

K. S. INGLIS. — *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1963. 336 pp. Studies in Social History, edited by Harold Perkins.

STEPHEN MAYOR. — *Churches and the Labour Movement*. London : Independent Press, 1967. 387 pp.

Back in the 1950's social historians began to realize that some attention had to be given to the role of religion in Victorian England. Halévy had already noted in his monumental study that religion influenced even the State's attempts to legislate "the dictates of the national conscience", and by the 1950's men like Asa Briggs were recognizing that further serious study had to be given to the role of the churches. It was a task which most social historians did not relish, however, for it is a difficult task to delve into ecclesiastical history of any kind, without becoming caught up in the complexities of theological disputation. Then rumours of major unexamined pamphlet collections in places like Pusey House, Oxford, began to circulate among eager young men looking for fresh Ph.D. material. By the end of the 1950's published lists of doctoral dissertations revealed that an increasing number of young scholars were showing interest in the relationship between the churches and Victorian society.

One of the first studies of the role of the churches in nineteenth century England to be produced from this new interest in religious history is *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, by K. S. Inglis, an Australian scholar who studied at Oxford under the direction of G. D. H. Cole. The work is a valuable one because it attempts to explore for the first time an area which had been overlooked for too long. The pages are full of information, raising problems that are interesting and suggestive. One of them, the implications of the religious census of 1851, led Professor Inglis to produce his valuable detailed study of its methodology in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* in 1960. Some chapters of the book, such as his study of the Labour Church Movement from 1892-1902, are extremely important and reveal wide reading.

There is one great defect in the work, however, one which reveals why so many historians have noted the need for a study of the role of the churches in Victorian society and yet have hesitated to touch the problem themselves. Dr. Inglis, very commendably yet rashly, has written about a subject which he really does not completely understand. I have no knowledge of his degree of theological comprehension now, but it is clear that he had rather little in 1963. He may well have been initiated into an acceptable sociological outlook by Professor Cole, but no historian can write good ecclesiastical history without understanding, at a level of empathy, the life of the institutions he is discussing. If Dr. Inglis had spent a period

of time with a master of the Victorian religious scene — such as Owen Chadwick — his work would have been immeasurably more valuable.

Inglis approaches the churches of Victorian England from the standpoint of an enlightened liberal historian who lives in a social-welfare state of the twentieth century. His tone is quietly yet consistently judgmental, as he disparages Victorian churches for not existing primarily as agencies of political, economic and social reform which would consciously seek to bring about the earthly Zion which we have inherited in our own age. It is clear that he is at least puzzled, if not openly disappointed, by church leaders who seemed to be much more interested in developing moral character than they were in installing drainpipes in new urban centres.

Take, for example, his treatment of Edward Bouverie Pusey, one of the leaders of the original Oxford Movement and the father-in-God to a whole generation of Ritualist slum priests. Their service to the working classes of England, and indeed to the nation as a whole, has yet to be measured. Yet Inglis states quite baldly that none of the leaders of the Oxford Movement were more than casually interested in social problems, and that Pusey himself was “not interested in social reform” (p. 266).

It is perfectly true that John Henry Newman, because of his theological views, showed little interest in matters of social reform; but it is historically incorrect — in fact a gross misrepresentation — to put Newman and Pusey in the same school of thought when discussing social ideology. Newman's Augustinian theology led him to cast a cold and suspicious eye on any struggle for social improvement that took place in a fallen world; but Pusey was very much concerned with the failings of the social system in Victorian England. His concern also reflected a theological outlook, but the theological environments of the movements and the individuals that Dr. Inglis examines are seldom referred to.

What Dr. Inglis fails to grasp is that E. B. Pusey had a highly developed social conscience, although it was a different kind of social conscience from that held by a latter-day Fabian of the G. D. H. Cole school of thought. Pusey had the mind — and the heart — of an enlightened Christian gentleman of Victorian England. He was born in 1800, as a privileged member of the gentry, and it would really have been remarkable if he had thought or acted in a way beyond the capacity of a man of his time. But just because he shared the outlook of most members of his generation, and believed in matters like the immutability of economic laws and the efficacy of private philanthropy, it is incorrect, as well as unfair, to accuse him of having no interest in social problems. To say that “No less than Wesley and Wilberforce Pusey conceived destitution as a spiritual condition” (p. 266) distorts the social outlook of the saintly Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford.

I suspect that Inglis' failure to understand a churchman like Pusey stems from his lack of acquaintance with seminal figures in the development of Victorian theological and social thought: men like Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Like most of his generation Pusey was greatly influenced by the thought of the sage of Highgate, not least by his idea of the "clerisy", that body of creative and privileged men who were called by God to serve their less fortunate neighbours in the nation. Inglis says (p. 267) that the Christian Socialism of F. D. Maurice was founded upon the teaching of the Tractarians, but it was Coleridge — not Newman — who influenced the founder of Christian Socialism, the Cooperative Movement and the Working Men's Colleges. He gave to Maurice, to Pusey and to most of their generation the concept of the clerisy, and a new social ethic. He also added to the early Victorian concept of the Church, derived from Hooker, which men like Maurice and Pusey held. Maurice and Pusey might solemnly agree that they did not believe in the same God. But they did agree that the Church they belonged to was called by their different deities to be the conscience of the nation.

Within the year that Newman left the Church of England because it did not agree with his abstract theological concept of what the Church should be, two significant movements appeared. Each of them represented the work of churchmen who had advanced Victorian social consciences, who considered that the Christian had to be a member of the clerisy, and for whom the Church was the conscience of the English nation. The first of these was the founding of a periodical paper, *The Guardian*. It was concerned not only with purely religious affairs, but also with scientific developments and the arts, because it believed that the duty of the Church was to pass judgment on all issues of public significance. It was one of the few religious publications of the age which was enlightened enough to welcome the evolutionary ideas of Darwin.

The second movement was represented by the founding of the slum parish of St. Saviour's, Leeds, by Dr. Pusey. Pusey had given large sums previously to Bishop C. J. Blomfield, to bring religion and civilization to the slums of the metropolis. He had also castigated undergraduates for their self-indulgent ways of life, and had radically curtailed his own expenditures for the sake of charity. But his foundation of St. Saviour's, Leeds, had a deeper significance than even Pusey realized at the time. For it was one of the first Ritualist slum churches whose clergy challenged their privileged contemporaries to join them in their attempt to bridge the religious and social gap between the "two nations" in Victorian England.

Long before Beatrice Potter wrote in the *Nineteenth Century* about her experiences in East End sweat shops, Ritualist clergy in London's dockland were making their contemporaries aware that in Wapping over a hundred people a year died of starvation. The *Guardian* of 1865 warned the author-

ities of the approaching cholera epidemic which hit London's East End in all its terror the following year. During this epidemic, Ritualist supporters like Pusey and the Hon. Charles L. Wood (later Lord Halifax) carried cholera victims in their arms to the temporary fever hospitals which churchmen manned in Bethnal Green. While they engaged in this direct "ambulance work", they used their positions of privilege, and organs like the *Guardian*, to castigate the callousness of the privileged who ceased to show alarm once they were convinced the contagion was to be confined to the East End.

Beyond the "Nonconformist Conscience", which Dr. Inglis admits did exist, there is the history of "clerisy" ideology for whose development and propagation men like Pusey sacrificed much. To say that a man like Pusey lacked social conscience, as Inglis does, is to reveal a general ignorance of the Victorian religious scene that should be recognized by anyone who uses his book. No historian can attempt a purely sociological approach to the problem of Victorian religion and its influence on society. It is disturbing, perhaps even incomprehensible to some twentieth-century minds, but the Victorians were passionately interested in theology. They cared more for the "Papal Aggression" than they did for the Great Exhibition at mid-century. And their theological ideas had consequences; they made their nation one of the most religious that the world has seen.

The advantage of Mr. Mayor's book is that he obviously has been a student of Victorian theology as well as of Victorian society. He makes the usual mistake of identifying Pusey as the leader of the Tractarians after Newman's defection, but he is able to recognize the intention of the Ritualists and to appreciate what they accomplished. He notes that by the end of the century it had become a tradition in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church for a newly-ordained curate to go to a slum parish. He notes that the *Guardian*, in 1856, could write on social matters with a tone which "might almost be from the writings of Marx" (p. 32). He also understands the idea of the "clerisy" behind the social role of the clergy which the *Guardian* approved (perhaps for the wrong reasons) :

It is no small security for the peace of this nation that 17,000 men scattered throughout the country, in positions which give them access to the poor at all times when they are most open to influence, are connected in habits and prospects, by blood and acquaintance and prepossessions, with what has been called the upper 10,000 (10 Dec. 1856).

Mayor also comments on the slow decline in religious influence in the nation, not in terms of statistics of church attendance alone, but because of the churches' shift in ideology. He recognizes and deplors the "contraction of interest and scope" on the part of religious publications. For this reflected the abandonment of ideas such as the churches' duty to act as the conscience of the nation, or the clergy's obligation to act as part of the "clerisy". By the end of the century the religious press reveals that the churches were

thinking of themselves less as the corporate conscience of the nation and more as religious minorities in a secular and pluralistic society.

From being the regulative principle of society — even if one often challenged — religion had shrunk to nothing more than one of the more important aspects of public life. Nothing had taken its place, and the idea of a regulative principle was no longer accepted, for the age of cultural anarchy was at hand. The narrowing of scope did not prevent the religious press from giving the most comprehensive advice to labour leaders, as to statesmen, but it was advice from one estate of the realm to another; not the somewhat imperious instruction of a mother for her prodigal offspring (p. 79).

He reveals that men like Keir Hardie and Ben Tillett never gave up hope that in spite of its failings the Church might become progressive in social matters, because like most Victorians they had dimly grasped what the Church might have been, should have been, and could have been, as the conscience of the nation.

Probably the defects in Inglis's volume reflect the fact that it was in many ways the first of its kind. It is packed with valuable information, but it is weak in insight. To give Inglis his due, he is aware of the deficiencies of his work; in conclusion he admires the work of religious sociologists like Gabriel Le Bras in France, and admits that nothing comparable has been attempted in England. He has given to English history what it greatly needed — a pioneer work in this field. Mayor's book is able to build on the defects of its predecessor. It has its limitations of format and writing — it is probably based on an academic thesis and reads as such — but Stephen Mayor is able to think as both a historian and a theologian. It is impossible for anyone to write successful ecclesiastical history without possessing such ability.

Desmond BOWEN,
Carleton University.

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CHARLES LIPTON. — *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959*. Montreal: Canadian Social Publications, 1966. 356 pages.

Canadian historiography on the subject of the Canadian labour movement is meagre. There are some solid articles on various aspects of this important subject and a few monographs and books, but there is still a great deal of work to be done in the field. It is encouraging to see that academics are now producing provocative studies¹ on areas that had been relatively untouched.

¹ For example: John CRISPO, *International Unionism: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (New York, 1967) and Gad HOROWITZ, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto, 1968). There are as well some useful articles: D. G. CREIGHTON, "George Brown, Sir John A. Macdonald, and the 'Workingman'", *Canadian Historical Review*, XXIV (1943); F. W. WATT, "The National Policy, the Workingman and Proletarian Ideas in Victorian Canada", *ibid.*, XL (1959); Bernard OSTRY, "Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1870's", *ibid.*, XLI (1960) and "Conservatives,