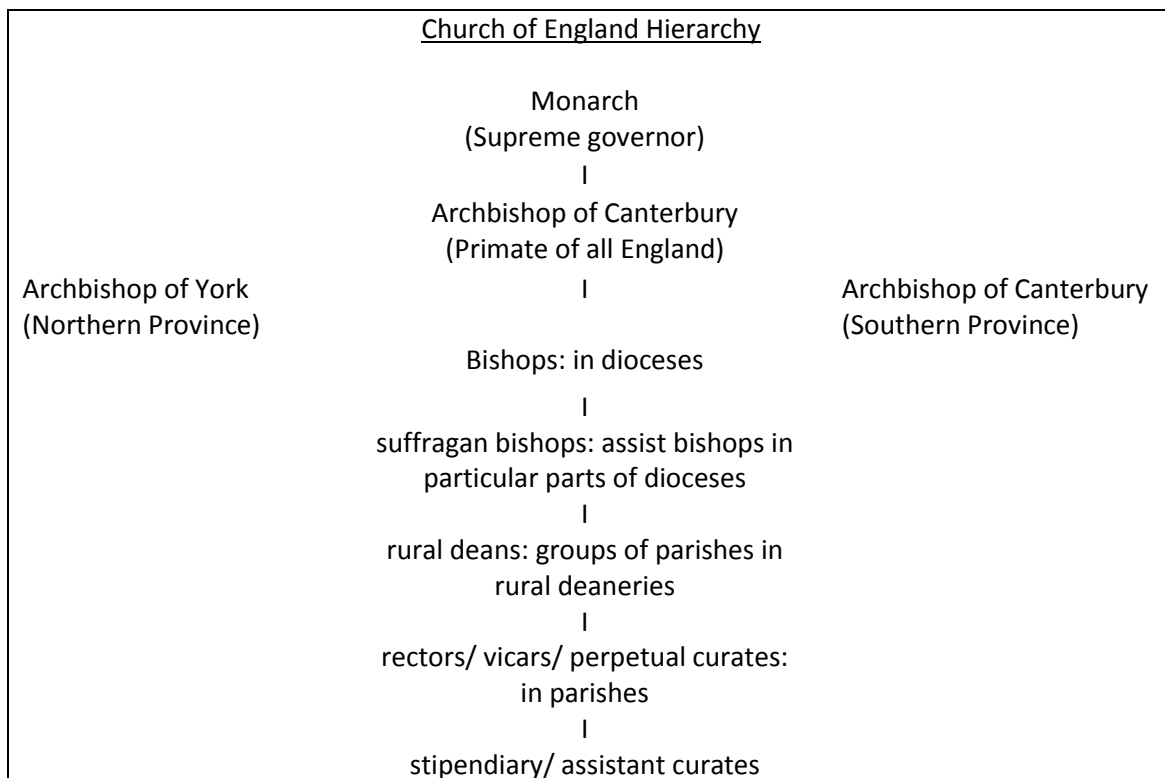


**Notes on the history of nineteenth-century religion
with particular reference to Anglicanism in Carlisle Diocese**

NOTES ON THE CONTEXT



The importance of religion to the nineteenth-century mind

John Terraine's introduction to the war letters of the Bickersteth family 1914-1918, remarks on a 'virtually unbridgeable' gulf that divides the Victorian era from the present. To Terraine, the two main elements separating the Victorians (particularly the late Victorians) from ourselves are patriotism and religion. Of these, patriotism is the easier to understand, but religion is harder to assess. Nevertheless, at the outset of any study of the nineteenth century, it is imperative to understand that **religion really mattered** - particularly, one might argue, to the middle-classes - vitally informing their moral compass, political opinions, leadership of national and local bodies and everyday actions. Those who rejected religion completely in the nineteenth century were very much in the minority; no study of nineteenth-century life could be complete without confronting this truth. However, attitudes to religion changed as the century progressed, driven by many social, political and cultural changes, as noted below.

1. CHANGE IN THE NATION WAS PARALLELED BY CHANGING ATTITUDES TO RELIGION

- A. Growing democracy led to establishment issues relating to the alliance of Church and State, centring on the religious and political inequality of Protestant Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Jews, and the different religious traditions of the Celtic nations: Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
 - i. Reform led to political and social equality for Protestant Nonconformists and Roman Catholics e.g. Parliamentary Reform Act (1832); abolition of compulsory Church Rate (1868); dissenters gained right to be educated at Oxbridge (1850s); establishment of divorce courts (1850s); first Jewish MPs (1850s).
 - ii. The different religious traditions of Ireland and Wales led to their eventual disestablishment amid calls for the disestablishment of the Church of England. While

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Irish disestablishment (1869-71) divided some Anglo-Catholics from the rest of the Church, the campaign for Welsh disestablishment (1894-5, 1909, 1912) drew the various factions together.

- B. Growth of Protestant Nonconformism and Roman Catholicism
 - i. Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1828); Catholic Emancipation (1829); enfranchisement of Nonconformists through the Reform Act (1867).
 - ii. Roman Catholic parish organisation spread, aided by the opening of schools run by religious orders.

- C. Increasing religious doubt, seen in the growth of atheism and widespread interest in science
 - i. Charles Bradlaugh founded the National Secular Society in 1866 and took his seat in the House of Commons in 1886.
 - ii. Publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859).

- D. Effects of the Industrial Revolution.
The following led to concern about poverty and its consequences
 - i. Growth of cities
 - ii. Growing population
 - iii. Growth of slums
 - iv. Growth of socialism

- E. Expansion of primary education and growth of literacy
 - i. Evangelicals wished the poor to read the Bible, while a growing number entering the workforce as artisans or clerks were deemed to need the benefits of a rudimentary education .
 - ii. Sunday-schools, inaugurated in 1780, taught the poor to read.
 - iii. Some new readers became enthusiastic autodidacts, their reading choices leading them to question the religious and social *status quo*.
 - iv. The first Church of England National Schools were founded in 1811 to counteract the influence of Nonconformist schools and secular parish schools.
 - v. Government provision of education grants to National Schools in 1833 led to governmental inspection.
 - vi. Local authority Board Schools, created in 1870, competed with church schools.
 - vii. Primary education became compulsory in 1880.
 - i. The battle for ownership of, and denominational teaching in, elementary schools was strongest during the period 1886-1902, and tended to unite all Anglican factions.

- F. Growth of the power of the press in an age of increasing equality
 - i. The press regularly reported on the Church of England's shortcomings, particularly on tithes, church rate and clerical pluralism. It also reported regularly on the successes of nonconformism.
 - ii. The denominations responded by publishing their own competing newspapers and magazines in increasing numbers, but this increased denominationalism and factionalism.

- G. Diminishing Anglican power in the parish
 - i. The new Poor Law (1834), abolition of compulsory church rate, tithe commutation, formation of the ecclesiastical (church) commissioners (1835-7), Board schools etc. led many local clergy to question their diminishing role, particularly in rural areas.
 - ii. The busy town parish became the place in which to succeed as a clergyman, but many found life in cities exhausting.
 - iii. City dwellers were less likely to attend church.

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- H. The laity's dislike of clerical pluralism and non-residence, and growing concern about the clergy's connections with power through, for example, birth and marriage ties, and through sitting as local magistrates.
- i. In 1831 only 44 per cent of churches in England and Wales had a resident incumbent, while 33 per cent of beneficed clergy held more than one living.
 - ii. Non-resident rectors enjoyed the benefits of tithes.
 - iii. The 1838 Pluralities Act began to deal with the problem.
 - iv. From 1830, numbers of clergy appointed as magistrates declined (Jacob, p. 234).

The Church's response to the speed and depth of change

1. THE 3 RS: 'REFORM, REVIVAL AND REALIGNMENT'

(See Gerald Parsons, 'The experience of Victorian Anglicanism': in Bibliography)

- A. Growth of evangelicalism and Methodism: the religion of the heart
- i. Beginning with John Wesley, evangelical worship spread to other Protestant denominations including the Church of England, where it counteracted 'high and dry' Anglicanism.
 - ii. The main characteristics of evangelicalism were Biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism (Christ's atoning sacrifice for each individual) and activism (see Bebbington).
- B. Growth of ritualism
- i. In the 1830s, the Oxford Movement (Tractarianism) emphasised the Roman Catholic roots and apostolic succession of the reformed Anglican ministry, thus asserting its independence from government interference; leaders included John Henry Newman, John Keble and E. B. Pusey.
 - ii. Ritualism in Anglo-Catholic worship became popular during the period in which ecclesiologists of the Cambridge Camden Society were embracing pseudo-medieval architecture, i.e. all things Gothic.
 - iii. Slum priests welcomed the richness of ritualist worship as they struggled to encourage churchgoing among the poor.
 - v. Evangelicals commonly opposed Ritualists and ritualism. Disorder and disobedience in the Church over aspects of ritualistic liturgy and ornament led to the imprisonment of some Anglo-Catholics after the passing of Archbishop Tait's Public Worship Regulation Act (1874).
 - vi. Anglo-Catholic ritual and liturgy had become the common form of Anglican worship and ceremonial by the end of the century, while evangelicalism had faded.
- C. Broad Church and Modernist advance
- i. Growth of Broad Church attitudes (which some called latitudinarianism) among mid-nineteenth-century clergy led in turn to 20th century modernist opinions, as developments in scientific knowledge and biblical scholarship provoked some Anglican clergymen to seek religious knowledge from all sources; this clashed with some evangelical and Anglo-Catholic beliefs and practices.
- D. Reorganisation in response to change
- i. At the beginning of the century, parish structure remained essentially as it had been in medieval times, in spite of changing settlement patterns. Reform led to
 - church-building in populous areas with parliamentary grants (1818, 1824)
 - a law to permit parishes to be altered and new parishes to be formed, to allow more churches in populous areas (1843)
 - building of mission halls, reading rooms, parish libraries
 - formation of parish clubs and societies
 - introduction of hymn singing and church choirs

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- school building
 - experiments with liturgy
 - beautification of church interiors
 - charity work by members of congregations
- ii. Desire to remove pluralism: The Pluralities Act (1838) allowed no incumbent to hold more than two benefices, the maximum distance between them being ten miles, the two being held only under a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury.
 - iii. The creation of a commission to inquire into Anglican finances, which reported in 1835; known as the Ecclesiastical Commission, it was run by ecclesiastical commissioners who became known as Church Commissioners in 1948 when they took over the running of Queen Anne's Bounty (income and mortgage provider for poor clergy).
 - iv. Training for the clergy: St Bees Theological College (founded 1816); first diocesan training college (Chichester: founded 1839).
 - v. Harder-working bishops, who spent more time in their dioceses.
 - vi. An increasing sense of professionalism among parish clergy.
 - vii. The Church of England formed its own governing body: convocation (1854), followed by the Church Congress (1861) and the Church Assembly. By the Enabling Act (1919) 'measures' decided upon by an ecclesiastical committee are presented to Parliament for final approval.
 - viii. Anglicans lost the wide powers of the parish vestry after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834; secular and ecclesiastical duties were separated nationally when the Local Government Act (1894) established elected rural parish councils and councils; the parish vestry was replaced with a parish council to manage all secular parish matters; Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) were created in 1919.
- E. Missionary activity, aided by imperial fervour
- i. Imperial fervour and missionary endeavour went hand in hand; missionaries could be intensely brave, encouraged by their faith and a prevailing Muscular Christianity which encouraged 'manliness'; such enthusiasm encouraged emigration and created links between parishes at home and abroad.
 - ii. Anglicanism became more international in approach; Anglican churches in the British Empire began to function independently but from 1867 were held together by the Lambeth Conference, where, every ten years, Anglican bishops from throughout the world met together.
- F. CLERICAL ANXIETY (particularly intense from the 1880s) caused by
- i. Rivalry between Anglican church parties
 - ii. Anglican rivalry with Protestant Nonconformists
 - iii. Growth of Roman Catholicism
 - iv. The expansion of democracy
 - v. The Church's perceived need for money
 - vi. Disestablishment fears
 - vii. The rise of socialism
 - viii. Loss of parochial power
 - ix. Secularism
 - x. The Victorian crisis of faith
 - xi. The Great War. During and after the war, the Church of England was roundly criticised from without and within, and its congregations diminished. Protestant Nonconformism was also seen to decline.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY RELIGION IN CARLISLE DIOCESE

- A. Characterised by:
- i. 'Otherisation' or stereotyping (by dominant social groups and through Wordsworth's Romanticism): see Marshall and Walton, Chapter 1.

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- ii. Perceptions of its remoteness (In 1863 Cumbria's supposed geographical and psychological inaccessibility was captured by Arthur Stanley, who, in a parliamentary speech, contrasted 'the archbishop in his palace at Lambeth' with 'the humblest curate in the wilds of Cumberland'). NB the perception of remoteness was evoked again in March 2015 within the official report on the shortcomings of Furness Maternity Unit.
- iii. Clerical Poverty (see Bishop Nicolson's notes 1703-04; Walter Fletcher's notes, 1814-55; churches and parsonage houses in need of repair, low clerical incomes).
- iv. Higher than average levels of literacy, and large numbers of endowed schools, plus independent farm ownership, leading, one might argue, to local independence of mind.
- v. Small chapelries, sometimes far from parish centres, with one service on Sundays, sometimes fewer, particularly in winter; few celebrations of communion per year.
- vi. Determinedly low-church or evangelical worship, affected by Scottish Presbyterianism and the traditions encouraged by prominent evangelicals such as Isaac Milner (Dean of Carlisle, 1792-1820) dominated the diocese during the bishopric of Samuel Waldegrave (1860-1869); partly through the influence of the evangelical Francis Close (Dean of Carlisle 1856-1881) low-church worship continued to be found in Carlisle diocese well into the twentieth century.
- vii. Low levels of church-going: in 1851 (Religious Census) only Whitehaven, Ulverston and West Ward in Westmorland could be regarded as areas of Anglican strength; in the rest of the diocese, Anglican churches were as poorly attended as those in Wales (Snell and Ell, p. 72).
- viii. Growth of Methodism: In 1851, though only half the population of Cumberland attended church, of that half, half was Protestant Nonconformist - mostly Methodist; e.g. the Pennine fellside in the vicinity of Penrith embraced Methodism after John Wesley's visits, though most Wesleyans attended church services too; Primitive Methodism also took root.

B. Other Issues

- Ritualistic disputes, for example, in Barrow and Wetheral, as Anglo-Catholic worship very gradually took over the diocese, aided by the sympathies of modernising bishops such as Harvey Goodwin (Bishop of Carlisle 1869-1891) and John Wareing Bardsley (Bishop of Carlisle 1892-1904), though evangelicals fought back in Carlisle until at least the end of the Prayer-Book controversy (1927-28).
- Pluralism in a poor, sparsely populated diocese.
- Church building in populous industrial areas, e.g. Carlisle and Barrow.
- Cumbrian landowners and patrons: in church building and restoration (sometimes insensitive) or in neglect.
- Growth of Roman Catholicism and spread of Roman-Catholic schools; anti-Roman-Catholicism in parts of the diocese.
- Collapse of Quakerism.
- The importance of William Paley (1743-1805). *Natural Theology ... Evidences for Christianity* through design in nature (i.e. God as the watchmaker), written in 1794, was still widely read in the 19th century; Paley's attitudes to parish worship and pluralism arguably typify the high-and-dry clergyman of the late-18th century.
- The roles of Isaac Milner (Dean of Carlisle 1792-1820), and John Fawcett, vicar of St Cuthbert's, Carlisle, in the spread of evangelicalism and changing moral behaviour.
- The diminishing importance of the parish churches as local charitable agencies.
- The role of Cumbrian church schools and their benefactors e.g. George Moore of Wigton.
- The importance of the church/chapel to people's social lives, aided by a growing number of church clubs and societies in an age of increasing leisure.

C. Changing church interiors

At the beginning of the century Chancellor Walter Fletcher noted galleries, plaster ceilings, box pews and paintings of the King's Arms in local churches: *The Diocese Of Carlisle, 1814-1855, Chancellor Walter Fletcher's 'Diocesan Book' with additional material from Bishop Percy's parish notebooks.*

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Compare Fletcher's notes with *The Church Notes of Sir Stephen Glynne for Cumbria (1833-1872)*, ed. Lawrence Butler. Glynne was a committed ecclesiologist, visiting over 52 Anglican churches and chapels in Cumbria. As a ritualist he sought the visual expression of reverence through architecture and church fittings. Early medievalism pleased him and he therefore disliked Lady Anne Clifford's alterations and most eighteenth-century church buildings.

Note changing church interiors and traditions in Carlisle Diocese as Anglo-Catholicism became popular, as seen in:

- i. Well-dressed altars with embroidered cloths, flowers and lighted candles as Holy Communion was increasingly celebrated
- ii. The 'gothicisation' of many churches
- iii. Larger number of windows with stained glass
- iv. Incense
- v. Harvest festivals (the modern tradition began in 1843)
- vi. Confession
- vii. Surplice wearing
- viii. Psalm chanting (plainsong)
- ix. Reservation of the sacrament
- x. Facing eastwards during the Communion rite
- xi. Provision of side chapels for private prayer
- xii. The disappearance of three-decker pulpits

D. Further Points

- i. Cumbria contained 2 dioceses until 1856.
- ii. Other sects and denominations: Inghamites, Baptists, Presbyterians (Scots and English), Salvation Army.
- iii. Increasing participation of women in formal Church business: PCCs and diocesan synods.
- iv. Schools: sometimes within churches, usually at the west end. National schools (from 1811). Controversy over endowed schools. Parish schools. Board schools.
- v. Church clubs and societies, such as temperance clubs, Bands of Hope, mothers' meetings, Girls' Friendly Society, lads' clubs, men's associations, magic lantern shows, suppers, teas, smoking clubs, sports clubs, scientific and literary societies, whist drives and even smoking clubs. Growth of the Mothers' Union from 1876.
- vi. Clerical poverty.
- vii. Clergymen as teachers: in church schools and as proprietors of their own schools.
- viii. Clergymen as experts: as antiquarians and ecclesiologists (see *CWAAS Transactions*) and in architecture, botany and meteorology; as writers of poetry and prose as well as sermons.
- ix. Clerical bad behaviour: drunkenness.
- x. Anti-clericalism in the local liberal press e.g. *Carlisle Journal*.

E. **Walter Fletcher's Diocesan Notebook (1814-45) with Bishop Hugh Percy's two Notebooks on Particulars of Churches (1828-55) ed. Jane Platt** (Original MSS in Cumbria Archives, Carlisle: DRC 11/14/1 and 11/15/1-2)

The notebooks give valuable information on parishes during the first half of the nineteenth century:

- agriculture
- church income
- church landholdings
- church services
- church vestries
- churchwardens
- clergymen, from the bishop to the lowliest curates
- individual Cumbrian characters: clergy and laity
- landowners
- local charities

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- parish clerks
- parish populations
- parsonage houses
- pluralism
- schools and teachers, including dame schools
- tithes
- weather
- local customs

Much of this information continued to be given in Carlisle Diocese Bishops' Visitation Returns (1858 to 1901), see below.

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