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Dr. F. H. Cosgrave, a Canadian scholar, sometime Provost of Trinity College in Toronto, has with his Committee taken the matter in hand for the Canadian Church and we shall have a Canadian revision, which with the Irish and the American, will contribute not a little to the riches of the Prayer Book as shared by all in the Anglican Communion. Perhaps here again the revision will be "conservative", but it is better that it should be so.

There are mistakes through misprints which must be corrected. There are more than a hundred archaisms but these should not be ousted unless they be obscure or misleading.

There are some sixty-six (or is it sixty-seven ?) interpolations which Coverdale took from the Vulgate, some few of which are peculiar to the Vulgate alone. This is a curious feature, for in his translation of 1535 there were only thirteen. Most of these "sixty-six" were noted in the Book Annexed, as well as some few others from elsewhere, but later the Printers no longer gave them indication. Some of these, although interpolations, we should not now be ready to lose, as for instance in Psalm vii. 12: "God is a righteous judge, *strong and patient*" (the Irish and American Books with reverent discrimination retain this true description). But there are others which should have no place. For instance, the word *God* in Psalm xlv. 12 completely alters the meaning. (Already this has been deleted in the Irish and American Prayer Books.)

Here as everywhere else in revision there is need of careful and exact scholarship. But as we recognise this we are even more aware of that primary need—"the which at this time by the aid of the Holy Ghost." Wherefore we recall those searching words written in the Prologue of Wycliffe's Bible, reading "reviser" in place of "translator":

"A translatour hath greet nede to studie wel . . . he hath nede to live a clene lif, and be ful devout in preire, that the Holi Spiryt, autor of wisdom . . . and truthe . . . suffre him not for to erre."

Only so shall our revisions be "fulfilling Pentecost".

The Religous Tract Society

IN THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By The Rev. G. H. G. Hewitt, M.A.

MOST contemporary writers on the social history of England in the nineteenth century are prepared to recognise the significance of the Evangelical Revival as a social force. Mr. R. C. K. Ensor, indeed, goes so far as to suggest that Evangelicalism is the clue to Victorian England. "It became," he says, "after Queen Victoria's marriage practically the religion of the court and gripped all ranks and conditions of society. After Melbourne's departure it inspired nearly every front rank public man save Palmerston for four decades."[1] M. Halévy[2] and Professor G. M. Trevelyan[3] might be quoted to the same effect.

[1] *England*, 1870-1914, p. 137.
[2] *A History of England*, p. 520.
[3] *England in* 1815, p. 433.

Certain important aspects of this social ascendancy of Evangelicalism tend, however, to be obscured in the general history books. For instance, they commonly assume that the Evangelical Revival was more or less confined to Methodism and the Church of England. They underestimate the effect of the Revival on the older dissenting bodies, and so leave us still wondering why the great interdenominational missionary societies appeared when they did, in the decade 1795-1805. Secondly, while there is general agreement that Evangelicalism lost its grip on English society in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, this decline is attributed almost exclusively to the rapid growth of secularism, and insufficient weight is given to the inner disruption of the Evangelical movement through the state-church controversy. Thirdly, one clue to this Evangelical ascendancy is often overlooked ; namely, the importance of its literature, particularly of the tracts, in setting the moral standards of the mid-Victorian age. The records of the Religious Tract Society throw light on these somewhat neglected aspects of social history, and it is appropriate that this evidence should be considered at a time when that venerable society is celebrating its third jubilee.

(1) THE CROSS-DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF EVANGELICALISM.

Dr. A. W. Harrison in his book *The Evangelical Revival and Christian Reunion* draws attention to the great increase in the number of dissenting chapels between 1700 and 1800, and suggests that it was largely a result of the Evangelical revival. Congregationalist and Baptist groups (particularly the Baptist New Connexion) were strongly influenced by Wesley and Whitefield. Thus, towards the close of the century, Dissenters possessing a common faith and piety were prepared to take common action in defence of their principles and the furtherance of the Gospel at home and abroad, *The Evangelical Magazine* founded in 1793 and the Surrey Chapel thrown open in 1782 to " pious ministers of all denominations and of every country," provided this movement with those necessary organs of self-expression—a periodical and a meeting-place in London. The London Missionary Society (1795), the Religious Tract Society (1799) and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) were the direct result of this movement. Evangelicals of the Church of England at first contributed little to its development. Haweis and Rowland Hill were thoroughly inside it, but they were men apart, and though the Clapham group were firm in their support of the Bible Society, and carried many Evangelical clergy with them, the preparatory work for the Bible Society between 1802 and 1804 owed little to them. Its chief spokesman was a Congregationalist, Dr. David Bogue. Preaching on the fourth day of the Conference which founded the London Missionary Society in September, 1795, before a huge congregation at the Tottenham Court Road Chapel, he said, " We are called this evening to a funeral of bigotry and I hope it will be buried so deep as never to rise again ". Five years later, in the first anniversary sermon of the R.T.S., Dr. Bogue rejoiced to note " that the Society has on the list both of writers of tracts and subscribers to its funds men of every denomination of believers in the country. There is nothing in its tracts to recommend or satirize

episcopacy, presbytery, independency, methodism, paedo-baptism or anti-paedo-baptism". The Annual Address of the R.T.S. Committee in 1812 gives typical expression to this experience of unity. "United by grand principles, they have felt no impediment from the peculiarities of their respective denominations which they merge in the common object: but have been delighted to find how truly in the weightiest matters of the law they agree". A statement of the Society's doctrinal position published in the 19th Annual Report speaks of "the common ground Churchman, Dissenter and Foreigner justly occupy, by which Christian Union may be established and strengthened, Christian affection excited and cherished, Christian zeal constituted and rendered proportionately effective".

William Jones' Jubilee History of the Religious Tract Society records many personal testimonies to the same effect. For example he quotes a remark of Rowland Hill: "If you saw a good Churchman and a good Dissenter upon their knees, you would not be able to find out which was which". Legh Richmond (Vicar of Turvey, and chaplain to the Duke of Kent, Queen Victoria's father) spoke out at the Committee in 1816 when the matter of a division of the Committee into equal numbers of Churchman and Dissenters was long debated. "I would say we have all been too long independent," he said. "We are now called Episcopalians, Independents, Baptist, Presbyterian, Friends; but we want a new name, and 'the Company of the United Ones' would not disgrace us". It was William Jones's boast that one half of his friends thought he was a Churchman and the other half a Dissenter. "Cross-denominational" is, perhaps, a better adjective than "Inter-denominational" to describe this movement. There was nothing official about it. It did not issue in any reunion movement. In so far as it included Churchmen with Dissenters it depended as Skeat and Miall suggest[1], upon silence on one side representing a fundamental principle—that of establishment.

(2) THE DISRUPTION OF EVANGELICAL UNITY.

The Church and State question began to trouble the peace in the early 1840's when the *Nonconformist* newspaper (founded 1841) began to expose what was considered to be "the unchristian, unjust, and mischievous character" of the Established Church. Sir James Graham's Factories' Education Bill of 1843 sharpened the issue and led to the formation of a "British anti-State Church Association". The sense of a widening rift between Churchman and Dissenter doubtless lies behind a sentence in the 1849 Report of the R.T.S. "Let us not suffer the poisons of discord to spread; but let us kill this hurtful serpent, that we, being by a free league united together in Christ, may vanquish all anti-christs, and may sing that hymn of the Lord our God, 'Behold how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity'." These hopes were not realised. The sweet spirit of concord was dispersed. Nonconformity was soon set on the warpath against the establishment of a Church which could no longer claim to be the nation at prayer, and Church Evangelicals were accused, by Spurgeon among others, of hypocrisy in continuing membership in a

[1] *A History of the Free Churches in England*, 1688-1898, p. 445.

Church whose formularies taught the baptismal regeneration of infants. The higher criticism of the Bible and liberal trends in theology did not lack advocates in all the major denominations, and though Evangelicals found a new point of unity in defending the old positions their energy was being sapped by this defensive warfare. Furthermore, the Tractarians were winning the poor of the new towns to a new type of piety, and the Roman Church, freed from disabilities, was also steadily advancing.

The R.T.S. did not fail to record this declining trend in Evangelicalism. Between 1884 and 1899 there was a sharp decline in its publication figures, its receipts from sales and consequently in its grants for evangelical literature at home and abroad. Much of its literature between 1870 and 1900 was defensive and controversial. It was much concerned about Romanist errors in the established Church and about the growth of Rationalism and " Neology ". In its publishing policy, the Society mirrored an Evangelicalism that had lost the initiative. " Mr. Bigotry " was not prepared to lie in the grave which Dr. Bogue and his friends had prepared for him. I think this was inevitable. The grave was far too shallow. The agreement had been sufficient to set in motion great centres of cross-denominational missionary activity, but it depended rather on the ability of small groups of men to pray together over a common enterprise than upon a real facing of differences. The Ecumenical Movement of the present century is stronger through its determination to face these differences realistically ; it is weaker in that it has not yet found a focus for prayer and action outside its exploration of these differences.

(3) Religious Tracts as a Social Force.

It is not easy to rid one's mind of the impression, largely created by the women novelists of the later nineteenth century, that " trakking " was a somewhat gauche accompaniment of, or alternative to, " slumming ", a regrettable manifestation of Victorian pietism without social significance. Most historians seem to have contented themselves with the verdict of the lady novelists, and not bothered to explain the matter further. It was left to an American historian Maurice Quinlan to remove this blind spot. In his book, *Victoria Prelude*,[1] he argues, with considerable force and evidence, first, that the moral standards we normally associate with Victorianism were well established in all classes of society by 1830 at the latest ; and secondly, that tracts played a very large part in this moral revolution.

The Religious Tract Society cannot, of course, claim all the credit, even in its own limited sphere, for this change in the standard reading matter of the artisan and " mechanical " classes of society. What can fairly be claimed is that the founders of the Society had a clear social aim and that for a large part of the century this aim was pursued with remarkable success. The preface to *The Proceedings of the First 20 Years of the Religious Tract Society* speaks of the universal diffusion of Education as having " augmented beyond calculation the numbers of individuals who are able to read. Unhappily," it goes on to say, " the advocates of infidelity have availed themselves of this oppor-

[1] Columbia University Press, 1941.

tunity and are diffusing poison far and wide". The aim, ambitious enough in all conscience, was to supply the poorer classes of the country now learning to read with evangelistic and moral literature to replace Tom Paine's popular writings and the bawdy broadsheets sold by hawkers at cottage doors. For the first five years or so, although three million tracts were distributed they made little social impact. Then, with considerable courage, the Committee decided to break right into the hawker's market even if it meant offending subscribers, affronting its own taste, and risking considerable financial loss.

The story of this venture may be briefly told.

The Committee was, at all events by 1805, uncomfortably aware that most of its tracts somewhat failed on the score of entertainment, if not of lucidity. They were, many of them, "plain didactic essays" which, as Dr. Bogue had said,[1] might be read by the Christian with much pleasure, but the persons for whom they were chiefly designed would fall asleep over them. In May of that year, therefore, the Committee did a bold thing, comparable in courage, and indeed in its result, with John Wesley's action when he "consented to be more vile" and preached his first open-air sermon. It inaugurated a new series of tracts ("The Second Series") which were deliberately designed to capture the hawker's market, and to counteract the influence of "the profane and vicious tracts profusely circulated by them". To achieve this it was necessary to give so large a discount on bulk orders that the young Society was involved in serious financial difficulty for some years to come. It also meant lowering the standards which the Committee was anxious to maintain, and catering for a popular taste, at least in titles, which caused some heartsearching; e.g., *The Fortune-Teller's Conjuring Cap*; *The Wonderful Cure of General Naaman*; *The Stingy Farmer's Daughters*; *Tom Toper's Tale over His Jug of Ale*; and each tract was to have a "cut", or cartoon drawing, on its cover. In its Seventh Report the Committee recommends these new tracts to the members of the Society and suggests—a little nervously—that candid perusal should be "accompanied with a constant recollection of the particular circumstances under which they have been published, and the special objects which they are intended to accomplish".

It was a bold stroke, but it succeeded. The new series took on with the hawkers and with their customers. The loss at first was heavy (by 1830 it amounted to £4,600), but half a million were sold in the first year, and gradually the shoddy wares which the hawkers had previously offered were driven off the market. This victory over self-consciousness on the part of the Committee was perhaps the most significant in the Society's history. The "Hawker's Tracts" did really get home to the people for whom the earlier series was also mainly intended. Apart from their efficacy in terms of personal repentance and faith, the "Hawker's Tracts" largely contributed to the new standards of morality which characterized Victorian England. Professor Quinlan, writing of London about 1830, concludes: "The streets no longer resounded with bawdy ballads and on market nights

[1] *Address to Christians on the Distribution of Tracts*, R.T.S., 1799.

hawkers sold, not the penny histories of famous criminals which had delighted the populace of Johnson's day, but tracts containing some urgent moral lesson or the account of a sinner's conversion."[1] Nowadays when it is fairly easy to argue that religious tracts are socially irrelevant, it is well also to remember that they were one of the chief agencies of a moral revolution.

The Committee which met every week over the breakfast table to pass the tracts to be published had a high sense of responsibility, and there was outspoken criticism of both format and subject-matter. "It is to be regretted," said one annual report, "that most of our writers are unable or untrained to express themselves with sufficient plainness of diction. Who has written on religious subjects in the easy style or with the simple diction of Cobbett?"

As long as this healthy self-criticism was maintained[2] the Committee was in no danger of surrender to the conservative pull of the older tract-distributors, who wanted to see certain tracts continually reprinted, not because they were doing their job but because they were "old friends". The distributors were not yet controlling or creating the tracts market. It was there apart from their labours.[3] "The tracts were admirably suited," writes Maurice Quinlan, "to that large section of the public which was just learning to read. But both rich and poor read these works, for the public had developed a great interest in moral and religious literature of all kinds. Many read virtually nothing else. With the exception of the Bible, the tracts held foremost place."[4]

All this laid on the Society a high social responsibility inseparable from its religious purpose. The demand of the new readers had to be met at its proper level. Gradually, the extracts from famous theologians found their rightful place at greater length between stiff covers, and the tract was left to do the job which books could not do—to point, through "the true and affecting narrative" of a *James Curry* or an *Andrew Dunn*, to "the way of salvation" as open to all who would accept it; or else to take hold of some public event—Victoria's coronation or the cholera outbreak of 1832—and, in the contemporary religious jargon, "improve it", *i.e.*, point out its moral and spiritual lesson. Perhaps the tracts on public disasters were too inclined to take a hard Old Testament line, and to forget our Lord's treatment of the incident of the Tower of Siloam. It is somewhat offensive to the modern conscience to consider a colliery disaster or a pestilence as subjects for "improvement"; but justice must be done to the profound Biblical theology which underlay these stern calls to amendment of life. The Evangelicals of this period were deeply convinced that public disasters were the result of sin, and therefore proper

[1] *Victoria Prelude*, p. 3.

[2] *The Christian Spectator*, March 18, 1840, quoted a letter from a lady in Yorkshire saying that a tract she liked herself required, for a cottager, "as much translating as if it had been written in a foreign language".

[3] Some of the tracts had astonishing sales. Mr. Stokes headed the list with a total of five and a half million circulation for his own tracts. Eleven tracts by the Rev. Richard Knill had a total circulation of three million by 1848, and three by the Rev. Legh Richmond of nearly one million and a half.

[4] *Victoria Prelude*, p. 126.

subjects for an appeal to repentance. We would be happier, in one respect, if they had followed the prophetic tradition more closely and pointed the sin home to the mine-owners and slum landlords whose negligence sometimes caused these disasters, but it is well to remember that the same religious ethics which produced these tracts produced Lord Shaftesbury. In face of the complex experience of human sin and suffering, compassion without judgment was not enough—nor was judgment without compassion. The best Evangelicals, and the best tracts, had both.

It is not easy to give a fair estimate of the social impact of the tracts in nineteenth century England. A good deal of research remains to be done. What can be said with certainty is that their impact was far deeper and more widespread than historians generally have allowed.

The mid-Victorian age was the great age of reading in England as in North-West Europe generally. The people were literate for the first time. They read with avidity all they could get hold of; gas-lighting, increased leisure, lack of competing entertainment such as we have nowadays, gave a wonderful opportunity to purveyors of popular literature; and, because the Christian Churches were alive to the opportunity, tracts really occupied the place in Victorian reading now taken by the popular Sunday newspapers. The effects, in society at large, were equally wide-reaching.

Charles Wesley's Eucharistic Hymns

By The Rev. Frank Colquhoun, M.A.

ONE of the more obvious weaknesses of Evangelicalism in modern times has been an apologetic and defensive attitude towards the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This has been due, almost certainly, to what John Wesley called "an over-grown fear of Popery" and the consequent suspicion of any doctrine or rite which savoured of the "blasphemous fable" of the Mass. As a result there grew up among Evangelicals the idea that it was highly dangerous to attach too much importance or give too much prominence to the Lord's Supper, lest the sacrament should become a substitute for the Saviour, and that in consequence "sacramentalism" in any shape or form was contrary to the Evangelical genius and tradition.

Happily this unhealthy state of affairs is rapidly being remedied, and one of the most encouraging features of present-day Evangelicalism is a fresh interest in the sacraments of the Gospel and a recognition of their essential place in the corporate life of the Church. In the case of the Lord's Supper this is finding expression in the "Family Communion", which is now adopted in many parishes and which is a serious attempt to restore the Holy Communion to the centre of the worshipping life of the people of God. Such a step is a return not only to the ideals of the early Church and of the Reformation: it is also a return to the faith and practice of the Evangelical Revival. Both