Nineteenth Century Liberalism and the Modern Missionary Movement[1]

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Liberalism—Its Origin and Roots

We may be tempted to feel that our Century is unique and that we alone are wrestling with the consequences of Liberalism. It is interesting to note, however, that Francis Schaeffer, in his magnificent last book—*The Great Evangelical Disaster*—quotes Dr. Harold J. Ockenga, who wrote about Liberalism at the turn of this century:

> Destructive higher criticism of the Bible became the dominant approach among the theologians at the close of the nineteenth century. When joined with naturalistic evolution, it produced Liberalism. Liberalism accommodated Christianity to modern scientific naturalism . . . whenever objections arose on the details of the Christian religion.[2]

Unquestionably, Liberalism is a thorough-going adaptation of Christian theology to the modern world and even today Liberals are prepared to sacrifice many elements of traditional Christian orthodoxy in their search for contemporary relevance.

Liberalism, which dominated much of the thought and social endeavour of European middle-class life in the Nineteenth Century stemmed in the main from the great spiritual impulses of the Seventeenth Century which are only partly comprised by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. There was the broader, more general recognition that freedom gave man the chance and the task of self-determination while this responsible 'self' on which so much depended was chiefly, if not exclusively, 'reason'.

The notion of freedom was already at work in the Declaration of Rights of 1689 and the growing influence of the Whigs in England, in the American Constitution of 1787 and very decisively in the French Revolution. The new wave of humanism and the Romantic Movement saw things differently. They recognized that where 'reason' was set up as the

only valid judge, it readily degenerated into an alien and stifling domination of a really much more complex entity. Less stress was laid on finding the truth of the authentic self in the reason. It was replaced by the notion that life should be lived to the full. The many sides of personality now seen to be highly complicated were to be freely developed, almost to the limits of anarchy. *Laissez faire* was the order of the day.

The relationship between the Church and Society which was gradually 'liberalizing' itself took on various forms. In Protestantism especially but also in the Catholic lands, movements arose within the churches to shake off all guardianship by State or Statutory hierarchy. There were a number of emancipation movements mostly in connexion with Liberalism in theology. In France, at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century there was the L'avenir and Le Sillon! In German-speaking countries there were the Eos group in Munich, the Protestant Union of 1863, the Swiss Union for Free Christianity, and also the 'Protestant Friends', and in Italy, the 'Democrazia Cristiana'.

The New Development—Christianity Justified

With the coming of Liberalism then, a notion of liberty which was basically individualistic penetrated all civil society in the Nineteenth Century. Theologians were inevitably confronted with the problems arising from the Liberalistic individualism. How could Christianity be justified, not just rationally, as on the whole intellectually satisfying and useful to the common good, but in the face of the Ego of freedom which saw itself as absolutely free and comprehensively responsible?

Within the circle of theological liberalism one must distinguish between liberalism of doctrine and liberalism in biblical scholarship. The former was an undermining or denial of the traditional doctrines of the Christian Faith, while the latter challenged the authenticity, historicity and divine inspiration of the Bible.

In the realm of Christian doctrine German Liberalism may be traced back to Kant and Lessing, but above all to Schleiermacher, who drastically reinterpreted the fundamental doctrines of Christianity from an anthropocentric viewpoint. For Schleiermacher there was no transcendent, self-disclosing God in the traditional sense; man's own feelings constituted his ground of reality, with Jesus as the man in whom these feelings of God-consciousness attained their highest perfection.

As Tony Lane has pointed out in the *Lion Book of Christian Thought*:

> Schleiermacher's approach was radically new. He took the Pietists' insight about the need for a felt and experienced religion to the extreme that religion is nothing but feeling and experience. Belief, in the sense of accepting doctrines, is foreign to religion: 'So far is it from being the highest in religion', as is asserted, 'that it must be rejected by all who would force their way into the sanctuary of religion'.[3]

This means a new concept of Christianity. Until Schleiermacher, Christian theology was seen as the account of 'God's revelation found in Scripture, tradition, nature, or some combination of these'. Schleiermacher gives revelation a radical new sense. It becomes the religious experience of each individual.

Or there was the serious challenge to the authenticity of the New Testament writings! This appears to have begun with Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in 1835. With this book Strauss proclaimed that the supernatural elements of the gospel history were unhistorical 'myth'.

It was followed in the same year by Peter von Bohlen's commentary on Genesis which demonstrated that Strauss's non-supernatural approach could also be applied to the Old Testament. These works evoked a flood of literature dealing with the Bible and its reliability. In the forefront came the 'Tübingen School', which from a non-supernatural theological and historical perspective examined the history of the Early Church and determined the dating and authorship of each book according to its own particular characteristic. The Gospels were all pronounced to be productions of the Second Century and apart from Romans 1, and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Revelation, no book was authentic.

Pentateuchal Criticism

In the realm of the Old Testament came the documentary theory in which the Pentateuch was divided up into at least four different sources or documents all thought to have originated at different times, thus disproving the Mosaic authorship. This hypothesis was fully developed by Karl Heinrick Graf (1815–69), Abraham Kuenen (1828–91), and Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), who brought it to its dominant position at the end of the Nineteenth Century. And there were others, J.G. Herder (1744–1813), F.W.J. von Schelling (1775–1854), and J.W. von Goethe (1749–1832), who developed the concept of God as Absolute Spirit, immanent in nature and revealed in history and humanity. This revelation was thought of as a general revelation throughout history in all people and cultures and not as special revelation and miraculous revelation to one particular nation, Israel.

Later on in the 1880s the Ritschlian School became the dominant influence in the realm of dogmatics and it was the liberalism of this school which largely determined non-orthodox theology until the First World War. Albrecht Ritschl declared that practical love of the neighbour, realized very concretely in social life and in one's calling, was the true and only meaning of the love of God. Hence it was the heart of Christianity, and when given adequate extension, could be the reality of the 'kingdom of God' in the form of a cultured and ethical society.

So Liberalism as a self-commending description, implying readiness to welcome new ideas and freedom from the restraints of so-called obscurantist traditionalism and irrational bigotry; has been adopted over the past

one hundred and fifty years on a wide front: by French Roman Catholics who favoured political democracy, Anglican Broadchurchmen who desired some loosening-up, and Protestants world-wide who held post-Enlightenment views stemming from Schleiermacher and Ritschl in theology, Kant and Hegel in philosophy, and Strauss and Wellhausen in biblical study.

The Downgrade in the Churches

In many spheres of knowledge then, the Nineteenth Century witnessed spectacular advances: in science, philosophy, languages, and history there appeared to be a renaissance of learning and a new concern for accuracy and progress. In this effort to advance, traditional concepts were questioned, old sources were critically examined and genuine progress was made. But if in all these spheres advances were possible then why should man's spiritual knowledge be static? What gains might be made by Christianity if the Church was willing to adopt a less rigid and less uncritical attitude to the contents of Scripture! Indeed was not a new approach to the interpretation of Scripture and a new definition of its inspiration essential if Christianity was not to lose touch with the onward march of science? Might it not be the case that some of the 'harder' aspects of Scripture—aspects which were already receiving a diminishing emphasis in preaching—could be explained with greater facility if the old outlook which justified them by reference to the character of God was abandoned? Questions like these were being asked as early as the 1850s. There was failure to deal directly with the issues raised in such thinking. Bishop Colenso of Natal published in 1863 a volume impugning the authenticity of the Pentateuch. He was deposed in South Africa but upheld in England. As Iain Murray has written:

> This was the kind of thing Spurgeon was referring to in 1864 when he said: 'God's Word in this age is a small affair; some do not even believe it to be inspired; and those who profess to revere it set up other books in a sort of rivalry with it. Why, there are great Church dignitaries now-a-days who write against the Bible, and yet find bishops to defend them.' Do not, for a moment, think of condemning their books or them; they are our dear brethren, and must not be fettered in thought.[4]

In the Free Church of Scotland there were outstanding attempts to preserve orthodoxy by the use of discipline. Professor Robertson Smith, was dismissed in 1881. But by this time, even in Scotland, the new critical 'appreciation' of Scripture was firmly established.

W.G. Elmslie, who had been trained in the Higher Critical approach by A.B. Davidson of Edinburgh, inculcated the same approach to Scripture in the English Presbyterian College and far from regarding the influence of this teaching as producing apostasy, he welcomed it as giving 'new light'. By the 1880s the new school was dominant. R.W. Dale had in 1874

declared against the eternal punishment of sinners, preferring annihilation. He went on to declare that a doctrinal acceptance of the Deity of Christ was not essential to the experience of saving faith in His person, and in his book *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels* (1890) argued that Christ is not lost to us though we discard the old belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Now we begin to see the effect of all this. Writing in the 'Sword and Trowel' (1887) Spurgeon attacked what he saw as the enemy of the Gospel:

> Attendance at places of worship is declining, and reverence for holy things is vanishing; and we solemnly believe this to be largely due to the Scepticism which has flashed from the pulpit and spread among the people.

He continued in words which could well be addressed to the Liberal Movement of our own day:

> Have these advanced thinkers filled their own chapels? Have they, after all prospered through discarding the old methods? In meeting houses holding a thousand, or twelve hundred, or fifteen hundred, places once packed to the ceiling with ardent hearers, how small are the numbers now!

Spurgeon, as we know, was to break with his own Baptist Union, and some say he died a broken man, as a consequence of it all. But his resignation on 28 October 1887, had been preceded by challenging words, especially against those who put denominational peace before fidelity to the Living Christ:

> Believers in Christ's atonement are now in declared union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the Fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death. . . . Yes, we have before us the wretched spectacle of professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the Faith, and scarcely concealing their contempt for those who cannot be guilty of such disloyalty to Christ. To be very plain, we are unable to call these things Christian Unions, they begin to look like Confederacies in Evil . . . it is our solemn conviction that where there can be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretence of fellowship. Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin.

In seeking to draw lessons from the Non-Conformist Down-Grade, Murray cites Spurgeon again, speaking in 1864:

> Whether it be the Baptist Church, or the Episcopalian, or the Presbyterian Church which errs from Christ's way, it is nothing to any one of us which it may be; it is Christ we are to care for and Christ's truth and this we are to follow over all the hedges and ditches of men's making.[5]

Indeed at the very outset of the Down-Grade controversy Spurgeon declared that what Evangelicals had to meet was 'a policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and unity'. An argument still in fashion today.

The Down-Grade controversy did not arrest the apostasy in Nonconformity; rather it gave concrete evidence of the existence of new attitudes which were to dominate the Free Church denominations for several generations to come. Surely these account for much of the spiritual decline in our day?

First, an unwillingness to define precisely any doctrinal issue, a readiness to reduce what constitutes the content of orthodox Christianity to a minimum, and a [false] charity which made men unwilling to question the standing of any denomination in the Sight of God, so long as it professed the 'Evangelical Faith'.

Secondly, the Down-Grade movement revealed that the Scriptures were no longer the rule of faith and practice within Nonconformity.

Lastly, the Down-Grade controversy showed a readiness on the part of many ministers to justify their lack of firm action on the grounds of the greater good to be attained by a more accommodating policy.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, died on 31 January 1892, at the premature age of 57 but the text on his coffin is still a challenge to us today: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith'.

A Bombshell in the United States

On 20 January 1891, a year before Spurgeon's death, Charles Briggs dropped his own personal bomb at Union Theological Seminary. He was a member of the Faculty. He had studied at the University of Berlin, working under A.I. Dormer, the Professor of Higher Criticism. By now the majority of the Faculty members at Union were overt or covert adherents to the Wellhausen documentary hypothesis. But Charles Briggs was the man to launch the deadly missile. Delivering his inaugural address, he stated that four barriers kept people from the Bible. The first one was superstition, the second was the dogma of verbal inspiration, the third was the false notion that the Scripture is inerrant, and the fourth was the idea that the authenticity of the Bible was founded upon the belief that holy men had written the various books of Holy Writ.

From this point on the inaugural address was a Manifesto urging all Liberals to join in the higher-criticism war against the Conservatives.[6] He was to be taken on by William G.T. Shedd and others. But again there are lessons to learn. Harold Lindsell maintains the main lesson is 'that once an Institution moves away from biblical infallibility, it continues its course until its aberrations include denials of biblical essentials beyond inerrancy.' He also maintains that Union Seminary, today, 'no longer believes in Evangelization, has no gospel that faintly resembles the gospel revealed in the New Testament, and its orientation has been more and

more leftward'.

The Anglican Downgrade

If we have been hard on the Nonconformists we still have little reason to be complacent with Anglicanism. Educated laymen heard of Tübingen and discussed Colenso.

Owen Chadwick highlights the dilemma for new thinkers:

> You might show, as Lightfoot showed, that Tübingen erred, but you were still left with a problem. It was easier to demolish the fancies of Old Testament critics than to persuade ordinary men that the story of Jonah was true, and at the level of the working man, the atheist pamphleteer or orator knew his business and asked more riddles than the question about Cain's wife. In the eighties it became imperative, for religious reasons, that silence should no longer be kept, lest Christians be accused of supposing that to be a Christian you must also believe that an ass spoke.[7]

Charles Gore, who started to teach the Bible to ordinands at Cuddesdon in 1880, did not conceal what he thought of the criticism of Genesis. Bishop Moorhouse of Manchester preached a sermon to the British Association in Manchester Cathedral of which one of the Canons said, 'I think much the same as you do, but I dare not say it'.

T.H. Green of Balliol College, as a religious philosopher, came to believe 'that every man has God in him, and his faith is his awareness of God, and endeavour to realise his unity with God. It has no connection with historical events except as symbols'. Henry Scott Holland was influenced by Green. Like Liddon, Holland read his Strauss and his Renan with disapproval but it was accompanied by more questioning and less certainty. Charles Gore, Fellow of Trinity college, edited *Lux Mundi*—a collection of Essays—published in November 1889. The authors claimed to 'be Servants of the Catholic Church who had received the revelation of God and wished to interpret it in such a way that the modern generation could understand it'. Gore's own essay on the 'Holy Spirit and Inspiration' gave the most offence as he used the word 'myth', and described myth not as a falsehood but as an apprehension of faith by a child or a primitive people. Liddon regarded *Lux Mundi* as the betrayal of everything Catholic—that for which Pusey and the Tractarians stood.

The years 1889–1892 were the high point of argument within the Church of England. A battle raged between Gore and Liddon but by the end of December 1891 the cause was safe. On 16 December thirty-eight men published a declaration on Holy Scripture. They believed its historical truth and repudiated and abhorred all suggestions of fallibility in the Lord, in respect of His use of the Old Testament. It was signed by several men who had rendered great service to the Church of England during the last forty years, partly High Churchmen, partly Evangelical: Goulburn, Denison, W.J. Butler, T.T. Carter, and Dean Gregory of St. Paul's

Cathedral.

Loss of Faith in Pulpit and Pew

But, sadly, the damage had already been done. The new teaching was now not only in University and Theological College, but in the pulpit. In one country parish critics said 'the parson did not believe the Bible, or spoke of parsons who tore the Bible to shreds'. One lady left the Church for the Chapel, though she gave the ostensible reason that the Vicar was a Socialist. In Rochester Professor Cheyne held a Canonry and as Cheyne's scholarship about the Old Testament grew more and more unbalanced during the 90s, the citizens of Rochester were not indifferent. There was a moment when the streets of Rochester carried placards about 'the Canon's latest blasphemy' and about Jonah being a fable.

A Liberal Diocese

My own Diocese of Lincoln, now almost totally Liberal, is revealing. The catalogue of the clerical library in the Lincolnshire archives enables a comparison of shift in balance between what the Clergy read in 1840 and in 1898.

Whereas they took out the 'British Magazine' and the 'Tracts for the Times' in 1839—they took out the 'Church Quarterly Review' sixty years later. But the differences are remarkable. In 1838–41 by far the commonest book to withdraw was a book of systematic theology, or a study of Christian doctrine. In 1897–1901 by far the commonest book to withdraw was a commentary on the Bible. Demolishing the verbal inspiration of the Bible had the effect of making its exposition need more equipment for the study of the text. But more depressing still is Chadwick's comment:

> The Bible became a more difficult book for laymen. Formerly they went to the simple text, now they seemed to need a commentary to understand it. Not a few people were so disturbed by the argument of the early 90's that they ceased to find pleasure or comfort reading their Bibles. Some, said Bishop Edward King of Lincoln, made the discomfort and excuse for giving up the reading altogether. As it was seen no longer as the words of God but as containing the Word of God, the exercise seemed to require more activity of mind by the reader. They could no longer know the Bible by knowing only the Bible.[8]

Sadly, we have not yet reversed this trend. Indeed, humanly speaking, we cannot! A new revival, a new confidence in God's written Word, a new sense of the Living God breaking in upon us with regenerating grace is needed and here we must turn our attention to the Modern Missionary Movement.

The Modern Missionary Movement

J. Edwin Orr has written about the Second Evangelical Awakening in a

heavily documented history:

> In 1860 the friends of the [1859] Revival convened at Liverpool a Conference on Missions. Already, according to Dr. Andrew Somerville, foreign Missionary Secretary of the United Presbyterian church in Scotland, the Revival was making itself felt on the foreign mission field, and he declared that every letter received from foreign missionaries thanked God for increased intercession at home, and expected increased effectiveness abroad. . . . the same note was struck by Lord Shaftesbury, who as Chairman of a great public meeting in the Philharmonic Hall during the Conference, said that 'this union of all evangelical and orthodox denominations is a great sign of the times,' and greeted the Conference as an Ecumenical Council. How prophetic were his remarks can be seen in the development of the Ecumenical Missionary Movement. Preceded by trial Conferences arranged by Dr. Alexander Duff in New York and London in 1854, the historical Liverpool Conference passed on the task of both to the Mildmay Conference of 1878, followed by the London Conference in 1888, crowned by the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York in 1900. Thus the Revival of 1859 helped to lay the foundations of the Modern International and inter-denominational Missionary structure, the International Missionary Council, which Dr. Kenneth S. Latourette dates back 'more directly' to the Liverpool Conference in 1860.[9]

The Father of Modern Missions

In fact we would wish to be earlier in our assessment. Towards the end of the Eighteenth Century a new movement gathered great momentum on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1792 William Carey a shoemaker and Baptist lay preacher, published *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.*

As early as 1787, at a Ministers' fraternal in Northampton he had suggested as a topic for discussion, 'whether the command given to the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations was not binding on all succeeding Ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent!' Dr. Ryland, the Chairman, frowned disapprovingly, jumped up and said:

> Young man, sit down, sit down. You're an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you or me. Besides, Sir, can you preach in Arabic, in Persian, in Hindustani, in Bengali? There must first be another Pentecostal gift of languages.[10]

In spite of Ryland's disapproval the Particular Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen, was founded in 1792, of which Carey was the first Missionary. As in the case of the Puritans, the belief in Predestination, contrary to many critics, was directed into missionary channels. However, D.J. Bosch in his book, *Witness to the World*, sees the extraordinary increase in missionary zeal, from this period onwards, asso-

ciated not only with Carey's name and the accompaniment of the Evangelical Awakening, but also in the further elements—a growing conviction of a manifest Anglo-Saxon destiny in the world, the apocalyptic events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, and the widening millennial expectations.

To return to Carey, he was extraordinarily independent and modern in his outlook. He saw missionary work as a five-pronged advance, with equal attention directed to each of the five elements:

First, the widespread preaching of the Gospel by every possible method;

Secondly, the support of the preaching by the distribution of the Bible in the languages of the country;

Thirdly, the establishment at the earliest possible moment of a Church;

Fourthly, the profound study of the background and thought of the non-Christian peoples;

Fifthly, the training at the earliest possible moment of an indigenous ministry.

To the Ends of the Earth

Bishop Stephen Neill also validates the Evangelical Revival in England as a powerful force for Mission,[11] particularly under the influence of Charles Simeon, incumbent of Holy Trinity, Cambridge. Under him the Reverend David Brown arrived in Calcutta in 1787, later joined by Thomas Thomason and Daniel Corrie, who became Bishop of Madras. Henry Martyn, too, arrived in India in 1806 and died in Persia, at the early age of 31, on his way home to England in 1813. Carey wrote of him that 'as the image or shadow of bigotry is not known among us here, we take sweet counsel together, and go to the house of God as friends'. In seven brief years Martyn had completed a translation of the New Testament in Urdu.

All this was in stark contrast to the deistic flavour of religion during the Eighteenth Century which made the Churches only too ready to acquiesce in the neglect of the heathen. In 1784, apart from the Roman missions, there were only six Missionary Societies, and two hundred missionaries in the world, and of the latter at least half were Moravians. By the end of the Century, when the population of the world was about nine hundred and sixty million, the number of Christians was not greater than one hundred and seventy four million, and the vast majority of them were, of course, in Europe. Again it was unquestionably the growth of Pietism in Germany and the Evangelical Revival in England that began to beat back the forces of indifference.

The Baptist Missionary Society (1792) was quickly followed by the London Missionary Society (1795) and, in 1799, was founded the largest of all, the Church Missionary Society. The Religious Tract Society came into existence in the same year. In 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society began its work, only to be followed by a host of other Societies.

Modern missions in Africa date from the collection of liberated slaves

in the West Coast. By 1846 fifty thousand had been gathered in Sierra Leone. In 1852 an Anglican Bishopric had been established. In Central Africa Livingstone's call was answered by the establishment of the Universities' Mission in 1858. In South Africa Robert Moffat was sent out by the London Missionary Society in 1816. In half a century he established a strong mission among the Bechuanas and translated the whole Bible into Bechuana. The London Missionary Society again started its modern work in China by sending Robert Morrison to Macao in 1807, to be strengthened later by the China Inland Mission—1865—the same year as the Salvation Army was born in the United Kingdom. The most remarkable accession to this Mission was that of the Cambridge Seven, influenced by D.L. Moody, himself a convert of the 1857 Revival in America. The Cambridge Seven, a body of Evangelical graduates, included among their number, the Captain of the Cricket Eleven and the Stroke of the University Boat.

The first English missionary to arrive in Japan was the Reverend George Ensor of the Church Missionary Society, who began his work by converting the man who had come to assassinate him. The first mission to New Zealand, was undertaken by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, the Anglican Chaplain at Sydney. He was accompanied by a schoolmaster, a carpenter, and a shoemaker sent out by the Church Missionary Society. The Party arrived in 1814, and despite the Maoris' reputation for cannibalism, had won the admiration of Charles Darwin by 1835, when the work flourished. In Polynesia, the London Missionary Society tried the experiment of sending out artisans and mechanics to teach the natives trades, as it was felt that they could not become Christians until they had been to some extent civilized. It was found, in point of fact, that results are much better when the teaching of Christianity precedes the teaching of industrial methods. Names associated with this missionary work are Bishop Selwyn, John Coleridge Patteson, consecrated Bishop of Melanesia in 1861, and John G. Paton, who served long enough to see at least one island completely evangelized in the New Hebrides, In 1887 Ian Keith-Falconer, the Reader in Arabic at Cambridge, established a Mission on behalf of the United Free Church of Scotland at Aden, but he died at the end of the four months' toil.

Clearly, great evangelistic and missionary effort was being shown. To cite China alone in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, over twenty societies were represented. By 1875 there were twenty nine, and in 1906 no less than eighty two different missionary organizations had agents in China.[12]

In a recently published book, *The Bible and the Flag*, Dr. Brian Stanley, Lecturer in Church History at Trinity College, Bristol, makes certain significant observations:

1. The Protestant Missionary Movement was in its origins an exclusively evangelical phenomenon. High Churchmen did not jump onto the

missionary bandwagon until the 1830s when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was transformed from a Colonial Church Society into a Society concerned with mission.

2. Evangelicals understood the objective of the missionary enterprise to be the restoration of mankind to a right relationship to its Creator, a restoration that would be achieved through the realization of the Lordship of Christ over the kingdoms of this world—Psalm 2:8: 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession'.

3. For probably the majority of Protestant missionaries throughout the Nineteenth Century, the grave moral seriousness of idolatry seemed to allow one conclusion only, with regard to the eternal destiny of the heathen: unless they believed in Christ they must be presumed lost for all eternity.

4. Evangelical understanding of the doctrine of divine providence provides the most telling illustration of the confluence of biblical and Enlightenment influences, in fashioning the evangelical world-view in the Nineteenth Century. The Biblical revelation of God as the Sovereign Lord of history was married to the Newtonian concept of God as the Supreme Governor of the Universe.

5. The Missionary Movement was born out of a conviction that the Church stood on the brink of the last days of history. Christians expected that the work of foreign missions would initiate a turning of the heathen to Christ on such a scale that the kingdoms of this world would become in actuality the kingdom of Christ. Certainly this eschatology, known as Postmillennialism, was shared by most missionaries and missionary supporters until the 1880s, as Iain Murray has shown in his stimulating work—*The Puritan Hope*. It was Edward Irving in the 1820s and the later Brethren Movement which reversed the teaching. Certainly, it is difficult to argue against Murray's assessment, even if we prefer a different eschatology.

> In and after the 1790's there arose in Britain a series of Missionary Societies, which were to be so strongly supported that for more than a Century, Britain was to remain in the foremost place in the world-wide spread of true Christianity. This small country down to 1900, and beyond, was to contribute more men and more money to the Missionary cause than any other nation.[13]

The Death of Liberalism and the Life of the Gospel

In closing I return to the 1857 Revival which was such a force for good and which charged the Modern Missionary Movement with the new life of the Holy Spirit, sending it to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of God's sovereign grace to dying sinners. For there are some similarities to the circumstances in which we find ourselves today. The 1857 Revival, from which issued the awakenings in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and

England a year or two later, came in the midst of a socio-economic collapse. Though in 1860 more than five million out of her thirty million people were Protestant church members, and around three million of these evangelical Baptists and Methodists, these numbers, like in our own time, seemed to have little effect on the nation. For ten early years (1845–1855) America's spiritual life steadily fell apart. Dr. Orr lists five contributing factors—so similar to our own day—which led to a great economic collapse in the country:

1. Gain, gambling, and greed. Speculation, spectacular wealth, and prosperity for an elite few widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots with a corresponding rapid increase in violent crime.

2. Occult Domination. A nation hungry for the supernatural turned to spiritualism which gained a popular foothold over many minds.

3. Immorality. A playboy philosophy of 'free love' was advocated and accepted by many.

4. Commercial and political corruption. Bribes, graft, and illegal business practices were ripe in the nation; national laws still legalized a cruel system of slavery.

5. Atheism, agnosticism, apathy, and indifference to God, to the church and its message abounded on every hand. 'The decline was fourfold; social, moral, political, and spiritual'.

And judgment came as it may well come to us. Both secular and religious conditions combined to bring about a terrible economic and social crash; thousands of merchants were forced to the wall as banks failed and railroads went into bankruptcy. Factories shut down; vast numbers were thrown out of employment, New York City alone having thirty thousand idle men. By October 1857 people were no longer engaged in speculation and gain, with despair and hunger staring them in the face.

But in the upper lecture-room of the 'Old North Dutch Church', in Fulton Street, New York, a solitary man was kneeling upon the floor, engaged in earnest, importunate prayer. He was a man who lived very much in the lives of others. He had no wife or children—but there were thousands with their husbands and fathers, without God and hope in the world; and these thousands were going to the gates of eternal death. He had, like the intercessor Nehemiah before him, surveyed all the lower wards of the city as a lay-missionary of the Old Church, and he longed to do something for their salvation. He knew he could do many things—he could take tracts in his hand, any and every day, and distribute them. He could preach the gospel from door to door. All this he had done. To reach these perishing thousands, he needed a thousand lives. Could not something more effectual be done? So, day after day, and many times a day, this man was on his knees and his constant prayer was 'Lord, what wilt thou have me do?' He rose from his knees—inspired with courage and hope, derived from God above.

We will describe the man. He was just forty years old. He is tall, well

made, with a remarkable pleasant, benevolent face; affectionate in his disposition and manner, possessed of indomitable energy and perseverance. He has good musical attainments; gifted in prayer and exhortation to a remarkable degree; modest in his demeanour, ardent in piety, sound in his judgment; having good common sense, a thorough knowledge of human nature, and those traits of character that make a welcome guest in any house. He is intelligent, and eminently fitted for the position which he has been called to occupy. His name is Jeremiah Calvin Lamphier, who was born in Coxsackie, New York, and he had not even joined the North Dutch Church until 1857, when he became a lay missionary, under the direction of its consistory. So writes Samuel Prime in the Banner of Truth history of the 1857 Revival published in 1991. I quote Prime as to what really happened next, for it was the beginning of a great Holy Ghost movement which heralded and inspired so much missionary energy in the second part of the Nineteenth Century.

> Going my rounds one day, as I was walking along the streets, the idea was suggested to my mind that an hour of prayer, from twelve to one o'clock, would be beneficial to business men, who usually in great numbers take that hour for rest and refreshment. The idea was to have singing, prayer, exhortation, relation of religious experience, as the case might be; that none should be required to stay the whole hour; that all should come and go as their engagements should allow or require, or their inclinations dictate.
>
> Arrangements were made, and at twelve o'clock noon, on 23rd September 1857 the door of the third storey lecture-room was thrown open. At half-past twelve the step of a solitary individual was heard upon the stairs. Shortly after, another, until six made up the whole company! We had a good meeting. The Lord was with us to bless us.

It will be noted that our missionary sat out the first half of the first noon-day prayer-meeting alone.

But at the second meeting a week afterwards, twenty persons attended. The intensity of prayer and feeling and concern grew. On 14 October he was able to record in his diary

> Attended the noon-day prayer meeting. Over one hundred present, many of them not professors of religion, but under conviction of sin, and seeking an interest in Christ; inquiring what they shall do to be saved. God grant that they find Christ precious to their souls.

Then he added, almost as an afterthought, 'This is a cloudy, rainy day'. By 23 October he was able to call on the editors of the religious papers to have them notice 'the interest that is daily manifested in our meetings'. Thus the revival had actually commenced and had been in progress for some time before any public mention had been made of it, so noiseless had been its footsteps. But what was this revival like? I answer in Samuel Prime's own words:

> The early dawn of the revival was marked by love to Christ, love for all His people, love of prayer, and love of personal effort. Never in any former revival, since the days of the first Christians, was the name of Christ so honoured, never so often mentioned, never so precious to the believer. Never was such ardent love to Him expressed. Never was there so much devotedness to His service. The whole atmosphere was love. It is not strange, then, that those who so loved Him, should love His image wherever and in whomsoever they saw it. It was a moral necessity. The union of Christians was felt. It needed no professions . . . this union of Christians in prayer struck the unbelieving world with amazement. It was felt that this was prayer. This love of Christians for one another, and this love of Christ, this love of prayer and love of souls, this union of all in prayer, whose names were lost sight of, disarmed all opposition, so that not a man opened his mouth in opposition. On the contrary, the conviction was conveyed to all minds that this truly is the work of God. The impenitent felt that Christians loved them; that their love of souls made them earnest. The truth now commended itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. They felt that this was not the work of man, but the work of God. They were awed by a sense of the divine presence in the prayer-meeting, and felt that this was holy ground. Christians were very much humbled. Impenitent men saw and felt this. They felt that it was awful to trifle with the place of prayer; sacrilegious to doubt the spirit, the sincerity, the efficiency, or the power of prayer. It began to be felt that Christians obtained answers to prayer; that if they united to pray for any particular man's conversion, that man was sure to be converted. What made them sure? What made them say that 'they thought this man and that man should soon become Christians?' Because they had become the subjects of prayer. And men prayed in the prayer-meeting, as if they expected God would hear and answer prayer.

Liberalism cannot produce that. Search the whole of the Nineteenth Century and nowhere will you find such records of Liberal triumphs because Liberalism destroys life—it does not generate it. The 1857 Revival is its own witness to the power of 'orthodoxy on fire'.

So within six months of the beginning of the 1857 Revival over 10,000 businessmen were meeting every day in similar meetings, confessing sin, praying for revival. Most of the organizers of the prayer meetings were themselves businessmen; people meeting in stores, company buildings, and churches. With hardly an exception, churches worked together as one; no time for jealousy. By common consent, doctrinal controversies were left alone.

America began to live again. The social and ethical effects continued for almost a century. Geographically, the blessing spread to Great Britain which had over twenty seven million people, of whom a third attended State and Free Church services. There were a hundred thousand converts in Ulster, the same in Wales, three hundred thousand in Scotland, and more than half a million in England by 1865.

Some of the great ministries of more recent history developed during the awakening. The revival saw the flowering of the ministry of

D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey, the world-changing influence of William and Catherine Booth and the Salvation Army. Hudson Taylor's revival-based concept of interdenominational missions, the China Inland Mission, which in due time became the largest Protestant or Catholic missionary body. We may not agree with all their theological predilections but who can argue against their use as instruments for God?

And to Social and Liberal theologians we would wish to emphasize that 'one of the first effects of the revival was a new and intense sympathy for the poor.' 'God has not ordained', protested Anthony Ashley Cooper (later Lord Shaftesbury), 'that in a Christian country there should be an overwhelming mass of foul, helpless poverty'. He wrote in his diary at twenty six years of age:

> Time was when I could not sleep for ambition. I thought of nothing but fame and immortality. But I am much changed. I desire to be useful to my generation and die in the knowledge of having advanced true happiness by having true religion.

Lord Shaftesbury attacked terrible social evils and to those who said of London's thirty thousand naked, wandering, homeless children, 'What will you do with them when educated?' He replied, 'What will you do with them if left where they are?'

Yes, it was not only that missionary work was being done abroad. There was much at home, equally fruit from the revivals of 1857–1860. Thomas Barnado founded the famous homes in London's tragic East End. George Williams, read Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*, and was deeply stirred to evangelism and revival prayer, founding the Young Men's Christian Association on 6 June 1844. Men like David Livingstone held out the challenge for Africa during the revival. Mary Slessor, converted in Dundee in 1860, joined the United Presbyterians in Nigeria and did extraordinary work among the tribes. The seeds of the Keswick Conventions of London, Oxford, and Brighton were laid by Evan Hopkins, a newly converted young clergyman, who had read Wiliam Boardman's hugely successful treatise, *The Higher Christian Life*, published in 1860 at the height of the Awakening. Of course, it contained those Arminian, Pietist, almost mystical elements of a questionable perfectionist holiness, but where would the Mission Fields have been without the contribution of Keswick? Indeed a majority of the Keswick Convention leaders were either evangelists or converts of the Revival. Henry Varley ministered there; D.L. Moody, Reuben Torrey, A.J. Gordon of 'Quiet Talks' fame, A.B. Simpson, J. Wilbur Chapman, and Handley C.G. Moule all supported it or spoke there. So did Andrew Murray and F.B. Meyer. In fact they became its public voice. The Revival influences ran deep, and missionary fervour was at its height, expressed well by Alec Vidler:

> the main motive of missions in the nineteenth century was the evangelical

> one . . . of rescuing as many of the heathen as possible from the everlasting damnation which otherwise awaited them. The grand object was to save as many souls as possible for eternal life in the next world. This was a very powerful motive—more powerful, it seems, than any that derives from a liberal theology about God's dealings with non-Christians, or from a more discriminating assessment of the value of other religions. The simple view that everything in non-Christian religions and culture was evil dominated missionary outlook for a long time, though individuals were of course often more humane than their creeds. The heathen in his blindness bowed down to wood and stone, and that was that.

Vidler writes, no doubt, disapprovingly, but nevertheless objectively and factually. To my mind, Liberalism may consider itself intellectually more attractive but where are its results? 'By their fruits ye shall know them', applies to systems as well as individuals, and here Liberalism leaves the cupboard bare.

In conclusion we agree with the historian, Professor A.M. Renwick:

> As we look at the Protestant Churches in Britain and America, in the second part of the 19th Century, the impression given is one of abounding vitality. It was an age when rationalism and scepticism were spreading in many sections of the population. Nevertheless, for the mass of the people, loyalty to the Gospel call and to the Church was a notable feature of the time but it has never been adequately realized how much this period owed to the Great Revival Movements which took place. This is particularly true of the 1857–60 Revival. As a result of this work of the Holy Spirit, at least one million converts were received into the Church of God in the United States of America alone . . . from America it spread first to Ulster and then to England and Scotland. In Britain, as in America, it was seen to be a work of God, not of man; and in this country, also, a million new members were added to the Churches. The Evangelical Awakening of the 18th Century made a tremendous impression on British Society . . . [but] . . . the revivals which occurred throughout the English-speaking world in 1857–60 injected new vigour into Protestant Church-life.[14]

In stark contrast we are left dumbfounded in the presence of Liberalism. It achieves nothing except unbelief, destruction, re-trenchment, and loss of vision for a perishing world. In Dr. J. Gresham Machen's words:–

> Modern Liberalism may be criticized (1) on the ground that it is unchristian, (2) on the ground that it is unscientific.
>
> Despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religion . . . the liberal attempt at reconciling Christianity with modern science has really relinquished everything distinctive of Christianity so that what remains is in essentials only that same indefinite type of religious aspiration which was in the world before Christianity came upon the scene.[15]

By the end of the Nineteenth Century the influence of the earlier evangelical revivals was fading and critical views were in the ascendancy. George Adam Smith's judgment, at the end of the Century was very perceptive: 'Modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity'.

Quite so! We who live today know what the real cost has been to the Gospel and the Church. Here is our dilemma and our challenge. But the God of the Twentieth Century is not a different God from the One of the Nineteenth! What He has done before, He can do again, if it pleases Him.

In the words of the Prayer Book Litany:

> O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the time before them.
> O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour.

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NOTES

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3 A. Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought*, Oxford Paperbacks, 1992, p. 184.
4 I. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986. p. 141.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 153.
6 H. Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 190.
7 O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (Vol. 2), SCM, London, 1971, p. 92.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
9 J.E. Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening*, Marshall, London, 1949, p. 224.
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11. S. Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, Penguin, London, 1964, p. 266.
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14 A.M. Renwick, *The Story of the Church*, Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 1958, p. 192ff.
15 J.G. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1923, p. 7.