

The British Isles: Recent Developments in the Writing of Church History

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In regard to the historiography of Christianity in the British Isles, it is necessary to begin by recalling that these islands contain two sovereign states, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; four nations, the formerly independent kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland and the Principality of Wales; and even four languages, the Welsh, Irish and Scots varieties of Gaelic or Celtic as well as the English language spoken by the great majority. The linguistic difference now affects only minorities, though the different national and regional dialects of English are fundamental to the self-identity of those who speak them, while the political divisions have important implications for the religious behaviour and affiliation of the people. Most English belong to the Church of England, which is closely linked with the English State and Crown and which derives its present form from Henry VIII's rejection of the authority of the Pope in the sixteenth century¹. The Queen of England is Supreme Governor of the Church of England as by law established and is in a sense a sacred person, anointed by holy oil at her coronation. She reigns by the grace of God,

1. There is an excellent bibliographical introduction on English Christianity, now needing updating, in John KENT's essay, «The Study of Modern Ecclesiastical History since 1930», in J. DANIELOU, A. H. COURATIN and John KENT, *The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology*, vol 2, *Historical Theology*, London, 1969, pp. 243-369. See also the bibliographies in Terence THOMAS (ed), *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices 1800-1986*, London, 1988. For the whole history of religion in Britain, excluding Ireland, see Sheridan GILLEY and W. J. SHEILS (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain*, Oxford, 1994. The work has a full bibliography. On the history of religion in England, see David L. EDWARDS, *Christian England*, London, 1986. Also an older work written from an Anglican perspective is still useful, W. R. W. STEPHENS and W. HUNT (eds), *A History of the English Church*, 9 vols, London, 1899-1910.

and the title bestowed on Henry VIII by Pope Leo X, Defender of the Faith, Fidei Defensor, F. D., is still engraved on every coin of the realm. The upper legislature, the House of Lords, contains a body of Anglican bishops, who are officially appointed by the Crown, on the advice of the Prime Minister, and even the legislation of the Church's representative assembly, the General Synod, which has only existed in its present form since 1970, requires the approval of the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

The majority of the Scottish people are members of the officially Calvinist Presbyterian Church which also enjoys the position of a national Church; the Church's annual General Assembly receives the Queen's representative, the Lord High Commissioner, though in the Declaratory Articles of 1921 the British parliament recognised the Church's complete independence from the State, a consequence of a long struggle by the more radical Presbyterians to preserve the Church's religious authority, in the name of what they called the «Crown Rights of the Redeemer». There are no Presbyterian representatives in the House of Lords as there are Anglican bishops, nor does the Crown appoint Presbyterian ministers².

Wales is different again. The Welsh were conquered by England in the fourteenth century, and the Welsh Church was simply part of the Established Church of England. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, a majority of the population seceded to the Protestant Nonconformist Churches, the largest the Calvinistic Methodist Church, and from the 1840s, these Nonconformists with their English allies began to campaign for the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales, an aim achieved in the Welsh Church Disestablishment Act of 1919. Unlike the English, or even the Scots, the Welsh have no official church establishment³.

Last, a majority of the population of Ireland remained Roman Catholics from the time of the Reformation⁴ and never accepted the ministrations of the

2. J. H. S. BURLEIGH, *A Church History of Scotland*, London, 1960; D. FORRESTER and D. MURRAY (eds), *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1984; Gordon DONALDSON, *Scottish Church History*, Edinburgh, 1985; Gordon DONALDSON, *The Faith of the Scots*, London, 1990.

3. For an introduction, with bibliography, see Robert TUDUR JONES, «Religion, Nationality and State in Wales, 1840-1890», in Donal A. KERR (ed), *Religion, State and Ethnic Groups*, vol 2, *Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940*, Aldershot, Hampshire, pp. 261-76. Also Glanmor WILLIAMS, *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales*, Cardiff, 1979; Glanmor WILLIAMS, *The Welsh and their Religion*, Cardiff, 1979; D. T. W. PRICE, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century*, Penarth, 1990; P. M. H. BELL, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales*, London, 1969.

4. For an introduction, with bibliography, see Donal A. KERR, «Government and Roman Catholics in Ireland, 1850-1940», in Donal A. KERR (ed), *op. cit.* pp. 277-312.

The British Isles

State-supported Protestant Church of Ireland, which was united to the Church of England when the parliaments of England and Ireland were also united in 1800. Roman Catholics opposed to the union of the parliaments were also opposed to the State's support for the Church of Ireland, and in response to pressures both from the Irish and from Nonconformists and radicals in England, the Liberal administration of William Ewart Gladstone disestablished the Church of Ireland in 1869. In 1921, after five years of revolution and insurrection, the predominantly Roman Catholic population of the south achieved their independence from Great Britain, and by its 1937 Constitution, the new Irish State recognised the place of the Catholic Church in the life of the Irish people, though it also recognised by name the existence of the Protestant Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and other Churches⁵. Of course the Irish State claims no power over the Churches, and religious controversy in Ireland since 1970 has arisen over attempts to reduce the Catholic Church's informal but considerable power over the Irish State.

These disparate Churches do, however, have certain characteristics in common. First, the Church of England, the Scots Presbyterian Church, the Welsh Nonconformist Churches and the Catholic Church in Ireland have all helped to create a sense of national identity in a majority of the population. Indeed in Scotland the General Assembly has sometimes been regarded as the parliament of Scotland since Scotland lost its secular parliament in 1707. In Wales and Ireland, the popular Churches have been in varying degree and measure the foci of opposition to British rule, while in Irish contexts, it has often been difficult to separate out the term Catholic from Irish, the loyalty to the Faith from the loyalty to the Fatherland.

Thus the influence of these countries upon one another has greatly complicated their religious history. The Church of Ireland included some native Irish converts to Protestantism, but most of its supporters came as conquerors from England which, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had dispossessed the native Catholic landowning and professional classes⁶. Again, the largest Protestant body in Ireland, the Presbyterian, is descended from Scots Presbyterian settlers «planted» in Ireland by the English Crown in place of the native Irish Catholics⁷. They are principally responsible for the fact that two thirds of the province

5. Dermot KEOGH, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics 1919-39*, Cambridge, 1986.

6. Walter A. PHILLIPS, *History of the Church of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 3 vols, Oxford, 1933-34; Donald H. AKENSON, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800-1885*, New Haven, 1971; R. B. McDOWELL, *The Church of Ireland 1869-1969*, London and Boston, 1975.

7. W. T. LATIMER, *History of the Irish Presbyterians*, Belfast, 1902; Peter BROOKE, *Ulster Presbyterianism The Historical Perspective 1610-1970*, Dublin, 1987.

of Ulster remained outside the newly independent Ireland in 1922. In Scotland, a minority of members of the State Church remained loyal to the Scottish Bishops when the Church readopted Presbyterianism in 1690. These Scots Episcopalians were reinforced by English immigrants and by the Anglicising influence on the Scottish upper classes during the nineteenth century⁸. The English Presbyterian Church was re-created in the nineteenth century by Scottish immigrants into England. Last, in England, Scotland and Wales a minority of the population remained true to the ancient Catholic faith. They were concentrated under gentry leadership in particular places, as in western Lancashire and county Durham and Northumberland in England and in Banffshire and the western Highlands and islands in Scotland⁹. But the strength of the Roman Catholic Church in Great Britain basically derives from the massive nineteenth-century immigration of Irish paupers into the major British cities, a presence reinforced by other immigrants from European countries in this century¹⁰.

Thus modern British religion constitutes a complicated picture, made still more complicated by the «dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion». This has meant the existence of sharp denominational divisions among the Protestant Churches, and a long history of sectarian conflict and rivalry, itself providing historians with an enormous subject matter, quite apart from the much more fundamental conflict between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism¹¹. It was in the seventeenth century that England became a nation with a hundred religions and only one sauce, through the rise of Protestant Dissent, or Nonconformity, to the State Church¹²: or as the Catholic poet Dryden satirised them as the beasts of the forest, in his poem *The Hind and the Panther: the Independent or Congregationalist Bear, the Presbyterian Wolf, the Quaker Hare, the Baptist Boar as well as the Anglican Panther and the pure unspotted Catholic Hind*. Dryden attacked the Dissenting animals in verse:

8. Marion LOCHHEAD, *Episcopal Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1966.

9. Edward R. NORMAN, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1984; J. DEREK HOLMES, *More Roman than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century*, London and Shepherdstown, 1978. David McROBERTS (ed), *Modern Scottish Catholicism 1878-1978*, Glasgow, 1979.

10. Roger SWIFT and Sheridan GILLEY (eds), *The Irish in the Victorian City*, London, 1985; Roger SWIFT and Sheridan GILLEY (eds), *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939*, London, 1989; Sheridan GILLEY, «Irish Catholicism in Britain», in Donal A. KERR (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 229-60; Maureen HARTIGAN and Mary J. HICKMAN, *The History of The Irish in Britain: A Bibliography*, London, 1986.

11. See Edward R. NORMAN, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, London, 1968. See also note 114 below.

12. Michael MULLETT, «Radical Sects and Dissenting Churches, 1600-1750», in GILLEY and SHEILS, *op. cit.*

The British Isles

Oh happy Regions, Italy and Spain,
Which never did those monsters entertain!

These divisions were enhanced, first in the eighteenth century, by the «heart religion» of the Evangelical Revival, which under the leadership of John Wesley and George Whitefield produced the Wesleyan Arminian and Calvinist Methodist Churches¹³; and then by the massive expansion of all forms of institutional Christianity in the nineteenth century.

The price of this expansion was, therefore, further division. After 1790, the Wesleyan Methodists suffered a number of splits, resulting in the creation of the Kilhamite New Connexion, the Primitive Methodists, the West Country Bryanite «Bible Christians» and the Wesleyan Reformers, while the Scots Presbyterian Church endured a number of major secessions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, generally over the state's right to control the Church. The chief of these came in 1843, in the Scottish Disruption, when a third of the clergy and laity of the official Church established a Free Church, which duplicated the efforts of the official Church, while the reunion of some smaller seceder bodies to form the United Presbyterians in 1847 meant that there were three major Calvinist Presbyterian Churches in Victorian Scotland hotly competing with one another¹⁴.

The main conflict in the nineteenth century, however, was the challenge to the position of the Established Church in England from radicals, Nonconformists¹⁵ and Roman Catholics, resulting in a partial measure of disestablishment of the Church with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which opened up parliament and most of the principal offices of state to non-Anglicans. The matter was made more complex by a thorough internal reform by the secular legislature of the Church's worst abuses to ma-

13. Rupert DAVIES, A. Raymond DAVIES and E. Gordon RUPP (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 3 vols, London, 1965-83; Henry D. RACK, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, London, 1989.

14. A. L. DRUMMOND and J. BULLOCH, *The Scottish Church, 1688-1843*, Edinburgh, 1973; *The Church in Victorian Scotland, 1843-1874*, Edinburgh, 1975; *The Church in Late Victorian Scotland, 1874-1900*, Edinburgh, 1978; A. A. MACLAREN, *Religion and Social Class: The Disruption Years in Aberdeen*, London, 1974; Stewart J. BROWN, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, Oxford, 1982.

15. David THOMPSON (ed), *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth-Century*, London, 1972; Ian SELLERS, *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity*, London, 1977; David W. BEBBINGTON, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics 1870-1914*, London, 1982.

ke it a pastorally more efficient institution¹⁶, and the accompanying process of dismantling Anglican privilege was a very slow one, from the introduction of civil marriage and civil registration in 1836 and of civil divorce in 1857, to the gradual secularisation of the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge between the 1850s and 1870s, a process which still left the Church with a very considerable position within them. Thus the Anglican clergy retained possession well into this century of the Oxbridge Divinity Faculties, the Collegiate Deaneries and chaplaincies and chapels, while college chapel attendance remained compulsory for undergraduates. But the rise of the Liberal Party from the 1850s meant that in the second half of the nineteenth century, English politics was often polarised between Liberal Non-conformist chapelgoers and Conservative or Tory Anglican Churchmen, even though the greatest of the Liberal leaders, William Ewart Gladstone, was the most eminent devout and highminded layman in the Church of England's history¹⁷.

The constitutional history of this nineteenth-century conflict and of the erosion, but not abolition, of Anglican privilege, has been elucidated in the excellent two-volume ecclesiastical-political narrative by G. I. T. Machin¹⁸. It is a major theme in the great two-volume work *The Victorian Church*, by the premier English church historian, Sir Owen Chadwick, who is also an Anglican priest¹⁹. But much of Chadwick's work and of modern Anglican church historiography has been concerned with schools or parties of High, Low and Broad Church clergy and laymen. The Low Church movement is a partly inaccurate description of the Protestant Evangelical revival in the Church of England deriving from the activities of the «Clapham Sect» of William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slaves, and the Cambridge divine Charles Simeon²⁰. The Broad Churchmen trace their origins to the

16. W. L. MATHIESON, *English Church Reform, 1815-1840*, London, 1923; Geoffrey F. A. BEST, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England*, Cambridge, 1964; Peter VIRGIN, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Church Reform 1700-1840*, Cambridge, 1989.

17. Perry A. BUTLER, *Gladstone, Church, State and Tractarianism: A Study of his Religious Ideas and Attitudes 1809-1859*, Oxford, 1982; J. P. PARRY, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party. 1867-1875*. Cambridge, 1986; David W. BEBBINGTON, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993.

18. G. I. T. MACHIN, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832 to 1868*, Oxford, 1977; *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869 to 1921*, Oxford, 1921.

19. Owen CHADWICK, *The Victorian Church*, 2 Parts, London, 1966, 1970. For his full bibliography see Derek BEALES and Geoffrey BEST, *History, Society and the Churches: Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick*, Cambridge, 1985.

20. Charles SMYTH, *Simeon and Church Order*, Cambridge, 1940; Arthur POLLARD and Michael HENNELL (eds), *Charles Simeon, 1759-1836*, London, 1959; Hugh E. HOPKINS, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge*, London 1977; Ford K. BROWN, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age*

seventeenth and eighteenth-century Latitudinarians who appealed to reason and religious toleration, and created a liberal tradition in Anglican theology²¹, a tradition which has become a much more radical «Modernist» unbelief in this century (and is the theme of recent monographs by Stephenson²² and Clements²³). The history of Anglican liberalism and of liberal schools like the Oxford Noetics and the Cambridge idealists is part of a flourishing body of intellectual and biographical studies exploring the relations between nineteenth-century English philosophy, science and theology²⁴, and the forms of middle class doubt which were the product of an ethical unease with traditional Christian teaching, of Darwinism²⁵ and of German Biblical criticism²⁶.

One moderate strand of Anglican liberalism coalesced in the late Victorian period with the High Church or Catholic-minded wing of the Church of England, which can be traced back to the Reformation, when the Church preserved much of its Catholic inheritance, including, crucially, the ancient three-fold ministerial order of bishop, priest and deacon. High Churchmen dominated the Church of England in the generation before 1830²⁷, but High Churchmanship increasingly turned after 1833 into an anti-Protestant movement under the direction of the Oxford Movement created by John Henry Newman²⁸, Edward Bouverie Pusey²⁹ and Richard Hurrell Froude³⁰. These new High Churchmen after 1833 tended to despise

of *Wilberforce*, Cambridge, 1961; E. M. HOWSE, *Saints in Politics: The «Clapham Sect» and the Growth of Freedom*, Toronto, 1962; Doreen M. ROSMAN, *Evangelicals and Culture*, London, 1984.

21. Basil WILLEY, *Nineteenth Century Studies Coleridge to Matthew Arnold*, London, 1949; *More Nineteenth Century Studies A Group of Honest Doubters*, London 1963.

22. Alan M. G. STEPHENSON, *The Rise and Decline of English Modernism: The Hulsean Lectures 1979-80*, London, 1984.

23. Keith W. CLEMENTS, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth-Century Theological Controversies in England*, London, 1985.

24. Bernard M. G. REARDON, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain*, London, 1971.

25. James R. MOORE, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to come to terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900*, Cambridge, 1979; Pietro CORSI, *Science and Religion: Baden Powell and the Anglican Debate, 1800-1860*, Cambridge, 1988; David N. LIVINGSTONE, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987.

26. Ieuan ELLIS, *Seven against Christ: A Study of «Essays and Reviews»*, Leiden, 1980.

27. Elizabeth VARLEY, *The Last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the Early Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1992; Clive DEWEY, *The Passing of Barchester: a real life version of Trollope*, London, 1991.

28. See below, note 34.

29. Perry BUTLER (ed), *Pusey Rediscovered*, London, 1983.

30. Piers BRENDON, *Hurrell Froude and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1974.

the achievements of their predecessors, and the historiography of the Oxford Movement followed them in emphasising the weaknesses of the Church of England in the generation before 1830 in clerical pluralism, absenteeism, inequality of income and inadequacy of pastoral provision for the new urban poor in the first nation in the world to undergo an Industrial Revolution³¹. This historiographical attitude was exacerbated by a tendency to see eighteenth-century England as an «Enlightenment» society in which religion was marginal or weak. The All Souls, Oxford, historian Jonathan Clark has recently brought together a mass of recent research to argue that eighteenth-century England was an *ancien régime* based upon the threefold pillars of monarchy, aristocracy and Church, in which the dominant ideology was Trinitarian orthodoxy³² and subversion of the State took the form of a rejection of that ideology, as by Deists and Unitarians. The forthcoming work of Peter Nockles³³ attempts a defence of the intellectual and spiritual life of the High Church school dominant in Church and State before 1830, so that recent Anglican historiography has seen something of a rehabilitation of the High Church tradition of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Yet the principal figures of the Oxford Movement had the advantage of the glamour of their setting, the last days of the unreformed University of Oxford between 1833 and 1845, and in John Henry Newman, who became a Roman Catholic in 1845, they had an intellectual leader who is simply the greatest English theologian in modern history. Thus of the making of books about Newman and about his writings there is no end³⁴, though here I should mention the large research school on High Church themes at Oxford supervised until lately by Geoffrey Rowell³⁵, and one recent work as possessing an especial merit, David Newsome's study of Newman's relations with his arch-rival and fellow convert-Cardinal, Henry Edward Manning³⁶. Another preoccupation of High Anglican historiography has

31. See Virgin in note 16.

32. Jonathan C. D. CLARK, *English Society 1688-1832*, Cambridge, 1985.

33. Peter NOCKLES, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857*, Cambridge, 1994.

34. Thus there are recent biographies of Newman by Meriol TREVOR (2 vols, 1962), Ian KER (1988), and Sheridan GILLEY (1990). For Newman's own bibliography see Vincent F. BLEHL, *John Henry Newman: A Bibliographical Catalogue of His Writings*, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1978. For secondary literature, see *Newman Studien*, 1948-; John R. GRIFFIN, *Newman: A Bibliography of Secondary Studies*, Front Royal, Virginia, 1980; Stephen THOMAS, *Newman and Heresy: The Anglican Years*, Cambridge, 1991. See also note 80.

35. Geoffrey ROWELL, *The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism*, Oxford, 1983; Geoffrey ROWELL (ed), *Tradition Renewed: The Oxford Movement Conference Papers*, London, 1986.

36. David NEWSOME, *The Convert Cardinals: John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning*, London, 1993. See also David NEWSOME, *The Parting of Friends: A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning*, London, 1966.

The British Isles

been the rise of ritualism³⁷. From the 1850s the followers of the movement attempted to introduce medieval or Roman Catholic ritual into Anglican churches to the horror both of an older generation of Protestant High Churchmen and of the rival Protestant Evangelicals and liberals. This conflict provoked riots in the churches, parliamentary commissions on religious worship and the imprisonment of five Anglo-Catholic clergy for ritual offences in defiance of the law.

The conflict between Catholic and Protestant within the Church of England has also spawned rival schools of Anglican Protestant and Anglo-Catholic historiography, in which the Protestant historians like Michael Hennell have tended until quite recently to concentrate on Wilberforce's generation before 1830, leaving the period after 1830 to High Church historians and most of the nineteenth-century history of Anglican Evangelical Protestantism unwept, unhonoured and unsung³⁸. The rise of the High Churchmen to a position of increasing influence over the Church of England, an influence which peaked between the wars, has meant that until quite recently Anglican church historians like Chadwick have generally belonged to the High Church school³⁹. It is notable that in spite of eclipse of Anglo-Catholicism and the new prominence of Anglican Protestantism in the past two decades, it has yet to produce an historian of the first rank. There are some good older Evangelical studies, like Eugene Stock's *History of the Church Missionary Society*⁴⁰, the greatest of the Evangelical voluntary associations, and some new Evangelical monographs, like John Wolffe's excellent work on the anti-Catholic «No Popery» societies⁴¹ and Donald Lewis's study of the London City Mission⁴², and Lewis is editing a forthcoming dictionary of Evangelical biography⁴³. But most of the great institutions of Victorian Evangelicalism have still to find their historian, and the most notable historians of the wider Evangelical movements outside the Church of England of the past generation have been the Methodists Reg Ward⁴⁴,

37. James E. BENTLEY, *Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain*, Oxford, 1978.

38. Michael HENNELL, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect*, London, 1958. But see his *Sons of the Prophets*, London, 1979. Another exception to the rule is Peter TOON, *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856 A Response to Tractarianism*, London, 1979. See also note 20.

39. See Lawrence N. CRUMB, *The Oxford Movement and its Leaders: A Bibliography of Secondary Studies and Lesser Primary Sources*, New Jersey and London, 1988.

40. Eugene STOCK, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, 3 vols, London, 1899.

41. John WOLFFE, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860*, Oxford, 1991.

42. Donald M. LEWIS, *Lighten their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London 1828-1860*, Westport, Connecticut, 1986.

43. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Oxford, forthcoming.

44. W. Reginald WARD, *Victorian Oxford*, London, 1965; *The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1820-1829*, London, 1972; *Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1830-1858*, London, 1976; *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850*, London, 1972. See

John Walsh⁴⁵ and John Kent⁴⁶, all of whom have recently retired, though there are a few first-rank younger scholars, like the Methodist David Hempton⁴⁷ and the Baptist David Bebbington⁴⁸.

The historiography of Protestantism has, however, also been influenced by the emergence of a body of social history foreshadowed by the Weber⁴⁹ and Tawney⁵⁰ theses on the relations between Protestantism and capitalism, and by the French historian Elie Halévy's argument that popular Methodism saved an industrialising England from social revolution⁵¹. The pioneering social historians E. R. Wickham⁵² and K. S. Inglis⁵³ drew on the 1851 Religious Census and subsequent local censuses of church attendance and other statistical material to argue that the great religious revivals of the nineteenth century were predominantly middle class affairs, and that churchgoing was weakest among urban working class men. In the 1970s, studies by Alan Gilbert⁵⁴ and Stephen Yeo⁵⁵ tried to relate patterns of religious revival and subsequent decline to different periods of industrialism, and there are now a good number of local and national studies which add up to a coherent map of regular religious practice in Victorian England⁵⁶.

This interest in the social history of the poor and of the «grass roots» experience of religion from below has extended beyond the examination of formal religious practice into a concern with religious and anti-religious belief outside the Churches, which one finds in such excellent books from the 1970s as Hugh

also Keith ROBBINS (ed), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, Essays in Honour of W. R. Ward, Studies in Church History, Subsidia 6*, Oxford, 1990.

45. See Jane GARNETT and Colin MATTHEW (eds), *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh*, London, 1993.

46. John H. S. KENT, *The Age of Disunity*, London, 1966; *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism*, London, 1978. See also Stewart MEWS (ed), *Modern Religious Rebels: Presented to John Kent*, London, 1993.

47. David HEMPTON, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850*, London, 1984.

48. David W. BEBBINGTON, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London, 1989. See also notes 15 and 17.

49. Max WEBER (Talcott PARSONS translator), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York, 1930.

50. R. H. TAWNEY, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*, London, 1926.

51. Elie HALEVY, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, 6 vols, London, 1949-52.

52. E. R. WICKHAM, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, London, 1957.

53. K. S. INGLIS, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, London, 1963.

54. Alan D. GILBERT, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914*, London, 1976.

55. Stephen YEO, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis*, London, 1976.

56. John D. GAY, *The Geography of Religion in England*, London, 1971, needs updating.

McLeod's monograph on Victorian London⁵⁷ and James Obelkevich's work on rural Lincolnshire⁵⁸. One finding from such studies is that the English working classes were very seldom antichristian even when they were anti-church. They were «unconscious secularists», who believed in God and in the example of Jesus, even when they belonged to the «rough» culture centred on the public house rather than to the «respectable» culture sustained by the Dissenting chapel. Antichristian «secularists» like George Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh never translated their hostility to Christianity into enduring popular mass movements⁵⁹. Indeed some of the radical agitators of the 1840s and 1890s formed Chartist or Labour Churches, while the great new Victorian working class Church, the Salvation Army, founded by the former Methodist General William Booth, had an active social programme⁶⁰.

Thus radicalism was fed by Christian idealism. Certain denominations, like the Primitive Methodists of the County Durham coalfields, played a central part in the emergence of the trades unions and the Labour Party⁶¹, which has been classically said to have owed more to Methodism than to Marx. The first Labour Party member of parliament, Keir Hardie, was hostile to mainstream Christianity but was himself a former Nonconformist Scottish lay preacher, while the British Communist Party never became a mass movement. Moreover even outside such admitted exceptions to the rule as the staunchly Nonconformist mining and fishing villages of Wales and Cornwall, recent studies suggest a higher degree of working class participation in church life, especially by women. As Thomas Laqueur defined them, the enormous Victorian Sunday Schools were popular working class institutions⁶², while Jeffrey Cox's study of the south London borough of Lambeth in the 1890s described the extraordinary number of points, in the realms of education, charity and leisure, at which the Churches influenced working class neighbourhoods

57. Hugh McLEOD, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City*, London, 1974. See also his *Religion and the Working Classes in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London, 1984; and his *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian England*, Bangor, 1993.

58. James OBELKEVICH, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875*, Oxford, 1976.

59. Edward ROYLE, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866*, Manchester, 1974; Edward ROYLE (ed), *The Infidel Tradition, from Paine to Bradlaugh*, London, 1976. On another alternative to Christianity, see T. R. WRIGHT, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian England*, Cambridge, 1986.

60. Robert SENDALL and A. R. WIGGINS, *History of the Salvation Army*, 5 vols, London, 1947-1968; Richard COLLIER, *The General Next to God*, London, 1965.

61. Robert MOORE, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Village*, Cambridge, 1974; Robert COLLS, *The Collier's Rant*, London, 1977.

62. Thomas W. LAQUEUR, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1750-1850*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1976.

as well as middle class ones⁶³. The power of religion is especially demonstrable in education. All schools were conducted by religious bodies before 1870. Their influence was weakened by the creation of the state-funded Board Schools after 1870, but these continued to teach Biblical Christianity, even while the Church of England actually strengthened its hold on middle class secondary education in its public schools⁶⁴, which were increasingly inspired by the ideals of a games playing imperial-minded «muscular Christianity»⁶⁵. All in all, there is much to support Owen Chadwick's classic judgement that «Victorian England was religious».

This preoccupation among scholars with the social dimension of religion has also led to comment on the predominantly middle and upper class social origins and attitudes of the Anglican clergy as by Ravitch⁶⁶ and Soloway⁶⁷ and more recently by Russell⁶⁸ and Haig⁶⁹, and to analyses of the Church's social policies, including both a self-congratulatory line of Anglican writing on Christian Socialism⁷⁰, and Edward Norman's critical insistence in a major monograph published in 1976 that Anglican clerical social and political opinion was a light religionisation of the secular ideology of the lay Anglican elite⁷¹. Roger Anstey⁷² and Boyd Hil-

63. Jeffrey COX, *English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930*, Oxford, 1982.

64. See especially Brian HEENEY, *Mission to the Middle Classes: The Woodard Schools 1848-1891*, London, 1969.

65. John R. DE S. HONEY, *Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Victorian Public School*, London, 1977.

66. Norman RAVITCH, *Sword and Mitre: Government and Episcopate in France and England in the Age of Aristocracy*, The Hague, 1966.

67. R. A. SOLOWAY, *Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852*, London, 1969.

68. Anthony RUSSELL, *The Clerical Profession*, London, 1980.

69. Alan HAIG, *The Victorian Clergy*, London, 1984. Also Brian HEENEY, *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in early and mid-Victorian England*, Connecticut, 1976. On the Nonconformist ministry see Kenneth D. BROWN, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930*, Oxford, 1988.

70. Charles RAVEN, *Christian Socialism 1848-1854*, London, 1920; G. C. BINYON, *The Christian Socialist Movement in England: An Introduction to the Study of its History*, London, 1931; Maurice RECKITT, *Maurice to Temple: A Century of the Social Movement in the Church of England*, London, 1947; P. d'A. JONES, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914*, Princeton, 1968; George KITSON CLARK, *Churchmen and the Condition of England, 1832-1885*, London, 1973. See also Torben CHRISTENSEN, *The Origin and History of Christian Socialism 1848-54*, Aarhus, 1962.

71. Edward R. NORMAN, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970: A Historical Study*, Oxford, 1976. See also his *The Victorian Christian Socialists*, Cambridge, 1987.

72. Roger T. ANSTEY, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810*, London, 1975.

ton⁷³, on the other hand, have tried to show the importance of Anglican Evangelical theology for a wider set of social and political attitudes, Hilton especially making the widest claims for the impact of the Evangelical doctrine of the Atonement on public social policy.

Hilton also takes seriously the division of Evangelicalism over the pre- and post-millennial understanding of Christ's Second Coming⁷⁴. Beyond Anglicanism, however, Protestantism has been fissiparous, and the result of its division has been a bewildering richness, especially in England, with scores of influential minor denominations, from the rich Unitarians, a liberal offshoot from Presbyterianism founded by an Anglican cleric, Theophilus Lindsey, in 1774, to the premillennial Catholic Apostolic Church, effectively established in 1832 under the inspiration of a former Presbyterian cleric, Edward Irving. The Catholic Apostolics believed so firmly in the imminent Second Coming that they would not reappoint successors to their college of founding Apostles, so that while the Church still exists, its ministry has died out⁷⁵. Like another nineteenth-century millennial sect, the Plymouth Brethren, founded in 1827 by a former Church of Ireland cleric John Nelson Darby, the Irvingites had an international outreach, though the Darbyites suffered a characteristic division between the «Exclusive» and more liberal «Open Brethren»⁷⁶. Other bodies, like the «Magic Methodists», the Sandemanians and the Inghamites, had a more local influence. The Irvingites and Exclusives are secretive and do not encourage historical enquiry, while the very provinciality and lack of sophistication of some smaller Protestant Churches means that they have few or no records and will never be properly studied. The consequences of the creation of so many different Protestant Churches have, however, also included the proliferation of records and archives and of historical societies to study them. Thus the Quaker Society of Friends, a tiny radical Protestant sect founded by George Fox in the seventeenth century, has an archive whose excellence is in almost inverse proportion to its numbers⁷⁷, while the Methodists lived up to their reputation for «method» from the first in keeping excellent membership records. The reunion by 1932 of most of the Churches belonging to the sundered branches of Methodism

73. Boyd HILTON, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865*, Oxford, 1988.

74. W. H. OLIVER, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s*, Auckland, 1978.

75. P. E. SHAW, *The Catholic Apostolic Church sometimes called Irvingite: A Historical Study*, New York, 1946; C. Graham FLEGG, «*Gathered under Apostles*»: *A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church*, Oxford, 1992.

76. F. Roy COAD, *A History of the Brethren Movement: Its Origins, its Worldwide Development and its Significance for the Present Day*, Exeter, 1968.

77. Elizabeth A. ISICHEI, *Victorian Quakers*, London, 1970.

has meant that most of the varied strands in Methodism are now represented in the records retained by the John Rylands Library in Manchester. The union of the bulk of two of the major Protestant Churches, the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, to form the United Reformed Church has also meant the coalescence of their historiographical efforts in a single society and journal. I should make a special mention of the importance for historians of Nonconformity of the George Williams Library in London.

As a rich and powerful institution, the Church of England could until a generation ago afford to be its own record keeper, as every diocese had its own registry and archive and every parish church a set of registers which were the only form of registration for births, marriages and deaths until the introduction of civil registration in 1836⁷⁸. In fact, over the past forty years, these records have usually been transferred either to the care of the professional archivists of the County Record Offices of the County Councils or to a form of joint custodianship between the Church and a neighbouring university as at Cambridge and Durham. The records of the monasteries were usually dispersed at the Reformation, but given the immunity of England from foreign invasion and civil war since the seventeenth century, most ecclesiastical records have survived. They cover everything from the secular jurisdictions of the Bishops of Durham and Ely through the documents relating to the large landholdings of the Church to the records of episcopal and archidiaconal visitations. The largest purely ecclesiastical archive is held by the Lambeth Palace Library, and it is a mark of Anglican unselfconsciousness about the Church's priceless inheritance that it was only in 1991 that it was felt necessary to found a separate Church of England Record Society.

Roman Catholic records are generally in a less happy condition. A number of dioceses and a few seminaries like Ushaw College have excellent archives which are well catalogued, but the archivist is usually a hard-worked priest with another job who can only come in to the archive on one or two days a week. Until a few years ago, the Archdiocese of Westminster was alone in employing a full-time lay archivist, who was unfortunately given early retirement and replaced by a cleric. Some religious orders, especially the great Benedictine Abbeys of Ampleforth and Downside, have excellent archives and libraries, but the Roman Catholic religious orders have undergone a massive decline in the past two decades, and the general situation is much more patchy. The best monastic histories and historians have also

78. Dorothy M. OWEN, *The Records of the Established Church in England excluding parochial records*, London, 1970.

been Benedictine, like Dom Aidan Bellenger, the author of a monograph and thirty-four published articles on the French émigré clergy⁷⁹.

Catholics are, however, well-served by the Catholic Records Society and by the historical periodical *Recusant History* and an annual conference for its study, though until the Second World War, the best Catholic historical writing had been the work of one family, the children of the convert-philosopher W. G. Ward: Wilfrid Ward, the biographer of Cardinals Wiseman and Newman and of his father⁸⁰; and Bernard Ward, the Bishop of Brentwood, who wrote a detailed and still-standard seven-volume history of English Catholicism between 1780 and 1850⁸¹. The Wards could be perfectly frank about the divisions within nineteenth-century English Catholicism, especially between «Liberal» and «Ultramontane» Catholics, after the spectacular «revelations» in E. S. Purcell's biography of Cardinal Manning⁸². There is an excellent recent life of Cardinal Wiseman by Richard Schiefen⁸³, but some of the major advances in Catholic historiography have come not from ecclesiastical history per se as through the new kind of social history, alive to the possibilities suggested by statistical method. English Catholic social history came of age with John Bossy's *English Catholic Community*, published in 1975, which presents an arresting and polemical argument about the native, lay-dominated, non-or barely episcopal, missionary and dissenting character of the English Catholic Church before it was transformed by Wiseman's Ultramontane clericalism from 1840⁸⁴. Bossy's work has been supplemented by local and national histories of Irish Catholicism in England. The very existence of distinct Irish «communities» in any meaningful sense has been questioned by some social historians of the Irish immigration, using the new tools of historical demography, but

79. Dom Dominic AIDAN BELLENGER, *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789: An Historical Introduction and Working List*, Downside Abbey, Somerset, 1986. See also note 82.

80. Wilfrid WARD, *William George Ward and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1889; *William George Ward and the Catholic Revival*, London, 1893; *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman*, 2 vols, London, 1897, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, 2 vols, London, 1912.

81. Bernard WARD, *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England 1781-1803*, 2 vols, London, 1909; *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation 1803-1829*, 3 vols, London, 1911-12; *The Sequel to Catholic Emancipation 1830-1850*, 2 vols, London, 1915.

82. Edmund S. PURCELL, *Life of Cardinal Manning Archbishop of Westminster*, 2 vols, London, 1895. See Sheridan GILLEY, «New light on an old scandal: Purcell's Life of Cardinal Manning», in Dom Dominic AIDAN BELLENGER (ed), *Opening the Scrolls: Essays in Catholic History in Honour of Godfrey Anstruther*, Downside Abbey, Somerset, 1987, pp. 166-98.

83. Richard J. SCHIEFEN, *Nicholas Wiseman and the Transformation of English Catholicism*, Shepherdstown, 1984.

84. John BOSSY, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, London, 1975.

there are recent studies like Gerard Connolly's⁸⁵ and Steven Fielding's⁸⁶ theses on Catholicism in Manchester which are as much a contribution to a general social as to a confessional history.

Yet the bulk of recent church historical writing shows a return to more ecclesiastical themes, and the writing of a definitely ecclesiastical or religious history is encouraged by the Ecclesiastical History Society with its two major publications, the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* and the annual volume *Studies in Church History*, containing the papers presented to the two conferences of the Society held in winter and summer, on a major theme covering the whole history of the Church suggested by the eminent scholar who holds office as the Society's President for the year⁸⁷. Many of the contributors to the *Journal* and to the *Studies* are teachers in the thirty-two Departments of Theology or Religious Studies in Great Britain, some of them in the old polytechnics which have recently become universities, and including the four traditionally prestigious Divinity Faculties in the ancient Scottish Universities and a number of departments of religion and theology in the University of Wales. A few posts in Oxford, Cambridge and Durham are still restricted to the Anglican clergy, but the only historian's post which still has this restriction is the chair in ecclesiastical history at Oxford, now under review for secularisation. On the other hand, there are only two chairs specifically for ecclesiastical history, at Oxford and Cambridge, and two which have been suspended because of cutbacks in university funding, at Manchester and King's College, London. Two of the four Scottish professorships of ecclesiastical history have also recently disappeared. There are some teaching posts in the declining world of the Anglican and Catholic seminaries and Nonconformist training colleges, which are now usually affiliated as colleges to universities and increasingly have the right to offer university degrees themselves.

Yet a majority of church historians are lay people. Thus my own Department in Durham contains a Reformation historian, two modern church historians and two patristic scholars who have historical interests, only one of whom is a clergyman, beside a body of teachers of the Old and New Testament, Systematic

85. Gerard P. CONNOLLY, *Catholicism in Manchester and Salford*, 2 vols, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1980.

86. Steven J. FIELDING, *The Irish Catholics of Manchester and Salford: Aspects of their Religious and Political History 1890-1939*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1989.

87. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol 1, 1950-; *Studies in Church History*, vol 1, 1964-Other, denominational historical journals abound: for Roman Catholics, *Recusant History*, as mentioned in the text; for former Congregationalists and Presbyterians, *The Journal of the United Reformed Church Historical Society*; for Baptists, the *Baptist Quarterly*; for Methodists, *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*; for Quakers, *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society*; for Unitarians, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*.

The British Isles

Theology and philosophy of religion. Church historians are also sometimes to be found in ordinary secular Departments of History, though possibly in diminishing numbers. A few work in other Departments, like my distinguished deceased colleague, Louis Allen, Reader in the Durham Department of French, a scholar of both Japanese and Portuguese, principally famous for his books on the Second World War in the Pacific. Louis has left me to edit a quarter-million word manuscript on the relations between the Victorian High Churchmen and their French Catholic contemporaries⁸⁸. Yet such a range of interests as Louis Allen's is increasingly rare in academia, and our profession is ageing. Indeed when I think of my contemporaries who did research with me at Cambridge who were appointed to university lectureships, Eamon Duffy at Cambridge⁸⁹, Hugh McLeod at Birmingham⁹⁰, Edward Royle at York⁹¹, Stewart Mews at Lancaster⁹² and James Obelkevich⁹³ at Warwick, I realise that we are now pushing fifty. The reductions in university funding since the early 1980s mean that some very good younger people who have done research have simply not been given academic posts.

Yet ours is a generation which has made a major difference to our knowledge of church history in recent centuries. The study of religious statistics especially has meant the emergence of a quantitative picture of English religion and of the patterns of its growth and decline in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The general picture is summarised in the volume edited by Gilbert, Currie and Horsley⁹⁴. Thus we know that the fastest period of expansion of the English and Welsh Nonconformist Churches was between 1790 and 1850, and that their membership figures reached an absolute peak around 1906 and despite short-lived recoveries, have been in overall decline ever since. The Church of England suffered an increasing crisis in its actively participating membership relative to population growth during the first period of the great expansion of the industrial cities, but underwent a massive recovery in the half century between 1830 and 1880, and though there was some weakening of its position in London by 1900, it was still in a very healthy condition until its decline set in with the First World War. The study of Catholic statistics indicates a substantial «leakage» or «seepage» of Irish

88. A small part of the ms has been published as *John Henry Newman and the Abbé Jager: A Controversy on Scripture and Tradition (1834-1836)*, London, 1975.

89. Eamon DUFFY, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580*. New Haven and London, 1992.

90. See note 57.

91. See note 59.

92. See note 46.

93. See notes 58 and 105.

94. Robert CURRIE, Alan D. GILBERT and Lee HORSLEY, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*, Oxford, 1977.

immigrants from the faith, but Catholic congregations continued to expand through the century at a time when other Churches were generally declining, and Catholic decline only set in around the time of the Second Vatican Council. Because the Catholic decline began later than that of the other Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, which is still losing members, is nonetheless the best-attended Church in England, and as regular Catholic church attendance remains high among Catholics in Scotland and Ireland, the odd consequence is that it is Catholics and not Protestants who now constitute the majority of the regularly worshipping congregations of these islands.

The very high level of Catholic religious practice in Ireland, over 80% of the population, and the centrality of religion to the continuing problem of Northern Ireland, has meant that in Ireland religious history is inseparable from secular historiography. On the other hand, historians have recognised that these very high levels of Irish Catholic religious practice, in contrast to much of the rest of western Europe, require an explanation⁹⁵. The idea that Irish Catholics had always been so faithful was rudely shaken by Professor David Miller's demonstration that before the Famine of 1846-49, Sunday attendance at Mass in some rural areas may have been less than 40% of the population⁹⁶. This was followed by an equally important article by the most prolific of Irish ecclesiastical historians, Emmet Larkin, arguing that the religious fidelity of modern Irish Catholics derived from a «Devotional Revolution» sponsored by the Ultramontane Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin Paul Cullen from the middle years of the nineteenth century⁹⁷. The proliferation of Italianate devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin and saints, and the introduction of the full splendour of Roman ritual in beautifully decorated new shrine churches, transformed a «folkloric» Catholicism hitherto built around prayer in the home, on Mass «stations» in houses, and on the «pattern» or pilgrimage to the local holy well and saint in a sacred rural landscape, into a new kind of church-based religion centred on attendance at weekly Mass. This church-centred devotion, in Latin or English, with a wealth of new aids from prayerbooks and holy cards to statues, vestments, banners and incense, also filled the cultural vacuum left by

95. There is a splendid bibliographical guide in Sean Connolly's *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, Dundalk, 1985. As mentioned in the text, the doyen of historians of Irish Catholicism is Fr Patrick J. CORISH, editor of *A History of Irish Catholicism*, Dublin, 1967-1972, 6 vols. See also his *The Irish Catholic Experience: Historical Survey* and Patrick J. CORISH (ed), *Radicals, Rebels and Establishments*, Belfast, 1983.

96. David W. MILLER, «Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine», *Journal of Social History*, vol. IX (1975), pp. 81-98. See also his *Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898-1921*, Dublin, 1973.

97. Emmet LARKIN, «The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75», *The American Historical Review*, vol. LXXVII (1972), pp. 625-52.

the devastation wrought by the Famine on the traditional Irish language and culture. Cullen's revolution was in discipline as well as devotion, and Larkin —and after him Sean Connolly— have stressed the pastoral inadequacies and poor discipline of the pre-Famine clergy, whose numbers were not keeping up with a rapidly growing population until the Famine⁹⁸. But during the Famine, more than a million people died and more than a million people emigrated, beginning a process of depopulation which transformed a worsening ratio of priests and religious to people into an improving one. Those who died or emigrated were predominantly the poorest, among whom regular religious practice was weakest, and this development strengthened the social, spiritual and political dominance in Irish life of the better-off class of farmers, especially in the east, whose religious practice was already good and who provided the lion's share of vocations to the clergy.

Larkin's argument has been not so much refuted as refined. Desmond Keenan has argued that the survival and revival in the eighteenth century of the Catholic diocesan and parochial structure meant that Irish Catholicism was in a better condition before 1840 than Larkin allowed, and it certainly seems true that the Irish Church had replaced many of its humbler chapels with fine new buildings boasting the whole range of Counter-Reformation devotions before the return to Ireland in 1850 of Paul Cullen⁹⁹. The «Devotional Revolution» belongs to an earlier period than 1840 in urban and parts of eastern Ireland. Yet it was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Irish became the «most practising» Catholics in the world. For Joseph Lee, Cullen was a «moderniser», the great builder of the Catholic poor schools system, and indeed it was through improving levels of literacy and standards of living as well as the Catholic Church's campaign against the casual violence, drunkenness and ritualised obscenity common at Irish weddings and wakes, that Ireland in large measure adopted the puritanical Victorian values of neighbouring Protestant Britain¹⁰⁰.

Larkin is also the author of a massive narrative history of the Irish Catholic Church which now runs from 1850 to 1891¹⁰¹, and is constructed out of a mosaic from the ecclesiastical archives of letters between the bishops and with the authorities in Rome. Larkin plans to complete the series with further volumes taking the story back to 1780 and forward to 1918. His books have been getting bigger and

98. Sean J. CONNOLLY, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845*, Dublin, 1982.

99. Desmond J. KEENAN, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, Dublin, 1983.

100. Joseph LEE, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, Dublin, 1973.

101. Emmet LARKIN, *The Making of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1850-1860*, Chapel Hill, 1980; *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860-1870*, Dublin, 1987; *The Roman Catholic Church and the Plan of Campaign in Ireland 1886-1888*, Cork, 1978; *The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and the Fall of Parnell, 1888-1891*, Liverpool, 1979.

bigger —one required a specially designed spine— as their range has expanded beyond his originally overnarrow attention to what the bishops said to other bishops.

Yet his subject matter has always extended far beyond the ecclesiastical, as it also covers the vexed issue of the involvement of the Catholic clergy in secular politics. This involvement was initiated by laymen, above all by the Irish Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, the subject of a recent model biography by Oliver MacDonagh¹⁰². O'Connell's fusion of the loyalties to Faith and Fatherland in the work of his Catholic Association survived to overcome the barriers between them raised by ecclesiastical opposition to the revolutionary nationalist tradition, deriving from the rebellions of 1798, 1848 and 1867¹⁰³. Cullen's crusade against the Fenian movement earned him a special place in revolutionary demonology, even though his opposition to Fenian priests like Father Patrick Lavelle took the ostensible form of removing the clergy from politics. The latest writing about Cullen shows him more sympathy, while works like Theo Hoppen's magnificent study of nineteenth-century Irish electoral politics place the issue of clerical direction or intimidation of voters at the polls in its complex historical setting¹⁰⁴. There has also been careful study of the manner in which the nationalist archbishops Croke and Walsh forged a new alliance between nationalism and the Church in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Equally adroit was the Church's accommodation with the revived revolutionary tradition, when a small minority, led by the devoutly Catholic Patrick Pearse, deployed Catholic symbolism in defence of armed rebellion in the Easter Rising against British rule in 1916¹⁰⁵.

Yet in other ways Catholic nationalism is under attack. The study of eighteenth-century Ireland has always been heavily dominated by the historiography of the imperial and aristocratic culture of the Anglo-Irish, which suggested that Irish Catholics could be happily described as the victims of colonialism, but it is only lately that Sean Connolly has seriously questioned the severity of Catholic suffering under the Penal Laws, in part on the grounds that the Catholic mass of the population were no more severely repressed than the subject people of any other

102. Oliver MACDONAGH, *The Hereditary Bondsman Daniel O'Connell 1775-1829*, London, 1988. I have not yet seen the second volume of this work.

103. Edward NORMAN, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859-1873*, London, 1965. See also his *A History of Modern Ireland*, London, 1971.

104. K. Theodore HOPPEN, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland 1832-1885*, Oxford, 1984. See also his *Ireland since 1800: Conflict & Conformity*, London, 1989.

105. Ruth D. EDWARDS, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, London, 1977; Sheridan GILLEY, «Pearse's sacrifice: Christ and Cuchulain crucified and risen in the Easter Rising, 1916», in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samuel (eds), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, London, 1987, pp. 479-98.

The British Isles

ancien régime dominated by a monarchy, aristocracy and established Church¹⁰⁶. Historians now disagree whether the Penal Laws were intended to convert the Catholic majority to Protestantism or to leave them Catholic and entrench the authority of the Protestant minority by excluding Catholics from all positions of power, property and privilege. Again, much had been made by Catholic nationalists of the decline of Catholic landowning in the eighteenth century under the impact of the Penal Laws. Recent study, however, by Louis Cullen¹⁰⁷, shows the subtle manner in which some fairly nominal Protestants held land on behalf of largely Catholic families, as well as the gradual recovery of the Irish Catholic Church, which confronted piecemeal and sporadic rather than sustained persecution, and even under persecution, was strong enough to retain the allegiance of the great majority of the Irish people.

These are matters of debate among lay historians like Connolly and his critic Tom Bartlett¹⁰⁸. The doyen of Irish Catholic historiography is Fr Patrick Corish¹⁰⁹, and there are other fine clerical historians like Donal Kerr, who has just retired from the celebrated chair in ecclesiastical history at Maynooth and has written a magnificent monograph on Sir Robert Peel's administration in Ireland¹¹⁰. Yet there are not all that many purely church historians for such a Catholic country. There are no local record offices as in England, and records tended to be concentrated in Dublin, where the writing of Irish history was made both easier and more difficult by the destruction by shelling of the national archives housed in the Four Courts during the fighting of the Civil War in 1922. Dublin has an archdiocesan archive, but the diocesan archive in Galway was only opened in 1989.

If Catholic historiography leaves much to be desired, the same should be said for Irish Protestantism. Desmond Bowen has studied the nineteenth-century Protestant crusades in Ireland to convert Catholics¹¹¹. Otherwise Finlay Holmes's excellent study of the great anti-Catholic Presbyterian orator Henry Cooke¹¹² and

106. Sean J. CONNOLLY, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760*, Oxford, 1992.

107. Louis M. CULLEN, *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900*, London, 1981.

108. Thomas BARTLETT, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830*, Dublin, 1992.

109. See note 95 above.

110. Donal A. KERR, *Peel, Priests and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1841-1846*, Oxford, 1982.

111. Desmond BOWEN, *Souperism: Myth or Reality*, Cork, 1970; *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70*, Dublin, 1978.

112. Finlay HOLMES, *Henry Cooke*, Belfast, 1981.

Sheridan Gilley

the monograph by David Hempton and Myrtle Hill¹¹³ on Evangelicalism in the Northern Irish Churches, which gives special attention to Irish Methodism, shine like good deeds in the prevailing darkness, and much Protestant historiography is still confessional. The historians of conflict between Catholic and Protestant are at least as well served by Frank Neal's¹¹⁴ and Tom Gallagher's¹¹⁵ studies of such conflict in Liverpool and Glasgow as by any equivalent study of Belfast¹¹⁶. Perhaps the owl of Minerva only takes its flight when the shadows fall and the battle fades into history. In Ireland, the battle still continues.

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113. David HEMPTON and Myrtle HILL, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890*, London, 1992.

114. Frank NEAL, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience 1819-1914 An aspect of Anglo-Irish History*, Manchester, 1988. See also on Liverpool, Philip J. WALLER, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool, 1868-1939*, Liverpool, 1981, and on anti-Catholicism Denis G. PAZ, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*, Stanford, 1992.

115. Tom GALLAGHER, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland 1819-1914* (in fact 1940), Manchester, 1987.

116. Ian BUDGE and Cornelius O'LEARY, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis A Study of Belfast Politics 1613-1970*, London, 1973; Sibil E. BAKER, «Orange and Green Belfast 1832-1912», H. J. DYOS and Michael WOLFF, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, 2 vols, 1973, vol 2, pp. 789-814.