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Hinde of Islington

Leonard Hickin.

If anyone in the late 1920s had prophesied that there would be a resurgence of Evangelical life in the Church of England, few church leaders would have taken such a prophecy seriously. 'I can see no future for Evangelicals in the Church of England,' said a senior bishop in 1930 to a young Evangelical ordinand. Not a few bishops treated Evangelicals as poor relations, and there were those who made no attempt to understand their point of view¹. A few did their best to ignore them and pretend that they were not there; they were not unlike the aged Tractarian divine who, in the 1890s, when he went for a walk along Banbury Road, Oxford, always passed the newly established Wycliffe Hall with averted gaze!

The years that followed the first World War were exceptionally difficult ones for Evangelicals. Their ranks were divided by acute controversy and there was a dearth of leadership². A heavy burden of responsibility rested upon the shoulders of the few men who were raised up as leaders, and they discharged their responsibility with great faithfulness. One who stood out head and shoulders above his fellow-Evangelicals at this period was Herbert William Hinde.

Herbert William Hinde, who was born nearly 100 years ago in October 1877, was the second son of Frank Page Hinde, a silk merchant and manufacturer in the City of Norwich. The Hindes had come to East Anglia from France in the 17th century and were proud of their Huguenot background. R.C.K. Ensor tells us that by 1870 Evangelicalism had attained the peak of its influence in Victorian England³. This was indeed the case in East Anglia at that period, and Norwich was noted as a centre of vigorous Evangelical witness⁴. Frank Hinde and his brother played a leading part in Evangelical activities and were keen supporters of missionary work, particularly that of the Church Missionary Society.

This atmosphere of deep Protestant and Evangelical conviction was to leave an indelible mark on the life and character of Herbert Hinde. He never ceased to thank God that he had been fortunate enough to grow up in such a godly home. Not only was he in later life to enter the ranks of the ordained ministry, but his example was followed by two younger brothers (Sidney, who became a CMS missionary in India, and Percy).

'Pembroke College, Cambridge, B.A. 1899, M.A. 1903' is all that Crockford's has to say about Hinde's academic attainments. In later life he always regretted that ill health prevented his reading for an Honours Degree. He had intellectual gifts of no mean order, and would probably have gained a good 'second' in one of the Triposes. In 1899 he entered Ridley Hall. Handley Moule was no longer in charge of Ridley Hall; he had been appointed Norrisian Professor of Divinity, and was soon to leave Cambridge for Auckland Castle. T.W. Drury (later to become Bishop of Sodor and Man, and then Bishop of Ripon) was now principal of Ridley Hall, and Hinde was one of his first students. He was already making his mark as a leader, for during the latter part of his time at Ridley he was elected senior student (or 'Archdeacon' as the senior student is always called).

After his training at Ridley he was given a title by the Rev. Thomas Kingdon Allen, father of Bishop Gerald Burton Allen. T.K. Allen was Vicar of St. Andrew-the-Less, Cambridge, and Hinde worked in that parish from 1900 till 1905, when he moved to a second curacy at St. James, Hatcham. He spent 4 years in this South London parish before moving to his first living at Ipswich.

The parish of St. Andrew-the-Less, Cambridge, contains what was in those days one of the worst slums in the East Midlands, the district of Barnwell; and the work of the parish centred round the Parish Church, St. John's Mission Church, and the Abbey Church. Hinde was put in charge of the Abbey Church, married Kathleen Yeomans⁵, and their first daughter, Kathleen⁶, was born a year later at their house in Maid's Causeway. After five years of hard and devoted work, the Hindes moved to an equally tough area, for Hinde was put in charge of one of the Hatcham mission churches, St. Michael's, situated in the Knoyle Street area of New Cross. The curate-in-charge of this low-lying area was usually known at 'the bishop of down below'! It was here that a second daughter, Marjorie⁷, was born.

The excellent training Hinde had been given in both these well-worked and well-organised parishes stood him in good stead when, on the nomination of the Simeon Trustees, he was instituted as Vicar of the large parish of St. John the Baptist, Ipswich – a parish that had been created in the 1880's to meet the spiritual needs of the rapidly expanding population of the eastern side of Ipswich. Hinde was the third vicar of St. John's, and followed incumbents who had laid good foundations. During his 12 years at St. John's (1909-1921), interrupted by 2 years (1918-19) when he was an Army Chaplain, the church became known far and wide as a centre of vigorous evangelism combined with immense enthusiasm for the missionary work of the church at home and overseas. Sunday by Sunday the large church was filled with congregations in which the male element was much in evidence.

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Hinde was always 'a man's man.' On Bank Holidays many men would turn out to support him in running an open-air meeting amongst the crowds on a near-by common.

The Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, a High Churchman, was so impressed with the fine quality of Hinde's work that in 1919 he appointed him as one of his Honorary Canons. When a man is made an Honorary Canon at the early age of 42, his people begin to prophesy future advancement for their Vicar! The advancement came two years later, not to a bishopric but to what for many years has been one of the most important positions that an Evangelical can occupy. In 1921 Hinde was appointed Vicar of Islington, a position he was to hold for the next 11 years.

These 11 years at Islington were to be Hinde's greatest years. He came to Islington at a most critical moment in the affairs of Anglican Evangelicals. Their fortunes were at a low ebb. They were divided as to what attitude they should adopt with regard to the revision of the Prayer Book. They were also engaged in bitter controversy amongst themselves over the inspiration of the Scriptures. Hinde was to play an important part in both these controversies.

The controversy over inspiration resulted from attempts to broaden the basis of the Church Missionary Society. The acute division of opinion created by the controversy led to a split in the ranks of CMS supporters, and in October 1922 the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society was formed. A full account of this distressing episode will be found in Gordon Hewitt's 'The Problems of Success' Volume 1 (pp. 467-473) and also in 'The First 25 Years of the BCMS' (W.S. Hooton and J. Stafford Wright).

Many Conservative Evangelicals joined the new Society, but there were some conservatives who were satisfied that CMS was still an Evangelical society and they remained with the older society. Hinde played a prominent part in the debates that preceded the split in CMS ranks, and after the split stayed with CMS. The fact that so staunch a conservative continued to support CMS helped to remove the fears of other conservatives who were wondering whether or not to leave CMS. By staying with CMS Hinde was in a position to play for many years a leading part in the counsels of the society and to ensure that those appointed to positions of responsibility in CMS were committed Evangelicals. The appointment in 1926 of the Rev. William Wilson Cash as CMS General Secretary was largely due to Hinde's initiative. Wilson Cash, who was later to become Bishop of Worcester, was a Conservative Evangelical who often spoke at the annual Keswick Convention (Hinde, too, was a keen supporter of Keswick). Cash's leadership did much to keep CMS true to the best traditions of Evangelical churchmanship; and the fact that such a man was at the head of CMS did much to assure conservatives that they still had a place in the society.

The other controversy in which Hinde was engaged during the 1920's was that which resulted from the proposals to revise the Book of Common Prayer. In 1906 a Royal Commission on Church Discipline had concluded that 'the law of public worship is too narrow for the religious life of the present generation;' and the work of drafting a revised prayer book began soon afterwards and culminated in debates in the Convocations and in the two Houses of Parliament in 1927 and 1928. The 'deposited book' (as the proposed new book was called) was twice accepted in the House of Lords and twice rejected by the House of Commons where Joynson-Hicks and Inskip, both members of the government at that time and both noted Evangelicals, spoke most effectively and voted against it. 'The chief grounds for their concern, shared in varying degrees by most Evangelicals, were that the proposed order of Holy Communion, and the rubrics authorising the use of vestments and reservation of the sacrament for the sick, departed from the principles of the Reformation⁸.

Hinde was elected proctor in Convocation in 1924 and immediately came to the fore as a leading spokesman for Evangelical churchmen. He was convinced that reservation of the sacrament was wrong and therefore felt it his duty to oppose the deposited book with all his might. His opposition rallied other Evangelicals to his support and he was constantly in request as a speaker at big public meetings in London and other important centres — meetings that were held to demonstrate the widespread antipathy of many churchpeople to what was regarded as a betrayal of the Reformation. 'Trust the bishops' was the plea often put forward by supporters of the deposited book⁹. But a number of bishops were seen to be quite incapable of preventing the holding of illegal services in their dioceses, and some even tried to win the support of Anglo-Catholics by telling them that the deposited book gave them all that they had been fighting to have. It was this thoroughly unsatisfactory state of affairs that led Hinde to make a most forceful speech on Convocation. 'How can we trust the bishops,' he asked, 'when some of them are giving their open support to illegal services?' He gave a number of examples based on recent newspaper reports to illustrate his contention. It was a powerful speech, and some of the bishops never forgave him for making it. He used to say sadly in later years; 'A number of bishops never speak to me now, and one or two of them are the best bishops we have got.'

But his courtesy, his integrity, and his sheer goodness did not go unrecognised even by some who were bitterly opposed to him. Sidney Dark, the lively editor of the Church Times in the days when that paper was the organ of the Anglo-Catholic party, wrote an amusing account of a protest meeting held in the Albert Hall in the spring of 1925. The one

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speaker he did not poke fun at was Hinde. 'The Vicar of Islington,' he wrote, 'is a tall, slim man, with the face of an ascetic, and I . . . record nothing of his speech but his touching confession of faith . . . (He) spoke with a deep sincerity that an opponent could appreciate, and in his simply expressed confession of devotion to our blessed Lord he raised the tone of the meeting'¹⁰. This was not the only occasion when Sidney Dark befriended him. When Hinde left Islington, he wrote a letter to the Church Times thanking the editor for the courteous way in which he had been treated¹¹. One of Hinde's best friends in Convocation was Prebendary E.D. Merritt, a prominent leader of the Anglo-Catholics. They were enjoying a talk together one day in St. Paul's Cathedral before a special service when Archbishop Fisher came unexpectedly upon them. The Archbishop was obviously surprised to find them having a friendly conversation, and looked at them with a twinkle in his eye, as much as to say, 'What are you two troublesome boys up to?'

Some bishops in England may have cold-shouldered him, but in other countries Hinde was given the respect due to a great church leader. Not long after the Prayer Book controversy he and his wife were on holiday in Ireland at the time when the General Synod of the Church of Ireland was in session. They decided to attend one of the meetings as visitors. Archbishop D'Arcy noticed Hinde in the gallery, stopped the proceedings, and said: 'We have a distinguished visitor with us this morning.' He explained who the visitor was, and then asked the members to stand as a mark of respect.

What about his work as Vicar of Islington? Men like Daniel Wilson, Dean Barlow, and Prebendary Proctor had built up a lively and vigorous church life at St. Mary's; but St. Mary's, like many other parishes, had lost good workers during the first world war and the spiritual life of the parish was at a low ebb when Hinde arrived in 1921. He soon gathered round him a staff of able young men, some of whom in later days were to be appointed to key posts in the Church of England¹². It was uphill work at first and there were many discouragements, but it was not long before a depleted congregation began to increase. As at Ipswich, men always made up a fair proportion of the worshippers, and many young people attended the church services. A few months before Hinde left Islington in 1932, *The Guardian* (a Tractarian church newspaper that has gone out of circulation) ran a series of articles on churches with large congregations, and one of the churches featured was St. Mary's, Islington.

To the Vicar of Islington falls the responsibility of organising the annual Islington Clerical Conference¹³. During the First World War the conference had been replaced by gatherings in Islington Parish Church at which devotional addresses had been given by selected speakers. Soon after

the war ended the conference was revived. When Hinde became Vicar and started to make arrangements for his first conference, he found that a group of Liberal Evangelicals were attempting to capture the Islington platform. He was determined that the conference should be a rallying point for all Evangelicals and set his face against any attempt to narrow its participants to one particular group. Year by year all shades of Evangelical thought were represented by those chosen as speakers. Those who attended the conference would hear an address from Dr. Stuart Holden, chairman of the Keswick Convention; later in the day they would be listening to a paper from Canon V.F. Storr, a leader of the Liberal Evangelicals. That veteran Evangelical historian, Eugene Stock, was so delighted with this juxtaposition that he wrote to congratulate Hinde, saying that he never thought he would live to see the day when two Evangelicals with such differing standpoints would be on the same platform. The Islington Clerical Conference continues to be well supported, thanks to the succession of able men who have followed Hinde as Vicars of Islington. All of them would agree that Hinde made an important contribution to the strength of the Islington Conference because of his courageous leadership and the statesmanlike policy that he pursued.

In 1932 Hinde left Islington to become first principal of Oak Hill Theological College¹⁴. At about this time he had been given the opportunity to become Archbishop of an important city in one of the Commonwealth countries. He was assured that if he consented to stand for election, he would be top of the poll. His reply to this invitation was characteristic. 'You need a young man for such an important post,' he cabled. 'Why not try X?' X was an able young missionary bishop. X consented to stand, was elected, and for many years did outstanding work as an Archbishop.

Hinde gathered round him a staff of able theological teachers (he had a flair for making good appointments) and within a short time Oak Hill was launched on its successful career. For over 40 years under a succession of first-class principals the college has made a magnificent contribution to the life of the whole church through the dedicated men who have been trained for the ministry within its walls. Hinde was first and foremost an administrator. As Principal, he had to administer not only the college but also the large estate attached to the college. He had a good head for business, always knew where and when to turn for advice, and carried out his administrative duties with the utmost efficiency. He left the G.O.E. work to the other members of the staff and confined his lectures to the important field of Pastoralia. In these lectures he was able to draw on his rich and varied experiences as a pastor in the four large parishes where he had ministered with such skill and devotion. His keen sense of humour made him popular with the students and helped to bridge the generation gap.

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During the first part of the 2nd World War the college was evacuated to Kingham; but in 1942 staff and students returned to Southgate. The London College of Divinity and Oak Hill had been amalgamated during this period as the number of students at both colleges was now so small. One of the war-time tutors has made the following comments on the period from September 1943 till June 1944: 'About a dozen students were in residence . . . Several clergymen came in from outside to assist with the lecturing. Cleverley Ford was Old Testament lecturer before I took over from him, and Donald Lynch also gave valuable help. There was a wonderful sense of fellowship between staff and students during my year at Oak Hill. Occasionally students fell foul of the Principal, but this did not happen during this particular period. The lectures Alan Stibbs gave had a remarkable influence upon the students. One of them told the Principal that when Alan spoke about our Lord, it was just as if He was visibly present. And as for the powerful influence for good exerted by the principal, let it be sufficient to say that few men were better fitted for responsible and exacting task of training men for the ministry. He was a grand leader of men.'

Hinde resigned from his work at Oak Hill in 1945 and was instituted to the living of Fairlight. He was followed 3 years later at Fairlight by one of his old Oak Hill students. He and his wife then went to live at Eastbourne, and died within a few weeks of each other in the autumn of 1955. Hinde had had an ideal partner in his wife. Her devotion, tact and graciousness were his daily comfort. She was his soundest critic and his nearest friend. She never faltered in her endless duties in parochial work, or as the wife of a College Principal. God greatly blessed this union and used both partners effectively in forwarding the Gospel of Christ – that work to which both had dedicated their lives.

Canon T.G Mohan, in a funeral address, declared: 'His outstanding achievement was his leadership, with Lord Caldecote and Lord Brentford, of the opposition to the Revised Prayer Book in 1927-28. The basis of his opposition was loyalty to the Word of God and to the Gospel which he believed to be threatened. He refused to be sidetracked from this fundamental principle; he was fearless in speech, firm and resolute in his conviction, but, with it all, courteous to those with whom he was in disagreement.' His uncompromising principles prevented him from receiving in this country the higher preferment he deserved. But the esteem in which he was held was recognised when the Bishop of London appointed him to a prebendal stall in St. Paul's Cathedral¹⁵.

Hinde was not in the first rank as a preacher or speaker. But he was a good teacher, and his sermons were models of sound biblical exposition.

And he had the God-given ability to raise the level of debates in which he took part as a member of the Church Assembly. Bishop Donaldson was so impressed by a speech Hinde delivered in the Assembly on the subject of Christian Giving, that he invited him in the autumn in 1935 to address the Salisbury Diocesan Conference. His membership of the Commission on Evangelism set up by the two Archbishops in 1943 resulted from his making a most effective speech on evangelism at the Assembly's summer session earlier in that same year. He may not have been a first rate speaker, but his goodness and sincerity shone through what he had to say.

Hinde was a good churchman. He loved the Prayer Book and the Prayer Book services. He would have agreed with Simeon (one of his heroes) that 'the finest sight short of heaven would be a whole congregation using the prayers of the Liturgy in the true spirit of them.' And he passed on his affection for the Prayer Book to the curates he trained. Bishop Gelsthorpe had this to say about one of them, who for many years worked as a CMS missionary in the Sudan: 'I shall always be grateful to Prebendary Hinde for making him such a good Prayer Book churchman.'

When the history of Evangelicalism in the 1920-50 period comes to be written, Hinde of Islington will stand out conspicuously as a great Evangelical leader at a time when such leaders were in short supply. As we have seen, these were difficult years for Evangelicals. But the faithful few fought bravely; they maintained the Evangelical faith and tradition in the Church of England and handed this heritage to their successors greatly enriched. How they would have rejoiced to see Evangelicals playing such an effective part in these days in the life of the whole church!

Footnotes

1. In W. Purcell *Fisher of Lambeth* an extraordinary example is given of this lack of understanding on the part of Fisher's predecessor at Chester.
2. Four great Evangelical leaders died in the early 1920's: Bishop Handley Moule, Prebendary H.W. Webb-Peploe, Dean Wave and Bishop J E. Watts-Ditchfield.
3. R.C.K. Ensor *England 1870-1914*, pp 140.
4. Temple Gairdner's mother came from Norwich. Constance Padwick in her life of Temple Gairdner (Temple Gairdner of Cairo, SPCK),

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when noting this fact, comments on the robust Protestant Evangelicalism that was characteristic of East Anglia in the Victorian age. The saintly Bishop J.T. Pelham, one of the best of the Palmerston bishops, was Bishop of Norwich from 1857 till 1893 (for a favourable appreciation of his work see W.O. Chadwick *The Victorian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 475).

5. Kathleen Yeomans was trained as a women's worker at Dynevor House, a CPAS Training Home established at Blackheath in 1895. After her training she went to St. James-the-Less, Bethnal Green, as a lady worker. Her vicar was the Revd. J.E. Watts-Ditchfield, who later became the first Bishop of Chelmsford.
6. Kathleen Hinde in 1934 married the Revd. G.B. Watkins Grubb. Both she and her husband were members of the Church Assembly during the war years – they represented the diocese of Exeter.
7. Majorie Hinde, after training as a pharmacist, was a CMS missionary, first in Egypt, and later in Northern Nigeria. She married the writer of this article. Her early death in 1941 meant a great loss to the church in Nigeria.
8. Hewitt: *The Problems of Success*. Vol. 1, p. 410.
9. It must not be forgotten that four, later five, diocesan bishops were opposed to the deposited book.
10. See article 'Protestantism in Passiontide: Some Notes of the Albert Hall Demonstration' in *The Church Times* April 4, 1925. Joynson-Hicks (later Lord Brentford) was in the chair: amongst the speakers were Bishop Knox, Archdeacon Thorpe, and two Free Church Ministers (Dr. Sidney Berry and the Revd. Thomas Nightingale).
11. 'May I be allowed to express to you my appreciation of your attitude towards me? My point of view, of course, is not yours . . . but that has not prevented a kindly courtesy which should have acknowledgment, and I desire to render it' (part of Hinde's letter in *The Church Times* July 8, 1932).
12. Amongst the curates trained by Hinde were: Bishop Hugh Gough, Canon T.G. Mohan, Canon C.E. Arnold and Canon Keith de Berry.

13. The Islington Clerical Conference began in 1827 when the elder Daniel Wilson invited 12 friends to Islington Vicarage to consider the subject of Prayer with special reference to the current Bible Society controversy and the danger of a European war. This meeting proved so helpful that it was decided to make it an annual event. Under the leadership of Daniel Wilson, the younger, the meeting steadily grew in influence; towards the end of his life (1886) there were always more than 300 clergy present. The subjects debated over the years show that those who attended were more interested in spiritual matters than in ecclesiastical disputes; at the same time controversial subjects were put on the agenda whenever the need arose.

14. As the result of a paper read at the 1925 Islington Conference by Archdeacon Sharpe, the Evangelical Churchmen's Ordination Council was established to foster a sense of vocation and to raise funds for training students. A plea was made for the establishment of an 'Evangelical Mirfield' and ECOC's first annual report drew attention to the need for a test school where men's general education might be advanced and their fitness for the ministry tested. Because of a most generous bequest from Mr. Charles Baring Young two large houses (Oak Hill and Bohun Lodge), standing in a large estate half way between Southgate and Cockfosters, were made available for the project. In 1928 a start was made with a test school, the Rev. A.W. Habershon being appointed as Principal. The school prospered under his guidance; and in 1932, when Habershon was appointed to a living in Cheltenham, it was decided to open a fully fledged theological college in addition to the test school with Hinde as Principal. (For further information see Hinde's last presidential address in the official report of the 1932 Islington Conference).

15. When anything was said in later years that implied doubt as to his being a good churchman, Hinde would reply, 'How do you explain the action of the two High Church bishops under whom I served as an incumbent? One of them made me an Honorary Canon, and the other made me a Prebendary!'