

# A SUMMARY OF PAPERS READ AT THE LAMAS LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON ON 20 NOVEMBER 2004: 'ST PAUL'S AND THE DIOCESE OF LONDON: FOURTEEN HUNDRED YEARS'

## THE FOUNDATION AND ENDOWMENT OF ST PAUL'S

*Pamela Taylor*

The magnificent new centenary history of St Paul's takes the history of London's cathedral through from the foundation in AD 604 to 2004. My own chapter there, 'Foundation and Endowment: St Paul's and the English Kingdoms, 604–1087', has a wider span than this paper, but could not include some of the detail that a local audience might appreciate. This paper therefore focuses only on the first two centuries and on three topographical issues, all within what might be called greater Middlesex. These are: firstly, the diocesan boundary; secondly, Stepney and the 24 hides; and thirdly, the west Middlesex estates: Fulham and Willesden.

Foundation and endowment were always inextricably linked since no church or any other institution could or can exist without the funds to support its buildings, staff and so on. In later centuries there were alternative forms of investment, but in the pre-modern world land was the only resource capable of yielding a long-term regular income. Since every founder knew this, the act of foundation necessarily included endowment. The sources for the early history of St Paul's are weak but we do have Bede's account of the foundation, and, although Bede

himself was far away in Jarrow, and not writing until the 730s AD, he had a key research assistant, Nothelm, who was a priest of St Paul's and also immersed himself in the records at Canterbury.

This immersion was not a routine genuflection to ecclesiastical hierarchy but a reflection of a basic and permanently determining political reality, that conversion was always via princes. When St Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great to reconvert the various tribes and kingdoms that would eventually coalesce into England, landed in Kent in AD 597, he was not simply taking the shortest crossing from Gaul but also acknowledging the prevailing political circumstances. Æthelberht, King of Kent, was also overlord of much of southern England, and the East Saxon kingdom, which included London, although it had its own royal line, was under Æthelberht's direct hegemony. This explains why the archbishopric was settled at Canterbury, even though Pope Gregory had assumed that the refounded church would continue the Roman pattern with the archbishoprics at London and York; and it is also why it was Æthelberht who in AD 604 established two other sees after Canterbury — at Rochester and London. It is also, in the longer view, why St Paul's, the cathedral of the permanently subservient East Saxons, was never as well endowed as one might assume the cathedral of London to have been.

Bede's account of the foundations makes this

essential royal support and endowment crystal clear:

In the year of our lord 604 Augustine, archbishop of Britain, consecrated two bishops, namely Mellitus and Justus, Mellitus to preach to the province (*provincia*) of the East Saxons, which is divided from Kent by the river Thames and borders on the sea to the east. Its capital is the city of London, which is on the banks of that river and is an emporium for many nations who come to it by land and sea. At that time Sæberht, Æthelberht's nephew ..., ruled over the people (*gens*) although he was under Æthelberht's suzerainty ... When this province had accepted the word of truth through the preaching of Mellitus, King Æthelberht built the church of the holy apostle Paul in the city of London, in which Mellitus and his successors were to have their episcopal seat ... [Æthelberht also built the church for Justus at Rochester]; he also bestowed many gifts on the bishops of both these churches and that of Canterbury; and he also added lands and possessions for the maintenance of those who were with the bishops.

Crystal clear, but only as far as it goes. First, Bede does not attempt to specify any of the 'lands and possessions'. Secondly, he does not fully define the province of the East Saxons, saying only that it was divided by the Thames from Kent and bordered the sea to the east, and thus avoiding the far more difficult question of the land boundaries on the north and west. It is obvious that the East Saxon kingdom was larger than the later county that inherited its name. Essex lies entirely east of the river Lea, but the kingdom in AD 604 spread much further west. London itself is west of the Lea and until the local government reorganisations of the 19th and 20th centuries was part of Middlesex, or the territory of the Middle Saxons. Earlier scholars assumed that in the 6th century the East Saxons must have been performing more strongly than later, and had managed to absorb the Middle Saxon kingdom. This is now considered doubtful. A better guess is that the East Saxon kingdom extended west of the Lea from the beginning and that 'Middlesex' (whose first recorded usage comes in a charter of AD 704) was a new term coined in the early 8th century by the Mercians, who had certainly by then absorbed the East Saxon kingdom into their ever-expanding empire. (Kent's hegemony barely outlived Æthelberht, who died

in AD 616). On this reading the Middle Saxons, like the neighbouring Middle Angles, were a bureaucratic invention.

It is also important to remember that the shiring of Mercia into anything resembling its modern counties did not occur until the early 10th century — as part of the reconquest of the area from the Vikings. Hertford, a newly created fort of AD 911, soon afterwards received its eponymous shire, which must have been taken primarily from Middlesex, though probably with additional land on the same problematic north and west. In the 10th century the new boundary between Middlesex and Hertfordshire becomes an additional issue, but one which is excluded here. Before this, the problem of the northern and western boundaries of the province and diocese pertain to greater Middlesex. The Tribal Hidage, probably drawn up in the 670s AD, gives a list of the political units that were then paying financial tributes to Mercia; these included the East Saxons, and also two other separate groups within the later Hertfordshire, the *Ciltensætan* (Chiltern-dwellers) at the western edge and the *Hicce* around Hitchin in the north, but the other known tribes in the area, including the *Brahingas* around Braughing and the *Wæclingas* around St Albans, are not named. As with the equally absent Middlesex and its constituent tribes, they had therefore already been absorbed into a larger unit, most probably that of the East Saxons.

The whole fledgling church came perilously close to collapse during the 7th century, and was only placed on a more stable footing by the dynamic Archbishop Theodore (AD 668–90). One of his actions was to rationalise the diocesan structure, both severing the exact connection with tribal origins and creating several new dioceses in Mercia. Among these was Leicester, created in AD 679 for the Middle Angles — as mentioned above an invented grouping (and, unlike the Middle Saxons, I think always understood as such) — and this was the adjacent see along London's northern and western edges. Leicester was ultimately absorbed within the enormous diocese of Lincoln. The diocese of London, as it existed from at least the high Middle Ages until subdivision in the 19th century, comprised the whole of the counties of Essex and Middlesex and about the eastern third of Hertfordshire, with West Herts, including St Albans, within the diocese of Lincoln. The boundary between East and West Herts was

and is the Roman Stane Street. The boundary between West Herts and Middlesex has no obvious topographical rationale (and all theories concerning Grimdsyke, which runs along part of the line, should be treated with great caution), and it is still uncertain whether when this was made the new county boundary in the early 10th century, it preceded or followed the diocesan one. But we do know that in AD 704, 25 years after Archbishop Theodore's rearrangements, King Offa of the East Saxons gave his bishop land in Hemel Hempstead, which must therefore at that time have been within the East Saxon province and diocese. Hemel, which is west of St Albans, was later firmly within West Herts and Lincoln. The Hemel estate was later lost to St Paul's, we know not when or how, but that is a common story.

Endowments, then, can be revelatory: the Hemel grant shows that the East Saxons' boundary changed after AD 704. More generally, the amount of endowment that a church received and retained at various periods can be a rough indicator of its standing *vis-à-vis* its rivals — and London's competitors came to include not only Canterbury but such other heavyweights as Westminster and St Albans. There are, of course, always difficulties in interpretation, not least because endowments could be problematic not only to retain but also, particularly in the later Anglo-Saxon period, to receive, so that documented promises could easily fail to materialise. Also, and an important point for local historians returned to below, changes both in the names of aggregated manorial units and in units of measurement make reading back from later evidence extremely hazardous.

By the time of Domesday Book (1086) the bishop and canons were holding their estates almost entirely separately from each other — that is both were holding directly from the Crown. No other English cathedral had yet progressed this far, and even at London such a fixed and formal degree of separation was recent. Bishop Theodred (d.951x953) transferred some estates from episcopal to cathedral endowment, but some had been re-transferred by 1066. Some bequests made around 1000 make it clear that the gift is to one side or the other, but others were still undivided; Æthelric for example bequeathed estates west of Rayne (Essex) 'for the bishop for the provision of lights and for the communication of Christianity to God's people there', and this is still in exact line with Bede's '[Æthelberht] also bestowed many gifts

on the bishops ...; and he also added lands and possessions for the maintenance of those who were with the bishops'. In the 7th and 8th centuries we have to assume that endowments were undifferentiated between the bishop and canons, and were only divided later. There are two other important facts about early grants: first that they were almost always made by kings, and secondly that they were normally of large tracts of territory. The smaller grants by lesser people such as Æthelric come later, and are closer to grants of estates as we easily recognise them. The early royal gifts are different, comprising not simply land but huge contiguous areas within which there was some alienation of royal sovereignty so that the grantee became responsible for some aspects of royal peace-keeping and so on. Despite the risk of a circular argument, I am convinced that even without documentation any evidence of one of these very large contiguous estates is evidence of an early, certainly pre-Viking, grant.

St Paul's had four such large blocks of territory, two in Essex and two in Middlesex. To deal briefly with the Essex ones: one has no charter and the earliest reference comes in Bishop Theodred's will of the mid-10th century, but it comprised a very large chunk of coastal Essex, 54 hides in Domesday Book, by which time it was divided exactly between the bishop's manors of Chich-St Osyth and Clacton and the canons' The Naze. Even without knowing the exact value of a hide (if it was actual it was probably around 120 acres, but it was as likely to be cadastral, and sometimes leniently beneficial), this is obviously a large area. The other Essex estate has a reputable charter, or more exactly, a reputable 17th-century copy from an apparently reputable charter roll, now lost, by which Suabred, King of the East Saxons, gave the Bishop of London 70 *cassati* 'in regione qui dicitur Deningei'. This *regio* or region called Dengie was the whole promontory between the rivers Crouch and Blackwater. Exactly how much was granted is unclear, and if the whole promontory then much was later lost, but the bishop's extensive manor of Southminster within the promontory was assessed at 30 hides in 1086. Tantalisingly too, the promontory also includes Tillingham, which St Paul's has always claimed as a foundation estate.

The Tillingham estate actually boasts a charter, or a copy of one, but the balance of expert opinion is that AD 604 would have been too early for this to be possible, and that it is therefore a later forged justification. I accept that the

charter is suspect but am less sure that this means that the gift cannot have occurred then. To say that no document equals no early estate but that any document is deeply suspect is to be damned either way. This becomes relevant when we move across to Middlesex, which has the only other estate that the canons always claimed as a foundation grant — the 24 hides just north of the city. Their claim was accepted by William the Conqueror, no pushover but four and a half centuries after the event, but as far as we know St Paul's never adduced any written evidence. We cannot pinpoint the 24 hides exactly — the amounts of land in the then recently created Domesday prebends do not tally — but they have to be more or less the area covering St Pancras, Tottenham Court, part of Moorfields, and probably part of Islington.

This by itself is quite substantial, but again needs to be seen in conjunction with the bishop's adjacent holdings. The bishop's manor of Stepney, for which there is no early documentation nor claim, lay all around the 24 hides. In 1086 he had 32 hides in demesne (direct ownership) there, as well as various subinfeudated chunks. The two largest of these were, first, 5.25 hides held by Hugh de Berneres, and since this became the manor of Islington Berners or Barnsbury, we know where it was — in Islington and north-west of modern Stepney. Second was a 5-hide estate held by the wife (or widow) of Brian, and although this carried no such helpful name-tag, because of its later descent it has been shown to be Clerkenwell, and therefore west not only of modern Stepney but also of the 24 hides.

The bishop also held Bishopsgate. This led out into St Paul's land, basically the manor of Stepney, although it was the canons whose cottagers were recorded at Bishopsgate in the Middlesex Domesday survey. In City terms it was a major gate, controlling the northern end of the important direct route up from London Bridge and the pre-bridge crossing place. Within the City we would probably expect St Paul's to have controlled the area around the precinct, but, although this may well originally have been the case, there seems to have been some radical readjustment and loss when the adjacent Castle Baynard was destroyed in the early 13th century. The bishop did however have a large soke (area of privileged private jurisdiction) covering the Cornhill and Bishopsgate areas. When this was acquired is uncertain, and it is only well documented from the 13th century, but the

earlier silence is almost certainly simply an absence of documentation. It is highly unlikely that any such new grant would have been made by then in exchange for the old area around the precinct: soke and socage rents are another example of early alienation of royal authority — and made at a time when the City's own local government was not a player. There was a legend, reported by Stow in the 16th century, that St Peter Cornhill marked the site of the Roman cathedral, and even though this is no longer accepted (it was certainly on the forum site but no suitable traces of a church have been found), if the legend was current sufficiently early it might explain the gift. But how early? AD 604 courtesy of Æthelberht? Around AD 700 courtesy of the Mercians, and if so, why? Around AD 900 during the Alfredian reconstruction of the City, or AD 950 when Bishop Theodred was very powerful? Any later than that seems unlikely.

It is certainly arguable that the soke seems coherent with St Paul's adjacent extramural holding, and that such a large area, ringing the City from Stepney and Hackney in the east round to Clerkenwell in the west, must have had obvious strategic importance. Not only does it make obvious sense for a foundation grant to be close to the cathedral city, but it is far from clear that any of London's later overlords would have been so generous with such territory. It is true that we now know that some or all of Islington — at the northern end of the area — was not received until some point in the 10th century, and in the bishop's case was then added in to Stepney (this was standard administrative practice if there was a convenient neighbouring manor), but this does not vitiate the main point. But we cannot prove that this was a, or the, foundation grant. All students of the past have to learn to live with uncertainty, and the burning desire to know definitively has to be controlled before it leads to *idées fixes* and tunnel vision.

The fourth of the cathedral's large areas of endowment comprises its estates in west Middlesex. Here we know that at least some were granted in the very early 8th century. There are actually two charters, or rather, again, reputable 17th-century copies from a reputable roll. Both were first published with the rest of Richard James's extracts by Marion Gibbs in 1939. In the early 1990s Simon Keynes unearthed another set of extracts from the same missing roll, this time by the distinguished jurist John Selden, again frustratingly incomplete, but providing a little

bit of additional information. The larger of the two grants, of 50 *manentes* ‘in loco qui dicitur Fulanham (in the place that is called Fulham)’, which Gibbs dated to c.AD 704–5, can now, thanks to Keynes, be assigned to AD 701. The other grant, of 10 *manentes* ‘in loco qui dicitur Gillingas (Ealing)’, is still only datable to between AD 693 and 704, so we still do not know which came first. We do know that the Ealing grant was made by Æthelred King of the Mercians, while Fulham came from Bishop Tyrhtilus of Hereford with the consent of Sigehard King of the East Saxons and Coenred joint King of the Mercians. Why Tyrhtilus had the land is still a major puzzle. Even within the Mercian empire it seems an unlikely endowment for so distant a see as Hereford, and even if, as is highly likely, Tyrhtilus was a Mercian prince, this is usually considered too early for land to be held by the lay aristocracy.

The exact area covered by *manentes*, like hides, is unknowable but 50 plus 10 is a substantial territory, far more than what we would now think of as Fulham and Ealing. As with Stepney or the 24 hides, grantors or owners picked on one name, which (as with a London borough) denotes an administrative unit not the settlements within it. This has been a constant pitfall for local historians. In the Hammersmith Local History Group’s pioneering *A History of Hammersmith*, for instance, published in 1965, Helen Miles, the then-borough archivist who contributed the chapter on the manor, was still as sure as earlier antiquarians had been that the Domesday manor of Fulham equated to the later parish of Fulham, which in turn equates to what had just in 1965 become the London Borough of Hammersmith, but in the face of local outrage was later renamed the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Fulham is a less complicated Domesday entry than Stepney, with only a 40-hide main manor held by the bishop and two other estates of 5 hides each, one of them held from the bishop by Fulchered and the other held by the canons directly from the Crown. Marion Gibbs showed in 1939 that the canons’ estate equated to their manors of Sutton and Chiswick, which between them occupied a large part of today’s Chiswick, and should perhaps have given Miss Miles pause for thought. But, convinced that the rest of the entry had to refer exclusively to Fulham and Hammersmith, she equated Fulchered’s 5 hides to Wormholt, now the Wormwood Scrubs area.

Shortly after this, and after Miss Miles’s departure, I too came to Hammersmith as one of

its archivists and turned with immediate interest to the manor, only to discover that the existing, extremely Fulham-centric, model simply did not fit. This led fairly swiftly to my doctoral thesis on the medieval Bishopric of London estates, and also to my one article in the LAMAS *Transactions*, published in 1977, and far too densely argued. The basic argument, though, remains sound. Just as in Stepney Hugo de Berners’ and the wife of Brian’s estates were in fact in Islington and Clerkenwell respectively, so in Fulham Fulchered’s 5 hides were in fact in Acton. The apparent absence of Ealing and Acton from Domesday Book is because in 1086 they were still fully subsumed within the manor of Fulham.

So does the 50 hides of Fulham in 1086 equate exactly to the 50 *manentes* in Fulham and 10 in Ealing granted around AD 700? Almost certainly not, not least because distant Finchley was probably added in the 10th century. But there is also a wider problem. That reputable charter roll whose 17th-century copies give us the grants of Hemel, Fulham, Ealing, Islington, and Dengie, refers predominantly to estates, or estate names, later held by the bishop. The canons had their separate Tillingham charter and their acceptance of the 24 hides by William the Conqueror, but for virtually everything else they relied on one comprehensive forgery, purporting to be a confirmation of their estates by King Athelstan (925x939), but in fact manufactured in the 12th century with help from the creative forgers down the road at Westminster Abbey. By then the holdings of the canons and bishop were fully separate and this confirmation (which was often later misconstrued as a grant) only deals with the canons’ estates. A genuine 10th-century document would not have been so narrow. If the canons had previously had any genuine documents, they seem to have disposed of them, but in the case of the four main early blocks of territory one has to wonder if such documentation had ever existed — for a single grant would have been made under a single name — Fulham, Ealing, Dengie — and later, when the territory had long been divided, this might well have been misunderstood. By 1066 the canons held extensive territories in a block adjacent to episcopal Fulham, listed in Domesday Book under the names of Twyford (two holdings of 2 hides), Harlesden (5 hides), and Willesden, a substantial 15 hides. Were these the result of a separate grant or grants, or were they within the original donations of Fulham and Ealing? There

is no way of knowing, but the problem underlines the dangers of any rigid equation of amounts of land, as well as of names, over time. And on the latter point, the area listed as Harlesden and Willesden in Domesday Book appears as Neasden in a St Paul's list of c.1000, compiled to show the distribution of obligations towards the manning of a warship and thus incidentally the first genuine list of the church's estates.

### Further reading

- B Colgrave and R A B Mynors (eds) *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1991)
- D Dumville 'Essex, Middle Anglia and the expansion of Mercia in the south-east Midlands' in *ipse, Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Early Middle Ages* (1993), IX, 1–30 [this is a footnoted version; the paper was first published without references in S Bassett (ed) *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (1989), ch 9]
- D Dumville 'The Tribal Hidage: an introduction to its texts and their history', in Bassett *op cit*, ch 16
- M Gibbs (ed) *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London* (1939)
- D Keene *et al* *St Paul's The Cathedral Church of London 604–2004* (2004)
- S E Kelly (ed) *Charters of St Paul's, London Anglo-Saxon Charters 10* (2004)
- S Keynes 'A charter of King Edward for Islington' *Historical Research* 66 (1993), 303–16
- D P Kirby 'The Saxon bishops of Leicester, Lindsey (Syddensis), and Dorchester' *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Soc Trans* 41 (1966), 1–7
- J Morris (ed) *Domesday Book. Middlesex* (1975)
- P Taylor 'A knight's fee at Acton, in the manor of Fulham' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 28 (1977), 316–22
- P Taylor 'The bishop of London's city soke' *Historical Research* 53 (1980), 174–82
- P Taylor 'Clerkenwell and the religious foundations of Jordan de Bricett: a re-examination' *Historical Research* 63 (1990), 17–28

## RECONSTRUCTING ST PAUL'S BEFORE THE FIRE

*John Schofield*

An archaeological account of St Paul's and its site is only now being assembled. The observations and excavations on which it is based go back to the time of Wren as he was building his new cathedral in the 1670s, and continue at the present day.

No certain evidence of the Saxon cathedral has yet been identified, though a foundation of Saxon or at latest 11th-century character found in a test pit on the north-west side of the cathedral in 1933 is significant: it suggests that where pockets of stratigraphy survive, they may include Saxon layers and features. But otherwise the Saxon cathedral and its ancillary buildings remain unknown. One potential site for the Saxon church, beneath the nave of its Romanesque successor, is suggested here; but there is no firm evidence and other sites are equally possible. The plotting of sites for the gazetteer has produced a probably significant proximity of the findspot of the well-known 11th-century Viking tombstone and the proposed site, on documentary grounds, of the bishop's palace before its move across the churchyard sometime in the 13th century.

The form of the eastern arm and transepts of the Romanesque cathedral were suggested by Richard Gem in 1990, and their significance hinted at, though not much could be said as the information was so exiguous. The London region was where a fully-developed style of Romanesque architecture might be expected before the Norman Conquest, and the rebuilding of the cathedral from 1087 would fit into this context. The analysis of moulded stones from the recent excavations, probably from the nave, has filled out this picture and identified the main building stone as from Taynton in Oxfordshire. The plotting of the outline of the whole church, from all the evidence, is gradually taking place on computers.

As we progress through the succession of cathedrals on the site, the information increases and our understanding of the building and therefore its architectural and historical significance becomes clearer. The New Work, the rebuilding and extension of the choir between 1255 and 1314, was presumably intended to provide an enlarged, spacious setting for the

shrine of Erkenwald; a similar extension for the patron saint had just been finished at Ely in 1252. The rose window in the east gable, the largest in Britain, may have been a conscious echo of, or reponse to, the rose in the south transept of Notre Dame, Paris. From 1270 to the 1290s, St Paul's was the greatest architectural undertaking in the London area, surpassing even the works at Westminster Abbey.

At the Reformation in the 1530s the cathedral suffered, like all other great churches. Its fabric was despoiled and neglected; in 1561 the spire caught fire and was afterwards demolished. During the Elizabethan and Jacobean decades, however, the choir of the cathedral became the site of prestigious, assertive tombs of courtiers and high-ranking officials. A major new element in our understanding of the development of the pre-Fire cathedral comprises the recovery and analysis of fragments of the Jones portico of 1633–1641 and other fragments from his restoration of the church. The majority of these fragments come from excavations of 1994–96, but now others in the historic collection, in the south triforium of the present building, can be recognised as also being from Jones's works. For the first time the portico can be reconstructed from actual fragments, and a detailed picture of his whole restoration is emerging from the conjunction of archaeological and documentary study.

Two overall conclusions can be drawn from this work. First, although the Wren building was itself destructive of traces of the previous cathedrals throughout its footprint and possibly for some distance outside in certain directions, a great deal survives beneath the ground and it has the capacity to elucidate, as no other source can, the early history of the cathedral and its site. By charting the discoveries and observations of the strata in and around the present cathedral since the time of Wren, we can underpin the present cathedral with much of the site's previous physical history and the context of worship in the cathedral since AD 604. Second, it may be suggested that St Paul's Churchyard, a rectangular block of land and strata in the western part of the City, comprises probably the best and most significant remaining block of strata for the understanding of the evolution of the City of London through 2000 years.

## JOHN COLET AND THE FOUNDATION OF ST PAUL'S SCHOOL

*Reverend Hugh Mead*

Five years after the see of London celebrates the fourteen hundredth anniversary of its re-foundation, the school that John Colet built in the cathedral's shadow, but that now flourishes on the river bank at Barnes, will celebrate a much more modest five hundred years of life. But perhaps the school ought really to have already kept its thousandth anniversary, as long ago as 1886. So argued the Edwardian pundit A F Leach, on the grounds that, when King Alfred retook London from the Danes in that year, a cathedral school would have at once been set up, and that Colet's foundation was no more than a reform of that cathedral school. There certainly was a medieval cathedral school — indeed there were two, a grammar school and a choir school. The grammar school may be able to claim both Thomas Becket and Geoffrey Chaucer as old boys, and can certainly claim a schoolmaster, one Elwin, 'who among other works of piety exercised the most vigilant discipline over the boys', one of whom miraculously escaped a beating by fleeing to the nearby shrine of St Erkenwald. But by Colet's day this school was in decay. It occupied tiny premises over some shops ('cum quatuor shoppis subtus') and Colet called it 'schola nullius plane momenti (obviously a school of no importance)'. In its place Colet planned a beautiful stone building, staffed by masters as well qualified (or so he told the pope) by sanctity as by literary knowledge. He began the complex legal and financial process of foundation in 1509 and obtained royal letters patent in 1510.

In one respect Colet's school certainly did break with the past — he ensured that it should be entirely outside the control of the cathedral authorities (apart, that is, from his own personal supervision), going so far as to petition the pope to quash any claims over it by the canon chancellor. Perhaps this was partly because the then chancellor was William Lichfield, of whom the Cathedral's historians have written, 'that no project could possibly flourish if placed in his apathetic hands' and who had allowed the Cathedral's divinity lectures, for which he was responsible, to lapse for twenty years. Instead Colet vested its government in the most senior of the livery companies of the City of London,

the Mercers, of which both he and his father, who had twice been Lord Mayor of London, were eminent members. According to his friend Erasmus of Rotterdam, 'that learned Erasmus' as Colet rightly called him, he chose them because, though there was nothing certain in human affairs, he yet found the least corruption in married laymen. He chose a married layman as the first high master too.

It used to be thought that these were radical choices: in fact married schoolmasters and lay trustees of schools were known well before Colet's day. What is surprising is that so severely ascetic a celibate as Colet should have chosen them. His own view of marriage, expressed in his treatise on the sacraments, was that 'the marriage of male and female for the propagation of the flesh is a vain and empty shadow of the true marriage between Christ and his church ... There is no need for [carnal marriage] among Christians, though it is necessarily permitted to the weak and feeble; nor is the resulting offspring needed ... The pagans would supply ample material for regeneration even if the church were altogether barren in that respect.' All this is from his Latin treatise on the sacraments, which was neither published in full nor translated until 1989. Yet he could also write, paraphrasing Proverbs xviii.22, 'if thou intend to marry or being married hast a good wife thank the Lord for it, for she is of his sending'. And he lavished a large fortune on the education of this unnecessary offspring and entrusted it to married men.

John Colet was himself the eldest of twenty two children, eleven boys and eleven girls, of whom all but two died in infancy. His remaining brother, Richard, seems to have died aged about twenty five. All this mortality helped make him very rich as his father's only heir. It may also have made him, to use a phrase that the late Harry Porter transferred to Colet from Inge, something of a gloomy dean. Erasmus thought Colet a man of strong passions, strongly repressed. He always wore black (it seems that in his day deans generally wore purple); he entertained meagrely (he thought demons were attracted by the smell of cooking) — you got good conversation at his table, but rose from it not very well filled. The Chapter thought he neglected his duties of hospitality, especially to the Chapter, and Colet thought that the Chapter, like the ungodly in the psalm, hated to be reformed. He ordered the canons: 'to refrain from vain conversation, guffawing and laughing, and ... to stand up

straight in their stalls, concentrated and devout; and they are either to be praying or reading or chanting, mindful that they are in the sight of God and the angels.'

Either in 1510 or 1512, in any case at the very time that his new school was rising in the cathedral churchyard, Colet preached before the Convocation of Canterbury a sermon which would later be hailed as having heralded the reformation, though its boldness and uniqueness may prove to have been considerably exaggerated. But even if conventional, his criticisms of his fellow clergy are certainly severe: 'Most priests give themselves up to feasting and banqueting, spend themselves in vain babbling, take part in sports and plays; devote themselves to hawking and hunting; are drowned in the delights of the world...' These strictures are no doubt reflected in his orders that the boys of his school should not be allowed 'cock fighting, nor riding about of victory, nor disputing at St Bartilmewe, which is but foolish babbling and losse of time'. Having dealt with the lust of the flesh, the Dean's sermon turns to covetousness: 'For what other thing seek we nowadays in the church than fat benefices and high promotions ... we care not how many, how chargeful, how great benefices we take so that they be of great value.' He himself had already acquired three livings in plurality, including a very valuable one which he kept for the rest of his life, even before he had been ordained deacon.

Colet the severe reformer then was also Colet the rich pluralist, and the Colet who found most virtue in married business men was also Colet the almost savagely celibate ascetic. For these paradoxes all beneficiaries of St Paul's School must be grateful. His reforming instincts made the school a centre of Christian humanism (but there are more paradoxes to come as to this topic). His childlessness (and the deaths of his siblings) left him free to give his school nearly all his wealth, and his wealth enabled him to make it the largest and best endowed in the kingdom (there were to be more than twice as many boys on its foundation as at Eton, and its masters were paid twice as well). Within a few years of the school's foundation Sir Thomas More could write to Colet that 'some are bursting with envy at your famous school'.

The new St Paul's school 'was elegantly built in stonework' and established in the eastern part of St Paul's churchyard. Adjoining it houses were provided for the High Master and his assistant,

the surmaster. Later on the High Master was also to enjoy a country house, in Stepney, but this was at first still occupied by Colet's mother, who survived him.

No plan or picture of the school Colet built is known to survive; but we have a verbal description of it at the time of Colet's death from the pen of Erasmus. It was a single large hall, divided into three by curtains. The High Master taught the senior boys at one end; the surmaster taught the middling boys in the middle; the chaplain taught the little boys at the other end. The last seems to have been an afterthought. At first the chaplain's duty was that of a chantry priest; but if he was learned enough, said Colet, he could help with the teaching should the High Master wish it. Over the High Master's chair was an image of Jesus as a boy, with the inscription 'Hear ye him', added, says Erasmus, 'at my suggestion': the school was dedicated to Jesus in his boyhood, and was at first often called Jesus School. The boys sat on benches raised in tiers. Colet intended that boys should be admitted from all nations and countries indifferently, but 'my countrymen Londoners specially'. As St Paul's was at first entirely a day school, early Paulines will all have been Londoners, unless they were put to board with friends or relations in the City. They were not to be admitted until they could read and write and say their catechism: but they were probably admitted very young, as Colet, in the introduction to the Grammar that he drew up for the school, addresses them as little babes, little children. Their education was to be free, but each was to come to school provided with a wax candle; for lessons, at least in winter, began in the dark. That the candles were of wax and not of tallow suggested to one early 20th-century historian of the school that St Paul's was not intended for the children of the poor. Well, perhaps not. But in the early 20th century, a London day school, however eminent academically, could never feel quite secure as to its place in the public school pecking order. And Colet did provide for at least one poor child of the school, who was to have the duty of removing the boys' urine and the perk of selling it.

Erasmus says that there were sixteen boys in each class. The top class at St Paul's is called the eighth (instead of the sixth as at most other schools). If this was so from the beginning, then we can envisage eight benches or forms, four on each side of the school room, and 128 boys altogether; but neither 128 boys nor eight forms

are divisible by three masters. Erasmus's scheme is too tidy. In any case Colet ordered that there should be 153 boys. (There are still 153 scholars.) As far as we know he did not explain his choice of this interesting number; but there seems no good reason to doubt that it is a reference to the 153 fishes in the miraculous catch at the end of St John's gospel. The school is to catch children for Christ, just as the apostles were to be fishers of men. J H Lupton, biographer and editor of Colet and surmaster 1866-99, argued against this view, probably because it went against his own idealised picture of Colet as a rational and enlightened Christian, a precursor of all that was good and moderate in the English Reformation. But Colet was interested in numerology: he may have had in mind the belief that there were 153 species of fish in existence, so that the catch is symbolic of the command to preach the gospel to all nations. Or he may have been thinking more elaborately. 153 is the triangular of the mystic number 17, which is the sum of 10 and 7, 'both symbols of perfection'. The Pauline, as soon as he was admitted to the school, was taught the ten commandments and the seven sacraments included in the catechism which Colet himself wrote for them in English. 'By this way', said Colet, 'thou shalt come to grace and to glory.'

Once the boys had learned their catechism, their studies were entirely in the classical tongues, and principally, of course, in Latin. But Colet, though he himself did not seriously try to learn Greek until nearly the end of his life, ordered it to be taught at his school; Lily, the first High Master, was a good Greek scholar, and St Paul's has long claimed to be the first English School to teach Greek. Hebrew was added at least as early as the 17th century. One High Master was removed, in 1559, ostensibly for not knowing Greek, but really for holding the wrong religious opinions. Colet's instructions were that the boys should be taught 'all way in good literature ... and good authors such as have the very Roman eloquence joined with wisdom, specially Christian authors that wrote their wisdom with clean and chaste Latin'. He denounced as blotterature rather than literature the 'Latin adulterate which ignorant blind fools later brought into this world and utterly abanished and excluded it' out of his school. This rather intemperate language reflects the contempt of Erasmus's circle for scholastic authors, especially the scotists, though Colet himself particularly disliked Thomas Aquinas.

Besides the catechism, Colet wrote an accident or elementary grammar for the school. This, with additions by Erasmus, William Lily, the first High Master, and John Ritwise, Lily's son-in-law and successor, grew into the long lived Lily's Grammar, made compulsory for all teaching in grammar schools by convocation in 1571, and, in 1758, shamelessly filched by Eton and rechristened the Eton Latin Grammar. Colet, who may well have personally taught in his school, also hoped that Erasmus would teach at St Paul's: this he declined to do, though he attempted, without success, to recruit masters for the school at Cambridge, reporting, if with disapproval, a remark he heard there to the effect that no man would willingly lead such a slavish life if he could earn his living in any other way: he did, however, write other text books for St Paul's, the *Colloquies* (Latin conversation), *De Copia* (a Latin phrase book), and a sermon on the child Jesus, for one of the boys to deliver to the others, perhaps as boy bishop on Innocents' Day. The good literature which the boys were to read when competent in grammar and vocabulary was specified by Colet and is surprising, given that he wants them 'to be proficient in the very Roman tongue which in the time of Tully and Sallust and Virgil and Terence was used'. The prescribed authors are 'Lactantius, Prudentius, and Proba and Sedulius, and Juvencus and Baptista Mantuanus'. These writers were all Christian: one, Baptista Mantuanus, was a contemporary much admired by Erasmus. The others were mostly late classical apologists: Lactantius wrote a gory *Deaths of the Persecutors*, Juvencus a harmony of the Gospels in Virgilian hexameters, Prudentius Christian poems and hymns, some of them fine ones: 'Corde natus ex parentis (Of the father's heart begotten)' is his. Sedulius was a Carolingian poet and theologian. This is a very conservative list: most of the names on it had been appearing in school syllabuses for centuries. C S Lewis thought that 'no more deadly or irrational scheme could have been propounded' and it certainly does not square with the school's perception of itself as a pioneer of humanist education. But it does square with Colet's professed aim: 'my intent is by this school specially to increase knowledge of God and our Lord Christ jesu and good christian life and manners in the children.'

Yet within half a century of Colet's death, all his prescribed authors, except the moderns, Erasmus and Baptista Mantuanus, had disappeared from

the syllabus, replaced by such classical authors as Caesar, Horace, Ovid, and Cicero. Classical writers had in any case been insinuated into Pauline studies by Erasmus's exclusive use of them as grammatical examples, and Lily wanted the boys to read Cicero, Virgil, and Terence. So dead a letter did Colet's instructions prove that it is permissible to wonder whether they were ever intended seriously. Colet told Erasmus that 'our school' was under attack: somebody influential had been 'blaspheming our school before a large concourse of people, declaring that I have erected ... a temple of idolatry.' Thomas More compared St Paul's to the Trojan horse. Just as Greeks came forth from the horse to destroy barbarian Troy, so Paulines come forth from the school to destroy ignorance and disorder. So it may be (though I doubt it) that that very conservative and strictly Christian reading list was meant for a smoke-screen rather than a real curriculum.

In his *Letter to Justus Jonas*, which was written in 1521, two years after Colet's death, and contains a biographical sketch of him, Erasmus declares that Colet 'had never got along well with his bishop', the aristocratic octogenarian Richard Fitzjames, who with two other bishops, delated the dean to the Archbishop of Canterbury for heresy. He specifies three charges: that Colet 'had taught that images were not to be adored', 'that he refused to acknowledge the duty of hospitality which Paul praised', and that he criticised those who read their sermons (meaning but not naming the Bishop of London). The Archbishop dismissed the charges, along with others which, according to Erasmus, were even more absurd, Colet himself disdaining to defend himself. In 1531 William Tyndale accused Fitzjames of bringing another charge against Colet, that of translating the *Pater Noster* into English.

As Colet's most recent biographer, John B Gleeson, has pointed out, these charges certainly are absurd, far too absurd for Fitzjames, unless quite senile, to have contemplated for a moment. We have already seen that an image of Jesus was set up in Colet's new school. Colet was not opposed to the cult of images: if he opposed the worship of the image in place of the reality it represented, he was quite orthodox in doing so. Colet's hospitality may have been meagre; but meanness is not heresy. It is rude to criticise one's bishop's manner of preaching: but rudeness is not heresy either. Colet did indeed translate (and expand) the *Pater Noster* for his schoolboys:

O father in heaven, hallowed be thy name among men in earth as it is among angels in heaven, and so on. The expansions are unexceptionable; the practice of such translation was not forbidden but encouraged by the hierarchy. (The whole Bible, of course, was another matter.)

Not only do the specified charges of heresy not make sense; but Gleeson is able to show that Erasmus was wrong in claiming that the bishop and the dean had never got on: 'the two men worked amicably together for years'. Gleeson also shows that as late as 1511, Colet 'so far from being suspected of heresy', sat on a commission that tried and condemned two heretics. But Gleeson does see a spark of truth behind the murky smoke of Erasmus's and Tyndale's stories. In the power struggle between Warham and Wolsey that ended with the Cardinal of York replacing the Archbishop of Canterbury as Lord Chancellor in 1515, Fitzjames supported Warham, Colet supported Wolsey. In Hunne's case, Fitzjames had favoured repression as the best way to silence the Church's critics. Wolsey and Colet saw the need for the Church to reform itself, if it was to avoid being reformed by others. Conservative bishops might well look for unsound opinions in a reforming dean who had helped loosen their hold on power. And Colet, Gleeson thinks, though generally discreet on formal occasions, could be less than discreet off duty. 'Heresies', he was reported as saying, 'are not so pestilent and pernicious ... as the evil and wicked life of priests.' Some years after his death, Erasmus told the story of the dean's disgust when invited to kiss the shoe of St Thomas of Canterbury: 'By the same token they might offer his spittle to be kissed, or who knows what else.'

However motivated and however ill- or well-justified, the attack on Colet for heresy got nowhere. An attempt to discredit him with the King fared equally badly. Colet, it seems, had preached pacifism, or near pacifism, at a time when Henry was projecting war on France. 'All the wicked', says Erasmus, 'then flocked together ... in the hope that now at last the King's anger would be kindled against him.' The King interviewed the dean in private, and then in public drank his health, embraced him, and declared: 'Let every man have his own doctor and show his favour to him. This is the doctor for me.' Colet, it seems, had agreed to explain 'for the sake of the rough soldiers' that some wars, such as defensive English wars against France, were just wars.

Colet died in 1519. His school was rebuilt for the second time on its original site in 1824, and moved to Hammersmith in 1884, and to Barnes in 1968. The fourth school's buildings were designed by Waterhouse and destroyed by an act of gross official vandalism soon after the move to Barnes in 1968. I remember approaching them from Baron's Court station on my way to work there as a very junior master. They were a splendid sight, at least on a sunny morning. You can see the fifth school if you take a bus over Hammersmith Bridge.

### Further reading

- John B Gleason *John Colet* (1989)
- S Knight *The Life of Dr John Colet* (1724)
- Arthur F Leach 'St Paul's School before Colet' *Archaeologia* 62 (1910)
- J H Lupton *Life of John Colet* (1909)
- J A R Marriot *The Life of John Colet* (1933)
- Michael F J McDonnell *A History of St Paul's School* (1909)
- Michael McDonnell *The Annals of St Paul's School* (1959)
- Michael McDonnell *The Registers of St Paul's School 1509-1748* (1977)
- A H Mead *A Miraculous Draft of Fishes: A History of St Paul's School 1509-1990* (1990)
- J B Trapp 'An English late medieval cleric and Italian thought: the case of John Colet, Dean of St Paul's (1467-1519)' in *Medieval Religious and Ethical Literature. Essays presented to G.H. Russell* (1986)
- J B Trapp 'John Colet' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* vol xii (2004), 601ff

### VICTORIAN MISSIONARY WORK IN LONDON

*Right Reverend Richard Chartres, Bishop of London*

Hats off to the Society for making possible this day as a coda to the celebrations of the 1400th anniversary of the re-organisation of the Diocese of London and the building of the first St Paul's.

Ecclesiastical history has been in temporary eclipse as a dimension of wider historical studies. Historians of the 20th century often lacked the imagination to believe that a part of life which meant little to them could have played a more significant role in the past. This is why in the recent histories of London, apart from a few caricaturing asides, the massively significant

social and institutional presence of the churches has been largely ignored.

At the same time ecclesiastical history had the misfortune to become, at least in part, the province of clerical partisans, who studied the past with polemical intent informed by somewhat arcane theological controversies of their own day and in the process convinced the wider public that there was little to interest them in such an area of study.

Things are changing. We await eagerly the publication of Arthur Burns new assessment of my predecessor Bishop Blomfield, coming as it does from the pen of the head of the history faculty in Kings and not from a divine.

*The Economist* is also a sign of the times. It would be fair to say that ten years ago that magazine believed that religion could be safely ignored as a phenomenon with no influence on the daylight world. That is not the case today. The salience of religion worldwide and not least in this great city state of London is vastly greater than it was a quarter of a century ago, sometimes for good but very often for ill. Once again, in a way that baffles many of our contemporaries, religion is unignorably connected to our deepest life and death concerns. This gives a new significance to the historical studies with which we are concerned today.

At the same time even the Church of England is waking up in a way that is directly relevant to my introductory talk. The talk is once more of 'mission'. In a recent influential report entitled 'Mission Shaped Church', various 'new ways of being church' are considered and commended. The authors frankly acknowledge that near the close of Victoria's reign in 1900, 55% of all the children in England and Wales were enrolled in some kind of Christian Sunday School, quite apart from the religious instruction which was part of the normal school day. In 2000 the figure was 4%, and I am surprised that it is so many.

As we mount our response to this challenge, I have become more and more aware that there are precedents for nearly all our 'new ways of being church' and it is instructive to contemplate our own situation in the light of the huge missionary challenges faced by the Victorian Church. We only have a limited time for such a vast subject, so I want to illuminate the picture a little with four vignettes, Bishop Blomfield at work, the Exeter Hall meeting of June 1840, the 1858 Primary Charge of Bishop Tait and its consequences, and lastly the witness

of an unpublished manuscript preserved in the Guildhall Library and written by the Reverend J M Rodwell between 1865 and 1875.

### **Blomfield**

To tell you the truth I am a trifle anniversaried out after the various 1400th celebrations of the reconstitution of the Diocese of London in AD 604 to serve the East Saxon tribe. But the experience of this year has been only an exaggerated version of usual episcopal business. I have to fulfil my predecessors' diaries as well as my own. This has alerted me to how busy my predecessor Bishop Blomfield was in opening churches. There has been a plethora of 150th anniversaries of foundation stone laying by Blomfield.

London in the 1830s constituted a challenge for all the churches and for the Church of England in particular. London had grown explosively and by 1820 was larger than all the capitals of continental Europe put together. The Church was beset by the difficulty of organising new parishes to serve the expanding population, of providing adequate clerical incomes, and in dealing with the related problem of clerical non-residence.

The years of the struggle with France had seen an explosive growth of Dissent. Between 1795 and 1801 alone there were 3,300 dissenting chapels registered. These were years of apocalyptic enthusiasm and speculation. In London William Blake gave voice to a buried tradition of urban mysticism. Old patterns of life and social restraints were disrupted by rapid industrialisation and the fascinating figure of Napoleon fuelled the sense of a world in the melting pot. By 1815, a third of the UK population were dissenters from the National Protestant Established Churches.

In London the response of the Established Church developed in an active alliance with the Government. The London based Hackney Phalanx, a network of high church clergy and their supporters were influential in promoting this church\state compact. From 1809–21, for example, the Government allowed £100,000 pa to enhance poor livings. In 1818 the Phalanx assisted by the Claphamites (their evangelical equivalents) and a Government grant of £1,000,000 launched the Incorporated Church Building Society with the intention of providing more 'sittings' for the burgeoning population.

In the years before 1828 the alliance of Church and State worked more in the favour of the

Established Churches in Britain than at any time since the reign of Charles II. The Government acted on the belief that the parochial structures of the Established Churches could assist in nation building.

The strategy came to grief in Ireland where the Second Reformation associated with Archbishop Magee's St Patrick's Charge of 1822 was a divisive failure. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 marked the end of even a theoretical constitutional symphony. There were further constitutional changes in the following years which made Parliament less Anglican and an assault on the Church's property and usefulness intensified in the early 1830s. Hostility to the collection of Church Rate was widespread. In Bethnal Green in 1836 when a lay worker sought to collect money for church extension, he was told that 'they would give him a shilling to hang the bishop but not six pence for church building' (quoted in S J Brown *The National Churches*).

The moralists were gloomy about the prospects. One influential assessment, 'The State of the Metropolis considered in a letter to the Bishop of London', was published in 1835. It was the work of Baptiste Noel (1793–1873), one of the founders of the London City Mission.

There is something, my Lord, unspeakably painful in this contemplation of this mass of immortal beings, in such close juxtaposition with ourselves, living as we have reason to fear without God and without hope. 500,000 Sabbath breakers at the very least, in total neglect of the restraints of religion, communicate the plague of ungodliness to all around them. 10,000 of these are devoted to play: above 20,000 are addicted to beggary: 30,000 are living by theft and fraud: 23,000 are in the course of the year picked up drunk in the streets: above 100,000 are habitual gin drinkers; and 100,000 or more have yielded themselves to systematic and abandoned profligacy.

The recipient of the letter was Charles James Blomfield who, although a high churchman, was justly noted for his pragmatism — he happily accepted the title of 'priest in the temple of expediency' when it was bestowed upon him in a Parliamentary debate. The Church's true beauty in his eyes was 'the beauty of its holy usefulness'.

He was born in 1786, was elevated to Chester in 1824, and translated to London in 1828. He was convinced, especially in the light of the experiments in Glasgow associated with the name

of the Reverend Thomas Chalmers, one of the most influential Christian strategists of the 19th century, that the revival of parish communities was the key to lasting social improvement.

In 1834 in 'The Uses of a Standing Ministry and an Established Church', Blomfield argued that such a church was 'the most efficient instrument of instructing the people in the doctrines of religion and of habituating them to its decencies and restraints.'

By declining to issue licenses for non-residence, he managed between 1831 and 1835 to increase the number of resident incumbents in the Diocese of London from 287 to 325. By 1834 there were only 64 parishes without a resident clergyman. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the work of the Ecclesiastical Commission which was launched in February 1835.

In April 1836 a major church building campaign was launched in London. The aim of the Metropolitan Churches Fund was the construction of at least 50 new churches. The need, especially in east and north-east London was very great. The population of 353,460 was served by only 18 churches and chapels and 24 clergy. Blomfield asserted that it was the task of the Established Church 'to divide the moral wilderness of this vast city into manageable districts each with its own place of worship, its schools and its local institutions'. Citing the example of church building in Glasgow, Blomfield called for voluntary contributions to build and endow the new churches. Endowments were especially important because they would render the parish clergy 'independent of pew rents' and thus strengthen the Church's mission in poorer districts.

In 1837 the first of the campaign's district churches was begun — St Peter's Stepney. It was financed by a wealthy banker, William Cotton. Within two years St Peter's was a model district church, with a district visiting society, a hospice, two large schools, and a lending library with 570 volumes.

Blomfield saw the Cathedral establishments as one source of finance, which earned him the hostility of the vastly overrated but admittedly witty Canon Sidney Smith, supposedly a Whig, but stout in the defence of antique Cathedral abuses. Blomfield, in a speech in the House of Lords in 1840, observed, 'I am continually brought into contact in the discharge of my official duties with vast masses of my fellow creatures living without God in the world. I traverse the streets of this

crowded city with deep and solemn thoughts of the spiritual condition of its inhabitants. I pass the magnificent church which crowns the metropolis and is consecrated to the noblest of objects, the glory of God and I ask of myself in what degree it answers that object.'

Between 1831 and 1841, the Church of England, almost entirely by its own efforts, built 667 new churches. There were lingering hopes of government assistance with this programme especially when the Tories under Sir Robert Peel were returned to power. The Prime Minister was personally a devout member of the Church of England but the moment had passed when it was possible for the Government to regard alliance with any particular religious body as a recipe for social cohesion. The explosion of the urban population continued but, although given an opportunity in 1840, Parliament declined to provide further public funds to make church extension a truly national effort. There was a similar story in education where, by 1839, 1,118,000 children were being educated as a result of voluntary exertions in Church of England schools.

The Church had by its own efforts achieved much of the vision to which Thomas Chalmers gave classic expression in his London lectures of 1838 on 'The Establishment and Extension of National Churches'. After the turmoil of the constitutional changes of the 1828–32 period with the determined attacks of the radicals, the churches had redefined themselves as popular institutions, exhibiting in Blomfield's words a 'beauty of holy usefulness'. They had set themselves to build viable communities, to educate the young, and to promote social harmony with the assistance of a new generation of clergy taught to see themselves as 'tribunes of the people'.

But had such a renascent Church achieved Parliamentary patronage in 1838–41 it might have resembled the Churches of Scandinavia and become more a department of state with its spiritual independence compromised. As it was, this watershed marked a decisive development in the peculiar British tradition by which religion is allowed a place in the public arena while being almost entirely sustained by voluntary effort. In the light of the responsibility carried by the Church of England in particular for such a large part of the architectural and cultural inheritance of the whole community, it can be confidently asserted that the Anglican Church is the most disestablished in Europe.

## **Exeter Hall**

Most often today we associate ticket touts with great sporting events, but at the beginning of June 1840 the touts were doing a roaring trade in tickets for the first anniversary meeting of the 'Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa'. The doors of the Exeter Hall in the Strand, one of the great places of Evangelical Assembly in Victorian London, were open at 10.00am and the streets surrounding the Strand were packed with people waiting to view Queen Victoria's German consort on his way to his first public engagement — to what *The Times* was to describe as 'the scene of Prince Albert's matriculation in the business of a free and deliberative people'.

The Bishop of London pleaded a prior engagement in Hertfordshire but he was hardly missed among the serried ranks of politicians, bishops, and noblemen. They were there to cheer the initiative which was about to be launched by HMG. Three steamships were being sent to the River Niger in West Africa where it was believed slavery and worse still lingered. They were to sail up and down the river pacifying and civilising as they went. In defence of the bishop I must say that it was announced as the day wore on that he was among the more notable new subscribers to the Society.

The meeting exhibited the old alliance between the anti-slavery movement and the missionary impulse and marks the outpouring of forces which had been gathering strength for the previous half century and which in the century to come were to transform Africa.

I have just attended a conference sponsored by the World Bank, organised around the idea, which some of the participants seemed to believe was novel, that the churches should be involved in the work of sustainable development. At least in part as a result of the eruption of energy which followed the Exeter Hall Meeting, Africa is 45% Christian and, in a country like Zambia, 40% of the health care and 30% of the education service is provided by the churches. They are in fact unignorable, although this comes as unwelcome news to many post-Victorian West Europeans.

Wilberforce's successor in the anti-slavery crusade, Thomas Fowell Buxton, was present in Exeter Hall. He declared that, 'It is the bible and the plough that must regenerate Africa'. Trade and Christian standards would replace the economy which depended upon the exploitation

of human misery and ignorance. The Prince Consort stood next to Buxton and such was the tumultuous reception of the first sentence he uttered, that his speech notes dropped off the brim of his upturned top hat and were scattered in the interior.

Wilberforce's son the Archdeacon was also there to remind the great audience that their purpose was to ensure 'that every ship laden with commerce might also bear the boon of everlasting life', that, in addition to gold and spices, every part of the earth should receive 'the more precious wealth – the more blessed frankincense of Christ their master'. The applause was tremendous and somewhere in the Hall was a 27-year-old medical student from the Charing Cross Hospital, David Livingstone.

### **Bishop Tait's Primary Charge of 1858**

The place was St Paul's Cathedral and the date was 13 November 1858. It was, as the bishop noted, the 300th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth — you see once again the anniversary captivity of the episcopate.

The Charge, 122 pages long and replete with statistical appendices, required almost five hours for its delivery and so exhausted the bishop that he was obliged to take a seaside break in Southend to recover.

It is interesting to note in the light of our focus on the history of St Paul's that the Cathedral was described by the bishop as being 'now used for the first time for such a gathering of the whole clergy of the Diocese'.

Appendix A lists the new churches consecrated by Blomfield, 198 in all, 169 in the 'present Diocese of London'. There is a table of attendance figures and of school rolls.

Among particular concerns noted by Tait is the fact that London clerical stipends have suffered by the loss of burial fees consequent on changes in the public health regime.

There is much reference to the recent House of Lords Select Committee on Spiritual Destitution and a recognition that the bonds between Church and society as a whole were fraying. 'It is certain that in our large towns there is a gradual diminution going on of all those outward helps that used to prop up a parish clergyman's position.' One of the notable challenges facing the Church was 'the subtle progress of an intellectual infidelity'.

In 1851 the population of the Diocese was

2,143,340. The Church of England regarded itself as responsible for the 1,881,994 unprovided for by other religious bodies. In 1858 Tait calculated that this figure had risen to 2 million served by 885 licensed clergy. The average stipend was £140 pa and many were dependent on private means. The debate about church rates to support the buildings was still raging. 'The days are gone by when the Church of England can look to be propped up by the adventitious aid of secular authority.'

But with the evidence of the voluntary vigour of the Church in London, the bishop struck a confident note of a kind which seems to have become very difficult for church leaders to sound in our own day. 'This our own national development of the Church of Christ — with its own peculiar institutions, dear to true hearted Englishmen from the historical associations from the centuries of England's most real greatness, which has been bound up with so many crises of the nation's history in times past, which men love because it maintains the faith in which their fathers lived and died, and in which they desire to rear their children; to which all the Protestant nations of the earth look as the great bulwark of that at once reasonable and loving Christianity which commends itself only the more to right minded men, the more they love freedom and the more they are educated — I say this, our great national development of the Church of Christ is in no danger, if we, its ministers, are what we ought to be.'

Tait turned to some specific challenges. There was, he argued, a danger of dumbing down. 'I know that it is a favourite theory with some in the present day that we need a lower order of clergymen of a more homely type with less Latin and Greek.' The bishop was determined to resist this movement.

He was alive, however, to the need for a clear parochial strategy. Every five or six thousand people ought to have a church and a parson supported by adequate staff, rather than subdivision into smaller units.

In 1857 there had been a meeting of the clergy of the more populous parishes in London House, the Bishop of London's town house in St James's Square (you can still see the mitres on the drain pipes). This meeting had resulted in the formation of the Diocesan Home Mission 'for adding somewhat of a missionary machinery to our ordinary parochial work'. 'The parochial system, standing quite alone, is unable to meet

many other wants of our complicated and highly artificial state of society.’

Methodist open air meetings were an example of an appeal to the alienated and deserved emulation. The days when it was feared that the Church of England was ‘dying of her dignity’ had passed but the needs of a fluctuating population were best met by missionaries. ‘But these efforts must be saved from degenerating into irregularity.’ In consequence every effort was made to secure the incumbent’s support for special services for the labouring poor who are invited to come in their working dresses.

The first missionary curate was appointed at £200 pa to serve Whitechapel and Spitalfields. In 1862 there was a special appeal for funds to employ two missionaries to work among omnibusmen and cabmen. They, together with their families, were estimated to comprise a population of 80,000, largely untouched by Christian mission.

The work made rapid progress, judging by the reports of London Diocesan Home Mission preserved in Lambeth Palace Library. The Council included luminaries like the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Shaftesbury, Mr Cazenove, even the Dean of Westminster. The AGM was held at Willis’s Rooms on 2 March 1865 and the work of the previous year was reviewed.

Resolution II proposed by Lord Harrowby and seconded by the Bishop of Ely, stated: ‘That the great extension of the operations of the Diocesan Home Mission, through the large grants from the Bishop of London’s Fund and the success which has attended the work of the increased staff of missionaries show that the method of working adopted by the mission is well suited to grapple with the various forms of Spiritual Destitution in the Metropolis and most effectually assists in the extension of the parochial system and the erection of new Churches.’ In speaking to the motion Harrowby remarked, ‘At last it had been found out that the church was the culminating point. The apostles began by addressing the multitude.’ (The Church Commissioners were involved in funding this ‘transient work’.)

The limitations of the strategy which put the principal emphasis on church building were well recognised in the second half of the 19th century and it is fascinating to discover Tait at work setting up a Home Mission Fund remarkably similar to the initiative which has just been taken by the 21st-century Diocese of London. We are united with our Victorian forebears in recognising that ‘this Metropolitan Diocese is a world in itself and

its schemes of Christian usefulness must suit all tastes’.

### **J M Rodwell**

Unpublished diary preserved in the Register of St Ethelburga, Bishopsgate commenced 1792–1812. Manuscript number 4238 Guildhall Library.

After the bomb explosion which laid it waste in 1992 the church of St Ethelburga in Bishopsgate was restored to serve a very contemporary need which is part of the duty of all followers of Christ, the work of preventing and transforming conflict, especially those conflicts with a religious dimension.

The St Ethelburga Centre which is devoted to this expression of Christian faith in the service of the whole community has just celebrated its second birthday. As a mark of respect, Professor Haleem, the foremost Quranic scholar whose translation of the Quran has just been published by Oxford University Press presented a copy of his new work to the library of the Centre. He was astonished by the news of a Providential discovery.

In a moment of leisure I was glancing at the invaluable publications of the London Record Society and noticed mention of an unpublished fragment of autobiography written on the leaves of an 18th-century Register of Births and Deaths from St Ethelburga’s, Bishopsgate. The author was John Medows Rodwell, Rector of St Ethelburga from 1843. The name seemed familiar for some reason that I could not remember and courtesy of the helpful staff in the manuscripts section of the Guildhall library I read it recently.

In the year of our Lord 1808. April 11 the writer J.M.Rodwell was born at Barham Hall in the County of Suffolk. – educated at Bury School under Dr Malkin.

B.A. of Gaius and Gonville College Cambridge 1830

M.A. 1834.

From the Rev. W. Kirby Rector of Barham, the celebrated naturalist and father of English entomology I derived great advantages and [?] in 1833 became his curate. He was also my uncle having married Miss Charlotte Rodwell, my Father’s sister in 1816. A debt of everlasting gratitude is due from me to the memory of my maternal uncle the Rev Robert Kedington M.A. of Babergh Hall in the aforesaid county who took an unceasing

interest in my education – early instilled into me sound church principles – a love for natural science – and a taste for learning generally especially languages. He was Rector of Bradfield Combust and a devoted Parish Priest and in every sense a thorough English gentleman.

.....

In the year of our Lord 1843 I was appointed to the rectory of St Ethelburga Bishopsgate on the collation of the Right Reverend Charles James Blomfield D.D. Lord Bishop of this Diocese. I had previously laboured for nine years in the charge of St Peter's Saffron Hill, as the first incumbent of that populous and poor District containing 13,000 souls – and the Bishop was good enough to say that he presented me to St E's in acknowledgement of what he was pleased to term "my arduous and earnest labours in that anxious sphere of duty". Such indeed it was and though I am only too painfully conscious how much that ought to have been done was left undone, and that I made many and painful mistakes, yet upon the whole my ministry there was very successful, the congregation very large, the schools well attended and the communicants numerous. Being only just in priest's orders and blessed with a strong constitution, a loud voice and a willing mind, I have reason to be most thankful that I was enabled to devote these gifts to the service of God – to whom I can never be sufficiently thankful for having raised up for me so many helpers who rendered most efficient aid with their purse and time as well as with personal labours among the poor in the schools and in visiting the sick and poor. The Rev. Gilbert Beresford was at this time Rector of St Andrews Holborn, to which St Peters was a Chapel of Ease – a really good man of deep unaffected Piety. He was very unpopular in the Parish except among a few select friends; most undeservedly so however, as his only offence was that of standing up for the rights of the church, and claiming the very low tythe which had always been paid up to the time of his appointment but which was now withheld by a few factious Dissenters and nominal Churchmen. Peace be with his memory. He was always kind liberal and most judicious in his counsels to me – and though there was lack of energy in his ministrations and he belonged to that somewhat uninfluential class of churchmen called High and Dry yet he was personally in every sense a Christian Gentleman. – It was with many regrets that I heard of his

removal to a family living in Leicestershire – where however I once again saw him.

Rodwell pens other affectionate reminiscences, most particularly of his wife, and then looks back (from 1865) to the period we have already been considering.

With the year 1842 and 1843 commenced a most eventful period for this Church of England. The ancient Barriers were now broken down; the old bonds between church and state were one after another gradually loosened. Romanism and Dissent had commenced their attacks. A High Church movement commenced in the Church itself and these all have been steadily developing during the last 25 years. The High Church movement first showed itself in the publication of the Oxford Tracts by Dr Pusey, Newman, Keble, A. Perceval and Hugh James Rose and the principles which they enunciated appear to me to have steadily leavened the Church of England ever since. Of course there have been other Phases of Religious Opinion – the Broad or Liberal Church Party and the Evangelical or Puritanico-Calvinistic schools. The latter sensibly diminishing for some years past both in number and in influence. And by the side of High Churchism has also grown up no small amount of German Neology and this I have no doubt is steadily though stealthily on the increase. It has its factors in high places and the name and writings of Bishop Colenso will mark I believe an epoch in the history of religious thought in England. Whether those views and principles are destined largely to overspread the church remains to be seen. If I may venture to prophesy I believe that they will.

I have kept my eye steadily upon this subject for many years. I have read much of the literature connected with it and am decidedly of the opinion that the orthodox party have not yet manifested learning and research equal to that of their opponents. I shall not live to see the issue of these attacks upon the Old Faith. But if these remarks shall last two hundred years hence, I venture to think that whoever may read them will find that much of the Catholic creed as now held by High Churchmen and orthodox persons generally will have been eliminated from the creed of Englishmen, when he compares the creed of his days with the standards and formularies of the church of this day. Regeneration in Holy Baptism, the Eternity of Hell Torments, the Inspiration

of Scripture are already open questions; and there are certain portions of the sacred text itself which seem likely to fare ill at the hands of the critics. For my own part *stare super antiquas vias* is my motto, and so far as my individual efforts go, I will never give up, whatever difficulties I see and feel, my portion of the old Catholic faith. There may be reasons for faith in mysteries that are above me, and for clearing up perplexing difficulties which I do not see and know ..... I am a thorough conservative in religion and wish to leave on record this my testimony for the ancient creeds. Englishmen seem to be fast unlearning their religion. There is a widespread scepticism among the lower orders especially in the manufacturing districts. In London large assemblies are held in various parts on Sunday evenings for lectures and discussions of an infidel tendency. Three years ago I remember attending one such in the City Road at which at least 1500 persons were present and when the speakers advocated 'infidelity pure and simple'. Neither are the middle classes free from this insidious enemy. The immense circulation attained by *Essays and Reviews*, Colenso's works, the *Westminster Review*, the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper etc clearly show how large a section of the public holds very loosely to the Faith of their Fathers.

For all his conservatism, however, Rodwell had been a friend of Darwin and accompanied him on botanising expeditions. His most extraordinary achievement, however, was his translation of the *Quran*, published in 1861. It has appeared in many editions ever since, particularly after its inclusion in the *Everyman Library*. Professor Haleem commended the Rodwell version for its stylistic felicities and was clearly moved to be standing in the church where Rodwell served and worshipped for so many years as rector.

There are, of course, judgements in the Rodwell translation and especially in its footnotes which are unacceptable to contemporary Muslim scholarship, but in his day Rodwell represented a positive estimate of the work of Muhammad and followed Carlyle's judgement that the *Quran* was the 'ferment of a great rude human soul ... fervent, earnest ... Sincerity in all senses seems to me the merit of the *Koran*'.

Rodwell himself says in the preface to his translation, 'The more insight we obtain from

undoubted historical sources into the actual character of Muhammad, the less do we find to justify the strong vituperative language of Maracci, Prideaux and others [scholars of the previous century]'.

Rodwell was also responsible for converting St Ethelburga's into a place of advanced ritual of the kind that made Victorian bishops uneasy but which was part of the reaction to the missionary challenges of the new industrial society. By 1865, as the smoke of industrial London grew thicker, Rodwell introduced incense, the fragrance of Paradise, collected from trees which legend asserted were smuggled out of the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve when they were expelled. Eucharistic vestments were also adopted.

In December 1867 there were anti-ritualistic disturbances in St Ethelburga's which resulted in a case heard by the Lord Mayor. Protests from the Vestry continued which did not however reflect the views of the substantial congregation and Bishop Jackson was induced to order the cessation of the ritual lovingly detailed in Rodwell's manuscript autobiography.

The *Church Times* for 13 April 1877 described the situation thus: '£1500 had been spent by Rodwell and his friends re-edifying St Ethelburga's. Large sums also came from the Rector's pocket to beautify the worship. Mr Rodwell was the first of the City clergy to open his church for short mid-day services and the success of the experiment may be gathered from the fact that 530 communicants signed a memorial to the bishop praying His Lordship to protect Mr Rodwell from persecution.' The bishop was unmoved however and threatened action unless the advanced ritual was abandoned. 'Bishop Jackson is content', thundered the *Church Times*, 'to let the City drones convert their benefices into sinecures but this admirable worker must be treated as if he were the scum of the earth. The right reverend prelate may depend upon it that he is accumulating matter for bitter remorse. This is not one of his *Little Sins* [a reference to the title of the Bishop's most popular devotional book].'

Rodwell survived until 1900 and died in St Leonard's on Sea. I do not doubt however that he has intervened recently to bless the new endeavours which we are building on the ancient foundations of St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate.