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WHAT EVANGELICALS STAND FOR.

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AN Evangelical is a person with an Evangel. He is not a person with a grievance, nor an antipathy, nor a church, nor a tradition, he is not a person distinguished by a lack of something. He is precisely a person with Good News, Good News which he has taken to himself, and Good News which he lives to impart to all others.

His Evangel is that he has experienced a change of heart. It is not a growth, it is a change and a discovery, not an attainment but an obtainment. It consists of three things, a knowledge of Forgiveness, the power of a New Life, and a personal knowledge of God. The experience may have come suddenly or very gradually, but it is not a growth, it is a Gift. It springs not from his native strength of character, but from the gift of God. It is so great, so infinite, that he knows it can bear no comparison to anything he can have done to deserve it: it must be of God's free mercy. He does not know anything about God's rejection of men before their birth, but he is ready to believe that God's choice of him must have sprung from some cause greater than anything existing in himself. This change, situated at the very centre of his being, is so radical that he welcomes the phrase "New Birth," which exactly describes it. And as this change is the newest thing there is, so he soon discovers that it is the oldest. His Bible lives and glows. Its words have become realities. Sin has become sinful and loathsome; holiness has become actual and glorious; the Knowledge of God has passed from a phrase into an experience. Prayer has become intercourse, Bible-reading the divine message, worship the proper exercise of his spiritual powers. He knows now what the early Christians called their "illumination." He is careless about persecution, he is in love with all the world, he longs to pass on in turn the Good News to all men. He feels that if only he could make them know what he knows, the Cross would draw them as a magnet, and all life's problems would be solved. The Epistles become instinct with life to him. Those paradoxes which perplex the commentator lose their difficulty to him; for the paradox is his experience. Perhaps in course of time he becomes ordained and is known as an Evangelical Clergyman. What will he stand for?

1. First, this New Life through Christ will be to him the measure of all things. Every book and periodical and sermon and teaching and ministry will be measured by it. Those which breathe the secret of his life will be treasured, and those which have it not will lose all their attraction for him.

2. He will have no difficulty about dogmatic Orthodoxy. His

new life is bound up with the divinity of Christ and His objective Atonement: the power in him is the power of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity wants no philosophical resetting to meet his rational demands. The Virgin Birth needs no apology or explanation: he can think of no fitter way for the Lord of Glory to come on earth.

3. When we come to Holy Scripture he finds himself ready to believe every word of it. It lives and burns and glows. It is alive where other books are dead. It is his chart and compass, his guide book to eternal life. He reads therein at every chance. Perhaps, like some known to the writer, he reads it to the exclusion of all else for many years. Its very words have an authentic power denied to any lesser writings: "there is no sword like it." But now suppose that he has some education and follows out the problems raised, in course of time he may find that there are difficulties in the simple faith of his childhood. He has been taught that the Scriptures are unlike all other books, that they contain from first to last, not only the thoughts and message of God, but even the exact expressions which God has willed; that there can be, in the original, no error of thought or fact, of exposition or expression; the *obiter dicta* and the clearest teachings are alike perfect and exact. But it is gradually borne in upon him that there are definite difficulties in this view. Without giving a credulous adherence to the vapourings of unbelieving critics, or being shaken at the account of miracles, however strange, he finds that there are inconsistencies, minor contradictions, surprising turns of expression, immodest phrases not to be taken on christian lips, mathematical difficulties inherent in the narrative, difficulties connected with the Canon—these perhaps the most insuperable of all. What then will he do?

He may on the one hand resolutely close his mind to these considerations and take them for the temptations of the devil; he may consider that the Saviour's use of the Old Testament has settled the matter and that he is bound by his faith to refuse to exercise his reason on the matter, and he may decide to believe that an unwavering faith in the full and verbal inspiration of every word of the Bible is the only sure rule of faith. Or on the other hand he may consider that his reason is God-given, and that he is bound to follow every light on so vital a matter, and he may come with reluctance to a somewhat different conclusion. We have as a matter of fact both these types of Evangelicals with us to-day, and it is this difference of belief which is doing so much to wreck the party. Personally I ask whether it is impossible to join conference with a view of coming to some better mutual understanding. But in any case we may say that Evangelicals are agreed that the religion we want is the religion of the Apostles, that the words of those who had companied with the Master Himself must be more worth attention than all the writings of those who followed later, that the words of eternal life must be sought in the New Testament or nowhere, and that any doctrine or practice definitely contra-

dicted by the apostles and incompatible with their solemn teaching cannot be the mind of Christ, and that their authoritative words have a power and an appeal which we seek in vain from all sources of lesser origin.

4. The Evangelical clings to the Doctrine of Grace. He has a sense of forgiveness and acceptance, an experience of the power which has come upon him, and he dare not say this is his doing or his merit. Far from that, he glories in the thought that it is the gift of God. Grace means to him, (1) that both his forgiveness and his new life are free and utterly irrespective of his merits. His old dead life is so distasteful and despicable that it is impossible to think of it as having merited this marvellous gift. So he praises the absolute freeness of the gift of God. (2) Secondly, just exactly because this new thing came to him who did nothing to deserve it, so he rejoices in the thought that it may come to all, for all stand on the same level of merit and deserving. (3) And thirdly, the doctrine of grace teaches him that these transcendent gifts came to him by an inward contact of the soul with Christ, not by the word of a priest, and that his new life is a thing directly between himself and his Saviour, which external things may help or hinder, but in the last analysis is conditioned only by his inward faith, that is by the reaching out of his spirit to the eternal spirit of Christ in God. Here in one moment is solved for him the whole question of all those fancied ways of acceptance through works of hardship, merit or of priestly mediation. He wants nothing of them, for he has Christ, and to have recourse to them is to insult the Christ who lives for ever in his heart.

This faith of his is essentially bound up with the doctrine of the eternal Sacrifice. He has found peace "through the blood of the cross," and he is not minded to let it go in obedience to modern fashions. When he is told on high authority that the notion of vicarious atonement is old-fashioned, that the only Evangel is that God is love, that Christ did not die the just for the unjust, that atonement only means "at-one-ment" (in light-hearted disregard of the words it translates), that the confutation of verbal inspiration has left him without a support for his out-of-date ideas, then he is not moved. He remembers how he fell at the cross as a guilty hell-deserving sinner, how the Spirit humbled him and raised him up, how he entered into the joyful slavery of the Saviour's service, and he is not minded to surrender the realities of the spirit for the law of a carnal commandment. He is not surprised that those who evacuate the cross are ignorant of the meaning of his experience of "assurance," that they substitute the law of works for the law of liberty, that they seek in vain to call on every mundane motive for enforcing morality rather than set the spirit free to walk in newness of life, and that while they are even found to scoff at Evangelicals as "saints" they at another time ask why it is that the old-time type of saints is no longer to be found among them.

5. In the Church he is met by teaching like this: that Grace indeed is free, much freer and more abundant than he has ever

thought, that God does not wait on some fancied frame, but bestows this very grace on every single infant who is baptized with proper words. He would that it were so. Nothing would please him better. Right gladly would he give up his life like a second Xavier to sprinkling the unconscious infants of the heathen world, by stealth if needful, that they might have the gift. But simple observation cannot but make him doubt whether this is so. But he is told, this undoubted grace they receive in baptism is grace in the form of a seed, it lies hard and fruitless in the soul till wakened, like the farmer's sowings, into active life. It needs the sunshine and the rain of Confirmation, Eucharist, self-examination, and constant moral struggle, a struggle which must go on with fallings and risings till the hour of his death, uncertain to the last whether the culture of the seed has been a failure or success. He listens in amazement, and when he asks where this is found in Scripture, is referred to the words of St. John, "His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin." So that whereas St. John spoke of a seed that saves from sin, this is used to justify the conception of a seed which leaves the soul in sin till it matures and ceases to be a seed. Or perhaps he is bid to "work out his salvation with fear and trembling," a counsel which seems to him to be somewhat out of its context and to have received a twist which the apostle never gave it. It seems to him that this teaching, while rendering lip service to the expression "grace," so ingeniously inverts the matter that it reduces the sphere of the spiritual life from faith to works, that it exanimates all the teaching of the liberty and love of the New Life, and that for practical purposes it leads back the soul to Judaism and retraces all the steps of that painful journey by which St. Paul emancipated himself (and taught us to triumph in the same path) from the bondage of a Judaism which had been tried and failed to a Christianity which was a regeneration and a victory. And he observes with sadness that those who teach the Christian life of struggle lean to the side of worldliness and selfish pleasure, and refuse to back him up in his crusade for temperance and unworldliness while stigmatizing him as an antinomian. And he likewise sees, but without much surprise, that the people who so pervert Scripture seem to value the writings of the fathers more than the Scriptures, that while they meditate in the one they use the other as a miscellany of texts among which they hope to find some here and there to support their notions. Hence the dreadful motto, to be shunned like the plague, "The Church to teach: the Bible to prove."

6. The Creeds of the Church he accepts with all his heart. But he ever bears in mind that they are epitomes of doctrine, not norms of saving faith. It may be written over all of them, "The devils believe and tremble." Saving faith may exist where the niceties of the Creeds are undistinguished. They are not a compendium of saving faith, they are a hedge to guard wandering feet from false beliefs, a hedge rather than a road. But saving faith is not theological faith, nor faith in one's forgiveness or salvation; it is not faith in a text of Scripture or faith in one's final perse-

verance ; it may co-exist with assurance or it may walk in darkness and have no light : but the faith which saves is faith in Christ : it is but the eye which sees, the ear which hears, the hand which stretches out and makes contact with and loses itself in the ever blessed Christ the eternal Son of God.

7. What shall we say of the Ritual of the Evangelical ? The writer's feeling is that we may find reason to retrace our steps upon this point. There has been a tendency to confound ritual with ritualism, to fear the stately, to seek to exhibit our liberty by our casualness, our spirituality by our haphazardness, our inspiration by our lack of dignity, our assurance by our want of preparation, and even sometimes by our slovenliness. But is there really any connection between this method of improvisation and the freedom of the Gospel ? Between the absence of ritual and the presence of the Spirit ? Is it certain that stately and dignified proceedings must necessarily be unspiritual ? It is a question of time and circumstance, of proportion and occasion. No one was more alive to these thoughts than our beloved Bishop Chavasse, none more free and rejoicing in ordered dignity than Bishop Moule. What we cannot do with is the ritual which symbolizes the wrong doctrine, as so much that is pressed upon us does ; or the ritual which is so exaggerated and pompous, or again so mechanical and meaningless that it distracts or repels the worshipper, or in which the service of the heart is subordinated to the fulfilment of a performance.

8. Episcopacy he finds practically established from apostolic times, but neither enjoined in Scripture nor even primitive at Corinth, where it was not till the second century. He might believe in the essential external unity of the Church mediated through bishops under the Papacy, if it corresponded to spiritual facts. But alas, it is far otherwise. What he does find, laid down with crystal clearness in Scripture, is that the holy man is born of God and the unrighteous man is not. Deep calls to deep, and while he finds in every communion men to whom God has given " the like gift as He did unto us," who is he that he should withstand God ? To him every Churchman, Dissenter, Roman Catholic, and Quaker who dwells at the Cross in love divine is a true brother in the church whose confines encircle humanity and whose walls exclusive and inviolable reach even unto Heaven.

9. The Holy Communion is his sacred meeting-place with the Saviour. There he kneels before the Cross, hears our Saviour's cries, sees Him crucified afresh, finds his heart's desire of contrition and amendment, drinks deep into the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost, holds fellowship with the holy brotherhood, and carries thence deep within his heart into a Christless world the very presence of his Lord and Saviour. The Holy Service is so unique that he is glad to set aside a special place, a special ritual to mark the solemnity of its observance. Perhaps he can find sympathy for those who wish to mark it also by a separate robe and many such-like things which he eschews as savouring too much of Rome. No value placed upon the sacrament exceeds the

judgment of his heart : but what he cannot do with is the doctrine which excludes, which says " This grace you receive here and not elsewhere," for he lives on Christ at all times in his heart by faith. For him the sacrament does but exhibit and persuade to the communion which he ever seeks to live by. He receives Christ, not from the priest but in the spirit, not in the hand but in the heart, not through manducation but by faith. He has a doctrine of intention, but it is the intention of the worshipper, not the priest. He cannot bear the word Validity. No sacrament can be invalid. He does not believe that the Lord inspects the pedigree of the celebrant before imparting Himself to humble hearts. And where the doctrine of an exclusive priesthood turns the friend into a ruler, the inspirer into an autocrat, the minister (or " servant ") into the magnate, the presbyter into the prelate, the shepherd into the drover, then indeed he feels that the spirit of the brotherhood which Christ came to found has sadly taken its departure.

10. The Ministry therefore is not a priesthood but an eldership. All are priests, and the minister is an elder among them. It is his to be the servant of all (as " minister " denotes), the leader of a joyful band, the example for willing learners, the inspirer of the army of the Lord ; but the man of magical exclusive powers or arrogant autocracy, this he can never do with.

11. With these principles it cannot be expected that he will take kindly to the Roman Catholic Confessional. His life in Christ is too direct to welcome the interference of a third party. His life of prayer is deeper than anything that strangers may meddle with. His confession to God too constant, detailed, and humble to benefit by a recited catalogue to an official priest, his conscience too sensitive through constant kneeling at God's awful judgment seat to benefit by the interrogation of a fellow-sinner. The Blood of Christ is his refuge and his peace, the assurance of the Spirit of God is his inward absolution.

But perhaps he covets for himself the power for good which the Confessional seems to promise, or covets for his flock the safeguard and nurture which it offers to provide for them. Then he considers that the mechanical submission of the actions of the penitent to the external judgment of the priest is a poor substitute for the freedom of the spirit and the conscious walk with God. He does not find the practice inculcated in the Acts ; in the Epistles he finds it denied in the directions for preparation for the Holy Communion (where it is written " Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread ") ; in history it was unknown to Basil, to Chrysostom, to Augustine ; nor does he find that those countries in which the Confessional has had full sway have risen in morality above those countries excommunicated by Rome where Christians have not been denied the exercise of their spiritual manhood and womanhood. The fact is that the Confessional cannot be exercised without a spiritual weakening of the patient, a moral lesion of the conscience. It is precisely the analogue of a surgical operation. In extreme cases it is indeed essential ; there are crises of the soul

where nothing but a full confession will save the life and purge out the foul and deadly humours which are poisoning the soul. But the most skilful operation leaves an essential weakness, and it can never be with the penitent as it was before. While as for frequent and regular confession, so definitely dis-commended, among others by Canon Body, we can only liken the result to the analogous effect of a monthly operation on the human body. The priestly penitent will inevitably be led to substitute the lower and external requirements of his confessor for the sterner justice of the court of conscience, and when the priest is satisfied and has pronounced his absolution no longer to ask himself whether he has failed of God's approval.

Thrice unhappy however is the unspiritual man who has cast away confession to a priest and not found confession to his Maker, who abuses the doctrine of the Spirit by yielding to the license of the flesh, who is neither examined by a priest, nor examines himself before God : better for him any form of religion, however external and elementary, which leads him to the Cross, than the free forms of the law of liberty, issuing but in spiritual death.

12. It is sometimes laid to the credit or the reproach of Evangelicals, as the case may be, that they attach more importance to Missionary Work than to the work at home. This is hardly true. They do not think that the soul of a black man is more valuable than that of a white man, nor are they specially anxious to evangelize the ignorant or uncivilized. But to them "all souls are Mine." Their motive for seeking the heathen abroad is the same as that for the heathen at home. It is the winning of precious souls to Christ. But if they have a preference for the Mission Field it is the thought that those who have never heard have a priority of claim over those who have had endless opportunities ; and their faith is justified by the results in all the regions beyond. And we are sure that the time is swiftly coming when the blood and treasure poured out on foreign missions will bring a reflex blessing to the homeland great beyond what most would dream. It may well be that therein lies the ultimate solution of the insistent problem of Home Reunion.

13. Confirmation is to the Evangelical a time of the utmost importance. It is to him a solemn Rite which nothing will justify a candidate from receiving unless he be truly converted to God. To him it is not a charm, not something that will turn a careless child into a godly, not a mechanical imparting of the Holy Ghost, but a solemn and conscious dedication of himself to a life-choice for God : and in that great profession, coupled with the receiving of the Apostolic sign, he indeed expects to receive from God His wanted gift. And therefore he seizes on this opportunity to lead the candidate to a full decision for Christ and a consciousness of his acceptance. He does not therefore welcome candidates till they are reasonably old enough to make a life-long choice, until in fact they have left the age of childhood and commenced that of adolescence. But yet, and this is purely the personal opinion of the

writer, one asks oneself many times what reason is there why a godly child should be turned from the Table of the Lord? If it were in the writer's power to decide, he could not find it in his heart to do so. Why should not the pious child at quite an early age be solemnly admitted on the recommendation of parent or teacher, say to the Easter Communion, and by degrees more frequently? Why should he be prevented from forming an early habit of communicating till old enough for the detailed and comprehensive teaching of the Confirmation Class?

14. As to Schism, the Evangelical has, we hope, a lively sense of its disaster, and if wanton, of its sin. But church unity is not the last word of all to him. There are worse things than the weakness, worry and scandal of Schism. There are unlawful terms of communion. And even as his fathers found courage to leave the unity of the Papacy, so his allegiance must be first to Christ and after to his beloved Church. To him the great orthodox churches not of his communion are bodies which God has owned, and he is sorely tried by narrow principles which forbid a recognition even in circumstances of urgent need. It is quite possible that here the reactions of the problem in the Mission Field will bring a great reward by setting the home problem in its true light.

15. To sum up all, the Evangelical is a spiritual man. He lives for spiritual ends. He believes in spiritual means, spiritual ministry, spiritual men, and spiritual measures. If it be objected that a ministry or school founded on such narrow principles can only be the church of the minority, he cheerfully replies that with God quality is more than quantity, intensity more than extension, that three hundred true soldiers are worth more than ten thousand feigned ones, that the work of the Church is a Fight with hard blows borne to rescue souls, and that the toleration or patronage of a worldly public is not worth having: and in this faith he takes the part of poverty and toil, well content if he can carry at the last sheaves from the harvest field which he may lay down with joy in the day of final ingathering at the Master's feet.

THE ULTIMATE EPOCH AND OTHER ESSAYS. By A. J. Hubbard, M.D. *Longmans*. 1928. (Pp. vi + 120.) 6s.

It is indicative of the increasing interest which the laity is taking in theology, that these four Essays come from the pen of a layman. The first (50 pp.) is by far the best. It contains a valuable study of our Lord's attitude to the use of self-interest. From Christ's refusal to use self-interest as a motive or as compulsion, the author concludes that this attitude must be the dominating factor in the Ultimate Epoch, which he sees already foreshadowed. The remaining Essays are interesting, but the conclusions drawn are very much open to criticism; it is not to be expected that critical problems which have exercised the best brains for generations, will be solved as easily as the author maintains.

G. H. W.