

A chapter in Robert Sauer, Ed. *Handbook on Economics and Religion*. London: World Scientific, 2021. (In press)

'Economic Doctrine' in the Church of England since the Reformation

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I *The Novelty of 'Christian Social Teaching'*

That any Christian Church should have an 'economic doctrine' is a new idea, first appearing in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII (1892).

When the Roman Empire became Christian in the Fourth Century, 'Church' and 'State' were one and the same, and the Emperor was Head. After the division of the Empire in the Fifth Century this relationship persisted in the Eastern half until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks (1453), and has been continued in the Eastern Orthodox churches, including those of Ukraine and Russia. After the Western Empire fell to the barbarians in the Fifth Century, the bits and pieces

soon became Christian, recognising the Bishop of Rome as spiritual head whilst becoming incipiently sovereign states.

In each of these, all members of society were Christian subjects of the same monarch: whose duty, often specified in the Coronation oath, was to govern his people in accordance with Christian teaching. There was not, nor could there have been, any conception of ‘the Church’ delivering ‘economic doctrine’ to ‘the State’. Every individual was a member of each, and all were more or less instructed in the duties of a Christian in such matters as respect for property rights, stewardship of one’s own property, charity to the poor, and the mutual obligations of buyers and sellers, employers and employees, lenders and borrowers, landlords and tenants. The economic maintenance of the Church itself was a duty of the sovereign.

With continual modification with respect to specific institutions and practices, and with regional variation, this understanding of economic affairs in a Christian society persisted in Europe until the Reformation. And although the Reformation destroyed the unity of Western Christendom, and in Protestant countries created a distinction between ‘the State’ and a now contested headship of ‘the Church’, it did not destroy Christianity. Until the end of the Eighteenth Century, each European nation was what Jonathan Clark (1985) has described as a ‘confessional state’ – in which the national church, whether Romanist or Protestant, continued to monitor the economic activities of its members. The existence of dissenting sects in many Protestant countries provided theological excuses for those who resisted the dominant economic ethic; but for the most part the effect on national culture was slight.

This state of affairs was destroyed by the French Revolution, which was a frontal attack on Christianity and the ancient culture of Christian Europe. Though a Bourbon Restoration after 1815 brought back monarchy and nobility to France, the Revolution had inflicted irreparable harm upon the Roman Catholic Church, which was never again to be the ‘established church’ of the West (Waterman, 2016). The deliberate secularisation of French political life became permanent, and was widely followed in those European nations which had been much affected by French ideas and practices. By 1829, 86% of all diocesan bishops in the world-wide Roman Church – chiefly in Europe – were appointed by the State (Duffy 2006, p. 297). After 1815 therefore, the papacy became as politically detached from Roman Catholic, as it had been from

Protestant, countries. And it was deeply conscious of this. With the sole exception of *Singularis Quidem* (1856), papal encyclicals from *Mirari Vos* (1832) to *Quanta Cura* (1864) denounced ‘the philosophy of this age’ supposed to have inspired the French Revolution (Waterman 2016). By the pontificate of Leo XIII ‘Church’ and ‘State’ were perceived in Rome as radically distinct; the former having a duty to instruct the latter in the political implications of the Christian religion. And in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) – which was itself a belated response to the French Revolution – Leo addressed social and specifically economic issues for the first time. ‘We approach the subject with confidence’, Leo asserted, ‘for no practical solution of this question will be found apart from the intervention of religion and of the Church’ (1891, para 16). Thus was born the conception of ‘Catholic (or Papal, or Christian) Social Doctrine’.

Britain was the only West European nation to have been completely insulated from the political and intellectual consequences of the French Revolution. Protected by the Channel and the Royal Navy from Napoleonic incursions, and by the Whig rhetoric of Edmund Burke (1790) from the meretricious glamour of Jacobin ideas, England and Scotland (though not Ireland) underwent no major social or political change from 1789 to 1815.

The Church of England was almost completely unaffected by the events in France – though one of its clerics composed the most radical and damaging refutation of Jacobin ideas ever written (Malthus 1798). Thus it became the only national Church in Western Europe to preserve unbroken continuity with its past. And that past went back at least to the Norman Conquest.

For though it had separated from the Papacy after the excommunication of Elizabeth I in 1570, as much continuity as possible had been preserved with the pre-Reformation church in liturgy, order and governance. That continuity was challenged by a powerful and subversive Puritan faction, which hijacked the Church and imposed Calvinist doctrine and order during the Great Rebellion (1642-59). But it was deliberately resumed at ‘the Restoration’ of Crown, Church and Parliament in 1660-62. The final and definitive recension of *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP 1662) provided the doctrinal framework within which the Church of England continued its age-old duty of monitoring the economic rights and duties of its members.

II *Before the French Revolution*

The traditional instruction in, and monitoring of, the economic rights and duties of Christians was codified by the Church of England at the Reformation.

In preparation for Confirmation all children were taught a *Catechism* (1549) which included social and economic duty.

Question. What is thy dutie towards thy neighbour?

Answer: My duetie towards my neighbour is to loue hym as myself. . . . To submitte myself to all my teachers, spirituall pastours, and maisters. To ordre myself lowlye and reuerentelye to al my betters. . . . To bee true and iust in al my dealing. . . . To kepe my hands from picking and stealing . . . Not to couet nor desire other mennes goodes. But learne and laboure truly to geate my owne liuing, and to doe my duety in that state of life: unto which it shal please God to cal me.

The intellectual tradition within which such duties were taught in every parish church was part of the training of the clergy.

By the eighteenth century, according to R. H. Tawney (1947, p. 147) ‘The social teaching of the Church had ceased to count, because the Church itself had ceased to think.’ Tawney was mistaken in supposing that the Church of England had ever delivered ‘social teaching’ in the sense of *Rerum Novarum*. And he was quite wrong to assert that there was no significant social *thinking* in the eighteenth-century Church.

In an important sense, Anglican social thinking had begun in the seventeenth century with *Leviathan* (Hobbes [1651] 1957), a powerful defence of the power and authority of the sovereign in a Christian society, based on the assumption of generally scarce resources and the consequent competition for these among humans. John Locke ([1689/90] 1967) differed fundamentally from Hobbes in proposing a normative theory of human society dependent upon the quasi-religious conception of ‘natural rights’ associated with the mediaeval Christian tradition of ‘natural law’,

which humans can know by ‘reason.’ Men are ‘naturally’ free and equal, can agree on social order, and Hobbesian absolute monarchy is unnecessary. The obvious incompatibility between Hobbes’s positive account of society and Locke’s normative account is the background to Anglican social thinking in the Eighteenth Century. Much of this took place in Cambridge, and was associated with incipient economic thought – itself an attempt to explore the implications for modern society of Hobbes’s assumption of resource scarcity.

Yet Locke, though an Oxford man, was important in Whiggish Cambridge where his most influential disciple was Edmund Law (1703-87), Master of Peterhouse and later Bishop of Carlisle. Law attracted the friendship of several of the brightest of his younger colleagues in the university, including William Paley (1743-1805); and in striking contrast with Hobbes, believed that the human race is gradually and continuously progressing in religion at the same rate at which it progresses in all other knowledge. In the second half of the eighteenth century however, Paley and some of his contemporaries slightly modified this optimistic view of the human condition by explicit recognition, in their teaching of undergraduates, of what we should now call ‘economic’ factors (Waterman 2017a).

All undergraduates were obliged to attend lectures in their own colleges and were allowed to do so in other colleges as well. An important part of the curriculum for future bishops, magistrates, legislators, ‘spirituall pastours’, and ‘maisters’ in a Christian society was social ethics. For the way in which the Church of England monitored the economic life of its members was through the teaching and influence of its educated elite, especially but not exclusively the clergy, all of whom were trained at one of the two universities.

Paley was typical in delivering a course in the 1760s on ‘Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy’, which eventually became his most famous book (Paley 1785); and in which – Book VI, chapter xi ‘Of Population and Provision’ – what was later to be known as ‘political economy’ was explicit for the first time (Waterman 1996, 2017). For though ‘social thinking’ must be normative, there can be no obligation to perform that which is unfeasible. Therefore knowledge of the real world in which ethical decisions must be made is essential. Though Paley’s incipient political economy took no account of resource scarcity, it analysed for the first time the

conception of optimisation – which does imply the opportunity cost of foregone possibilities, and therefore the fact of scarcity in a more general sense (Waterman 1996, pp. 680, 681, 685).

Paley's lectures included treatment of the ethics of certain economic topics including contracts of sale and productive services, and most importantly, property. The right to property in land does not depend, as Locke had argued, upon anything done by its owner, but simply upon positive law (Paley 1785, p. 101). The ethical criteria are utilitarian: for that tradition of ethics was born in Cambridge – 50 years before Jeremy Bentham (1789) – with John Gay's 'Dissertation concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality', published as a preface to the English translation by Paley's patron Edmund Law (1739) of William King's *De Origine Mali* (1702). Hence for Paley and his Cambridge contemporaries, 'Virtue is the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness' (Paley 1785, p. 35).

An exact contemporary, neighbour, fellow-Yorkshireman and probably friend of Paley, John Hey (1734-1815), fellow and tutor at Sidney Sussex College from 1758 to 1779, and in 1780 first Norrisian Professor of Divinity, also gave a series of lectures on 'Morality' in the 1770s for his college pupils which attracted the voluntary attendance of undergraduates from other colleges including William Pitt, then (1773-76) at Pembroke College. Hey's Norrisian (1796) lectures in Divinity had been a great success; but the enormous prestige of Paley's *Principles* forestalled the possibility of publishing his own 'Lectures in Morality', which may now be read in manuscript in his college library (Hey 1815). These were utterly unlike Paley's, not only in style but in content. And indeed they more closely resembled the kind of Christian social thinking mourned by Tawney as forgotten. A brief excerpt illustrates the style.

Lecture 37 'Of permutatory contracts: and first of the general laws by which all such contracts ought to be regulated'.

It is generally said, that in all permutatory contracts there must be an equality of value in the rights alienated by the contracting parties; but this does not seem satisfactory; if two oxen were exactly of the same value, that is, if it was quite indifferent to me which I had, it were trifling to change them. The value of anything is, in strictness, relative not absolute; tho' some standard may be found convenient for the purpose of distinctness; but certainly

what is more valuable to one is less valuable to another; and indeed upon this depends the whole good of permutatory contracts: therefore it does not appear how equality of value of two things in an exchange can be computed absolutely (Hey 1815, Vol. III [MS 12] p. 1273).

Like Paley however, Hey employed what we should now call ‘economic analysis’, including an incipient theory of market price. Hey suggests that the best way ‘to conceive the value of anything according to men’s general wants’ would be ‘to suppose all men bidding for it at an universal auktion.’ In developing this idea Hey’s exposition seems to be a possible source of the first-ever formal demand function, specified by Malthus (1800).

In one very important respect Paley and Hey were at one. The normative social theory of each was utilitarian in the original, Cambridge, sense. There seems little reason to suppose that their treatment of social ethics was not typical in Cambridge.

There was no attention to social ethics in Oxford during the eighteenth century, where the undergraduate curriculum, such as it was, was based on Latin literature (Sutherland and Mitchell 1986, pp. 477-81).

III *Effects of the French Revolution.*

Though Britain was spared the drastic political and social upheaval of the French Revolution, both Anglicans and Dissenters were compelled to make up their minds about the new possibilities it created and the ideas on which it appeared to be based.

The first leading Anglican thinker to react to the French Revolution was William Wilberforce (1759-1853), Cambridge-educated, ‘evangelical’ layman, Member of Parliament, social reformer and campaigner against slavery. His ‘Practical View’ of current Anglican religion contrasted with ‘Real Christianity’ (Wilberforce 1797) supplied the impetus for a wide-ranging series of social reforms, from the abolition of slavery to the welfare of chimney sweeps, and remained influential

throughout the Nineteenth Century. Wilberforce was a member of the ‘Clapham Sect’ which included the pioneer in monetary theory, Henry Thornton (1760-1815), and other experienced bankers and merchants, most of whom were allied with Wilberforce in his campaigns. But the evils to be remedied seemed too obvious to require much in the way of social theory, and not until later did evangelicalism (or evangelicals) play any significant part in the ‘social thinking’ of the Church of England.

However, for the first time since the Glorious Revolution what we should now call ‘ideological’ questions demanded answers; and some of these questions seemed amenable to the new science of Political Economy. But Britain was still a ‘confessional state’: satisfactory answers had therefore to be theologically acceptable to the authorities of the Established Church. Over the next four or five decades, an influential group of Anglican clerics – two of whom eventually became Archbishops – worked out an ideological alliance of Political Economy and Christian Theology (Waterman 1983a) which provided the conceptual framework of social thinking in the Church of England for the first half of the Nineteenth Century.

The events of 1789 had attracted little attention in England at first. Only Edmund Burke (1790) saw clearly their implications: the revolution in Paris, which was quite unlike the Glorious Revolution of 1690, would lead inevitably to bloodshed, tyranny and war. Burke’s predictions were fully substantiated over the next two years, and an anti-Jacobin ideology began to be constructed as a theoretical defence of the status quo. Many in England however, especially among Protestant Dissenters, remained faithful to the ideal of human perfectibility through institutional reform. The most influential of these was William Godwin (1756-1836), whose *Political Justice* (1793, 1796, 1798) recaptured the intellectual high ground for revolution and was widely popular (Waterman 1991, pp. 22-24).

Godwin’s work might have died a natural death after Britain joined the coalition of European powers in 1792 and began a twenty-three-year war against France and its Revolution. But by 1797 support for subversive ideas appeared to be reviving in Britain – at least to the *Anti-Jacobin Review* founded by George Canning in that year. The Fleet mutinied at Spithead and the

Nore; the French landed in Pembrokeshire; Grey's campaign for Parliamentary reform was defeated. Godwin's second edition had greatly strengthened his argument for 'equal liberty and justice for all'. And an important part of his argument was his attack on 'the established administration of property.' It was this that became the principle target of the most radical and influential attack on revolutionary ideas ever mounted in Britain. Its anonymous author was then an obscure clergyman. The subsequent development of his argument by himself and others created a fundamental and long-lasting mutation in the social thinking of the Church of England (Waterman 1991).

Robert Malthus (1766-1834) was a Fellow and sometime Exhibitioner of Jesus College Cambridge, and Ninth Wrangler of his year. William Paley, though by now Archdeacon of Carlisle, was still a powerful influence in Cambridge. *Moral and Political Philosophy* was published in Malthus's freshman year, and immediately adopted by the university as a textbook. In 1798 Malthus was Curate of a small parish near his parents' estate and in frequent conversation with his father, Daniel (1730-1800), who – though a Churchman – favoured liberal political ideas, was a friend of Rousseau and Hume, and sympathetic to Godwin's notions. The *Essay on Population* (1798) which grew out of these conversations considered 'the Future Improvement of Society, and contained 'Remarks on the Speculations of Mr Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers'. At the centre of its demolition of Godwin in Chapter X was a revival of Hobbes's insight into resource scarcity, which had been deliberately ignored by Locke and his disciples.

Malthus performed a Hume-type 'mental experiment'. Let us imagine Godwin's 'beautiful system of equality realized in its utmost purity'. As all economic thinkers of the eighteenth century had realised, population would then grow exponentially (e.g. Smith [1776] 1976, I.viii.39, 23). Food production would also grow, but 'at best' only arithmetically because land is limited. Hence per capita income must fall. Long before it reaches the 'subsistence' (zero population-growth) level, falling real income reawakens 'the mighty law of self-preservation.' Theft and falsehood undermine the mutual trust on which 'benevolence' depends. 'Self-love resumes his wonted empire and lords it triumphant over the world.' And as Hobbes ([1651] 1957, p. 82) had explained, human institutions – government, property rights, laws – must then exist: to

contain the human propensity ‘to invade and destroy one another’. The ‘inevitable laws of nature’ thus create ‘a society, constructed on a plan not essentially different from that which prevails in every known State at present’ (Malthus 1798, p. 207). Godwin’s plan of ‘equal liberty and justice for all’ is self-reversing. The economic and social status quo is a position of stable equilibrium (Waterman 1991, pp. 27-50).

Though the central argument of the first *Essay* was generally accepted as decisive, there was much criticism of detail. In particular, the last two chapters, in which Malthus attempted to supply a theodicy of scarcity, were regarded by all as confused or heterodox or both (Waterman 1983b). Abandoning anonymity, Malthus (1803) wrote a second *Essay* which dropped the amateurish theology and marshalled demographic evidence for the ‘principle of population’. Over the next twenty-three years he produced four more recensions of the *Essay*, and a *Summary View* in 1830.

Because of the high political importance of Malthus’s case against revolution, it was essential that the Anglican Establishment be assured that its argument was consistent with Christian orthodoxy. Over the next four decades therefore, a series of influential authors, beginning with Paley (1802), corrected Malthus’s defective theology, developed the wider social implications of his analysis, and (with Malthus himself) refined the political economy on which it was based – and answered the objection that the new science of political economy was ‘hostile to religion’. The most important of these was John Bird Sumner (1780-1862) whose seminal work inaugurated what became known as ‘Christian Political Economy’ (Waterman 1991).

Sumner’s *Treatise on the Records of the Creation* (1816), which Malthus (1817, vol 3, p. 423) acknowledged as a ‘masterly developement (sic) and completion’ of his views’, was decisive. ‘Inequalities of Ranks and Fortunes,’ Sumner argued, is the condition best suited to human development and the exercise of virtue. It is proof of the Divine wisdom that this order of things is ‘universally established, by the operation of a single principle’: the ‘principle of population’ (Waterman 1991, pp. 160-70). In the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution and the French Wars which were one of its consequences, ‘economic doctrine’ in the Church of England – though a product of ‘liberal’ political economy, and notwithstanding the seemingly radical nature of Wilberforce’s reformism – was predictably conservative, not to say reactionary.

This was no mere political success. Sumner's work received the applause of all, including the tiny fraternity of political economists. David Ricardo thought *Records* 'a clever book' and regretted that Sumner was abandoning economics for theology (Waterman 1991, p. 157). In part, the reason for its success was its theological moderation. Sumner was a King's Scholar, and like Wilberforce a Simeonite evangelical; but with a broad and comprehensive view of the Church, and with intellectual roots in the Cambridge tradition of Paley and Hey. As with them, the natural theology of Newton's *Principia* was central. He treated Hume with great respect, and explicitly recognised the authority of Paley's natural theology. His intellectual achievement was to remove from the icy realm of theodicy the seeming evil produced by the 'principle of population', and transplant it to the genial soil of Paley's teleology (Waterman 1991, pp. 164-65). It was not a 'natural evil' to be excused and explained, as even Malthus had supposed, but an example of 'the Wisdom and Goodness of God'.

Though Paley had rejected the optimism of Locke, he ignored the pessimism of Hobbes. Resource scarcity has no place in his social theory. But it was precisely in the thin slice of time between the last of his Cambridge lectures in 1775 and Malthus's *Essay* (1798) that *Wealth of Nations* (1776) appeared; and the new science of 'Political Economy' was transplanted from France where it was born (Faccarello 1999) to Britain. Malthus himself was one of the first students of *Wealth of Nations*, which he first encountered at Warrington Academy whilst in his teens (Waterman 2006); and by 1805 was the foremost English authority on Adam Smith. His friendship with Ricardo a few years later led eventually to their foundation of the Political Economy Club in 1821 (Waterman 2008). Political Economy, later to mutate into 'Economics', had become a permanent – if unwelcome – addition to British intellectual life.

In 1816 Sumner was an obscure usher at Eton. The success and importance of his *Treatise* was immediately followed by a series of valuable preferments, and eventually consecration to the episcopate (Chester) in 1828. In 1848 he became Archbishop of Canterbury. It was Sumner's achievement to co-opt the new science into the main stream of Anglican social thinking. Serious thinking by Christians about social order henceforth must take account of resource scarcity. Hobbes was right. Locke was wrong.

For nearly a century, Anglican social thought had been a purely Cambridge enterprise. From the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, however, there had been a revival of intellectual life in Oxford centred on Oriel College, led successively by two distinguished Provosts: John Eveleigh and Edward Copleston (1776-1849; Provost 1814-28; Bishop of Llandaff 1827-49). Copleston played an active part in public affairs, was a friend and frequent visitor of Lord Grenville at Dropmore, and consulted by other leading political figures on government policy. He had studied Adam Smith and Malthus, followed the proceedings of the Bullion Committee of 1810; and the publication of his two *Letters to Peel* (1819a, b) on the causal nexus between protection, currency reform and the Poor Law in relation to the work of Malthus and Sumner ‘raised Christian Political Economy to a new level of analytical sophistication’ (Waterman 1991, p. 179).

Copleston’s most distinguished pupil at Oriel, Richard Whately (1787-1863; Archbishop of Dublin 1831-63) became a Fellow of that college, and in 1831 was elected the second Drummond Professor of Political Economy – succeeding his former pupil Nassau Senior. Though not a seminal thinker like Malthus or a brilliant analyst like Copleston, he had a clear grasp of the importance of Malthus and Sumner in the construction of CPE, and of the new science on which it was based. And it seemed to him that ‘before too long, political economists, of some sort or other, must govern the world’ (Waterman 1991, p. 206). It was essential, therefore, to incorporate the science into Christian social thought; and in backward-looking Oxford to begin by dispelling the fear that it was ‘hostile to religion’. But his *Introductory Lectures in Political Economy* (1831) were all he was able to deliver before his abrupt and entirely unexpected elevation as an Archbishop prevented his writing more about the subject himself.

Whately was first and foremost a logician and philosopher, and his most important contribution to Economics (and Christian Political Economy) was epistemological: to establish the difference between ‘secular knowledge’ (of Nature) and ‘sacred knowledge’ (of God). The former is based on theory and is subject to empirical test. The latter comes by faith, by means of which we can see God’s self-revelation in ‘Scripture’. This crucial distinction became of high importance four decades later, when Darwinian evolution appeared to many to falsify the

Creation myths in *Genesis*. Whately's demarcation permitted Anglican theologians to welcome Natural Science rather than denying it: as some Protestant Christians did (and still do). But in one respect Whately was untypical of Christian Political Economy. Unlike the Cambridge authors (save Paley) and Copleston, resource scarcity plays no part in his thinking. For him, Political Economy is not 'Economics' but 'Catalactics' – a conception revived and adopted in the Twentieth Century by Hayek and by James Buchanan and his associates (Marciano 2011).

By the 1830s, CPE was become the main stream of Anglican social thinking, generally accepted in the two universities and represented in the House of Lords by two highly regarded prelates, J. B. Sumner and Whately.

An eminent Scottish cleric, Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), was closely associated with, and a contributor to, CPE (Waterman 1991, chap. 6). His numerous publications on Political Economy in relation to Christian theology were influential upon social thinking in the Church of Scotland.

IV The Victorian Period

Though Queen Victoria had reigned for eleven years when Sumner became Archbishop of Canterbury, and for twenty-five when he died, he and Whately – though still eminent and authoritative – were products (and creators) of the Regency culture. But new voices were now raised in the national conversation on Christian social thinking, some of which were highly critical of Christian Political Economy.

The most radical of these, literary Romantics such as the Lake Poets, rejected political economy altogether (Waterman 2003). Some rejected the Malthusian conception of the human condition. Others rejected the 'classical' assumptions of CPE: the equilibrium outcomes of free and competitive markets may not always be preferable to deliberate allocation of scarce resources by the State. Those like Marx and Engels and their followers, who rejected Christianity and all religion as ideological deception, had no interest at all in Christian social thinking.

Underlying all this was a profound transformation of English society and culture, and the place of the Church in that culture, wrought by industrialisation, population growth and urbanisation.

What Donald Winch (1996, p. 418) has called ‘the schism, or fault line, separating economists from the self-appointed spokesmen for human beings’ was inaugurated in Robert Southey’s ([1804] 1994) maledictory review of Malthus’s second *Essay* (1803). S. T. Coleridge, who had hated Malthus since his undergraduate days, took the lead in the Lake Poets’ attack on Political Economy, which was perfectly captured in Wordsworth’s (1950, pp. 354-5) sonnet on King’s College chapel:

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
 With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned –
 Albeit labouring for a scanty band
 Of white-robed Scholars only – this immense
 And glorious Work of fine intelligence!
 Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
 Of nicely calculated less or more:
 So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
 These lofty pillars . . .

The lore ‘Of nicely calculated less or more’ was an affront to warm imaginations excited by the rediscovery of mediæval art, architecture, Christian culture and social order in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Romantic hatred of economic thinking was powerfully amplified by Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, Kingsley and many another canonical author; and has remained a permanent feature of British intellectual life (Waterman 2003).

The Romantic critique was eventually co-opted by Marxist socialists: e.g. ‘The Victorian bourgeoisie had constructed from bits of Adam Smith and Ricardo, Bentham and Malthus a cast-iron theoretical system’ with which ‘to justify and perpetuate exploitation’ (Thompson 1976, pp. 8-9). But as early as 1848, the very different ‘Christian Socialists’ associated with F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes inaugurated a tradition of Anglican Christian Socialism which long remained influential. (Norman 1976). Despite the growing technical elaboration in

this period of what became known as ‘Neoclassical Economics’ (Waterman 2019/20, pp. 331-36), a considerable body of educated opinion in the Church of England entertained far less confidence in the efficacy of free and competitive markets than the proponents of CPE. By the 1890s this mutation of social thinking in the Church of England had led to the creation in Oxford of the Christian Social Union inspired by the principles of Maurice and his associates (Jones 1968).

CPE had emerged in the final decades of Peter Laslett’s *World We Have Lost* (1965): in which the entire population save that of London and Bristol lived in rural communities and small towns; in which everyone knew his neighbours; and in which the all-powerful trio of Squire, Parson and Schoolmaster performed the traditional pastoral function of monitoring the economic rights and duties of parishioners. Despite Methodism and Dissent, the Church of England was still to a great extent the national religion, as it had been since the Reformation.

But in the first half of the nineteenth century, innovation in textiles, coal mining and iron production created a strong demand for labour that relocated under-employed and starving farm-hands into the new factory towns huddled around the Dark Satanic Mills. They lived in tenements near the factories, there were few if any parish churches to attend, and those who wished to remain faithful depended on Methodist or other non-Anglican missions. Cut off from the immemorial culture of their rural ancestors, they quitted the Church. And in general, urbanisation in England, which increased from 15% in 1750 to 85% in 1900, produced the same result. By 1851 the Religious Census revealed that of 10.4 million possible worshippers, only 4.6 million attended a Sunday morning service; and only 2.5 million of these were Anglican. <http://www.brin.ac.uk/religious-census-1851-online/>

But traditional Anglican culture, romanticised in the Barseshire novels, persisted in rural areas having few close contacts with great cities. The age-old instruction in, and monitoring of, the economic rights and duties of Christians continued in each parish school under the watchful eyes of Squire, Parson and Schoolmaster, or at any rate of the second of these. But we never see what actually goes on in Josiah Crawley’s school at Hogglestock or that of Mark Robarts at Framley.

In many parts of the South and West of England the ancient rural culture was still alive, if not well, into the early Twentieth Century, and was acutely observed by Flora Thompson from the viewpoint of one of the village children. In 'Lark Rise' the Parson visits the school every day for 'Scripture', and to teach the older children their Christian duties: in particular 'To ordre myself lowlye and reuerentelye to al my betters'. His Sunday sermons to the villagers emphasize that theme:

Another favourite subject was the supreme rightness of the social order as it then existed. God, in His infinite wisdom, had appointed a place for every man, woman and child on this earth and it was their bounden duty to remain contentedly in their niches. A gentleman might seem to some of his listeners to have a pleasant, easy life, compare to theirs at field labour; but he had his duties and responsibilities, which would be far beyond their capabilities. He had to pay taxes, sit on the Bench of Magistrates, oversee his estate, and keep up his position by entertaining. Could they do these things? No, of course they could not; and he did not suppose that a gentleman could cut as straight a furrow or mow or thatch a rick as expertly as they could (Thompson 1945, chap XIV).

Now it is obvious that this is a perversion of the original Anglican doctrine, according to which the catechumen learns indeed to respect authority, but also 'to doe my duety in that state of life: unto which it shal please God to cal me'. The Rector of 'Lark Rise' implicitly changes 'shal' to 'hath' and 'please' to 'pleased', and no-one seems to notice.

But this is only a straw in the wind and may not be typical at that date. By Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee a new Vicar of 'Candleford' had drastically changed the relations between the gentry at the vicarage and even the humblest parishioners. His excellent and extremely popular sermons 'made you feel two inches taller' (Thompson 1945, chap XXXIX). Even in 'Candleford', *The World We Have Lost* was finally lost for ever.

V *The Twentieth Century*

By the end of Victoria's reign the Church of England was no longer the national religion (Inglis 1963). 'Social thinking' persisted however – and indeed flourished – among some of the educated élite in the Twentieth Century, but in an increasingly new and inhospitable world. For after 'the greatest of all divisions in the history of the West – that which divides the present from, say, the age of Jane Austen and Scott' (Lewis 1969, p. 7) there could eventually be no 'national religion' whatsoever. And not only England but the whole of Western Christendom has been 'un-christened'. Though belief may survive in individuals, it no longer shapes our culture (Lewis 1969, pp. 4-5, 9-10). As others, including Flora Thompson, have perceived, this is a consequence of a fundamental change in productive technique: an economic and cultural shift that Marx and Engels would have expected.

Between Jane Austen and us, but not between her and Shakespeare, Chaucer, Alfred . . . comes the birth of the machines. . . . This is on a level with the change from stone to bronze, or from a pastoral to an agricultural economy. It alters Man's place in nature. (Lewis 1969, p. 10)

Yet the profound social mutation that C. S. Lewis correctly identified in his Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge in 1954 was hardly apparent to most in England, whether Christian or not, until after the First World War; and only obvious to all after the American and European cultural revolution of the late 1960s. For most English, whether rural or urban, life carried on pretty much as usual until 1914; and despite the great and permanent effects of the War, resumed in many places until 1939. In the countryside at any rate, there were still many parishes in which the ancient tradition of instruction in, and monitoring of, the economic rights and duties of Christians persisted until the Second World War. Only in the 1950s did it finally disappear: as mechanisation on the farms reduced the demand for labour, and villagers were replaced by industrial workers relocated from nearby towns.

Meanwhile the 'social thinking' of its élite continued the consensus that emerged in Oxford in the Christian Social Union, founded in 1889 by the Professor of Divinity, Canon Henry Scott Holland together with Charles Gore and J. R. Illingworth to propagate and develop the social doctrine of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Edward Benson (1889). The Archbishop had

written: ‘there is much in “socialism” as we now understand it, which honestly searches for some beneficial remedy – much of which is purely religious and Christian’.

The characteristic feature of that consensus was the kind of ‘Christian Socialism’ first proposed in the 1840s by F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes. Its starting point was a complete rejection of Christian Political Economy and the case for reconciling capitalism and the market economy with Christian ethics. Unlike Romantic Political Economy however, it did not abjure all economic thinking. For though orthodox economics at that time was strictly neoclassical, and devoted to exploring the optimum allocation of scarce resources by free markets, its analytical technique did provide the conceptual framework for a rational socialism (Waterman 2019/20); and even the less rigorously specified Christian Socialism avoided the seeming anti-intellectualism of the Romantics. What ‘Socialism’ seems to have meant to Anglican intellectuals at this time was the assignment to government rather than the market of some important economic functions such as utilities and transport; and comprehensive and coherent policies to improve the welfare of the poor through education, health and income support.

There was a high correlation, in the years between 1889 and 1914, between commitment to this kind of socialism and the ‘Anglo-Catholic’ movement in the late Victorian Church. As William Temple (1908, page 199), a leading figure in that movement had put it, ‘The alternative stands before us, Socialism or Heresy’. The Anglo-Catholic Christian Socialist movement had its origins of in the work of Scott Holland and Stewart Headlam, each of whom had been followers of F. D. Maurice. Headlam was priest of a working-class parish in Bethnal Green where he founded the Guild of St Mathew, later succeeded by the Church Socialist League in 1906 which was a response to the founding of the British Labour Party in that year. (<http://anglicanhistory.org/academic/hopkins1982/01.pdf>)

Anglo-Catholic missions to industrial working-class parishes, conducted by Oxford-educated sons of the upper classes and assisted in vacation time by undergraduates such as Temple, were a hallmark of this manifestation of Anglican social thinking.

Anglo-Catholic Christian Socialism remained influential in the Church of England until the 1950s, strongly abetted by the ‘Christendom Group’ led and funded by Maurice Reckitt

(1888-1980); and which included such well-known social thinkers as T.S. Eliot, Alec Vidler, and V. A. Demant (mbreckitttrust.org/index.php/articles/49-twenty-years-of-the-christendom-trust). The recent Archbishop of Canterbury (2003-2012), Rowan Williams, is or was an Anglo-Catholic Christian Socialist who has been an outspoken critic of nuclear ‘deterrents’, the ‘market state’, ‘consumerism’, tax avoidance, economic inequality both domestic and international, and environmental degradation.

His successor however, Justin Welby, is an Evangelical and a former business executive, neither of which would predispose him to Anglo-Catholic Christian Socialism. Yet his position on the social and economic problems facing Britain appears to differ little, if at all, from that of Williams. ‘Our economic model is broken . . . the gains from growth are being diverted into profits rather than wages . . . We are failing those who will grow up in a world where the gap between the richest and the poorest parts of the country is significant and destabilising’ (*Guardian*, 5 September 2017).

The background to these archiepiscopal observations on economic and social affairs was provided 70 years before by William Temple, who had repented him of his useful dogmatism; and though still a friend and colleague of his Rugby school-fellow and friend R. H. Tawney, a lifelong socialist, and a member of the Labour Party for some years, no longer believed that we must choose between Socialism and heresy. As Bishop of Manchester (1921-29) he became acquainted with industrial culture and the realities of the capitalist economy, and mediated between coal-miners and their employers. He became Archbishop of York (1929-1942) at the moment that the world economy collapsed into the longest and deepest depression in history, only ending in the greatest war of the Twentieth Century. And in 1942 he was nominated to the primatial see of Canterbury by Winston Churchill, who disapproved of his socialist principles but who recognised his superlative abilities (Robbins 1993, page 223).

It was in that year that he produced *Christianity and Social Order* (Temple 1942), the nearest to a definitive statement of Anglican social doctrine that has ever been written, and lastingly influential. As Edward Heath, Conservative Prime Minister (1965-1970) wrote for its republication in 1976,

The impact of William Temple on my generation was immense. . . (He) was foremost among the leaders of the nation, temporal or spiritual, in posing challenging, radical questions about the nature of our society and its economic basis . . .

his book

brings home to every one of us the continuing importance, not so much as having cut-and-dried schemes for every eventuality as of being able to rely on a body of principle by which our plans and our actions can be both motivated and judged (Temple 1976, pages 1, 2).

An Oxford economist of the 1960s judged that it was ‘one of the foundation piers of the Welfare State’ (Munby 1960, page 157).

Though short (114 pages) and popular in style, Temple had taken much trouble with its composition, and had asked Lord Keynes to read the page proofs. For by the late 1930s Temple was beginning to discover at least as much in common with advanced Liberals like Keynes and Sir William Beveridge (1879-1963) as with doctrinaire, upper-class Christian socialists in the Labour Party. Keynes and Beveridge, eminent economists whose opinions and advice were studied with close attention and respect by government, were the principle architects of the post-war macroeconomic and social policies implemented by the Labour government (1945-51) of Clement Atlee.

Keynes was reassuring. Of course the Church has the right to ‘interfere’ in public policy, which is ‘essentially a branch of ethics . . . I should have supposed that it was a very recent heresy indeed to cut these matters out of its province.’ Keynes reminded Temple of the important contributions to political economy made by clerics such as Swift, Fleetwood, Berkeley, Paley and Malthus; and he pointed out that ‘Archbishop Sumner’s early work was on economics’ (Temple 1976, page 9); not realising, perhaps, that this work was fundamentally opposed in its political implications to everything Temple stood for.

The first chapter asked ‘What Right has the Church to Interfere?’ in public policy, to which Keynes responded. The second asked ‘How Should the Church Interfere?’ the answer to which is

through the actions of individual Christian people like Wilberforce; never by committing itself corporately to ‘a programme of detailed action’ (page 41); though Christian groups and organisations can engage in politics. And ‘the Church’ may and sometimes *intervene* – as in industrial disputes. Chapter 3 asked ‘Has the Church Claimed to Intervene Before?’ and is a brief but substantial treatment of Christian doctrines of property, usury, the just price and enclosures.

Chapter 4 considers ‘primary’ Christian Social Principles: announced by the Church but to be implemented by ‘Christian citizens acting in their civic capacity’, who must ‘re-shape the existing order in closer conformity to the principles’ (page 58). However, because of Original Sin, ‘Self-interest is always exercising its disturbing influence’. Therefore ‘The art of government in fact is the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands’ (page 65). Forty-nine years later Pope John-Paul II, almost certainly in ignorance of Temple’s book, amplified exactly this point in *Centesimus Annus* (John-Paul 1991, para 25), which affirmed the market economy for the first time in papal history (Waterman 2017b, pages 393-94). Together with the recognition that

Whether or not our existing form of Capitalism in Great Britain offends against ‘Natural Law’, it has certainly given to the great mass of the people a higher standard of life . . . than any previous system (page 81),

this realistic understanding of the human material with which ‘the Church’ must work in baptizing Social Order is a measure of how far Temple had come from his youthful dogmatism.

Chapter 5 deals with ‘derivative’ principles; 6 is a critique of ‘Natural Law’ theorising; and 7 concludes with ‘The Task Before Us’, followed by a superbly balanced and judicious Appendix outlining ‘A Suggested Programme’ – which must not be regarded as ‘the political programme which Christians ought to support’ for there can be no such programme (page 114).

Though Christian ‘Economic Doctrine’ in the Church of England will doubtless persist among Anglicans unless or until their religion becomes extinct, it can never in the foreseeable future be a matter of national importance as it was in Temple’s day. For as C. S. Lewis correctly perceived, not only England but the whole of Western Christendom has been ‘un-christened’. Though belief may survive in individuals, it no longer shapes our culture. William Temple was the last – and

perhaps the greatest – Archbishop of Canterbury since the Reformation to be recognised by almost all as *ex officio* spiritual head of the nation.

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