The Contemporary Review, 1866-1900

In 1866, publisher Alexander Strahan added *The Contemporary Review* to his list of popular religious magazines, *Good Words*, the *Sunday Magazine*, *Good Words for the Young*, and the *Argosy*. Strahan’s object in founding *Good Words* had been “to bridge the wide gulf which then existed between secular and sacred reading”; his later review may fairly be said to have accomplished the same end at a more intellectual level. Directly influenced by the success of the secular and liberal *Fortnightly Review*, founded a year earlier, the *Contemporary* was designed to be the *Fortnightly* of the Established Church. Not that the new monthly was to speak as the voice of the Broad Church party, however. Strahan’s choice of Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, poet, musician, painter, and traveller, as its first editor assured the publication of articles of diversified interest. The *Contemporary* was, indeed, the first journal of its day to devote extensive space to art and music. But the tone of scholarly Christianity which was to typify the *Contemporary Review* throughout Dean Alford’s tenure as editor was apparent in the first number.

Though to some degree the Review was the mirror of its editor’s mind—reflecting with particular clarity his concern with textual criticism of the Bible and the light shed on religious problems by current philosophy and science—its pages remained open to opposing points of view. Lengthy letters, articles in reply to previously published arguments, charges and counter-charges filled the journal, apparently unhampered by editorial opinion. Thus, while Alford was able to write to a friend in late 1865, “I trust we are doing good service against Ritualism and extravagancies of every kind,” the *Contemporary* regularly printed the defenses of Ritualists. Most notably, an ecumenical spirit and a commitment to the ideal of a reunited Christendom distinguished Alford’s review.

The issue for March 1870 marks the end of his editorship. A postscript to that number, presumably by Strahan, announces the Dean’s retirement, under pressure of failing health and scholarly work, and concludes with a statement of policy: “The Review will be conducted on the same principles which have hitherto guided it; and will continue to express the views of those who, in the words of its late Editor at its commencement, ‘holding loyally to belief in the articles of the Christian faith, are not afraid of collision with modern thought in its varied aspects and

Contemporary Review, 35 (July 1879)—37 (Mar. 1880)


VOLUME 35, AUGUST, 1879


VOLUME 36, SEPTEMBER, 1879

1489 Conspiracies in Russia under the reigning Czar, 120–147. Karl Blind. Signed.
1490 The first sin, as recorded in the Bible and in ancient Oriental tradition, 148–163. François Lenoirnart. Signed.

VOLUME 36, OCTOBER, 1879


VOLUME 36, NOVEMBER, 1879

1507 Mr. Gladstone: two studies suggested by his Gleanings of Past Years (No. I), 398–414. Signed: A Liberal.
1508 Mr. Gladstone: two studies suggested by his Gleanings of Past Years (No. II), 414–431. Signed: A Conservative.