to our own Life Groups.

Questions

Questions or Comments

Next time November - Atonement



The Ballad of the Method-Men

Come, listen, all you gentlemen,
Who sleep away the morn,
And hear about the method-men
To vex the college born.

With ticking clocks and pious looks,
They march to drink and pray,
And weigh their dinners by their books,
And fast the hours away.

They count the sins of every-inch,
By rule and ledger-line,
And never dare a-bit to flinch,
Or carelessly to dine.

They call themselves a holy band,
A-searching out the skies,
While all the tavern through the land
In merry laughter lies.

So let them pore upon their Greek,
And count their daily groans,
We'll find our ale and hide our seek,
With laughter in our bones!

20 Charles Wesley hymns

1. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"
2. "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"
3. "And Can It Be That I Should Gain?"
4. "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"
5. "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
6. "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"
7. "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"
8. "Rejoice, the Lord is King"
9. "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending"
10. "Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise"

"Arise, My Soul, Arise"

"A Charge to Keep I Have"

"I Want a Principle Within"

"Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies"

"Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown"

"Depth of Mercy, Can it Be"

"Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee"

"Jesus, The Name High Over All"

"O for a Heart to Praise My God"

"O Thou Who Camest from Above"