

EVANGELICALISM : YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

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WORLD EVANGELISATION.

IT would seem impossible to write a history of the Evangelical Revival without marking the fervour of Evangelicals for World Evangelisation. The spirit of the movement rendered essential Evangelistic Endeavour, and no accurate portrayal of the Revival could be given without reference to it. The issue therefore of a history of the Evangelical Revival, a few years ago, by a well-known Anglo-Catholic writer, in which reference is made to the Church Missionary Society, the Bible Society, the Colonial and Continental Church Society and other such societies in a few words only, and solely, apparently, for the purpose of setting them forth as proofs of a party spirit and narrow-mindedness, seems sufficient to condemn the book as a reliable history of the movement. For the movement set in motion so many agencies, and released so much power, for World Evangelisation that it may almost be said that the effectiveness of the Revival, and of what ensued, is most clearly seen in World Evangelisation.

At the Islington Conference two or three years ago, the present Principal of Wycliffe Hall said :

“ It was the Evangelical Revival that roused this beloved Church of England from her torpor, that under God gave her the only sufficient justification for expansion—a practical Christianity deep based upon personal knowledge of the redemptive and liberating love of Christ. And a very practical Christianity it was, a Christianity that waged relentless war on the moral and social evils of the day, that worked for the abolition of slavery, the improvement of the gaols, the better education of children ; a Christianity that strove to bring back reality and reverence into the cold and formal ministrations of the Church ; a Christianity that sought to do the will of God by carrying out Christ’s last command to ‘ make disciples of all nations,’ just because it was the work that the Master Himself had come to do, ‘ to seek and to save the lost.’ ”

There, surely, Mr. Taylor has rightly gauged the spirit of the Evangelical Revival, and indeed of Evangelicalism. The inscription outside Clapham Parish Church to the memory of the Clapham Sect says they laboured “ abundantly for national righteousness and the conversion of the heathen.” It will be hard to find a single phrase representing the issues of the Evangelical Revival better than that, for it was by their labours for national righteousness and the conversion of the heathen that our Evangelical forefathers exerted that influence which we, three or four generations later, still feel.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the wave of blessing which we mean when we speak of the Evangelical Revival

was being felt throughout England, there was little being done by the National Church, or other bodies of Christians, by way of World Evangelisation. This was partly due to spiritual torpor, but also because the world was not then open as we to-day understand openness. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel could look back upon nearly a hundred years' existence, but at this time its total annual income from subscriptions and donations amounted to little more than £550, and its activities were directed primarily to Britons overseas. £550 seems very little, but whether it is so small when considered in relation to the value of money and in proportion to the opportunity then before the Church, it is difficult to say.

Knowledge of Africa was then limited to its coastline, though something was known of the Nile Valley and Mungo Park had begun to explore the Niger. Little more than the coast of South America had then been mapped, and all that was known of the western half of North America was the Pacific coast. Central, Northern, and South Eastern Asia were also practically unknown, and were under the sway of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or some form of pagan religion. The aboriginals of Australasia and of North and South America were quite pagan, and Christianity was then absolutely proscribed in China and Japan.

Mrs. Ashley Carus Wilson in her book, published before the War, *The Expansion of Christendom*, tells us that "with the exception of European colonies in North and South America, and of apparently moribund churches in Africa and Asia, all the Christians in the world (at the commencement of the nineteenth century) were in Europe," and that not a single British missionary was to be found in any part of Asia and Africa. (It seems right here to say it is not clear whether she includes Roman Catholics.) An examination of the list of Anglican Dioceses given in *Crockford* shows that at that time there were only two Anglican Bishops outside Britain, the original dioceses of Nova Scotia and Quebec being then under the oversight of their first Bishops.

Such was the state of affairs when there dawned what the Bishop of Durham described in the last session of the Church Assembly as "the golden age of Evangelicalism." The Bishop asked at the same time what it was, in the case of the Evangelical Fathers, transformed the humanitarianism of the eighteenth century "into an aggressive and conquering passion of benevolence." The answer he himself gave was "the power of Christian conviction." Nebulous though that may be, it witnesses to the truth. They were impelled by deep religious convictions. They surveyed the world in the light of the Gospel, and they went forth in the power of the Gospel to promote and to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. With a new sense of the righteousness of God and of His redeeming love and power, their aim was, it may fairly be stated, more for the salvation of individual souls than for the resultant extension of the kingdom of God.

When it is recalled that the early Coptic, Abyssinian and other

Churches, failing to be evangelistic, lost their effectiveness, the truth is seen that a Church which does not give the message rapidly degenerates into a Church which has no message to give. It is not an unreasonable suggestion that the Protestant-Reformed Church of England was, at the period we are considering at the moment, put to the test whether or not she would pass on the message of salvation to a world lying in darkness and in the shadow of death. Had she then proved unresponsive to the Divinely given opportunity to arise and advance, neither the Church of England nor the English Nation would occupy the honourable position they do to-day in the councils of the world. The worldwide growth of the Empire is more due to the evangelistic zeal of the Church than the evangelistic activity of the Church is due to imperial expansion.

The fathers of the Evangelical Revival had no thought of imperial expansion, only of the winning of the world for the Lord Jesus Christ. The old wineskins could not contain the new wine of their evangelistic enthusiasm, and something new had to be devised. A number of Missionary Societies came into existence with a view to evangelising the world and bringing all into submission to the Redeemer-King. They were no evidence of narrow-mindedness, but of true Catholicity; even if some or all were content to define the limits of their operations.

In the founding of these Societies, it is clear that there was no thought of acting otherwise than in loyalty to the Church of England. The original constitutions show that the founders considered that with an open Bible, and on the basis of the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles, they had sure ground on which to move, and in every step they took they believed themselves to be in accord with the spirit and tenets of the Church of England. They did not think it necessary to designate their new organisations as either Protestant or Evangelical. They conceived the Church of England to be both the one and the other. The difficulty for them was to secure Episcopal recognition for what seemed wild enthusiasm or (to quote Miss Padwick's phrase in *The Land of Behest*) mad projects. And such recognition came very slowly. The Archbishops and Bishops were not seized with the same spirit of enthusiasm or evangelistic zeal. The spirit of adventure did not possess them. But on the other hand, such was the torpor of the day, they did not find sufficient cold water to damp down the fire engendered by the Evangelical Revival. It was soon seen to have within it such inherent power that no earthly force could check it, and the outlets it made for itself were allowed to have their place in Church life.

Thus it was that the Church of England passed through the testing time which came with the dawn of a day of great opportunity. The Evangelical Revival by the missionary zeal it engendered saved the Church, and released the forces which have made her, and her progeny in the Anglican Communion, a great world power.

But what were those forces released? In the first place let it

be said to be the Gospel Message itself. The founding of the Church Missionary Society in 1799, so soon after the founding of the Baptist and the London Missionary Societies, denoted what was the predominant thought and desire. As with the Church Pastoral Aid Society, established a generation later, it may be said to have sought to "make the Church efficient" to fulfil its duty to "carry the gospel" to those who know it not. It was "for Africa and the East," and that may be said to cover its activities to-day; but it must be remembered that between the time of its founding and now it has at one time or another evangelised non-Christians in all the six continents. I do not think this can be said of any other Society. In the course of its history it has done a great deal more than "carry the gospel"; it has sought to fulfil the Commission to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that the Lord has commanded. Hence it has seen diocese after diocese called into existence as a direct result of the work of its missionary agents, and may be said to have done more than any other agency for the extension of the Anglican Communion.

The first Missionary Exhibition at which the writer was allowed to take a part as a steward was in his undergraduate days, and he served in the New Zealand Court. The C.M.S. was then still carrying on work among the Maoris. It has of course now long ceased to do so. Nevertheless, be it remembered that the Society first carried the Gospel to that land, tamed a whole race and opened the way to the establishment of the Dominion. It was said on behalf of the Society at the time when New Zealand was annexed to the British Empire, that besides building churches and schools it had caused the wide observance of the Lord's Day, had reduced the language to writing and secured Bible translations, had set up a printing press and a water mill, had introduced into the island cattle and sheep and horses, and done much else to check war and cannibalism and to bring in a new state. Before the Society withdrew it could claim that sixty-six Maori converts had been ordained to the ministry of the Church of England.

Thus not only in the world-wide work of the Society to-day do we see the outflow of the Evangelical Revival, but it may be said that in such fields as North-West Canada and British Columbia (as well as New Zealand) where the work has been begun and accomplished, is the fruit to be found.

But it must not be thought that the C.M.S. alone represented that new current of missionary activity which was then set moving. The Religious Tract Society was also founded in 1799, and the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in 1808. The Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland which afterwards became the Colonial and Continental Church Society was founded in 1823, and others inevitably followed.

If it may be said that the Gospel Message was the first force released by the Evangelical Revival, the second (and some would perhaps even put it first) was a vernacular Bible. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804 and has an amazing

record. Of the 655 languages or dialects in which the Bible in whole or in part has been issued which appear on their list of publications, about sixty only, and those mainly European, were issued earlier than the nineteenth century. The Eastern Church had relied upon the Septuagint and the Greek Testament, and the Roman Church upon the Vulgate, and had been unconcerned about translations. But the Evangelical Faith demanded for every man the right to read the Word of God in his mother-tongue, and from the first the Bible Society has co-operated with all missionary agencies in seeking to secure for every man that right.

It does not seem too much to claim that it has been through a vernacular Bible that the world evangelisation of the Anglican Church, and other Protestant Churches, has been, under God, so successful. History plainly teaches that the Bible in the language of the people establishes the teaching of the Gospel and best guarantees, in any country, the preservation of the Church through storms of persecution and its revival in times of decline. The value of the Bible Society to the cause of world evangelisation cannot be over-estimated.

Perhaps the third force released by the Revival may be said to be money. Hitherto opportunities of giving had not been many, and channels into which to direct gifts had been strictly limited. But now every new endeavour and every expansion of the work caused a new demand. The number of the givers were few at first, and always have been a minority, but the contributions of those whose hearts were touched with a sense of the love of God were made on a new and rising scale. Both the C.M.S. and the Bible Society publish a statement showing the amounts received each year from the commencement. It is interesting to notice the steady rise, and at times, mainly in consequence of new endeavours, the speedy rise. In 128 years the Bible Society received over 23 million pounds. In its first year it received nearly £700, in its second over £1,600, and the average of the last few years has been over £400,000. The C.M.S. began with receiving about £2,400 in five years and then went ahead as the field opened to the expectant vision of the Lord's people, and during the last six years has averaged nearly £450,000 of available income. This is mentioned not to represent what Evangelicals are doing or have done, for that cannot be done by citing one or two agencies alone, but as evidence of the vitality of what was undertaken as a result of the Evangelical Revival. Nevertheless, it may be permitted to add while this aspect of Christian activity is before us, that Evangelicals have never been other than a minority in the Church of England, at any rate in the period under review, yet their contributions have exceeded those who hold other ecclesiastical views. The number of parishes supporting S.P.G. and/or U.M.C.A. must exceed the number supporting C.M.S., but their united income comes short of that of the C.M.S. Evangelical fervour has always shown itself, in part, in the liberality of its gifts. Experience seems to prove that the more wholeheartedly and unreservedly the evangelical doctrines are

held, the more abundant are the contributions in aid of evangelistic work. Even to-day, it may be maintained, the more firmly are held those doctrines of grace which marked the Evangelical Revival the larger are the gifts for world evangelisation.

We have lately been hearing much in the *Church Times* about "Protestant Money-bags," and their power. Is the suggestion that all wealthy people are Evangelicals? Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, and other such places, would at once be a sufficient retort. They certainly cannot mean that the number of Protestants is so large that the aggregate funds are vast, for they are always saying we are a minority, and a small one at that. May I not quote their references to Protestant money-bags as evidence of what I say, that the Evangelical Faith releases money; that those who are moved by those doctrines which we Evangelicals hold, and regard as primary, are more ready to contribute to the point of sacrifice to the Great Cause we have at heart?

One other force released by the Evangelical Revival should be mentioned, and that is the power of consecrated lives. Indeed, this lies at the back of what has just been mentioned. The realisation afresh of what Jesus Christ did for us on the Cross of Calvary stirred up such a sense of His love that the believing heart responded with a wholehearted devotion which involved the consecration of something more than material gifts, even that of son and daughter, yea, even more still, of life itself. Constrained by the love of Christ, men and women in a great stream have gone forth to preach the Word of Salvation, counting their own lives as nothing and in so many cases laying them down "for Jesus' sake." Many have been the martyrs; many more have been those who have nobly persevered amidst untold privations, disappointments, difficulties, sufferings, and loneliness through long years. Who can estimate the wealth of their devotion or the measure of their self-sacrifice? But they would themselves account it as nothing in comparison with what they owe their Lord for the benefits of His passion.

But, again, it would be unfair to speak of the consecration of lives only in regard to those who have served overseas. How much thought, how much care, how much work, how much prayer, has been put into the cause of world evangelisation? Missionary Meetings, Working Parties, Prayer Meetings, have long been held up to ridicule and derision, but how fruitful they have been. How truly they have been animated by the spirit of the Evangelical Revival. They have afforded to the rank and file the information, the opportunity and the stimulus which alone were necessary to hearts aflame with love for the Redeemer of the world. This is an age when young life is asserting itself. Let them choose for themselves, as led by the Spirit of God, the ways in which to express their love for Christ and a perishing world, but in so doing let them also seek for grace to emulate the self-denying efforts, the steady and persistent endeavours and self-sacrificing devotion of the young men and women, and the middle-aged and elderly men and women

who have gone before, and perhaps not least the last named. It is common and cheap to make gibes at the elderly widows and spinsters, but how much, how very much is due to them for their endeavours, out of love for Jesus Christ, on behalf of world evangelisation.

It has already been suggested that the fires of the Evangelical Revival have continued to burn throughout the intervening period. They have indeed at times seemed to die down, and at others they have been again fanned into a flame. It is hard to estimate their force to-day. We have been passing through days of religious decline, and Evangelicals have shared in it. We are bound to acknowledge that, but nevertheless we may claim that something of the evangelical fervour still exists. The Bishop of Durham, to whom reference has already been made, on the same occasion spoke in what sounded like derisive terms of "the golden age of Evangelicalism, in the light of which a certain fading nimbus rests on Evangelical brows to this day." It may be it is fading. It is not for us to contradict, even if we do not agree. The outsider can best judge, but let him do it with less bias than that generally shown by the Bishop. At any rate we are grateful to him for his testimony to the fact that it does still rest on Evangelical brows.

No one who studies the overseas operations of the Church of England can suppose that to-day Evangelicals count for little in world evangelisation. Evangelistic fervour still marks that loyal section of the Anglican Church which calls itself Evangelical, and seems to mark it more than any other section.

"With one accord," the unified statement of the needs of the Church overseas put out by the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly affords us much encouragement, especially when read with enlightened understanding (it is not always plain to those who know little of the work of the Church beyond our shores). It presents in brief compass a picture of the field of the Church's work overseas. That picture shows how vast is the work of Evangelical Societies in comparison with others. There is no desire now to force comparisons, but at a time (as indeed at all times) when in the councils of the Church, Evangelicals are given so small a place, and when it seems frequently to be assumed that Evangelicalism in the Church of England will soon be as dead as the dodo, it may be well to invite a careful estimate of the share of Evangelicals in the overseas work of the Church as shown in the financial summary given at the end of the book, or in the Statistical Tables illustrating the work of the several areas. At the same time it is fair to say these figures are somewhat misleading and require explanation. The Home Secretary of the C.M.S. has been well advised to put out a statement in explanation of the £205,000 which is stated to be expended by all societies as "Agency payments" made at home on behalf of the Church overseas. The C.M.S. share in that is nearly £102,000, but it includes outfits and passages, missionaries' pensions, disablement and superannuation allowances, training of missionaries, etc. He concludes by saying the estimated expenditure of C.M.S. either

actually overseas or as an agency for overseas work comes to £402,817, not £300,880 as the statement seems to imply.

Much more might be said to show that the forces set free by the Evangelical Revival continue to progress. For instance, the remarkable measure of success which has attended the B.C.M.S. since its inception, when certain members of the C.M.S. separated themselves from the old Society and formed the new, must certainly be borne in mind. The vitality which is vigorous enough to secede when conscience demands it, and the vitality which is strong enough to progress along a God-given path in spite of the secession, are alike evidence of human zeal and earnestness and of Divine blessing.

As Evangelicals we have very much cause to thank our gracious God, and we do not doubt that if we had been more faithful we should have had much more. There are facing us, if the Lord tarry, days of golden opportunity. May a double portion of the spirit of our forefathers rest upon us, that we may emulate their endeavours, advance the cause they had at heart, and glorify our Redeemer Lord.

The Evangelical Doctrine of Holy Communion, edited by Dr. A. J. Macdonald, has proved its value and has reached a second edition. As the first attempt to trace the Evangelical interpretation of the doctrine of Holy Communion from the New Testament to the present day, it has supplied a great need. In the cheaper form it will now reach a wider circle of readers who will appreciate its scholarly qualities. Archdeacon Hunkin deals with the Origin of Eucharistic Doctrine. The Editor traces it to the time of Berengar. Mr. T. C. Hammond deals with the Later Middle Ages, Dr. Harold Smith with the Teaching of the Reformers, Canon McKean with the English Theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dr. A. H. W. Harrison, Principal of the Wesleyan Training College at Westminster, explains the Free Church interpretation, and Archdeacon Storr gives an account of Anglican Eucharistic Theology To-day. This comprehensive treatment of the great subject should be in the hands of all Students.

An interesting little book, *The Open Road in Persia*, by the Rev. J. R. Richards, has been issued by C.M.S. (1s. net). Dr. Linton, Bishop in Persia, contributes a Foreword. Persia, at the present time, presents many difficulties and great possibilities. This account of the work is an inspiration to go forward along the open road.

Southwark Cathedral has many interesting historical and literary associations and has had a chequered history before its elevation to the position of the Cathedral Church of the diocese of Southwark. Canon Munroe has written an interesting record of its history which has been issued with an admirable series of artistic illustrations by Messrs. Raphael Tuck & Sons at the small cost of 2s. 6d.