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Evangelical Churchmen and Social Problems.

BY THE REV. CANON LEWIS, M.A.

THERE is humiliation for the Evangelical School in the fact that at this time of day there should be necessity to debate what the duty of Evangelical Churchmen to England's social problems is.

It is humiliating, because other schools of Churchmen have already formed definite ideas and adopted a working policy in the matter as far as it affects them.

Nonconformists began so long ago to share in Christian social work that they can now claim to be experts in the business.

Even the Roman Church has its social workers, and also its social literature.

And we Evangelical Churchmen, where are we in this great enterprise? What is our position? It is this—we are just beginning to introduce into our conferences the question, "What are we to think, and what are we to do, as regards the social evils of this country, and the attempts which are being made to deal with them?" It is an ignoble position for the Evangelical School to be in.

It would take long to answer the question, "Why is the Evangelical School so backward in dealing with England's social problem?" There are many contributory causes. To answer it would require a full discussion of the whole position now held by Evangelical Churchmen.

On the present occasion we can only attempt to put into definite form some of the more important points of obligation in which Evangelicals seem to us to come dishonourably short in the serious and pressing matter of helping England to understand her social and industrial problems, and to give a Christian solution to the same.

In performing our task we shall be compelled to say what will wound the pride and rouse the resentment of some who are

satisfied that all is well with the Evangelical School. Such wounding, however, has become necessary.

We modern Evangelical Church-people have been piped to for years on the subject of England's social problems, but we have not danced. We have been mourned to, but we have not lamented. The strange, and sometimes terrible, music made by "the fierce confederate storm of sorrow, barricaded evermore within the walls of cities," has not moved us.

Other Christians—and some who are not Christians—have been moved by it, but it has not disturbed us. It remains, therefore, to be seen whether we Evangelicals will feel when we are stung, and whether we will make response when we are accused. Better—a thousand times better—that a great historic School like ours should be made angry by unwelcome truth than that it should remain placid and contented, while all the rest of the Church and nation sneers at its deficiencies.

We begin, then, our list of points of duty for Evangelical Church-people in their relation to the social problems of the day by saying :

1. *We ought to take some adequate trouble to ascertain the real facts of what Carlyle used to call "the condition of England question."*

It has been lately said that Evangelicals do not read. Publishers have recently told us that they find Nonconformists are better buyers of books than we are. Whether these charges be true or not, it is certain that we do not produce books, for no considerable book has come forth from our ranks for the last seven years. And reading and book-making go together. Therefore, if our young men are going to make up for the shortcomings of their present seniors in the Evangelical School, they must begin to study social subjects now. To neglect this will be to perpetuate the general lack of knowledge on social problems which prevails among us.

Happily, there are facilities for study on these subjects. Social literature is now plentiful and able and cheap. A Christian Social Union for Churchmen exists. Social problems have be-

come a permanent part of the programme of the yearly Church Congress. Even so backward a body as Convocation is now producing most admirable speeches on "The Moral Witness of the Church on Economic Subjects." It remains for younger Evangelicals to use these facilities, to make themselves familiar with what social questions mean, and then to press on the managing committees of all our conferences, and on the editors of our newspapers and magazines, that these social questions shall have at least as much attention as that now given to the subjects of ritual, the New Theology, and the like.

2. *We ought to be impressed when economists tell us, and our daily newspapers show us, that the forces of social change are working great revolutions in every country, and that these forces are, in the main, for the rising up of the common people to place and power.*

In France the people, moved by Socialist ideals, have dismissed the National Church. In Germany the people, taught by the Socialists, have forced the proudest Emperor of modern times to step down into the dust of the political arena, and to fight by political methods for a temporary tenure of his supremacy. In Russia the people, led by Socialists, have shut up the autocrat of all the Russias as a permanent prisoner in his palace. In Italy the people, consolidated and fired by Socialism, have uncrowned the Pope, and are working out their salvation as a new nation on the lines of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In India the spirit, and to some extent the methods, of Socialism have created the Congress movement, which is already beginning to give trouble to the British Government. Space fails us to show how the same spirit of democracy is at work in other nations—even in China, a country on which has rested the sleep of ages; and yet Sir Ian Hamilton, in his book of recent experiences among the Japanese, tells us that China has now 14,000 students studying in Japan, hoping thereby to discover how to succeed as Japan has succeeded.

Is not all this yeast-like agitation of the world's proletariat phenomenal? Does it not necessarily mean the passing away

of a vast amount of the familiar and the old, and the coming of much that is strange and new? That is how economists and historians view it. They tell us that the human race is being reborn. They warn us that old ideas, ancient institutions, and long-established customs, will before long receive such a shock as never was since the world began.

If this be so, what manner of persons ought we Evangelicals to be? Will indifference to Socialism fit us for contending with it for mastery? Will a continued neglect of the study of its aims and methods strengthen us for the coming struggle? Is it natural to shut our eyes to what all the rest of the world is watching with breathless interest not unmixed with fear?

3. *We ought to realize that the teaching of Socialism is at this moment in possession of our English working classes.*

Seven out of every ten labouring men in England are more stirred by the wonderful possibilities which are put before them by the Labour party than by all the preaching of all the Churches.

And what teaching the teaching of Socialism is! Its sole concern is with the material interests of human life. It raises a great mocking laugh at the Church, which for nearly two thousand years has taught the world that the best way to the material is through the spiritual, or, in other words, that—

“ It takes a soul
To move a body ; it takes a high-souled man
To move the masses . . . even to a cleaner sty ;
It takes the ideal to blow a hair's-breadth off
The dust of the actual.”¹

Socialism has no place in its teaching even for morals. Its ten commandments¹ have yet to be written. Sin is still a word outside its vocabulary. As Maurice put it long ago, the Gospel of Socialism is that “working men should hope for emancipation from a change of circumstances, not from a change of character and conduct.” Surely Evangelicals have something to say to all this. Surely they, of all people, can emphasize

¹ Mrs. Browning.

that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Surely they can repeat what their forefathers did in the eighteenth century.

It will be remembered what the English nation was listening to then. It was the age of Deism, which taught that all that "the condition of England question" required was that men and women should follow the light of reason. We know what Deism brought English religion to in that century. We know what Deist scholarship and Deist statesmanship brought England to in those days. Of all the English centuries, the eighteenth takes first place for religious decay and a low standard of public morals. It was to deal with the mischief wrought by Deism that God raised up the first Evangelicals. It was due to a reaffirmation of the first principles of the New Testament by Evangelicals that English religion and English morals were made Christian once again.

It may be that God has similar work for Evangelical Churchmen to do in connexion with the evil which Socialism is now doing, and will yet do, for a generation to come. Certainly, if modern Evangelicals can preach the fact of sin, and God's method for dealing with sin, as Grimshaw, Romaine, Griffith Jones, Rowlands, Hervey, Walker of Truro, and other early Evangelicals did, with the same conviction, with the same force of personal character, with the same consuming zeal, with the same noble indifference to consequences, with the same glorious enthusiasm for men's souls, then the ignoring of the spiritual side of human life by the Socialists will have its corrective. England's masses, when tired of the delusive promises of Socialism, will turn in sheer weariness to the old Gospel, which deals sternly with sin, but is infinitely tender and omnipotently helpful to the victims of sin.

4. *We ought to remember that the New Testament contains social principles, all of which have accomplished great things in past ages, and are now waiting to be applied to our modern needs.*

What was it which enabled the Apostles to deal with that

most powerful institution of the Roman world—the ancient, the universal, institution of slavery? It was the principle that the Incarnation makes ownership of man by man an unnatural and monstrous thing.

What was it which shamed the pride of caste among the Jews, and also among the Roman patricians? It was the principle that what God has cleansed no man may call common.

What was it which stopped the decline of respect for woman among the conquerors of the world, and raised her to a new world of worth in the eyes of men? It was the principle that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, and that in Him the human race finds its true solidarity.

What was it which changed the old barbarous aspects of war, of heroism, of the value of human life, of sport, of marriage, of the use of wealth, of pleasure? All these enter into the social life of a nation. All contribute to the rise or fall of a people individually and collectively.

How came the old to give place to the new? If the Romans failed in raising the standard of these things, why did the beginnings of the most noble transfiguration come to these same things during the worst days of the Empire, and at a time when it was tottering to its fall? Again the answer is, the change was due to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," dwells on what he calls "the complete unconsciousness" of Roman writers during the first three Christian centuries as to the social changes in Roman society which the despised religion of Him who had been crucified by one of their colonial governors was quietly working.

Among all these Roman writers there are only ten to twelve slight allusions to the existence of the Christian faith, and they are mostly contemptuous. And yet this is what Lecky, who himself was "a free-lance" in matters of religion, says in evident astonishment at the phenomena: "That the greatest religious change in the history of mankind should have taken place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians, who

were profoundly conscious of the decomposition around them ; that all these writers should have utterly failed to predict the issue of the movement they were observing ; and that during the space of three centuries they should have treated as simply contemptible an agency which all men must now admit to have been for good or evil, the most powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men, are facts well worthy of meditation in every period of religious transition.”¹

If the Christian Church was thus powerful as a moral force working in the most corrupt society which the world has ever seen ; if it could accomplish 1,500 years ago what the most elaborate system of State government, assisted by some of the finest intellects of all time, failed to do ; if it could make men first pure, then just, then loving, then self-sacrificing for the good of mankind—all which qualities are essential for social welfare—what must its power be to-day ? For time does not wither its life nor use diminish its power. The passing of the years do but add to the vitality and the ability of the Christian Church. The older she grows the younger she becomes, for the longer she lives, and the more she serves, the greater is her increase in the fullness of Him in whom is the fullness of God.

If to-day the Christian Church seems unable to solve the social problems of the English people, the cause is not due to the equipment of the Church, it is not due to that great body of revealed truth which the Church exists to administer. The fault is in us, who are the unworthy members of the Church. We have ceased to be faithful. We do not further the interests of our Lord's cause. We allow the Labour party and all its kindred organizations to pose before the nation as the only people who understand and can help the working classes. We make no adequate effort to show to the masses that the evils which oppress them can be cured by an intelligent apprehension and a practical application of what the New Testament teaches.

¹ Vol. i., 338.

There was a time when Evangelicals used to raise the cry, "What saith the Scriptures?" We greatly need that cry to-day. But not, as hitherto, for theological controversy. We have had more than enough of that. What both the nation and the Church of this land are waiting for is that all who call themselves Christians should do their utmost to show how modern the Bible is, how "up to date," how capable it is of supplying every need of human life, whether that need be spiritual, mental, physical, or social.

5. *We ought to seek guidance from and be inspired by the past history of our School.*

Each of the three great Schools in the English Church has at least 150 years to look back upon. It is not a long period, but in the case of the Evangelical School it is a full period. And the rise of the School was entirely due to "the condition of England question." The great deeds of the School have been mostly for "the condition of England question."

Was it not the Evangelicals who first discovered "the man in the street" in this country? Where was he in public estimation before the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century began its work? Was it not also the Evangelicals who taught the British people in these modern days "how much is a man better than a sheep"? That is a truth as old as Christianity itself, but in the eighteenth century England had not learned it. Men were hanged for sheep-stealing, and the public conscience was in no wise made uneasy thereby. Sheep were more sure of their food and a decent dwelling than human beings until the field preaching of the Methodists and Evangelicals 150 years ago raised the value of human life, and taught the English people to regard it as infinitely sacred. Again, was it not the Evangelicals inside the Church and outside it who first revealed to the masses the capabilities which were in them for sharing in the conduct of national affairs? That great result is usually put to the credit of the French Revolution. But the French Revolution began in 1789. The first Evangelicals began fifty years earlier.

By their bold departure from a wrong established order ; by their turning to the common people, when the pulpits of the churches were shut against them ; by their use of outdoor mass meetings ; by their incessant travelling to and fro in all parts of the country ; by the multitudes of converts which they made ; by their system of organizing their converts into societies which met locally every week ; by the annual assembly of these societies in central places ; by the institution of lay preachers ; by the strict enforcement of discipline and the growth of democratic rule ; by the gradual conquest of public opinion ; by the ultimate winning of place and power in the National Church ; by the grand discovery, made in the agitation against the slave-trade, that to capture the House of Commons you must first create the irresistible force of public opinion—the Evangelical movement opened the eyes of English working men and women as to what was in them, and what could come out of them, if only they were given a fair opportunity ; and with the vision there came much of the aspiration and effort which have since lifted the common people of this country to the heights of ruling power.

With all this and more of the same sort to look back upon, ought not we modern Evangelical Churchmen to be proud ? Ought we not to be ever learning from what our forefathers have done ? Ought we not to feel that we come of a royal stock of Christian workers for all such needs as modern social problems mean, and that as such we are pledged by all that is honourable to act worthy of our lineage ?

6. We ought to learn from our present experience of the weakness which comes from unconcentrated strength, and to begin at once to call in our scattered forces.

Is there any School in the Church, any denomination in Nonconformity, any party in politics, which lets its power run loose as the Evangelical School does ?

The power unquestionably exists. It is a greater power than that of any other School in the Church. But it is not under control. It is not directed on well-thought-out lines. It does

not work for a seen, and a desired, and a common end. It is power which is dissipated, as the power of an army is dissipated whose soldiers individually act in their own self-chosen ways.

What are the causes of the uncontrolled and dissipated power of the great Evangelical School? They are mainly two: our excessive individualism and our overindulgence in undenominationalism.

Individualism kept within due limits, and compelled to be loyal to the corporate life of the School, might be one of our sources of strength. But such individualism is scarce among us to-day. Undenominationalism in certain cases, and when carried out without weakening the forces which are necessary for each of the co-operating parties to do its most important work, may approximate to the ideal.

But what is undenominationalism doing in the Evangelical School to-day? It is taking away power on a large scale from our School, and using it for principles and ends which, however good they may be in themselves, are not of the distinctive Church character for which the Evangelical stands.

The result is that neither the Church of which the Evangelical School is a most important part is served as the Church, nor is the Evangelical School as a special organization of distinctive principles strengthened. Undenominational societies are strengthened. Nonconformity, whose system approximates more closely to undenominationalism than any Church organization, is strengthened. Ritualism, by reason of the weakening of its natural corrective, the Evangelical School, is strengthened. But Evangelical Church-people as a party, having a special work to do, lose considerably by the arrangement. Before we can address ourselves to the tremendous task of dealing effectively with England's social and other problems all this will have to be altered. Our School cannot stand the drain upon its strength which the present support of undenominational causes means. If a change is not soon made, the Evangelical School in the Church of England, as an organized body of religious conviction and effort, will become truly, as

Mr. Gladstone prophesied it would soon be, "a negligible quantity."

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." And he who sees whither things are tending among us, and is pained at heart thereby, let him not be afraid, but speak out bravely, that the things which are wrong among us may be put right.

Such are the points of duty for Evangelical Churchmen in the present critical condition created by the urgent social needs, the fierce social demands, and the dangerous social experiments of the English people. It is not likely that the older members of the Evangelical School will regard them as points of duty for them. They do not hesitate to say so on occasions. The old methods of fifty years ago are sufficient for them. They refuse to believe that any other methods are necessary. And here lies the explanation of much of the present stagnation of the Evangelical School. The world has grown, but as a School we Evangelicals have too often shown a morbid dread of becoming bigger.

Happily, it is not so with our younger men. Their eyes are not dim; their souls are not bound; they have their visions; they feel "the life more abundant" working within them. They see that, however good the principles of Evangelical Churchmen may be, those principles have not yet been given a fair opportunity of dealing with the social problems of these modern days. They are now becoming keen for the experiment to be made. And if they follow the instinct of progress which is in them; if, like Browning did, they will continue to look out upon the nation's past history and present experiences, and say,

"Here and here England did help me—
How can I help England?"

then the future of the Evangelical School will be made sure. It will do greater deeds than our forefathers did. Not that the future representatives of the Evangelical School will be better men and women than the first Evangelicals, but they will so use the glorious heritage secured for them that out of it there

shall come increase from God which, when seen and properly understood, makes men bow in worship before it, and repeat the old words: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise."



The Jewish Sacred Year and Calendar.

BY THE REV. G. H. BOX, M.A.

ONE of the most interesting links that connect the modern Jews with their great historic past is their sacred year and calendar. This has been maintained intact (though with developments) from Biblical times. It is a subject, therefore, that claims the intelligent consideration of all who are interested in the study of Holy Scripture, both in its Old and New Testament divisions. The calendar system, which is implied in the New Testament, may be studied in the life, as it were, in the social organization and worship of the modern Jews. No apology is, therefore, needed for introducing a short study of the main relevant facts in this place.

I. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR.

The elements of the calendar are, of course, the day, the month, and the year. The day is reckoned from evening to evening, and begins when (on a clear night) three stars are visible, which is supposed to be twenty-five minutes after sunset. This is technically known as the "coming forth of the stars." It should be noted that this division of the day is guaranteed by the first chapter of the Bible. In the enumeration of the days of creation evening comes first: "And it was evening and it was morning one day" (Gen. i. 5), etc. Accordingly, the day is divided into evening, morning, and afternoon, for each of which an appropriate service of prayer is provided—viz., evening prayer (*Ma-ārīb*), morning prayer (*Shahārīth*), and afternoon prayer (*Minhā*). The week is, of course, identical with