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Evangelicals, culture and the arts

Peter Webster

One evening in the early 1960s Michael Seward, curate of St Margaret's Edgware, a thriving evangelical Anglican parish in north London, went to the Royal Festival Hall to hear the aged Otto Klemperer conduct Beethoven. As the Polish violinist Henryk Szeryng played the Violin Concerto, Seward unexpectedly found himself 'sitting (or so it seemed) a yard above my seat and experiencing what I can only describe as perhaps twenty minutes of orgasmic ecstasy. . . . Heaven had touched earth in the Royal Festival Hall.' Seward came later to view the experience as the third instalment in a 'trinity of revelation . . . a taste of [God's] work as creator of all that is beautiful, dynamic and worthy of praise . . . speaking of his majesty in the universe which he has made, goes on sustaining, and fills with his life force, the Holy Spirit, who draws out of humanity an infinite range of talent, skill and glorious creativity in artistic works.'¹

Seward's words were part of a memoir and not a work of theology, but they challenge many received views of the relationship between evangelicals and the arts. Here was a graduate of the conservative theological college Tyndale Hall, Bristol, sitting in a concert hall, listening to a German Jew conduct a Polish Jew in a piece of secular music, wordless and without any explicit programmatic meaning, and yet attaching such significance to the experience. Even though, as we shall see, music was the art form most likely to be appreciated within the evangelical constituency, rarely does the historian find such a positive evaluation of the arts, their effects, and their place in the theology of creation and of the work of the Holy Spirit.

1 Michael Seward, *A Faint Streak of Humility: An autobiography* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), pp. 183-4.

The historian thinking about the relationship between evangelicals and culture must straight away find stable definitions of both 'evangelical' and 'culture'. On the former, this chapter adopts the now famous 'Bebbington Quadrilateral', which identifies the four key features of evangelicalism as its activism, biblicism, conversionism and crucicentrism.² In the latter case, this chapter takes a catholic definition of culture, akin to that of the New Cultural History of recent years, which defines culture as the whole gamut of thought, feeling, practices and objects that humans produce, enact and consume collectively as a means of making sense of themselves and their social surroundings.³ Although the chapter is concerned primarily with the production, reception and performance of works of art among evangelicals, this cannot be understood outside the broader contours of their understanding of culture in the wider sense. In addition, this inclusive definition of culture clears the way for the consideration of forms of artistic production, such as heavy metal music or the Left Behind novels, which are excluded by higher-pitched definitions of art.

Evangelical theologies of culture have at root been theologies of the Fall. A contrast may be drawn between evangelical understandings of the status of the created physical world which had been really positive, and more pessimistic estimates of human potential. Whilst some have centred upon Paul's description of creation as frustrated by sin and groaning in anticipation of its redemption (Romans 8), the more resonant note has been that struck by the Psalmist, of the heavens telling the glory of God (Psalm 19). Creation was not so completely marred and defaced by sin that it could not be read as evidence of both God's creative work and his judgment on sin (in the form of natural disasters). Although this kind of natural theology was a poor relation to God's revelation through his Word, it was part of the family

2 David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 4-17.

3 Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction: history, culture and text' in Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp.1-22.

nonetheless.⁴

Evangelical understandings of humanity after the Fall may be contrasted with the catholic sense of human capability. Anglican Catholics in England in the twentieth century began to recover a much older incarnational sense, thought to have been lost since the Reformation, of human activity of all kinds as subordinate participation in the work of creation. Not only could the maker of a work of art communicate something to the viewer about the aspect of creation that he or she was representing; the act of making could also in some sense be co-operating with God.⁵

In contrast, the characteristic evangelical view of human capability has tended to be more pessimistic. Put most strongly, sin so defaced the divine image in human beings and so clouded their perception that their unaided attempts at understanding God and creation would be at best partial and incomplete, if not indeed corrupted and thus useless. Any attainment of virtue would be accidental, the product of external influence rather than any effort on the part of the individual. To attempt to create anything of beauty would be futile, and all participation in secular activity prone to the corruption of pride and self-interest.⁶

At base, this is the centre of gravity in what remains, even after thirty years, the most sustained historical treatment of the question of evangelicalism and culture in Britain, *Evangelicals and Culture* by Doreen Rosman (1984). In the early nineteenth century, Rosman found many individual evangelicals who were able to engage in the arts in positive ways, and indeed to delight in their performance. However, evangelical theology was never able to develop its instinctive rhetorical claim on the whole of human life into a framework that

4 Doreen Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 44-7.

5 For an example, see Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (London: Methuen, 1941), *passim*; Peter Webster, 'The "revival" in the visual arts in the Church of England, c.1935-c.1956', in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Revival and Resurgence in Christian History* (Studies in Church History 44: Woodbridge, Boydell, 2008), 301-5.

6 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 47-50.

could comfortably encompass the arts. Unable to sanctify the senses, it was often forced instead to seek to subjugate them. Evangelicals ‘were never confident to assimilate such worldly activities within the framework of their world-denying theology.’⁷

Rosman’s study laid to rest lingering stereotypes of the evangelical as philistine and kill-joy – characterisations which owed much to the historiography of puritanism – and this chapter will not seek to bury them again.⁸ It will instead extend the analysis beyond Rosman’s chronological and geographical parameters. It will observe evangelical encounters with the arts in each of the possible modes: as both consumer and performer in the apparently ‘neutral’ sphere of the home and in private recreation; as user of the arts in the context of public worship; as user of the arts as tools for evangelism; and as moralist and reformer of the artistic pursuits of others. It concerns itself mainly with music, literature, the visual arts and drama, although none of these will receive an exhaustive treatment in its own terms. Its examples are drawn chiefly from Britain and the USA, and from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which distribution represents the weight of the scholarship to date. That said, its overall analysis makes a claim to be applicable to the evangelical movement in all its geographical diversity and temporal spread.

The arts and private leisure

We begin in the evangelical home, since it was here that priorities could most easily and safely be worked out away from the tension of confrontation with the ‘world’. The typical puritan home of an earlier period has been caricatured as one of diligent labour and strenuous godly exercise, with little time left over for much except eating and sleep. Some traces of the

⁷ Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 59, 178.

⁸ On Puritanism and culture, see the various essays in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism* (London: Macmillan, 1996)

same unease about an unreserved delight in the arts may be found in evangelical theology and practice. There was a continuity between the agonies of the spiritual diaries of the puritans and that of the eighteen-year-old New England Congregationalist Susanna Anthony (1726-91). On reaching adulthood, she asked, should she now ‘forsake strict and solid religion, and run with the young, giddy multitude, into the excesses of vanity?’ No: it was right for her to choose ‘the sorrows of religion’ over ‘the world in all its pomp and splendor, with ten thousand enjoyments.’⁹

Despite this, it is abundantly clear that evangelical households were places in which the arts could be received and enjoyed. Many in the nineteenth century were keen private readers. The young Thomas Babington Macaulay, within the orbit of the Clapham Sect, read such edifying literature as Foxe’s ‘Book of Martyrs’ and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*; Foxe was also part of the childhood reading of the hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal. In the same circle as Macaulay, the teenage Jane Catherine Venn read the poetry of Walter Scott and works of history as well as William Wilberforce’s *Practical View*. Among the poets, Havergal read John Milton, George Herbert and Robert Browning; for Venn it was Milton and Dryden. Classic imaginative literature of earlier ages were also in view. The young Macaulay read Alexander Pope’s Homer and Dryden’s Virgil; in the case of John Wesley, it was Horace.¹⁰ To a large extent, evangelicals shared the taste of the educated middle class in the early nineteenth century.¹¹

The novel, a newer artistic form in the eighteenth century, was regarded with greater caution initially. The young Edmund Knox, later bishop of Manchester and leader of the

9 ‘The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony’ (1796), as in Jonathan Yeager (ed.), *Early Evangelicalism: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 103, 105.

10 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 67; Christopher Tolley, *Domestic Biography: The legacy of evangelicalism in four nineteenth-century families* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p. 13; Janet Grierson, *Frances Ridley Havergal. Worcestershire hymnwriter* (Bromsgrove: Havergal Society, 1979), pp.5, 76.

11 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 121, 125.

evangelical opposition in the Church of England between the two world wars, grew up in a household in the 1850s where novels were disallowed entirely.¹² A similar prohibition held in the Havergal household a decade or so earlier.¹³ Objections were raised to the format in principle: that the reading of them was seductively easy and spoiled the reader for more exacting fare; and that history and biography, dealing as they did in facts, were inherently a better means of conveying truth than mere stories. If the medium was to be allowed at all, particular novels might over-familiarise the mind to vice, even if it were made repellent. They might inflame the passions and sensual desire, or overvalue excitement and adventure at the expense of contentment with mundane reality.¹⁴ Frances Havergal's sister Maria was grateful for her father's prohibition, but later as an adult tried reading a novel by way of an experiment, 'to see if I could close the book and go with appetite to other studies. No. I felt the whirlpool of imagination stirred, but the dreamy mawkishness and unreality disgusted me.'¹⁵

However, the evangelical scruple at fictional writing was neither universal in the early nineteenth century, nor durable over time. The popularity of the novels of writers such as Hannah More at the beginning of the nineteenth century or the brothers Silas and Joseph Hocking at its end show that many evangelicals were keen readers of at least some novels.¹⁶ More recently, Alister McGrath has drawn attention to the recovery of C. S. Lewis particularly among American evangelicals since the 1970s, and as much for Narnia as for *Mere Christianity*.¹⁷ Remarkably popular, in the USA at least, was the genre of evangelical

12 Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Knox Brothers* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 19.

13 Grierson, *Havergal*, p.75.

14 David John Sandifer, "'The most dangerous of allies': evangelicals and the novel, 1790-1840", *Christianity and History Forum Bulletin* 6 (2010), pp. 26-7.

15 Grierson, *Havergal*, p.75.

16 Martin Wellings, "'Pulp Methodism" revisited: the literature and significance of Silas and Joseph Hocking' in Peter Clarke and Charlotte Methuen (eds), *The Church and Literature* (Studies in Church History vol. 48, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2012), pp.362-73.

17 Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis: A Life* (London: Hodder, 2013), pp.371-8.

romance fiction, finding its inception in the work of Grace Livingston Hill (1865-1947) and subsequently burgeoning from the 1970s onwards.¹⁸ Crawford Gribben has documented the remarkable commercial success of rapture fiction, and in particular the ‘Left Behind’ books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.¹⁹ Evangelicals have found much to delight them in a wide variety of literary forms.

Examples also abound of evangelical households that took delight in artistic performance. Chief among them was music, perhaps the most communal of the arts. The palace of Francis Chavasse, bishop of Liverpool, resounded to the efforts of the ‘Chavasse concert party’, as Christopher, future bishop of Rochester, played the concertina alongside his siblings in the years before the First World War.²⁰ In an earlier generation, the Anglican Richenda Cunningham’s recreation was her piano. Drawing on a much older Puritan tradition of domestic psalm singing, evangelical families were to be found singing religious music in a domestic setting. John Jowett, evangelical layman of Newington in Surrey and founder of the Church Missionary Society, often took the tenor part in home performances of choruses of Handel oratorios with his brothers and children.²¹ Mrs Chavasse was piano accompanist to domestic worship in Liverpool.²² On a Sunday evening Frances Havergal sang hymns as a young child to the keyboard accompaniment of her father, William Henry Havergal, rector of Astley in Worcestershire.²³

Despite this apparent enthusiasm for domestic consumption and performance of the arts, there was an ever-present note of concern about the right use of time. Could any

18 Lynn S. Neal, *Romancing God. Evangelical Women and Inspirational Fiction* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp.16-24, and *passim*.

19 Crawford Gribben, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

20 Selwyn Gummer, *The Chavasse Twins* (London: Hodder, 1963), p. 45.

21 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 97, 98. His son William was the first Anglican clergyman to serve overseas with the CMS: ODNB, ‘William Jowett, 1787-1855’

22 Gummer, *Chavasse Twins*, p. 31.

23 Grierson, *Havergal*, p.11.

enjoyment of the arts really be justified on its own terms when time on earth was short and the business of devotion and mission so pressing? Richard Cecil, prominent Anglican evangelical in the early years of the nineteenth century, attempted to find fifteen minutes every day for his violin, but found the temptation to play longer too much to resist, and so gave it up entirely.²⁴ In Oxford in the 1940s, the young James I. Packer allowed his friends in the university Christian Union to persuade him that his playing the clarinet in a local dance band ought to give way to the Saturday evening Bible readings, although he evidently continued as a keen listener to recorded jazz.²⁵

The most longstanding and widespread evangelical objection to a whole art form concerned drama. Frances Havergal, often a contralto soloist on the oratorio stage, apparently never set foot in a theatre.²⁶ Charles Simeon advised one lady that to disobey her husband was a better course than to accompany him to a play; the evil of the theatre was intrinsic, not merely circumstantial.²⁷ For some, acting itself placed the player in danger of vain ostentation, a temptation to pride. Even though for Frances Havergal the semi-staged nature of the oratorio was acceptable in a way the theatre was not, there were still scruples at the 'wild intoxication of of public applause', a 'delicious delusion'. The very act of dissimulation – of appearing to be what one was not – was also a source of discomfort. Havergal at one point consented to perform the part of Jezebel in Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*, but was persuaded that a 'Christian girl' could not safely personate such a character.²⁸ The Regency theatre also often seemed to lionise the very values of which evangelicals disapproved: honour, romance, adventure and conflict. Even a play that eventually showed the consequences of sin could do

24 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 98.

25 Alister McGrath, *To Know and Serve God: A biography of James I. Packer* (London: Hodder, 1997) p. 21.

26 Grierson, *Havergal*, p.75.

27 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p.56.

28 Grierson, *Havergal*, pp.85, 110.

harm in familiarising the viewer with that sin in the first place.²⁹

However, even this most strong of taboos showed some signs of relaxation in later periods, at least in Britain. Attitudes to the theatre were relaxed among the Oxford Group between the wars, and by 1947 John Wenham was urging members of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship to drop the blanket prohibition.³⁰ In the early 1960s, Michael Saward was daring enough to see the controversial satire *Beyond the Fringe*.³¹ By the 1980s the British charismatic Gerald Coates was to wear his love of cinema and theatre as a badge of the movement's new-found freedom.³²

This change can surely be attributed in part to the changing status of the theatre amongst the respectable middle class. The atmosphere and social connotation of the London stage of the Regency period – bawdy, unruly, and shunned by the better sort – was very different to that of the new National Theatre in London after 1945. In this, the evangelical objection voiced by William Wilberforce or Hannah More can be seen as a product of a social context. However, it is also noteworthy that there was greater openness to the *private reading* of plays amongst those who would not contemplate visiting a theatre. Away from suspect company, and from the seductive power of the spectacle itself, a play was rendered safe, and could be subjected to the same disciplined attention and critique that evangelicals applied to all their reading.³³

The arts in evangelical worship

Evangelical meeting places have generally been relatively plain, at least in comparison to

29 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 56-8.

30 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 238, 263.

31 Saward, *Faint Streak of Humility*, p. 207.

32 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 244.

33 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 55-6, 129-30.

Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches: neat, well kept, but with a minimum of ornament. As Patrick Collinson observed of the Reformation period, this was not merely a matter of inattention, but at one level an aesthetic statement in itself.³⁴ While other Christians might understand the beauty of holiness of the Psalmist in material terms, in reference to the worship space, the aesthetic of Protestant worship has been one in which to worship in spirit and truth required no trappings. There was beauty in the truth, and in true worship. At the same time, Donald Davie has rightly observed that to demand of the worship space such qualities of 'simplicity, sobriety, and measure' is not a denial of the senses as is often supposed, but 'sensuous pleasure deployed with an unusually frugal, and therefore exquisite, fastidiousness.'³⁵

This plainness was not only a positive statement, but an insurance. Encoded in the Protestant DNA that evangelicals shared was a fear of idolatry: of the misuse of the visual image, particularly in church buildings. While in the modern period few really feared that the ignorant might mistake the image for the thing it represented – the fear that had prompted the iconoclasm of the Reformation period – a residual unease with the visual image often persisted. This point should not be overstressed: recent work on Protestant and evangelical visual culture by John Harvey and David Morgan among others has shown the complex ways in which word and image have interacted.³⁶ E.J.H. Nash (or 'Bash', whose influence may be traced throughout the recent history of British evangelicalism) was given to using Holman Hunt's painting 'The Light of the World' as a visual aid in evangelistic preaching.³⁷ However,

34 Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003), p.154.

35 Donald Davie, *A Gathered Church: The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 25-6.

36 John Harvey, 'Seen to be remembered: representation and recollection in contemporary British evangelicalism', in Mark Smith (ed.), *British Evangelical Identities, Past and Present* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 180-200; David Morgan, 'Seeing Protestant icons: the popular reception of visual media in nineteenth- and twentieth- century America', in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Elite and Popular Religion (Studies in Church History, volume 42: Woodbridge, Boydell, 2006)*, pp. 406-28

37 Dick Knight, 'The Speaker' in John Eddison (ed.), *Bash. A study in spiritual power* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1983), p.51.

until the late twentieth century it was an uncommon evangelical church that used sculpted or painted images as the central focus of contemplation in public worship without a protective covering of orthodox words.³⁸

The art-form used most in evangelical worship was of course music. Although there was a strain in Reformation thought, associated with Calvin but most particularly with Zwingli in Zurich, that sought to restrict or disallow music for very fear of its persuasive power, this has rarely been dominant. The literature on church music is very extensive – much more so than for the other arts, and particularly for the nineteenth century – and it is in hymnody rather than the choral and instrumental tradition that evangelicals have featured most prominently.³⁹ Music, unlike any other art form, was directly sanctioned for use in worship by Scripture: at every turn by the Psalmist; by Paul and apparently by Christ himself.⁴⁰ As a result, the hymns of Charles Wesley are only the most well-known of the many hymns produced by evangelicals for their own use in worship, to which we must add those of John Newton, William Cowper and others.

But there were limits on the kinds of music that could be so welcomed. There was a very clear line of descent from the Reformation critique of medieval polyphony on grounds that the text was unintelligible, to later evangelical rejection of forms of church music that similarly obscured the words sung. This in part explains the lack of engagement by evangelicals with the elaborate cathedral musical tradition that reached its acme in England in

38 Very recent years have seen the widespread adoption of overhead projection equipment. Even then, it might be argued that, when these are used to project visual images (rather than the texts of songs for singing), those images are rarely used as a primary focus of attention.

39 Older but still useful studies include Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England. From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690-1900* (first published in two parts in 1961-2, and reprinted together by Eerdmans in 1996), pp.201-4, 210-40; see also Erik Routley, *The Musical Wesleys* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968). More recently, see the two volumes by Lionel Adey: *Hymns and the Christian Myth* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), pp.99-149; *Class and Idol in the English Hymn* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), *passim*. For the USA, see Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1981), *passim*.

40 The key passages from Paul were Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19, and (in the Gospels) Matthew 26:30.

the period under discussion and was transplanted all over the Anglican world. It also frames the enthusiasm with which a godly family such as that of John Jowett had embraced the oratorios of Handel, which combined musical invention with clarity of word setting.⁴¹ To allow music that merely delighted the hearer without instructing them was to miss the purpose of public worship.

Distinct but closely related was evangelical concern about the performer, as well as the music itself. The victory of the organ over the English parish band as the means of accompaniment to singing was welcomed by some evangelicals, since the organ, being in the hands of a single player, tended to curb ostentatious excess.⁴² In some Methodist chapels in the early nineteenth century, some band players had introduced 'almost every variety of musical instrument, destroying the simplicity and devotional character of the singing'. Even if some in the congregation may have delighted in such elaboration, it was the edification of 'the more sober part of the congregation' which was paramount.⁴³

Key to differentiating evangelical enthusiasm for music in church from that of others is a distinctive understanding of the nature of a 'sacrifice of praise' (Hebrews 13:15). Catholic thinkers have tended to stress the offering of the work of art itself as the key transaction. In musical terms, a well-wrought composition expertly performed could in and of itself constitute an offering.⁴⁴ As a result, many of the critiques of pop church music in its early days were both of the standard of the composition, and the inexpert nature of some early performances. Few evangelicals have been able to accept such an understanding without wishing also to stress the importance of the intention of the performer. A bad song inexpertly

41 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 98.

42 On evangelical use of the organ in the early nineteenth century, see Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (volume 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.214-8.

43 The recollection of Thomas Jackson in 1873, as quoted by Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 100.

44 On the debate about 'authenticity' in contemporary church music, see Ian Jones with Peter Webster, 'Expressions of authenticity: music for worship' in Jane Garnett et al (eds), *Redefining Christian Britain. Post-1945 perspectives* (London: SCM, 2006), pp.50-62.

sung but with the right intention would nonetheless be acceptable to God.

This concentration on the singer and not the song has also meant that evangelicals have often been, in the words of a sympathetic outsider, prepared to ‘embrace bad taste for the sake of the gospel’.⁴⁵ By no means all evangelicals were prepared to use popular tunes and musical styles, fearing the effects on the listener of pre-existing secular associations that such melodies and styles carried.⁴⁶ However (to anticipate the theme of the next section) three well-known examples will suffice to show evangelicals making use of popular styles in evangelistic services and (latterly) in regular worship. The Salvation Army, founded in 1865, overcame scruples about vigorous use of the full panoply of musical instruments; the bands ‘broke through the cordons of reserve and decorum in a riot of joyous righteousness’, thus (to use William Booth’s most famous saying) ‘robbing the Devil of his choice tunes’.⁴⁷ Originating in songs written for use in American Sunday schools, the gospel song genre – simple, direct, tuneful verse-refrain songs with uncomplicated harmony – was popularised both in America and Britain by Dwight L. Moody and his singing partner Ira D. Sankey in the later nineteenth century. Spreading beyond the narrow confines of public worship by means of concert appearances by principal singers as well as radio and recorded distribution, the genre became what one observer has called ‘the folksong of American religious life.’⁴⁸ Cliff Barrows, leader of the music in Billy Graham’s London crusade of 1954, blended traditional hymnody with such gospel songs as ‘Blessed assurance’ and ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’.⁴⁹

45 Richard Holloway, ‘Evangelicalism: an outsider’s perspective’, in R.T. France and A. E. McGrath (eds), *Evangelical Anglicans. Their role and influence in the Church today* (London: SPCK, 1993), p. 182.

46 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 99; Hustad, *Jubilate*, pp.26-32.

47 Davies, *Worship and Theology in England. From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690-1900* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 169.

48 Mel R. Wilhoit, ‘Gospel Songs/Gospel Hymns’, in Ray Broadus Browne and Pat Browne, *The Guide to United States Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 333-4; Hustad, *Jubilate*, pp.130-2, 248-51.

49 Frank Colquhoun, *Harringay Story. The official record of the Billy Graham Greater London Crusade 1954* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1955), pp. 100-2.

It remains to be established how quickly the gospel song repertoire was incorporated into authoritative hymnals, or found its way into the repertoire by other means. However, by the end of the twentieth century in many churches it was no longer gospel songs that were found amongst the larger body of hymns, but a handful of hymns that jostled for space amongst a standard repertoire of songs in popular style. Even though British evangelicals came later to experimentation with pop church music than other sections of the churches, by the 1970s they were firmly in the lead, and by the 1990s popular songs played by guitar bands had become one of the visual markers of Anglo-American evangelicalism.⁵⁰ Only a minority of critics still voiced the same principled criticisms of the use of non-sacred styles of music. Evangelicals had adopted the musical language of the world, whilst emptying it of its notes of rebellion and unregulated sexuality.⁵¹

The arts as evangelism

Evangelicals were at certain times and places assiduous producers of the arts for those outside the fold. However, the underlying motivation to do so was fundamentally different from many other artists, although the difference only came into relief (in Britain, at least) in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. Before that time, as David Sandifer has pointed out, there were very considerable affinities between an evangelical view of the real purpose of art, and assumptions made more generally. It was widely held that ‘human beings exist for moral and spiritual excellence; [that] this excellence is progressive [and] every action must be judged on the basis of how it contributes or does not contribute to this growth in

50 On the key influence of the charismatic movement in this transition, see James Steven, *Worship in the Spirit. Charismatic worship in the Church of England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), *passim*.

51 Peter Webster and Ian Jones, ‘New music and the “evangelical style” in the Church of England, c.1958-1991’, in Smith (ed.), *British Evangelical Identities*, pp. 167-79.

excellence.’⁵² The evangelical concern that cultural products should be judged by their effects on the receiver was thus aligned with assumptions common to many others. It was only as artists, philosophers and critics asserted the independence of art of any criterion other than its own beauty that the evangelical insistence on wider and older criteria began to appear counter-cultural.

Readers may pause over the treatment here of almost all evangelical artistic work outside public worship as a form of evangelism, but evangelism it overwhelmingly was, in one important sense. Few intended that these works of art should merely be a source of delight to the receiver, although delight was a welcome side-effect, which in itself aided the main purpose. The arts were a means of aiding private devotion; of convincing the reader or viewer of a theological argument; of convicting the reader of their sinfulness and need of grace; of calling the reader to amendment of life and reformation of conduct. Seldom were they an end in themselves.

One early and highly self-conscious deployment of a literary form for these polemical ends was *Theron and Aspasio* (1755) by the Anglican evangelical James Hervey (1714-58). Looking to deliver a message in a form acceptable to elite taste, Hervey cast the work in the form of a series of dialogues in which Aspasio gradually leads his friend towards an acceptance of the gospel. That Hervey expected his readers to object is apparent at the very beginning. Before Aspasio can embark on his exposition of imputed righteousness, Hervey makes him justify the introduction of ‘*edifying* Talk into our *fashionable* Assemblies’, an ‘outrageous Violation of the Mode [of polite conversation]’ which might arouse ‘the Suspicion of *Enthusiasm*’ [italics original].⁵³

52 Sandifer, ‘The most dangerous of allies’, p. 28.

53 Hervey, *Theron and Aspasio* (1755), in Yeager (ed.), *Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 189, 192-3.

Early evangelicalism was also not without its poets, perhaps the most significant of which among evangelicals in England was William Cowper (1731-1800). Although now better known for hymns such as 'O for a closer walk with God', Cowper's poetry was frequently reprinted and included in anthologies throughout the nineteenth century before falling from critical favour in the twentieth.⁵⁴ The poems of the Particular Baptist Anne Steele (1717-78) were published by her family for public use. In the United States, Phillis Wheatley was bought as a slave by an evangelical Boston merchant, and through his connections was to publish *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) under the powerful patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon.⁵⁵ These poems were not simply private devotional exercises, but public offerings for edification and influence.

Phillis Wheatley's works achieved very considerable success in terms of sales, but even wider reach was achieved by the group of British writers working around the turn of the nineteenth century. The *Annals of the Poor* (1809-10) by Legh Richmond, a literary recounting of tales of the rural poor and their edifying demises, achieved a readership not only among the evangelical middle classes but also among those whom it depicted.⁵⁶ Hannah More, evangelical royalty from the centre of the Clapham Sect, achieved even greater success, in more than one genre. Like *The Annals of the Poor*, More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-8) were examples of the genre of the 'moral tale' described by Tim Killick, the production of which was by no means only by evangelicals.⁵⁷ Fictionalised tales of the poor from town and country (whereas Richmond's were based on real events), an estimated two

54 John D. Baird, 'Cowper, William' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; on the complex relationship between Cowper's work, faith and mental health, see Diane Buie, 'William Cowper: a religious melancholic?', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* 36:1 (2013), 103-119.

55 See the selection of poems from the *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* (1760) at Yeager (ed.), *Early Evangelicalism*, p. 176-7; see the selection of Wheatley poems in Yeager (ed.), *Early Evangelicalism*, p. 276-7.

56 A.G. Newell, 'Early Evangelical fiction', *Evangelical Quarterly* 38:2 (1966), pp.81-5.

57 Tim Killick, *British short fiction in the early nineteenth century. The rise of the tale* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), pp.73-115.

million copies were in circulation by 1796. Nearly forty years later they were thought to be ‘a principal part of the English cottagers’ library’.⁵⁸ Modern critics have charged the *Tracts* with being an attack on popular culture, which in one sense they were, in that More very clearly intended to influence behaviour for the better. Neither were the *Tracts* artistic failures. More showed considerable skill in employing existing genres – ‘moral tales’, ballads, allegories – to a self-conscious and sustained educational and moral purpose. Despite some unease amongst the evangelical press, More achieved similar success with the anonymous novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809). Reviewed very favourably in literary periodicals, it went through nine editions in nine months, as well as thirty in the United States, and German and French editions, and remained in print twenty years later.⁵⁹

Other British evangelical writers were equally successful but without achieving the same fusion of literary achievement and seriousness of purpose. Emma Jane Worboise published some fifty works between 1846 and 1887, an explicit attempt to ‘provide something purer’ to replace the popular literature of her time. However, in the words Elisabeth Jay, ‘the combination of her devotion to fact and the paramount desire to provide an Evangelical witness were Mrs Worboise’s downfall.’ In *Thornycroft Hall*, her answer to Jane Eyre, Worboise was prepared to sacrifice psychological plausibility in order to force all her characters, however bad, to accept the gospel before their final demise. It was this kind of instrumentalisation of the arts that discredited evangelical artistic work in the eyes of critics and artists from outside the evangelical fold.⁶⁰

The evangelistic importance of the music of Ira D. Sankey was noted earlier, but in

58 Julia Saunders, ‘Putting the Reader Right: Reassessing Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts*’, *Romanticism on the Net* n.16, (November 1999), para 6 and *passim*: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/005881ar>

59 Sandifer, ‘The most dangerous of allies’, p. 23.

60 Elisabeth Jay, *The religion of the heart: Anglican evangelicalism and the nineteenth century novel*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), pp. 244-5.

the USA we might add the names of Charles Alexander and Homer Rodeheaver as the musical partners of prominent evangelists.⁶¹ In England Frances Havergal regarded her life's work as proclaiming the Gospel. As well as being an oratorio soloist and trainer of her church choir, Havergal was ever alert to the opportunity to share the gospel in song. At a mission among the urban working class in Liverpool, she took rehearsals of the hymns for the main mission services, interspersed with her own songs. 'The silence and breathless attention would have been remarkable anywhere' she reported, 'but fancy these poor wretches, who certainly never heard anything but the lowest songs before.' At a YWCA mission in Swansea, there was distributed a card with her own hymn 'Take my life and let it be' printed upon it, with a space for a written response by the recipient; her sister recalled the occasion as 'a great night of decision for many present'. Even her music tuition classes were 'a grappling-iron to draw many drifting vessels close to our side, bringing them within hearing of loving and sympathizing words, and of the One name which is sweeter than music.'⁶²

It was also the case that whole art forms were at times suspect, yet embraced at other times as a means of evangelism. Such was the case with drama. Not only was attendance at the secular theatre suspect to the majority of British evangelicals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for reasons already examined; the idea of dramatic presentations of the gospel was also hard to comprehend for some. In 1795 Rowland Hill asserted the 'illegitimacy of plays, in any circumstances'.⁶³ In 1928, when the chapter of Canterbury Cathedral staged what was (wrongly) thought to be the first play in a cathedral since the Reformation, a similar objection was raised by the National Church League, over the signature of E. A. Knox. Such 'pagan methods of imparting religious teaching' had no warrant in Scripture and were a poor substitute for a clear verbal apprehension of the truth. In

61 Hustad, *Jubilate*, pp.132-7.

62 Grierson, *Havergal*, pp.130, 132, 86.

63 Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 55.

the jazz age, when ‘the pursuit of pleasure and love of vain display’ were blinding people to the reality of sin, any ‘frivolous accommodation to that craze for amusement’ was not to be countenanced.⁶⁴

However, the evangelical objection to the use of drama waned as did the taboo on the secular theatre. John Masefield’s play for Canterbury marked the beginning of a remarkable flowering of religious drama in England, most associated with the catholic wing of the Church of England. Less well understood is evangelical experimentation with drama at much the same time, such as the plays written by G.R. Balleine for his London parish in the 1930s.⁶⁵ The Riding Lights Theatre Company traces its origins to the evangelistic ministry of David Watson at the church of St Michael-le-Belfrey in York in the late 1970s.⁶⁶ Once again, evangelical attitudes to the arts could and did shift with the context in which they found themselves.

Evangelicals against the arts

Evangelicals had also to engage with artistic production and consumption outside their control: amongst their neighbours; in local theatres, concert and music halls; in print, and (in the twentieth century) on national and local broadcast media. The assumptions that drove evangelical involvement in campaigns against the arts have remained relatively consistent, and relate to those that governed their own use of the arts. The arts could certainly conduce to vice if incorrectly handled, and the activism and conversionism that defined the evangelical

64 A remonstrance presented to the Dean and Chapter in July 1928, as quoted at Peter Webster, ‘George Bell, John Masefield and *The Coming of Christ: Context and Significance*’, in Andrew Chandler (ed.), *The Church and Humanity: The Life and Work of George Bell, 1883-1958* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) pp. 51-3.

65 Andrew Atherstone, ‘George Reginald Balleine: historian of Anglican Evangelicalism’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 12:1 (2014), 82-111, at 98-99

66 *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England* (London: CIO, 1981), p. 25; Mathew Guest, *Evangelical identity and contemporary culture: A congregational study in innovation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2007), p. 58.

meant that unsaved souls could not simply be left to their corruption. The correct use of the arts was part of a broader concern for public morality, in which the Christian standard was held to be normative, and which was the duty of the state to enforce. Any artistic output that caused the deterioration of that Christian moral standard was subject to intervention.

One common impulse among evangelicals when faced with the kind of cultural production they disliked was to attempt to displace it. It was key that evangelicals themselves had these alternatives to choose for their own use. Benjamin L. Fischer has noted the development of separate journals and magazines for evangelicals in the early nineteenth century. Titles such as the *Evangelical Magazine* or the *Eclectic Review* offered an alternative to the pernicious influence of secular magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review*. As well as offering more acceptable interpretations of contemporary politics and current affairs, these journals sought to provide alternative material for recreational reading as well. Evangelicals (it was thought) ought to prefer the truth over fiction, and this need was well served by a new genre of narratives of daring and dangerous missionary journeys in far-off lands: factual, edifying, yet still a stimulation to the imagination, and thus to be read with pleasure.⁶⁷ In 1995 Dave Tomlinson noted a Christian alternativism that sought to replace all the enticing pleasures of the world with Christianised alternatives: ‘It is like a parallel universe: Christian festivals, Christian records, Christian holidays, Christian social events, Christian dating agencies, Christian theatre, Christian comedy, Christian television, Christian aerobics set to Christian music – it seems like the resourcefulness of “Christian” imitation knows no bounds.’⁶⁸

It is in the light of this conscious or unconscious impulse towards the replacement of

67 Benjamin L. Fischer, ‘A novel resistance: mission narrative as the anti-novel in the Evangelical assault on British culture’, in Clarke and Methuen (eds), *The Church and Literature* (Studies in Church History 48), 232-45

68 Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (London: SPCK, 1995), p. 124.

unwholesome with wholesome that evangelical domestic music-making can also be read. As well as being a source of delight, the music played and sung in the homes of Francis Chavasse and John Jowett kept closed any space that might otherwise have been filled with more frivolous or lascivious fare. In the late twentieth century, the phenomenon of Contemporary Christian Music, as well as being music for a specific use in worship, also showed some signs of having the same effect. Studio recordings of music by prominent worship leaders have come to be music for recreation and private consumption, displacing secular alternatives. While not unprecedented in evangelical history, this trend has arguably accelerated in the early twenty-first century. It is also notable that live recordings of worship services have also crossed into the home, to be listened to while engaged in other activities: a blurring of the spheres of religious activity impossible before the age of the Walkman and the iPod.⁶⁹

The impulse to replacement was not confined within the evangelical constituency but spilled over into society at large. The year 1995 saw the appearance of the first title in the phenomenally successful *Left Behind* series of novels, and Crawford Gribben has shown the degree to which ‘prophecy fiction’ broke out from within evangelical circles to find a wider readership, such that ‘the evangelical imagination has entered the cultural mainstream’. However, the dispersed and independent nature of both the writing and publication of prophecy fiction has resulted in a theologically unruly genre which itself demonstrated the degree to which ‘[American] evangelicalism has lost its theological coherence’.⁷⁰ Allowing the cultural products of evangelicalism to spread and develop freely outside the constituency is not without its risks.

69 Much more research is required on the degree to which this trend represents the consumerisation of religious practice, as outlined at large in Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion. Christian faith and practice in a consumer culture* (New York, Continuum, 2003)

70 Gribben, *Writing the rapture*, p.170.

On occasions, evangelicals have sought very directly to place an alternative cultural product in the secular marketplace, in order to supplant the secular choice. One such intervention was in that most competitive of markets, the theatres of London's West End. In 1946 a group associated with Moral Re-Armament, the political wing of Frank Buchman's Oxford Group, bought the Westminster Theatre (itself formerly the Charlotte Chapel) to provide the venue for a theatre of 'not only entertainment but a constructive drama of ideas, relevant to the post-war world, and based on Christian faith and moral values'.⁷¹ The theatre provided a base from which Peter Howard, playwright and MRA leader, could put forward what he himself described as his 'propaganda plays'. Howard was explicit that matter presented on stage had a direct effect on the viewer's subsequent behaviour, and so the theatre had a part to play in 'restoring honour to homes, unity between colours and classes, and to all men faith in God'.⁷²

But sometimes displacement was not enough, and the only appropriate evangelical response to a particular work of art was to fight it. Just as before the twentieth century evangelicals shared many elite assumptions about the purposes of art, so too were there common assumptions about state and voluntary intervention in public morality. On the voluntary side, a great deal of research remains to be done on the extent of evangelical involvement in campaigning movements about public morals. In the United States, the career of Anthony Comstock illustrates the difficulties for the historian in untangling the threads of evangelical piety and what could still be described in late nineteenth century America as puritanism. In his assiduous churchgoing and intense private examination of his conscience Comstock was like a Puritan in the classical seventeenth century sense, but his decades-long campaign against obscenity in literature could carry with it many what we might call "social

71 K. D. Belden, *The story of the Westminster Theatre* (London: Westminster Theatre, 1965), p. 23.

72 Philip Boobbyer, 'The Cold War in the plays of Peter Howard', *Contemporary British History* 19:2 (2005), 210.

puritans” who would not have shared his style of piety.⁷³ Comstock's New York Society for the Suppression of Vice bore some similarities with British organisations, such as the London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality, which between 1899 and 1967 concerned itself with sexual behaviour in the city, along with the capital's music halls, theatre performance and latterly radio and television broadcasts.⁷⁴ It remains to be seen how far evangelicals were prepared to lend their support to broader-based campaigns of this sort. Evangelicals were certainly very often morally conservative, but such conservatism was not unique to them.⁷⁵

However, as the twentieth century wore on, and public (or at least elite) consensus about the shape of public morality was weakened, evangelical concerns became both sharper and more clearly distinctive. In 1929 William Joynson-Hicks, former Conservative politician and Protestant leader, was able to assert that the bulk of Christian opinion in Britain still supported the censorship that was then operative in the UK.⁷⁶ The post-war period however saw a series of significant moments in the loosening of state control of the arts in Britain. The Obscene Publications Act of 1959, whilst maintaining the offence of obscenity, introduced a defence of being in the public good (that is, having artistic merit). The Theatres Act of 1968 ended the censorship of the British stage that had been exercised by the Lord Chamberlain. While there was vigorous conservative opposition to these perceived relaxations of the safeguards against literature and drama that might deprave the reader or viewer, they were by no means universally opposed by the churches.⁷⁷

73 Heywood Brown and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock. Roundsman of the Lord* (London: Wishart, 1928), pp.24-32

74 On the attention paid by the Council to the censorship of stage plays, see Peter Webster, 'The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chamberlain and the censorship of the theatre', in Clarke and Methuen (eds), *The Church and Literature* (Studies in Church History 48), 439.

75 On the various campaigns against 'obscene' literature in Britain, see Celia Marshik, *British Modernism and censorship* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), *passim*.

76 Viscount Brentford [William Joynson-Hicks], *Do we need a censor?* (London, Faber, 1929), p.23.

77 On the churches' involvement in the reform of the law on the theatre, see Peter Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey: The shape of the church* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 74-7.

There were moments in this process in which evangelicals were involved. 1967 saw what turned out to be the last significant obscenity trial of a work of fiction under the 1959 Act: *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, by Hubert Selby Junior. The test of obscenity was whether the work had a tendency to ‘deprave and corrupt’ the reader, which could be offset if the work could be shown to have significant artistic merit. Whilst the defence counsel for the publisher lined up several critics to establish the latter point, one of the prosecution witnesses was David Sheppard, later Anglican bishop of Liverpool, but at the time a priest-cum-social worker at the Mayflower Centre in Canning Town in east London. Sheppard later recalled his view, a view similar to that of much evangelical opinion (and indeed wider conservative Christian opinion) in the late Sixties: that ‘though censorship should be a weapon sparingly used, there were times when it made for health.’⁷⁸

There were many aspects of the arts that were not subject to this kind of statutory and systematised censorship. In these cases, if evangelicals wanted to counter them, different methods were required. One such matter was the suspected effects of popular music, particularly in the twentieth century. Popular forms of music making had for long been a source of worry, due to a tight knot of concerns. Uncontrolled music-making and listening had often betokened a lack of restraint: an invitation to dancing and associated licentiousness. When dealing with music with sung words, the most common concern amongst evangelicals was with covert or overt references to sex or violence or the questioning of legitimate authority that might be an occasion to sin. With the advent first of jazz, and supremely of rock and roll after 1945, these long-standing concerns were both heightened and broadened in scope. In the British context, once the indigenous music styles of folk song and the music hall began to be supplanted by such ‘foreign’ styles, concern mounted (and not only amongst

⁷⁸ David Sheppard, *Steps Along Hope Street* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), pp. 137-8; John Sutherland, *Offensive Literature: Decensorship in Britain 1960-1982* (London, Junction, 1982), p. 69; John Mortimer, *Clinging to the Wreckage* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 200-4.

evangelicals) about the supposedly ‘primal’ nature of the music.⁷⁹ These concerns reached a particular height in the USA from the early 1970s onwards in relation to heavy metal (which added occultic references to the older themes of sex and violence).⁸⁰ Some of the same concerns have been observed being played out in relation to rap music in the last few decades.⁸¹

In America, evangelical ministers such as Bob Larson wrote and preached energetically against rock in all its forms, and organised a new form of conversion ritual, the record burning, in which heavy metal fans destroyed the objects of their sinfulness as a sign of a turning from temptation. Morality campaigns against popular music have tended to focus on lyrics, since these may be tested and assessed in ways in which the style of music, the personal image of the musician, and the fan culture that surrounds him or her may not. The greatest national success of the movement in the USA, although indirect, was the ‘Tipper sticker’: labels placed on records advising parents of sexually explicit or violent content, named after Tipper Gore, leader of the group of so-called ‘Washington Wives’ that pressed for the legislation. It was an evangelical, Pastor Jeff Ling of Clear River Community Church in Virginia, who briefed a senate hearing on the matter in September 1985.⁸²

In Britain, while the theatre and literature remained subject to censorship backed by law, the national broadcaster was not. It was the BBC that provoked the first entry into public life of Mary Whitehouse with her Clean-Up TV campaign of 1964. This soon led to the

79 Ian Jones and Peter Webster, ‘Anglican “Establishment” Reactions to “Pop” Church Music in England, c.1956-1991’, in Cooper and Gregory (eds), *Elite and Popular Religion (Studies in Church History 42)*, pp. 433-4.

80 Jason C. Bivins, *Religion of fear: The politics of horror in conservative evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), passim.

81 Sandra L. Barnes, Religion and rap music: an analysis of black church usage, *Review of Religious Research* 49:3 (2008), 319-38.

82 ABC News clip, 19 September 1985, available at www.gettyimages.co.uk, clip 450014078 at <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/video/pastor-jeff-ling-of-virginia-gives-a-slideshow-detailing-news-footage/450014078> ; on the Parents Music Resource Center, and on Ling, see Bivins, *Religion of Fear*, pp.96-7.

formation of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, which in turn influenced the shape of the Nationwide Festival of Light (NFOL) which was inaugurated in 1971.

Whitehouse, who was also involved with the NFOL, had been influenced in earlier life by Moral Re-armament, and Matthew Grimley has shown that the NFOL was strongly influenced by evangelicals from its outset. Although Whitehouse's work began with television and radio, the scope was soon widened to cover several of the other arts. The NFOL's opening statement of intent named as its targets films such as Ken Russell's *The Devils*, with its mixture of sex, religion and brutality; the group was to derail the proposed ending of film censorship in London in 1975.⁸³ Mary Whitehouse successfully sued the periodical *Gay News* in 1977 over the content of a blasphemous poem; her case against the production of *The Romans in Britain* at the National Theatre in 1982 was to end inconclusively.⁸⁴

The campaigns of Mary Whitehouse may be seen as a component part of a wider response to a perceived moral crisis. That this sense of crisis was not unique to the UK has been shown by Hugh McLeod and others, and a parallel movement may be seen amongst evangelicals elsewhere in the same period.⁸⁵ To conservative observers, it seemed that all the western countries were witnessing a decline in traditional religious observance simultaneous with increased permissiveness, which were both reflected in and fostered by both the media and the liberal artistic establishment. While evangelicals were involved in campaigns against the arts before the middle of the twentieth century, they were less prominent simply because the consensus of the respectable was with them. By the end of the century, evangelicals stood

83 Matthew Grimley, 'Anglican evangelicals and anti-permissiveness: the Nationwide Festival of Light, 1971-1983', in Andrew Atherstone and John Maiden (eds), *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the twentieth century: reform, resistance, and renewal* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), pp. 186-8.

84 On the *Gay News* case, see David Nash, *Blasphemy in Modern Britain. 1789 to the present* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999), pp.239-57. On *The Romans in Britain*, see Mary Whitehouse, *A Most Dangerous Woman?* (Tring: Lion, 1982), pp.232-49.

85 Hugh McLeod, *The religious crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

out as that consensus had disintegrated around them.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined evangelical attitudes to and participation in the arts in four main contexts: in domestic settings; in public worship; in evangelism, and when created and consumed by others in society at large. In certain cases there were evangelical principles that went to the very basis of the art form concerned, such as the stress on the intelligibility of words sung to music, which as a result were both widespread and persistent. It has also shown that there were other evangelical shibboleths, such as the taboo on attendance at the theatre, which were not so much issues with the medium itself, but a particular social context in which it was produced. As a result such prohibitions could be, and were relaxed at other times and in other places.

Implicit in much of the chapter is a wider question which still awaits a full historico-theological treatment: the degree to which evangelical engagement with the arts was conditioned by the cultural power that evangelicals were able to exercise in general, and the extent to which their cultural presuppositions were shared with others. At the height of influence of British evangelicalism in the mid-nineteenth century, evangelicals shared many presumptions with their neighbours about the moral purpose of the arts, and about the conditions that should surround their production and reception. As Elisabeth Jay has shown, this cultural closeness was mirrored in the degree to which evangelical life itself was the *subject* of the Victorian novel; an interest which waned as did evangelical influence in society, reaching a terminal point in Samuel Butler.⁸⁶

86 Jay, *Religion of the Heart*, pp. 11, 260.

In contrast, evangelicals in late-twentieth-century Britain and America found themselves marooned by the processes of secularisation in societies in which any consensus amongst the respectable on the purpose of art had fractured; and in which middle-class consensus on morality (the consensus that mattered) had disintegrated. It is no coincidence that this period saw a spate of evangelical writing on the supposed death of Christian culture in the west as reflected in the arts, by figures such as Francis Schaeffer and H.R. Rookmaaker.⁸⁷ In this context of perceived cultural and moral crisis, the paradox was that evangelicals were in confrontation with secular artistic production for its godlessness, whilst domesticating its forms for their own purposes – in popular church music, or in religious drama – to a greater extent than ever.

⁸⁷ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968); H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern art and the death of a culture* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970).