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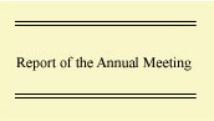

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THE PRODUCT OF REVOLUTIONS: BASIC FACTORS IN ENGLISH HISTORY

By A. R. M. Lower

I

English history seems to be characterized by some deep-seated principle of unity: a sort of inevitable march to it tempts the observer to think in terms of a modified predestination. Whatever this principle is, its manifestations are legion. If one could penetrate to its heart—and that no doubt is impossible—he would find a key which would unlock many doors.

To understand English life and thought it must be recognized that it is very largely the product of two revolutions, in both of which the English-speaking world still lives. These revolutions are the Reformation and the parliamentary struggle of the seventeenth century. To English life, as it is to-day and as it has been for many generations these two revolutions give its wide harmonies and its deep contradictions.

From the Reformation comes Protestantism, the typical religion of the English-speaking peoples, Protestantism in various degrees of departure from the Roman tradition. Nothing has so cut England off from that continent of which in medieval times she was a part, nothing has so re-enforced her isolation, as has the severance of the tie with Rome. That sense of discontinuity, that separation geographically and spiritually from the main stream of European tradition, for which the vigour of the Elizabethan Renaissance was never able to compensate, has been carried by the English peoples all over the world and operates powerfully to-day. The Reformation in England was first of all a movement against external control, rather than a religious experience. This antagonism to outside control has never died down and lies at the roots of English nationalism and of the nationalism of all the English-speaking peoples.

So completely was tradition upset by the Reformation that virtually nothing remained which was not insular. English political institutions had always been England's and *they* carried over, but of other characteristic marks of medievalism few remained. Even feudalism underwent a change, the responsibility and harshness of the baronial class, still evident in recent times on the continent, becoming tempered down into the more or less genial paternalism of the squire.

The Reformation cut clean from the continent. The seventeenth-century revolutions in their turn drove a deep fissure into English life itself which still remains one of its most obvious features. *Cavalier* and *Roundhead,* taken not too narrowly, are good current terms and nearly every significant issue still tends to divide English opinion in much the same way as it was divided in Cromwellian times. Those who rallied to King Charles were, in the main, of the same world as those who would have rallied to King Edward.

This primary division, it may be said in parenthesis, pushes out overseas, but not in as well-marked a form, certainly not on this continent. America is the Roundhead's citadel, for we did not bring all aspects of English life across the seas with us, but mainly one, Puritanism. This continent, or most of it, represents a single stratum of English life, drawn out and made into a whole society.

To return to England; the two views of life manifest themselves in a rather obvious manner. Given a man's "class", his general stock-in-trade

of ideas and his affiliations in various spheres can be worked out with fair accuracy. With the *Cavalier,* may be associated what remains of feudalism —and in England that amounts to more than in any other white country— Toryism (which is not the same as Conservatism, it is to be remarked), Anglicanism, the country house, the fighting "services", and the monarchical idea of the state. The *Roundhead* may still be taken to represent the Puritan view of life, dissent (in the English sense), individualism, the middle class, commerce, and so on. In practice, three centuries of living together have softened the lines of distinction and complicated the simplicity of the picture but in the main the division holds.

The Cavalier tradition has come down most distinct. Though it has succeeded in associating with it certain groups that stem from Puritanism, such as certain sections of the higher ranges of finance, and in completely absorbing many individuals, it remains to-day remarkably intact. Puritanism, on the other hand, has divided and subdivided, setting up contradictory manifestations that sometimes are at complete opposites.

Its chief divisions are two: individualism and humanitarianism. Calvinism, the parent of English and American Puritanism, will have nothing between the individual and his Maker. "What need they of lenses who can look in the eye of the sun?" This tremendous burden laid on the individual has not crushed him. On the contrary, it has caused him to wear the fetters of society lightly. The individual no longer is a mere cog in a wheel: he is in charge of his own destiny. By a measure of historical accident he found himself in charge of his own destiny at the same time as he saw facing him a whole new world to move about in. Hence the tremendous wave of materialism and exploitation which continues on down into our own day and which finds expression in such terms as *commercialism, industrialism, business, prosperity, development,* and *"progress"*. All this is of the earth earthy and it is not necessary to lay the whole burden of it on the shoulders of Puritanism, but the felicitous combination of creed and opportunity were to dominate the nature of many of the most characteristic expressions of English-speaking life down to our own day.

Individualism driven to an extreme has worked out into some unlovely forms: the attempt to erect a philosophy on its extremes has largely failed— that ridiculous creature, the economic man, has long been admitted to be not an extinct species but a character in fiction. "Each for himself and the devil take the hindmost", as a principle of politics once had a certain vogue but it soon proved no foundation on which to build a society, and except in the backwoods recesses of North American capitalism, has now disappeared.

The introspective and self-regarding aspects of Puritanism—that concern for one's own "election" which made him so strangely indifferent to the fate of other people and which underlay a good deal of the extremity of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century individualism—soon set up their own antidotes. Two hundred years ago this year, John Wesley "got religion". The date conveniently marks the beginning of the vast movement known as *humanitarianism,* a movement that was also based on the individual but which consisted in solicitude for other individuals rather than in concern for one's own personal interests. Within fifty years humanitarianism was making over English life, cleaning up prisons, reforming the criminal code, attempting to free the slave and beginning the modern missionary movement. Within a century, or by about 1833, it was making

a bid for control of the state and the same generation which saw the triumph of individualism in the repeal of the Corn Laws witnessed the victories of humanitarianism in the emancipation of the slaves and the enactment of the factory laws.

Humanitarianism within the last century has become the characteristic expression of English-speaking Protestantism. The hard old selfishness of Calvinism has disappeared, even from Presbyterianism, and along with it most of the mystical elements of religion, but "service", the social virtues, the emphasis on the decent treatment of others, the attempt to relieve suffering and to stamp out poverty, all these leading to some blurred vision of an ideal society, these things have become the ordinary expressions of religion.

How great the gap is between the two points of view! The inheritance of individualism, still strong in every English-speaking heart, in its dominating materialistic expression, gives us the horse-trading view of society on which modern business is based. It involves the worship of things, not the love of life. "Success" is its criterion. The ethic that it evolves suggests that all roads to wealth are legal roads, even though they include tyranny, injustice, teleological futility, sharp practice, and in case of necessity, bloodshed.

On the other hand, the inheritance of humanitarianism is equally strong in every English-speaking breast—and a virtual monopoly of the English-speaking world—an inheritance that produces multitudes of good causes, that fills the subscription lists of charities, that insists that we are our brothers' keepers. It was humanitarianism that completed the ruin of the West Indies in freeing the slaves, it was humanitarianism that forced a Tory English government much against its will, to undertake to apply sanctions in order to prevent the Italians conquering Ethiopia.

For the last hundred years the two offspring of Puritanism have met in every aspect of English life and in every corner of the British Empire. First one has triumphed, then the other. First there is a tremendous outcry against the Turks for their Bulgarian atrocities, next there are fleets sent to protect the Turks against the armies that are about to punish them for their Bulgarian atrocities. First the unregenerate trader goes into some South Sea paradise, and with his rum and his diseases, his immoralities, and his weapons, debauches and destroys the native. Next the missionary comes along with another more polite but just as deadly a stock of diseases, edges out the trader and attempts to keep his island a native preserve of primitive innocence and Calvinistic propriety. Everywhere and at all times the two great ethics struggle with each other, causing government to blow first hot and then cold, to cancel one day the decision made the day before, to disavow its agents and refuse to keep the agreements they have made, earning for England that sobriquet *Perfidious Albion* and the reputation for hypocrisy that she will never live down.

II

The inheritance of Cavalier and Roundhead, the latter subdivided into materialistic individualism and humanitarianism, are the deep conditioning factors of all British action in the modern world. They throw off certain great derivatives which are themselves big enough to constitute major fields of historical thinking.

From Puritanism, plus opportunity, there springs the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution is the product of individualism. If it does not actually create, it at least brings into great prominence a new social class, the self-made man, the *bourgeois,* the middle class. The latter part of the eighteenth century sees the middle classes quietly growing in strength, wealth, and influence. Sir Robert Peel's grandfather, originally a simple yeoman, founds the family fortunes in cotton spinning and puts his son, the first Sir Robert, through the traditional mill which grinds out gentlemen—Eton and Oxford. The house of Baring, first founded by a Prussian immigrant, supplies in the person of Alexander Baring, a powerful financial spokesman in Parliament. Such men are sure of themselves: they are the architects of their own fortunes, they wish nobody's assistance in running their business: they are the Henry Fords of their day.

In the first half of the nineteenth century these men go on logically to a fight for the control of the state: Huskisson's reforms, the Great Reform Bill of 1832, and Peel's budgets ending in the repeal of the Corn Laws, chart the course of the struggle which ends in victory. The new men have established the laissez-faire state, the policeman state, whose business is simply to act as referee in the ring, or as Cobden put it:—no workman has a right to combine with others to force his will on his employers; let every individual look after his own affairs; the proper course for the discontented workman is to save £20 and emigrate to America.

Religiously, the Industrial Revolution correlates with Non-Conformism, especially with Quakerism and the less "respectable" sects such as Methodists and Baptists, and with low-church Anglicanism. Many of the pioneers, especially in iron-founding, banking, and the new importing industries such as the cocoa trade, were Quakers. Wilkinson the "iron man", a pioneer of eighteenth-century iron-founding, was a Quaker. John Bright was a Quaker. Elizabeth Fry, the prison reformer, was a member of the famous "cocoa" family, and Gibbon Wakefield, that curious combination of Quaker philanthrophy and Quaker shrewdness gone wrong, was a relative of hers. Cobden and the original Peel were Anglicans.

Politically, it correlates with certain groups on the left wings of both the traditional parties. The Barings, bankers and originally from Germany, were nearly all left-wing Tories. Peel was a Tory who consistently betrayed his party until he had made it over into Conservatism. The Manchester School, which represented the very heart of the new industrialism, supplied M.P.'s who were somewhere over on the left of the Whig party. The party correlation is not entirely clear, being confused first by the conflict of interests within the world of industry itself (a conflict which caused certain old occupations such as shipping to be mainly Tory), and secondly by the affiliations of pure economic laissez-faire with doctrinaire intellectualism, a topic to be discussed below.

Just as humanitarianism was the eighteenth-century antidote for self-regarding puritanism, so industrialism developed its antidote in the form of socialism. English socialism, coming out of the actual conditions of an industrial society, proceeding by trial and error, pragmatic in consonance with the English mentality, was the pioneer movement of its kind. The doctrines were supplied later by such parlour pinks as Karl Marx. In

England, socialism, after Francis Place had secured the repeal of the combination laws (1825), went on into the Reform Bill agitation alongside the middle class, but being betrayed by the middle class, who had no intention of sharing their victory with their employees, it was driven into new paths and emerged politically as Chartism. Partly in sympathetic reflection of continental revolutionary movements, Chartism reached its apex, in the same year as did they, in the presentation of the very mild "People's Charter" of 1848.

Socialism and humanitarianism in some of their aspects closely approach each other: they are, however, distinguished in that while socialism represents an intellectual attempt to incorporate the principle of justice into society, humanitarianism is primarily ameliorative and proceeds not so much from the intellect as from the emotions. It is perhaps this which makes it so congenial to the English temperament. To English-speaking peoples the undue use of the intellect is always anathema: they neither like to think overmuch, to think clearly, or to think abstractly. Humanitarianism, requiring not cool heads but warm hearts, enables them to avoid this necessity. It is in essence a kind of inverse materialism. It objects to the irresponsible pursuit of wealth mainly when that leads to the waste of human material. For it the great end is not so much the triumph of the spirit over the flesh as the salvation of the flesh in the form of the lessening of pain, the multiplying of means of food and shelter, orderly and decent living within a materialistic code. "I am come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly", it translates into "I am come that ye might have well-being and have more abundance".

Paradoxically, its semi-materialistic basis is capable of producing striking examples of self-immolation. Names such as Livingstone's immediately come to mind. Humanitarianism has furnished its quota of martyrs, all of them as much inspired by what they conceived to be the will of God as any seventeenth-century Jesuit in the Canadian wilderness. But for all of them the salvation that they have so ardently preached has involved a salvation for the body as well as for the soul. Nowadays, with Protestantism no longer much concerned over the salvation of men's souls, the materialistic aspects of the gospel of humanitarianism stand very clearly revealed, for to-day its pre-occupation is almost solely with temporal well-being.

Socially, humanitarianism has correlated with reform movements of every description, such as prison reform, factory acts, or in our own day, prohibition, mother's allowances, and so on. It appears to have had no clear economic tenets, the same individuals often being warm-hearted supporters of good causes—especially those in distant lands—and at the same time directly engaged in exploitive activity. Religiously, it correlates with Methodism and Evangelicanism.

Both these forms of Protestantism stand close behind the two characteristic expressions of humanitarianism in our period, the movement for the abolition of the slave trade and the missionary movement.

The abolition of the slave trade was the direct result of the work of a relatively small body of men who at the beginning of the century had their nucleus in the well-known group, "The Clapham Sect". This group had direct access to government through such men as Wilberforce and James Stephen, the latter for years a sort of unofficial colonial minister.

He was succeeded by his son, afterwards Sir James Stephen, influential in the department from an early period and under-secretary for the colonies from the year 1836, one of the most influential persons who ever had to do with colonial government. When in 1835 Lord Glenelg, another adherent of the "Sect", became colonial secretary, humanitarianism at one step conquered the whole apparatus of colonial government. Henceforth colonies would tend to be governed in the interests of the "oppressed" within them. In Canada "the oppressed" would mean the French, in the West Indies the word would mean the now liberated slaves, and in other parts it would mean "natives". The whole weight of Non-Conformism and of the Evangelical wing of the church would bear down on government, hindering the growth of British dominion in South Africa, delaying for nearly ten years the annexation of New Zealand, successfully preventing the extension of British rule to many of the islands of the Pacific.

The modern missionary movement coincides closely in time with the movement for the abolition of slavery. In 1792 the Baptist Missionary Society was founded by that Henry Cary who was to render himself so unpopular with British officials in India. In 1793 the London Missionary Society, notable for its work in the South Seas, was begun, in 1796 the Edinburgh and Glasgow Missionary Society, in 1799 the Church Missionary Society, in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society, and so on. The movement spread beyond the British Isles, beyond the race and beyond Protestantism, reaching out first to the United States where the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was founded in 1810, and next to Protestant Germany and France, where numerous societies were founded after 1820. In 1822, the Institution for the Propagation of the Faith, founded at Lyons, France, indicated that the contagion was spreading to Catholicism.

The missionary movement, it may be inferred, during the period under discussion was one of the chief obstacles to colonization. The concern of the missionary was for the well-being of his flock and he always believed, generally rightly, that his flock would be better off if there were no other white men around. Consequently he resisted settlement and he resisted annexation because of the rights with which annexation would endow all British subjects. It was the most successful and influential of these early missionaries, Doctor Philip of the London Missionary Society, whose general policy led to those disturbances in the Cape in 1834 which resulted first in the annexation by D'Urban of the region between the Great Fish River and the Kei, and next in the revocation of the annexation by Glenelg. If there is one factor more than another which has caused South Africa to have such a troubled history it is the secular conflict between humanitarianism as represented by the English missionaries and seventeenth-century Puritan individualism as represented by the Boers, with the puzzled Cavalier pro-consuls and men-at-arms such as D'Urban and Smith standing by, attempting to keep the peace.

In more recent times, the missionary movement has tended to press for annexation rather than to resist it. The reason is plain: after 1878, when the scramble for territory began, if the missionaries could not secure British annexation they were in danger of annexation by some other European power. It was under such pressure that regions like Nyassaland and parts of Uganda were brought in.

The gist of this most absorbing struggle of philosophies, the struggle of apparent disinterestedness against exploitation, is well put in the words of a piece of doggerel verse by a well-known Canadian author:

When we in touch with heathen come
We send them first a case of rum.
Next, to rebuke their native sin,
We send a missionary in.
Then when the hungry Hottentot,
Has boiled his pastor in a pot
We teach him Christian, dumb contrition
By means of dum-dum ammunition.
The situation grows perplexed,
The wicked country is annexed.
But oh! the change, when o'er the wild
Our sweet humanity has smiled!
The savage shaves his shaggy locks,
Wears breeches and balbriggan socks,
Learns Euclid, classifies the fossils,
Draws pictures of the Twelve Apostles.
And now his pastor at the most,
He is content to simply roast.
Forgetful of the art of war,
He smokes a twenty cent cigar.
He drinks not rum, his present care is
For whiskey and Appolinaris.
Content for this his land to change,
He fattens up and dies of mange.
Lo! on the ashes of his Kraal,
A Protestant Cathed-er-all!

STEPHEN LEACOCK, *College Days.*

A third descendant of Puritanism was the intellectual movement of the early nineteenth century. Puritanism had its very pronounced intellectual side. Three-hour sermons in the seventeenth century were in reality often profound metaphysical dissertations, starting endless series of discussions among their hearers, thrusting them into the regions of abstract thought and sending them scouring through the written word for arguments and rebuttals. In much the same way as Victorian piety has worked out into twentieth-century rationalism, so this intellectual emphasis of seventeenth-century Puritanism can be seen working out into eighteenth-century rationalism—through such men as Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith. The chain goes on in unbroken sequence through Jeremy Bentham, the elder Mill, *etc.*, until the movement emerges as the Philosophical Radicalism of the 1820's and 1830's.

Philosophical Radicalism correlates on its economic side with laissez-faire, the new industrialism, free trade, freedom of contract, the policeman state. On its ethical side, it is agnostic, or even atheistic. It was the free-thinking of Joseph Hume and his friends which prompted Egerton Ryerson to write his celebrated diatribe against the English Radicals and thereby to terminate his alliance with William Lyon Mackenzie.

On its social side Philosophical Radicalism is associated with the Baltic timber traders, an old middle-class group, and with Cambridge University. Its representative figures, Grote, Roebuck, Poulett Thomson, Villiers, *etc.*, are half business men, half literary figures. They are all of the substantial middle classes. Politically the school stands behind constitutional reform, where it meets other somewhat similar groups, especially the left wing of the aristocratic element among the Whigs, which had preserved the tradition of 1688 in its purest form,—that little group centring around Earl Grey, Lord Russell, Lord Durham, and Holland House, and sometimes known as the Liberal Imperialists.

III

Just as Puritanism has thrown off all these major derivatives, the Cavalier tradition has also had its varied modes of expression. It is difficult to give them a philosophical form but the word Romanticism comes close to indicating their general nature. The romantic movement was in many ways a revival of the Cavalier tradition; indeed, it to some extent was a revival of medieval tradition; "Pre-Raphaelite" was not an empty name.

Romanticism could be associated with the appeal of the senses, (whence comes the reverence for the beautiful), the feeling for mystery (whence come its mystics such as Keble and Newman), a certain repugnance for the free play of the intellect (whence come the Oxford Movement, Anglo-Catholicism, and the recovery of ground in England by the Roman Catholic church), and with avidity for the glamour of the primitive (whence came late eighteenth-century pre-occupation with "Gothic barbarianism" and that delight in adventure, either vicarious or actual, which has driven Englishmen by the hundreds to wander into the strange places of the earth).

Romanticism stood in the full stream of the English literary tradition, which has derived in only a relatively minor degree from Puritanism and whose full force stems from the older world of the Elizabethans and of Catholic medievalism. It found itself in full sympathy with the monarchical state, whose trappings and ceremony delighted its eyes and appealed to its sense of the mystical. Its typical figures were Byron, whose grandiose heroes exactly fitted the mood of an age where Britons could go off in any given direction and rule in solitary majesty, like Rajah Brooke of Sarawak, and Carlyle, whose impatience with the "talking shop" of Parliament, whose invectives against the cheap industrialism of the day, and whose general love of authority and the strong man put him into the same camp as D. H. Lawrence, with his anti-intellectualism. Lawrence is the intellectual father of English fascism, Carlyle is the grandfather of English fascism and of German nazi-ism.

It was in India that Romanticism was best seen projected against the screen of Empire. In that country the merchant had lost his early priority and had been replaced by the Cavalier. It was still the land of opportunity, if not for stealing diamonds from idols as had the ancestors of the Pitts, at least for conquering provinces. Thus out of the sheer lust of conquest Napier took Scind in 1846, sending back his famous despatch

"peccavi". India was the land for the medieval feudal baron to find his rebirth.

But shortly after the end of our period Romanticism began to lose its gusto. Most of the provinces of India had been conquered. Most of the delights of the religion of mysticism had been explored. The blood-letting of the Crimean War tended to moderate slightly the exuberance of a people who had for a generation been thinking of the earth as their private playground. The romantic, full-blooded, Byronic hero was being replaced with the anaemic figure who flits through Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. The day of the strong man, the bearded man, the paterfamilias with his huge family, the day of ardent hopes, great eloquence, and unlimited horizons was drawing into afternoon.

IV

Throughout the period and throughout centuries of English history, penetrating and underlying all the philosophical attitudes, there seems to run in the profoundest stream of all, insistence on self-government and freedom. It can only be mentioned here. It permeates every quarter except the most extreme regions of feudalism and Anglo-Catholicism. But it cannot be kept at home. It is distinctly an export commodity. It was exported with Strongbow to Ireland, it was sent out in 1618 to Virginia, in 1630 to Boston, in 1763 to Quebec and later on to Australia, to South Africa, to India, to Egypt. When this tradition of self-government comes in, the continuance of Empire goes out. Empire—rule by dominance—will not mix with freedom. Hence the American Revolution, hence the Canadian attainment of responsible government, hence the Union of South Africa, the "treaty" with Southern Ireland, the Government of India Act, and the independence of Egypt. There is as deep an antimony between the two traditions of freedom and dominance as there is between the other two, individualism and humanitarianism.

Thus at the base of all English life there lie a series of gigantic contradictions. Within them is to be found the motive power for great accomplishments, but as soon as great deeds have been wrought one philosophy begins to destroy that which the other has created. Individual enterprise, the thirst for adventure, even humanitarian impulse, create a great empire but no sooner is it created than humanitarian impulse and above all, the tradition of freedom, of which all the others are in some degree an expression, begin to disintegrate it. Whether the disintegration that these things effect is or is not but itself an expression of some still more profound integration, it remains for the future to reveal.

Discussion. Mr. Trotter pointed out, in reference to Mr. Lower's remarks on humanitarianism, that it was difficult to appreciate the other side of the movement: that is, it was connected more with the salvation of souls than with material well-being. The two were related, but he felt that the religious aspect was the more important.

Mr. Harvey suggested that the Puritans believed that we must watch over others as well as ourselves, a point of view which was sometimes carried to an extreme.

Mr. Brown referred to the difference in attitude between the Calvinist and the Wesleyan. The Puritan in New England was more concerned

with the defence of his local Christian Commonwealth than with missions to the Indians.

Mr. Lower said that, incidentally, he made no apologies for touching religious issues, for religion was far too great a force in society to be neglected by the historian. Concerning the point that had been made that Puritanism was a self-regarding movement, there was no missionary movement in New England as compared with New France.

Mr. Harvey asked if there was no missionary movement in Scottish Puritanism.

Mr. Lower replied that there was not prior to the nineteenth century, by which time it had lost a good deal of the harshness of the old Puritanism.