

The Church and the State

A Tale of Two Cities

A Guide to the Exhibition at Chester Cathedral Library
to Mark the 800th Anniversary of the
Promulgation of the Magna Carta, 15th June 1215

by
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“My kingdom is not of this world”

(John 18:36)

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come”

(Hebrews 13:14)

“The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all”

(Galatians 4:26)

PREFACE

The present exhibition arose out of a conversation with my esteemed friend George Brooke who pointed out to me last year that 2015 would be the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, and that Cathedrals were being asked to contribute to the celebration of this momentous event in the history of our civil liberties. He and the other members of the Chester Theological Society were organizing with the Cathedral a talk by the Master of the Temple on Magna Carta, and he had devised a block of six Bible studies for the Wednesday lunch-time slot at the Cathedral on the theme of the Bible and Politics. What could the library do? I offered a relevant exhibition, but struggled to find a way to focus it. To begin with, unlike Lincoln and Salisbury, we don't have a copy of the Magna Carta. Then, out of the blue, the Bishops' Pastoral Letter, Who is my neighbour? was published. Suddenly I had my theme. I perceived a long and tortuous genealogy that linked Magna Carta to Who is my Neighbour? We would try to trace it. The Exhibition would be about Church and State, about the Christian and Politics. We would offer some of the backstory to the Pastoral Letter.

The project is in many ways impossible. The richness of the tradition cannot be squeezed into so small a compass. I have had to be wildly selective, and the selection is idiosyncratic and personal. I have limited myself to Britain. There are, of course, strong traditions of Christian political and social thought on mainland Europe – Catholic, Christian Democrat, and Christian Socialist – and indeed we can find there political parties with “Christian” in their title, something we do not have in Britain. But to have tried to cover these would have been too complicated, and, besides, they are shaped by political experiences very different from our own. Even within the British context I have focussed almost exclusively on Anglican thought. This is not to deny the important contribution of “Dissenters” or even “Recusants”. It was dictated by context (we're in an Anglican cathedral) and by space. I have also highlighted the contribution of the North West to our story – and gratifyingly rich it proves to be. The presiding genius of the exhibition has to be Augustine. His idea of the two cities – the heavenly and the earthly – expounded in the greatest work of Christian political thought, The City of God, pervades it.

I am no expert on this subject, but I have thought long and hard about the roots of Christian political thinking in the polity of ancient Israel, particularly the fundamental idea of the “Kingdom of God”. I feel a little more confident in presenting the Guide after an illuminating “tutorial” from Elaine Graham, one of our leading Anglican social theologians. She cannot, however, be held responsible for any inaccuracies or failings. These remain all my own.

Finally my thanks are due to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral for allowing me the continuing run of their fine library, and to the Chancellor, Jane Brooke, the Canon Librarian, for her continuing support. This exhibition like its predecessors would have been impossible without the selfless work of Peter Bamford, the Librarian, and the Library Volunteers. Their uncomplaining co-operation and enthusiasm have been an inspiration.

Philip Alexander

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The Church and the State: A Tale of Two Cities

The Problem of the Church and the State

Magna Carta is widely regarded as one of the foundation documents of our civil liberties. Everyone remembers that the parties to the charter were King John and the Barons. What is easily forgotten is that the Church was deeply involved as well. It was drawn up on the advice of a number of senior bishops, and its opening clauses affirm a fundamental right of the Church – to make internal appointments free from state interference. Not only were bishops involved in the political process that led to the charter, not only does it touch briefly on the rights of the Church, but many of the civil liberties it enshrines are deeply rooted in Christian political thought. Its anniversary, then, offers a splendid pretext for thinking about Christianity and Politics, about the Church and the State.

The commemoration of Magna Carta is particularly apposite this year, because the nation goes to the polls on 7th May to elect a new government, and, in a move seen widely in the media as “unprecedented”, the Bishops have issued a pastoral letter, *Who is my neighbour?*, urging Anglicans and other Christians to vote, and reminding them that they have a wealth of Christian principle to guide them as they make their choice. The reaction to the Bishops’ letter in the wider world was mixed: the *Guardian* welcomed it, *The Times* condemned it. One recurrent theme of the critics was the claim that the Church has no business interfering in politics. Is this fair?

Given that the Church still speaks with moral authority, two important constitutional principles are potentially at stake here – the separation of Church and State, and liberty of conscience. The Church of England is in a peculiar legal position in that it is the established Church of which the head of state, the monarch, remains the “supreme governor”, and a number of its bishops sit of right in the House of Lords – a situation which the main parties at the moment seem content to accept. This gives the Bishops an official platform on which to speak their mind about government policy. But even if this were not the case, they and other Christian leaders would still have a right to remind politicians that the Church is heir to a rich tradition of political wisdom which has a direct bearing on the burning political issues of the day,

and to remind their flock, too, that this tradition is there to guide their political actions.

The principle of liberty of conscience affirms that no-one should be forced to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs, though the State may wish on occasion to curtail this right, if it regards those beliefs as inimical to the common good. This principle has played out in different ways in Christian history. In antiquity the pagan state tried to coerce the consciences of Christians, and many chose martyrdom rather than comply. Later, when the Church became allied to political power, it, in its turn, attempted to coerce the consciences of those not of the Christian faith, or even other Christians, “heretics” and “dissenters”, who were not of the ruling Church. Now, however, there is a widespread consensus that we all have a right to make up our own minds on political as well as other personal issues. The secrecy of the ballot is sacrosanct. No-one can or should dictate to us how we cast our vote, neither Church, nor State, nor family, nor friends, though we remain open to manipulation through (increasingly sophisticated) political propaganda, advertising, lobbying, and peer pressure – pressure which sometimes makes a mockery of freedom of choice. But there is no way that the Bishops’ letter could reasonably be seen as interfering with liberty of conscience. They are very careful to avoid suggesting precisely which party a Christian should support. As our exhibition will show the Bishops’ intervention in politics is by no means “unprecedented”. They have a longstanding right to do so, and a duty to remind their flock of some of the Christian principles which should guide Christian political action.

These are some of the issues which this exhibition seeks to explore. It includes a copy not only of the Magna Carta, but of the Bishops’ letter as well. It can be seen as tracing the sometimes convoluted lines of descent that link the latter to the former.

Case One: Magna Carta and the Church in England

Magna Carta (the Great Charter) is an agreement concluded between King John and a number of rebel Barons, who had become increasingly disenchanted with his rule, in the meadow at Runnymede, close to the royal

castle at Windsor and the rebel headquarters at Staines, on 15th June 1215. As already noted, the Church was involved in it right from the start. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, sensing the danger of civil war, acted as mediator between the two parties, and drafted the charter.

Though the majority of the clauses address a rag-bag of specific grievances, behind the detail stands a fundamental principle, viz, that the power of the king is not unlimited, but should be governed by law. Up till this point the king basically acted by “force and will” (*vis et voluntas*). His powers were vague but potentially vast and arbitrary. Now they were being prescribed, and a mechanism, a council of 25 barons, put in place to police his compliance with his charter-obligations. Justice was to be dispensed by competent persons (clause 45: “We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or other officials, only men that know the law of the realm and are minded to keep it well”), and in such a way that it was easy of access, and timely. The few general principles the Charter does contain are pure gold. Of these, the most famous and far-reaching are clauses 39 and 40: “No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land. To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.”

The Charter was almost immediately repudiated by the king, but was reissued in 1216, 1217, 1225, and 1297. The later forms were by no means identical to the Charter of 1215, but this constant re-issuing had the effect of embedding its principles in English law. There are arguably only three clauses that are still operative: all the others have been repealed, though many of the repealed clauses have been taken up, defined and extended in other legislation.

The Charter is widely regarded as the corner-stone of the British “constitution”. Lord Denning, the famous Master of the Rolls, described it as “the greatest constitutional document of all time – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot.” Down through the ages it has been invoked again and again to assert basic freedoms against the tyranny of rulers. It was used by the eminent jurist Edward Coke and others in the early 17th century to argue against the divine right of kings. A bill was even brought before parliament in 1621 to renew it,

and it formed the preamble to a Petition of Rights in 1628, both of which were quashed by the crown. As recently as 2008 Tony Benn described the proposal to extend the period terrorist suspects could be held without charge from 28 to 42 days as “the day the Magna Carta was repealed”. It has inspired numerous other constitutions and declarations of human rights, most notably the Constitution of the United States of 1789, and the United States Bill of Rights. It is no accident that the memorial on the spot at Runnymede, where the Charter was agreed, was erected by the American Bar Association, and that a facsimile of it is displayed in the Capitol in Washington DC. An actual copy of the 1297 Charter is on view in the Parliament Building in Canberra, Australia.

A lot of myth has grown up around the Charter, myth that will doubtless be much inflated during the present year of commemoration. Some historians remind us that it was only one charter among many, and it should not be arbitrarily singled out. One describes it as a “sacred cow”, fit only to be slain. We are exhorted to remember that the Charter was limited in its scope, a point made wittily by Sellar and Yeatman in their famous parody of English history *1066 and All That*: “Magna Charter was therefore the chief cause of Democracy in England, and thus a *Good Thing* for everyone (except the Common People)”. All this is true, but rather beside the point. The fact is that Magna Carta *has* been singled out, and has become a huge symbol of liberty. Nations need such symbols round which to rally. Myths, even if not literally true, may serve higher truth. Magna Carta serves as an excellent symbol of some of the political values that we in these islands hold most dear.

Magna Carta, like any collection of laws, needs to be interpreted. In its case that need is amplified by the fact that it is now almost a sacred text, and like many sacred texts its meaning is deeply contested. Two of its major interpreters are featured in the exhibition. The first is **William Blackstone** (1723-1780), one of the most important exponents of the common law of England. Blackstone produced the first scholarly edition of the Magna Carta (*The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest*, 1759), and he is responsible for the numbering of the clauses we still use. The Magna Carta comes up again in the section on the Rights of Persons in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69), a work which has had an enormous influence on legal thought and training not only in this country but in the United States.

The other interpreter of the Magna Carta featured in the exhibition is **William Stubbs** (1825-1901). Stubbs, still the greatest constitutional historian of England, had a distinguished career in both academia and the Church. Having been Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, he became successively Bishop of Chester (1884-89, where he undertook a much needed reorganization of the diocese) and Bishop of Oxford (1889-1901). In his magisterial *Constitutional History of England* (1874-78) he declares that “the whole constitutional history of England is little more than a commentary on Magna Carta”. “The Great Charter is the first act of a nation, after it has realised its own identity: the consummation of the work for which unconsciously kings, prelates, and lawyers have been labouring for a century. There is not a word in it that recalls the distinctions of race and blood, or that maintains the differences of English and Norman law.” Stubbs argues that the barons acted with remarkable altruism. “The barons”, he writes, “maintain and secure the right of the whole people as against themselves as well as their master. Clause by clause the rights of the commons are provided for as well as the rights of the nobles ... The knight is protected against the compulsory exaction of his services, and the horse and cart of the freeman against irregular requisition even of the sheriff.”

The Charter, though mainly concerned with the rights of freemen, also touches on the rights of the Church. Its opening clause runs: “First, ... we have granted to God, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired. That we wish this so to be observed, appears from the fact that of our own free will, before the outbreak of the present dispute between us and our barons, we granted and confirmed by charter the freedom of the Church's elections – a right reckoned to be of the greatest necessity and importance to it – and caused this to be confirmed by Pope Innocent III. This freedom we shall observe ourselves, and desire to be observed in good faith by our heirs in perpetuity.”

How does the Church's freedom granted under Magna Carta sit with the Act of Supremacy of 1534 which appointed Henry VIII the “supreme head on earth” of the Church of England? That act was repealed under Mary in 1554, but reinstated under Elizabeth in 1559. It lapsed during the Commonwealth, but was reaffirmed in 1660 when the monarchy was

restored. And it has remained on the statute book ever since, though since 1559 the monarch is known as “supreme governor” rather than “supreme head”, to avoid the charge that he or she is usurping the role of Christ, the only “head” of the Church. The primary purpose of the Act of Supremacy of 1534 was negative – to deny that the Pope had any jurisdiction over the English Church. It is short, and defines Henry’s headship in very general terms. His role was to suppress heresies, reform abuses, and ensure the religious peace, unity and tranquillity of the realm.

Article XXXVII of the Thirty-Nine Articles defines the royal supremacy in this way: “The King’s Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of *England*, and other his dominions, unto whom the Chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction. Where we attribute to the King’s Majesty the chief government (by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended) we give not our Princes the ministering either of God’s Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evildoers.”

The practical operation of this power can be seen in the Acts of Uniformity prefaced to the **Book of Common Prayer**. The king, of course, did not compose the liturgies of the prayer book. He left that to the Bishops. But he had the final say whether or not to approve those liturgies, and the implicit grounds on which he decided were not so much whether they were sound theologically but whether they promoted the peace of the realm. There is nothing in all this about interfering in appointments (the fundamental right identified by Magna Carta), so in that sense there is no obvious clash with the Charter. However, there can be no doubt that down the years English monarchs have seen their headship of the Church as giving them a say in who is appointed bishops or archbishops. This was particularly true under the Stuarts, and even today the ghost of this patronage remains. Episcopal appointments still have to be approved by the Prime Minister of the day, acting under crown prerogative. The element of state involvement is now

very formal and minimal, though as late as 1987 Margaret Thatcher vetoed the appointment of James Lawton Thompson as Bishop of Birmingham because she regarded him as too left-wing. Magna Carta, then, and the Act of Supremacy raise acutely the question of the relationship between Church and State, and define that relationship in rather different ways.

Case Two, Top Shelf: The Roots of Christian Political Thought in Scripture and Tradition

Christianity offers a total worldview which includes a powerful vision of the good society. It has, therefore, a *political* vision. The roots of this lie in the Bible, which is a highly political document. The following are some key biblical ideas which shape that vision.

(1) **The separation of the offices of King and Priest.** This was by no means universal in the ancient world: in many cases the ruler was both king and chief priest. But in ancient Israel the two offices were kept apart. The king could not officiate in the Temple, or offer sacrifice on the altar, or enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Conversely the priest could not sit on the throne, or exercise regal or juridical powers. The priesthood belonged to the tribe of Levi, and more specifically to the House of Aaron. Kingship belonged to the tribe of Judah. Now there were times in Israel's history when this distinction got blurred: kings performed priestly functions, and priests took the title of king (as in the time of the Maccabees), but the law is clear, and this is what was important for later political thought. What is involved here is a clear separation of "Church" and "State".

(2) **The separation between "sacred" and "secular".** This is a corollary of the separation of the offices of "king" and "priest". The realm of the sacred is the realm of the priest, the realm of the secular is the realm of the king. This idea is woefully misunderstood today, because today for us "secular" is *opposed to* "religious", it involves the *negation* of religion. Since at least the 19th century the tide of faith has been going out (the "melancholy, long withdrawing roar" that Matthew Arnold heard on Dover beach). There are many reasons for this – the rise of modern science, the social upheavals created by the industrial revolution. Fewer and fewer people go to Church. This is a fact, and historians call this process "secularisation". They are

entitled to do so, but it should not blind us to the important fact that biblical thinking has its own idea of a secular realm – a realm that is as much part of the divine order as the realm of the holy. It is demarcated not only by office (priest v. king), but also by space: the Temple is holy space, whereas the king’s palace or the market-square are not; and by time: festivals, like Sabbath, are holy time, but ordinary weekdays are not. The practical point here is that Christians operate differently in the holy realm from how they operate in the secular. In the secular they engage in work, and play, and culture, and here they can enter into political alliances even with those who are not believers. It is this *Christian* concept of the secular that defines the sphere of Christian politics. At a functional, everyday level it may differ little from the political sphere as defined by non-Christians, which offers all sorts of possibilities for collaboration with people of good will, whatever their beliefs. At this level there is considerable scope for accommodating the religious to the non-religious idea of the secular.

(3) **The concept of social justice**, the idea that the wealth of society should be equitably distributed, so that all should be able to live a good life free from hunger and want. No individual or class should oppress another individual or class, or deny them their basic rights and dignity. This concept of social justice is expressed vividly in the prophets. Take the following oracle of Amos: “Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes – they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way” (Amos 2:6-7). Or take the story of Nathan and David, in which the prophet rebukes the king for abusing his power by taking another man’s wife (2 Samuel 12:1-15). These prophetic denunciations can be seen as the outworking of the Law of Moses. Take the law that an employer should make sure to pay wages on time (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-15); or the law that if someone has taken a coat in pledge for a loan he should return it if the borrower has nothing else to cover himself with at night to ward off the cold (Exodus 22:26); or the law against lending money on interest (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19) – thought-provoking, surely, for those of us with bank accounts!; or the law forbidding owners from physically abusing their slaves: if they do them serious harm, then they forfeit the right to their labour and the slave can go free (Exodus 21:26-27); or the law against oppressing immigrants (Exodus 22:21; 23:9;

Leviticus 19:33; Deuteronomy 24:17; 27:19). No-one according to the ancient law of Israel was above the law: the king was bound by the law, and indeed should write out and keep a copy of it beside him (Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

(4) **The concept of the “kingdom of God”,** or “kingdom of Heaven” (the terms are synonymous). This was fundamental to the teaching of Jesus. His ministry began with a call to repentance, because the “kingdom of God” was at hand (Mark 1:15). Jesus was here appealing to an idea widespread in the Judaism of his day, and rooted in the ancient prophetic visions of the time to come when wickedness, oppression, hunger and wars would cease, when each would sit under his vine and his fig-tree, and the lion would lie down with the lamb. The principal agent in Jewish tradition who would bring in the kingdom was the Anointed One, the Messiah. The Messiah was a king, the best of all kings, the embodiment of kingship. Thinking about the qualities of the ideal messianic king opened up a rich vein of speculation about good government in general and the ideal ruler in particular. Jesus’ own take on these common themes was highly original. He saw the kingdom as coming not, as his contemporaries thought, through the liberation of the people from foreign oppression by war, but through a transformation in their hearts. And he came to see his own messianic role as being, paradoxically, to suffer and die for the people.

The coming, ideal society was also in Jewish and Christian tradition pictured under the image of a heavenly city, a New Jerusalem, which would be established on earth at the end of history (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 13:14; Revelation 21:9-27). This image, as we shall see, was to resonate powerfully in Christian political thought. Though the “Kingdom of God” and the “New Jerusalem” are fundamentally synonymous, the latter as a symbol conjures up a more concrete picture than the former, and opens up somewhat different trains of thought.

Developing these biblical principles was the work of Christian tradition. That tradition has been immensely rich, and only a few examples can feature in the present exhibition. I have chosen four texts to represent it in the period down to the end of the middle ages.

(1) The first is the *Apology of Justin Martyr* (c.100-165), which illustrates the fraught relationships between the early Church and the Roman State. It is hardly surprising that the Roman authorities were suspicious of Christianity, given that it honoured as its founder a Galilean Jew who had been crucified as a criminal and troublemaker by a Roman provincial governor. The Roman State demanded that its subjects, as evidence of their loyalty, should offer sacrifice to the emperor. This Christians felt they could not do. They were from time to time persecuted, and many chose to die rather than renounce their faith. This persecution forced Christians to reflect on the limits of state power, and to formulate a doctrine of martyrdom. Building on Jewish ideas they identified certain beliefs which they could not forswear even if required to do so by the State. They should be prepared to die rather than give them up. Their astonishing heroism established an important political principle, which lies at the very heart of civil society today – the principle of freedom of conscience: the state has no right to compel people to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs.

Born in Flavia Neapolis (Nablus) in Palestine, Justin adopted the philosophic way of life, but, dissatisfied with what the pagan philosophers had to offer, he became a follower of Christ. He went to Rome where he founded a Christian school, in which he taught Christianity as the true philosophy. He wrote two apologies arguing that Christianity was a reasonable faith, and posed no threat to Rome, one addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, the other to the Senate. The authorities were not persuaded. According to tradition, Justin and several other Christians, having refused “to sacrifice to the gods and yield to the command of the emperor” were scourged, and then led away to suffer punishment by decapitation. “The holy martyrs having glorified God, and having gone forth to the accustomed place, were beheaded, and perfected their testimony in the confession of the Saviour”.

(2) A dramatic reversal in the fortunes of the Church occurred under the emperor Constantine (ruled 306-337). Constantine decided that Christianity, which by his day had spread throughout the Roman world and beyond, could function for the good of the Roman State by helping to unite its diverse peoples and factions. He was the prime mover behind the so-called Edict of Milan of 313 which recognized Christianity as a legal religion in the Roman empire, and ended the persecution of the Church. He was not himself baptized as a Christian till just before his death, but he had begun

long before this to favour Christianity. His mother, Queen Helena, did convert, and embarked on a remarkable programme of church-building, particularly in the Holy Land. Constantine's successors all ascended the imperial throne as Christians. Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, and now began to deal out to non-Christians the sort of persecution that Christians had once received.

The story of the triumph of Christianity was told by **Eusebius** (260/65 – 339/40), bishop of Caesarea Maritima, in Palestine, in his great work the *Ecclesiastical History*, which traces the story of the Church and its relationship to the Roman State from the time of Christ to his own day. Eusebius was a friend of Constantine, and he makes the emperor's final triumph over all his enemies (and with it the triumph also the Church), the climax of his history. Eusebius was an old man when the emperor died but he set about at once writing a hagiographic account of his life (*The Life of Constantine*). However, he died before he could finish it.

Constantine defined anew the relationship between Church and State. Though he did not, as noted, formally convert to Christianity till his deathbed, this did not stop him interfering in Church affairs. The Church was riven by doctrinal controversy in his day, over the doctrine of the divine sonship of Christ, and this made it less effective as an instrument of state policy. So Constantine resolved to sort it out. He convened an ecumenical council of bishops at Nicea in Asia Minor in 325, and tasked them with deciding where the truth lay. He personally opened the council and sat through the debates. This was one of the very greatest of the Church Councils, and it decided in favour of Trinitarianism as against Arianism, thus making belief in the Trinity part of the orthodox creed.

All well and good, but Constantine had effectively subordinated the Church to the State. He had acted as though he was the head of the Church. This doctrine, that the civil power has authority over the Church, sometimes called Caesaropapism (i.e. the Caesar effectively acts as pope) was to have its advocates down to the present day. Later Christian kings and princes were to claim authority over the Church, including, as we saw, our own Henry VIII with his Act of Supremacy in 1534.

(3) **Augustine of Hippo** in North Africa (354-430) is the presiding genius of our exhibition, because his sprawling masterpiece *The City of God* is the single most influential treatment of our theme. It was written in response to the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410. That the Eternal City had fallen to barbarians caused profound shock to intellectual Romans, and some argued that the catastrophe had happened because Rome had abandoned the old gods who had protected her for so long, and embraced the new-fangled Christianity. Augustine refutes this claim. He sets this attack on the Church in the context of a conflict between two cities, a conflict which can be traced from the beginning of time to its end. The one city is the City of God, or the Heavenly City, the other the City of Men, or the City of the World. He divides humanity into “two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the two communities of men, of which the one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil.”

The two cities are implacably opposed to each other, and ultimately there can be no compromise between them. The City of Men arose in rebellion against God, with the sin of Adam and Eve. Indeed it can be traced back still earlier to the fall of Satan and the evil angels. In the present age the two cities intermingle, but at the end of time they will be finally separated: the City of God will triumph and the City of Men will be eternally destroyed. The dualism of Augustine’s position is stark, his view of the State deeply negative. One should never forget that Manichaeism attracted him in his youth, and he never really escaped its darkly dualistic worldview.

The intermingling of the two cities at the present time leads to the question of how they can co-exist day-to-day. Augustine discusses this in the following terms: “The families which do not live by faith [i.e. those who belong to the City of Men] seek their peace in the earthly advantages of this life; while the families which live by faith [i.e. those who belong to the City of God] look for those eternal blessings which are promised, and use as pilgrims such advantages of time and of earth as do not fascinate and divert them from God, but rather aid them to endure with greater ease, and to keep down the number of those burdens of the corruptible body which weigh upon the soul. Thus the things necessary for this mortal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in

using them. The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away. Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as the earnest of it, it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony betwixt them in regard to what belongs to it.”

So the Heavenly City can reach a pragmatic accommodation of sorts with the Earthly City in this life: Christians should obey the State in all things lawful, and would clearly prefer to live in a state which maintains peace and order in a way that allows them to devote themselves to the things of God. But it is hard to find any justification in Augustine for them getting involved in the politics of the earthly city to bring about the conditions in which the Church can flourish (though he allows that the Christian can and should fight for his country!). For Augustine God is the Lord of history: he providentially oversees all that happens, and so is in ultimate control of the Earthly City, but he nowhere concedes that the Earthly City – the State – is part of the divinely created order. It arose in rebellion against God, and is ultimately irredeemable. This powerful, negative vision of the State has resonated down the ages in Christian political thought, as we shall see.

(4) More positive Christian views of the State emerged in the middle ages, for example in the writings of **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274), the most influential of the schoolmen, whose ideas remain fundamental to Catholic political thought. For Aquinas the State *is* part of the created divine order, with as much legitimacy in the divine scheme of things as the Church. Its purpose is to ensure the temporal happiness of its subjects, by maintaining peace, order and justice, so that each can flourish as best they can. The purpose of the Church is to ensure the *eternal* happiness of its members, and to order itself in such a way as to ensure their *spiritual* wellbeing and *eternal* salvation. This is the function of Church and State in the purposes of God, but they can fall short of their ideals: because of human sin both can be

badly governed, both can become corrupt and need reform. Aquinas, therefore, sees clear grounds on which the Christian can engage in politics – to ensure that the State plays out its proper role in the purposes of God.

This is nowhere seen more clearly than in his development of a theory of just war (interestingly built on references scattered in the writings of Augustine, though not in the *City of God*). Waging war has always been seen as one of the fundamental duties of states, to defend their citizens against external attack. Aquinas concedes that, terrible though war is, there are occasions when it can be justified. But such wars should be conducted according to ethical rules. They can only be declared by competent authority, they must be for a just cause, not unprovoked wars of aggression, and the ultimate aim should always be the achievement of a just peace. Aquinas's doctrine of the just war has been seminal in the development of just-war theory, and has been crucial to the definition of a war crime, a concept at the heart of international law today. Some Christian ethicists argue that the recent Iraq War (2003-2011) did not meet Aquinas's criteria for a just war.

Aquinas recognized that because the jurisdictions of both the Church and the State affect the individual who belongs to both, conflicts can arise. He is clear that when they do the jurisdiction of the Church, which administers revealed law, and has the care of the individual's eternal destiny, prevails over that of the State which administers natural law, and has the care of the individual's temporal good. It was in reliance on this principle, as well as some "dodgy" historical claims about temporal powers granted by Constantine to the Church, that the popes regularly intervened in political life in the middle ages, deposing kings and annulling state laws.

Case Two, Bottom Shelf: 16th and 17th Centuries The Wars of Religion

It was in the 16th and 17th centuries that our political constitution was hammered out – a point well made by the statue of Oliver Cromwell that stands outside the House of Commons. The statue was erected in 1899. It was controversial at the time, and supported by only a narrow majority in the Commons. There have even been attempts since to have it removed and melted down, an echo of the indignity Cromwell's corpse suffered: it was

dug up when the king was restored, and gruesomely “executed” at Tyburn, his severed head being displayed on a pole outside Westminster Hall till 1685. But Cromwell’s statue still stands defiantly outside Parliament, with a sword in one hand and a Bible (inscribed 1641) in the other. This neatly symbolizes our period: it was a time of violence, and religion was at the heart of the conflict. Religious ideas mattered and people were prepared to kill and be killed for them. The spirit of the age – soaring intellect and piety on one hand, and extraordinary brutality on the other – is well captured by Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall*. The key issue was the theme of our exhibition: the relation between Church and State. The richness of the thinking on this topic is astonishing.

All sides agreed on one fundamental axiom, namely that the Church was not the State, nor the State the Church. The State deals with temporal, the Church with spiritual and eternal matters. There are political systems where the two are totally fused. This is the case, for example, in classic Islam: the head of the state is the caliph, the successor the Prophet, and he wields ultimate *religious* as well as *political* authority. We can see this system working itself out in a monstrous way in the Islamic State (IS). But in Christian political thinking State and Church are fundamentally separate. This principle was rooted, as we saw, in the Old Testament idea of the separation between the kingship and the high priesthood. These offices had to be held by separate people. However, though separate, Church and State have to operate within the same society, within the same polity, and so the key question becomes what is their relationship to each other.

Logically there are three possibilities. (1) The Church is superior in authority to the State, and while it will normally leave the State to get on with its proper business, it reserves the right to intervene in its affairs. (2) The State is superior to the Church, and while the State will normally leave the Church to get on with the business of the cure of souls, it reserves the right to intervene in its affairs. (3) The Church and the State sit within the polity side by side, each with its own proper sphere into which the other has no right to trespass. Each of these positions is capable of subtle inflections and variations, but all are *Christian* views of the relation between Church and State. Broadly speaking option 1 is the Catholic position, option 2 the Anglican, and option 3 the Reformed. No-one denies that there should be a

separation between Church and State: the fundamental question is the nature of that separation, and how wide it should be.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) and **John Calvin** (1509-1564) both subscribed to Aquinas's view that both State and Church belong to the divinely created order, and are instruments by which God governs the world. The office of civil magistrate or secular prince is as much ordained by God as that of an elder or minister within the Church. But both want to make a much stronger separation between Church and State than Aquinas advocated, to stress the absolute sovereignty of each within its own domain (option 3 above). Secular rulers have no business getting involved in the internal governance of the Church, or in saving souls, or in trying to coerce consciences or imposing belief. Equally the Church had no business getting involved in the governance of the State, in administering law, or waging war, or collecting taxes.

Luther puts it this way: "God has ordained the two governments: the spiritual, which by the Holy Spirit under Christ makes Christians and pious people; and the secular, which restrains the unchristian and wicked so that they are obliged to keep the peace outwardly ... The laws of worldly government extend no farther than to life and property and what is external upon earth. For over the soul God can and will let no one rule but himself. Therefore, where temporal power presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God's government and only misleads and destroys souls."

Calvin writes in essentially similar terms. He opens his treatment of "Civil Government" in his *Institutes* thus: "Having shown above that there is a twofold government in man, and having fully considered the one which, placed in the inward man, relates to eternal life, we are here called to say something of the other, which pertains only to civil institutions and the external regulation of manners."

Both Luther and Calvin are reacting on the one hand to the Catholic doctrine of papal supremacy, and on the other to radical Christian groups who wanted to overthrow the State, or to deny its validity. Both had a horror of civil disorder, and firmly told Christians to obey the State in all things lawful. Luther reacted negatively to the German Peasants' Revolt of 1524-25, though he acknowledged some of the injustices that caused it. Calvin

fulminated against the Anabaptists, some of whom were, politically speaking, anarchists. “Some”, he writes, “on hearing that liberty is promised in the gospel, a liberty which acknowledges no king and no magistrate among men, but looks to Christ alone, think that they can perceive no benefit from their liberty so long as they see any power placed over them. Accordingly, they think that nothing will be safe until the whole world is changed into a new form, when there will be neither courts, nor laws nor magistrates, nor anything of the kind to interfere, as they suppose, with their liberty.” Interestingly Calvin was not prepared to prescribe the political form the State should take: he considers the three forms of government recognized in his day – monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy – and concludes that all three are compatible with the Christian view of the State, though he expresses a personal preference for aristocracy. This is interesting, because today we tend to assume that democracy is intrinsically the most Christian form of government.

The supremacy of the Pope over Kings was re-affirmed in dramatic fashion in the chamber of the French Third Estate on 15th January 1615 by Cardinal de Perron. The “harangue” was printed and in the printed version, rather cheekily, addressed to James I, the leading Protestant monarch in Europe. James was not best pleased. The issue was very much alive for him. He and Parliament had miraculously survived the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 – a deliverance commemorated annually ever since. There were many in England who saw the Pope behind the plot: here was a spectacular way to exercise his authority to depose kings. The king, who was something of a frustrated scholar, wrote a refutation of de Perron, which was published in French, and shortly after translated into English. The king’s essay is not very distinguished: fulsomely rhetorical, it is concerned largely with obscure historical precedents.

The king’s position rests on his passionate belief in the divine right of kings, a doctrine that was to have fateful consequences for his son, Charles I. It was not just a question of the Pope not having jurisdiction over a king. No one else had either: the king was appointed by God and answerable to God alone. In a speech to parliament in 1610, James put it this way: “The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth, for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. ... I conclude then this point touching the power of

kings with this axiom of divinity, that as to dispute what God may do is blasphemy . . . so is it sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power.” This did not mean that the king could act as an arbitrary tyrant. He should act justly and compassionately as the “father of his country” (*parens patriae*), and he was bound by laws, but they were “his own laws”. James had set these out in a little manual of statecraft, the *Basilikon Doron*, which he had written for his young son Henry, while still in Scotland. And he should be prepared to explain himself to his people. “Just kings,” he says in the same parliamentary speech, “will ever be willing to declare what they do, if they will not incur the curse of God. I will not be content that my power be disputed upon, but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appear of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my laws.”

James, though he was brought up in Presbyterian Scotland, which was strongly influenced by Calvin, embraced wholeheartedly the doctrine of the royal supremacy over the Church when he became King of England. At the end of the 16th century that doctrine had come under increasing attack. Protestants of all religious parties had united in face of the threat of invasion by Spain, which aimed to bring England back under the authority of Rome, but once the Armada had been defeated in 1588, cracks began to appear in this unity. The Puritans, who looked to Calvin for inspiration, wanted further radical reform of the Church of England, and with it a stronger separation between Church and State. Conventicles began to spring up, meeting along Presbyterian lines and effectively ignoring the Book of Common Prayer. The manifesto of the Puritan party had been published as far back as 1572 by John Field and Thomas Wilcox in the form of an *Admonition to Parliament*. This called on the Queen to root out the remaining Roman Catholic practices of the Church of England, to abolish episcopacy, and generally to return to the simplicity and purity of New Testament worship. The reform movement gathered strength in the 1590s.

There were attempts from the Anglican side to answer the arguments of the *Admonition*. By far the most important of these was *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* by **Richard Hooker** (1554-1600). In the eyes of many Hooker is the supreme theologian of Anglicanism. He certainly steered a middle course between Rome and Geneva which has been widely seen as expressing the spirit of Anglicanism. The first five books of his *magnum*

opus, which also happens to be a masterpiece of English prose, appeared between 1594 and 1597, the final three after his death (he died at the age of 46).

Hooker set out to defend the Elizabethan settlement. There was, consequently, nothing new in the position he proposed. He devoted, for example, Book VIII of *The Laws*, to defining and defending the royal supremacy. What was new, and of enormous significance, was *how* he defended the *status quo*. For Hooker the burning questions of how the Church was to organize itself, and what relationship it should have to the civil power were to be answered not just by an appeal to Scripture (as the Puritans argued) but also to reason and tradition. Hooker argued that all three sources of theology are needed, and carefully demonstrated how they should interact. The whole thrust of Hooker's argument is towards breadth and inclusion. He appealed to a wide range of sources, including Aquinas, whose work he valued. He argued that we should draw a distinction between what is of vital importance to the Church and what is "indifferent", that is to say things on which a range of opinions may be tolerated, and where uniformity should not be imposed. We should be prepared to acknowledge and allow differences based on reason or tradition which are compatible with Scripture, even if not explicitly sanctioned by it. Among things indifferent he startlingly included the precise form of Church government (what matters is not whether people are Presbyterian or Anglican, but whether they are pious and god-fearing), and of civil government as well (like Calvin he saw monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as all, in principle, acceptable from a Christian point of view). In many ways he anticipates what is best about the broad-church, latitudinarian position that emerged in the 18th century, and it is not surprising that he is frequently quoted by John Locke (on whom more below). Nor is it surprising that interest in him is growing in the present fractious state of the Anglican communion. His time may be coming again.

No account of the doctrine of Church and State in the 17th century could be complete without mentioning **Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679), and especially his masterpiece, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of A Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651), one of the foundation documents of modern European political thought. For Hobbes states are created by social contracts between people. Taken as individuals, no one

has any more inherent right to the resources of the world than anyone else. All have license to grab as much as they can. But this situation, which he calls “the state of nature”, inevitably leads to a condition of “war of all against all”. It is dominated by “continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”. The only way out of this misery is for individuals to create a civil society by setting up a ruler over themselves, to whom they cede some of their individual rights. This ruler is thereby tasked with preserving the peace and protecting people from each other. The more absolute the ruler is, the stronger and better the society will be: the power ceded to him cannot be recalled, and he must unify in himself all authority – civil, military, juridical and ecclesiastical.

Hobbes illustrated his ideas in a powerful engraving, part of which is reproduced on the front of this guide. This depicts the state as a monstrous human figure (the Leviathan) menacing a landscape both urban and pastoral. The figure, on close inspection, is made up of tiny human figures all of whom are looking towards the head. In its left hand it holds a crozier (representing ecclesiastical power) and in its right a sword (representing civil and military power). Thus for Hobbes, though the powers of Church and State are different, in a strong civil society both are wielded by the same sovereign ruler. States collapse when the social contract on which they are based is broken, when individuals rebel against the authority of the sovereign. When that happens the body politic dies.

Hobbes’s view of the state is based on a deeply pessimistic view of human nature, in part explicable by his experience of living through the Civil War, when Britain tore itself apart politically, and the social contract failed. It has been a matter of intense debate how much he was influenced specifically by Christian ideas. Some of his critics accused him of atheism, or adopting views which naturally lead to atheism. He denied this, and, indeed, the whole of Part III of *Leviathan* is devoted to a careful exposition of Scripture. His idea of the “state of nature” is not incompatible with some forms of the Christian doctrine of the Fall. His idea of the absolute ruler is not in substance all that far away from James I’s doctrine of the divine right of kings, though, of course, the source of the absolute authority differs radically in the two cases: in James I’s case it is from God, whereas in Hobbes’s it is from the people. In short, on closer inspection Hobbes’s position is less singular than it might at first sight appear.

Implicit in the thinking of the 16th and 17th century writers so far considered is the idea that Christians *should* get involved in politics, but there is a powerful strand of Christian thought which argues that they *shouldn't*. Some urge this view on pragmatic grounds: nothing can be more important than our eternal salvation. Our priority must be to save our souls, to ensure we are right with God. To get absorbed in the cares of the world is a distraction, that puts our eternal destiny at risk. Pragmatism may be reinforced by theology: the world is so corrupt as to be irredeemable; it is under the judgement of God, and to get tangled up in it is to risk sharing in its judgement. The idea may be put in starkly dualistic terms. The present political order is demonic, under the control of Satan, the Prince of this World. There is no point trying to reform it. Its destiny is to be swept away when Christ comes again to establish his kingdom on earth. Withdrawalism has resonated powerfully down the centuries within Christian thought. It has, arguably, a champion in Augustine. It appeals to something deep within us, the world-weariness that afflicts us all from time to time, when life's trials and tribulations get too much – a mood captured by Henry Vaughan's poem, "My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars" (especially in Parry's ravishing setting). Nothing Christians can do can transform the City of the World into the City of God. Rather it will be smashed by catastrophic *divine* intervention and *replaced* by the City of God.

John Bunyan (1628-1688) presents a seductive version of this vision in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Translated into some 200 languages, *Pilgrim's Progress* has probably never been out of print since it first appeared in 1678. It is held in deep affection by Christians of all persuasions, and has often been adapted for children. It is testimony to Bunyan's storytelling that most readers miss its political implications, but they are there. It opens: "As I walked through the wilderness of the world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed; and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden on his back. I looked and I saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and, not being able to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" The man is Pilgrim and what he wisely does is flee from the City of Destruction where he lives and set out for the Celestial City, into

which, after numerous attempts to lure him back, he is triumphantly welcomed after death. The last thing Pilgrim should do is to get involved in the affairs of the City of Destruction: they are only a snare and a delusion that may cost him his heavenly prize.

Case Three, Top Shelf: 18th and 19th Centuries The Church loses and finds again its Prophetic Voice

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 marks a turning-point in the relationship between the Church and State in England. It established once and for all the protestant succession to the throne – a position further reinforced after the defeat of the Jacobite rebellions in '15 and '45. It brought new clarity to the status of the monarchy as a limited, constitutional monarchy. And it put in power both in Church and State the low-church party. This came about for a variety of reasons, among which was the fact that many of the most principled high-churchmen refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary (which would have meant abjuring their oath to James), and these non-jurors were thus excluded from office in both Church and State. But there were plenty of high-churchmen who were prepared to pledge allegiance, and the high-church party (the Tories) remained influential. Politics were, however, dominated for most of the 18th century by the low-church party (the Whigs), particularly after George the Elector of Hanover was brought over in 1714 to occupy the English throne.

18th century English history is complex, full of contradictory tendencies, and generalisations are hazardous, but it is probably fair to say that from our present point of view it marks a low point in the relationship between Church and State. The problem was that the State's embrace of the Church was so tight that it effectively stifled the Church's prophetic role to challenge it, and to address society's ills. The Church became an arm of the State, and was totally subservient to it. To some degree this had been the case ever since Henry VIII made himself head of the Church, and even during the Commonwealth, first Parliament and then the Lord Protector, Cromwell, took the place of the King. But what marked out the 18th century as different was the lack of questioning of this on all sides, the degree of corrupt collusion on the part of the Church. Bishops of all stripes competed to curry favour with and support the government, and were rewarded with

preferment. There *were* men of real substance and integrity in the upper echelons of the Church (Joseph Butler and George Berkeley would have stood out in any age), but they were depressingly few and far between.

A new chapter in thinking about the relationship between Church and State is often said to begin with the philosopher **John Locke** (1632-1704), though his originality can be overestimated. In crucial ways he was anticipated by Hooker, whom he regularly quotes. Locke belongs chronologically to the 17th century, but he is one of the harbingers of the European Enlightenment and best taken with the 18th. Locke, in his *Two Treatises on Government* and in his *Epistle on Toleration* argued for a strong separation of Church and State. While he agreed with Hobbes that at the basis of the State lies a social contract, he developed this idea in very different ways. Hobbes, as we saw, argued that once the people had voluntarily given up power to the ruler, the ruler's power was absolute and could not be recalled. Locke argued that no ruler should rule without the *continued* consent of the ruled. And whereas Hobbes argued that the ruler had the power to enforce uniformity in religion, and indeed must do so for the efficient running of the State, Locke argued that diversity in religious opinion and practice should be tolerated, otherwise opposition and civil strife will ensue. He was, therefore, in favour of repealing the Test Act that discriminated against Dissenters. For Locke the state did not have the right, nor, indeed, ultimately, the power, to coerce individual consciences, and it should recognize that conscience lies beyond its jurisdiction. For him religion was fundamentally a matter of conscience. Churches, consisting of individuals who had voluntarily banded together, should be governed along similar lines to the State: they should be governed with the consent of their members; church discipline should not, as far as possible, be coercive.

Locke's views provided intellectual under-pinning for the doctrine of the Church embraced by the low-church or latitudinarian party, and for the policies of their political allies the Whigs. They also lie behind the strong separation of Church and State in the American Constitution. Thomas Jefferson in his famous letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802 caught their spirit well: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions

only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.” And, as I mentioned earlier, it resonates powerfully in political discourse today, and lies behind some of the criticism of the recent Pastoral Letter of the Bishops.

Locke’s broad principles were worked out more fully in ecclesiological terms by **Benjamin Hoadly** (1676-1761), who by the time of his death, had risen within the hierarchy of the Church to become Bishop of Winchester. There was a strong puritan tradition in Hoadly’s family which would have sat quite easily with Locke’s views. He was a doughty polemicist, who argued for a number of very low-church, whiggish positions (including a strictly memorialist, Zwinglian view of the Lords Supper, and the right, under certain circumstances, to resist magistrates – a view he actually argued from Romans 13:1, usually seen as the classic text to the contrary), often to the alarm even of his more moderate low-church brethren, let alone his high-church opponents. While Bishop of Bangor he provoked the Bangorian Controversy – the single most important debate on the relationship between Church and State in the 18th century. The occasion was a sermon which Hoadly preached before King George I on 31st March 1731 on “The Nature of the Kingdom of Christ”. He argued that the classic text, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), meant that there is no Scriptural basis for earthly church government *of any sort*. The Church is the Kingdom of *Heaven*: Christ is the “Sole *Lawgiver* to his Subjects, and Sole *Judge*, in matters relating to Salvation ... In the Affairs of *Eternal Conscience* and *Salvation* ... He hath ... left behind Him, no visible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be said properly to supply his Place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the Consciences and Religion of his People”.

But where does this leave the Bishops, in whose ranks Hoadly himself held a prominent place? We should not jump too quickly, as many have done, to charge him with hypocrisy. Actually he had dealt with this question in an earlier work in which he argued that although episcopacy was not established by divine law, it was a reasonable and practical way to govern

the Church, which was of apostolic institution, and he urged Dissenters to conform to it. There are surely echoes here of the concept of “reduced episcopacy” argued by Archbishop Ussher in the previous century.

Hoadly’s views caused a furore, and he was attacked by high-churchmen on all sides, including William Law, on whom more presently. There is a credible tradition that he preached the famous sermon at the instigation of the King. Certainly the King seems to have been pleased with it and to have ordered its publication. It might seem odd that the King should have favoured the views of Hoadly and the Whigs, given that they held a weaker doctrine of the royal prerogative than the high church Tories (some of whom still subscribed to versions of the divine right of kings), but there seems little doubt that the King was in favour of dismantling the apparatus of discrimination against Dissenters, and was irked by the way in which, for all their expressions of deference, the Tories and the high-church bishops were trying to frustrate him at every turn. He favoured Hoadly’s views because he saw them as weakening episcopal authority, and Hoadly was no anarchist: he recognized the right of the civil power to intervene in the Church, even to remove bishops, if it saw its interests threatened.

Locke and Hoadly were in many ways ahead of their time. Their views still resonate strongly in our own day, when the separation of Church and State and freedom of conscience are so integral to political life. But this view generates obvious theological problems. It tends to define religion very narrowly as something that belongs to the private sphere, to confine it to the individual’s relationship to his or her God. It is true that Hoadly and even Locke did try to construct theories of the State based on Christian, even Biblical principles, but this side of their work is now largely forgotten. What is remembered is that they separated Church and State, and this is now often taken to mean that the Church has no voice in politics: politics is the domain of objective reason; the Church is the domain of subjective, irrational faith – a crass simplification to which neither Hoadly nor Locke would have for one moment subscribed.

Though the 18th century debates on the Church and the State are well-worth revisiting, the spiritual life of the Church at this time reached a very low ebb.

One eminent historian sums it up by saying: “It must be admitted the church of England during the eighteenth century is not an inspiring spectacle. Latitudinarianism, to a degree which makes it difficult to find any theological justification for its existence, was at its highest . . . an efficient instrument of statecraft, at its lowest . . . a nest of pluralists and mundane divines” (Basil Williams). The evangelical revival did something to alleviate the dreary worldliness of the 18th century Church, but it did little to address the political problem. On the contrary it strengthened withdrawal from the political life. It was strongly individualistic: having made oneself right with God, one then cultivated a life of holiness.

The most striking manifestation of the new pietism was Methodism, the leaders of which were John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. They criss-crossed the country preaching the Gospel to large audiences, and brought many who were effectively unchurched to a more vital Christian faith. Though all three were ordained in the Church of England they largely operated outside it, and were often forced to preach in the open air, because the parish priest objected to them straying onto his patch. The movements they founded in the end broke away from the established Church. The Methodist revival undoubtedly had an impact for good on the morals of society, but the kind of Christianity it advocated did not sit easily with involvement in politics, focussed as it was on preaching the Gospel and living a life of personal holiness. It is not common to find outright rejection of involvement in politics, and Methodists often enough engaged in charity, which was readily acknowledged as integral to the life of piety, but it was a question of priorities: nothing should distract from preaching the Gospel and cultivating one’s relationship with God. There was always the danger that this could turn people inward, make them narcissistic even, and deflect them from considering and addressing the broader ills of society.

The roots of pietism lie further back in history. We have already noted the potential narcissism of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, but perhaps a more important antecedent can be found in the writings the 17th century Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), particularly his two manuals of the spiritual life – *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* – both of which were highly regarded by John Wesley. Closer to home were the writings of **William Law** (1686-1761), particularly his *Practical Treatise on Christian*

Perfection (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729). Law is like Taylor in some ways. Like Taylor he was a feisty controversialist, and involved in the hurly-burly of public debate: he attacked Hoadly's Bangor Sermon (from a high church perspective), and he crossed swords with the leading Deist thinker of his era – Matthew Tindal. He made no secret of his Jacobite sympathies, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to George I, and thus blocking his advancement in either Church or State. Yet at the same time, like Taylor, he advocated the cultivation of an intense, inward-looking spirituality. It is hard to reconcile the two sides of his character. As with Taylor some of his contemporaries noted the contradiction. When the *Serious Call* appeared, someone who knew Law well drily remarked that "his book would have been better if he had travelled that way himself". Law was in demand as a spiritual director, and one of those who sought his guidance was John Wesley. Wesley later fell out with Law, but he continued to acknowledge a debt to him. The *Serious Call* influenced not only Methodism. It became a classic of a certain strand of evangelicalism right down to the present day. Curiously many of those who were later influenced by it were totally unaware of Law's other writings, which took him onto ground where they might have been reluctant to go. He became increasingly mystical in his outlook, obsessed by the impenetrable vagaries of the German writer Jakob Böhme (1575-1624).

Law set up a spiritual commune at his ancestral home in the village of King's Cliffe in Northamptonshire, near Stamford, in 1740, reminiscent of the Little Gidding community of Nicholas Ferrar a hundred years earlier, and there he remained till his death. This move was obviously a consequence of the fact that he had boxed himself in from public life by his non-juring. But it was also a natural outworking of his system of spirituality. This was so disciplined and intense that it could really only be implemented by people of independent means living in quasi-monastic seclusion.

From the accumulated resources of its members the little community had a substantial income. Charity was important to Law, and much of this income was used for charitable purposes. Schools and a public library were founded in the village, while the rest was dispersed in handouts to any beggar who knocked on the door. This caused friction with the locals, who saw an influx of tramps into the village. The local rector preached against the practice. Law was stung by the criticism and in a letter in 1753 he

threatened to leave the village, taking his charitable foundations with him. Some sort of accommodation seems to have been reached and we hear no more of the matter, but we shouldn't too hastily condemn the locals. The rector may have had a point. Indiscriminate handouts were not necessarily the best way to tackle a deep-seated social problem, nor, indeed, the best way to fulfil the Christian duty of charity. While alleviating immediate suffering, they may have entrenched the problem in the longer term, but to have worked all this out would have required a systematic analysis of the causes of poverty which might have distracted from the spiritual life of the community.

So then whether it was from cosyng up too close to power or from being too absorbed in personal holiness, the prophetic voice of the Church in public was muted in the 18th century. In the early 19th century, however, distinctive Christian voices began to be heard again in the political sphere. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. Many people of good will rallied to this cause (it was Quakers who made the early running), but its acknowledged leader was **William Wilberforce** (1759-1833). Wilberforce decided early on to go into politics. He was first elected to Parliament as MP for Hull in 1780 when he was barely twenty-one. Though he had many dissenting friends and allies, he was and remained throughout his life a loyal Anglican. He underwent a classic evangelical conversion in 1785, and for the rest of his life was identified with the evangelical wing of the Church. There can be no doubt that his evangelical faith nourished his activism, but it is interesting to note that in the immediate aftermath of his conversion he agonized about withdrawing from politics. He was dissuaded by friends as diverse as the evangelical clergyman John Newton (author of "Amazing grace") and Pitt the Younger, whom he had known from student days in Cambridge. He instinctively sensed the tension between the inherent otherworldliness of the evangelical position (which we have traced in Law and Bunyan), and engagement in politics.

Having been persuaded, rather reluctantly, to spearhead the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade in Parliament he never wavered. From taking up the cause in Parliament in 1788 he fought doggedly against set-back after set-back till the Slave Trade Act was finally passed in 1807. The delay and the struggle it generated, however, had one positive effect – its mobilised

Christian opinion, and particularly evangelical opinion, to effect change in the social and political sphere. The Act only abolished the slave *trade* in British territories. The fight to abolish slavery itself and emancipate the slaves took even longer. Wilberforce threw himself into it, despite declining health, helping to found the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823, but the Slavery Abolition Act was not passed till some ten years later. It received its third reading in the Commons three days before his death in 1833, and came into effect the following year.

Wilberforce argued against slavery fundamentally on grounds of Christian morality. Though he supported in the end its total abolition, it was the cruelty of the practice, and its morally degenerating effects on the slaves, their owners, and the captains and crews of the slave-ships that initially outraged his Christian sensibilities, rather than the institution itself. It is arguable that he came to abolition only after attempts at reform had failed. This is understandable, since the Bible does not condemn slavery. Old Testament law recognizes the legitimacy of debt-slavery, though it legislates in various ways to ameliorate the condition. And Paul in his letter to Philemon, carried by the runaway slave Onesimus, pointedly does not ask Philemon to free Onesimus, though he neatly subverts his slave-status by exhorting Philemon to accept him now as a brother in Christ. Arguably from a biblical perspective (and the Bible was very important for evangelicals), provided its abuses were eradicated, there was no command to abolish slavery as such. This point was not lost on many in Wilberforce's day who supported slavery, nor was it lost on slave-owners in the southern states of the USA at the time of the American Civil War. Wilberforce never developed the hermeneutical tools which would have allowed him to challenge this view, but tended to rely on emotional, *ad hominem* arguments that documented the appalling barbarity of the system, or on appeals to self interest (abolishing the slave-trade would actually increase the prosperity of the West Indian plantations!), or on general moral principles, such as charity.

This lack of a consistent, systematic approach is evident in his domestic politics. Here he was notably conservative and traditional, very reluctant to challenge the *status quo*. The inconsistency was not lost on some of his contemporaries. William Cobbett attacked him for the hypocrisy of campaigning for better conditions for slaves abroad while ignoring the plight of workers at home: "Never have you done a single act in favour of the

labourers of this country”, he wrote. William Hazlitt condemned him as one “who preaches vital Christianity to untutored savages, and tolerates its worst abuses in civilised states.” Like many of the political class in England in his day he was alarmed by the radical ideas coming out of revolutionary France in the 1790s. He backed the suspension of *habeas corpus* in 1795, supported Pitt’s “Gagging Bills” which banned meetings of more than 50 people, opposed trade unions, and voted against an enquiry into the Peterloo massacre of 1819. He agreed that society needed regeneration but believed that this would come from the spiritual renewal of the individual, and his or her personal commitment to Christian values, chief of which were goodneighbourliness and charity. The social, political, and economic order did not need a root and branch restructuring. It only needed to be administered in a better, more Christian way. This individualism was in keeping with Wilberforce’s evangelical principles: it constituted a sort of political pietism. And he continued, in classic evangelical fashion, to look towards “the city to come”, objecting to widening the democratic franchise on the ground that it “squeezed out spiritual interest by laying too great a stress on the concerns of this world.”

A more radical Christian approach to politics began to emerge shortly after Wilberforce’s death in the movement that came to be known as Christian Socialism. One of the earliest and most important theologians of this approach was **Frederick Denison Maurice** (1805-1872). The son of a Unitarian minister, Maurice developed early in life doubts about Unitarianism. He was finally baptized into the Church of England in 1831, and three years later ordained an Anglican priest. He was one of the great public intellectuals of his day. He held chairs in English History and Literature (1840), and then, concurrently, Divinity (1846) at King’s College London, but was dismissed from them by the college council in 1853 for his unorthodox views of eternal punishment. He re-entered academic life in 1866 when he was appointed professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge.

What marked out Maurice from other Christian thinkers of his day was not his interest in the ills and problems of society but his systematic and principled approach to them. The Industrial Revolution had created appalling poverty (a situation excoriated by Friedrich Engels, Marx’s friend and patron, in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1845 and based on his observation of factories in Manchester 1842-44).

There was agitation for political reform and the extension of the franchise, led by the Chartists, and, in 1848, the year of revolutions, uprisings against the established political order swept across Europe. Christians tended to respond to the situation in an *ad hoc* way, uniting around single issues, e.g., by offering Christian charity to alleviate the immediate sufferings of the poor. They certainly got involved in philanthropic activities (as we saw with Wilberforce), but they showed little interest in challenging the social order which had created problems in the first place. There was little social *theology*. This was to change with Maurice: he marks a significant attempt to formulate a *theology* of society and the state, to hold up a new, comprehensive vision of a Christian society that could provide a blueprint for political action. His efforts now look fuzzy and timid. He himself recognized that he did not have a practical turn of mind. “Let people call me”, he said, “merely a philosopher, or merely anything else ... My business, because I am a theologian, and have no vocation except for theology, is not to build, but to dig, to show that economics and politics ... must have a ground beneath themselves, and that society was not to be made by any arrangements of ours, but is to be regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony, the only secret of its existence, in God”.

Maurice was not helped in communicating his vision by an ingrained tendency towards mysticism and lofty generalisation, and by an obscure literary style (evident in the quotation above). Nevertheless what was important was the premise from which he started, viz., that there is a Christian theology of society and the state, and this is where Christian political action should begin. In 1848 he launched with John Malcolm Ludlow (a barrister), Charles Kingsley (on whom more anon), and others a Christian Socialist movement (marked by the publication of the periodicals *Politics for the People*, and its successor *The Christian Socialist*). The time was ripe, he felt, to engage in “the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian socialists”. Ludlow was the practical brains of the movement (he had learned political activism in socialist movements in France), and Kingsley was more radical politically (often to Maurice’s alarm), but Maurice remained the acknowledged “guru”, and was held in high affection and esteem. Kingsley declared him “the most beautiful human soul God has ever allowed me to meet”. There was a saintliness about him which impressed many of his contemporaries.

Maurice's own political activism, such as it was, tended to revolve around educational ventures such as the Working Men's College, which he helped found in 1854, and of which he served as principal from 1854 to 1872. Luminaries such the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Ruskin taught at the college, though the latter expressed exasperation at what he saw as Maurice's muddle-headed thinking and tortuous style. The Christian Socialist movement which he had helped found in 1848 didn't survive as a cohesive organization much beyond 1854: it was pulled apart by the competing visions of Christian Socialism of its leading members, but it had launched an idea, and staked out a position, which has echoed powerfully in Christian political thinking right down to the present day.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was a very different sort of man from Maurice, more impetuous, strident, and opinionated. The son of a Church of England Rector, with a parish in Devon, on the edge of Dartmoor, Kingsley followed his father into Anglican orders. His first two curacies were in rural Hampshire and Dorset, and they aroused his sympathy for the plight of the agrarian poor. He became more and more exercised by social problems through the "hungry forties". He publically supported the six-point Charter promulgated by the London Working Men's Association in 1839 (universal male suffrage, a secret ballot, no property qualification for MPs, payment for MPs, equal-sized constituencies, and annual parliaments). Indeed, he felt it didn't go far enough. Society needed to be morally renewed, and freed from demagoguery and from electoral bribery and corruption, and the only power he could see that could achieve this transformation was religion. He was active in the big Chartist demonstration held at Kennington Common in April 1848.

Kingsley's written output was substantial. Indeed, for financial reasons, he seems to have put into print nearly everything he wrote, however unpolished or ill-thought-out. He was both a novelist and essayist/controversialist. His historical novels (*Westward Ho!*, *Hereward the Wake*) had a heavy didactic, moralizing tone, and celebrate a "Christian manliness" which he saw as particularly exemplified by the Anglo-Saxon and the Teuton. His children's story, *The Water Babies*, was an attack on the exploitation of child labour, particularly the use of small, climbing boys as chimney sweeps. He enjoyed an impressive career, in large measure due to the patronage of Prince Albert, who liked what he wrote. It was thanks to Prince Albert that

he was appointed a chaplain to the Queen in 1859, and then (1860) to the regius chair of Modern History in Cambridge, and finally (1861) as a private tutor to the Prince of Wales. The strain of his numerous commitments began to tell on his health, and he resigned the Cambridge chair in 1869. The Queen had him appointed in 1870 to a vacant canonry at Chester cathedral. While in Chester he threw himself into the life of the city as well as the cathedral. Since his boyhood he had had a strong interest in natural history. He was a friend of Charles Darwin and a very early clerical supporter of his theory of evolution. He helped found the Chester Society for Natural History, Literature and Art, which established the Grosvenor Museum. His time in Chester is commemorated by a blue plaque in the cathedral close, attached to the Retreat House where he lived while in residence. In 1873 Gladstone, with the Queen's approval, arranged for him to exchange the canonry at Chester for one at Westminster Abbey, where he seems to have worked amicably with the formidable Dean Stanley, a scion of the Stanleys of Alderley in Cheshire.

Kingsley, then, moved in exalted circles and enjoyed powerful patrons, and some have claimed that this dampened the fires of his socialist, reforming ardour. This may well be the case. His social activism decreased in later life. One subject, however, in which he seems to have maintained a life-long interest was public health, and particularly in sanitation (an interest he shared with the Prince Consort). This was a huge issue in Victorian London. The old sewers could not cope with the expansion of the city, and cholera was an ever-present danger. The Great Stink of 1858, caused by untreated human waste and industrial effluent pouring into the Thames, paralyzed the city. The problem was not solved until Joseph Bazalgette completed his magnificent complex of new sewers in 1875.

Looking back Kingsley is a deeply flawed and problematic character. While he did much to promote Christian thinking about social problems, he was a racist. Casual racist language was ubiquitous in Kingsley's day, but racism, to an unusual degree, was woven into the very fabric of his thought, which is as much concerned with avoiding the degeneration of the noble Anglo-Saxon race, as it was with attacking the social evils of poverty. He disparaged blacks, Jews and above all the Irish. In a letter from Ireland (a "horrible country") to his wife in 1860 he wrote: "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw . . . I don't believe they are our fault. . . . But to see

white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much. . . .” He simply failed to grasp that oppression of the poor at home was the mirror image of imperial oppression of the natives abroad. The latter cried out as much for Christian condemnation as the former.

The third Christian Socialist who features in our exhibition is **Brooke Foss Westcott** (1819-1875). Like the other two he was a man of great intellectual ability and broad interests, which included natural science (his father was a lecturer in botany at Sydenham medical school in Birmingham). After a brilliant academic career at Cambridge (1844-48), where he took a double first in classics and mathematics, he was elected in 1849 to a fellowship at Trinity College. Marriage in 1852 forced him to give this up, and he accepted the post of assistant master at Harrow School. Though he was not well-suited to school-teaching (himself an only child he had difficulty, apparently, keeping the rowdy boys in check), he found time to build a reputation as a New Testament scholar. He began his scholarly collaboration with J.B. Lightfoot and F.J.A Hort, a remarkable venture, later fruitfully continued at Cambridge. The triumvirate of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort dominated the study of the New Testament in this country at the end of the 19th century.

His growing academic reputation led to his appointment in 1870 to the regius chair of Divinity in Cambridge. The abolition of the religious test for matriculation in 1871 forced a rethink of the relationship between the Church and the university, and Westcott threw himself with energy into the reform of the theological curriculum and of ordination training, work commemorated in the name of one of the Anglican ordination-training colleges in Cambridge, Westcott House. His other great interest was in foreign missions, and here he did some pioneering thinking on the relationship of Christianity to other faiths.

In 1884 he accepted Gladstone’s offer of a canonry at Westminster. This brought him close to the seat of political power, and also confronted him with the miseries of the urban poor. He became increasingly interested in social problems. He rediscovered the writings of F.D. Maurice. There is an intellectual affinity between the two men. Both were attracted to Plato. Westcott was particularly influenced by the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews, the two most platonic of the New Testament writings. Both

had a mystical cast of mind, and both struggled at times to express clearly their profoundest thoughts.

Westcott's growing interest in applying his Christian faith to the social and political problems of the day is reflected in the sermons he preached at the Abbey, published as *Christus Consummator* (1886) and *Social Aspects of Christianity* (1887). His activism grew and in 1889 he became first president of the Christian Social Union (a later president was William Temple, on whom more presently). All this proved excellent preparation for his surprise appointment in 1890, at the age of 65, as Bishop of Durham, to succeed his close friend J.B. Lightfoot. He arrived at a time of bitter conflict in the mining industry in the North East. He worked tirelessly to improve industrial relations, and to better the miners' lot. He mediated in the three-month strike of 1892, inviting the mine-owners and the miners' representatives to Auckland Castle, his episcopal seat, and shuttling between the two parties seated in different rooms till a deal was struck. He chaired conferences of employers and trade unionists at Auckland Castle to discuss social and economic problems. He was involved in co-operative and temperance organizations, and supported moves to provide better housing and retirement homes for miners. He marked annually the miners' gala day with an appropriate sermon in Durham Cathedral. The miners took him to their hearts. He was even asked to address the miners' gala meeting at Blyth in 1894. One witness remarked with astonishment how the cerebral, academic Bishop, "a slight, frail and rather weary figure, with thick masses of hair turned grey," held the men "spellbound".

Case Three, Bottom Shelf:

Where are we now? William Temple and his Legacy

Where are we now? The recent attempts of the Church to engage with politics, of which *Who is my Neighbour?* is one example, have their roots in the thinking of **William Temple** (1881-1944), and it is interesting how often he is invoked in current debates. Temple was one of the towering figures of British life in the mid-twentieth century. He was very well-connected socially. His father, Frederick Temple, was Archbishop of Canterbury, and his mother a granddaughter of the second earl of Harewood. He was educated at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford, where he was one of the

most brilliant students of his generation. He went into the Church, and, after a stint as headmaster of Repton, became in 1914 Rector of St. James's Piccadilly. In 1919 he was appointed a canon of Westminster, and then, successively Bishop of Manchester (1921-29), Archbishop of York (1929-42), and finally Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-44). With his strong philosophical training he was an able dogmatician, author of *Mens Creatrix* (1917) and *Nature, Man and God* (1934), the latter based on his Gifford Lectures of 1932-33. His influence in this sphere has been limited: since his day dogmatics has moved in other directions, and been dominated by other figures, but it is interesting to note how increasingly he was inspired by Aquinas, even in his social thinking.

Much more lasting has been his work in promoting Christian unity (he was a founder of the World Council of Churches), and in developing a Christian social and political theology. Important here was a series of interdenominational conferences on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship which he helped organize in the 1920s and 30s. His life coincided with the rise of the Labour movement, and he sympathized with many of its ideals. He was for a time a card-carrying member of the Labour Party. This will cause little surprise to those who know their political history, because one of the roots of the Labour movement was Christian Socialism, which emerged, as we saw, in the 19th century. Another was Marxism, and it is instructive to see how at the point of political action people embracing these contrasting worldviews could agree on immediate goals and campaign together.

Temple's most influential contribution to Christian political thinking was his little book *Christianity and Social Order*. Written in 1941-42, in the darkest days of the war, it showed how he was already thinking about the kind of society that should be built when the war was over. Other people were thinking the same way. The book struck a chord. Issued as a Penguin Special, it sold 140,000 copies in a very short time. It caught a mood but it also helped to shape it. Some argue it paved the way for the Labour victory of 1945. Certainly many of the sweeping changes which that government introduced (the NHS, the welfare state – a term which Temple may have coined) were in tune with his thinking, though Temple died in 1944, before he could see them come to pass. *Christianity and Social Order* has remained hugely influential. It was reprinted in 1976 with a thoughtful and

appreciative foreword by Edward Heath, who as a One-Nation Conservative, had little difficulty in warming to Temple's argument. Heath concluded: "The strength of William Temple's broad approach remains. It is the responsibility of the Church to set out its own teaching. It must do so in modern terms. Young people today, as well as many of their elders, are clamouring for the presentation of a morality which is not preoccupied with sexuality but which is relevant to the myriad of problems besetting the individual in his personal, his family and his communal activities. The Church can challenge the existing order with its questions. As William Temple pointed out, others – and particularly in the more technological world in which we now live – may be better able to produce the answers. Only the Church can provide the contemporary teaching, the enunciation of principle on which all else must be founded. That was William Temple's lasting message."

Christian social thinking as represented by Temple was broadly in harmony with the post-war consensus inaugurated by the Attlee government of 1945, a consensus to which successive governments, Labour and Conservative, subscribed. The consensus was broken by the conservative administration of 1979 led by Margaret Thatcher, which set about reducing the role of the state in everyday life, emphasizing individual responsibility, and encouraging entrepreneurialism. The "Thatcher Revolution", as it has sometimes been called, created a new political framework within which subsequent governments have broadly operated, including the long Labour administration of Tony Blair (though aspects of his, and Gordon Brown's own political thinking owe something to Christian Socialism). Much social and political theology of the early Thatcher years appeared at odds with the new politics, so much so that some saw the Bishops as providing the sort of political opposition which the demoralized Labour Party was failing to provide.

The most important document of this period was the report *Faith in the City* (1985), produced by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. This argued that some of the deprivation, decline and social disintegration emerging in the great urban was directly caused by government policy. A parallel report, *Faith in the Countryside* (1990), which looked separately at the problems of rural areas, did not receive anything like the same attention. Government reaction to *Faith in the City*

was generally negative. A cabinet minister reputedly condemned it as “pure Marxist theology” – ignorant, one assumes, of how deeply rooted the report was in Christian political thinking.

One of the figures behind the report was **David Sheppard** (1929-2005), the Bishop of Liverpool. Sheppard was hugely popular, not least because he was a superb cricketer, who, even after he was ordained, played for, and indeed, captained, the national side – still the only “reverend” to have done so. The affection in which he was held was caught by the famous story (possibly apocryphal) of how, when, Sheppard dropped a crucial catch, Fred Trueman quipped that it was a pity he didn’t keep his hands together more. Sheppard became Bishop of Liverpool at a time when the city was in serious trouble. It was in steep economic decline, resulting in widespread poverty and deprivation. The social fabric started to fall apart, and there was serious rioting (the Toxteth riots). Local politics, thanks to the influence of the ultra-leftwing Militant Tendency, had become dysfunctionally confrontational. Sheppard and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Derek Worlock, who forged a remarkable alliance, worked tirelessly to improve the situation, finding at one point an ally in the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, Michael Heseltine.

Though Margaret Thatcher, who had a strong Methodist upbringing, was not averse to quoting Scripture to justify her policies in Christian terms (and, of course, most Anglicans voted and continue to vote Conservative), it has to be said that there was no significant attempt to develop a Christian political theology along Thatcherite lines. Temple’s influence continued to dominate. His legacy was preserved by the William Temple College. Founded at Hawarden in 1947, it moved first to Rugby (1954) and then to Manchester (1971), when it changed its name to the William Temple Foundation. After many years associated with the University of Manchester, it has now found a home in the University of Chester. The foundation has been involved in research and reflection on a variety of social and political issues, embodied in a range of reports and policy documents. Two figures long associated with it deserve mention here – John Atherton, formerly Canon Theologian of Manchester Cathedral, now Visiting Research Professor at the University of Chester, and Chris Baker, who holds the William Temple Chair of Religion in Public Life at the same university.

Another Northwestern institution which has had a profound impact on the field is the Samuel Ferguson Chair of Social and Pastoral Theology at the University of Manchester. The first incumbent Ronald Preston held it from 1970-81, his successor Tony Dyson from 1981-98, and Dyson's pupil and successor **Elaine Graham** from 1998-2009 – a remarkable succession of leading Anglican social theologians. In 2009 Graham moved to the University of Chester as the Grosvenor Research Professor of Practical Theology. In March 2014 she was appointed Canon Theologian at Chester Cathedral. Her 2013 book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* is on display to represent the historic and ongoing contribution of Northwest and, indeed, specifically Chester theologians to some of the burning political questions of our age.

Recent significant documents include the report *Feeding Britain* (December 2014) and the already mentioned *Who is my Neighbour?* (February 2015). The former is the report of an inquiry set up by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty. Though not a church report it was funded by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Charitable Trust, and one of its co-chairs was Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro. The other was Frank Field, the veteran Labour MP for Birkenhead, and a respected lay figure of the Church of England. The input of politicians to this "strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland" is evident on every page. It is strongly evidence-based, and it makes many concrete, implementable proposals.

Who is my neighbour? is framed as a pastoral letter "from the House of Bishops to the People and Parishes of the Church of England for the General Election of 2015". It is careful not to suggest where Christians should cast their vote on election day. It concentrates on "middle axioms", that is to say, it restates some fundamental principles of Christian political thought in ways that bring them closer to implementation without suggesting the precise mechanisms by which that may be done, and it acknowledges that they could be implemented in different ways. The letter suggests that the time may have come in the political life of this country to transcend the principles of both the Attlee and the Thatcher revolutions, to combine the best of both and create a new politics, and they wonder if the upcoming election will break the mould of British politics yet again.

There is one final exhibit to mention, one that seems startlingly out of place among all the rest. It is a copy of the **Qur'an**. It is put there to remind us that we now live in a multi-faith society in a way that would not have been true even in William Temple's day. The UK Census of 2011 recorded 2,786,635 Muslims in the country, 4.4% of the total population, and they are becoming increasingly involved in politics. Islam and politics is a vast subject that cannot be covered here. Suffice to say that Islam, every bit as much as Christianity, has a vision for society, and a wealth of traditional resources from which to construct Islamic political philosophies (and these don't all focus on *Jihad* in the sense understood by Islamic State). It is interesting to note that no sooner was *Who is my Neighbour?* published than the press was reporting that Muslims, and indeed Sikhs, were issuing their own manifestoes for the coming election. This is a new reality which the Church has to face. Richard Hooker takes it for granted that England is a Christian country, and much of the argument of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is predicated on that assumption. That assumption no longer holds good. The State no longer faces one religion but many. The Church when it enters the public sphere finds other religions also there. Many of those religions are transnational in character, that is to say, they have been created by recent immigration, and their adherents, to a significant degree, look outside Britain for their religious guidance. Every bit as much as the multinational corporations, they contribute to the phenomenon of globalisation, which challenges the concept of the nation-state which we have taken for granted for so long. Hand-in-hand with negotiating its relationship to the State the Church has now to negotiate its relationship with these other faiths. Interfaith dialogue and political theology have become intertwined. The situation is complex and challenging, but also full of promise.

Concluding Personal Reflections

(1) The Church has a right to speak in the political sphere, and should firmly resist all attempts to slap it down, and box it into a corner. Christianity is more than what people do in Church on Sunday, or in their private devotions. It involves a total vision of the world, and a mission to preach that vision, and to work to transform society in line with it. Politics is much too important to be left to professional politicians. As the exhibition shows the Church in this country has for centuries been involved in political life, and it is

still involved. Sometimes its interventions have been disastrous, if not downright wrong. The Church should know its history and learn from its mistakes. But many of the liberties we treasure today are rooted in Christian values, and result from Christian activism. And the Church has much wisdom to contribute to the betterment of public life, and the creation of a just society.

(2) In presenting its vision of the just society to the world the Church has rich resources of Christian political and social thinking on which to draw. We have only touched in this exhibition on a few highlights. Christians should know something of this tradition, and be proud of it. They shouldn't be coy about referring to it in public. Some recent reports of the Church of England have been remarkable for their lack of reference to this great tradition, so much so that one commentator has remarked: "The Church seems content to present itself as merely an informed voice, whose expertise stems from experience rather than theological insight." Now while one can understand the desire to present the Christian message to a wider audience in non-technical terms, this lack of theological reference can reinforce public perceptions that the Church has no real basis for what it says, and is a bit of an "amateur" and a "Johnny-cum-lately" to the great public debates of our times. Nothing could be further from the truth.

(3) The sheer richness of the tradition presents problems. Within it are tensions, contradictions even, and it can sustain very different programmes of political action in the wider world. This point is made in *Who is my neighbour?* The principles laid down there could result, as the letter indicates, in a Christian voting for any of the main parties in the May elections. There is a heartening side to this: it shows that a surprising political consensus exists as to what we should be trying to achieve. All the main parties would claim to be trying to create a fairer, more just society, where no one is oppressed, but all can flourish and achieve their potential, enjoying happiness to the best that they are able. There is broad agreement on what constitutes the common good. Christians can claim that these are Christian principles: they got there first, well before any of the current political parties came into being.

(4) So why keep flagging up the principles, if people of good will generally agree on them? Two reasons. First, in the messiness and knockabout of

political life the principles are easily corrupted. Parties and individuals are constantly tempted to put sectional or self-interest before the common good. Christians should constantly hold up the policies and actions of politicians to the mirror of principle and judge how well they implement it. This is not easy. It puts a burden of discernment on Christians, and they need to think deeply, thoughtfully, prayerfully even, about how they can do this. They will need to know the principle inside out, they will need to understand the policy, and cut through the spin in which it is too often dressed. They will need to exercise their God-given faculties to decide how well the policy implements the principle, all the while realising that others may come to different conclusions, and being open to changing their minds. Knowledge of the long history of the Church's involvement in politics is a salutary corrective to political dogmatism. This process of discernment should be embraced wholeheartedly. It dignifies us. It marks us out as mature and responsible human beings.

There is a second reason why principle needs to be kept constantly in mind. Day-to-day politics is largely about ways and means, about working out how to get things done. That's where politicians rightly concentrate their energies. But in doing so they may lose sight of the fact that management practices are never value-neutral. They always embody assumptions about human nature, human relations and the ultimate good. Managers are often not the best people to identify and critique the assumptions implicit in what may be taken for granted as good practice in their profession. Principles and practice need to be kept in a constant dialogue.

(5) The exhibition, small though it is, shows that, although the Christian tradition of political thinking is rich, it tends, very broadly speaking, to oscillate between the poles of engagement and withdrawal. There has been a strong Christian tradition of withdrawal from the world as corrupt and under the judgement of God. Politics are a distraction from the Christians' true business of saving themselves and others "from the wrath to come". On the other hand many Christians have been deeply engaged in the politics, and seen politics as a proper sphere in which to exercise their Christian principles. Both sides are looking for the coming of the "Kingdom of God", but they differ profoundly as to *how* it will come about. The withdrawers believe the Kingdom will come in suddenly and catastrophically at the end of history, overwhelming and smashing the existing political order. The

engagers believe that the kingdom will come in gradually through the transformation of society as we now know it, a transformation that will be brought about incrementally by people working in practical ways to establish justice and peace. The withdrawers believe the Church is an embattled remnant keeping itself “unspotted from the world”, as it waits anxiously for God dramatically to rescue it. The engagers believe the Church is the advance-guard of the Kingdom of God. It has to realise within itself the principles of the Kingdom and then take them out into the world. To withdraw or engage? This is the first theological question which a Christian political theology has to address.

(6) The danger of Christians getting involved in politics is that this can bring politics into the Church. People can be passionate about their politics, and this passion can put unity at risk. The Church in the past has been torn apart by politics, and Christian has been pitted against Christian. Christians need to devise a new way of doing politics that minimizes this risk – one based on tolerance and mutual respect, on honesty and frankness, on courtesy, on a readiness to listen, to be persuaded, to change one’s mind and admit one might be wrong, all virtues conspicuous by their absence in our current “yah-boo” political culture. Above all they must distinguish between what constitutes the non-negotiable core of the Christian faith and what is “indifferent”, that is to say peripheral and open to honest disagreement. What is “indifferent” should never be made the condition of fellowship. There should be room for diversity within the Church. Surely all Christians can agree that the Gospel has huge political implications: it proclaims that the world is broken and needs to be redeemed, and it holds out the vision of a better society (“the Kingdom of God”), but they may differ as to how that vision is to be realized – though even here there are manifold possibilities for those divided by politics to co-operate on practical measures to alleviate a particular need (a food bank, a credit union and so forth). Christians should strive to maximize such co-operation, and if they do they surely have little to fear from bringing politics into the Church.

LIST OF EXHIBITS

1. Case One. Magna Carta and the Church in England

- 1.1 *Magna Carta*: A representation for use in schools
- 1.2 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (7th edn, Oxford 1775)
- 1.3 William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development* (Oxford 1875)
- 1.4 *A Black-letter Book of Common Prayer* 1636, marked up for the 1662 revision (Facsimile 1870). Open at the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity of 1559

2. Case Two, Top Shelf. The Roots of Christian Political Thought in Scripture and Tradition

- 2.1 *Holy Bible* (Authorized Version: Oxford 1675), open at Deuteronomy 17, the Law of the King.
- 2.2 Justin Martyr, *Opera* (Paris 1615)
- 2.3 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Paris 1659)
- 2.4 Augustine, *The City of God* (Frankfurt and Hamburg 1661)
- 2.5 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Paris 1631)

3. Case Two, Bottom Shelf. 16th and 17th Centuries: The Wars of Religion

- 3.1 Martin Luther, *Opera Omnia* (Jena 1537)
- 3.2 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (English translation, London 1574)
- 3.3 James I, *Declaration du Serenissime Roy Jaques I ... pour le droit de Rois* (London 1615)
- 3.4 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London 1651)
- 3.5 Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London 1611)
- 3.6 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Cassell, Petter and Galpin: London no date)

4. Case Three, Top Shelf: 18th and 19th Centuries: The Church loses and finds again its Prophetic Voice

- 4.1 John Locke, *Works* (London 1714)

- 4.2 Benjamin Hoadly, *The Measures of Submission to a Civil Magistrate in a Defense of the Doctrine* (London 1706)
- 4.3 William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Glasgow 1838)
- 4.4 Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London 1838)
- 4.5 F.D. Maurice, *The Representation and Education of the People* (London 1866)
- 4.6 F.D. Maurice, *The Church a Family* (London 1850: a copy presented by the author to Bishop Jacobson)
- 4.7 Charles Kingsley, *Sanitary and Social Essays* (London 1889)
- 4.8 Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* (London 1888)
- 4.9 B.F. Westcott, *Social Aspects of Christianity* (London 1900)
- 4.10 B.F. Westcott, *The Two Empires: The Church and the World* (London 1909)

5. Case Three, Bottom Shelf. Where are we now? William Temple and his Legacy

- 5.1 William Temple, *Citizen and Churchman* (London 1941)
- 5.2 William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (1942; reprint London 1976, with a Foreword by Edward Heath, and an Introduction by Ronald Preston)
- 5.3 David Sheppard, *Built as a City* (London 1974)
- 5.4 David Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor* (London 1983)
- 5.5 *Faith in the City: A Call for Action* (London 1985: a pre-publication copy given to Tony Dyson, hence the embargo-sticker)
- 5.6 *Feeding Britain: The Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom*, Co-Chaired by Frank Field MP and Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro (2014)
- 5.7 *Who is my Neighbour? A Letter from the House of Bishops to the People and Parishes of the Church of England for the General Election 2015* (London, February 2015)
- 5.8 Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (London 2013)
- 5.9 *The Holy Qur'an*, with English translation (Medinah AH 1413), a widely distributed free copy of the Qur'an.

*I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant Land.*

William Blake, "Jerusalem"



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