

Unit 4: The Churches and the Inter-War Years

The churches and social questions



Picture of William Temple

As the nation began the slow and sometimes painful process of readjustment to life after the Great War, social questions began to assume an even more central place in the agenda of the churches. Within the Church of England, the Christian socialist tradition had a distinguished pedigree, stretching back to F.D. Maurice, J.M. Ludlow and Charles Kingsley in the 1840s, and then to a second generation of Scott Holland, Westcott and Gore (see unit 2). Back in 1908, the young William Temple (who was the son of Archbishop Frederick Temple) had declared that 'The alternative stands before us - Socialism or Heresy; we are involved in one or the other. (Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p.172). A few years later, the elderly Henry Scott Holland had observed that 'the whole world has become Christian Social Union now' (Edward Norman, *Church and Society in England* (1976), p.221). It certainly seemed to be the case that a whole generation of upper class and upper-middle class clergy were embracing political views well to the left of the rest of the establishment. In 1912, Temple articulated opinions which might have seemed shocking on the lips of twenty-first century clergyman: 'Competition is not a thing limited to business. It is a thing that pervades the whole of our life. It is simply organised selfishness ... a great deal has been said in praise of competition, and most of it is rubbish' (Norman, *Church and Society in England*, p.228). Yet when it came to decisive action in practical situations, sometimes Temple could falter. His Life and Liberty movement, though supposedly a rallying point for the most radical church people of the day, was in reality rather cautious. He caved in completely when the principal of Cuddesdon Theological College, J.B. Seaton (himself a Life and Liberty member) refused to permit Maud Royden to sleep on the premises. The occasion was Life and Liberty's conference in 1916. Maud Royden was the secretary of the council of Life and Liberty, but was objected to by the principal because she was a campaigner for the ordination of women, and had accepted a pastoral ministry at the City Temple, the most important Congregational church in the city of London. Temple and his fellow radicals meekly acquiesced in the principal's wishes, and Miss Royden was obliged to sleep in Oxford, commuting to Cuddesdon during the day.

Before the war socialism was merely a theory which had not yet become enshrined in political reality, and so the vagueness of Christian socialism is understandable. After the war, it began to be seen as something with practical implications which could turn out to be decidedly uncomfortable. Lloyd George's social reforms, in fact Liberal rather than socialist in origin, created pensions and sickness benefit, but had to be paid for through increased taxation, which was unpopular. Secondly, the emergence of the Labour Party as a viable parliamentary group seemed to point more towards the creation of just another dreary political grouping, rather than to be a fanfare

for the new Jerusalem. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia provided the world with its first example of a socialist revolution in practice. It was violent, atheistic and frightening.

In the 1920s, Christian social thought had to adjust itself to these new realities. The process began to crystallise in April 1924, when, under William Temple's leadership, the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC) took place in Birmingham. The importance of this conference was not only for the social thought of the Church of England, for it was a pioneering interdenominational venture; as Temple put it at the time, it was the 'biggest manifestation of such unity hitherto'. It can be argued that 1924 is the year which marks a watershed in the development of social teaching in the Church of England. On the one side, it brought a more consistent, systematic and coherent statement of the social radicalism of the preceding decade, although some vagueness remained. On the other, it prepared the ground for the mood of social thought known as 'Christian Sociology' which was to flourish in the inter-war period. Most importantly, perhaps, it stamped the mind of the Church of England with a definite bias towards a social interpretation of Christianity, which was to be characteristic of its attitudes during the rest of the century. Those who expressed disquiet at the 1985 Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City*, would have done well to reflect on the origins of modern Christian social thought as revealed at the COPEC conference. As Edward Norman has observed, COPEC was among the first occasions on which the public became aware of the extent to which social radicalism had penetrated the leadership of the churches, and that was one of its most important features (Norman, *Church and Society in England*, p.280).

COPEC was three years in preparation, and like the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, much of the work was done beforehand, with the presentation of a weighty series of reports. Twelve Commissions were set up to inquire into twelve areas of social concern. These were 'The Nature of God and his Purpose for the World'; 'Education'; 'The Home'; 'The Relation of the Sexes'; 'Leisure'; 'The Treatment of Crime'; 'International Relations'; 'Christianity and War'; 'Industry and Property'; 'Politics and Citizenship'; 'The Social Function of the Church' and 'Historical Illustrations of the Social Effects of Christianity'. The commissions sent out 200,000 questionnaires. Copies of the preliminary reports were sent to parishes and public schools, in what was intended to be a national education campaign. At the conference, the reports were discussed in turn, but much of their practical application remained decidedly unclear. The speakers denounced the evils of laissez-faire policies, and declared the need for co-operation in industrial relationships. The churches continually berated themselves for their failure to address social questions adequately, and, seemed to neglect the very considerable contribution towards concern for the poor made by Christians of all denominations in previous decades. Indeed, there was so much talk of the churches' guilt and failure that the two Roman Catholic priests on the Executive Committee felt obliged to resign - on the grounds that Roman Catholic social teaching had not failed. The collapse of this early co-operation between Catholics and Anglicans had the effect of making the conference rather less ecumenical than had been intended.

Above all, COPEC marked the rise of William Temple to ascendancy over the social teaching of the Church of England. As Maurice Reckitt put it, 'COPEC itself made it clear where that leadership would be for the next two decades', and in fact, Temple remained the commanding figure in the Church of England, and indeed the Anglican Communion, until his death in 1944, by which time he was Archbishop of Canterbury. Temple was firmly rooted within the Westcott tradition of social criticism, and had formulated many of his ideas from within the more daring wing of the Christian Social Union at the time that Westcott led it. He relinquished his early, uncritical faith in socialism. Indeed, in 1921 he resigned from the Labour Party, after only three years of membership, apparently regarding membership of a political party as incompatible with the office of a bishop - he had just been raised to the see of Manchester. Temple's plan was to keep COPEC free of party politics but this was never quite possible as the social analyses used, the solutions recommended, and even the

vocabulary, were all characteristic of the Labour movement. Furthermore, the conference took place just three months after the election of the first ever Labour government, under the premiership of Ramsay MacDonald, and the consequent euphoria amongst Labour supporters had not entirely evaporated by the time the delegates assembled.

In the inter-war years, in England at least, concern for the social gospel was very largely an Anglo-Catholic enterprise. The placing of social issues at the heart of the Christian agenda, and the beginnings of the golden age of Anglo-Catholicism, were events which coincided. Evangelicals, by contrast, took little interest in social issues. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, in his generally very sympathetic study of Evangelicals in the Church of England (1988) admits that they were 'somewhat tardy and ineffectual in their response', and that their efforts were 'rather meagre and inadequate' (p.260) in the first four decades of the twentieth century. David Bebbington tends to skate over social questions in his study of Evangelicalism in Modern Britain (1989) pointing out that many conservative evangelicals believed that the liberals had turned aside from the true gospel to a social gospel. True Christianity, they maintained, should seek to change people's hearts, not their living conditions. With very few exceptions, they tended to be hostile to the political doctrine of socialism. Liberal evangelicals tended to be more tolerant, however, and the Methodists regularly made pronouncements on social questions. Even so, Evangelicals in general kept their distance from the pressing domestic public issues of their day. Their interest in social questions was confined to the areas of individual sinfulness: drinking, gambling and the Sunday question. The Salvation Army was exceptional in remaining committed to a wide range of social ministries.

In Wales social Christianity was very much a Nonconformist affair. One of the effects of the Great War was to convince church leaders that social justice would need to be prioritized when the troops came home (Morgan, *Span of the Cross*, pp. 75-6). A social gospel had already been formulated, not by Anglican theologians who were wholly absorbed in defending the Welsh dioceses from the threat of disestablishment, but by a young generation of gifted Nonconformists who had become advanced liberals in their doctrinal views. Disenchanted by the orthodoxy of their elders, pre-war theologians had made common cause with the new Labour which advanced rapidly in the industrial valleys of the south, yet they remained seemingly oblivious to the dangers involved. 'Socialist apologists tried to demonstrate a basic similarity between their message and the Christian gospel. This ultimately posed a threat to the institutional church for it was a secular organization, the labour movement, which was promoted as the chief means of fulfilling Jesus' commands' (Robert Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-39* (1998), p.28). The important denominational reports by the Calvinistic Methodists (1921) and the Congregationalists (1922) utilized an outmoded theology of the Kingdom of God understood in individualist and Idealist terms - the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man - in order to ameliorate social injustice, whereas the Labour movement had long forsaken individualism for a collectivist understanding of economic wrongs. COPEC and its derivative, the Welsh School of Social Service, did serve as a platform for those who saw the need for a specifically Christian response to the poverty, hardship and mass unemployment of the decade, but doctrinal naiveté combined with the harsh social and economic realities boded ill for their success. According to Robert Pope: 'No adequate social philosophy or theology was developed apart from the claim that social improvement was an implicit factor in individual regeneration. Welsh Nonconformists had never had an explicit social theology ... By the end of the 1920s, most of the sympathetic protagonists were either concentrating on other issues, waylaid or dead' (*Building Jerusalem*, p. 240).

cf. Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales*, pp.180-5; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 172-85; Morgan, *Span of the Cross*, pp.148-56.

The 'golden-age' of Anglo-Catholicism



Image of the 'golden-age' of Anglo-Catholicism

The link between socialist thought forms and Anglo-Catholicism is not difficult to discern. A Catholic stress on the corporate aspects of Christian faith tends to go with a belief in the value of collective responsibility. It became fashionable to believe that what was needed was the revival of a quasi-medieval socialist protection of the poor against the capitalist. As Adrian Hastings has argued, remove the Anglo-Catholic inspiration, and very little would be left of English Christian social endeavour of this period. On the one hand, it spawned bodies of intellectuals like the Christendom group, which included V.A. Demant, Maurice Reckitt and T.S. Eliot, who attempted to outline a Christian social ethic based on an entirely spurious neo-medievalism. At the other extreme, it threw up eccentrics like Conrad Noel, who as vicar of Thaxted, Essex, preached the gospel of 'Catholic Socialism' - daily communion, plainsong, country dancing, a united Ireland and class war (Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p.174).

Between the intellectuals of the Christendom group on the one hand, and the eccentricities of Thaxted on the other, a newly-found Anglo-Catholic respectability began to emerge, and to dominate the establishment. Anglo-Catholics moved from being a barely tolerated minority to a central force in the Church of England, reshaping its ethos and symbolism so that the Church of England, as known and taken for granted in the latter part of the twentieth century (to say nothing of the 21st), would be quite significantly different from the Church of the Victorian age. Intellectually, Anglo-Catholicism had grown well beyond the rigid Tractarianism of its Victorian leaders, Edward Bouverie Pusey and Henry Parry Liddon, and it began to develop a more intellectual, and also more liberal wing. This may be seen as symbolized by the founding of the journal *Theology* in 1920. *Theology* became the best known general journal of Anglican theology, and was an excellent barometer of well-educated Anglican opinion. It had some formidable Anglo-Catholic editors, particularly E.G. Selwyn in the 1920s, and from 1939 to 1964 Alec Vidler. All the pressing theological and ecclesiastical issues of those years found their way into its pages. In other ways too, Anglo-Catholics found themselves entering the mainstream of Anglican life and thought. Some were being appointed as bishops, and even Anglo-Catholic celibate bishops were becoming increasingly acceptable to those who made the appointments. Examples include Charles Gore, Cosmo Gordon Lang, Walter Frere and Cyril Garbett.

Perhaps the most significant figure in all this was Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of York from 1908-1928 and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1928-1942. Adrian Hastings suggests that he Catholicized the Church of England probably more than anyone else, and largely without giving offence. When appointed to York, he was already publicly committed to advocating the legalization of the 'Six points' - Eucharistic vestments, lighted candles on the altar, the use of wafers, the eastward position, the use of incense and the mixed chalice. These were the main outward symbols which in the mind of Catholic and Protestant alike distinguished the Mass of one from the Communion service of the other, and which in the nineteenth century had proved so highly controversial. It was Lang who was the first Archbishop since the Reformation to wear a mitre, and who made the cope the normal liturgical dress for bishop and archbishop. Cyril Garbett, Bishop of Southwark in the 1920s and Archbishop of York in the 1940s, illustrates the transition. He declared himself to be 'no Anglo-Catholic', but he always wore a cassock, put on vestments in his private

chapel and a cope and mitre in his cathedral. He was unworried by the use of incense and the reservation of the sacrament. Moderate Anglo-Catholics, like B.K. Cunningham, the principal of Westcott House and Eric Graham, the principal of Cuddesdon, might laugh at rosaries and birettas, but they habitually wore cassocks and insisted on a daily celebration of the Eucharist in their theological colleges. They nurtured their ordinands in a moderate Anglo-Catholicism which became quite recognisable as the Anglican clerical norm.

cf. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp.193-200, 250-61.

The Free Churches

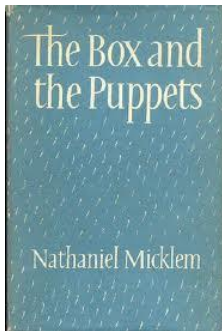


Image of text "The Box and Puppets" Third: the autobiography of Nathaniel Micklem (1957)

On 16 November 1918, George V and Queen Mary attended the post-Armistice thanksgiving service of the Free Churches in the Albert Hall. It was the first time a reigning British sovereign had ever attended a Free Church service. It provided an interesting contrast with the earlier national thanksgiving service in Westminster Abbey from which the Free Churches had been excluded. In 1920, the Free Churches could still claim with some justification the support of about half of all those people in England who had some interest in religion. In Wales it was more than half. In the inter-war period as a whole, however, the pattern was to be one of sharp decline, and this was to be considerably more severe amongst English Free Church people than amongst their Welsh, Scottish and Irish counterparts. The older, more institutionally established of the Nonconformist churches experienced the most rapid contraction. The Baptists, for example, dropped from 434,741 in 1906 to 354,900 in 1946. Relative to the rising total population of the country, the fall was more serious than these figures suggest. Perhaps more seriously still, Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists began to experience the sharpest decline in the places which had been their nineteenth-century heartlands, the industrial and mining areas of the north of England.

At the same time, relations between the Free Churches began to improve markedly. The Methodist reunion of 1932 illustrates this, but can also be interpreted as one sign of the contraction which was afflicting what was still the largest of all the Free Churches. Back in 1907, some of the breakaway Methodist denominations which had split from Wesleyanism in the nineteenth century - the Bible Christians, Free Methodists and the New Connexion - merged into one body known as the United Methodist Church. This left just three Methodist bodies, the United Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists. The existence of these three distinct Methodist bodies did however result in a large amount of duplication. In the traditional strongholds of Methodism, it was possible for three competing Methodist chapels to exist in one village. Separate theological colleges, central administration and denominational newspapers were also seen as increasingly wasteful and pointless. It seemed hard to justify the divisions on theological grounds, and it increasingly came to be considered that a single Methodist body would make much greater impact

on society at large. A second factor which made Methodist reunion look attractive was that it might provide a great boost for English Protestantism. Methodists looked at the Church of England, and saw that it was succumbing to Anglo-Catholicism. Many Free Church people were heated opponents of the 1928 prayer book revision, seeing it not as an internal Anglican affair, but as a challenge to the nation's Protestantism by crypto-Romanists (Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 204ff for the wider context). In the eyes of some, the only effective answer to the 'Rome ward movement' of the Church of England was a reunited Methodism which might emerge as the one true Protestant church in the land. For others, however, Methodist reunion was more of a necessary stage in the reunion of Christians all round. The great leaders of the movement for Methodist reunion, Scott Lidgett and A.S. Peake, were liberal progressives caught up in the full tide of ecumenism. Decline was God's judgement upon Christian quarrelling, and growth would necessarily follow reunion, or so they thought.

The process of Methodist reunion was a slow one. Formal negotiations between the three churches were begun in 1918, but the reluctance of the Wesleyans, who were the strongest body, to compromise over the rights of ministers above those of the laity, and their refusal to sanction lay presidency at the Lord's Supper, delayed the process considerably. Full union was deferred until 1932, though the crucial decision was taken in 1928. The internal problems consequent upon reunion were considerable, as hard decisions had to be made about which of the many small chapels should close. In some localities, where antagonism between competing Methodist chapels had been openly expressed, ill feeling ran high. The optimism of Scott Lidgett and Peake that revival would necessarily follow reunion proved to be unfounded. Instead, the years after reunion were marked by overall numerical decline, not growth.

In the 1920s, some had advocated Methodist reunion as a means of reasserting Protestantism in the face of the increasingly Rome ward drift of the established church. In the 1930s, paradoxically, some within the Free Churches found themselves increasingly attracted to the Church of England, in a manner which would have been unthinkable in the days when Nonconformity was at its most rigorous. In religious and social terms, the Church of England of the 1930s looked a great deal more attractive than it had done in the past. The Church of William Temple, Bishop Bell and T.S. Eliot was a Church which one could easily want to belong to, a Church with leadership, spiritual vitality, theological diversity, intellectual credibility and a social conscience. The liturgical movement and the renewed emphasis on the beauty of Anglican worship could also be a draw. E.L. Allen's article in the *Congregational Quarterly* in 1943 illustrates the way in which the Church of England was proving a lure:

A few years ago one of my best friends, a Presbyterian minister, resigned his charge and 'went over' as we say in these cases, to the Church of England ... Shortly after, a Baptist minister who, as pastor of a Union Church, had been uncompromising in his adherence to the principle of believers' immersion, re-appeared as an Anglican curate. Shortly after again, a Methodist minister remarked in the course of conversation that the position in his family was a singular one, since all his sons and daughters were confirmed members of the Church of England: within six months he had followed them. Congregationalists could relate many such incidents ... Ex-Free churchmen are everywhere in the Church of England; they live in bishops' palaces, hold canons' stalls, and lecture from professorial chairs ... Is it not time that we faced seriously this disconcerting fact of the drift towards Canterbury? (cited by Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p.269).

Two new bishops of the 1930s had in fact previously been Free churchmen: Rawlinson of Derby was earlier a Congregationalist and Kirk of Oxford had been a Methodist. It was more common, of course, for the children of Nonconformity to revert to the Church of England, particularly if they were sent to public schools. Michael Ramsey has already been mentioned as the product of a Congregational home. Austin Farrer was brought up as a Baptist. It would, of course, be unwise to overplay this drift from the Free Churches to the establishment. Most of those who drifted away from the Free Churches drifted into unbelief. Hastings remarks that the post-war leadership of

the Labour Party consisted very largely of men without religious commitment, like Tony Benn and Michael Foot, who were the sons of devout Free Church parents.

Whatever we want to say about the above, by far the most interesting development within the Free Churches in both England and Wales during the inter-war years had to do not with Methodist reunion but with theology and doctrine. The standard of theology in each of the denominations was uniformly high. It was within the Dissenting traditions, principally the Congregationalists, that the transfer from the older liberalism to an engaged and highly relevant orthodoxy, created the most stimulation. The public intellectuals who returned to Christian commitment during the late 1920s and '30s – Dorothy Sayers, T. S. Eliot, Rosalind Murray, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton and in Wales Saunders Lewis and D. Gwenallt Jones – did so for the most part within the catholic traditions of High Anglicanism or Romanism. Yet it was among the theologians of Protestant Dissent, Nathaniel Micklem in Oxford, J. S. Whale and the historian Bernard Lord Manning in Cambridge along with J. E. Daniel in Wales, that a vibrant and radical orthodoxy, stimulated by the volcanic thought of the Swiss Karl Barth, created the deepest impression. Liberalism was increasingly regarded as being moribund (Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales*, pp. 162-76). It had little to offer a generation that had been scarred by the Great War, disappointed by post-war economic dislocation and threatened the incipient terrorism of totalitarian regimes of both left and right: Stalinism in Russia and, by the mid-'30s, Hitler's Nazism, Mussolini's fascism and the tyranny of Franco's Spain. It was Germany which provided the catalyst. It seemed that the only effective foil to Hitler in 1934-5 was the Confessing Church of Pastor Martin Niemöller and the young theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Church which was undergirded by the uncompromising biblical theology of Karl Barth: 'Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death' (Barmen Declaration, 1934). It was no coincidence that the renewal of doctrine which occurred among English Congregationalists and Welsh Nonconformists during these years and applied to the domestic needs of the British churches and the society that they served, was stimulated by the work of Karl Barth. 'Hitler and Stalin had made the old religious mix of mysticism and social concern ... of a vague sort... seem a rather too inadequate way of asserting Christianity. The German pastors of the Confessing Church were calling for support, but they did not want it from the liberals. The voices of Barth, Niebuhr and Maritain were rallying the ranks' (Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 294-5). The theological renewal which fuelled this response was at its starkest in the work of Nathaniel Micklem in England and J. E. Daniel in Wales (D. Densil Morgan, *Barth Reception in Britain* (2010), pp. 128-34, 154-60, 165-73). It was the renewal of orthodox doctrine which proved to be the most stirring aspect of the life of the Free Churches between 1919 and 1939.

Cf. Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales*, pp. 241-50; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 262-72, 337-45; Morgan, *Span of the Cross*, pp. 130-7.

Roman Catholicism



Image of G. K. Chesterton

In marked contrast with the other major denominations, Roman Catholicism continued to expand in the inter-war period. (For the Welsh experience, see Hughes, *Winds of Change* (1998), pp. 7-12 and *passim*, and Morgan, *Span of the Cross*, pp. 93-106). In 1920 there were over two million Roman Catholics in England and Wales and 400,000 children in Catholic schools. The community was served by almost 4000 priests. By 1940 the number of priests had reached 5,652 and by 1950 it had reached 6,643. Not only did the overall number of Catholics increase, the regional distribution of Catholics began to shift significantly. Hitherto the Catholic presence had been more or less confined to Lancashire, and particularly Liverpool, and to some of the other major cities. In the thirties, it began to spread out to new suburbs and smaller country places where it had previously been unknown. Twenty-two new churches were opened in the Southwark diocese between 1930 and 1939 - all of them located in middle class commuter towns such as Purley, Sidcup, Woking and Bexley Heath. A comparison of statistics for the number of Catholics attending Easter Mass for the years 1931 and 1949 in the Northampton diocese - which was not by any means a traditional centre of Catholicism - reveals the phenomenal growth rate. In Luton, for example, 440 went to Easter Mass in 1931; 2,243 went in 1949. In Bedford, 640 went in 1931 and 1,660 in 1949. In Cambridge, 752 went in 1931 and 2,134 went in 1949 (Hastings, *History of English Christianity* p.276).

So why did Roman Catholicism increase at a time when the other denominations were experiencing a serious loss of members? The late 1940s was a significant period of immigration. There was, for example, an influx of Italians into Bedford. But immigration is not on its own a sufficient explanation. Hastings suggests that previous to the First World War, many Catholics lapsed from their faith simply because when they moved away from the Catholic ghettos, there was no church available for them to attend. The growth of Catholic churches and schools in those parts of south-eastern England to which many people were moving meant that such lapses were significantly less likely to occur from the late 1920s onwards. By the 1930s, Catholicism was admitting some twelve thousand converts a year, many of whom were probably the Protestant partners in what would otherwise have been mixed marriages. The very unyielding regulations on mixed marriages, together with the activities of the Catholic Missionary Society, seem to have been working very effectively. Furthermore, the official opposition to birth control (which had been cautiously accepted by Anglicans at the 1930 Lambeth Conference and then endorsed more enthusiastically in 1958) had the effect of pushing the Catholic birth rate above that of the rest of the population.

By the 1930s, Roman Catholics were ceasing to be members of an almost exclusively working class church. There was an expansion of the Catholic public schools, and after the 1944 Education Act, a large increase in the provision of Catholic grammar schools. There was a noticeable increase in the number of Catholics in higher education, and in the numbers of priests studying at the specifically Catholic Oxbridge institutions, Campion Hall in Oxford and St Edmund's House in Cambridge. Catholics also began to make their mark in the professions, for example in journalism, and at the Foreign Office.

The Church remained a highly conservative institution, aloof from the social gospel which was becoming an increasingly central issue on the Anglican agenda. Cardinal Bourne roundly condemned the General Strike of 1926. Hastings points out that in the Depression of the 1930s, the worst areas of deprivation and unemployment - Tyneside, Merseyside, Clydeside - were also the areas of highest Catholic density. In these places, it was above all Catholics who were losing their jobs. Yet the Catholic hierarchy - led by Cardinal Bourne until 1935 - were silent as their own strongholds became devastated by mass unemployment (Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, p.278). The hierarchy continued to be preoccupied with its own priorities - mixed marriages, birth control and anti-communism - and those laypeople who could be regarded as the spokesmen for their faith were largely apathetic on social questions. In fact, many of Roman Catholicism's most articulate laymen - like Hilaire Belloc and Evelyn Waugh - seemed to have made a conscious link between ecclesiastical authoritarianism and political authoritarianism. They approved of both, and were far more tolerant of Franco and Mussolini than were most of the people of Britain.

The first half of the twentieth century was conspicuously not a period of theological creativity within Catholicism. It can be argued that after the death of Cardinal Newman in 1890, and of the modernist thinker George Tyrell in 1909, almost no significant theological work was undertaken by clergy in the Roman Church in Britain until the 1950s. The Catholic thinkers of this period were largely all laymen: Von Hugel, Wilfred Ward, Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton. One reason for this was the imposition of the anti-modernist oath in 1910, which imposed a rigid, somewhat wooden orthodoxy on the Church. The oath 'against all liberal interpretations whether of scripture or history' had to be taken by all priests before ordination or when entering into a new job. It had the effect of strangling almost all clerical attempts at scholarship for half a century.

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) was a prolific journalist, novelist and critic whose work was much admired during the first few decades of the twentieth century. He became a tireless defender of conventional Christianity with a quirky, unconventional style that made his writings memorable. Christianity, he claimed, 'got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites by keeping them both furious'. He was a vigorous critic of the rationalism and scepticism of men like George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells. Previously an Anglican, in 1922 Chesterton was received into the Roman Catholic Church. This event took place in the dance room of the Railway Hotel in Beaconsfield, which served as the Catholic church in that town. He wrote *The Everlasting Man* (document 3) relatively soon after his conversion, and the work was regarded as a masterpiece. The book, about 260 pages long, was written in two parts, 'On the Creature Called Man' and 'On the Man Called Christ'. Document 3 consists of the Introduction, the first chapter of part one and the first and second chapters of part two.

Under Cardinal Francis Bourne, who became Archbishop of Westminster in 1903 (the same year that Randall Davidson went to Lambeth) the Catholic Church went from strength to strength in terms of the numbers it retained and recruited. Bourne had been born in Clapham, where his father had worked in the post office. Educated at Ushaw, Paris and Louvain, he lacked first hand experience of Rome, and this helped him to keep his distance from papal pronouncements in a way which marked him out from his predecessors. It was not, however, an easy time for anyone to try to resist the renewed tide of ultramontanism (the policy of increasing the authority of the Vatican at the expense of the autonomy of the local churches). Ultramontanism was flowing from Rome in the wake of the crisis surrounding the anti-modernist purge of Pius X. Bourne seems to have done his best to defend the British modernists. When he told the Roman authorities that there were no modernists in his diocese, he was only half believed, and may have become regarded as suspect in Roman eyes. Throughout the inter-war period, the Church continued to pursue the policies of ultramontanism, and to regard itself as fundamentally separate from the non-Catholic world.

Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 273-86; Morgan, *Span of the Cross*, pp. 93-106.

Further Reading

- David Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalists in Inter-war Britain' in Keith Robbins (ed.) Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750 - c.1950: Studies in Church History Subsidia 7 (1990).
- Trystan Owain Hughes, Winds of Change: The Roman Catholic Church and Society in Wales, 1916-62 (Cardiff; University of Wales Press).
- G.I.T. Machin, Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth Century Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapters 2 & 3.
- Stuart Mews, 'Religious Life Between the Wars 1920-1940' in Sheridan Gilley and W.J. Sheils (eds), A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
- Nathaniel Micklem, The Box and the Puppets (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1957).
- D. Densil Morgan, Barth Reception in Britain (London: T & T Clark, 2010).
- E.R. Norman, Church and Society in England 1770-1970 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), chapters 7 & 8.
- W.S.F. Pickering, Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1989).
- Ian M. Randall, Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918 – 1939 (Nottingham: Paternoster, 1999).
- David M. Thompson, 'The Older Free Churches', in Rupert Davies (ed.), The Testing of the Churches, 1932-82 (London: Epworth Press, 1982), pp. 87-118.