**IONA School for Ministry**

**March 13, 2021**

**“Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in the Church of England”**

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A simple reading of the history of the Church of England would ascribe the 18th

Century to the Evangelicals and the 19th century to the Tractarians. The history of these

Centuries includes a complex network of social, political, theological and personal dynamics.

Wesley has often been described as the ‘man of the 18th century,’ the founder of Methodism and

one who saved England from a revolution that had swept across France. John Wesley,

however, was not the only figure to play a prominent role in church affairs of the 18th century.

Stephen Neill identifies another leading figure of that century, **Joseph Butler (1692-1752)**, the

Bishop of Bristol and later of Durham. He was considered to be one of the greatest thinkers of

the English Church of his day (Neill 184).

At some time in 1739 Bishop Butler accorded at Bristol an interview to the Rev. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, in the course of which he remarked (according to Wesley’s account of the discussion): ‘I once thought you and Mr. Whitefield, well-meaning men; but I cannot think so now...Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing. It was hardly to be expected that the two greatest Anglicans of the 18th century should understand one another. What is significant is that they were both Anglicans; and it might be debated to the end of time which of these two has rendered greater services to the cause of Christ not only in England, but throughout the world (Neill 187).

The Evangelicals did not suddenly burst on the scene in the 18th century with the

appearance of the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield preaching outside the churches in

England. We have seen how the term ‘evangelical’ became descriptive of the churches in

Germany as distinct from the Calvinist (Reformed) bodies. The influence of the pietist

movement in Germany and Moravia was significant during both the 17th and 18th centuries.

John Wesley was certainly influenced by the Moravians who were descended from the

Bohemian Brethren (*Unitas fratrum)* or United Brethren. John Wesley was so impressed by the

Moravians that he began to learn German on his way to Georgia.

At least three characters stand out in the evangelical movement in the Church of England:

**George Whitefield (1714-70), Charles Wesley (1707-88) and his brother, John Wesley**

**(1703-91).** George Whitefield was a *servitor* at Pembroke College, Oxford when he met the

Wesley brothers. (A *servitor* is a student who earned his fees while he studies). He joined the

“Holy Club” whose members became known as ‘Methodists.’ Whitefield’s outdoor preaching

and oratorical style led Wesley to adopt the same method of reaching large crowds of people.

Benjamin Franklin went to hear Whitefield on one of his many preaching tours in America.

Whitefield had a major impact on the “Great Awakening” in the American colonies.

Though an Anglican, he soon established ties of friendship with revivalistic preachers of

other denominations—Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), Presbyterian

Gilbert Tennant (1703-64), and Reformed Pastor Theodore Frelinghuysen (1691-1748).

(Prichard – 43).

At least in America, George Whitefield reached many more people through his iterant

preaching than John Wesley. In his recent biography of Whitefield, Thomas Kidd opens with

this anecdote:

On October 12, 1740, in the fading light of a cool autumn evening, the twenty-five year old evangelist George Whitefield ascended a platform on Boston Common. Before him stood twenty thousand people. If the crowd estimates were reasonably accurate, this was the largest assembly ever gathered in the history of the American colonies. (Boston’s entire population was only seventeen thousand in 1740). Whitefield had already seen crowds this massive—even larger in the great city of London, but the teeming New England throngs, gathered in the region’s small fishing villages and provincial towns, amazed him (1).

Although Whitefield certainly influenced Wesley, they later had a major disagreement over

the doctrine of predestination and free will. Susannah Wesley wrote a scathing letter to

Whitefield attacking his position and defending her son Charles’ teaching on free will.

(See *Complete Works of Susannah Wesley).*

This disagreement led to the separation of the Evangelical Movement to the extent that most of

Whitefield’s followers joined the Congregationalists after his death in 1770. Strangely enough,

the vast majority of the Evangelicals who remained in the Church of England tended to be

Calvinists and the Methodists, Arminians. (The term ‘Arminian’ comes from a Dutch

theologian, Arminius who expounded the doctrine of free will as opposed to predestination as

held by the Calvinists).

John Wesley’s life and work have been the focus of intense study and research since his

death. He was actually the founder of the ‘Holy Club’ in Oxford where he was a student at

Christ Church. One of the major themes we’ll see in both the Evangelicals and the Tractarians

was their pursuit of holiness. Both movements in the Church of England laid stress on a deep

reverence for God in Christ and a personal desire for service through worship, the celebration of

the sacraments and social reform. Almost all of the leaders in these two movements were faithful

Churchmen; however, their ecclesiology led them in different directions.

After the return from his disappointing mission to Savannah, Georgia, John Wesley

attributed his ‘conversion’ to Peter Boehler, a German (Moravian). He writes in his diary on

May 24, 1738:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was

reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine,

while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in

Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for

salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine,

and saved me from the law of sin and death (Wesley’s Journal 43).

His brother, Charles had a similar conversion experience a few days earlier on May 21 on the

Day of Pentecost. Throughout their ministry, both Charles and John worked very closely. John

edited many of his brother’s lines of verse that were used for hymns.

He defended the right to preach anywhere and to anyone outside parish churches arguing that

he had a special permission because he was a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. What was so

important about Wesley’s ‘heart-warming experience?’ This experience occurred during the

days of pietism and deism when churchmen were not given to emotional expression. In fact,

many of the adherents were called ‘enthusiasts.’ George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter attacked

Wesley in his work entitled, *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared.*

The epitaph on the bishop’s tomb reads, “The Suppressor of Enthusiasm.”

Neill raises the question, “What is the purpose of religion?’ asked the deists, and their answer was that the aim of religion is to make men virtuous. And how are they to be made virtuous? By the acceptance of certain sound principles men could become good; natural religion would accept, as generally valid principles, belief in God, in human immortality, and in some system of rewards and punishments after death (Neill 182).

This was the “Age of Reason” in which Kant’s exploration of *The Critique of Pure Reason* led to

the search for a ‘categorical imperative.’ Truth was no longer based on revelation from God,

but rather was ‘self-evident.’ Note the important phrase in our Declaration of Independence,

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

Wesley’s attempt to lead a holy life had met with disappointment and frustration until his

heartwarming experience. His faith was not simply of the mind, but also of the heart. His

brother, Charles, dated his conversion to almost the same time: Whitsunday, May 21, 1738.

Charles had a remarkable gift for composing hymns and one could argue that he had a more

lasting effect through his hymns than John did with his sermons. Over the course of fifty years

Charles composed over 6,000 hymns. At this pace he was composing one almost every day.

We still sing many of his popular hymns including: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Hail the

Day that sees him rise,” “Love Divine, all loves excelling,” “Jesu, lover of my soul,” and “And

Can it be?” (See Hymnal 1982 for a listing of Charles Wesley’s hymns). Also, John Wesley

provided instructions for hymn singing to his followers in *Select Hymns in Tunes Annext (*sic)

1761. These seven directions can still be found in The United Methodist Church's Hymnal and

Book of Worship. There is only one other person who has more hymns or translations in the

1982 Hymnal than Charles Wesley and he is John Mason Neale.

However, the other great hymn writer, **Isaac Watts (1674-1748)**, of the 18th century was not an

Anglican. He is sometimes called the "Father of Hymnody" He published two collections of

hymns, the second of which is "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" in 1707. Three of his most famous

hymns are still sung today, "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past," "When I Survey the Wondrous

Cross" "Joy to the World" and "Jesus Shall Reign." He became a Congregational Minister at the

Mark Lane Chapel in 1699 and became the pastor in 1702. He was also known for a text on

philosophy which he devoted many of years of his life writing called, "Logic, or the Right Use of

Reason in the Enquiry after Truth" published in 1725.

John Wesley traveled up and down the length and breadth of England, Wales and

Scotland. He often preached three or four times a day and several times during a week. He

preached primarily outside parish churches to the working class who felt marginalized by the

institution of the church. On a trip to Cornwall a number of years ago, I visited a colliery where

Wesley had preached and held outdoor meetings. In this circular pit 3,000 miners and their

families gathered at one time to hear him preach.

In a recent issue of Christian Century: John Wesley, the great first Methodist, knew a

thing or two about theatrics, as this story suggests: “It is related of Mr. Wesley,

that riding one day to preach, he met a pompous country magistrate, mounted

on his stately charger, who, looking with ineffable scorn upon the little apostle

of Methodism, exclaimed in a rough tone of voice, ‘I shall not give the road

to a fool.’” Wesley very calmly reined his horse to the left and quietly replied,

“But I will.” (Martin Marty, “Acting Methodist” March 21, 2006)

In 1789 Wesley defined the four essentials of Methodism:

1. To preach in the open air
2. To pray extempore (spontaneously)
3. To form societies
4. To accept the assistance of lay preachers (Edwards 64).

One of the other aspects of the evangelical movement was the rise of women in ministry, both as

preachers, but also leaders. Woman began to have a role in ministry both in the Methodist and

Congregational Churches. (See *Not Angels, but Anglicans*, p. 189, 190.)

What emphasis did Wesley place on his ministry besides preaching? Three principles

underlie the Methodist movement: theology, education and discipline. A reading of Wesley’s

sermons and notes on the New Testament leads one to the conclusion that he was a careful

scholar and writer. He may not have been very innovative theologically, but what he lacked in

creativity he added with inspiration. One quote attributed to Wesley on preaching is famous,

“Prepare as if everything depends on you; preach as if everything depends on the Holy Spirit.”

The formation of societies and the weekly class meetings provided opportunities for followers in

the movement to learn and grow. There was a built in accountability to one another in their

individual pursuit of holiness.

This raises a question about Wesley’s doctrine of perfectionism. Here is his

commentary on Matthew 5:48 “Therefore ye shall be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is

perfect.”

So the original runs, referring to all that holiness which is described in the fore-

going verses, which our Lord in the beginning of the chapter recommends as

happiness, and in the close of it as perfection. And how wise and gracious is this,

to sum up, as it were a seal, all his commandments with a promise; even the proper

promise of the gospel, that he will “put” those “laws in our minds, and write them in

our hearts!” He well knew how ready our unbelief would be to cry out, This is

impossible! And therefore stakes upon it all the power, truth and faithfulness of Him

to whom all things are possible. (Then Wesley adds a note on Chapter 6:1). In the

foregoing chapter our Lord particularly described the nature of inward holiness.

In this he describes that purity of intention without which none of our outward

actions are holy. (Wesley’s Notes on the NT, Vol. I)

One of the sad chapters in history is the split of the Methodists from the Church of England.

Wesley saw the necessity of appointing Thomas Coke as a Superintendent for America 1784

and he later ordained Francis Asbury as deacon, elder and superintendent. This set in motion

the separation of the Methodist Church from the Church of England and the Episcopal Church.

At the same time, the Episcopal Church found itself in the initial stages of electing Samuel

Seabury as its first bishop and developing its own independent national church. “The

American Revolution” in *A History of the Episcopal Church, Revised Edition* by Robert

Prichard provides a good summary of the events in the early American Church.

Not all of the Evangelicals left the Church of England. Many important evangelical

figures continued the legacy of preaching and the importance of individual conversion after

Wesley’s death. **William Wilberforce (1759 -1833)** led the abolitionist movement to end

slavery in Britain and later throughout the Empire (1809, 1833). The emergence of the

Clapham Sect (a suburb outside London) led to many social reforms in London and other cities.

Among William Wilberforce’s company were: **Henry Thornton (1760-1815), a wealthy**

**banker, Sir John Teignmouth, Zachary Macaulay and A.A. Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury**

**(1801-85).**

Many of the laws they introduced attempted to alleviate the conditions of factory workers and

restrict child labor. The members of the Clapham Sect also founded the London City Mission to

address the needs of the poor of the rapidly growing metropolis.

Probably the most noteworthy person to carry the evangelical tradition into the 19th

century was **Charles Simeon (1759-1836)**, a scholar of Eton College and Fellow of King’s

College, Cambridge. His conversion has that familiar evangelical ring when he wrote about his

preparation to receive Holy Communion. He had not only a spiritual, but an emotional

conversion to Christ his Savior. Simeon became a Fellow of King’s College in 1782, was

ordained in 1783 and in the same year he was appointed as the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge

where he preached until his death in 1836. Simeon was not only famous for his influence on

countless undergraduates, but also for the formation of missionary societies such as the Church

Missionary Society (1799) and the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS).

Throughout the 19th century the evangelicals founded many missionary societies at home

and abroad: CMS, CPAS and SAMS. The 19th century began with Britain’s struggle with France

in the Napoleonic Wars, but by the end of the century the nation and its empire was unrivaled

throughout the world. Wherever the British Navy sailed they took their chaplains as did the

colonists traveled to India, Africa and South America. Stephen Neill adds this conclusion about

the Anglican Evangelicals and their accomplishments during the 18th and 19th centuries:

Yet, when all is said and done, the record of the Anglican Evangelicals is in every

way memorable. To them more than to any other group or party in the Church

it was due that, in the words of two secular historians in the middle of the

19th century ‘England became, perhaps, more nearly a Christian country than

she had ever been before, perhaps more nearly than any comparable community

before or since (Neill 243).

However, many other complex dynamics were set in motion both in church and state as

the nineteenth century continued to unfold. The nineteenth century is no less complicated than

the eighteenth century in England. The period between the beginning of the French

Revolution to the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 occupied the government of England and

required considerable resources in order to achieve victory. As a thanksgiving for the final

victory over Napoleon, the government offered a substantial grant for the building of new

churches throughout England.

The tension mounted, however, over the control that Parliament would have over the church.

Other forces were at work in society with the technological development of the steam

engine, rail travel and large industrial works. Those who lived during the nineteenth century

also saw seismic shifts in the world of science, most notably with the publication of Charles

Lyell’s *Elements of Geology* in 1838 and Charles Darwin’s *Origins of Species* in 1859 (Neill 263).

The Oxford movement, however, began as a consequence of the Reform Act of 1832.

Many in the Church of England saw that the Parliament had overstepped its boundaries in the

attempts to reform and control the established church. The crisis was precipitated by a proposal

to reduce the number of bishoprics in the Church of Ireland and return the revenue to assist many

parishes in need. **John Henry Newman (1801-1890)** dates the beginning of the Oxford

Movement to July 14, 1833 when John Keble preached his famous Assize sermon on ‘National

Apostasy’ at St. Mary’s Church, Oxford.

The high churchmen of Oxford met in Hadleigh that produced schemes for committees

and associations. Newman wrote to Keble saying that the Oxford name must be used in

defense of the church “with a view to stir up our brethren to consider the state of the Church, and

especially to the practical belief and preaching of the Apostolical Succession” (Rowell 55).

The Association of Friends of the Church was formed and the first of “the Tracts for the Times”

was published, and distributed widely among the clergy. Neill makes this observation contrasting

the “Tractarians” with the Evangelicals.

From the beginning the Tractarians, unlike the Evangelicals, formed a party. They

had a center, Oxford. They had a central organ of opinion, the Tracts of the Times.

They had recognized and acknowledged leaders. Most eminent and unchallenged

among the leaders was John Henry, later Cardinal, Newman (Neill 255).

For many years, however, the followers in the Oxford movement were known as ‘puseyites.’

They also were called the ‘apostolicals’ because of their emphasis on the apostolic succession

and the continued catholicity of the Church of England.

The first of the Tracts was entitled, “Thoughts on the Ministerial Commission

Respectfully Addressed to the Clergy.” Here is an excerpt from Tract I published on September 1, 1833:

Christ has not left his Church without claims of its own upon the attention of men.

Surely not. Hard Master he cannot be, to bid us oppose the world, yet give us no

credentials for so doing. There are some that rest their divine mission on their own

unsupported assertion; others who rest in their popularity; others on their success;

and others who rest in upon their temporal distinctions. This last cause has perhaps,

been too much our own; I fear we have neglected the real ground on which our own

authority is built–our APOSTOLIC DESCENT. (Caps added original).

Newman wrestled with the doctrine of the apostolic church and succession until on 9 October

1845 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Newman’s departure from the Church

of England was due in part to his inability to come to terms with the Reformation and the way in

which the catholicity of the church had been preserved throughout the tumultuous 16th century.

Tract 90 was largely Newman’s attempt to see how far the thirty-nine Articles of Religion would

not conflict with his views of the ‘catholic church’ (Neill 260). The publication of Tract 90

instigated a firestorm of protest during which the Bishop of Oxford himself had to intervene.

We must remember that all clergy had to subscribe to the thirty-nine Articles of Religion at their

ordination. Now the Articles of Religion have been consigned to the Historical Document

section of our Prayer Book, but at that time they were considered to be foundational statements

of faith. Note Moorman’s summary how the party of the Tractarians were divided into three

groups (p. 342). The writings of these Oxford men were an attack on the Evangelicals in the

Church of England, the Methodists and the Dissenters as well as on the state control of the

Church. Some of them believed that the Church of England had to be separated from the control

of Parliament. Others believed that the Church had to be reformed within along Catholic lines.

None of them believed reconciliation with Rome was possible.

From the beginning the Tractarians, unlike the Evangelicals, formed a party. They

had a center, Oxford. They had a central organ of opinion, the Tracts of the Times.

They had recognized and acknowledged leaders. Most eminent and unchallenged

among the leaders was John Henry, later Cardinal, Newman (Neill 255).

Newman’s departure to the Church of Rome caused an immediate crisis for the church and the

Oxford Movement. If it hadn’t been for the capable and persistent leadership of E.B. Pusey

(1800-92) and John Keble (1792-1886) the Anglo-Catholic movement would have probably

died. In the same way as John and Charles Wesley were men of the 18th century, so too were

Pusey and Keble men of the 19th century.

Pusey and Keble were both fellows of Oriel College, Oxford. Pusey was probably the

most learned man of his generation in Oxford where eventually he became Professor of Hebrew

and Canon of Christ Church Cathedral. He was one of the few English scholars who had

travelled to Germany to study Hebrew and other Oriental languages. Even Newman called

Pusey, *‘o megas’* (The great one).

Pusey was also a considerable scholar of the mystical traditions of the church. The

Tracts he published dealt with topics such as fasting, the sacraments of baptism and the

Eucharist. He drew deeply from the well of the early church fathers. It was largely due to

Pusey that ‘sacramental confession’ returned and religious orders returned to the church.

Pusey valued the Fathers because they witnessed powerfully to the reality of

Divine grace, weaving together doctrine and devotion so that *lex orandi* was

seen to be *lex credendi*. That same fusion is evident in Pusey unjustly neglected

sermons, as well as in the work of spiritual direction for which he was valued

by many. Owen Chadwick has commented that whereas the word ‘ecstatic’ would

never be used of the writings of Keble and Newman that word ‘springs naturally

to the mind of one reading the sermons of Pusey.’ (Rowell 79).

He was a man not only of great scholarship, but also of humility. He patiently and quietly

endured a two year suspension by the university authorities who questioned his doctrine of the

Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He repudiated transubstantiation and also

consubstantiation attributed to the Lutherans (Rowell 88), but he defended his understanding of

the Real Presence:

The Holy Eucharist is plainly the closest union of man with God. Through the Incarnation God took our nature, took the Manhood into God. But although we had that unspeakable nearness to Himself...this was a gift to our whole race. It was a gift which by its very nature, must overflow to us individually; yet still it required a further act of God’s condescension fully to apply it to each one of us... (A sermon before the university).

John Keble was one of Pusey’s brilliant companions, who became the Professor of Poetry,

Oxford. The publication of his poems, *The Christian Year,* was an immediate success. This

volume contains poems for every Sunday of the year and major feast days. Some have criticized

works of the leaders of the Oxford movement as being influenced by the romanticism of the day

as well as a pining for the glories of the Medieval Church. Matthew Arnold in one of his poems

refers to Oxford as the ‘last enchantment of the Middle Ages.’

However, Keble was also known for his insights into the spiritual life. His Letters of

Spiritual Counsel and Guidance published shortly after his death contain many invaluable

lessons for spiritual direction.

I am struck by Keble’s deep care for the people he is writing to and by the sense of sound balance that pervades his answers to their questions. Whether it is a matter of practical choices in life or problems and challenges in the life of prayer, there are strong marks of his own spiritual experience, of his insight and openness to the other person’s situation, and of his straightforward common sense (Ball 40).

Keble College, Oxford was founded in his honor in 1870. The architecture and grandeur

of this college is a formidable reminder of the glories of the Oxford movement. Pusey House

(library and chapel) also continues to stand as a monument to this great scholar and churchman.

The Evangelicals would not be overshadowed. They erected the Martyrs’ Monument to the

Bishops: Latimer, Cranmer and Ridley just outside St. Mary’s Magdalene’s Church. The ones

who disdained the Reformation would always have a reminder of the martyrs’ sacrifice as they

roamed the streets of Oxford.

The Oxford movement not only turned new pages in the theological world, it also led the

way in liturgical studies, church architecture and music. One of the most important figures in

Church music and architecture was **John Mason Neale (1818-1866).** His concern for the ‘Gothic

Revival’ in architecture is grounded in the symbolism and topology of his sermons and hymns.

Many of his translations of ancient hymns can be found in our 1982 Hymnal. One of the most

familiar is "All Glory, Laud and Honor" (155). Not all of the verses of his translation were

included such as this one,

Be Thou, O Lord, the Rider,

and we the little ass;

That to God's Holy City

Together we may pass.

(See the list of his translations in *Authors, Translators and Sources,* p. 939 Hymnal 1982).

Rowell in his book, *The Vision Glorious* makes this observation, "One of the notable features of

these hymns is what might be called, their heavenly reference. Time and again the hymns which

Neale chose to translate were hymns which pointed the worshipper to the glory and adoration of

heaven" (Rowell 106). Another point is important. Ecclesiology led to statements about the

outworking of liturgical and theological principles, an architectural medium which proclaimed a

theological message (Rowell 101).

Anglo-Catholicism survived the death of the leading figures such as Pusey, Keble and

Neale due in part to the fact that a new generation of High Churchmen emerged such as

**Charles Gore (1853-1932)** The Movement had also spread to the American Church and the

growing churches of the Anglican Communion. Oxford continued to be the intellectual center of

education and liturgy. Anglo-Catholics became noted not only for their liturgical and spiritual

innovations, but also for the establishment of religious orders and social reforms. One of the best

examples of the reform was the foundation of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE).

**Richard Meux Benson (1824-1915)** founded the first religious order in the Church of England

since the Reformation in Cowley an impoverished suburb outside Oxford. New parishes were

founded by priests of the Oxford Movement in many poor urban where the

Evangelicals had not succeeded.

Both the Oxford and Evangelical Movements were inspired by men who had a desire for

holiness. The Evangelicals often preached a personal holiness expressed in behavior and good

deeds. The Tractarians placed the emphasis on the holiness and catholicity of the church. Within

the church one could find the nourishment and encouragement through the sacraments and a call

to lead a devout and holy life of service.

Peter Ball adds this comment about the contribution of the Oxford movement to

Spiritual direction:

The Oxford movement’s revival of the catholic and sacramental tradition of the Church of England is of great importance in the story of spiritual direction. Faced with what they saw as a decline in the vigor of church life, Anglican clergy like Keble and Pusey worked to recover and promote the awareness of the Church of England not simply as an appendage of the state but as God’s holy church (37).

During the 19th century, however, one cannot overlook the tremendous effect of the

scientific developments of the day. Darwin’s theory of natural selection did as much to challenge

the faith of the Victorians as the Tractarians were leading the way of reform. One could say

that the Victorians were great church goers, but they were also scientists and skeptics.

A great debate was staged between the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce and Aldous

Aldous Huxley over Darwin’s book *Origin of Species*. Many clergy had already subscribed to

the literal interpretation of Scripture. One of the great questions was, “Were human beings

descended from apes or angels?” Not all clergy were closed minded. One evangelical was

known to have said, “If science proves that there is another explanation for creation, then our

interpretation of the Bible is wrong.”

Charles Gore led a second generation of high churchman who produced a volume of

essays entitled *Lux Mundi* in 1889 in which they affirmed that it is not inconsistent with the

Catholic faith to accept reasonable results of scientific criticism of the Scriptures (Neill 272).

Some see this as the rise of liberal Catholicism. Alongside this new way of thinking

F.D. Maurice’s work is also worthy of note. He produced a two-volume work called, “The

Kingdom of Christ.” Maurice developed a new way of thinking about church and society.

Historians now call this the birth of Christian socialism. Maurice understood that the problems

and evils of society were not only of individual making, but also of corporate greed and

institutions. The church has a role to play in working to establish the kingdom of God on earth

and not merely to proclaim that the kingdom awaits us in heaven. One can trace the

foundation of the Christian Social Union and the Student Christian Movement to Maurice’s

theology.

Although many may point to the 19th century as the Golden Age of the Church of

England it also saw the rise of the ‘virtuous agnostics’ (Neill 265). Matthew Arnold’s poem

“Dover Beach” is a prime example of the erosion of faith:

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl’d.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The winds of change would certainly stir the sea of faith and unsettle the Church of England in

the next century. The Victorian Age was coming to a close. When Queen Victoria died in 1901,

the threat of a World War was already imminent. Victoria was the symbol of the British Empire

over which she had reigned for sixty-four years (1837 – 1901). Most of her subjects could not remember any

other monarch. Note the similarity with the end of the reign of Victoria with Elizabeth I. It's also

interesting to note that three of the longest reigning monarchs in England's history have all been

women. (Victoria, Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II).

The Great War of 1914-1918 resulted in significant changes to the entire fabric

of the church and state in Britain. The Church of England, however, survived another century

although the society that surrounded it was vastly different. In the next lecture we'll see how the

church responded to the crises of two world wars and the events of the second half of the 20th

century.

**IONA – 18th & 19th Centuries in the Church of England March 13, 2021**

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