

*St Mary's Theology Course*

*A Drop-in Course as an Aid to Theological Discussion*

Resource Paper: The Controversy of *Essays and Reviews*

Our theme is that there were a number of leading German and American theologians of the nineteenth century open to the new academic disciplines, who realised theology was open and problematic in the face of those disciplines: that there were revisions necessary regarding the divinity of Jesus or the building of the Kingdom of God among others. But these theologians were optimistic people, so that after the two twentieth century wars German and American modern theology was somewhat more pessimistic and furthermore preserved Christology whether the questions were secular, existential, social and economic, historical, or just theoretical. The modern theologians handled modernity, but did so from within a conserved space.

The Anglican Church being this country's dominant Church ought to have some sort of connection with these theological movements, even accepting the contentious point that England is a bit of a theological backwater. We observe a history of controversies breaking out and dying down again, based on an English expression of these overseas theologies that somehow burst out of academia. Then they die down again and return to just the lecture rooms of universities and seminaries. We might ask if there is any longer term Church impact. What is involved, then, regarding these controversies, is a sense of surprise and a sense of shock, rather like snow falling in England in winter. The theological world has been such a secretive world but this world leaks out.

The controversies are always at the liberal end. They are seen as undermining tradition and undermining institutions. From the liberal standpoint, the Church has to have low barriers of entry to the general population: Henry Bristow Wilson in *Essays and Reviews* said that to maintain the Church's need for wide appeal its doctrines should not harden in one age to become exclusive barriers in another age (1861, 194), and that freedom of opinion belonging to the English citizen should also belong to the English Churchman including ministers (180). Thus speculative doctrines should be kept to philosophical schools (195). He even went further, saying, a national Church need not historically be Christian, but if it be Christian then not to be tied to particular forms.

So we might ask, is this is what has happened? Have doctrines hardened to become exclusive barriers in a later age with particular forms of doctrine? Does the Church of England have these periodic ruptures of apparent more liberal theologies for them only to go back in the box again? Disraeli said free inquiry was only for free inquirers (Ellis, 1980, 7), and clergymen were not free but had to subscribe, as still they do.

Now there is an issue about the writers of *Essays and Reviews* being at the radical end of the Broad Church party, and whether they wished to match the intellectuals of Unitarianism and what they were preaching at that time. Did they wish to absorb the Unitarian ideas and even some personnel? There was certainly agreeable interaction between the two groups (Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, 87-110), and so this comparison comes into this discussion. Other non-conformists were not really affected by German theology, and indeed it was only after 1845 that the theologically open Free Christian Unitarians started to flex their muscles over the recently dominant biblical literalist Unitarians.

Frances Cobbe, a convert Unitarian, and a friend of *Essays and Reviews* author Benjamin Jowett, in *Broken Lights*, published in 1864 (Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, 49) described the essayists as honest and who would therefore save the Church. It is this notion of intellectual honesty to be set against doctrine that is controversial, that somehow it is being dishonest to follow doctrine when truth seems to lead otherwise. The institutional position of subscription is that there is a duty to follow and express the Church's teachings via the Church's own words.

Leading Unitarians did go to Germany and studied directly, but Anglicans were suspicious of German theology. To call an Anglican a 'Germanist' or German was to use a label of abuse and suspicion. J. A. Voigt in 1857 said (used in Ellis, 1980, 7), "English theologians have nothing more in common with Prussian theologians than the name," and he wrote a condemnatory study of the condition of theology in England and Scotland.

There were two English centres of theology, Oxford and Cambridge. Cambridge had been a centre of Latitudinarianism, and even had expressions of Arianism, but Cambridge, regarded as Platonist, was not seen as extremist by temperament. Oxford was the place of Augustinian extremities. We have individuals coalescing in Oxford for both *Essays and Reviews* and for *Lux Mundi* towards the end of the century. *Lux Mundi* was basically an Oxford pals act of between 1865 and 1875 for a book first published in 1889 that actually demonstrated a more liberal form of Catholicism rather than the Catholic traditionalism associated with the Oxford Movement. R. W. Macan, writing about Religious Changes in Oxford During the Last 50 Years in 1907 said that *Lux Mundi* was a far cry from but still descended from *Essays and Reviews* (Macan, 1907, 26, used in Ellis, 1980, 262).

In the later nineteenth century each Anglican party had a broad mass and a leading edge, true for the evangelicals, the high Church party and the Broad Church. *Essays and Reviews* came from that leading radical edge of an otherwise broad amorphous mass of middling Churchpeople, and it was they who acclaimed the Higher Criticism (as it was then called) that had been developed in Germany (Glover, 1954, 43, as referred to in Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, 40).

*Essays and Reviews* is a non-descript title for a book of seven essays, and the preface says each essay is independent and yet also says that the volume as a whole is an attempt at a free approach to religious and moral truth of subjects that might suffer from traditional handling and conventional language. The seven authors were:

- Frederick Temple, Chaplain to the Queen and Headteacher of Rugby School, who wrote from a perspective of evolving civilisation (later Bishop of Exeter, Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury);
- Rowland Williams, a Professor of Hebrew and Vice Principal at St. David's College Lampeter (Llanbedr Pont Steffan), who commented on a Lutheran's approach to biblical research;
- Baden Powell, Professor of Geometry at Oxford, who found that miracles were becoming a barrier not an evidence for Christianity;
- Henry Bristow Wilson, Vicar of Great Staughton, who wrote about the national Church from an arguably Erastian stance;
- Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, who had a no nonsense approach to Genesis and geology;
- Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College Oxford, who wrote fiercely about deism in England; and
- Benjamin Jowett, who denied to his penpal, Florence Nightingale (of Unitarian parents - she had more Catholic leanings), that he was the leader of the group, who wrote on scripture methodology.

In a letter written by Benjamin Jowett to Arthur Penrhyn Stanley in 1858, Jowett had decided, "not to submit to this abominable system of terrorism which prevents the statement of the plainest facts and makes true theology or theological education impossible (Abbot and Campbell, 1897, 275, used in Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, 28). Benjamin Jowett's use of the actual word 'terrorism' in the text is more in passing, where he speaks of "the terrorism of a few" regarding critical enquiries (1861, 432).

Jowett claimed that:

The Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it. Such a position cannot be long maintained, or can only end in the withdrawal of the educated classes from the influences of religion... Time was when the Gospel was before the age; when it breathed a new life into a decaying world when the difficulties of Christianity were difficulties of the heart only, and the highest minds found in its truths not only the rule of their lives, but a well-spring of intellectual delight. Is it to be held a thing impossible that the Christian religion, instead of shrinking into itself, may again embrace the thoughts of men upon the earth? (1861, 374-375)

Jowett further wrote on page 420:

It has to be considered whether the intellectual forms under which Christianity has been described may not also be in a state of transition and resolution, in this respect contrasting with the never-changing truth of the Christian life, (i Cor. xiii. 8.). (1861, 420)

Jowett therefore regards the Christian life as being fixed as a truth, but he is saying that intellectual expression changes. This would exactly be the position of James Martineau (1805-1900), Jowett's good friend (Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, 103). At that time, in comparison with Jowett, Unitarians would have stated that there is a simple Christianity and higher religion, to be described variously. Jowett says the kernel of Christianity is the Christian life. Christology - about Christ - is therefore derived, not fixed, because the core is in our inner life, our collective intellectual consensus, and/ or the progress of the State.

Jowett sees the potential of Scripture, studied in a more liberal spirit as 'the best book for the heart [that] might also be made the best book of the intellect' (1861, 428) - and is read, not by custom or tradition but according to the laws of human knowledge. So the method of reading changed with changes of knowledge. Still, Jowett exhibits a tension with tradition, and on the Council of Nicaea he states:

...the decision of the council of Nicaea has been described by an eminent English prelate as 'the greatest misfortune that ever befel the Christian world' That is, perhaps, true ; yet a different decision would have been a greater misfortune. (1861, 420)

It is interesting to go years later and find Jowett's attitude to *Lux Mundi*, and he had hardly changed:

I have read a considerable portion of of *Lux Mundi*, but am a good deal disappointed in it. It has a more friendly and Christian tone than High Church theology used to have, but it is the same old haze or maze - no nearer approach of religion either to morality or to historical truth... (Abbott and Campbell, 1899, 376-7, used in Ellis, 1980, 263).

It's worth noting that Charles Gore, editor of *Lux Mundi*, was a student of Benjamin Jowett and kept a portrait of him in his study.

The assumptions of *Essays and Reviews* are evolutionary and developmental, that is that thought and religion has been assuming greater heights throughout the history of the world. This is the line pushed by Frederick Temple writing the first chapter, and illustrates the bias of the classical education and European liberal Protestantism. Early Anthropology illustrated the same idea: there were the primitives and there were the civilised, and there were magical superstitious religions and the advanced religions: the most advanced of all being liberal Protestant. Even Charles Darwin had similar views, though he thought modern humans could easily slip back into primitive barbarianism.

Thus the Hebrews may be said to have disciplined the human conscience, Rome the human will, Greece the reason and taste, Asia the spiritual imagination. Other races that have been since admitted into Christendom also did their parts. (Goodwin et al., 1861, 19)

Later, Temple compares an age of outer manifestations of religion with our own inner turn, and makes a very interesting refusal to exchange the contemporary with the display of revelation in the past:

If we have lost that freshness of faith which would be the first to say to a poor carpenter Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, yet we possess, in the greater cultivation of our religious understanding, that which, perhaps, we ought not to be willing to give in exchange. The early Christians could recognise, more readily than we, the greatness and beauty of the Example set before them ; but it is not too much to say, that we know better than they the precise outlines of the truth. To every age is given by God its own proper gift. (1861, 24-25)

This can be called progressive revelation, that God gives to each age its characteristic in addition to what was given before. This view does not recognise that, for example, the essence of religion might just be the magic and the supernaturalism of a previous age that was proving to be so difficult for these Victorian English in the face of the growth of intellectual disciplines that valued new knowledge.

So what does Temple say about the Church in comparison? Interestingly:

This career of dogmatism in the Church was, in many ways, similar to the hasty generalizations of early manhood. The principle on which the controversies of those days were conducted is that of giving an answer to every imaginable question. (1861, 41)

However, despite the dogma of early man, and luckily:

That the decisions were right, on the whole - that is, that they always embodied, if they did not always rightly define, the truth - is proved by the permanent vitality of the Church as compared with the various heretical bodies that broke from her. But

the fact that so vast a number of the early decisions are practically obsolete, and that even many of the doctrinal statements are plainly unfitted for permanent use, is a proof that the Church was not capable, any more than a man is capable, of extracting, at once, all the truth and wisdom contained in the teaching of the earlier periods. (1861, 41)

So, confusingly, the Church happened to make the right decisions (on the proof of a Church that survives and other groups that fall away), but the early doctrinal decisions are not permanent. So much for any faith once delivered to the saints.

Nowadays we would speak, instead, not of superior knowledge development but of a paradigm shift in knowledge, and of the sociology of knowledge. We are not better, higher, but different in outlook according to variable epochs of science, technology, economic organisation and cultures. This 'turn to paradigms' actually makes the first century Middle East more distant not less, in that we really understand very little about the first century mindset.

Rowland Williams was going to write about Ernst Renan, whose book *Vie de Jesus* appeared in 1863, and was very controversial. He actually wrote instead about Baron Arnold Bunsen, the Prussian Ambassador in Britain from 1841, and a writer on German biblical exegesis including for the British, seeing something of a gap in the market here. Bunsen was a target of theological conservatives, who regarded him as a key source of 'Germanism'. He had mixed with a number of the *Essays and Reviews* authors, but it was Bunsen's praise of Rowland Williams's book *Christianity and Hinduism* as like his own writing that created a particular bond between the two, and Williams visited Bunsen in Germany in 1857. Williams was accused of hiding behind Bunsen for his chapter in *Essays and Reviews*, both of them arguing for a broadening out of an understanding of revelation so that it is hearts that respond to truth better than any external authority. (Ellis,

1980, 57-59) It has to be said that this is comes very close to James Martineau's theology of the inner conscience over the Church or book, and a subjective turn in theology. Williams argued that Anglican foundations of research and fair statement meant might mean revising what was believed. The truth of the Bible was in the world and its growth through civilisations (as seen in research, illustrated by Bunsen), rather than by external authority and revelatory word content. Clearly the world had developed slowly - even languages take longer to develop than Archbishop Ussher's timescale (Goodwin et al., 1861, 55). Williams repeats Bunsen's critical view about the Old Testament that the Torah was not written by Moses, the crossing of the Red Sea was as of poetry, the cursing psalms were not inspired, David did not foretell the exile, psalms 22 and 23 did not foretell the crucifixion, the Virgin birth of Isaiah refers to the time of Ahaz and the suffering servant was about the time of Jeremiah, Micah on Bethlehem was not about predicting Jesus's birthplace and Daniel was about past occurrences rather than future predictions (Ellis, 1980, 61). Williams focuses on the prophets and Isaiah (as did Bunsen) (1980, 62). Regarding the New Testament, Hebrews is not Pauline and II Peter is not apostolic (61). Williams thinks the Bible is the best book of comparative religious scriptures (62) (as an open view of scriptures has to consider other faiths).

What Williams wanted to do, and different from perhaps today, is lift the prophets out of their historical setting and make them not predictors of the future but teachers of morals. They became witnesses to Christ only in the sense that they point to the same ethical witness of the Kingdom of God (Goodwin et al., 1861, 70) at the heart of Christianity that Christ also teaches (Ellis, 1980, 62). For example, he comments on the Unitarian leaning Francis William Newman, brother of John Henry, for being consistent regarding history in

his book on Hebrew Monarchy, but says he fails to detect the ideal of patience and glory that become fulfilled in the New Testament (Goodwin et al., 1861, 67).

It's this idea that you can become historically neutral, extracted and idealised that is a particular attraction to the late nineteenth century mind. History is limiting, so extract it and apparently it leaves the highest ideals in the New Testament. But by what judgment are the highest ideals found in the New Testament?

Baden Powell uses the word evidences for the miracles of Christianity. People of the time of Christ and after might have looked for positive signs of external revelation, but to call miracles evidences means they must become subject to the historical and scientific approach to evidence. This then meant a set of rules for science, involving the regular and reliable and the ordinary. Ernst Troeltsch (theologian, sociologist and historian) later suggested:

1. Historical likelihoods are probable only: the critical component
2. We move from the more familiar to the less: the component of analogy
3. Nothing is isolated at any one time: the component of correlation

In other words, as soon as miracles became about science in history, they ceased to obey the rules of generality in the ordinary and therefore were severely doubted. Baden Powell before Troeltsch puts it that the evidences, once a proof of Christianity, become its exception (because, of course, they remain in the texts), and treating observation as a universal characteristic through time there must be a greater chance that these believers made an error in their time as testimony (following David Hume) is unreliable. (see Ellis, 1980, 67-68, Goodwin et al., 1861, 95-144) Baden Powell was also quick to assert the

'undeniable grounds of... self evolving powers of nature' (1861, 139) based on Charles Darwin's very recent *The Origin of Species* (see Darwin, 1994).

Here is the universal observation pro-miracles reply. If miracles were reliably observed then they become even more a proof of revelation if science lacks explanation, exceptional or not.

Today we would not make that assumption of universal observation. We see what we believe to be the case, and make a lot of reality by saying it first. If you look for signs and wonders you will find them, and more so explain them, but if you don't, you don't see them, and explanations are different. But the nineteenth century mind was still objective and universal, and so the earlier peoples must have been mistaken. The problem with being mistaken is that you are but a heartbeat from being foolish, and then a few heartbeats from being dishonest. Postmodern minds keep off that tricky road.

Today also we would question the regularity of all natural science. At micro and some very large macro levels science (and mathematics) is chaotic as well as regulative, and thus the unevenness of revelation need not be in conflict with a science or indeed a history of surprises. History is not judged by absence of uniqueness, but by documentation.

Incidentally, one of Baden Powell's long-standing motivations, especially between 1829 and 1833 was to argue against the Unitarians' selective treatment of scripture (Ellis, 1980, 218-9), but his pro-science method of uniformity meant having to admit contradictions in the Bible and such led him to his more liberal phase by 1860 with his new understanding of natural revelation.

Returning to Wilson, his essay is about people doubting for honest and thoughtful reasons and reacting against Church doctrines. Against honesty, the threat of eternal punishment has no impact. In a long future, not an immediate one, God would demonstrate broad and equal justice.

Wilson was anti individualist sect, and pro multitudinist Church, and by 1860 had come to the view that Church and the State approached the nation only from different angles. All the people should come under the moral influence of the Church, and the national Church should teach what the State and Church shared as a common interest, leaving particular doctrines to their schools. The Church minister should be a public teacher and need not relate to the supernatural. The Church occupied a portion of public property, so nothing should be in the way of access for the public, and the clergyman should be free to preach as sees fit. As such Wilson was one with James Martineau when he wrote *Church Life or Sect Life?* (1859). Wilson was also against the Tractarians, whom he accused of going back to the Middle Ages, suggesting neither a national Church nor the essence of Christianity. For Wilson, Judaism was like a national Church, and Christianity was consistent with these origins: Christ and Paul were multitudinist. The national Church ought to include the spirit of the dissenters and even the spirit of congregationalism. In this he was completely with Martineau and his proposed Free Christian Union (around 1867).

Now Wilson was supposed to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, and so he did a John Henry Newman. He turned them on their head, and said his approach was consistent with their liberal spirit. The legal obligation on signatories was unclear, and this vagueness meant there was no obligation on those who sign them, he claimed. For Wilson it stifled

the Christian life to expect unanimity of speculative belief, and a historical belief did not exist, and therefore the Church can only be generalist regarding beliefs - but it can express a moral order.

This is all very Durkheimian, that there is a collective conscience that brings a society together, and this is the function of religion. But there is a problem here.

The argument to level at H. B. Wilson must be this: that in the mediaeval period the Church was in tune with culture and both were clearly Christian, supernatural and even superstitious. That ability to glue society was grounded in a shared Christian world view. What is being proposed here is a kind of stripped out Christianity, certainly consistent with the Unitarians, but surely not consistent with the supernatural and superstitious content of the New Testament. Instead, Coleridge had proposed both a German idealism and English Romanticism; he found the early Unitarians too dryly chapel based and switched to the Anglicans: he would have found Martineau's Unitarianism far more congenial. And arguably, early Christian communities were sectarian: only later on did they become Empire Churches of a new European ideology.

Some of these ideas come from a German, Friedrich Schleiermacher's pupil, Richard Rothe (Ellis 1980, 73), who proposed a parallel development of the Church and State, achieving ever higher moral forms, so that a Church would shed its particular doctrines in favour of feeling and principles. Out of both Church and State as developed come the enlightened human spirit - and thus what we have here is Hegelian religion, where higher and higher forms are achieved towards pure spirit.

No wonder, then, that the First World War blew all this optimism away. The argument for a big national Church is but a pipe-dream, but the price as we come to our postmodern times is that there is nothing to bind a society together, no positive shared spirit, and instead just lots of different beliefs held by different groups - and sometimes difference, separation and unknowing lead to fear. That's why faith schools receive such opposition: no problem if there is a national Church of general moral values but not when there is difference and many particularities.

C. W. Goodwin's essay on the 'Mosaical Cosmogony' is a pretty swift preference for scientific evidence over the biblical record. It makes the point, for example, that Genesis does not carry some overall, allegorical meaning, but has a straight account of six days creation and a seventh to rest - days meaning days - and on that basis it is simply wrong. In any case, there are two creation accounts incompatible with each other, and therefore not a revelation. Goodwin, the only lay author in the book, deals with geology directly and technically. Genesis suggests a moral possibility, relating to that of the unity and beauty of the world as a whole, but Genesis has subsumed the moral into the incorrect factual and physical account of origins. So, basically, Genesis is duff.

One of the charges often made against liberal writings is that they are inadequately academic: *Essays and Reviews* was slapdash, *Honest to God* (1962) was populist and misunderstood its theological sources and that *The Myth of God Incarnate* was confused about the meaning of myth. Mark Pattison's essay on 1688 to 1750 was the most clearly academic and yet had the least impact: so damned if you do and damned if you don't. What Pattison intends to show is that nineteenth century religious thinking was built upon the best of the eighteenth century age of reason. There were two periods of what were a

rational approach to religion, and these were first of reasoning itself with spiritual considerations on believed to be credible Christian facts, to secondly focussing on the externals beyond inner intuition (see Ellis, 1980, 76-77). The nineteenth century liberal became consistent with the positive reasoning, whereas the Catholic Tractarians were just reactionaries against eighteenth century reasoning obsessed with the externals. There is some doubt in the text (Goodwin et al., 1861, 296) whether Socinians and Deists are answered by the period of reasoning, which may be because Deism and Socinianism shared a 'common sense' (297) approach to a pre-critical Bible, and were central to that reasoning period!

Pattison thought the Tractarians lacked critical insight or historical enquiry about what they claimed was revered: they were just diggers up of antiquity. The liberal spirit was more solid, based on subjecting historical claims to a critical approach. And the person who mastered the liberal approach was John Locke (1632-1704), of major importance for latitudinarians and foundational for Unitarians, for whom the highest form of knowledge was intuitive reasoning, but for whom claims of external revelation were also to be subjected to reason. Pattison said reason (not the Church, nor inner light) should be the basis of doctrines continuing on. However, Pattison had a complaint:

In the present day when a godless orthodoxy threatens, as in the fifteenth century, to extinguish religious thought altogether, and nothing is allowed in the Church of England but the formulae of past thinkings, which have long lost all sense of any kind... (1861, 297)

Well, Pattison's optimism for a liberal future also had a pessimistic side regarding the tractarian approach:

When it [religion] is stiffened into phrases, and these phrases are declared to be objects of reverence but not of intelligence, it is on the way to become a useless

encumbrance, the rubbish of the past, blocking the road. Theology then retires into the position it occupies in the Church of Rome at present... This system is equally fatal to popular morality and to religious theory. It locks up virtue in the cloister, and theology in the library. (1861, 297-8)

The future turned out to be rather more complex. Arguably more moderate Catholic preachers combine retreats into history (e.g. lives of saints) along with expressions of general morality, behaviour and service. As reasoning now suggests the full ordination of women, Church of England traditionalist Catholicism approaches a final end, leaving behind the incarnational Catholicism of *Lux Mundi* (1902) rather than that of Pusey and Newman. Liberalism without some mystical expression is hardly religious, and Catholicism without liberalism is crusty and institutional, and so the Anglican future became the two intertwined.

Benjamin Jowett (Goodwin et al., 1861, 342 to 343) lists some common views regarding the Bible in his time.

- "There can be no error in the Word of God"
- "It is a thousand times more likely that the interpreter should err than the inspired writer." (342-343)
- The failure of a prophecy is never admitted, in spite of Scripture and of history
- God speaks not as man speaks. Human faculties are limited and should abstain from investigations.

Jowett tackles these but swiftly writes that they are inconsistent with the freedom of the truth and the moral character of the Gospel (1861, 343). And his answer is simple: treat the Bible like any other book. By page 378 he has some rules of interpretation:

1. Scripture has one meaning the meaning which it had to the mind of the prophet or evangelist who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it. (378) The interpreter should place himself as nearly as possible in the position of the sacred writer.

2. Interpret Scripture from itself like any other book written at a time and place of little other record. (382)
3. Become familiar with Scripture, in its own world, from which must be excluded theological or classical influences. (384)
4. A further principle is that although unintelligent and intelligent minds are drawn to Scripture, the intelligent mind finds its own questions and most answers so that the true use of interpretation is to remove interpretation and leave us with the author's deepest spiritual intentions (see Ellis, 1980, 83; Goodwin et al., 1861, 402-404). It is like an early religious form of Habermasian communicative reason!

This is done through the English language: Greek and Hebrew scholars tend to arrive at traditional conceptions, being insufficiently concerned with getting at the deeper truth, but the Greek used at the New Testament was in decay and thus did not contain the ancient world as once it, when a rich and secure language, did. The method, then is to arrive at the essential content: that, he states, the universal truth easily breaks through the accidents of time and place in which it is involved. (1861, 412).

This was the difference between Karl Barth (1886-1968) and James Martineau. For Barth, the particularity of the Gospel was essential, with the encounter of God in that Christ, but for the Unitarian James Martineau the Gospel was just one example in time and place of a higher universal truth of God. Jowett agrees with his friend Martineau: no doubt about it. This also means Christ is as a universal higher truth, or perhaps, more accurately, universal higher truth becomes Christ. James Martineau commented directly on *Essays and Reviews* as showing that Anglican intellectuals were in revolt against received forms of Christianity and were snatching at something deeper and truer (Drummond, 1902, 397, used in Ellis, 1980, 134).

So why wasn't Jowett a Unitarian then? His explanation concerns his agreement with Henry Bristow Wilson in the book regarding the Church. Jowett wrote to Florence Nightingale in July 1862, whose parents were Unitarian, and said that the balance of the parties in the Church of England gives more freedom than in a smaller community, even Unitarians or Freethinkers, where unity is harder to maintain, and if he left he would feel 'denationalised' and 'sectarianised' (used in Ellis, 1980, 89 and footnote).

So every single chapter in *Essays and Reviews* was a radical statement, and of course not always well received. The controversy concerned its legality as from Church of England clergymen (Ellis, 1980, 102). Henry Parry. Liddon of the traditionalist High Church was an early reader and initial critic, and he accused it of rationalism - especially of Jowett and Wilson - and Liddon was an early stirrer of the pot (1980, 103). *The Spectator* on 7 April 1860 called the book 'Open Teaching in the Church of England' (104) and the debate in that publication went on for nearly 5 years. Outside the Church various publications showed positive interest, often in the personalities, in freedom for churchmen, and the issues (105), but inside the Church the reaction was hostile. Thus in 1864 *The Times* pronounced that thoughtful men were being repelled from the Church (104). But also, a once Christian thinker becoming agnostic, Frederick Harrison, described the book as 'Neo-Christianity'. He saw it as radical and wanting to be Christian, and this wasn't credible (see 106). Like Christianity handed over to a Charles Darwin, he stated that facts are idealised and creeds are discredited as human and provisional; such may be a true view but must be a new view (*Westminster Review*, 1860, 293-332, used in Ellis, 1980, 108). Yet Jowett did not dismiss this criticism at all and became Harrison's friend (107). Bishop Wilberforce went further in an unsigned article in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1861, and called it

not neo-Christianity but a new religion (108-9). He went on to say that these apparent German rationalists should not be Established Church clergymen.

*The Christian Observer* said that whilst Tract 90 was John Henry Newman being a Christian without the Thirty-nine Articles, this was a Tract 90 of the Broad Church trying to be Christian without the Bible (115). By 1865, some 400 articles and books had been written about *Essays and Reviews* (117). However, *Essays and Reviews* hugely outsold all the critics' publications (124) - 22,250 copies in 1863 at the 13th edition.

When Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, who knew about the book's preparation, and decided not to participate, saw the row develop, he took a kind of middling defence, criticising and yet defending them (112-114), but then Stanley became tainted with the same brush.

Abroad, the conservative theologian Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg located the book's home as Germany but only as an example of a movement towards unbelief and not continuous with Luther or historic faith (138). Heinrich von Ewald was a sympathetic liberal theologian who said Germany had here repaid the debt back into England after England possessed and exported theology 200 years earlier, but the book was too swift and compressed in its arguments (139). The French both approved and saw the book as Protestantism in crisis, and with the exception of its Unitarians the Americans generally attacked the book (140).

The Church of England issue was this: the freedom of the theologian versus the authority of the Church (169). It was Bishop Wilberforce who led an effort whereby 25 bishops produced an episcopal letter, forcing a distrusted Bishop Archibald Campbell Tait (who only wanted writers to respond) into conformity with the bishops, and this meant any expected

help from Tait and other bishops for the authors' freedoms could not come (163-167). A committee of the lower house of the Convocation of Canterbury spent 70 hours producing a report found three leading errors in the book:

1. Present intellectual knowledge and conscience measures and determines the truth of the Bible,
2. The Bible is assumed to be a human utterance when found in conflict with human intellect
3. There should be a new basis of judging the truth of the Bible.

Even Jesus had referred to the facts of the Old Testament, and he could not be wrong, it was said.

As a result the report was generated, conservative speakers spoke and the house voted for a synodical judgment to be made. That could have been it, but for court action. (176)

From 1858 Rowland Williams wanted to move from South Wales to Salisbury, and the bishop, Walter Kerr Hamilton, had read him and did not want him. So Williams threatened legal action, and the bishop gave way. Now Williams was within his grasp, people asked Hamilton to act. Avoiding his own court, Hamilton used the Discipline Act of 1840 and the Court of Arches was involved. Then a request to the court came regarding Henry Wilson. (178-179). A. P. Stanley organised a Williams and Wilson Appeal Fund (178), but the High Church party wanted blood and wondered if Newman's departure to Rome had let in the rationalists (181) to both Oxford as a seat of learning and the Church of England. The Dean of Arches took eighteen months to reach a decision (183), reading the book twenty times (184). He said the case is not whether their statements were true and false but if they contradicted the Prayer Book and Articles, and that the Church of England lacked the

means by which trials of belief could be conducted. So he dismissed 9 of 22 charges against Wilson and Williams (25 June 1862) (185). Nevertheless they each had offended some of the Articles, Williams contradicting 6, 7, 11 and 21 and Wilson 6, 18, 20 with some general inconsistency over his universalism. As a result they each were suspended for a year and had to pay costs (15 December 1862). (185) Yet, there was an appeal to the Privy Council on the basis that ecclesiastical matters should have gone to the Judicial Committee, not the Court of Arches, and on 8 February 1864 all charges were dismissed and the suspension was cancelled: the Articles had not been contradicted. The liberals had won - and there had been bishops on that committee, as well as Law Lords (thus a suggestion of having an Erastian Church) (190).

One petition in 1861 was signed by 8000 clergy and another in 1864 by 11000 clergy. Legally the authors were untouchable, but the Convocation of Canterbury returned to consider *Essays and Reviews* in 1864. There was a tied vote for a committee to examine the book again, but was passed by hostile Archbishop Longley's casting vote. The committee on 21 June 1864 condemned the book as contrary to doctrine - only Bishop Tait and the Bishop of Lincoln, John Jackson, signed against (196).

Jowett himself was attacked further as an Oxford professor requiring subscription to the Articles. The University decided not to increase Jowett's nominal salary, but then Christ Church chapter made up the difference, and the upshot was sympathy given to Jowett by *The Times*. (181-183). Jowett imagined himself being burned in Doncaster churchyard (180).

Meanwhile, Frederick Temple, fearing loss of new pupils at Rugby School, forbade his sixth formers from reading *Essays and Reviews* and retracted his thoughts through a series of subsequently published sermons in the school chapel (Ellis, 1980, 178-179). When Temple was to become Bishop of Exeter in 1869, he agreed to let H. B. Wilson reprint the book again, but then asked it be left to fade away (1980, 200). Rowland Williams also did something of a personal reversal, starting to recant views from about 1864 so that in 1868 when the Free Christian Union was proposed by Unitarians James Martineau and John James Tayler, Williams declined membership on the basis that he was an orthodox churchman (234). Wilson did a slight retraction, on the basis of inspiration existing throughout Christianity and in the Bible like no other book, but remained fully liberal in method (235). The effect on Jowett was to lose his desire to publish, despite his own reading and sending Florence Nightingale Strauss's *New Life of Jesus* (236-7).

The idea of a second *Essays and Reviews* was considered, but it never got off the ground. A. R. Stanley might have written on reforming the liturgy, H. B. Wilson on Protestantism, Lewis Campbell on the misreadings of the New Testament, Edward Caird on doctrine history, M. Pattison on miracles, Friedrich Max-Muller on Eastern religions, William Henry Freemantle on religious education, and Alexander Grant on ethics, and there might have been chapters on the Church of England relating to other Churches, the dating of scripture books and the composition of the gospels. (239)

In 1871 the test of subscription was removed from the universities. This was one of the outcomes of the *Essays and Reviews* controversy, and represented an institutional narrowing of belief into the Church while Oxford became a freer seat of learning (232). Jowett predicted liberals would move on to free up public schools (233). The problem was,

however, that the Broad Church was dying with the generation that had given it such an impact. The Evangelical party also went into a decline, leaving the High Church party on the rise (247). *Essays and Reviews* was, in the end, also institutional: Jowett criticised the book for lack of relevance to the poor and uneducated - 255), and this left the High Church people to develop their mysteries, theatrics and dogma and even practise social concern (see 247-251). Thus *Lux Mundi* was the book of 1889 and onward (261), liberal in tone (such as accepting present experience over past miracles, accepting evolution that qualified sinfulness, and proposing the immanence of The Word in history on a progressive revelation principle), but it was more boring to read and proposed a divine, unique Church beyond politics (261-263).

There might have been more of a radical Broad Church future had Edwin Hatch, a brilliant but poverty stricken academic and student of Jowett's, lived longer than 55 years old. He was of the Harnack and Ritschlian school of open liberal German thought and anti-tractarian, rejecting their preference for the patristic age as the height of Church tradition. (263-268) In 1868 he also wrote of a Free Church of England. Hatch would have undermined the insistence in the 1888 Lambeth Quadrilateral on the threefold ministry, for example - he died a year later in 1889. Von Harnack called Hatch "a glorious man" and Church historian, who applied historical principles to Church study.

So what to make of *Essays and Reviews*. It clearly was open German theology with an English twist. It was also something of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's idealised romanticism and Thomas Arnold's reform of Church and education. It was the time of the Bishop Colenso affair, the liberal schismatic in South Africa. There was also the parallel development of Utilitarianism and John Stuart Mill - but *Essays and Reviews* was looking

for idealised faith not utility. In one sense the Church of England was given a jolt into the nineteenth century by *Essays and Reviews*, reacted against it, and then ended up absorbing some of it.

But what since? Imagine if there was an acceptance of the Erastian Church and open theology. By the twentieth century the new stress would have been on masses and classes. Could a liberalised Church have survived that? The Unitarians, for example, could not adjust to the new collective Labourism, it being stuck in something of a liberal and individualist rut, even if progressive, whereas Anglican Tractarians had already added in socialism and created a kind of folk feudal Merrie Englandism. *Essays and Reviews* like Unitarian theology was of a middle class thought process, and awkward in a once clearly feudal Church.

Then the intellectual doors closed on Europe, once the revolutionary impacts paused. It has to be said that when we get to 1962 and *Honest to God*, we are dealing with the use of German and American theologians who have clearly broken with the liberalism of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack and Troeltsch, thanks to the pessimism of the world wars and totalitarianism.

The main issue, however, is whether a Church committed to incarnational principles can ever run long term with an idealised theology, where the material world is one thing and faith is extracted out. The *a priori* protection of Christology inevitably means a faith of various evidences and the material. Plus Hegelism (that climbing to higher and higher truths) remained dead, in favour of this truth in this corner and that truth in that corner: so

the Church may as well exist in its corner with its beliefs: all Churches are sects now. *Lux Mundi* is perhaps right where on page 338 it states:

The 'Church of England' is a particular misleading term. The Church of Christ in England is, as [even] Coleridge pointed out, the safer and truer phrase. (1902, 338).

This brings on the argument of kerygma and kernel. The kernel seeking Church is the one in *Essays and Reviews*, in its search for a universal truth. The kerygma Church is the one that would be in *Lux Mundi*, had page 339 not gone on to say that this essential Catholicism rests on corresponding:

...not to one or another nation, but to humanity... that the true type of the Church is rather in the family than in the State (1902, 339).

That's another kernel moment! If it is properly a kerygma, it is in the revelation of Christ and that such is self-contained and sufficient, and requires the Church and theologians to make a prior defence of a revelation. Despite *Lux Mundi's* error, Jowett thought *Lux Mundi* had gone backwards in its conceptualising. But we must ask if there is a backwards or forwards regarding something presumed to be eternal.

Wigmore-Beddoes in *Yesterday's Radicals* (1971, 118-9) also makes the point that the Broad Churchmen took the Anglican Church into dangerous territory, and that the Anglican Church could never go the further stages of the Unitarians (towards other faiths and religious humanism); nor would Unitarian ministers give up their freedoms to join even a minimalist credal Church as the then Church of 18,000 clergy could not change doctrinally just to add a few hundred Unitarian ministers.

In any case, the ethos of the Broad Church developed as middling and managerial. It suits bringing different sides together. Despite this, it went on to endure other controversies around more conservative and limited issues. *Essays and Reviews* set the pattern: outburst, big interest, fall away, partial absorption, and institutional marginalisation. Increasingly disputes concern a Church that has been exporting less into a national religious life and imports less from the general religious culture. Intellectual theology has continued of course, but inhabits its own centres and has little impact among the pews (although the Internet does let the cat out of the bag). Church radicals exist only in corners: and the Don Cupitts and Richard Holloways of this world are largely ignored institutionally, and increasingly they are uninterested in institutional religion anyway. Even the *Lux Mundi* type Catholic is being tarred with a liberal brush; they were not and are not, but in an increasingly bipolar Church they may as well be and a divided Church does tend to find new friends in old rivals.

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## Mainly Paragraph by Paragraph Summary: *Essays and Reviews*

So far the theme pursued is this: in the nineteenth century mainly German, open theologians, realised history and other disciplines created revisions necessary regarding the divinity of Jesus or the building of the Kingdom of God, to be replaced in the more pessimistic twentieth century with modern theologians who preserved Christology.

We expect the Church of England, even if a bit of a theological backwater, to show some evidence of these movements, and there is a history of controversies where theology has burst out of academia. Such seems to involve a sense of surprise and a sense of shock.

The controversies happen at the liberal end, but a liberal intention is low barriers of joining a national Church: H. B. Wilson wanted doctrines that didn't prevent future generations joining and freedom for clergy - and might not even be Christian, but should be generally so if it is.

Are the theological ruptures temporary? Was Disraeli right to say free enquirers only for free enquirers, not subscribers?

One question is whether the Broad Church radicals were trying to match the intellectuals of Unitarianism and what they were preaching. They certainly interacted, with the newly coming to dominance Free Christian Unitarians over their biblicist rivals.

Frances Cobbe, a convert Unitarian, said the essayists were honest and would save the Church. Freedom first - but the institutional position is that individuals should express the Church's teachings via the Church's own words.

Leading Unitarians took on board new German teachings, but 'Germanist' was a term of abuse for Anglicans. English theology was thought to be very weak.

Cambridge had radicalism but a Platonist bias was seen as moderating, whereas Oxford generated a party atmosphere. *Lux Mundi*, a book from 1899 of a more moderate Catholicism came from Oxford, different from but a descendent of *Essays and Reviews*.

In the later nineteenth century each Anglican party had a broad mass and a leading edge, true for the evangelicals, the high Church party and the Broad Church. *Essays and Reviews* acclaiming 'higher criticism' came from that leading radical edge of a broader mass of middling Churchpeople.

*Essays and Reviews* is a boring title for individual essays but is an attempt at a free approach to religious and moral truth of subjects.

- Frederick Temple, who wrote from a perspective of evolving civilisation;
- Rowland Williams, who commented on a Lutheran's approach to biblical research;
- Baden Powell, who found that miracles were becoming a barrier for Christianity;
- Henry Bristow Wilson, who wrote about the national Church as a State Church;
- Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, who had a no nonsense approach to Genesis and geology;

- Mark Pattison, who wrote fiercely about deism in England; and
- Benjamin Jowett, who wrote on scripture methodology.

Benjamin Jowett likened the non-free approach to theological education to terrorism.

Christianity is a false religion, he said, when tendencies of thought are opposed to it, and he wondered if Christianity can recover.

He further asked if the intellectual expression of Christianity is in a state of transition.

The Christian life might be fixed, its kernel, but expression changes. This is the view of his Unitarian friend James Martineau, that there is a simple Christianity and then its variable description. This means Christology is derived, as the core is the inner life, our collective intellectual consensus, and/ or the progress of the State. Scripture is the best book for the heart, might so become for the intellect, read according to laws of human knowledge.

Nicaea was a great misfortune but a different decision might have been worse.

*Lux Mundi* later on he found disappointing, but friendlier than some High Church material. Charles Gore, its editor, was his pupil.

Frederick Temple assumed world development from primitives to highest civilisation, as reflected elsewhere in magic to magical religion to religion.

So he prefers the present-future to the past: they might have recognised a messiah better, but we can outline the truth better than they could.

This is progressive revelation: God gives stages of progress as we remember what came before. What, though, if the essence of religion is magic and the supernatural?

Early manhood made quick dogmatic decisions, full of answers. Fortunately they largely got it right, though many of their answers are practically obsolete. You can't extract truth all at once.

With impermanent doctrinal decisions, so much for any faith once delivered to the saints.

Today we instead emphasise paradigm shifts in knowledge according to variable epochs of science, technology, economic organisation and cultures. But it makes the first century Middle East more distant.

Rowland Williams chapter re-presents the outlook of Baron Arnold Bunsen, a writer on German biblical exegesis, and somewhat accused of hiding behind Bunsen in his chapter. The two knew each other well. Hearts respond to truth, better than external authority: again very close to James Martineau's stance. There are clear difficulties with mosaic and Davidic authorship and prophetic predictions and some Pauline books are not. But the Bible is the best book of comparative religious scriptures.

Prophets are teachers of morals and that's how they connect to Christ and the Kingdom of God. Francis William Newman was consistent on history but not on patience and glory that become fulfilled in the New Testament.

So here is the ahistorical idealising of the nineteenth century mind, but how do we know the highest ideals are found in the New Testament?

Baden Powell finds that whereas miracles were evidence for Christianity now evidence means necessity to treat scientifically and historically and they have become an embarrassment. Believers in the past must have made errors as testimony is unreliable (so says David Hume).

The reply is if they were reliable observed then they really are miraculous!

Today we say we see what we believe, and say much reality first: look for signs and wonders and you find them, and don't if you don't look. Being mistaken suggests foolishness and even can become dishonesty.

Plus science and maths at quantum and very large levels is not regular. What matters in history is documentation, not the usual.

Baden Powell originally set out to challenge Unitarians but being left with biblical contradictions meant he ended up with his liberal phase.

For Wilson, people honestly reacted against Church doctrines and did not fear a just God when honest.

Wilson was anti individualist sect, and pro multitudinist Church, and by 1860 had come to the view that Church and the State approached the nation only from different angles teaching everyone with full public access to state property and teaching the common interest of State and Church and need not relate to the supernatural with freedom for the clergyman. Wilson was one with James Martineau when he wrote Church Life or Sect Life? (1859). For Wilson Judaism was like a national church, Jesus and Paul were multitudinist, and he was alongside Martineau's Free Christian Union idea (from 1867).

Wilson regarded the 39 Articles as legally vague and obliging nothing and the Church can be generalist regarding beliefs, expressing a moral order. This is all very Durkheimian, bringing society together with a collective conscience.

However, the mediaeval Church combined Christianity supernatural and superstitious in society and Church. The 19th century version is a stripped down Christianity, certainly consistent with the Unitarians, and Coleridge's romanticism and idealism, but surely not consistent with the supernatural and superstitious content of the New Testament. NT communities were sectarian, only later becoming Empire churches.

Friedrich Schleiermacher's pupil, Richard Rothe, had proposed a parallel development of the Church and State and it is very Hegelian.

The First World War swept away such optimism. Postmodern times have nothing to unite a whole society: it's all difference.

C. W. Goodwin's essay on the 'Mosaical Cosmogony' favours geology over a straight view of Genesis where days mean days and two origin stories contradict.

The most academic essay is from Mark Pattison, that explains from 1688-1750 a period first of reasoning that enhanced Christianity (thanks to John Locke) but then a turn to the externals reasoned that limited Christianity. The liberal approach restores reasoning whereas the Tractarians were stuck with externals. Socinianism and Deism shared a common sense view of the Bible as reasoned.

John Locke was foundational to Unitarianism and important for Anglican liberals and their critical approach. Tractarians just dug up antiquity. Reason, not doctrine, nor inner light, should be the basis of doctrine.

He complains that the Church of England tackles godless orthodoxy with formulae of the past. Old doctrinal phrases are useless, like rubbish of the past, locking virtue in the cloister and theology in the library.

Today we see Catholicism giving some mystical expression to the liberal and the liberal approaches stopping Catholicism becoming crusty. The Tractarian position is now ceasing with the full ordination of women, the *Lux Mundi* inheritance continues.

Benjamin Jowett finds people too protective of the Bible via spurious arguments: it should be treated like any other book. He recommends closeness to the writer, familiarity with the text, interpret as with any other book lacking external support, and interpret for the purpose of ceasing to interpret when finding a unity with the author's deepest spiritual intentions.

The English language allows this: Greek at the time was in flux and didn't contain its world as once did, and this method extracts essential content.

This was the difference between Karl Barth (1886-1968) and James Martineau. For Barth, the particularity of the Gospel was essential, with the encounter of God in that Christ, but for the Unitarian James Martineau the Gospel was just one example in time and place of a higher universal truth of God. Jowett is with Martineau, in essence a universal higher truth becomes Christ.

Jowett would have felt denationalised and sectarianised had he left the Church of England where the balance of parties give freedom.

The result against the book was a campaign in the Convocation in 1861, but then court action that lasted until 1864 with all charges dismissed on appeal, and convocation again finding the book heretical. The Church institution was more against than the wider public media and there were two petitions of clergymen.

Reaction in Germany agreed this was German sourced material but one side said towards secularism and the other said faithful. France said a crisis in Protestantism and Americans opposed the book except for its Unitarians.

Frederick Temple forbade sixth formers to read the book and asked Wilson to reprint the book only once more in 1869, Rowland Williams started to recant and refused to consider joining the Free Christian Union, Wilson slightly recanted, and Jowett lost the appetite to publish.

A second *Essays and Reviews* was considered but never got off the ground.

One effect was 1871 removing subscription from universities. But the Broad Church went into decline with its generation of impact.

*Lux Mundi* was more the spirit of the age, with some liberality (such as accepting present experience over past miracles, accepting evolution that qualified sinfulness, and proposing the immanence of The Word in history on a progressive revelation principle) but proposing a unique Catholic principle Church beyond politics.

A brilliant fresh face of liberalism Edwin Hatch died early aged 55 in 1899 (a what might have been).

So *Essays and Reviews* was of open German theology with an English twist. It matched similar movements of romanticism and reform and the liberal Bishop Colenso schism in South Africa. It brought the Church of England into the nineteenth century with a jolt.

But had it been more accepted, the ideology of *Essays and Reviews* was middle class liberal (like Unitarianism) and not suited to the Labourism and mass movements of the twentieth century. Tractarians already had imported socialism into their kind of folk feudal Merrie Englandism.

By the time we get to Honest to God, we deal with the use of German and American theologians who have clearly broken with the liberalism of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack and Troeltsch.

Can a Church committed to incarnational principles ever run long term with an idealised theology? The a priori protection of Christology inevitably means a faith of various evidences and the material. Hegelianism is dead, as we all occupy corners with truths, and all Churches are sects now.

Kernel or kerygma. *Essays and Reviews* was an idealised universal truth, a kernel. *Lux Mundi* was nearly of a kerygma.

Kerygma is in the revelation of Christ that is self-contained and sufficient, and requires the Church and theologians to make a prior defence of a revelation.

Broad Churchmen took the Anglican Church into dangerous territory, and that the Anglican Church could never go the further stages of the Unitarians. Neither could adapt to the other, one losing too much freedom, the other giving up too much doctrine.

In any case, the ethos of the Broad Church developed as middling and managerial. It suits bringing different sides together. Controversies still happened, but on less radical issues, if *Essays and Reviews* set the pattern for how controversies appear and settle, and radicals proper are marginalised institutionally. The Church has less connection with beyond its boundaries. *Lux Mundi* types now get tarred with the liberal brush in a bipolar Church and new friends can come from old rivals.

Adrian Worsfold

### Some main points

- Essays and Reviews was of Open German Theology and Biblical Criticism, dividing liberal from other schools but promoting a general idealised theology
- Lux Mundi was more moderate and combined the Catholic and elements of liberal and was more incarnational
- Essays and Review came close to Unitarianism and progressive revelation, but despite it 'being the future' an incarnation committed Church may not be open to such a future.