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OUR ANGLICAN HERITAGE.¹

BY THE REV. CANON A. J. TAIT, D.D.

I.

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places : yea, I have a goodly heritage.—Psalm xvi. 5, 6.

SEVERAL happenings of the past few months have quickened within me the desire to increase my knowledge and understanding of the religious Movements which made the development of Church life and activity a conspicuous feature of the nineteenth century, and so to grow in appreciation of the spiritual heritage into which the Church of England has entered in this twentieth century. Some of those happenings to which I refer were particularly connected with the challenge of our very right to existence, which is being constantly reiterated by representative spokesmen of the Roman Communion.

My purpose therefore for these Sunday mornings in August is to speak positively about our heritage, and our indebtedness for its enrichment to the Movements of the nineteenth century, and, if time permits at the close, to give my reasons for regarding the Roman challenge as having no true foundation.

In connection with the recent celebrations of the Centenary of the Oxford Movement I noted with interest a statement of the Bishop of Llandaff. After warning his hearers, as many of our leaders have recently done both in Pulpit and Press, that the battle in the near future will be with the forces of materialism and secularism, he said that the paramount need of the day was for consecrated men and women who know the meaning of membership of the consecrated Society. Now in the two parts of that statement of the need I see the distinctive emphases of the Evangelical and the Tractarian Movements: the Evangelical Movement stressing individual consecration to God, the Tractarian Movement stressing the meaning of membership of the consecrated Society.

I do not intend for a moment to imply that the Evangelicals had no sense or doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments; but their emphasis was on individual religion and responsibility. Nor do I imply that the Tractarian Movement did not produce consecrated individuals; but its stress was on the corporate and institutional side of religion.

As the Bishop of Truro put it, in his sermon in Lincoln College, Oxford, on the indebtedness of the Oxford Movement to the Evangelical Revival (and I could have wished that his title had been

¹ The first of a course of four sermons preached in Peterborough Cathedral during the month of August; printed in their original form except for the omission of a few sentences of immediate and local reference.

“The indebtedness of the Church of England to the Evangelical Revival”), the two Movements have stood, the one for the Prophetic Ministry, the other for the Priestly Ministry, and each must learn to co-operate with the other.

To these two Movements we must add a third, if we are to take an all-round view of the influences which have been and are at work among us, the Liberal or Broad Church Movement, led by men who fearlessly exercise the spirit of enquiry and the right of criticism, and bring traditional interpretations and current theories to the test of new discoveries, new knowledge, new thought.

My desire, then, is to bear what tribute my mind and pen enable me to each of these Movements; but before doing so I must say a word about our foundations and structure.

In the Church of England we are based on, and our building is one of, historic order, mercifully preserved to us in the great upheaval of the sixteenth century, when we had to break with the Church of Rome as the price of liberty to amend our ways and to purge our doctrines from the adulterations of medievalism. In the early years of the Oxford Movement even Pusey recognised that the English Church would never have recovered Apostolicity without the Reformation, though, as years went on, he became more sympathetic towards the Roman Church (see MacKean, *Eucharistic Doctrine of the Oxford Movement*, p. 49). I bid you remember that the writings of our English Reformers are saturated not merely with appeal to the New Testament, but also with appeal to the Fathers of the Church, whom they could quote more readily than most of us could quote the Bible. The last thing that the Reformers thought of doing was to introduce novelty (though what they did was novelty indeed to the men of their time); their claim rather was that they were restoring the true tradition. Read the three prefatory chapters in the Prayer Book: the first, “The Preface,” the latest of the three, the work of the 1662 revisers who gave us the Prayer Book as we now have it, showing clearly that those later Caroline Churchmen (including our great Dean Cosin) had no thought of repudiating the work of the Reformers; the other two, belonging to 1549, explaining the principles of the Reformation itself.

Yes, we are built, all the more firmly because of the Reformation, on the historic order, the historic Scriptures, the historic Creeds, the historic Sacraments. All of the historic foundation and structure is preserved among us, and is our external link of union with the past, and of our real unity among ourselves, which is apt to be pushed into the background through our fearless exhibiting to the world of relatively minor differences, relatively minor, but not unimportant differences, such as inevitably characterise self-respecting manhood that refuses to live in an ecclesiastical nursery, differences moreover which may contribute to the richness of apprehension and life.

Now I pass to the Movements of last century through which the heritage has been mediated to us. The recent commemora-

tion of the Oxford Movement makes this a fitting opportunity to take the wider view of the revival of Church life. I begin then with the Evangelical Movement, the first in the order of time in the period with which we are concerned.

The Evangelical Movement started with the Wesleys and their friends of "The Holy Club" at Oxford in the early years of the eighteenth century; and, let it be remembered, with an indebtedness (of which John Wesley could never speak too highly) to William Law, the Non-Juror, best known to us as the author of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.

The Movement was religious rather than doctrinal or ecclesiastical. The leaders were not concerned with such matters as the government of the Church and the relation of Church and State; and doctrinally they were satisfied with the Articles understood in their historical and natural sense, for no question had arisen then about their being interpreted in any other. Their objective was not theology or Ecclesiasticism but personal religion. They laid themselves out to bring men back to God, to seek and to save the lost sheep, to lead men into personal surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ and experience of His constraining love, and to give to men freedom both from the enslavement of sin and from the tyranny of other men. They and their successors became more theological and controversial under the pressure of circumstances, for they got entangled in Calvinistic controversy and later in controversy for the Reformed character of the Church; and those who claim to be in their tradition to-day are concerning themselves with all aspects of Church thought and policy; but the Movement originated in relation to religion rather than theology, and it has been centred there ever since.

It was a mighty movement touching all classes of lay people from the highest to the lowest social circles; but it was unloved by the majority of the clergy, who in the eighteenth century seem to have been for the most part men without any use for religious enthusiasm. It is a profound mistake for anyone to imagine that the Evangelicals had become dominant in the Church at the time when the Oxford Movement arose (How could they be that without the clergy?) except in spiritual and philanthropic activity, and dominant in those respects they undoubtedly were. Whatever charges of laxity and worldliness may be justly brought against the clergy of the time, they may not be laid at the door of the relatively few Evangelical clergy. They were known as "the serious clergy," a sufficiently clear tribute.

It may surprise some of my listeners to hear that it was the Evangelicals who introduced the singing of hymns in Public Worship, and were pioneers in introducing early celebrations of Holy Communion. In the Parish Church of Islington Daniel Wilson established an early Celebration in addition to the midday one in 1828, and light may be thrown on his reasons by the fact that in the previous year on New Year's Day there were two hundred and thirty-eight communicants. In a book published in 1854 Arch-

bishop Whately mentions the saying of the Words of Administration once to a group of persons as a method of administering that had been for long time the custom in many churches. A symptom of slackness? Nay, rather an indication of the increase in the number of communicants. At St. Peter's, Hereford, e.g., where the Bishop refused to allow John Venn, the first Chairman of C.M.S., to employ that method, there was an occasion when the Service lasted from eleven to four. Similar witness is borne by the widespread use of devotional manuals of preparation. One of these had reached the twenty-fourth edition in 1807, another the eighteenth edition in 1819, and a third, published in 1815, reached the sixth edition in 1830. I have culled these statistics from a book that has been recently published, *The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Oxford Movement*, by Dr. MacKean, Canon Residentiary of Rochester. Such facts do not mean, of course, that the whole Church was alive and vigorous, or that statements of there being, e.g., only six communicants in St. Paul's Cathedral on an Easter-Day, are not true: what they do mean is that the revival of which I am speaking was leading up in churches whose clergy had been influenced by it to an increase in the number of communicants and of Celebrations of Holy Communion.

II.

Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.—Colossians i. 27.

THE tragedy of the Evangelical Movement was that a great deal of its fruit was lost to the Church of England, largely, I believe, through the failure of the majority of the Clergy to sympathise with, and make room for, the new enthusiasm and new methods; and the lost fruit is represented to-day by the Methodist Communion.

But the Church of England retained a share, and out of that share has sprung a host of agencies for doing the Church's work, which have rendered an annual account of their activities at what was (and still are) called the May Meetings, originally associated with Exeter Hall, built in 1831 for Evangelical evangelistic work. The list of these meetings to-day includes other societies than those of the Evangelicals, but I can remember the day when it did not. Of the Evangelical achievements that which calls for specially honourable mention was the arousing of the Church to a fuller sense of its obligation to give the Gospel to the whole world of men. The already venerable Societies for the Propagation of the Gospel and for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge came under the influence of the Movement, and in 1818 became more vigorous: but even then their scope was limited to our own people overseas and to the "Natives in our Plantations." So in 1799 was founded

The Church Missionary Society with its full title, "for Africa and the East."

Evangelistic work, both at home and abroad, requires literature, and particularly the circulation and the translation of the Scriptures; so in 1799 arose The Religious Tract Society, and in 1804 The British and Foreign Bible Society.

I have been amazed by the variety of call and outlet for the Church's activity that was in turn responded to by men of the Movement. It was not that they acted as an organised Party obeying the call of a Party caucus; that was not their way of doing things: but it was through the leadership and initiative of individuals or little groups that the various agencies were set on foot.

In 1808 was founded the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, and in 1836 The Church Pastoral-Aid Society for supplying workers in home parishes. And in this connection I note that the Church owes its authorised Lay Ministry to the Movement, for The Additional Curates Society came into being as a secession, in protest against the employment of Laymen for spiritual work (see Dr. Eugene Stock's *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 53, Longmans).

In 1838 arose the Colonial and Continental Church Society for our people abroad, because the Evangelicals were not wanted on the Councils of the S.P.G.

In 1844 they responded to the call of South America, that came through the heroic work of Captain Allen Gardiner: so arose The South American Missionary Society.

In 1856 they saw the needs of our seamen in home and foreign Ports, and founded The Missions to Seamen.

In 1865 Hudson Taylor heard the call of Western China, and founded The China Inland Mission, which received a great impetus in 1885 through the going forth of the Cambridge Seven, including Stanley Smith, the Stroke of the Boat, and C. T. Studd, the Captain of the Cricket Eleven, both of them fruit of the Mission of Moody, the outstanding Evangelist of the Nineteenth Century, as Wesley and Whitfield had been in the Eighteenth.

In 1876 Hay Aitken, another fruit of Moody's Mission, founded the Parochial Mission Society.

In 1880 they heard the call of India's women who could not be reached by male missionaries, and founded the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.

In 1882, under the inspiration of Wilson Carlile (yet another fruit of Moody's Mission), arose the Church Army.

This list is only representative: it leaves unrecognised the various organisations for the training of Clergy and Deaconesses, for education in Sunday Schools and Public Schools, for holiday mission work amongst children on the sea-shore and otherwise, for work among students at the Universities. Yes, and more than that, for I have not mentioned the achievements that removed some of the outstanding blots in our national life, achievements con-

nected particularly with the names of Clarkson, Wilberforce, the Thorntons, Lord Shaftesbury, and other influential men who were inspired by the religion which the Movement gave to them—the emancipation of the slaves, the carrying out of which has been one of the glories of the British Navy ever since, Prison Reform, the abolition of child labour in the Factories, and general activity in the improvement of the lot of the lower classes in society.

The *Cambridge Chronicle* recently published the following extract from its issue of August 2, 1833 :

“ It is this day our melancholy duty to announce the death of William Wilberforce, a name with which there is probably associated more of love and veneration than ever fell to the lot of any single individual throughout the whole civilised world. At one period the sad event would have been felt as a grievous national calamity, and even now the tidings of his departure will be heard with the deepest sorrow through every part of the Empire. But he worked while it was called day, remembering that the night was coming wherein no man may work. And he was not permitted to leave the scene of his labours, till he beheld the great cause to which he had dedicated all the energies of his soul triumphant, and the fetters of the negro about to be struck off for ever. His warfare is accomplished : his course is finished : he kept the faith.”

How I wish that I had time to pay honour to other leaders of the Movement, but I have not ; and it fits in best with their character if I do not, for they were men who with one accord repudiated self-righteousness and shunned popular esteem. But let me say this : I know of no tonic for the spirit that is more effective than the reading of a good biography of a good man. I mention then three books which can help us to enter into the spirit of some representatives of the Movement. One is *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*, by John Charles Ryle, first Bishop of Liverpool, with an introduction by the dear old Oxford saint, Canon Christopher (Thynne). The second is one of the literary legacies of that devout scholar, Handley Moule, Bishop of Durham ; it is *Charles Simeon*, in the series of English Leaders of Religion (Methuen). The third is *Henry Martyn*, by Constance Padwick (Student Christian Movement).

I pass now to a word about the message of the Movement in the days of its evangelistic fervour. What was the substance of the preaching and writing which were so mightily used for the revival of practical religion ?

From beginning to end it was just a magnifying of the love and grace of God, manifested and given to man in the Lord Jesus Christ. The message was often couched in language which we would not use to-day ; and it is worthy of note that it is not only the language of doctrine that gets out of date. Miss Padwick, in her *Life of Henry Martyn*, published in 1922, writes about Sargent's contemporary biography of Martyn : “ Sargent's book in the religious language of 1816 is almost strange to the children of another century.”

The message was also associated with some interpretations which we would reject ; indeed, if we look only at the clothing of the

message we might be inclined to accept the verdict of a modern evangelist who said to me : " The old way of preaching the Gospel is as dead as a door nail." Yes, the shell of it may be, but break the shell and get at the kernel, and you will find that the essence of the message was the magnifying of the grace of God.

So they preached the corruption of human nature, and at heart it was testimony to man's entire dependence upon the grace of God for renewal unto life.

So they preached the Atonement, with crude, as I think, interpretation of the meaning of the Crucifixion, and at heart it was the magnifying of God's grace in His dealing with the fact of man's transgression, rebellion, sin.

So they preached Justification through faith alone, and it was the magnifying of the Father's love in welcoming and restoring the penitent prodigal who can do nothing to deserve such treatment, and can only return and cast himself upon the Father's mercy and love.

So they preached the recreating power of the Holy Spirit, as free in His working as the wind of heaven, a recreating which could take place at any time through the agency of the Gospel message heard or read : and it was a magnifying of the will, grace, power of God, ever ready and present to bring men to a new life.

Yes, and they preached the inseparable connection between true faith and personal holiness, testifying at once to the obligation that lies upon the life that is lived under grace, and to the certainty of its being fulfilled through faith in the sanctifying power of the indwelling Christ : and it was the magnifying of the ever-present grace of God in perfecting the good work which He has begun in us.

I bring this tribute to an end with some words from another pen : it is a statement of Dr. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, to be found in his *Popular History of the Church of England* (John Murray). After referring to some ardent erratic spirits among the Clergy, aroused by the Movement in its earlier days, he writes :

" The greater number, loyal to the Prayer Book and its rubrics, were distinguished by the zealotry with which they discharged their duty, by the blamelessness of their lives, by their inflexible standard of right and wrong, by their love of the name of Christ, and by a deep and rich inward experience of religion. The age of practical Christianity was at hand. As men's spirits were awakened to the deeper aspects of life, and they realised God and eternity, man's immortality, sin and righteousness, they began to care for the poor, the sick, the enslaved, the ill-treated. Philanthropy dawned, but it came in the wake of a religious revival."

Those who are interested in the Missionary work in the Zenana Missions will appreciate a story by D. S. Batley dealing with the lot of Indian women. The title is *Romoni's Daughters* (Zenith Press, 2s. net). A vivid picture is given of the hard fate of Hindu women and the urgent need for the Gospel of Christ is forcibly shown as the only means of the improvement of their condition.