

Evangelical Experiences: A Study In The Spirituality Of English Evangelicalism 1918-1939

The Religion of Englishness: Puritanism, Providentialism, and "National Character," 1918-1945

Matthew Grimley

One of the most pervasive images in the English art and literature of the Second World War was the country church. The rural chapel at Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire (home of a Caroline Anglican community) provided the resolution to T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, first published in 1942:

So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and in England.¹

In Michael Powell's and Emeric Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), the towers of Canterbury Cathedral standing amid a blitzed city provided a recurrent motif. The film's culmination—and the plot's resolution—occurred in and around the cathedral, with the protagonists experiencing a series of miraculous interventions, followed by the closing scene of a platoon of soldiers singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" before departing to France. Salisbury Cathedral was the subject of one of Frank Newbould's "Your Britain—Fight for It Now" posters, as well as featuring in Lawrence Whistler's stained-glass window depicting a fighter airplane at Moreton in Dorset.² This depiction of churches was not just "deep England" bucolicism. Urban scenes were also portrayed, notably in John Piper's pictures of damaged churches in Coventry, Bath, Bristol, and London. Most famously, Her-

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¹ T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *Four Quartets* (1944; repr., London, 1959), 46.

² For other examples of the use of cathedrals in wartime propaganda, see Paul B. Rich, *Prospero's Return: Historical Essays on Race, Culture, and Society* (London, 1994), 38–39.

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884

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