Themes from The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism

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[0:00] Great. Good to be with you. Feels like being with family, and it seems like it's a punchy crowd this morning, so that's good. Very ready to go. Feel free to stop me in the midst of the presentation if you have questions or at the end.

This is the theme I want to talk about. It's from one of the chapters of the book. I'll just go through quickly what the new book is about. And then we're going to look at this idea of the spirituality of the law, which came up frequently in the sources I was reading.
And that whole idea, there's lots of talk these days about the word spirituality, but the term is used quite widely in the 18th century in the midst of the revival. We'll talk about that. This is what the cover of the book looks like.
And the print on the cover of the book has a figure. It's from an 18th century book by somebody named James Harvey. And it has a figure in an attitude of devotion in between natural philosophy. You see people working on the orbits of the planets here with a book by Isaac Newton. And then observational astronomy up here. And so in the midst of the modern world, the scientific revolution is a figure who is lost in wonder, love, and praise.
[1:14] And so in many ways, the book is asking what is the meaning of true religion in the modern world? And the world that we're all very familiar with today. But as this world is, in a sense, the incoming wave, as Christendom is receding and modernity is advancing, what does true religion look like?

And I think that's the question that was being asked quite widely in the midst of the revival and in the rise of evangelicalism. And so that's the main theme of the book. This, I, I, I, a lot of the pictures that are in the book, I, those of you that like the pictures in the book, I've included the pictures here so you can see.
I have two engravings of the scene or the, in Luke 10, where, you know, Jesus says to Mary and Bethany in the house of Mary and Martha that Mary sitting at his feet has chosen the one thing needful.
And she has chosen the better part and it will not be taken away. And Mary and Martha receives a rebuke that in the midst of the many things, one needs to focus on the presence of Jesus.
And I love this print. It's 1735. It's before Wesley's conversion. He is a high church Anglican. He publishes a very nice gentleman's edition of Thomas the Campus's Invitation of Christ and it has this print.
[2:30] I like the fluted Corinthian columns, the statuary, the women in drapery, the architectural lines receding down the hall to where the servants are laboring in the kitchen.

Never had the poor village of Bethany looked more like a Palladium great house, 18th century great house. And our daughter is named Bethany and we found out later from a Hebrew scholar that it means house of poverty.
And so I think Bethany is a poor village. Actually, she came home one day and she said that Jim Packer had called her Brittany at Regent.
And she said, if Jim Packer calls me Brittany, maybe that is my name, she said. So, no, her name is Bethany.
So this, in a sense, is a picture of a very intense kind of 17th century devotion that Wesley picks up. Anglican ascetical piety from the 17th century.
[3:32] One thing is needful, the unum necessarium of Jeremy Taylor. One thing is necessary, that earnest desire for purity of intention that he picks up in this high church Anglican mode.

The second engraving I have is move on a few years when the revival is in full flood. Wesley has been converted. George Whitefield has been converted. And they are preaching this same

message, but not, if you like, in the vestry or the cloister.
But this is now out in the fields and the byways. And this message is now one of earnest concern. That everyone, high and low, hear the message that to be a real Christian is to be entirely devoted to Jesus Christ.
And so the second engraving of this is this, which George Whitefield was visiting Thomas Fanning on Long Island, a wealthy man on Long Island in the midst of his itinerancy.
And he felt that he was insufficiently pious. And so with a diamond on the windowpane, he scratched one thing is needful on the windowpane before leaving town. And his devout vandalism was still evident in the 19th century.
[4:42] And so for me, this sort of captures the same message, but now it has a certain kind of urgency. He scratches it with a diamond in the windowpane.

So the one theme of the book is this theme about earnest, serious, true, real Christianity. What does that look like as opposed to being a nominal Christian?
This is the question of some urgency. The first chapter looked at the making of evangelical devotion in a case study of George Whitefield. This is a page from George Whitefield's diary when he was the same age as my youngest son, Sam, at Oxford, and recording every hour of the day what he was reading and what he was doing and so on.
And so I try to look at the period just prior to when he emerges as the boy parson and begins preaching. What are the factors that came together to shape his devotion?
What lit his fire? What, a sociologist might say, what radicalized him in his 20s as a Christian? And so by reading his diary, you can see what he's reading. We can see the various influences that came together in the making of evangelical devotion.
[5:49] And this is just at the bottom of that page. And what happens is, over the course of this diary in 1736, there's more and more and more of this language of the Holy Spirit and the joy of the Holy Spirit.

There's all this discipline, you see, all this discipline in the diary. But what you see in this young man is increasingly this sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the joy of the Holy Spirit. And in many ways, this is one of the themes of the book, and it wasn't particularly what I went looking for.
But in terms of the, what does it mean to experience the presence of God in the modern world, where God can seem so absent? In many ways, the central message of the early evangelicals was of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one of Whitefield's early sermons.
So he emerges as the boy parson. This is a print. I think I've shown this here before. 1742. The print is 19th century, but it's of his preaching in Moorfields.
He emerges as the preacher. So field preaching was not just some dewy-eyed Gainsborough painting out in the field somewhere. Field preaching was in the rough and tumble of the crowds, and where he stood up and proclaimed the gospel.
[7:14] And at this day at Moorfields, thousands, well, 300 responded, and it was the beginning of the Moorfield Society, but preaching to crowds of thousands. In the letter in 1742, he describes this occasion where he's being interrupted.

Did you see the fellow in the tree with the trumpet by people on trumpets? There's a recruiting sergeant with a drum you see in the bottom right-hand corner. There's somebody with a whip you can see on the left, stage left, as it were.
But also the letter describes somebody throwing dead dogs and dead cats at him, and a streaker running through the scene, which was not pictured by Eric Crow in this particular painting.
But the transition here is from a kind of very earnest, but if you like, churchy, priestly sort of piety that you had in John Wesley's edition of Thomas at Campus to preaching to the masses.
And Whitefield is the case study for that. I should move more quickly here. There's two chapters that explore the question of modernity. How modern is evangelicalism? And trying to look at big themes in terms of culture, the receding of Christendom and modernity on its way in.
[8:30] And so the first chapter is looking at the context of modernity. The term modernity in many ways goes back, and there's at least one contemporary philosopher who argues that the whole idea of modernity goes back to this period and to the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, it was called.

The quarrel of the ancients and the moderns. And so this print here is of Jonathan Swift's Battle of the Books, in which he imagines at, he says, Last Friday, ancient and modern books at St. James's

Library come off the shelf, and they begin to do battle.
And Plato and Homer and Aristotle are doing battle with Descartes and Locke and so on, and these books begin fighting the ancients versus the moderns. It looks a lot like a regent college faculty meeting.
But so the whole question of what is the authority of modern knowledge? Now that we have science, do we need the ancients anymore?
And where do we look for authority? That question is front and center. So I try to place the rise of evangelicalism in the midst of this debate. And there are several modern features of the movement. The movement arises.
[9:48] Of course, the gospel has always been true. The gospel has always been preached in every generation. But something about the movement of modern evangelicalism is tied to the rise of modernity. A certain sense of self and society.

Treating people as individual agents and addressing the gospel to them and gathering them in small groups, voluntary associations. And so the first chapter looks at some of the features of the movement that arise in that context and that are modern.
A surprising work, a modern movement, especially in its social form. But then the next chapter looks at the classical sources and the way in which it's still ancient. The message is ancient.
The message is in many ways an Augustinian message of God's grace to sinners that has been preached down through the centuries. And so a lot of what I do is go through bibliographies and book lists and reading lists and see what the early evangelicals were reading.
And see the way they use these sources and do a number of book biographies to kind of trace the reading. In a way, I like this picture because it illustrates the kind of process of the democratization of classical spirituality.
[11:01] Because the left-hand volume is the one from which that print of the Palladian great house, as it were, in the village of Bethany is taken.

And this is the edition of The Imitation of Christ by John Wesley in 1735, when he is a gentleman's scholar at Oxford and has his holy club and an intense kind of piety.
But then the one on the right is, in bibliographic terms, the one on the left we call, I guess it's octavo in terms of the size of the volume.
The one on the left is trisisimo secundo. It is 32 mo. It's a tiny, tiny little book that fits in the palm of your hand. It's an abridgment, and it was published in 1741.
Between these two publications is his evangelical conversion. And so he takes this ancient piety, if you like, the 14th century piety of the devotio of Moderna and the intensity of that devotion, and literally puts it in the hands of lay people, right, in an abridged volume that you could stick in, a woman could stick it in the pocket of her apron, a domestic servant.
[12:13] And there's all sorts of stories, like this one, a manuscript I found in which the lay woman, Anne Bolton, is riding to Honeybourne in the Cotswolds between five and six in the morning with her brother Tommy, and they're reading a chapter of Thomas the Campus.

So we're able to trace, if you like, from the sources in the Thomas the Campus is using Augustine and other sources, and to Thomas the Campus, to John Wesley, to lay people, and see that there are deep, ancient sources for evangelical piety.
And this is just one example of some in that chapter. There's a couple chapters on science. And so if the one main theme is true religion, the two movements are modernization and naturalization. Society is modernizing, and there's a new appeal to nature and the authority of nature. And then the three discourses are science, law, and art that I look at in terms of culture.
And so there's a chapter on Whitefield, two chapters on the ancients and the moderns, and then the rest of the book deals with science, law, and art. So science, this is John Wesley's electrical machine.
[13:28] I don't know why I included that picture. It's in the book. But he was fascinated, among many things in terms of science, he was fascinated with electricity and reading all about the experiments. And so I look at a number of figures in these two chapters who are...

Evangelicalism arises in the first generation that has accepted the Newtonian postulates about inert objects in time and space obeying abstract laws in terms of the Newtonian science and that worldview.

It had been contested by the Boyle Lecture, by the Cambridge Platonists. It had been debated the religious implications by the Boyle Lecturers at Cambridge. But the first generation that had properly received Newtonianism was the evangelical generation.
And so I just try to look at how they responded to science. And in short, they responded by re-enchanting the universe.
In a sense, the universe is drained of a certain kind of transcendence. There is no form principle. Metaphysically, in terms of internal form principle or external form principle.
[14:41] The old sort of Hellenistic ideas about science are gone. The world is surfaces, right? And so what do you do with that? Well, the instinct was their piety did, I say, a certain kind of metaphysical work above its pay grade.

It responded to the natural world with devotion, offering it to God in Charles Wesley's phrase, with wonder, love and praise. So the very same words that he ends his great Christological hymn, love divine and love is excelling.
He ends it on the note of wonder, love and praise. It's exactly the same phrase used by John Wesley in his four-volume summary of the latest findings of 18th century science.
So an evangelical pastor, Anglican priest, John Wesley, publishes several editions of a book giving a compendium of the latest findings in science.
And he says, why? He says, this should warm our hearts and lead us to offer to God wonder, love and praise. So they re-enchant the world that science had, in a sense, drained of transcendence.
[15:45] And one of the figures I look at, these are just some of the, as I say, the illustrations of the book, is a figure named John Russell who paints pictures of the moon. He's a pastelist.

He paints pictures of the moon. He watches, goes out in his back garden in London when there was no light pollution. You could still see the moon.
And for several hours a night, he would observe the moon. And he was fascinated with this particular feature of Heraclides' promontory. And there had been one figure, Cassini, who had noted that it looks like a woman's head.
You see that there? And I was just intrigued when I went through his drawings, his moon drawings, in the Museum of the History of Science at Oxford. Here's this evangelical painter, member of the Royal Academy, making his living, painting portraits and so on.
But he's absolutely fascinated with the moon and studies the moon. But I find this picture just exquisitely beautiful. And it's not just a figure of a woman's head now.
[16:50] It's merged into the figure of an angel. You see, it's merged into the figure of an angel. And I'm intrigued by the way he unites devotion and art. He was very careful about light and shadow and things he learned as an artist, but also science.

These are just some of his measurements with the micrometer, measuring in great detail different features of the moon. And he made a real contribution to science. So I look at about a dozen figures that respond to science.
This is what I'm going to come back to in a moment, is how evangelicals responded to the culture that's modernizing and naturalizing in terms of science, but also in terms of ethics.
The question that's being raised by Enlightenment philosophers for the first time, really, can you be good without God? And how do we understand ethics based on just nature? And it's also the great century of law in terms of understanding human behavior, the organization of society in terms of law.
And we could talk more about that, the kind of constitutional revolution and the understanding of law. And so I look at the way evangelicals respond to that and in terms of a culture of law and the making of evangelical conscience and it's the making of conversion.
[18:14] So I say we'll come back to that. And then there's a final chapter on aspirations and on beauty, on art, and that tries to place evangelical spiritual aspirations, their deepest longings, in the context of the aesthetic culture of the 18th century, especially looking at the sublime and the agon, some of these features of 18th century art and how they use that kind of language and engage what is a deeply contemporary debate about human agency.

But their question is still, how do we understand human agency in a world that God exists where God is the highest being to be loved? And so that's the final chapter.
So now you don't need to read the book. That's the whole book laid out for you. Okay. So I wanted just to dive into one theme and I'm interested to know what you think about this because this struck

me as of a certain importance, this language of the spirituality of the law.
These are those two chapters on law. Well, a number of Catholic historians have made the argument that the word spirituality enters English through the French, spiritualité, especially early in the 20th century, the translation of some of the works that have been, some of the French work in spirituality.
And it sort of enters the vernacular and becomes common sort of mid-20th century. And you can trace that in many ways. So I find it really interesting that in English, in the 18th century, they used the word spirituality.
[19:52] It's used quite widely on both sides of the Atlantic. It's used in Scotland. It's used in New England. It's used in the Middle Colonies. It's used in the Middle Island. And I trace the use of this language to this phrase, the spirituality, often the spirituality and extent of the law is the phrase that's used.

And this does a certain kind of work for the evangelicals in the 18th century. So evangelicals embrace science as poets, as painters, as medics, as chemists, as theologians, as philosophers. but they offered up the praise of the mute creation through what James Harvey, the poet, called an evangelical telescope. But what about human nature?
What about human nature? When it came to moral philosophy and the consideration of human nature in contrast to the observable universe, evangelicals were much more sharply at odds with developments in 18th century culture, in the Enlightenment.
Isaac Newton had opened the door not just to a new natural philosophy, a new science, but also a new moral philosophy or ethics based on the same procedures that have revolutionized physics.
[21:09] And so I look at both philosophers and felons, if you like. This is Hugo Grotius on the left, who had a famous phrase that said in Latin that translates as, even if we were to concede.

That's the phrase. And it's seen as opening the door in ethics to this whole project of being good without God, because he said, what I have just said would be true, even if we were to concede that God didn't exist.
Right? So it's sort of his little clause that opens the door to a natural moral philosophy. And so I look at both the philosophers and also what's actually happening on the ground in terms of ethics, in terms of law.
And this is a print of Lord Ferrer's in 1760, who is one of the famous hangings in the 18th century. But the question is, is there an Isaac Newton of the moral sciences?
And when you think about natural law, you might think about science, or you might think about natural law in terms of ethics and human behavior. And so is there a moral, Isaac Newton of the moral sciences?
[22:24] Isaac Newton concluded his optics, his book on the optics, with what I call a four-further-consideration clause. He says this, if natural philosophy in all its parts, by pursuing this method, an empirical method, shall at length be perfected, he says the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged.

That is, understanding human nature. Duty to God and to one another will appear to us by the light of nature, he says. The word nature was capitalized, and well might he have capitalized that word, for the burden laid upon nature had never been greater.
Natural law became one of those powerful explanatory concepts that appeared in more and more domains in the 18th century, in legal discourse and scientific discourse and ethical discourse and in religious discourse.
The contest had begun to see who might prove the Newton of the moral sciences, and there were many candidates, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to David Hume to Adam Smith and others.
In a way, what begins with moral philosophy will emerge at the longer story as the social sciences, really the attempt to study human nature and human flourishing and what constitutes human flourishing by just empirical methodology.
[23:47] And so a lot of the questions were whether you could give an account of human nature, an account of the good, in terms of basic instincts, like certain people have basic moral senses, like the fact that parents want to care for their children, the fact that people seem to naturally pity those who are suffering.

So is there a basic moral sense from which you can build out a whole moral philosophy? Or a certain sense of conscience for somebody like Joseph Butler? So these are the kinds of ways that

people were trying to pursue ethics on a natural basis.
But to take universal human nature as a given subject to investigate morally and politically raises certain problems. Many notice that this idea of nature as given is not a sufficient starting point for ethics.
Alexander Pope's phrase, whatever is, is right, was not going to address what evangelicals took to be the desperate human condition. So they embrace the sciences, but in a sense re-enchant the sciences with a sense of wonder and praise and love for God and seeing God's presence in the natural world.
But in terms of human nature, they're at odds with their culture. They are counter-cultural, and they are going to take a different line. They would not wax eloquent about the glory of human nature as James Harvey did, about the splendor of the planets.
[25:15] The highest their rhetoric rose was people like John Newton saying that human nature was majestic, though in ruins. It's a nice phrase. Anybody know where it comes from?

It's John Milton describing Satan. So, this is from John Milton from Paradise Lost. This is his description of Satan.
So, it's maybe not, it's poignant until you realize sort of where it comes from. Evangelical rhetoric about human nature would not sound very enlightened or polished.
For evangelicals, human nature in its fallen condition was depraved, even when papered over with a veneer of civilization. George Whitefield never tired of telling his hearers that they were mere baptized heathens.
They were by nature monstrosities, half a devil and half a beast. Compared to the rhetoric of the third Earl of Shaftesbury or Francis Hutchinson, this conspicuously lacked a certain grace and refinement.
[26:21] That was the whole point. Whitefield objected. This is a quotation. He says, Let these modern, polite gentlemen paint man in as lovely colors as they please. I will not do it.

He works from a different palette. If I was to paint man in his proper colors, I must go to the kingdom of hell for a copy. My brethren man is half a beast and half a devil and a motley mixture of beast and devil.
This is bruising to modern sensibilities, isn't it? What about people's self-image? Self-esteem? He is actually echoing, quoting William Law and the 17th century Bishop John Hall when he says this. But he must have repeated it often and it was some force since many noted it and I found it in lay people's testimonies, this phrase. Deterrent in nature in the 18th century made this kind of preaching now appear especially disruptive.
His rhetoric was not untypical among evangelicals and their awakening sermons. They were not looking for a Newton of the moral sciences. We can maybe come back to this. So momentous changes are taking place in natural philosophy or science.
[27:35] The trajectory in moral philosophy from Hugo Grotius to Immanuel Kant is from objective natural law to subjective autonomy. Like, autonomy is literally self-law where I propose a law to myself.

It is within this context that Evan Jockels had to make a case about human nature as deeply flawed and in need of divine grace. How are they going to do that? The key anthropological category will shift from nature to law and here too, as I alluded to, there's a cultural watershed.
England is preoccupied with law at every level in the 18th century. We could illustrate this at some length. From the Constitutional Revolution in 1689 to the growth of statute law in the course of the 18th century to the growth of criminal law and laws carrying the death penalty increased by about 200 in the 18th century.
Everything is about law in the 18th century. It's England's century of law. And they take this term that's being used, natural laws are being used in science, laws, they take this language and it'll be their key to diagnosing the flawed rather than the enlightened human condition.
So let's just take an example of how this worked. I'm going to dive right into a case study and I'll keep my eye on the clock here. Are we done at about 10 o'clock? Where's Alessandra?
[29:01] Yeah, okay. Wednesday, April the 9th, 1760, a 25-year-old unemployed cabinetmaker, a joiner, as they were called then, named William Turner, sat down and sharpened his quill pen and dipped it in his inkwell and put pen to paper to write to Charles Wesley, telling him how he had been converted under Wesley's preaching on the previous Monday.

He's the same age as my middle son, Matt, and my son Matt is in the trades. He's a skilled welder. This is a skilled cabinetmaker. He's unemployed, but he was converted by Charles Wesley's preaching on Monday.
After a time where he had been religiously serious, he had been fasting over the Easter weekend, and then on Easter Monday he's converted. This letter is one of 153 letters like this in a tremendous collection of manuscripts of the John Rylands Library in Manchester.
And the collection goes back to Charles Wesley's practice of preserving letters and other documents that describe people's spiritual experiences.
They're kind of white-hot spiritual experiences. He felt like these were, he said, in fact, I think I've got it here. Can you see it? It says William Turner.
[30:18] He actually begins amending the date. There's problems with the date we talked about, but it says a seal. A seal. It meant a seal to his ministry. It was a sign that God used the message, that the message preached had an impact.

And so that's the way he annotated this collection, this collection of letters, where there was what Jonathan Edwards might have called a divine and supernatural work. These letters were kind of live testimonies.
So, yeah. William Turner. he writes in quite an elegant hand.
He explained in the course of his testimony that he had read some sermons by the evangelical preacher William Romaine. And through these, he tells Charles Wesley, I had been shown the spirituality of the law.
There's our phrase. What did he mean by this? This is one of the places where it comes up. So he had been converted on Monday, and he writes to Charles Wesley. He said, part of my coming to Christ was reading these sermons by William Romaine and being shown the spirituality of the law.
[31:31] There's our phrase. The sermons that he's referred to by William Romaine, this Anglican minister in London, were these. Twelve discourses upon the practical parts of Solomon's song, in which William Romaine argued that the spiritual meaning of the Song of Songs concerned the exquisite intimacy between Christ and the believer.

So based on Ephesians 5, I speak a mystery, Christ and the church, in terms of a marriage and the love of a man and a woman, the reading of the Song of Songs and the love between the bridegroom and the bride is a picture of the intimacy between Christ and the believer.
But William Romaine said, this could only be appreciated by those who have first been brought properly to seek after Christ as needy sinners. This is the key point. You'll never know how much Jesus loves you until you know how much you need him.
You'll never have that intimacy with him until you receive him as a needy sinner. Of Christ's love, said William Romaine, you can form no judgment of his love unless you have seen your guilt and your misery and found out how much you stood in need of his love.
That's what William Romaine said. William Turner is reading this. The love of Christ was one of the deep things of God, said William Romaine, which the natural man, there's our nature again, right?
[33:03] The natural man cannot understand. No natural moral philosophy is going to take you here. This message struck home to William Turner. He had been working night and day in his trade only to find his master went broke and it left him destitute.

I'll let you try to work out the handwriting there while I read this. I had no friend living, he said, and away from all old acquaintance in a strange place, I thought I must seek happiness from God.
So I began to amend my life by going to sacrament and fixing resolutions to need a new life. This often happens. A friend of mine in Oxford, Jim Packer, might know, John Walsh, a Methodist.
He's 90 years of age at Jesus College in Oxford. He calls this the guilty apprentice syndrome that you had the apprentice from the country, you know, the morally reinforcing structures of the village who ends up in the anonymous city in London, gets into trouble, gets into moral trouble.
There's a certain sense of alienation and guilt and that these were a kind of constituency, if you like, that responded often to the preaching of the early evangelicals.
[34:16] He said, I had no friend living away from old acquaintances in a strange place, that sense of alienation. I thought I must seek happiness from God. And so I'm going to try harder, right? That's what he, initially, I'm going to try harder.

I'm going to go to church and sacrament. But on perusal of Mr. Romaine's discourses, I found myself not right because I could not call Jesus Christ my beloved from my heart.

The evangelical message of the law as concerned with interior motives and the whole of one's life, it hit its mark for William Turner. He was convinced of his sin.
So Turner says, I soon began to see my want of a savior, that is my need of a savior, my want, my need of a savior. I had been shown the spirituality of the law, he said.
This was the fulcrum upon which his conversion turned. I did look up to the author and finisher of my faith, sorry, the author and finisher of my faith, and rested on him, relying on his righteousness and renouncing my own.
[35:24] I did first see, see first, the great want or lack of faith. So, the word spirituality does not appear frequently in the 18th century but here it is in evangelical preaching and testimony, one important place where it shows up.

It's a key episode in the story of 18th century interiority, one of the sources of the self. Missed by Charles Taylor. It's this doctrine of the inwardness of God's law, the extensiveness of God's law, it's spirituality that was the making of the evangelical conscience and the key to the appearance of evangelical conversion in large numbers in the 1730s and beyond.
New dimensions of interiority are called forth. They are mapped if you like. It makes space for whole new emotions. The deepening of conscience and the deepening of love progress together.
I can't emphasize strongly enough how widely this message which was preached in the evangelical awakening of the 18th century, the spirituality and extent of God's law was proclaimed from pulpit and press across the North Atlantic and it hit the mark for people like William Turner.
In the diary and memoirs of Sarah Osborne in Newport, Rhode Island, she wrote of one sermon she said that told me the very secrets of my heart. To a visiting minister she wrote later, Oh dear sir, you little thought what a wound you gave me when you stated some particular cases and adjured conscience to do its office in your sermon on Tuesday.
[36:54] It pierced her to the heart, made her sins flash crimson in her face. And we could give all sorts of accounts of this. There are some of the lay Methodists that actually, if you read some of their letters, they wondered if the ministers had the ability to read their minds because they seemed to be able to preach in a way that was so accurate.

There's one woman, it's kind of a funny but sad story, who invited her husband to come and he hears John Wesley preach and he was so convinced that she must have told him secrets about him that he beat her afterwards at home.
But there's something about their preaching that touched people very deeply. spirituality. And so, spirituality was the word for this inwardness. It goes in like a bunker-busting bomb.
The message went in and it addressed people's conscience at a very deep level in terms of interiority. They're aware, oh, this has to do with all my motives, not just propriety and outward behavior and acceptability to society.
It has to do with my deepest motives. It's modern, it's psychologically penetrating, and it hits the mark. And it's also extensive. It's ethically comprehensive.
[38:07] It's every part of my life. It's Monday to Saturday, no aspect of my life. All of it comes under God's purview. That's the message that is counter-enlightenment.

Charles Taylor talked about the self in this period, the Newtonian, Lockean self, the modern self. He calls it the punctual self. It's reduced to a point.
It's like you take a cross-section of yourself and your sensory experience, the tabula rasa, the imprint of sense experience, and the self is just reduced to a point.
It's drained of transcendence. I am the bundle of my sensations at the given moment. And so, in order to deal with that sense of the enclosed self, to shatter that illusion, the evangelicals use this doctrine as their hammer, the spirituality of the law.
There is huge depths that are addressed by God. And in order to love God deeply, this is what William Turner found, to love him deeply, to experience deep intimacy, your heart needs to be addressed at this deep level.
[39:26] So that's what went hand in hand. And we could give many other examples. Among the papers of the lay Methodist Anne Bolton of Whitney, I found some manuscripts in west of Oxford in a village where Anne Bolton's descendant still lives.

And they had a trunk we brought down from the, a strong box that we brought down from the attic. And it was filled with letters of Anne Bolton to and from John Wesley and 42 original John Wesley letters and diaries and all sorts of things.

But here's an ordinary lay Methodist near Whitney. And she gives an account of her experience. And she said in 1764 God seemed to deepen his work in her soul.
How? Quote, the Lord laid open the exceeding depravity of my evil nature and the spirituality of his law. There it is again. I saw the commandment was exceeding broad. Deep and wide.
Right? Isn't there a children's song? But deep and wide, deep and wide. Well this is, this is the, this is the sense. God's laws is deep and it's wide. The result though was not, as I say, it can be bruising to modern sensibilities this idea of addressing us and saying at our core that there is something deeply wrong.
[40:49] Right? Like this. But the result was not craven fear for her. But like William Turner, profound desire. She longed for conformity to Christ and found her soul in a lovely phrase she says, stretched out after his lovely likeness.

made her want more of Jesus and want more to be like her. The depth and breadth of God's law opened up depth and breadth of interiority among those like Bolton who took it seriously.
Across the North Atlantic, evangelical devotion began with a unique sense of self generated by this universal insistence on the psychological penetration and the moral breadth of God's law.
It was this message as Whitefield often observed in his letters and his sermons that led to the pricking of the heart. Acts 2.37 And made women and men cry out like the Philippian jailer what must I do to be saved?
Parenthesis. Jim, was it for the Manila conference at Lausanne, one of the Lausanne conferences, that you wrote the article on conversion and the means of grace?
[42:00] The means of conversion? One of the Lausanne conferences. Yes. I'm afraid at the moment I can't remember. Okay.

Okay. There's an article Jim wrote on conversion and if I remember right, it was critiquing the way in which conversions can be too shallow today and it was power evangelism was the phrase back then with the vineyard signs and wonders and crusade evangelism making decisions for Christ and as much as you know wonderful people are being welcomed into the kingdom for conversions to happen at depth required something like and in Jim's article he goes back to the Puritan Pietist Evangelical tradition very much like this.
so it's very much saying ultimately for conversion to go deeply we need to be diagnosed deeply the wound needs to be probed so in fact let's look at that kind of language here in the 18th century and in the preaching the preaching of the law administered what was considered a necessary astringent we're going to use 18th century medical language when John Wesley wrote to a lay preacher in 1750 with advice about preaching he was emphatic he said to I think it's John Pawson he's writing to let the law always prepare for the gospel I scarce ever spoke more earnestly here of the love of God in Christ than last night I spoke of God's love that's what I spoke about but what does he say it was after I had been tearing the unawakened in pieces go thou and do likewise tis true he says the love of God in Christ alone feeds his children but even they are to be guided as well as fed it's like John Calvin the third use of the law that the law still guides us he said yea and often physict too physict receiving medicine the bulk of our hearers must be purged before they are fed else we only feed the disease beware of all honey the 18th century medical terminology here purging rather than feeding a disease this Galenic sense of you know bloodletting purging and humoral medicine rather than feeding a disease points to Wesley's sense that the law had a therapeutic purpose what the law is doing is therapeutic it's for our healing in the economy of salvation the evangelical minister Martin Madden who had previously been a lawyer likewise appealed to the language of medicine when speaking of the law he says if you have to do with a stupid hardened unawakened sinner the word stupid in the 18th century means like in a stupor right there's not his way of just saying like he's not very bright right it's like being in a stupor kind of like a soporific if you have to do with a stupid hardened unawakened sinner set the terrors of the law before him without mercy endeavor by corrosives to eat down the proud flesh of his heart what were corrosives they were caustic medicinal agents especially mercurials corrosive sublimate used by surgeons as he indicates to eat away at corrupt or proud flesh it's like you're going to need hydrogen peroxide before polysporin however martin madden continued when you meet with a sinner whose soul is pierced humbled and touched to the quick with a pungent sense of sin set before him the love and tenderness the blood and righteousness of the compassionate and almighty
Jesus this was also medicinal it was to offer as madden went on to say the lenitives that is the analgesics of the gospel first corrosives and then analgesics first hydrogen peroxide then

polysporin something like this was William Turner's experience right it was therapeutic again the all important phrase that recurs in I'll come to John Barrage in a minute the all important phrase that recurs is the spirituality and extent of the law here's how John Barrage of Everton John Barrage is endlessly fun to quote this is how he explained it to Charles Simeon this is like John Wesley's letter to John Pawson this is now Barrage to Charles Simeon how to use the law in an evangelical ministry he said lay open the spirituality of the law and its extent there's our phrase again reaching to every thought word and action now it's interesting this language of thought word and action is being used already in the 17th century it's being it's there in
[46:47] Ignatius Loyola's spiritual exercises in terms of the examine it's there in the puritan examine it's there in so in various ways there is a kind of interiority and he's saying preach this preach this every thought word and action declare every transgression whether by omission or commission deserving of death declare a man's utter helplessness to change his nature or make his peace pardon and holiness must come from the savior acquaint them with the searching eye of god watching us continuously spying out every thought word and action there it is again that's in the prayer book too that language noting them down in the book of his remembrance and bringing every secret thing into judgment whether it be good or evil so he's saying preach the spirituality of the law it was only when the hearers had been deeply affected by this he says quote which is seen by the hanging down of their heads that the preacher is ready to present christ one was to lay open the spirituality of the law then one was to lay open the power of christ to save the sense of having one's inner life laid open is what i mean by a new experience of interiority right mapping mapping my interior life so in the book i examine this sort of evangelical preaching of the law against the background of legal developments in society generally including the growth of statute law the growth of penal legislation and so on so part of my question was when people hear this preaching and hear this language of law we always understand vocabulary understand things in terms of our experience of that you know what does law mean to people what is their experience of law and society and so i go into that in in some detail in a number of case studies to show how this worked especially in what for evangelicals became the case study of all case studies which those who were actually condemned by the law those who actually went to prison and were on death row and a number of the case studies at newgate prison let me just walk through a few slides and illustrate some of the way in which law worked this way in terms of the cultural background this is an astonishing print i think i've got a bigger picture of it this is george whitfield in kenny on kennington common south of the thames and this is the execution ground for the surya sizes so when cases have been heard by the surya sizes and people were sentenced to death they were executed at kennington common just as they were in the london and middlesex exercises at tyburn where this is where they were hanged a number of people over the course of the 18th century were hanged at kennington common and this satirical print shows whitfield and that's a sea a sea of heads little dots these are these are all people up here right he's preaching to an oversized whitfield he would be absolutely a colossus if this was to scale but he's preaching to people but look at the the background here there's well to do people and coaches the aristocrats coming to listen but there's corpses hanging from the gibbet people singing drinking songs in the foreground and so on it's a satirical print but it was not lost on observers that whitfield is preaching in the same place where people are being executed right and this is a famous back to tyburn an execution at tyburn this is a famous print by hogarth and it's the end of the it tells a moral story about the idle apprentice who was executed at tyburn and he's on his way to it's a bit of a where's wally picture lots is going on in the

picture but he's on his way to being hung here this is the ordinary of tyburn or the anglican clergyman who's responsible sort of as chaplain to the whole scene but here is the the criminal on his way to the gallows and who is up there in the cart with him it's um it's uh it says here wesley this is a wesleyan preacher right and that's exactly what did happen uh time and time again and um i've uh run out of time i have a number of case studies of um examples including a long letter by charles wesley in 1738 of exactly his account of of um going to to newgate prison and uh all night prayer meetings with people and testing the message of the law and the gospel and seeing if it works in the most desperate of cases right and seeing people come to christ and it had a huge impact um so in um in whitfield's preaching just uh one uh more example of um there are many ways in which uh evangelicals use the language of law in their society um whitfield um cornelius winter remembered when an extraordinary trial was taking place whitfield would act the part of the judge in front of his

assembled hearers quote on observing the formality of the judge putting on his black cap to pronounce sentence the black cap meant he was about to pronounce the death sentence i have known him to avail himself of it whitfield in the close of a sermon with his eyes full of tears and his heart almost too big to admit of speech dropping into a momentary pause i am now going to put on my condemning cap sinner i must do it i must pronounce sentence upon you and then in a tremendous strain of eloquence he would recite our lord's words go ye cursed and not without a very powerful description of the nature of the curse winter said you really had to see this in person to see the effect it had it had on people so the law is the background it amplifies and extends the message that they have to preach and try to address and deal with this fact that human nature is that the human predicament there is something fundamental that requires god's grace at a very deep level and they use this language of law to try to address people and so i go through various case studies and i spent one summer with wesley's journals in one hand and my website opened to the old bailey in london where all the trial records in the 18th century are available online and i could correlate who they were visiting to the indictments and the trial records of the people in prison and kind of reconstruct some of these case studies this is one fellow william snowed who was actually the person he stole from was the methodists he kind of weaseled his way into their society and embezzled funds and he wrote to john wesley uses an interesting phrase and he says i am naked before the law naked before god so it's literally divine law civil law coincided and there's that sense of being exposed at my depth and it is the last and only hope now uh the gospel and so these case studies are ones um ones we go through uh newgate is um is where you have the most desperate of cases so um a couple times they they sing this at newgate they sing this on the way to the gallows this is written by john and charles wesley's father um behold the savior of mankind nailed to the shameful tree they're about to be executed on their own shameful tree so the language of the atonement is no longer legal fiction it's not this is actually um happening how vast the
love that him inclined to bleed and die for thee hark how he groans while nature shakes and earth's strong pillars bend the temples veil and thunder breaks the solid marbles rend tis done the precious ransoms paid receive my soul he cries see where he bows his sacred head he bows his head and dies so they're singing this like that hogarth picture on the way to the gallows that jesus took my place on the shameful tree soon he'll break death's envious chain and in full glory shine oh lamb of god was ever pain was ever loved like thine um some of the assize sermons that are preached um uh a minister will be chosen to preach a sermon on the occasion of the court when the court is meeting in the different jail uh towns in in different districts around england and you read through these assize sermons and you can get kind of some of the legal theory uh the uh of the 18th century and somebody like joshua fitz simmons sees what's happening as it's like cutting a cancer out of society the criminal is being cut out of like a desperate case where you cut cancer out of the body to preserve the body you are erasing this person and yet evangelicals treat these people with compassion they know their stories and they identify with them and they say we are most like the prisoner so actually even in terms of later um prison reform john howard society and um and the repeal of some of the uh bloody code legislation of the 18th century it's important that um the evangelicals see the um see these prisoners as human beings with whom they identify who stand in need of the gospel just like us and in fact they become the key um the key case study so this is the um uh letter uh by charles wesley which he recounts uh some of his prison visiting and there's a case study here look at this edward barcock of saint martin's in the fields was indicted for assaulting stephen broughton esquire on the king's highway putting him in fear and taking from him a hat value five shillings sentenced to death for stealing a hat worth five shillings putting him in fear that is in fear of his life so it was a violent assault on the king's highway and that's one of the people that um charles wesley visits and uh and he says um i set the terrors of the lord in array before them in this kind of prison revival and then he said i hasted from the law to the gospels it's the same message of the law and the gospel but in a setting where it's not a legal fiction this is actually this is their real situation and he sees these people um uh turn to christ and so edward barcock is one of them who cried out with the utmost vehemence i do i do believe it from my heart and um and there's a whole kind of revival this is the chapel at newgate and um let me just look at this last um paragraph and we'll maybe conclude with this while they were dying and for half an hour after we spoke to the spectators several of whom seem much affected and came in the evening to hear my brother preach i must break off abruptly may we may we tread in their steps may we tread in the steps of their faith confess we have just as much merit as they and no more that trusting like them entirely the merits of christ we may though condemn malefactors receive a free pardon notice the language

uh in the steps of their faith rather than this person being cut out of society and just erased we are like them we're identifying with them as much merit as they and no more that we are like them going to trust the merits of christ um we are condemned malefactors and uh hope
for free pardon so um so this is the message that was preached and um is the spirituality of the law and as i say it's kind of bruising the modern sensibilities it feels like you're just telling people how bad they are but the evangelical sense was that um at the point where people are looking for resources in anthropology in in observing people's moral senses and that's the basis to construct a whole moral philosophy um evangelicals are saying things are far worse than you imagine and far better than you imagine to really know the human condition is requires the spirituality of the law and it's this that opens the way to really experience the love of christ um why don't we stop there yeah i'd be interested in what you think of that kind of presentation of the gospel in my mind i don't know whether i picked it up correctly or not but it seems like manipulation psychological manipulation of the individual right okay so the question is and this is a version of my saying this is bruising the modern sensibilities what do we think of this is this psychological manipulation and so on uh here's what i think i think at this point um there's this is the receding of christendom and the coming into modernity there are when the gospel is being preached well over 90 percent of the population are already baptized there's a level of sort of christianization and christian understanding so that um john westley says when he's in wales his people are absolute pagans they know no more of christianity than tombo chachi and the creek indians that i visited in georgia all they know they know by rote is the lord's prayer the the catechism the creed the ten commandments and it's like yeah they're complete pagans right so they there is this level of where um there's a level of christianization there's a level of christian understanding in society that means in a sense the gospel is being preached here rather than here in terms of people's awareness so richard baxter says and his autobiography he worried that everything that had been done in his life had been done by socialization rather than uh regeneration he didn't have the kind of story of repentance and conversion that he was reading about other people having and then he says it's a wonderful phrase this is at last i came to realize that god breaketh not all men's hearts the same and he realized that he he was alive in christ but he was aware that all hearts sooner or later break so at some point or other we realize we don't turn easily we realize that there is a deep there's a deep sense of our need for christ so what seems to me it seems to me that uh people still encounter the fact that we do not easily turn we are as luther said homo in se and curvatus we are curved in upon ourselves we are not simply people who need to be educated we are rebels who need to lay down our arms we are our hearts are far from god we desperately need god's grace to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves but in terms of the timing of that it may not be a simple message of preaching the spirituality the law like this in preparation for conversion it may be something more like an alpha course it may be um when my wife came to christ when carolyn came to christ in high school she um somebody shared the gospel with her she opened her heart to christ um she stayed up all night and just opened her heart to the love of god um and it was only really years later that
she that she would probably to have the experience that would have been described in these letters but she came to realize as surely as anybody comes to realize that we don't easily turn that the work of conversion has to go deep that we need god god's law to diagnose us and so so my sense is um sorry it's a long answer and it actually requires an even longer answer my sense is um there's a level of christianization of society or if that's not the right word there's a an awareness of things like um uh creation moral order providence the four last things and so on that people are aware of so that this message could be received and people go yes whereas today uh if the question is almost like it was in lyconia in the book of acts is whose god is god who is the god of this place it's the pagan question is whose god is god and is god real and that may precede um that may be uh the first question but sooner or later um that people come to understand something like um uh the spirituality of the law um in the course of conversion going going deep um you you you you